



# City of St. Catharines Parks Policy Plan

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Community Services Department

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*The Parks Policy Plan charts a course for providing a balanced and integrated system of parks, open space, and trails for St. Catharines for the next ten years. It includes strategies for planning, maintaining, and managing the City's parks, open space, trails, and associated facilities.*

*The Plan is the culmination of community input, in-depth research and sound planning practices and serves as a guide for parks, open space, and trails planning. In addition to developing new policies, the process has also included a review and refining of existing policies and standards.*

*St. Catharines' 2001 population is estimated to be in the range of 132,500 and is projected to grow modestly to 136,000 by 2026 (source: St. Catharines Planning Department). Future growth in St. Catharines is projected to be modest as the City has a limited supply of developable residential land. In keeping with the planning principles of Smart Growth, new development will consist primarily of infill and redevelopment. Only the City's West Planning District is projected to experience significant growth due to the younger age profile of this area (family formation age). Given the shortage of developable land, a strong commitment for community renewal with emphasis on beautification and greening will continue to be a necessity.*

*In addition to an expanded tourism base, community leaders are seeking to attract new and emerging industries and businesses that may draw a younger population and counteract the aging trend in St. Catharines. In this respect, the City's parks system is viewed and being promoted as a feature that contributes to the quality of life enjoyed by employees of these new businesses.*

*There is ongoing discussion about the benefits that are derived by residents and their communities (e.g., personal, social, economic and environmental) from parks, open space and trails as compared to the cost of providing and maintaining those amenities and services. St. Catharines parks, open space, and trails provide a broad range of leisure opportunities and physical activities for residents and visitors of all ages. This translates into an active healthier population and subsequently lower health costs as well as tourism revenue.*

*Community consultation was a key component in preparing this Parks Policy Plan. As such, a consultation program was developed and implemented as part of the research phase. A range of opportunities to participate were available to residents including: a random sample household survey; interviews with stakeholders/user groups, City Councillors and key municipal staff; a public workshop; and a public meeting. A number of common themes or threads emerged through the consultation initiatives. These have been considered and integrated, as appropriate, into the Parks Policy Plan.*

*In developing the Parks Policy Plan, a number of strategic directions and guiding principles were developed based upon input provided by the community, Councillors and staff through the consultation process and the overall analysis that has been undertaken in developing the Plan. These statements represent the most pressing parks, open space, and trails needs and desires for St. Catharines. The strategic directions provide the focus for the Plan's recommendations and serve as a guide for future decision-making for St. Catharines' parks, open space and trails system.*

#### **Parks Policy Plan Guiding Principles & Strategic Directions**

##### **Guiding Principles**

- *To provide an equitable and accessible distribution of parks, open space and trails.*
- *To provide a diverse range of park spaces, opportunities and activities that are safe and meet the needs of users.*
- *To preserve, protect and enhance unique natural features and heritage resources through the application of effective stewardship practices.*
- *To develop and enhance partnerships to maximize community benefit.*
- *To provide the infrastructure and management tools to delivery services in an effective and efficient manner.*

*The Parks Policy Plan contains a number of recommended "actions plans" intended to be consistent with the Guiding Principles, while providing specific implementation tasks*

for the City, its partners and the public to undertake. Some of the key recommended action plans include:

- *Establishing a new Parkland Classification System to include two new categories - Linear Park and Special Urban Park;*
- *Adjusting the service radii for neighbourhood parks and playgrounds to 800-metres compared to the current target of 400-metres;*
- *Establishing planning tools/regulations to increase "greening" opportunities including provisions in the zoning by-law, use of bonusing, and site plan guidelines;*
- *Establishing a parkland dedication requirement of 2% for commercial, industrial and mixed use development;*
- *Establishing when the value of land for the purpose of cash in lieu will be determined (e.g. prior to issuing a building permit; value as fully serviced);*
- *Making provision for streetscape enhancements in the order to 3% of capital works projects;*
- *Develop a capital conservation fund as a funding source for parks renewal projects (initially at \$250,000 annual - to be reviewed and monitored on an on-going basis);*
- *Design and implement a way-finding system that promotes St. Catharines' canal heritage and significant parks and trails.*
- *Assigning a "municipal" priority to gateway improvements;*
- *Placing a higher priority on linking the community and its parks and establishing a comprehensive trails classification system;*
- *Consider adopting a community stewardship program to assist with protecting and preserving the urban forest and to enhance safety and security of parks; and*

- *Encourage greater public involvement in park renewal by developing programs such as adopt-a-park and anti-littering initiatives.*

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## **SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 The Future of Our Parks - Our Mission**

*The City's trails, parks and open spaces provide important environmental, social, economic, and physical benefits which positively impact on individual well being and on the community as a whole.*

The City of St. Catharines' system of parks, open space, trails, and natural assets contribute to the rich quality of life and leisure opportunities that are enjoyed by its residents. The City's trails, parks and open spaces provide important environmental, social, economic, and physical benefits which positively impact on individual well being and on the community as a whole. They also contribute to the aesthetics of St. Catharines, making the city an attractive and desirable place to live and visit.

The City manages and maintains a system of more than 400 hectares (988 acres) of parks and open spaces (not including service agreement lands), as well as an extensive trail system (60 kilometres). Given that this includes more than 70 floral gardens, it is no surprise that St. Catharines is known as the "Garden City". The parks system also includes unique natural and heritage features such as the Niagara Escarpment, the Welland Canal, Twelve Mile Creek and the Lake Ontario waterfront, all of which contribute to the overall enjoyment of living, playing, working, and visiting in St. Catharines.

St. Catharines is a city in transition. Its economy is evolving, moving from a traditional heavy industry-based economy to one comprised of light industry and tourism. Its demographic composition is also changing. With these changes, the City must ensure that its system of parks, open space and trails responds to the future needs of residents and visitors alike.

The following mission statement has been created based on public input to this Plan and will assist in guiding the actions and policies of the City in regard to parks, open space and trails:

*To develop and promote a diverse and connected system of quality parks, open space and trails that makes the best use of available resources, encourages stewardship and provides the most benefit and enjoyment for all St. Catharines residents and visitors while preserving, protecting and enhancing the City's natural and heritage resources for future generations.*



## 1.2 Purpose of the Plan

The Parks Policy Plan charts a course for providing a balanced and integrated system of parks, open space, and trails for St. Catharines for the next ten years. It includes strategies for planning, maintaining, and managing the City's parks, open space, trails, and associated facilities.

This Plan is the culmination of community input, in-depth research and sound planning practices and serves as a guide for parks, open space, and trails planning. In addition to developing new policies, the process has also included a review and refining of existing policies (e.g., land acquisition) and standards (e.g., service levels). The Plan does not address the full range of service delivery issues, which is anticipated to be a component of the Recreation Master Plan Study that the City is planning to undertake in 2005.

*The Parks Policy Plan is a  
blueprint for St. Catharines'  
parks system.*

## 1.3 How to Use this Document

The document is divided into 9 sections, each of which contributes the key building blocks for developing the Parks Policy Plan.

Section 1: Introduction – provides an overview of the Plan's purpose and organization.

Section 2: Context – considers planning, demographic, fiscal, social and “big picture” trends and issues that will shape St. Catharines' Parks, Open Space and Trail System.

Section 3: Public Consultation – provides an overview of the community consultation process and the common themes that were identified and which provide the basis for the Strategic Directions for the Plan.

Section 4: Strategic Directions – the strategic directions provide the focus for the Plan's recommendations and reflect the priorities which emerged from the public consultation process, trends and the overall analysis of the parks system that was undertaken for this planning exercise.

Section 5: Parks & Open Space Assessment – provides a comprehensive overview of the parks supply and classification system and identifies modifications to address existing and future parkland requirements.

Section 6: Park Development & Renewal – sets out park acquisition and dedication strategies, identified park renewal priorities as well as recommendations relating to playing fields, beautification and parks promotion.

Section 7: Trails – describes the existing trail classification system and recommends new trail categories.

Section 8: Environmental Management – assesses the key issues that are impacting the City's natural heritage features and identifies initiatives designed to protect and enhance St. Catharines' natural heritage resources including the City's urban forest.

Section 9: Community Partnerships – highlights the significance of the City's partners in parks and identifies ways to strengthen existing relationships as well as developing new ones.

#### **1.4 The Way Forward**

The Parks Policy Plan is a living document; it is not "set in stone". The Plan will need to be monitored annually in the context of the City's budget deliberations, as well as comprehensively every five years with public participation to ensure that the Plan remains relevant. The Plan also contains policies that are best implemented by the City's Official Plan.

The Parks Policy Plan is a blueprint for St. Catharines' parks system. It provides a comprehensive framework for decision-makers and helps to ensure that all new projects maintain St. Catharines' long range vision for its parks and trail system. At the review stage, the Plan may need to be refined to ensure that it continues to be responsive and flexible to the needs of the community, and is providing clear direction for the future. In this way, the document will continue to move forward. The Park Policy Plan also provides support for Official Plan Amendments relating to parks, open space and trails.

## **SECTION 2     CONTEXT**

### **2.1     Planning Context**

Future growth in St. Catharines is projected to be modest as the City has a limited supply of developable residential land. In keeping with the planning principles of Smart Growth, new development will consist primarily of infill and redevelopment. Only the City's West Planning District is projected to experience significant growth due to the younger age profile of this area (family formation age). Given the shortage of developable land, a strong commitment for community renewal with emphasis on beautification and greening will continue to be a necessity.

Tourism is a "driving force" in the Niagara Region's economy and is being actively promoted in St. Catharines through its Economic Development Strategies. The City's canal heritage is considered to be an under-promoted resource. Sports tourism and tournaments also bring in revenue to the local economy. In marketing St. Catharines as a tourism destination, a balance between the needs of residents and visitors will need to be maintained.

The City's economy is changing. In addition to an expanded tourism base, community leaders are seeking to attract new and emerging industries and businesses that may draw a younger population and counteract the aging trend in St. Catharines. In this respect, the City's parks system is viewed and being promoted as a feature that contributes to the quality of life enjoyed by employees of these new businesses.

### **2.2     Demographic Context**

St. Catharines' 2001 population was estimated to be in the range of 132,500 and is projected to grow modestly to 136,000 by 2026 (source: St. Catharines Planning Department).

The St. Catharines/Niagara Census Metropolitan Area has been identified as one of the two most popular retirement destinations for Canada's aging baby-boomers by the Economic Development Department. However, in 2001, 80% of the City's population

*Given the shortage of developable land, a strong commitment for community renewal with emphasis on beautification and greening will continue to be a necessity.*

*The St. Catharines/Niagara Census Metropolitan Area ... (is one of the) most popular retirement destinations for Canada's aging baby-boomers.*

was under the age of 65 years. The median age in St. Catharines is 41.7 years, which is higher than the Provincial median of 37.2 years.

The implications of an older age profile translate into a need for more passive parks and trails. However, a balanced parks system comprised of active and passive spaces is required to meet the needs of all users in St. Catharines. We also know that the "new senior" is more physically active than previous generations and will make additional demands on active parkland resources.

### 2.3 Fiscal Context

At present, a significant portion of the City's parks budget is allocated to maintaining the parks system. Municipal budget allocation to park services in St. Catharines is in the range of \$54 per person.

It is anticipated that the Province's performance measurement project will provide a means of determining how this allocation compares to other jurisdictions in the Province. Over the next few months, municipalities across Ontario will be asked to complete a survey that will collect benchmarking data on such aspects as per capita support for recreation and hectares of park space. What is significant about this benchmarking exercise is that a real effort is being made to ensure that the inputs to the financial data will be comparable. When this database is assembled, the City will have a means of measuring how its spending compares to others.

St. Catharines has a Parks Reserve Account that contains funds used for major acquisitions (e.g., arena lands). These funds are obtained primarily through the City's practice of receiving cash-in-lieu of parkland. Looking to the future, this account will not increase substantially unless significant redevelopment and/or infilling occurs in the core. As a result, the Parks Reserve Account is not likely going to be able to support any significant amount of land acquisition.

The *Planning Act* provides St. Catharines with opportunities for maximizing parkland dedication including requiring parkland dedication for commercial and industrial lands, requiring payment for parkland before the issuance of a building permit (at the rate of 2%

*... the Parks Reserve Account is not likely going to be able to support any significant amount of land acquisition.*

of the land area) and calculating parkland dedication for residential development (at a rate of 5% of the land area or 1 hectare per 300 units).

St. Catharines currently does not have a policy of collecting non-discretionary reserve funds for future parks projects. This is a longstanding practice of the municipality and is in place to ensure that taxpayer dollars do not sit in a fund unused.

The City does apply surcharges to user fees in order to offset the cost of parks and recreation projects. For example, arena users will pay a special surcharge to offset the costs of the new four-pad arena.

## 2.4 Social Context

There is ongoing discussion about the benefits that are derived by residents and their communities (e.g., personal, social, economic and environmental) from parks, open space and trails as compared to the cost of providing and maintaining those amenities and services. St. Catharines parks, open space, and trails provide a broad range of leisure opportunities and physical activities for residents and visitors of all ages. This translates into an active healthier population and subsequently lower health costs as well as tourism revenue. A quality parks system is a selling feature for businesses seeking to attract new employees, which translates into a healthy economy. Parks and recreation services provide many benefits to a community and need to be recognized by the decision-makers as an essential service.

*Parks and recreation services provide many benefits to a community and need to be recognized by the decision-makers as an essential service.*

## 2.5 Broader Context: Trends & Best Practices

There are numerous trends influencing the delivery of park services that are evident in St. Catharines. The following provides an overview of the trends, which are more fully addressed through policy recommendations in the Plan.

### 2.5.1 Socio-Demographic & Lifestyle Trends

**Shortage of Time:** Decreasing leisure time has led to a greater interest in activities that can be pursued alone and on a casual basis. This has translated

into a greater interest in outdoor activities that offer numerous opportunities for spontaneous exercise and health benefits. There is also increased interest in the natural environment. A parks and linkage system that promotes walking, cycling and in-line skating is good for people's health as well as the environment.

**Aging Population:** This trend is evident nation-wide. However, although the needs of older traditional seniors, as well as more active older adults and seniors, will need to be addressed, a significant portion of the population also need to be considered (i.e. those under 65 years of age).

**Other Trends:** Income tends to have an impact on people's ability to participate in leisure activities - higher income households tends to participate more often. In many instances, seniors are retiring wealthier than they did in the past resulting in municipalities changing subsidies practises so that they are based on "ability to pay" versus the more traditional "age of participant".

#### 2.5.2 Participation Trends

*A parks and linkage system that promotes walking, cycling and in-line skating is good for people's health as well as the environment... Walking is the number one physical activity for all ages.*

**Barriers to a Physically Active Lifestyle:** locally, lack of time due to work (50%), deadlines (42%), and lack of pleasant places to walk and/or bicycle (28%) are the most common barriers to leisure participation.

**Age Variations:** Although children and youth have tended to be the largest consumers of recreation services and have been the major target of municipal parks and recreation programs and services, adults today are more active than previous generations and the "new senior" is also more active.

**Popular Activities:** Walking is the number one physical activity for all ages. There is also increased interest in unstructured activities that corresponds to a decline in team sports participation. Overall, participation in many sports has been declining (soccer being a key exception) in favour of casual, drop-in, or unstructured leisure opportunities.

**Participation & Facility Trends in Outdoor Sports (organized activities)**

Activity	National/Provincial Trends
soccer	participation leveling off after years of double digit increases; adult & female participation growing; municipalities still playing catch-up with field development
football	resurgence of interest in minor football (tackle); shortage of fields; field condition issues
baseball	declining participation; shortage of tournament quality facilities is an issue; provincial sport organizations, municipalities exploring field conversion
softball	declining participation (see above)
slo-pitch	stable demand at adult level
lacrosse	growing in popularity – short season played on football/soccer
tennis	After years of decline participation numbers are beginning to increase in Ontario; however it ranks far below walking and cycling in terms of popularity
emerging sports	Cricket growing in GTA (multi-culturalism); ultimate frisbee high participation rates in 20 –35 age range (highest participation in major cities); rugby increasing in popularity

**Trends in Unorganized Outdoor Activities**

Activity	National/Provincial Trends
walking running jogging	most popular activity for people of all ages; road races popular; running/jogging also growing in popularity
cycling	one of the most popular outdoor activities in Ontario, Niagara Region has produced many of Canada's leading cyclists
mountain biking/bmx	both popular; extreme sports-bmx facilities being developed in City parks (Mississauga, Toronto);
in-line skating	growing in popularity as a form of recreation and transportation
playgrounds	removal /replacement of playgrounds for safety reasons; development of accessible playgrounds; themed playgrounds
skateboarding	an established sport for youth; most popular with the 10 to 19 age bracket (boys); municipalities across Ontario developing skateboarding facilities

Activity	National/Provincial Trends
spray pads/water features	replacing traditional wading pools; primarily serve the x to x age group; service radius of x for larger facilities;
golf	Following 10 years of growth, Canadian golf statistics for 2002 showed a slight decline; increase in the younger ages; junior programs growing; Golf ranked no. 7 for Ontarions over 20
festivals and special events	growing in popularity in Ontario- Major city parks accommodating more events; park amenities required to service these events: bandshells, water, hydro, washrooms etc.
picnicking	demand for picnic shelters on the increase in Ontario cities; demand for passive park spaces increasing
public gardens/ allotment gardens	visits to public gardens, historic sites anticipated to increase - "Doors Open"; Communities in Bloom movement catching on across Ontario more space is being allocated for allotment gardens in municipal parks; "grow a row"
outdoor basketball/sport court	a "front drive sport "and a park based activity which appeals to youth- sport courts replacing aging tennis courts; year round these courts are used- in the winter for road hockey
outdoor rinks	Toronto has the greatest number of artificial outdoor ice surfaces; London has recently developed its first skating path
boating	Household income strongest determinant in boating; in 2000 12.6% of Ontarions participating in boating; ( 2% sailing, 10.4% motor boating)
fishing	10 <sup>th</sup> most popular activity for adults in Ontario in 2001
off-leash parks/areas	A North American phenomena; 30 off leash areas in Toronto; Mississauga has well developed system

### 2.5.3 Delivery System Trends

**User Fees:** The cost of delivering services is increasing and there is greater competition for the tax dollar. Municipalities have responded by imposing or considering user fees.

**Partnerships:** There is greater reliance on community partners and on community volunteers to deliver services.

**Investing in Infrastructure:** Parks, open spaces, and trails are being recognized for their local and tourism benefit. Across the province, municipalities are wrestling with aging infrastructure, including parks.



#### 2.5.4 Best Practices

The "best practices" in parks planning and development that are applicable to St. Catharines include:

**Parks & Recreation Master Planning:** Municipalities across Ontario are preparing parks and recreation master plans in order to establish core services and identify the community's priorities.

**Doing More with Less:** Staffing levels have typically not kept pace with increasing park and trail inventories and maintenance responsibilities. Naturalization is a trend to reduce grass cutting and pesticide use but is not popular with all residents.

**Park Renewal or Reserve Funds:** These funds are a way of ensuring that there are sufficient resources to maintain and upgrade parks and facilities. This is a practice in place in a number of municipalities in Ontario but is not practised by St. Catharines as the City does not have unused tax dollars in reserve accounts.

**Partners in Parks:** Public/public, public/private and public/not for profit partnerships are recognized as a means of allowing a community to leverage resources. St. Catharines has numerous partnerships, which has allowed the City to reduce its role in service delivery.

**Urban Forest Management:** Drought and disease have taken their toll especially in older areas where trees are at the end of their lifespan. In response, St. Catharines has developed a new tree replacement program. New trees are to be planted to replace the anticipated loss of older street trees.

**Greening - The New Urbanism:** The "new urbanism" movement calls for smaller parks located within walkable distance of neighbourhoods that provide benches, special landscape treatment, pathways, picnic benches, public art and gardens. Smaller parks, however, can place a strain on municipal maintenance budgets and municipalities need to apply some caution in promoting small park development at the risk of not providing sufficient space for organized sports or spontaneous play. Most municipalities are developing larger sports parks to

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reduce maintenance costs. The small urban park, however, may be appropriate in core areas where a lack of greenspace may exist and provide an opportunity for public and quasi-public open space initiatives.

***Environmental Management:*** The use of pesticides, protection of natural areas, and techniques to reduce encroachment on municipally owned lands and parks are issues everywhere. Environmental protection is a high priority in most municipalities and St. Catharines is no exception.

***Parks Promotion/Education:*** Ensuring that the public is aware of parks and recreation resources is an issue that municipalities struggle with. In this regard, promotional and education programs have generally not been the focus of energies. In St. Catharines, residents generally appear to be familiar with their local parks but not with the entire system. Also of note, parks and trails are increasingly being recognized and promoted for their value relative to healthy living.

***Safety & Security:*** New park design principles emphasize safety and security; making the system safe is a priority. The most effective way is to increase usage and “eyes on the park” in some of the City’s more remote parks and trails (working to reduce such issues as graffiti, gang violence).

***Amenities:*** Within parks systems (most notably outdoor sports fields), municipalities are dealing with demands for higher quality amenities such as washrooms, lighting, drinking fountains, better playing surfaces and shade. With newer and more stringent standards, municipalities have also been devoting significant resources to playground upgrading. The trend towards more special events in parks and higher expectations of the public are also leading to a greater demand for amenities such as water, power sources, bandshells, washrooms, bicycle parking and staging areas.

## **SECTION 3 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

### **3.1 The Process**

Community consultation was a key component in preparing this Parks Policy Plan. As such, a consultation program was developed and implemented as part of the research phase. A range of opportunities to participate were available to residents including:

- Household Survey – representing the opinions of 398 households (correct within +/-4.9%, 19 times out of 20);
- Interviews – with a variety of stakeholder groups, City Councillors and Staff as well as community groups;
- Public Workshop – 28 participants representing 27 different organizations; and
- Public Meeting – to review strategic directions and guiding principles.

A number of common themes or threads emerged through the consultation initiatives. These have been considered and integrated, as appropriate, into the Parks Policy Plan.

### **3.2 The Common Threads**

The community has spoken and has indicated that St. Catharines' parks, open space, and trail system is serving them well. While the majority feel that they have enough park space, a shortage of parks and accessibility to park space were identified in certain locations (e.g., the area located south of the QEW - an ongoing issue). The input obtained during the consultation process has been divided into four categories – strengths, weaknesses, constraints and opportunities.

*Community consultation  
was a key component in  
preparing this Parks Policy  
Plan.*

*Overall, the City is meeting the needs for parkland, although there are some gaps in distribution.*

The community noted the following strengths of St. Catharines' Parks System:

- **Maintenance**
- **Floral Gardens**
- **Diversity** of park space that serves all ages.
- **Location** of park space is the most positive attribute of system.
- **Sufficient Green Space City-wide.** With the exception of certain gap areas (e.g. along the waterfront and some trail linkages), parkland acquisition is not a priority.
- **Good System.** The parks and open space system, and the network of city, neighbourhood and district parks and trails are good.
- **Waterfront.** There is a desire to see more money and time directed towards waterfront projects (e.g., beaches, parks acquisition, etc.).
- **Partnerships.** City has strong partners who have contributed to the parks and open space system (service clubs, friends of groups, etc.).

*There is a lack of awareness of the "gems" in the park system.*

The following weaknesses were identified:

- **Facilities** such as washrooms are lacking in parks.
- **Littering/ By-Law Enforcement**
- **Promotion & Education of Parks.** There is a lack of awareness of the "gems" in the parks system.
- **Agreements.** There area a lack of formal joint-use agreements with school boards.
- **Upgrading.** There is a need to upgrade and replace playgrounds; rejuvenate parks.
- **Priority Setting.** There is a perceived lack of a "game plan" for establishing parks and trail priorities.
- **Heritage Resources.** The public generally feels that there is a lack of attention/priority given to heritage resources, especially the canal.
- **Greening.** More emphasis is needed on greening especially in core.

A number of constraints were noted:

- **Lack of Funding** for neighbourhood park improvement.
- **Linkages**. The City needs a comprehensive plan to improve them and identify priority improvements.
- **Spending**. There is a need to establish priorities for spending within parks and open space system.
- **Acquisition**. There are limited opportunities for parks acquisition. Priorities should include greening, passive parks and waterfront acquisition.
- **Lack of Promotion & Education**. There is a need to identify and promote the City's efforts on naturalization.

Opportunities include:

- **Hydro Lands** represent an opportunity for enhanced linkages.
- **Promotion of Heritage Resources** (especially the canal).
- **Partnerships**. The City has a number of partners who are actively working towards improvement. Need to establish agreed-upon priorities.
- **Greening**. Encourage opportunities for "greening" the City through beautification (especially in the core), naturalization and urban forest management.
- **Canal Lands**. Is there potential for federal partnership (e.g., designated national heritage site/ national park)? Possible economic/tourism opportunity.
- **Rail Lines** represent an easy opportunity to expand the City's trail system.
- **Parks Promotion**. People in St. Catharines need to be made aware of the City's great park assets. Provide better signage, more days in the park, cycling tours, newspaper articles on the City's unique parks.
- **Linkage System**. Improve trail linkages and fill gaps. May be a strategic way to addressing park deficiencies by providing better access to other community park facilities in St. Catharines and in other municipalities.
- **Community Involvement**. The community should be encouraged to become involved (volunteer) and take ownership of the parks system.

## **SECTION 4      STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

### **4.1      Guiding Principles & Strategic Directions**

*The strategic directions and guiding principles ... serve as a guide for future decision-making for St. Catharines' parks, open space and trails system.*

The strategic directions and guiding principles (Table 4-1) are a culmination of the input provided by the community, Councillors and staff through the consultation process and the overall analysis that has been undertaken in developing the Plan. These statements represent the most pressing parks, open space, and trails needs and desires for St. Catharines. The strategic directions provide the focus for the Plan's recommendations and serve as a guide for future decision-making for St. Catharines' parks, open space and trails system.

The opinions and needs that were expressed through the consultation process helped to shape the Plan's strategic directions. These were presented to the community at a public meeting (May 2004) and were strongly supported by the majority of those who were in attendance. Baseball representatives expressed some concern regarding the proposed elimination and redevelopment of some ball diamonds.

**Table 4-1: Parks Policy Plan Guiding Principles & Strategic Directions**

<b>Guiding Principles</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To provide an equitable and accessible distribution of parks, open space and trails.</li> <li>▪ To provide a diverse range of park spaces, opportunities and activities that are safe and meet the needs of users.</li> <li>▪ To preserve, protect and enhance unique natural features and heritage resources through the application of effective stewardship practices.</li> <li>▪ To develop and enhance partnerships to maximize community benefit.</li> <li>▪ To provide the infrastructure and management tools to delivery services in an effective and efficient manner.</li> </ul>

## **SECTION 5      PARKS & OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT**

### **5.1      Overview**

St. Catharines' parks classification and service standards are "made in St. Catharines". While the classification categories are fairly consistent with those found in other jurisdictions (e.g., neighbourhood, district and regional), the service standards and those recommended in this Parks Policy Plan (e.g., special urban park and linear park) reflect the historic levels of park space, expressed community priorities, and the anticipated form of future development.

In 1995, a detailed assessment of the St. Catharines' inventory of parks and facilities was undertaken. This inventory has been updated by the City and provides the basis for this current parks and open space assessment. St. Catharines parkland system has been analyzed on a city-wide basis as well as on a district-by-district basis.

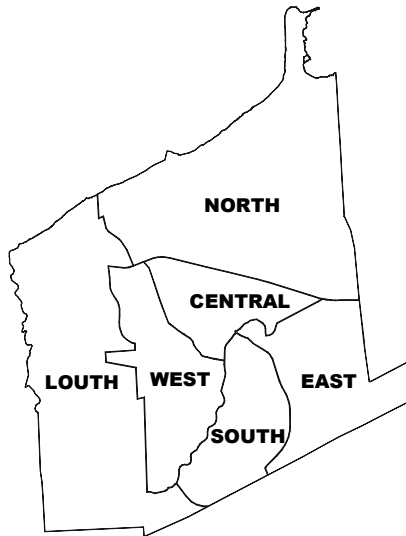
### **5.2      Parkland Supply**

#### **5.2.1    Existing Municipal Parks**

St. Catharines has more than 365 hectares (900 acres) of municipally owned parkland and open space. This number increases to over 400 hectares (988 acres) when other publicly accessible lands (which are not subject to service agreements) are considered.

Table 5-1 provides a summary of the City's current (2004) inventory of parks based on the Planning Districts utilized by the City's Planning Department. This inventory includes some park spaces that are owned by other agencies, but which are the subject of service agreements with the City. These spaces include Charles Ansell Park Municipal Beach (owned by the Seaway Authority), Grantham Lions Park, and the newly reclaimed Glenridge Quarry (owned by the Region). Should changes to the role of mandate of any of these organizations/agencies change in a manner that affects the availability of these areas for public use, the City may need to initiate discussions regarding possible acquisitions. and Per capita provision levels are shown later in the report in Table 5-4.

*St. Catharines' parks classification and service standards are "made in St. Catharines".*



*Due to historic supply, opportunities and geography, there are considerable variations in the amount of parkland in St. Catharines.*

**Table 5-1: Parkland Inventory (2003)**

Classification	Hectares of Parkland by District					
	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST	CENTRAL	TOTAL
City-Wide/Regional *	52.28***	56.43	46.13	22.67	8.46	<b>185.97</b>
District**	26.71	13.90	7.11	10.82	5.74	<b>64.28</b>
Neighbourhood	75.13	26.07	4.52	12.34	6.16	<b>124.22</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>154.12</b>	<b>96.4</b>	<b>57.76</b>	<b>90.63</b>	<b>20.36</b>	<b>419.27</b>
<b>TOTAL (excluding service agreements)</b>	<b>146.33</b>	<b>96.4</b>	<b>57.76</b>	<b>45.83</b>	<b>20.36</b>	<b>366.68</b>

\* Includes the following City-wide parks which are not City-owned but which are subject to Service Agreements: Charles Ansell (1.20 ha.), Municipal Beach (4.17ha.), Glenridge Quarry (44.80 ha.) and Grantham Lions Park (2.4.2 ha.)..

\*\* North District City-Wide Parks does not include Henley Island (14.82 ha available for public use when there is no conflict with rowing events).

It is noted that non-city land - Lakeside Park (3.64 hectares) and Pierson Park (12.8 hectares) are not included.

Since 1995, the City has added new regional parkland (e.g., Glenridge Quarry). New park spaces have also been added in the west-end and parks that had been identified as future opportunities (e.g., Joe McCaffrey Park) have been developed.

Due to historic supply, opportunities and geography, there are considerable variations in the amount of parkland in St. Catharines. For example, the core area has the lowest levels of parkland. Also, many areas that were identified as being deficient in park space in 1995 continue to be deficient of park space.

From a fiscal and land availability perspective, there are few opportunities to add significant amounts of open space to the existing supply of parkland due to a shortage of available land and the high cost of land. As such, one of the objectives of this Parks Policy Plan is to identify opportunities to enhance the supply (See Section 6.2).



5.2.2 Existing Schools

The City’s 1995 Parkland Assessment integrated school "parkland" into the analysis. In recent years, however, St. Catharines has witnessed the sale of a number of school properties (e.g., Scottdale School – North District) and a number are listed for sale (e.g., Lakebreeze and Maplewood, both in the North District) which may be attributed to declining enrolments in certain neighbourhoods and consolidation of schools.

There are more than 72 hectares (178 acres) of school-based open space that enhance St. Catharines’ communities. School grounds serve as a neighbourhood-level resource. However, the available facilities (largely playgrounds and playfields) do not appeal to all age groups and leisure pursuits. Furthermore, community access to school facilities is limited due to extended school usage and issues related to liability, maintenance, and costs. While a valued resource, the market value of school sites has been such that the City has not been able to acquire them all (purchased Maplecrest in the East District) as they have come on the market.

Table 5-2 indicates the current supply of school parkland on a City-wide and district basis, excluding the school sites that have been sold or have been listed for sale.

**Table 5-2: Existing Supply of School Parkland (2003)**

	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>WEST</b>	<b>CENTRAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Elementary School (hectares)*	23.48	8.41	5.85	3.78	7.21	<b>48.73</b>
Elementary School (hectares per 1000)	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.2	0.4	<b>2.2</b>
High School (hectares)	10.92	3.10	5.32	2.80	1.50	<b>23.64</b>
High School (hectares per 1000)	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.1	0.1	<b>1.1</b>
<b>TOTAL (hectares)</b>	<b>34.4</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>8.71</b>	<b>72.37</b>
<b>TOTAL (hectares per 1000)</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.54</b>

\* Schools that have been sold or are currently on the market have not been included in the inventory. This includes Schottdale, Lakebreeze, Old Power Glen School, Maplewood and Victoria. Consolidated is temporarily open to students but the future of the school has not yet been determined.

Source: City of St. Catharines and Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, 2004

School parkland has not been included in the overall supply because the City cannot depend on school space to always be available. When the City's supply of school parkland is considered, the City's supply of parkland is approaching 4 hectares per 1,000 population which is a reasonable level of open space provision.

### **5.3 Parkland Classification System**

St. Catharines' existing parkland classification system has been in place for over 20 years and is generally consistent with those found in other jurisdictions. The following provides an assessment of the system. The discussion is presented according to key topic area.

#### **5.3.1 Park Categories**

##### **a) *Existing Park Categories***

The City's Official Plan establishes three categories of parks:

- Neighbourhood Parks and Playgrounds;
- District Parks and Playing Fields; and
- City-wide Parks and Regional Open Spaces.

Table 5-3 contains a summary of the key attributes of each park category in the classification system.

**Table 5-3: Existing Parkland Classification System**

	<b>Neighbourhood Parks and Playgrounds</b>	<b>District Parks and Playfields</b>	<b>City-Wide Parks and Regional Open Spaces</b>
<b>Service Radius</b>	400 metres or 5 minutes walking distance	1.6 km or 20 minutes walking distance	accessible to entire community
<b>Service Standard</b>	1 ha/1000 population (0.8 ha/1000 active plus 0.2 ha/1000 passive)	0.5 ha/1000 population	4.5 ha/1000 population
<b>Size</b>	maximum 3 ha per site	4 to 8 ha	may vary depending on facilities
<b>Location</b>	central, within safe and convenient walking distance of majority of neighbourhood residents, extensive street frontage for visibility and safety, co-ordinate with elementary school sites	central to service population, accessible by public transit, automobile and bicycle, frontage on major traffic route, co-ordinated with secondary school sites	widely distributed, areas of unique character/significance, accessible by transit, automobile, secondary access by pedestrian and bicycle paths
<b>Facilities / Activities</b>	backstop for children's ball, junior-sized soccer field/playfield, playground equipment, paved areas for informal games/ basketball, shaded areas for passive recreation, parking areas if appropriate	regulation-sized soccer fields, softball and baseball diamonds, football fields, tracks, swimming pools, arenas, community centres, parking facilities, etc.	multi-purpose or specialized - golf courses, museums, art galleries, bicycle trails, major sports facilities, etc.
<b>Topography</b>	flat, well-drained, up to 20% contour variations	reasonably flat, peripheral contour variations, landscaping	take advantage of prominent land forms and natural environment features

b) *New Park Categories*

As St. Catharines evolves into a more urban community that features new higher density and infill development, changes to the classification system should be considered. These changes reflect the physical realities of a community that has a shortage of developable land and therefore, limited opportunities for new park development. There is also a need to recognize the City's trail system as a key component of St. Catharines' parks and open space system.

*Two new classifications  
are proposed:*

*(1) Linear Park*

*(2) Special Urban Park*

Two new classifications are proposed:

1. Linear Park: to reflect the importance of trails and linkages in the community. The creation of the Linear Park category addresses the public's strong desire for not only more walking and cycling trails, but also for linkages to tie neighbourhoods and facilities together through a comprehensive trail system. The level of development of linear parks can range from minimal to extensive, and may include trailhead (e.g., parking and amenity) areas. If parking is provided, associated amenities may include restrooms or pavilion areas. The Linear Park category could be applied to Walker's Creek Park, the area along Twelve Mile Creek and the Welland Canal Parkway.
2. Special Urban Park: To permit the development of smaller parks in urban areas. St. Catharines has been promoting "Smart Growth", a planning approach which emphasizes redevelopment, intensification and infill. The addition of a "Special Urban Park" category will permit the development of smaller parks suitable for highly urbanized areas such as the core. This category will also allow for the acquisition and development of smaller park sites within under-served areas where the acquisition of larger parks is not possible. Other possible names for this new category could include Parkette, Urban Park/ Plaza/ Square, etc.

5.3.2 Service Standards

a) *Existing Service Standards*

The use of service standards for the allocation of parkland is a practice used by most municipalities. However, they should be viewed as guidelines that provide a useful starting point in analyzing park system needs.

Based on the City's existing park service standards on a City-wide basis for Neighbourhood Parks (1 hectare per 1000 population) and District Parks (0.5 hectares per 1000 population), the standards are being met. Due to the limited population growth that is projected, the City will be able to maintain these standards on a City-wide basis even into the future without the addition of significant amounts of park space. No changes to the neighbourhood and district level park service standards are recommended.

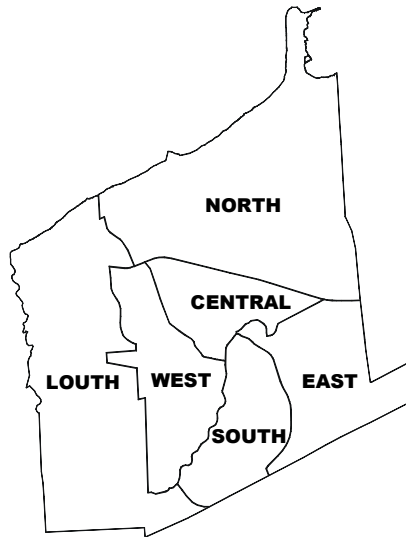
The existing City-Wide/Regional Parks service standard of 4.5 hectares per 1000 population is not being achieved through municipal ownership. Based on the existing municipal supply of City-wide and Regional Park space, a service standard of 1.7 hectares per 1000 population is being provided.

If the Seaway, Escarpment lands, and Twelve Mile Creek corridor lands (totalling more than 300 hectares) were to be considered part of the inventory, the existing supply would meet the current City-wide and Regional Park standard of 4.5 hectares per 1000 population. However, the reality is that these lands are not entirely within the jurisdiction of the City (may not be readily accessible for public use) and, therefore, cannot be considered to be developed or designated parkland.

As indicated in Table 5-4, St. Catharines is currently providing a service level of 3 hectares of parkland per 1000 population City-wide. There are however considerable variations within each district, with the Central and West Districts having the least amount of park space per capita. Historic shortfalls will be difficult to address but strategies are needed that will allow the City to maximize potential parkland dedication opportunities.

*St. Catharines is currently providing a service level of 3 hectares of parkland per 1000 population City-wide.*

*No changes to the neighbourhood and district level park service standards are recommended.*



**Table 5-4: Existing (2003) Municipal Parkland Service Levels (hectares per 1000 population)**

	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>WEST</b>	<b>CENTRAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>POPULATION (2001)</b>	<b>65,527</b>	<b>18,658</b>	<b>9,299</b>	<b>20,103</b>	<b>20,582</b>	<b>134,169</b>
District	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.5	0.3	<b>0.5</b>
Neighbourhood	1.1	1.4	0.5	0.6	0.3	<b>0.9</b>
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.4</b>
City-Wide & Regional Open Space	0.8	3.0	5.0	3.3	0.4	<b>1.7</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>

Source: City of St. Catharines and Monteith Brown Planning Consultants & City of St. Catharines, 2004

b) *Proposed Service Standards*

The City is close to meeting the existing park service standards for Neighbourhood Parks (1 hectare per 1000 population) and District Parks (0.5 hectare per 1000 population) on a City-wide basis. These standards should be maintained.

St. Catharines' standard of Regional and City-wide park space is effectively 1.7 hectares per 1000 population. The existing service standard is 4.5 hectares per 1000 persons, which is a difference of almost 3 hectares (an amount that corresponds to lands held by the Seaway Authority, escarpment lands and the Twelve Mile Creek corridor). To better reflect the existing supply, a standard of 1.5 hectares per 1000 population for City-wide and Regional parkland is recommended.

Looking to the future, the City should work with the Seaway Authority, Region of Niagara, Ontario Power Generation, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Ministry of Natural Resources, and other government agencies to ensure that areas of unique natural and cultural significance within St. Catharines are preserved. The Seaway lands and the Twelve Mile Creek corridor contain significant opportunities for trail development and the City may be able to

*To better reflect the existing supply, a standard of 1.5 hectares per 1000 population for City-wide and Regional parkland is recommended.*

increase public access through service agreements such as those currently in place relative to parks such as Charles Ansell and Municipal Beach. When the overall parks and open space provision level is compared (both municipally owned and those owned/operated by other agencies) to the levels achieved in some other communities, St. Catharines is within a reasonable standard (although tending toward the lower end of this range). However, given the City's image as the "Garden City", a balanced approach is recommended in terms of quantity and quality with emphasis being placed on increasing the quality of existing parks and open space areas due to the limited opportunities and high land costs associated with the purchase of significant additional lands. Where opportunities become available to increase parks and open space provision, such opportunities should be focused strategically in currently deficit and gap areas and where linkages are missing.

Tables 5-5, 5-6, and 5-7 show the theoretical parkland deficiencies and surpluses that exist if the City were to apply the proposed parkland service standards on an area by area basis to the year 2026. It is important to remember that there are considerable variations in supply on a district-by-district basis. Considering the supply of district and neighbourhood park space, standards suggest that the Central, South and West districts have deficiencies, with the Central district having the most severe shortage. Relying on private and semi-private open space opportunities could also be pursued.

Regional parkland and City-wide park space has also been assessed on an district-by-district basis. Reflecting the specialized nature of this type of parkland, there is considerable variation but this is expected given that City-wide and Regional parks are specialized parks and occur on an opportunity basis. The presence of a City-wide park (depending upon its facilities, especially the existence of play equipment) can serve to functionally reduce deficiencies in Neighbourhood and District parkland.

*The presence of a City-wide park (depending upon its facilities, especially the existence of play equipment) can serve to functionally reduce deficiencies in Neighbourhood and District parkland.*

**Table 5-5a: District and Neighbourhood Parkland Surpluses & Deficiencies - 2003 (hectares)**

	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>WEST</b>	<b>CENTRAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
District	-6.0	4.6	2.5	0.8	-4.6	<b>-2.8</b>
Neighbourhood	9.6	7.4	-4.8	-7.8	-14.4	<b>-9.9</b>
<b>TOTAL</b> (neighbourhood and district)	<b>3.6</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>-2.3</b>	<b>-7.0</b>	<b>-19.0</b>	<b>-12.7</b>

Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants &amp; City of St. Catharines, 2004

**Table 5-5b: City-wide & Regional Open Space Surpluses & Deficiencies - 2003 (hectares)**

	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>WEST</b>	<b>CENTRAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
City-Wide & Regional Open Space	-45.9	+28.45	+32.2	37.3	-22.4	<b>30</b>

Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants &amp; City of St. Catharines, 2004

**Table 5-6a: District and Neighbourhood Parkland Surpluses & Deficiencies - 2011 (hectares)**

	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>WEST</b>	<b>CENTRAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
District	-5.6	4.6	2.9	-0.7	-4.3	<b>-5.5</b>
Neighbourhood	10.5	7.6	-3.9	-10.6	-14.0	<b>-10.4</b>
<b>TOTAL</b> (neighbourhood and district)	<b>4.9</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>-1.0</b>	<b>-11.3</b>	<b>-18.3</b>	<b>-15.9</b>

Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants &amp; City of St. Catharines, 2004

**Table 5-6b: City-wide & Regional Open Sapce Surpluses & Deficiencies - 2011 (hectares)**

	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>WEST</b>	<b>CENTRAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
City-Wide & Regional Open Space	-44.7	28.7	33.5	33.0	-21.8	<b>28.8</b>

Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants &amp; City of St. Catharines, 2004



**Table 5-7a: District and Neighbourhood Parkland Surpluses & Deficiencies - 2026** (hectares)

	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST	CENTRAL	TOTAL
District	-4.9	4.5	2.9	-1.5	-5.0	<b>-4.0</b>
Neighbourhood	11.9	7.3	-3.9	-12.3	-15.4	<b>-12.4</b>
<b>TOTAL</b> (neighbourhood and district)	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>-1.1</b>	<b>-13.8</b>	<b>-20.4</b>	<b>-16.7</b>

Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants & City of St. Catharines, 2004

**Table 5-7b: City-wide & Regional Open Space Surpluses & Deficiencies - 2026** (hectares)

	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST	CENTRAL	TOTAL
City-Wide & Regional Open Space	-42.6	28.3	33.4	30.8	-23.8	<b>25.8</b>

Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants & City of St. Catharines, 2004

St. Catharines' population growth will be modest, which means that the City's future requirements for parkland will not be much greater than they are today. Tables 5-8 summarizes parkland service levels (based on the current supply of parkland) for 2026. The City should strive to maintain the existing overall parkland service level of 3 hectares per 1000 population, at the same time recognizing that the standards will be difficult to achieve on a district-by-district basis without priority being given to acquisition in deficit/gap areas.

*St. Catharines' population growth will be modest, which means that the City's future requirements for parkland will not be much greater than they are today.*

*The City should strive to maintain the existing overall parkland service level of 3 hectares per 1000 population, at the same time recognizing that the standards cannot be fully achieved on a district-by-district basis.*

*An adjustment to the neighbourhood park service radius from 400 to 800 metres without the need to cross an arterial road or major physical barrier is recommended.*

**Table 5-8: Future 2026 Municipal Parkland Service Levels (hectares per 1,000 population)**

	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>WEST</b>	<b>CENTRAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>POPULATION (2026)</b>	<b>63,272</b>	<b>18,737</b>	<b>8,464</b>	<b>24,617</b>	<b>21,534</b>	<b>136,624</b>
District	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.4	0.3	<b>0.5</b>
Neighbourhood	1.2	1.4	0.5	0.5	0.3	<b>0.9</b>
SUB-TOTAL	1.6	2.1	1.4	0.9	0.6	<b>1.4</b>
City-Wide & Regional Open Space	0.8	0.3	5	2.7	0.4	<b>1.7</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>

Source: Monteith Brown Planning Consultants & City of St. Catharines, 2004

### 5.3.3 Service Radii

#### a) *Existing Service Radii*

A service radius of 400 metres for neighbourhood parks is a component of the City's current service standard for neighbourhood parks. While many areas in St. Catharines meet this standard, there are a number of areas that are completely developed that do not meet this standard. However, in reviewing the existing standard in light of public input, trends and benchmarking, the current service radius standard is excessive and needs to be reconsidered.

#### b) *Future Service Radii*

An adjustment to the neighbourhood park service radius from 400 to 800 metres without the need to cross an arterial road or major physical barrier is recommended. The 800-metre radius is a benchmark that is comparable to that used in other urban municipalities, notably London and Mississauga. The application of a more realistic service radius will allow the City to focus its attention on areas where there is genuine need and will continue to meet community needs while responding to the need for fiscal responsibility. It is also noted that school playgrounds are not included in this service radius which can effectively provides additional open space opportunities within the service radius.

Maps 5-1 to 5-5 illustrate the City's distribution of neighbourhood park spaces and playgrounds based on the recommended service radius of 800-metres (the equivalent of a 10 minute walk) uninterrupted by major roadways or other physical barriers in areas of urban settlement.

Parkland distribution is addressed more fully in Section 5.4, which assesses parkland requirements based on the revised service radii of 800-metres.

#### 5.3.4 Neighbourhood Parkland Ratios – Active vs. Passive

##### a) *Existing Neighbourhood Parkland Ratios*

The existing service standard for Neighbourhood Parks establishes a ratio of 0.8 hectares of active park space per 1000 population and 0.2 hectares of passive space per 1000 population. The City is currently providing a fairly equitable distribution of active and passive park space (48.1% active and 51.9% passive for Neighbourhood Parks). With the trends data showing a demand for more passive space, public consultation supporting a balanced approach and the current ratio, it is recommended that the current standard be revised to better reflect need/demand for a balance of active and passive parkland.

##### b) *Future Neighbourhood Parkland Ratios*

The existing requirement for 0.8 hectares of active and 0.2 hectares of passive neighbourhood parkland should be deleted. The City should instead, strive for a balance of active and passive park spaces. In the future, as St. Catharines' population ages, it is anticipated that the City will need to place greater emphasis on its passive park spaces.

The change is justified for a number of reasons. First, the City's ability to increase the supply of parkland is limited. Establishing such fixed ratios inevitably highlights deficiencies that the City has limited opportunities to address. While the need for increased playing fields (particularly soccer) was identified, the age profile indicates that this a "peak" need. Longer term the City's age profile also suggests that the City will need fewer playing fields and more

amenities to serve an aging population. Chief among those elements are pathways. One of the identified park trends that have been noted in other municipalities is greater attention to passive park spaces.

#### 5.3.4 Summary of Proposed Modifications to the Parkland Classification system

Table 5-10 summarizes all of the proposed changes to St. Catharines' Parkland Classification System. The proposed modifications include:

- The introduction of two new parkland categories, "special urban park" and "linear park". The City's inventory of trails and parks should be reviewed and areas identified for reclassification to linear park.
- Adjusting the "municipal parkland service standard for Regional and City-wide Parkland to reflect the amount of parkland that the City has historically been able to provide (i.e. lands owned by the City). However, continuing to work with other agencies to strive for an overall provision level in the range of 4.5 hectares per 1,000 population.
- Changing the service radius from 1:400 metres for neighbourhood parks to 1:800 metres without crossing an arterial road or major physical barrier, a change that reflects the overall satisfaction with parkland distribution in St. Catharines.
- Eliminating the current fixed ratio for active and passive parkland (0.8 hectares of active, 0.2 hectares of passive) in favour of a policy which strives for a balanced supply, a change which reflects the public's desire for more passive elements.

**Table 5-10: Proposed Modifications to St. Catharines' Parkland Classification System**

Criteria	Special Urban Parks	Neighbourhood Parks & Playgrounds	District Parks & Playfields	City-Wide Parks & Regional Open Spaces	Linear Park
<b>Service Radius</b>	800 metres uninterrupted by major thoroughfares and/or other major physical barriers		No Change (1.6 km or 20 minutes walking distance)	Not Applicable - these parks are special areas; unique function, (e.g., includes the City 's golf courses & beaches).	within 1 kilometre of any location in City; provides public access to trail oriented facilities and connects community facilities
<b>Service Standards</b>	1 ha/1000 population and a balance of active and passive park spaces (ratio of active and passive has been removed)		No Change (0.5 ha/1000 population)	(1.5 ha/1000 population)	Sufficient size and width to accommodate trail-related activities and green space
<b>Size</b>	maximum of 0.6 ha	No Change (maximum 3 ha per site)	No Change (4 to 8 ha )	varies depending on facilities	minimum width of 15 metres
<b>Location</b>	In densely populated urban neighbourhoods, provided as an alternative to a neighbourhood park, within safe & convenient walking distance of majority of residents, linked to trail system	No Change (central, within safe and convenient walking distance of majority of neighbourhood residents, extensive street frontage for visibility and safety, co-ordinated with elementary school sites)	No Change (central to population, accessible by public transit, automobile and bicycle, frontage on major traffic route, co-ordinated with secondary school sites)	No Change (widely distributed, areas of unique character/ significance, accessible by transit, automobile, secondary access by pedestrian and bicycle paths)	On an Opportunity Basis – determined by linkage need & public accessibility

continued...

Table 5-10: Proposed Modifications to St. Catharines' Parkland Classification System (...continued)

Criteria	Special Urban Parks	Neighbourhood Parks & Playgrounds	District Parks & Playfields	City-Wide Parks & Regional Open Spaces	Linear Park
<b>Facilities / Activities</b>	urban plaza, informal play area, small playground, seating areas, shaded passive areas, gardens, street parking, scenic views, bike racks	Combines passive & active elements; amenities may include paths, benches, playgrounds for casual play, tennis courts, and opportunities for unstructured field sports, horticultural plantings maintained by residents	regulation-sized playing fields (lit & unlit), swimming pools, arenas, community centres, parking facilities, spray pads, small scale skateboarding, medium-large playgrounds, passive space, trails, picnic pavilion, horticultural planting maintained by residents	Add horticultural plantings, passive space, picnic areas and pavilion  (multi-purpose or specialized - golf courses, museums, art galleries, trails, major sports facilities, etc.)	Multi-purpose paved trails, multiple access points from adjacent communities, benches, play areas, soft surface trails, water access, picnic facilities and natural areas.
<b>Topography</b>	--	flat, well-drained, up to 20% contour variations	reasonably flat, peripheral contour variations, landscaping	take advantage of prominent land forms and natural environment features	design sensitive to natural heritage features, offer scenic beauty

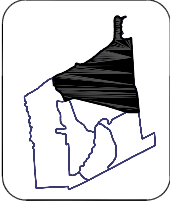
*The acquisition of parkland did not emerge as a high priority through the community consultation process.*

#### 5.4 Parkland Distribution and Future Parkland Requirements

The acquisition of parkland did not emerge as a high priority through the community consultation process. Residents consider their park system to be “above average” and the overall supply of municipal parkland (3 hectares per 1000) is a good one compared to many municipalities. There are, however, areas within the City where gaps in parkland distribution exist; there are considerable differences in the supply of parkland on a district-by-district basis. Although the Official Plan (Schedule D) currently identifies park deficient areas, the following is an independent assessment of gaps based on the revised service radius of 1:800 metres for neighbourhood parks (refer to Maps 5-1 to 5-5) while also recognizing major barriers as part of the analysis.

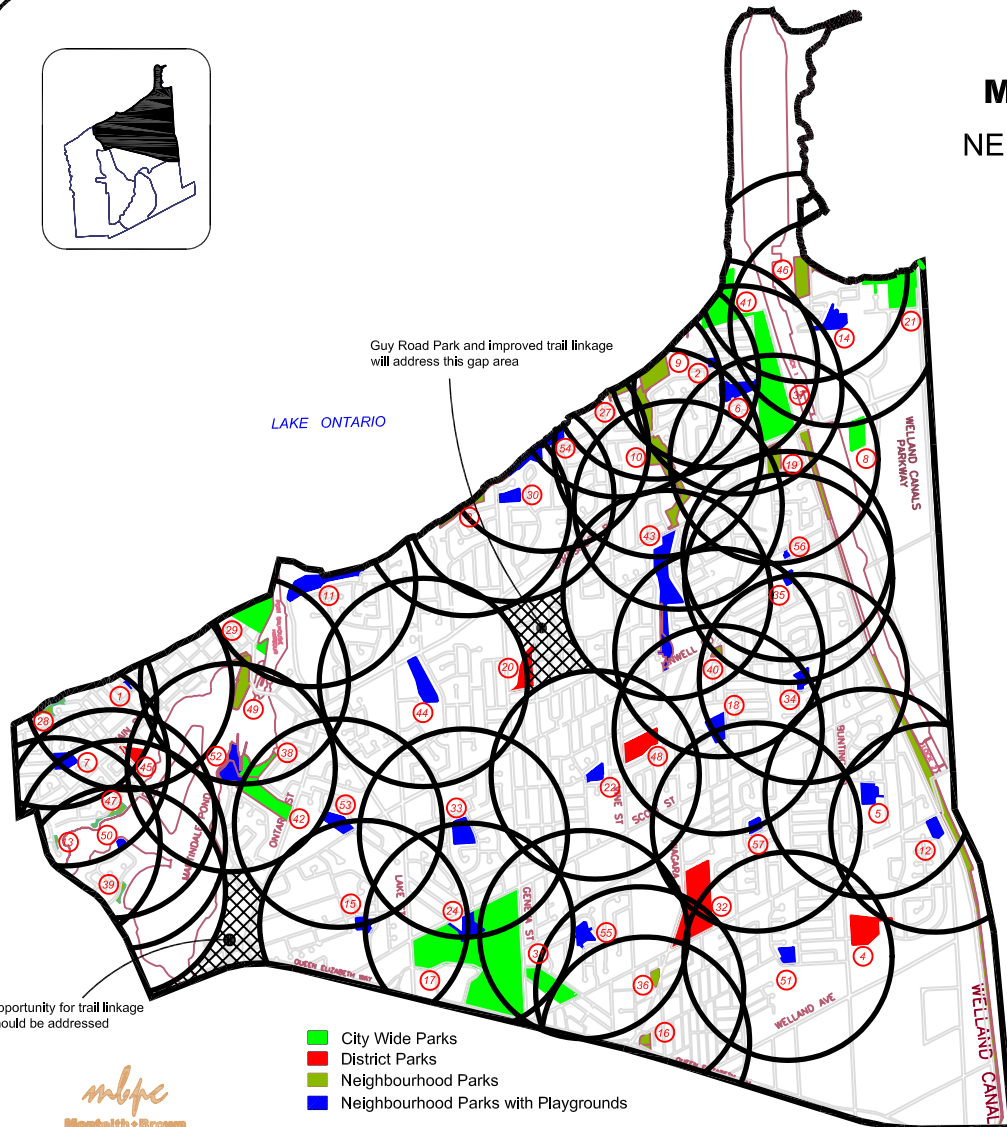
# MAP 5-1 - NORTH DISTRICT

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK SERVICE AREAS AND PLAYGROUNDS



Guy Road Park and improved trail linkage will address this gap area

LAKE ONTARIO



Opportunity for trail linkage should be addressed

- City Wide Parks
- District Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks with Playgrounds

### LEGEND

- Planning District Boundary
- Roads
- Neighbourhood Park Playground Service Radii (800m)
- Neighbourhood Service Gaps
- Watercourse
- Parks

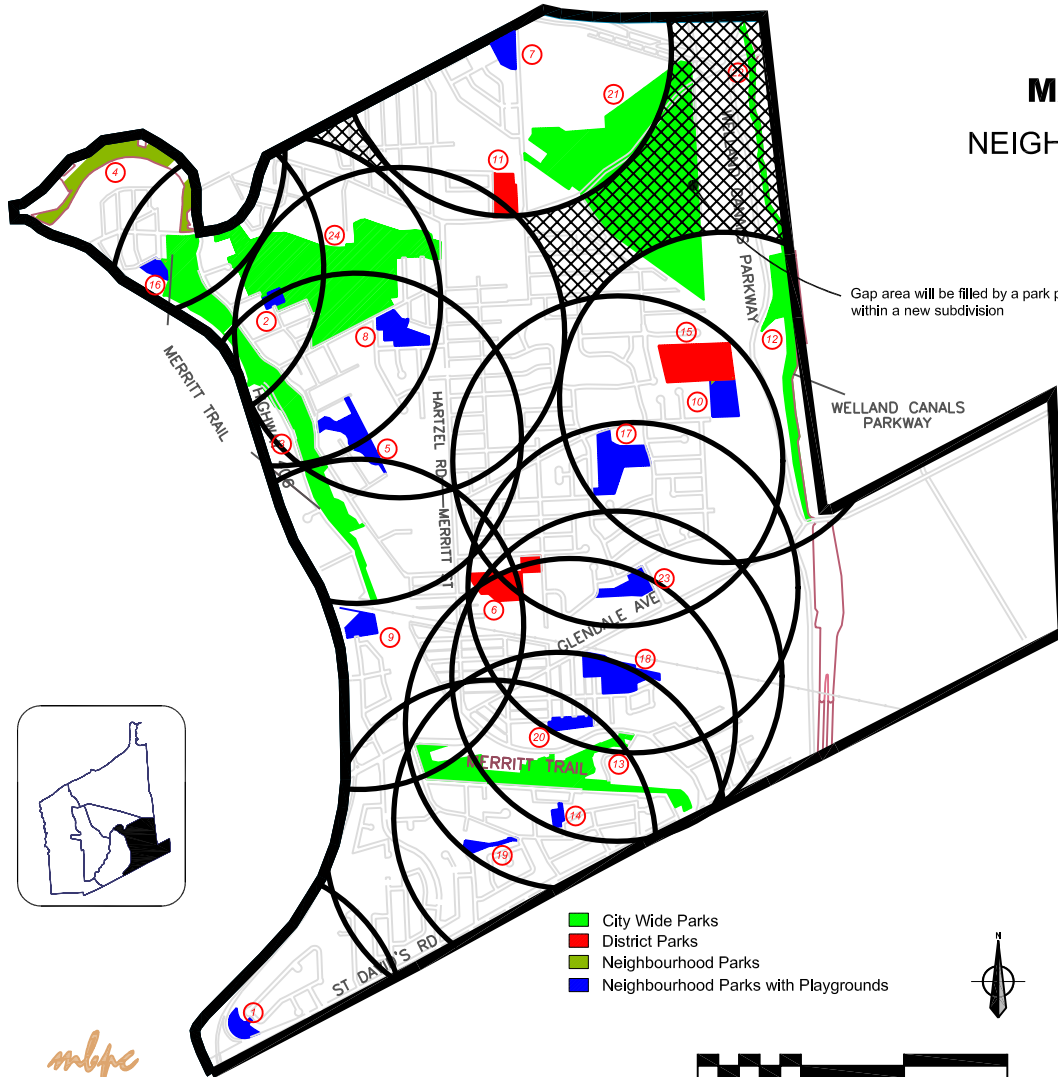
- |                            |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 - Abbey Mews             | 31 - Lancaster Park             |
| 2 - Arthur Street Park     | 32 - Lester B. Pearson Park     |
| 3 - Belmont Park           | 33 - Linlake Park               |
| 4 - Berkley Park           | 34 - Lockview Park              |
| 5 - Bermuda Park           | 35 - Louis Park                 |
| 6 - Bogart Street Park     | 36 - <i>Madame Currie Park</i>  |
| 7 - Cambria Drive Park     | 37 - Malcomson Park             |
| 8 - Charles Ansell Park    | 38 - Martindale Park            |
| 9 - Cherie Road Park       | 39 - Martindale Pond Lookout    |
| 10 - Cindy Drive Park      | 40 - Monarch Park               |
| 11 - Westcliff Park        | 41 - Municipal Beach Park       |
| 12 - Cushman Road Park     | 42 - Jaycee Park                |
| 13 - Dalemere Estates Park | 43 - Walker's Creek             |
| 14 - Eastport Park         | 44 - Orchard Creek Park         |
| 15 - Elma Street Park      | 45 - Port Dalhousie Lions Park  |
| 16 - Facer Street Park     | 46 - Port Weller East Park      |
| 17 - Fairview Golf         | 47 - Portmaster Park            |
| 18 - Grantham Avenue Park  | 48 - Realty Park                |
| 19 - Grantham Lion's Park  | 49 - Rennie Park                |
| 20 - Guy Road Park         | 50 - Richardson's Creek Lookout |
| 21 - Happy Rolf's Park     | 51 - Roehampton Park            |
| 22 - Harcove Park          | 52 - Royal Henley Park          |
| *23 - <i>Henley Island</i> | 53 - Sheridan Park              |
| 24 - John Page Park        | 54 - Spring Garden Park         |
| 25 - Johnson Park          | 55 - St. Alfred's Park          |
| *26 - <i>Jones Beach</i>   | 56 - Tecumseh Park              |
| 27 - Lakebreeze Park       | 57 - Village Gate Park          |
| 28 - Lakefront Park        |                                 |
| 29 - Lakeside Park         |                                 |
| 30 - Lakeview Park         |                                 |

\* - not identified on map



**MAP 5-2 - EAST DISTRICT**

NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK SERVICE  
AREAS AND PLAYGROUNDS



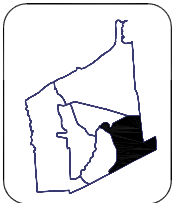
Gap area will be filled by a park proposed within a new subdivision

**LEGEND**

- Planning District Boundary
- Roads
- Neighbourhood Park Playground Service Radii (800m)
- Neighbourhood Service Gaps
- Watercourse
- Parks

- City Wide Parks
- District Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks with Playgrounds

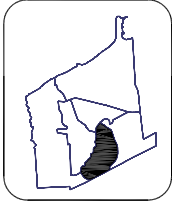
- |                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 - Barbian Heights Park  | 13 - Mountain Locks         |
| 2 - Barley Drive Park     | 14 - Neelon Park            |
| 3 - Canal Valley          | 15 - Pic Leeson Park        |
| 4 - Centennial Gardens    | 16 - Princess Park          |
| 5 - Clifford's Creek Park | 17 - Secord Woods Park      |
| 6 - Community Park        | 18 - Trapper Leo Park       |
| 7 - Douglas Park          | 19 - Treeview Park          |
| 8 - Eastmount Park        | 20 - Valleyview Park        |
| 9 - Glen Gary Park        | 21 - Victoria Lawn Cemetery |
| 10 - John Dempsey Park    | 22 - Welland Canals Parkway |
| 11 - Kernahan Park        | 23 - Wembley Drive Park     |
| 12 - Lock 3 Museum        | 24 - Municipal Golf Course  |



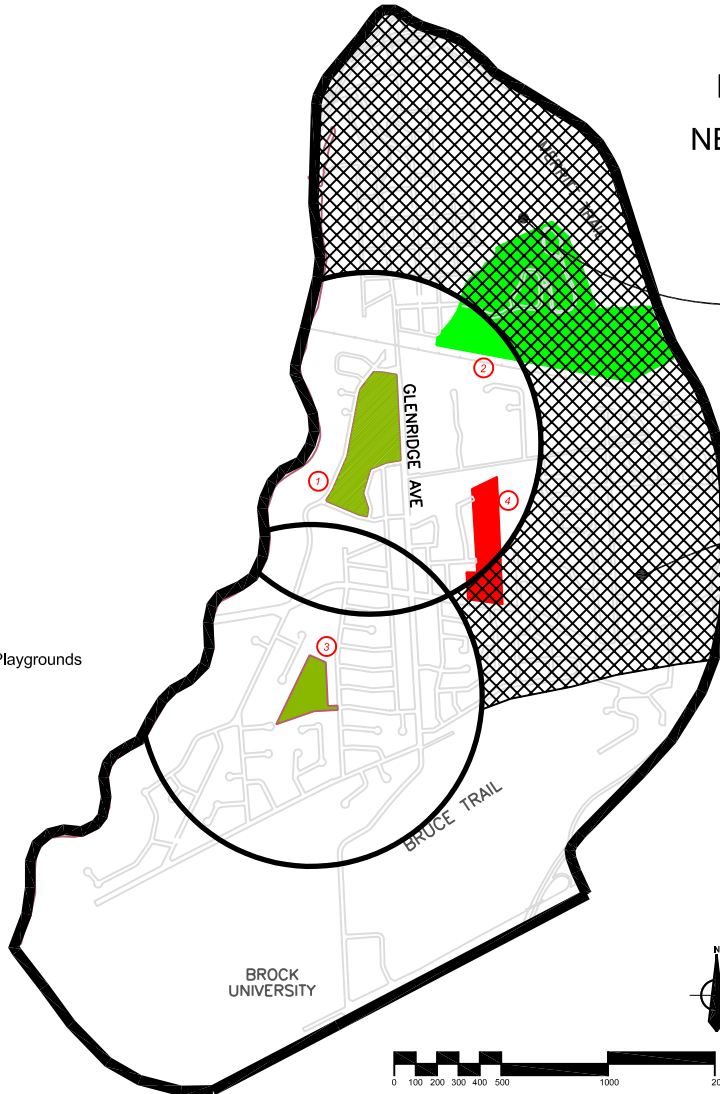


**MAP 5-3 - SOUTH DISTRICT**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK SERVICE  
AREAS AND PLAYGROUNDS**



- City Wide Parks
- District Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks with Playgrounds



Burgoyne Woods provides neighbourhood level opportunities to serve their gap areas

Gap filled by Woodgale Park

**LEGEND**

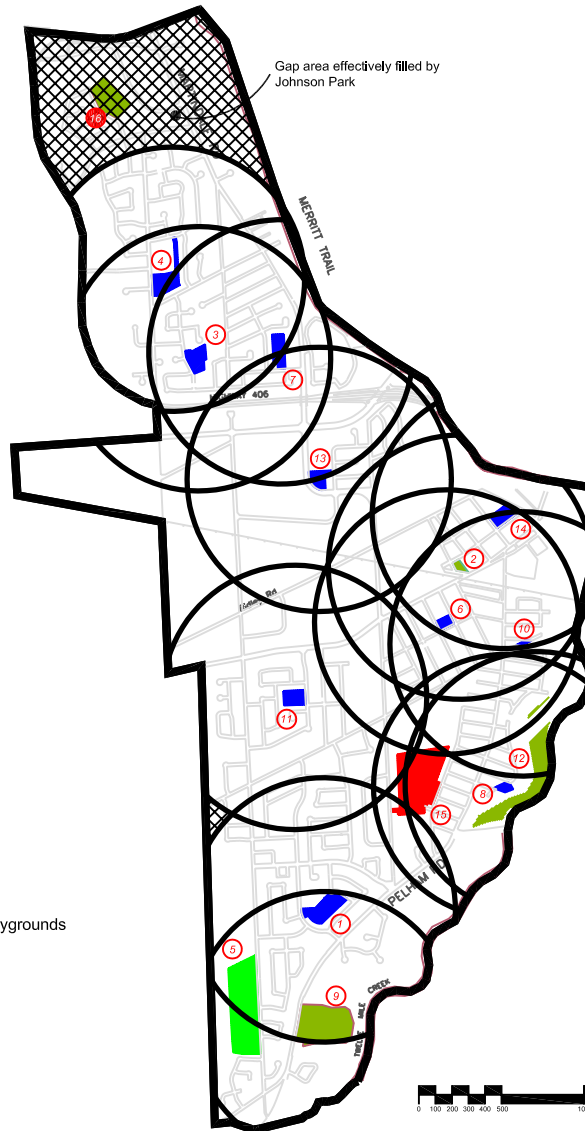
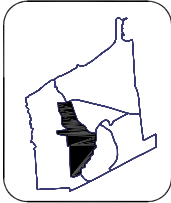
- Planning District Boundary
- Roads
- Neighbourhood Park Playground Service Radii (800m)
- Neighbourhood Service Gaps
- Watercourse
- Parks

- 1 - Belton Park
- 2 - Burgoyne Woods
- 3 - Town & Country Park
- 4 - Woodgale Park

St. Catharines  
Parks Policy Plan

**MAP 5-4 - WEST DISTRICT**

NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK SERVICE  
AREAS AND PLAYGROUNDS



**LEGEND**

- Planning District Boundary
- Roads
- Neighbourhood Park Playground Service Radii (800m)
- Neighbourhood Service Gaps
- Watercourse
- Parks

- City Wide Parks
- District Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks with Playgrounds

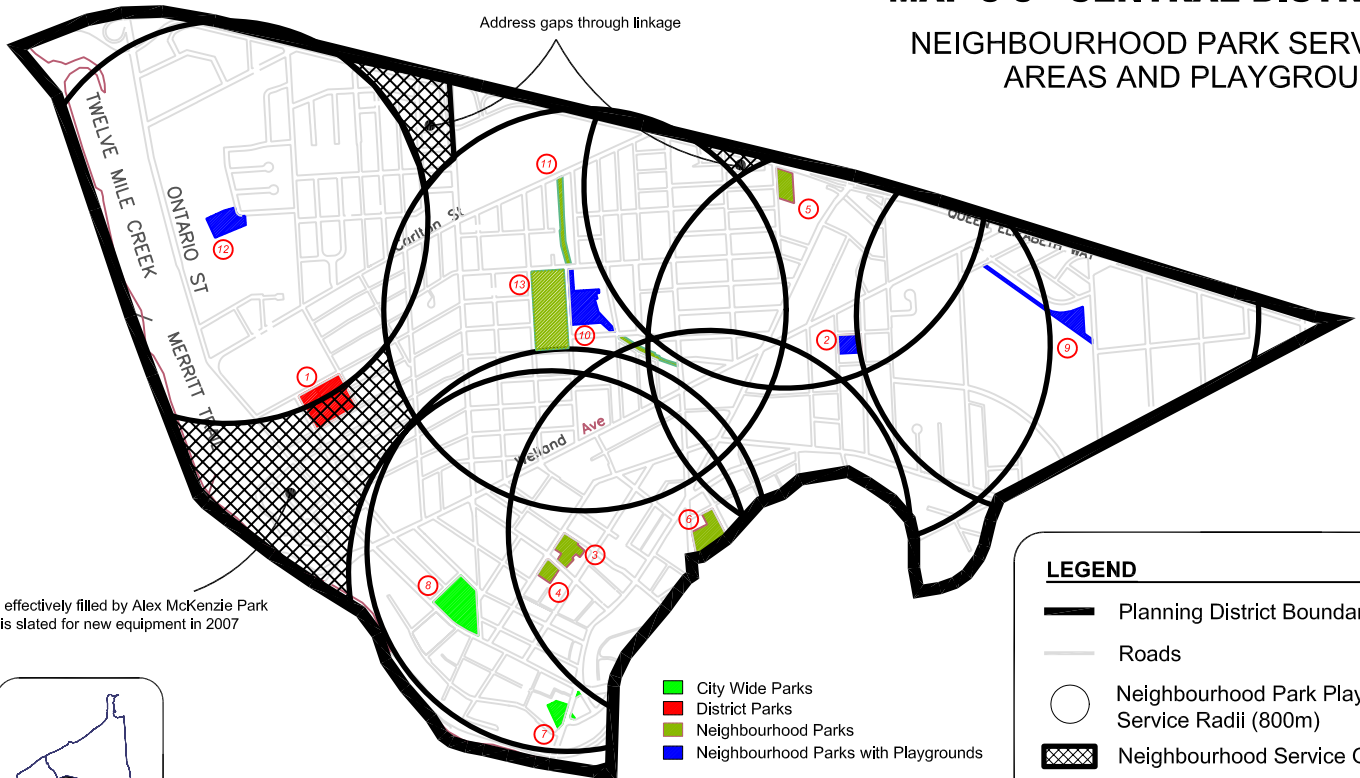
- |                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 - Brockview Park        | 9 - Pelham Road Park    |
| 2 - Cameron Park          | 10 - Rykert Street Park |
| 3 - Fairhaven Park        | 11 - Shauna Park        |
| 4 - Grapeview Park        | 12 - Twelve Mile Creek  |
| 5 - Joseph McCaffery Park | 13 - Vintage Park       |
| 6 - Lincoln Park          | 14 - Walkinshaw Park    |
| 7 - Mountainview Park     | 15 - West Park          |
| 8 - Parker Street Park    | 16 - Johnson Park       |
|                           | *17 - Rotary Park       |
|                           | *18 - Glenridge Quarry  |

\* - not identified on map

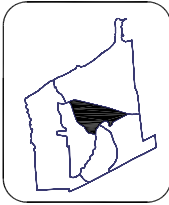


**MAP 5-5 - CENTRAL DISTRICT**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK SERVICE  
AREAS AND PLAYGROUNDS**



Gap is effectively filled by Alex McKenzie Park which is slated for new equipment in 2007

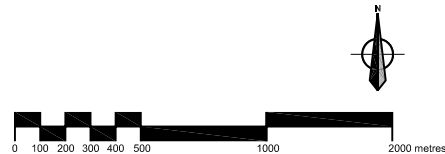


- City Wide Parks
- District Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks with Playgrounds

**LEGEND**

- Planning District Boundary
- Roads
- Neighbourhood Park Playground Service Radii (800m)
- Neighbourhood Service Gaps
- Watercourse
- Parks

- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 - Alex McKenzie Park | 7 - Memorial & Merritt Parks  |
| 2 - Bartlett Park      | 8 - Montebello Park           |
| 3 - Centennial Gardens | 9 - Plymouth Avenue Park      |
| 4 - City Hall          | 10 - St. Patrick's Park       |
| 5 - Fitzgerald Park    | 11 - Terry Fox Trail          |
| 6 - Jack Gatedcliff    | 12 - Torosian Park            |
| Arena Complex          | 13 - 69 Catharine Street Park |



#### 5.4.1 Assessment of Parkland “Gaps”

##### *North District (see Map 5-1)*

Two gaps are noted in the area, one central and one in the southwest. For the first gap (located north of Linwell Road, south of Lakeshore Road, east of Geneva Street, and west of Vine Street), opportunities to acquire parkland in this area are limited. This is an area that could benefit from improved trail connections. As the area is also served by a City-wide park (Guy Road Park) which includes a playground, playing field, and tennis courts, there is no gap from a functional perspective.

The southwest gap is smaller and is located north of QEW, east of Martindale Pond, and southwest of Ontario Street/Linwell Road Intersection. One option for solving the lack of play equipment could be to enter into an agreement with the Senior Citizen Home that is in the area. This is an area that could benefit from improved trail connections rather than parkland acquisition. This is addressed more fully in Section 7 (Trails).

Overall, the North District has a large number of parks within its boundaries. Although it is one of the two areas which falls short of the recommended service standard of 3 hectares of parkland per 1000 standard, a review of parkland distribution identifies limited gaps. Public input indicates that the priority for residents in this area is improved access to the Waterfront Trail and completing the gaps in the trail. Within the North District are many opportunities to improve linkages. St. Catharines' canal heritage is focused in this district and priority has been assigned to promoting and enhancing this resource. No specific suggestions are being made for parkland acquisition in this area, however, continuous efforts to complete the trail system should be a priority.

A number of parks in the North area are identified as priorities for playground replacement. These include Harcove, Abbey Mews, Royal Henley, Richardson Creek, Westcliffe Park and Orchard Park.

The North District could benefit from greening. With the update of the zoning by-law, careful consideration should be given to required landscaping provisions in

order to establish more stringent site plan guidelines that emphasize enhanced landscaping (e.g. greater setbacks, buffer strips).

*East District (see Map 5-2)*

There are only limited gaps within this district and with new residential development slated for the main gap area (adjacent to Victoria Lawn Cemetery), a new neighbourhood park proposed within this subdivision will eliminate this gap.

*South District (see Map 5-3)*

There are two gap areas within the South district, the first one being north of Burgoyne Park. This area is identified as a gap area on Schedule D of the Official Plan. Burgoyne Woods (City-wide park), however, contains a wide range of park amenities which serve the neighbourhood including a playground and a playing field (backstop). Acquisition of parkland to address this gap is not warranted.

The area east of Glenridge Avenue and north east of the University also does not meet the 800-metre criteria. This area is, however, served by Woodgale Park, a City-wide park that includes tennis courts and playing fields but no playground equipment. This park was identified during the public meeting for the Plan as a relatively unknown park which with increased awareness could serve to also provide a neighbourhood function thereby filling in this gap area.

Park acquisition should not be a priority in this district. Opportunities exist within the existing parks to meet neighbourhood needs. Priority, however, should be assigned to installing playground equipment at Woodgale Park. Furthermore, the existing neighbourhood parks (Belton Park and Town and Country Park) do not contain playground equipment. Input from residents of this area is needed to determine what if any improvements are desired to these parks.

*West District (see Map 5-4)*

Schedule D of the Official Plan identified one gap in the north area. This gap has been effectively eliminated with the development of Johnson Park.

At the present time, some of the neighbourhood parks are lacking updated playgrounds. This was identified as an issue during the public consultation process. Shauna, Mountainview and Parker Street parks are scheduled to have new (replacement) playgrounds in place in 2005. Given the younger age profile of this area of the City, these playgrounds will be needed.

*Central District (see Map 5-5)*

When the 1:800 radius is applied to the Central district, two gap areas are identified (refer to Map 5-1)

First is the area immediately south of the QEW and west of Lake Street. This area is a minor gap, affecting a relatively small area and opportunities to redress shortfalls in this area are limited but could include linkages - on road or off.

Second is the area generally bounded by Twelve Mile Creek to the south and Pleasant Street to the north. This area is a more significant gap, however, there is a district park (Alex McKenzie Park) located in this area and that park is scheduled to have a new playground in 2007. With the addition of playground equipment, residents would have access to "neighbourhood park" type amenities. We strongly support the addition of the playground equipment at Alex McKenzie Park. No additional parkland is required to serve this area.

Distribution is not the major issue in the Central district. Rather it is a "greening" issue. The overall supply of parkland is only 1 hectare per 1000 population. The Central District could benefit from the addition of "special urban parks" opportunities through redevelopment and from increased greening in new development. It is also noted that Catharine Street Park is a large parcel, highly accessible and in an area already well served by St. Patrick's Park. As such, it is recommended that the City consider reclassify this park to a "district park" to serve a wider area. In addition, Centennial Gardens which was once a vibrant park should be consider for revitalization to better serve the area. The City is currently preparing a new zoning bylaw and that process provides an opportunity for the City to review and revise its site plan guidelines. It is recommended that the zoning by-law have mandatory landscaping provisions that will permit site

plan agreements to achieve a great "greenway" in this area. The Downtown Comprehensive Development Strategy identified opportunities for urban parks in the core area including the development of a park on 92 Geneva Street, BME Freedom Park. Section 6 of this Plan addresses opportunities for park development and renewal.

#### 5.4.2 Acquisition of School Property to Meet Deficiencies

The distribution of municipal neighbourhood parks revealed very few real gaps in the distribution of parkland. While school closures and the resulting loss of open space significantly impacts adjacent residents, there is sufficient municipally-owned open space to meet the needs of the community.

Given the high cost of land, it is unlikely that the City will be in a financial position to purchase school sites in the future or that such partnerships should be a priority. However, as these sites are redeveloped, the City will have an opportunity to acquire parkland through the land development process. Again, special attention within the new zoning by-law should be given to ensuring that appropriate "greening" will result from any redevelopment.

#### 5.4.3 Future Parkland Requirements

Based on an assessment of parkland distribution, the City has few genuine gaps in parkland distribution. By applying a 1:800 metre service radius, many of the identified gaps in Schedule D of the Official Plan (Park Deficient areas) have been eliminated. It is, therefore, recommended that the City delete Section D from the Official Plan. The City should seek to address the identified gap areas through improvements to existing parks, by maximizing land dedication opportunities and by strengthening linkages. These strategies are described more fully in Section 6 of this Plan.

*Based on an assessment of parkland distribution, the City has few genuine gaps in parkland distribution.*

#### **Action Plans**

- ❖ Maintain the existing Park System Classification Categories and add two new categories - Special Urban Park and Linear Park. Amend the Official Plan accordingly to reflect the addition of these two new categories and other changes that are documented in Table 5-10.

- ❖ Adjust the service radius for neighbourhood parks and playgrounds to 800-metres uninterrupted by major thoroughfares and/or other major physical barriers (a ten-minute walk).
- ❖ Maintain the existing Neighbourhood Park and District Park service standards and modify the Regional and City-wide Park service standard of 4.5 hectares per 1000 population to 1.5 hectares per 1000 in order to better reflect the current standard of supply.
- ❖ Continue to work with the Seaway Authority, Ontario Power Generation, and other governmental agencies to identify properties which may be available for public use in the future and to identify opportunities to improve linkages.
- ❖ Reclassify St. Catharine Street Park to a "district park" to serve a wider area
- ❖ Revitalize Centennial Gardens to better serve the area.
- ❖ Evaluate opportunities to provide recreation amenities in the lower area behind St. Paul Street.
- ❖ Recognize that there will be variations in the service standards throughout the City due to a historic difference in supply (e.g., core area lacks park space) and a shortage of available land that the City cannot easily rectify. Focus on addressing a specific list of park acquisition priorities rather than trying to address historic deficiencies that exist in some neighbourhoods.
- ❖ Seek to maintain a balance of active and passive neighbourhood park space. Eliminate the fixed standard of the neighbourhood service standard.
- ❖ Overall, the City should strive to maintain the current standard of 3 hectares per 1000 population, recognizing that there will continue to be considerable variation in the supply of parkland throughout the City.



- ❖ Amend the Official Plan by deleting Schedule D - Park Deficient Areas and Policy 8.7.5 (which indicates that the City will assign priority to meeting deficiencies in existing residential areas). Application of the 1:800 metre radius has eliminated many of the identified deficiencies and land acquisition is no longer considered to be the only means address identified park deficiencies. Section 6 addresses the identified parkland deficient areas or gaps as part of a general strategy for parkland development and renewal.
- ❖ When school sites are redeveloped, the City should consider acquiring green space through parkland dedication in areas where there are identified shortfalls of neighbourhood park space. If there is sufficient neighbourhood park space, the City should seek cash-in-lieu of parkland.
- ❖ Consideration should be given to establishing mandatory landscaping provisions in the City's zoning by-law to ensure that appropriate "greening" will result from new development and redevelopment City-wide and may include provision of adequate buffers, landscape strips and setbacks.
- ❖ In development and re-development applications for site plan approval, policies should be in place to encourage or require good quality open space/landscaped areas.

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## **SECTION 6      PARK DEVELOPMENT & RENEWAL**

### **6.1      Overview**

This section addresses the following major topics:

- **New Parkland Development:** sets out acquisition and parkland dedication strategies. With a shortage of developable land within its urban boundary, strategies for the City to maximize land dedication and priorities for future parkland acquisition are identified.
- **Playing Fields:** as the most land extensive activity that takes place within the parks, there is a need to understand the current and future demands to ensure that the City's park system will be able to accommodate the needs of user groups.
- **Park Revitalization & Renewal:** identifies needed improvements in local parks and how they can be funded. Overall, residents have indicated that park renewal should be assigned a higher priority than new park development. Priorities for park renewal (e.g., Canal Heritage) are identified.
- **Elevating the Profile of Parks and Trails:** includes specific suggestions on making residents more aware of the opportunities that exist within the parks system.
- **Beautification:** recognizes the importance that St. Catharines residents assign to the City's floral beds and identifies priorities for floral beds and for gateway locations.

Within the parks system, there are likely a variety of indoor and outdoor facility needs that are not within the scope of this Plan. The City's upcoming Parks and Recreation Master Plan is expected to address other issues such as the need for skateboarding parks, spray pads, playgrounds, tennis courts, as well as confirming the need for additional (or fewer) playing fields.

## 6.2 New Park Development: Acquisition & Development Strategies

Money and/or land for new park development come from two major sources: parkland dedication and municipal taxes. As the City is projecting fairly modest growth in the future, it will be important to maximize all park dedication opportunities. At the present time, the City is not taking advantage of all of the opportunities available under the *Planning Act*.

In the past, the City has opted to take lower amounts of parkland for higher density residential development and has not taken parkland dedication for commercial and industrial development. St. Catharines has in fact used parkland dedication as a development incentive. This is a practice pursued by some municipalities where it is viewed as providing a competitive advantage over other municipalities that require the maximum dedications. Since the City first adopted this policy, there has been a change in the community's thinking in regard to the importance of parks and green spaces. By maximizing parkland dedication opportunities, St. Catharines will reflect the greater importance that is now being placed on green spaces nation-wide.

A number of changes are recommended to St. Catharines' Official Plan that will permit the City to maximize parkland dedication opportunities and funding which is available for new parks development. These include:

- Establishing parkland dedication requirements for commercial, industrial and mixed use development (2% - as permitted by the Planning Act).
- Increasing the parkland dedication requirements for higher density residential development while providing some flexibility to take the lesser amounts (5% or 1 hectares per 300 units).
- Develop as a general rule that the alternate of 1 hectare per 300 units to be applied as an alternative to the 5% parkland dedication, whichever is greater.
- Increasing the policy that limits parkland dedication for high density residential development to a maximum of 30% of the site area.
- Establishing when the value of the land for the purposes of cash in lieu will be determined (e.g., prior to the issuing of a building permit; value as fully serviced).

*A number of changes are recommended to St. Catharines' Official Plan that will permit the City to maximize parkland dedication opportunities and funding which is available for new parks development.*

*... a number of parkland acquisition priorities have been identified, including the waterfront, land to complete the City's trail system, and additional greening in the core areas.*

- Review and update Official Plan policies to provide allowance for increased height and or density of development in return for parkland dedication.
- Create policies and zoning regulations that permit parkland dedication for new commercial or residential development in the Downtown to be taken in the form of setbacks or landscaped plaza areas that enhance pedestrian circulation or contribute to the greening of the Downtown. This may involve a review and update of the City's Downtown Design Guidelines.

Based on the assessment of parkland supply, and public and staff input, a number of parkland acquisition priorities have been identified, including the waterfront, land to complete the City's trail system, and additional greening in the core areas (including the Downtown, Merriton, Port Dalhousie and West St. Catharines). Identified acquisition priorities should be reviewed when land becomes available and should be considered during the land development process as a guide on whether land or cash-in-lieu should be sought. Where lands cannot be acquired to address deficiencies, then alternative greening opportunities should be pursued.

There is a desire to 'green' the downtown core. Through the policies that encourage the creation of 'special urban parks' and the changes to the current parkland dedication requirements, the City will be in a better position to accomplish this goal.

The following are parkland acquisition priorities that should be implemented on an opportunity basis:

1. **Waterfront:** The City should continue to assign a high priority to completing gaps in the waterfront trail, increasing public access to the waterfront and improving waterfront parks.
2. **Land to Extend the City's Trail System:** In neighbourhoods where the supply of parkland is less than the desired municipal standard, priority should be assigned to completing identified gaps in the linkage system as a way of increasing the functional supply of parkland. (Trail Improvement priorities are detailed in Section 7)
3. **Core Area:** As the City seeks to transform its core areas, greening has been identified as a priority. The City should seek to increase the amount of park

space in the core area through the development of special urban parks as land becomes available through the land development process. The City should consider the projects and priorities established in the Comprehensive Development Strategies as a guide.

4. **Land for Playing Fields:** There is a high demand for soccer fields. Should the City not be able to accommodate this demand through the reallocation/redevelopment of some currently under-utilized ball diamonds and through agreements with the School Boards, there may be a need for additional land for playing fields. (Refer to Section 6.3)

### **Action Plans**

The City should maximize parkland dedication opportunities by amending the Official Plan to accommodate the following changes:

- ❖ Require that parkland dedication be provided at a rate of 2% for commercial and industrial development.
- ❖ Require that parkland dedication be provided for all mixed-use developments,. In doing so, parkland dedication requirements for non-residential components will be calculated based on total floor area.
- ❖ Review and update policies for bonus zoning to allow for increased height and or density of development in return for parkland dedication.
- ❖ Revisit the current parkland dedication requirements to increase the parkland dedication for higher density residential development. The City, except under special circumstances, should apply the most advantageous standard of either 5% or 1 hectare per 300 units. 1 hectare per 300 units. The intent should be to apply the standard that yields the greatest amount of parkland to be conveyed to the municipality.
- ❖ Increase the current policy limits on parkland dedication to a maximum of 30% of the site area.

- ❖ Require that the value of land for the purpose of calculating cash-in-lieu be based on serviced land (e.g., prior to the issuing of a building permit).
- ❖ Consistent with the Green Committee recommendation, make provision in capital works projects (e.g. road construction projects) for streetscape enhancement in the order to 3% of the project cost.
- ❖ Create policies and zoning regulations that permit parkland dedication for new commercial or residential development in the Downtown to be taken in the form of setbacks or landscaped plaza areas that enhance pedestrian circulation or contribute to the greening of the Downtown. This may involve a review and update of the City's Downtown Design Guidelines.
- ❖ Assign a high priority to improving linkages which will allow residents to access parkland in other neighbourhoods, maximizing land dedication and cash in lieu opportunities available to the City through the land development process and acquiring and developing parkland on an opportunity basis, guided by the new parkland acquisition priorities.

### **6.3 Playing Fields**

What activities occur in St. Catharines' parks? Outside of casual uses for walking, cycling, playing and picnicking, playing fields are the most land extensive use within the parks system. Therefore, the demand for playing fields and the implications on future parkland requirements has been assessed. A more detailed assessment of playing field demands is anticipated to be undertaken in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to be completed at a later date.

#### **6.3.1 Softball & Baseball Diamonds**

Province-wide, participation in softball/baseball is declining and is continuing to do so, most notably at the minor level. In St. Catharines, groups believe that the downturn is over and are optimistic about future participation levels. From a sports field management perspective, municipalities throughout the Province are:

## Section 6: Park Development & Renewal

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- converting diamonds to meet the demand for growth sports like soccer (the City has converted ball diamonds in West Park to soccer fields to meet the growing demand for soccer fields);
- recognizing the cyclical nature of sport participation through the development of a universal field template capable of accommodating numerous sports;
- favouring clustered facilities over stand alone facilities to address the needs of the tournament market and improve maintenance efficiencies; and/or
- balancing the needs for informal casual play with league play.

Based on equating one lit diamond to two unlit diamonds due to the extended length of use, there are 47 backstops within City-owned parks. 36 of these are categorized as Class A and B diamonds and are generally suitable for competitive play. The City's inventory indicates that 1 new diamond is proposed for Grapeview Park. In addition, there are 50 backstops on elementary and high school property. The City, however, no longer has an agreement with either School Board for use of school fields.

If all diamonds are counted (City-owned A and B diamonds and fields for casual play as well as school diamonds), the City has an equivalent of 104 diamonds for approximately 135,000 people. This translates into a per capita service level of 1 diamond per 1300 population or 1 municipal diamond per 2,872 residents. Provision standards targeted by many communities are typically in the range of 1 allocated diamond (municipal and school) per 5,000 population. Per capita standards, however, have limitations/drawbacks as they do not reflect actual participation rates within a municipality or account for the uniqueness of the City's population characteristics. As such, a market-driven participation-based standard in the range of one diamond per 100 active players is recommended. This standard should be confirmed when the City undertakes a comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Considering the supply of A and B diamonds only (36 diamonds with lighted fields been considered as equivalent to two diamonds) the City has a standard of 1:3,750 and a participant standard of 1:61 players (based on available data). Participant data for all ball diamond user groups was not available and would be required in order to confirm an appropriate participant-based standard.

Without knowing the total number of local ball players, it is difficult to accurately assess supply and demand. Based on the input of groups, however, it is clear that the existing supply of ball diamonds is more than adequate to meet demand. However, there are some specific maintenance issues with respect to some diamonds that should be addressed on a priority basis in consultation with ball user groups.

### 6.3.2 Soccer Fields

Soccer is St. Catharines' most popular outdoor field sport and field supply is a key issue with soccer organizations. While the City's supply of fields appears able to meet game demand, groups are having to reduce their practice time and playing games on fields which they consider to be sub-standard (many of which are school fields). Furthermore, some soccer fields are being shared with lacrosse and football, further impairing field quality.

There are 25 municipal soccer fields (each lit field is considered to be equivalent to 2 unlit fields) and 2 new fields are proposed for Joe McCaffrey Park. Local schools offer 35 soccer fields, although public access to these fields is not guaranteed (nor is the field condition) due to the absence of agreements with the City. Counting existing and proposed municipal soccer fields, there is a supply of approximately one field per 5,000 residents. While this ratio was at one time reasonable, it does not accurately reflect the specific circumstances in St. Catharines nor does it reflect the growth of the sport in recent years.

To better determine current and future soccer field needs, it is recommended that a participation-based standard in the range of one field per 80 active players be applied. While complete registration data has not been compiled, there is a strong indication that current supply to participation ratios greatly exceed the recommended standard, thereby indicating a considerable shortage of fields. Consultation with local user groups reveals that there is a need for more fields in the west and north ends of the City. Maintenance is also an issue. This is not surprising given the high level of use. Up-to-date soccer registration data is required to gain a full understanding of the magnitude of the shortfall (a component that will likely be assessed during the preparation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan).



The opportunities for the City to acquire new tracts of land suitable for field development are becoming more and more limited. Some of the following strategies employed by other municipalities to address growing demand for soccer fields should be considered in St. Catharines:

- lighting of fields;
- converting surplus ball diamonds to full or mini soccer pitches;
- establishing joint-use and maintenance agreements to maximize utilization of school fields;
- improving turf management and consideration of artificial turf for field sports;
- establishing a universal template for new fields (to facilitate future conversion);
- purchasing land in an adjacent municipality to develop additional soccer fields; and/or
- moving to a 7-day schedule.

Fortunately, the aging of the population in St. Catharines suggests that the demand for playing fields will likely decline over the coming years. As such, the City is likely dealing with a peak demand scenario at present. Providing sufficient facilities to satisfy a peak in demand is not recommended, however, there still appears to be a justifiable need for additional soccer fields for both current and future participants.

### 6.3.3 Football & Lacrosse Fields

Like soccer, field availability and conditions are concerns for football and lacrosse within the City. Participation in minor football has been growing in recent years and minor football clubs have expressed an interest in a designated football facility.

There is one dedicated football field within the City parks system, as well as seven fields that are shared with soccer. A strategy to meet the growing demand for football fields is to increase the supply of multi-purpose fields.

The City has been able to meet demand for field lacrosse and the groups are generally happy with the quality of maintenance.

#### 6.3.4 Multi-Purpose Fields

Some municipalities are designating certain fields as 'multi-purpose' to accommodate emerging sports such as ultimate frisbee, field lacrosse, and rugby, as well as football and soccer. Developing multi-purpose fields is a strategy that St. Catharines should consider, although the demand for soccer fields may be more pressing than the demand for other field sports. The City should monitor potential demand for fields from the identified emerging sports.

#### 6.3.5 Funding for Playing Field Improvements

Over the years, user groups have made substantial financial investments to improve the City's playing fields. While the Parks Policy Plan has not identified specific field improvements, the need for a funding source for new and/or enhanced fields will become an issue once the City has clarified playing field needs through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. One technique that the City may wish to consider is the introduction of surcharges to offset the cost of new and or improved facilities.

#### **Action Plans**

- ❖ In order to accommodate the demand for additional playing fields (soccer) the City should: (1) seek to reduce and reallocate any surplus ball diamonds; (2) enter into discussions with both School Boards in regard to the use of their fields; (3) review the existing park inventory to identify any areas which have potential for field development; and (4) consider expanding the 5-day schedule to a 7-day schedule.
- ❖ Require that groups who are using municipal fields, submit and verify registration numbers on an annual basis. Without current and complete participant data, the City will not be in a position to confirm service standards and accurately measure current and future demand for playing fields.
- ❖ Monitor field use and seek to reduce the number of fields which are booked but not being used. Under-utilized fields are costing the City money to maintain. As part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, field allocation policies and procedures should be reviewed.

- ❖ Confirm the recommended service standards for field sports during the Master Plan process. At the present time the City has an identified shortage of soccer fields and growing demand for football and field lacrosse.
- ❖ Review field inventories and identify ball diamonds that should be eliminated and converted to soccer fields or multi-use.
- ❖ Create a new field category ('multi-use') and increase the supply of designated multi-use fields that can accommodate rugby, field lacrosse, soccer, football, and ultimate sports.
- ❖ Develop a universal template for any new field development that can accommodate different field uses and user groups.
- ❖ Undertake an assessment of all playing fields and develop a sports field strategy in consultation with user groups to identify field improvements, field conversions and management strategies (e.g., field allocation, requirements for registration data etc.) in a comprehensive manner. The Strategy should also identify ways in which the City can finance needed field upgrades and additions (e.g., imposing surcharges).

#### **6.4 Park Revitalization & Renewal**

Residents of St. Catharines, through the public consultation process, have identified the need for park renewal and have assigned a higher priority to park renewal than to new park development. There is a consensus that many of St. Catharines parks are "tired". During the public consultation process it was highlighted that some parks (e.g., Centennial) have received little attention since they were first developed. The following are the items related to park renewal which were highlighted during the public consultation process.

##### **6.4.1 Playgrounds**

As a result of safety concerns, the City has been actively renewing its playground equipment for the past few years. Playgrounds (or the lack of playgrounds) were raised as an issue during the public consultation process. For households with children, a

*Residents of St. Catharines  
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playground nearby is very important. The City of St. Catharines has removed playgrounds from a number of neighbourhoods and the pace with which the City is replacing these playgrounds is a controversial issue. Overall, the City has a good distribution of parks with playgrounds and this has been demonstrated by the application of the service radius of 800 metres (10 minutes walk) to the City's neighbourhood level parks. Generally where gaps exist, there are playgrounds available in City-wide or district parks (see Section 5.4).

The City should continue to replace playground structures, with priority being given to the West District which has the highest percentage of households with children.

#### 6.4.2 Amenities

Washrooms were identified as the least satisfactory element in St. Catharines parks system, but other needed improvements were identified including:

- More water fountains
- Power sources in parks where special events are held
- Bandshells and outdoor amphitheatres
- More picnic shelters
- More shade/shade trees within parks
- More bicycle parking (bike racks)
- Better drainage in some local parks
- More walking paths
- More tree planting
- More attention to waterfront parks and beaches. Municipal Beach was singled out as a park area that is in need of improvement.
- More opportunities for fishing
- More public art and cultural/heritage properties within the parks system.

The City should consider focusing on maintaining and improving neighbourhood park infrastructure by devoting capital budget funds to improvements on an annual basis.

### 6.4.3 Funding

The City has been concentrating on replacing playground equipment, however, there is a need for more investment in the parks system. Funding is an issue. Each year the Department addresses the “hot-button” issues but renovating local parks, developing washroom facilities in strategic locations, adding bicycle parking opportunities etc. do not always rise to the top of the agenda.

There is a need for the City to establish an annual/regular source of funds for park upgrading. At the present time, the City does not have a capital conservation fund or any special reserve funds that provide monies for such improvements.

Some municipalities divert funds from profit generating areas of the recreation system to support those that cannot operate on a cost-recovery basis. The City’s golf courses generate profit but currently these funds remain in special reserve accounts to cover needed repairs or costly new equipment.

### 6.4.4 Priorities & Accessibility

Many of the identified park improvement priorities reflect the strategic priorities of this Plan, specifically greening in the core area and promoting, conserving and preserving the City’s canal heritage and promoting the waterfront. However, there are some additional areas that must continue to be assigned priority. These include continuing to make the park system accessible for everyone by eliminating or reducing barriers for persons with disabilities and by ensuring public safety and security.

### 6.4.5 Safety & Security

Safety and security are ongoing issues within the parks system. There are certain parks where vandalism has been an issue. Parks which have identified safety and security issues should be assigned priority when it comes to park renewal. Through the principles of CEPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design), changes can be made to a park which can improve its safety (e.g., thinning out of vegetation, re-siting of park facilities, regrading to improve site lines and visibility). The best approach to improve parks safety is to increase the number of “eyes on the park” (e.g., community policing). This Parks Policy Plan contains recommendations designed to increase the

number of persons who are regular users of the parks system through a variety of awareness techniques and signage (way-finding).

#### 6.4.6 Off-Leash Areas

Dogs off-leash within the City's parks and trails are a management issue and a by-law enforcement headache. During the consultation process, people failing to pick up after their dogs was also identified as a problem in some parks. Many municipalities across North America are establishing special off-leash areas for dogs within the parks system. This issue has been raised in the past in St. Catharines and was identified during the public consultation process for the Plan. It is an idea that does have merit and should be initially undertaken in one location as a "pilot" project.

#### 6.4.7 Arts & Culture in the Parks System

There is a need to increase the amount of public art and heritage properties within the parks system. Currently St. Catharines' parks are home to a variety of art and cultural property, including a number of heritage assets. The City's Public Art Policy includes in its published inventory the following items on City parkland:

- 5 works of art
- 7 artifacts
- 4 war memorials
- 9 commemorative structures
- 23 plaques
- 3 fountains
- 1 gateway

Parks are often identified as an ideal location for public art as they are accessible to all residents, can be enhanced with aesthetically appealing artwork, and the artwork can often be developed thematically in a way that promotes civic pride and appreciation.

Traditionally, all three levels of government have played a major role in developing public art for local residents. The development of artwork in municipal parks is usually spearheaded by municipalities through public art programs. The City of St. Catharines does not currently have a public art program, however, the Municipal Cultural Policy

recommends that the City's Culture Committee investigate a Public Art Program, as well as a percentage for art program. The latter program could provide options for funding that would be essential for the development of public art in St. Catharines.

Presently, the City's parks have a higher number of commemorative plaques, with little or no aesthetic value, than they do artwork or artifacts of interest. A new Committee of City Council, the Public Art Advisory Committee, could be utilized by community members as a source of expertise when developing memorial plaques, with the goal of enhancing the cultural value of future installations.

The City's parks are also home to remnants of the first three Welland Canals, the historic Lakeside Park Carousel, the Port Dalhousie Inner Range Lighthouse and the Morningstar Mill site at Decew Falls. The carousel is the only fully utilized heritage asset, operating within the Recreation Division from May to October. Morningstar Mill and the Lighthouse have both been the focus of community volunteer efforts to restore the structures to working order, with work continuing on the seven buildings located on the Mill site. At present there are no end-use plans for either of these sites.

Some of the Welland Canal site remnants are the focus of a current initiative funded by the City and the Province, the "Heritage Corridor" project. Signage will be developed downtown, and in Merritton, that will highlight some of this canal infrastructure. The initiative is a first step in this process, and seeks to encourage future investment in developing the canal infrastructure that exists in St. Catharines and increasing signage for visitors and residents.

### **Action Plans**

- ❖ Develop a capital conservation fund creates a source of funds for parks park renewal (initially at \$250,000 annually - to be reviewed and monitored on an on-going basis).
- ❖ Allocate funds for maintaining and improving parks by devoting budget funds to park improvements on an annual basis.
- ❖ Develop a list of park renewal projects which incorporates the following priorities:
  - greening within the core area;

- improving St. Catharines' canal heritage;
  - waterfront parks;
  - correcting public safety issues which could pose risk to the public (e.g., rutted pathway, deteriorating back-stop);
  - making parks accessible for everyone by reducing the number of physical barriers for persons with disabilities;
  - improving safety and security which could include design/layout of the parks, initiating community volunteer/neighbourhood watch programs and installation of suitable lighting; and
  - community partnerships where an organization will make a financial contribution to the park improvement and where the identified park improvement is supported by the policies and directions of this Plan.
- 
- ❖ Develop a list of priority park renewal projects on an annual basis and ensure that these priorities are known to all of the City's partners in parks, including service clubs that make regular financial contributions to the parks system.
  - ❖ Determine if there is a park or an area within a park that would be suitable as a leash-free area and work with the community to establish one such area as a test case. Work with a community group to establish the rules and maintenance schedules for such an area.
  - ❖ Identify opportunities within the parks system for public art and cultural property. Opportunities to promote the City's canal heritage and to highlight historical remnants of the old Canal system should be emphasized.
  - ❖ Encourage the St. Catharines Culture Committee to consider the role of the City's Parks when investigating a potential Public Art Program.
  - ❖ Ensure all community members interested in installing substantial commemoratives or memorials be referred to the Public Art Advisory Committee early in the development process, with the intent of increasing the cultural value and interest of all future installations.



- ❖ Investigate options for end-use at Morningstar Mill and the Lighthouse, exploring the potential for community partnerships and revenue generation.
- ❖ Partner with Welland Canal development initiatives in the region, with the aim of leveraging provincial and federal funding for canal site development in the city's parks, and promoting the City's canal heritage.
- ❖ Encourage the Culture Committee and/or Heritage Committee to assess the need for policy development to address the role of the municipality in managing these heritage assets.

### 6.5 Elevating the Profile of Parks and Trails

Many great cities are known for their parks. While St. Catharines residents are familiar with their own local park or the Waterfront Trail, there is a lack of awareness and promotion of the City-wide parks system and its attributes. St. Catharines' parks and trail system contains many wonderful parks and trails and there is a need to acquaint residents with the entire system.

Visitors to St. Catharines with an architectural or historic interest might for example be drawn to St. Catharines' "Central Park" – Montebello which was designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, who also designed Central Park in New York City and Mount Royal in Montreal. Others are drawn to the Bruce Trail. The remarkable features that are contained within St. Catharines' parks system need to be communicated to residents and visitors alike. The City's web-site is one possibility but for local residents, newspaper articles, tours, better signage and special events will all help to get more residents using the parks.

The local newspaper could be encouraged to run a regular feature on St. Catharines' "hidden gems" within the parks system. Local groups should be encouraged to host walking and cycling tours of the parks.

The City's interpretative material including maps, brochures, and the leisure guide need to be revisited to ensure that they are highlighting the strengths of the system and are effective at drawing residents and tourists to points of interest. The Leisure Guide,

*St. Catharines' parks and trail system contains many wonderful parks and trails and there is a need to acquaint residents with the entire system.*

which is distributed to every household, provides another opportunity to promote the local parks and trails. The Guide could feature park activities/programs as well as descriptions of the trails and promotion of selected parks.

It is one thing to know about a park; being able to get there however is a key part of the equation. St. Catharines is a community of communities and residents who live north of the QEW in Port Dalhousie, for example, may not be familiar with parks such as Woodgale in South St. Catharines. Although owned by the Henley Corporation, residents and tourists may for example, not be aware that Henley Island is open to residents when regattas are not being held.

The design and placement of effective signage to enhance wayfinding (providing information to enable people to reach a desired destination) needs to be improved in St. Catharines as a means of increasing the number of visitors to the parks and trails. When designed in a manner that is complementary to the surroundings (e.g., to provide a unique sense of place), signage provides a highly effective tool for communicating directional information and can also be used as a public relations or marketing tool.

A successful wayfinding system is best achieved when all design elements are tied together to reinforce one another. It must be realized that even though wayfinding is heavily reliant on signage, the process is based on the combination of a number of visual elements and principles including:

1. The creation of a theme upon which to base integrated design. In St. Catharines the canal heritage would provide appropriate theme elements including a canal park;
2. The delineation of an area or areas which differ in visual character to which the wayfinding system will be employed;
3. The creation of an identity at each location that is different from others;
4. The identification of key destinations within each area or areas;
5. The use of landmarks to provide orientation cues and memorable locations;
6. Controlling the number of navigational choices;
7. The provision of signage at key navigational decision points; and

- 8. The combination of signage into a single directional system to reduce sign clutter.

**Action Plans**

- ❖ Review and refine current promotional material including existing maps, signage, web-site, leisure guide, and tourism and promotion packages.
- ❖ Develop and implement a promotion plan for St. Catharines' parks and open spaces that will include, as a high priority, the development of a way-finding package.
- ❖ Promote parks and open spaces in regularly featured articles in the local newspaper and the media.
- ❖ Continue to develop interpretative material for St. Catharines' significant parks and trails, and place emphasis on interpretative and signage material related to St. Catharines canal heritage.
- ❖ Design and implement a wayfinding system that promotes St. Catharines canal heritage and significant parks and trails system.

**6.6 Beautification**

6.6.1 Floral Beds

The City has done an excellent job at beautifying St. Catharines that has included the installation of floral gardens and a variety of landscape elements (e.g., pavers, banners, hanging baskets etc.). There are over 70 identified floral displays within the parks system. Through the consultation process, the community expressed its pride in the floral gardens and has indicated that the City should continue its efforts to enhance the appearance of the City.

There is a cost associated with planting and maintaining the City's numerous floral beds. Looking to the future, there is a need to prioritize efforts and to establish some guidelines with respect to where floral plantings should occur. The City should also seek to engage community partners in maintaining and planting these beds and in

*... the community expressed its pride in the floral gardens and has indicated that the City should continue its efforts to enhance the appearance of the City.*

keeping with “communities in bloom movement”, encourage neighbourhood groups and individuals to “adopt a garden”, particularly where floral beds are not located in identified priority locations.

The City of St. Catharines also sponsors the annual Trillium Awards in partnership with the Horticultural Society and other organizations, providing awards for best landscaped properties in a variety of locations.

A number of beautification projects and/or locations have been identified as follows:

- Promote neighbourhood beautification along St. Paul Street West
- Augment main intersections with landscape elements such as decorative pavers and lighting, banners and flower beds and baskets.
- Cameron Park Railway Garden - install gardens along the banks of the railway/Cameron Park.
- Redevelop the centre boulevard at St. Paul Street West/St. Paul Crescent Village Flower Garden.

#### 6.6.2 Gateways

The City has targeted all of its gateways as being in need of improvement, most notably those located in West St. Catharines. It must be recognized however, that gateway projects are a City matter and should not be viewed as only serving recreation/leisure function for residents - they tend to benefit the City’s tourism market. Gateway improvements should be assigned a priority from a City perspective and coordinated through a variety of municipal departments for implementation.

A number of gateway areas in need of improvement have been identified including:

- St. Paul Street West and Old Highway 8 (the west entrance to the City) – extend linear landscaped areas (create a gateway park on the grounds of the TRW plant on the north side of St. Paul Street between Louth Street Highway Service Area and the St. Paul Crescent Commercial node);
- Ontario Street, Main Street and Seventh Avenue (part of greening initiatives of Green Committee);

- Glendale Avenue/Glendale Bridge;
- Ansell Park – gateway to Welland Canal Parkway; and
- Seventh Street – Agripark Welcome/Gateway.

**Action Plans**

- ❖ Recognize the City's floral beds as an important element in the City's public image as the "Garden City".
- ❖ Assign priority to floral gardens in the following locations:
  1. Gateway locations
  2. The Core Area
  3. Tourism Attractions
  4. Public Buildings and Facilities
  5. City- wide parks
- ❖ Encourage neighbourhood associations and business associations to "adopt a garden", particularly in locations which do not conform to the above guidelines. This could include a volunteers in partnership program.
- ❖ That gateway improvements be assigned a "City" priority with various municipal department co-ordinating the implementation.
- ❖ Where possible, gateway improvements be undertaken in partnership with the community and that the identified projects be given first consideration before undertaking any new projects.

## **Section 7: TRAILS**

### **7.1 Overview**

At present, a variety of trail systems weave through the community providing means for recreation and commuting opportunities to the residents of St. Catharines. This trail system serves the functional purposes of connectivity and preservation of the natural environment within this region. The purpose of this report is to provide the following:

- Review of the existing alignments and identify the requirements and importance for linkages and continuity;
- Recommend a trail classification system; and
- Identify trail acquisition and development priorities; (i.e., Official Plan amendment to require new development to include/provide connection corridors to be deeded to the City to establish/maintain these connections as part of the Draft Plan Conditions for site plans and subdivisions)

*The City of St. Catharines currently possesses over 80 kilometers of trails within its urban boundaries.*

The objectives for this section of the report are to identify and ensure the following:

- Trail systems are used for both recreational and commuting functions;
- Safety, security and accessibility to residents and users;
- Develop a trail system that is sustainable and maintainable; and
- Preservation and education of the natural and ecological environment.

### **7.2 Existing Trail System**

The City of St. Catharines currently possesses over 80 kilometers of trails within its urban boundaries. These trails have been developed over the years to address the community's needs for non-motorized recreation corridors in the forms of walking, hiking and bicycle trails. These trails were developed to connect public green spaces, neighbourhoods and communities. Today, these trails run along municipal and regional road networks, through municipal parks and open spaces, environmental protection

areas and along water systems such as the Welland Cannel, Lake Ontario and Twelve Mile Creek.

The connectivity/continuity of the present trail system has been interrupted by several obstacles including:

- Availability of municipal land along water courses and recreational land and open spaces;
- Safety and hazard conditions along arterial roads – require to address transportation corridor crossings;
- Natural and built features;
- Limitations along vehicular bridges – need to provide for sidewalks and/or bike lanes.

These obstacles require resolution through the development of a strategic plan to obtain support from the residents of the City of St. Catharines and direction of the municipal governing bodies under the advisement of its professional staff.

*The connectivity/continuity of the present trail system has been interrupted by several obstacles ... (that) require resolution through the development of a strategic plan.*

### **7.3 Recommended Trail Classification System**

At present, the existing trails through the City of St. Catharines have been classified as follows:

- Primary trails – City maintained trails that have the highest use and linkages to most significant areas/destinations;
- Secondary trails – City maintained trails linking neighbourhood facilities and/or within a park system;
- Club trails – service clubs developed and maintained trails.

These three classifications may be maintained as a simplified version for public use, however, given the current variety of conditions and levels of trail utilization, a more detailed classification system is required. Table 7-1 proposes eight trail classifications that will provide for the level maintenance required and allow City staff to allocate municipal budgets accordingly for annual maintenance of these facilities.

Table 7-1: Proposed Trail Classification System

Class	Description	Min.-Max. width	Example
I.	<u>On-Street Trail</u> or spur section, of which a considerable portion is within Parks and Recreation jurisdiction. Typically a cross-jurisdictional bicycle or walking route. Route is published and/or signed.	1.5 metres min., may vary	
II.	<u>Paved multi-use trail</u> . Surfacing either concrete or asphalt. Uses including walking, jogging, skating, and bicycling. Cross-jurisdictional, urban, includes street crossings although vehicular access is limited to municipal service vehicles (incl. Emergency). Wheelchair accessible	3.0 metres min.	
III.	<u>Paved multi-use trail</u> . Surfacing either concrete or asphalt. Uses including walking, jogging, skating, bicycling and service access. <u>Contained within a Park</u> , vehicular access limited to municipal service vehicles (incl. Emergency). Wheelchair accessible	3.0 metres min.	
IV.	<u>Paved Pedestrian-only walking path contained within a Park</u> . Wheelchair accessible	1.5 metres min., may vary	Almost any developed park
V.	Soft Surface Multi-purpose trail. Crushed rock paving. Primarily walking, service access, limited bicycle use. Contained within a Park, vehicular access limited to service vehicles.	2.0 metres min., 3.0 metres max.	
VI.	<u>Arterial Walking Trail</u> . Crushed rock paving. Pedestrian only, no vehicles access. Contained within a Park.	1.2 metres min., 2.5 metres max.	Most fully developed primary trails within “undeveloped” or natural parklands.
VII.	<u>Secondary Walking Trail</u> . Improved mineral soil or crushed rock paving. Pedestrian only, usually associated with a Class VI arterial trail. Should reconnect back to arterial, developed area, or terminate at a destination of some significance. Lowest legitimate level of development within the Park system.	0.6 metres min., 1.2 metres max.	
VIII.	<u>Dirt Path</u> . Informal path or underdeveloped class VI or VII trail awaiting improvement. Illegitimate paths may include private points of access or those in very wet or steep areas typically deemed inappropriate for continued maintenance or future development.	as narrow as 0.3 metres	Many short cuts throughout the Parks trail system.



These proposed classifications might be applicable to both Municipal and Club trails, as they vary throughout the city limits. These proposed classifications may also be carried through to adjacent municipalities to maintain a level of consistency and continuity for trail users.

### 7.4 Trail Acquisition and Development Priorities

The primary objective of this section is to ensure the potential for connectivity and continuity of the trails is realized. As discussed earlier, the networks of the existing trails are interrupted by various key issues such as accessibility and availability of property. There are several methods to achieve this objective:

- City to purchase right-of-ways from private land owners;
- Encourage landowners to sever and deed a portion of their land to the City for trail development – in return, the City may offer a tax incentive and/or develop a vegetative buffer between the trail and private property; and
- Issue an amendment to the Official Plan to require developers to deed a portion of their land towards trail development as part of the green space dedication requirements – the developer or City may install the trails through development charges money.

In order to achieve the above mentioned options, an overall City-Wide Trails Master Plan must be developed as part of the Official Plan amendment to identify where and what level these trails is developed. The connections and land required may form part of the Draft Plan Conditions for new development. The conditions of the Official Plan may also be applicable to new Municipal, Regional and Ministry transportation corridor upgrades and widening projects, to stipulate the requirement for bike lanes and sidewalks along roadways and bridges.

This portion of the report summarizes the priorities established during the process of Policy Review, meetings with the public and user groups, and City staff. However, there should be an understanding that these linkages be reviewed and coordinated with the overall municipal infrastructure improvement program, especially when large capital budget items such as bridges (vehicular and pedestrian) and transportation corridor widening are concerned. There are several approaches to prioritize the connections and

linkages of the existing trails. Of course the easiest way to complete a large-scale trail development project is to secure all the funding necessary to complete the project up front. This is seldom possible. However, if the project becomes a priority, then available funding can be directed towards it. Once a City Wide Trails Master Plan has been developed with future linkages identified, then prioritization list be formed with the following criteria:

- **Priority One:** Short simple sections – these should be consistently at the top of the list to be implemented regularly as budgets become available. Availability of land to accommodate trails, no major structures or traffic manipulation required – normally along EPA Lands and municipal park projects.
- **Priority Two:** Larger sections that will require acquisition/dedication of property/corridor for trail development. Efforts may be justified with overall master plan indicating make-or-break situation towards the success of the network.
- **Priority Three:** More complex portions of the trail -include Priority Two conditions plus major infrastructure upgrade including bridge structures, pavement widening, and enhanced traffic control/safety systems. Under these circumstances, the project should be developed with major municipal/ regional/ MTO infrastructure upgrade programs, as such will be carried out under the conditions and requirements of an amended Official Plan.

The following is a preliminary list of trail improvements sections identified under the criteria as described. At this time, the order will be governed by the availability of land, budget for design and construction and other development incentives including Club sponsorship, and fund-raising opportunities.

#### 7.4.1 Priority One Trails

- Lake Ontario Shore Waterfront Trail – connection of municipal parkland where property is available of through acquisition/dedication
- Extension of Welland Canal Parkway north to St. Lawrence Seaway Authority piers (establish partnership program with Seaway Authority may be a possibility)
- Port Master Park to Dalemere Park and eventual link to Green Ribbon Trail

## Section 7: Trails

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- Green Ribbon/Merritt Trail connection to EPA Lands along the east corridor of Highway 406 (crossing of QEW will be a Priority Three option) MTO approval required
- Burgoyne Woods trails
- Joe McCaffrey Sports Park hydro corridor (and First Street Louth Loop as part of Priority Three) – north-south connection
- Renovation of Participark Trail
- Continue assignment of trail signage through the network as per City standards

### 7.4.2 Priority Two Trails

- Rennie Park to Martindale Park along the eastern shores of Martindale Pond, however, will require to traverse private property
- CNR spur line rail-to-trail conversion
- Resolution of Centennial Gardens connection to Merritt Trail
- Yale Crescent rail corridor conversion through Garden City Municipal Golf Course (crossing existing CNR tracks may be considered under Priority Three) to Glengarry Park
- Walker Garden Park trail improvements – grading improvements

### 7.4.3 Priority Three Trails

- Green Ribbon/Merritt Trail connection to EPA Lands along the east corridor of Highway 406 (crossing of QEW)
- CNR south to hydro corridor and Victoria Lawn Cemetery and Glendale Avenue (crossing of QEW) to Merritt Trail and Bruce Trail
- Resolution of Centennial Gardens connection to Merritt Trail and Bruce Trail over Highway 406 (pedestrian overpass required)
- Floating boardwalk across Martindale Pond (Rennie Park to Martindale Park)

## 7.5 Next Steps

The issues, constraints and opportunities of the existing trail network and classification system have been identified in this Parks Policy Plan, as well as a list of strategic linkages which need to be completed (Priority 1 linkages). The next steps will be crucial towards the development and enforcement of an implementation strategy. First and foremost building on the City's trails plan should be undertaken to include priority areas.

A more detailed assessment will be beneficial for a marketing and trails committees to harness partnerships and sponsorships with local service clubs, naturalists, and trails groups. Funding options could also be explored and identified with corporations and SuperBuild programs.

### Action Plans

- ❖ Consider adoption of a revised trail classification system as set out in Table 7-1 and initiate a review of the City's current system trail network accordingly.
- ❖ Recognize the identified Priority 1 linkages as strategic priorities that should be completed on an opportunity basis.
- ❖ Build on the existing City-wide trails plan to include priority areas.

## **SECTION 8 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

### **8.1 Overview**

St. Catharines' natural heritage resources (including the Niagara Escarpment, the extensive tributary system, and the Lake Ontario shoreline) contribute to the quality of life enjoyed by the community and serves to attract countless visitors each year. Enhancing and protecting these fragile resources has become a focus for most communities nation-wide as they come to realize how invaluable and irreplaceable these features and landscapes are. The following analysis examines St. Catharines' natural heritage with the goal of preserving and enhancing them for future generations.

### **8.2 Urban Forestry**

St. Catharines urban forest includes street/boulevard trees, municipally owned woodlots and trees in parks. Trees represent a key aesthetic and design component of the City's parks, open space and trails system. They provide numerous environmental benefits including reducing air pollution levels and providing shade.

St. Catharines is currently undertaking an inventory of the trees in its urban forest but is planning to prepare one for its street trees (not those located in natural areas or in passive parks) in 2004. This data base is essential for planning and budgeting for required maintenance and tree replacement and should be considered a priority action.

The health of trees is an issue. Drought and disease are taking their toll and in many older areas trees are reaching the end of their lifespan. This is an issue affecting municipalities across Ontario. As a result, tree removal costs are soaring. St. Catharines is developing a tree replacement program that calls for the planting of trees in anticipation of the loss of some older street trees. The City currently plants 1200 trees each year.

The cost of future tree replacement should be a significant future budget consideration. Knowing this, the City should encourage community involvement or stewardship in protecting and preserving St. Catharines' urban forest and in tree planting. Non profit groups can access funds from organizations and foundations that might not be available

*The cost of future tree replacement should be a significant future budget consideration.*

to the City. Encouraging the involvement of the community in such a way is a way of augmenting the City's tree planting budget. Other efforts may include developing a citizen-based education program about the urban forest and how to care for it. The watering of boulevard trees for example during periods of extended drought can prolong the life of urban trees. The public needs to be educated on the importance of caring for the urban forest.

The City's 1995 *Green Plan* has promoted species diversity for many years. Due to the impact of disease on the City's trees, the planting of a diversity of species should be continued, including hardier native tree species.

A tree planting program alone is not an effective urban forest management strategy. The City of St. Catharines needs to dedicate sufficient resources for tree maintenance, pruning, watering, etc.

#### **Action Plans**

- ❖ That the City prepare an urban forest inventory and identify the potential tree replacement costs that the City will be facing in the future as a first step in establishing an appropriate level of funding for tree replacement and maintenance.
- ❖ That the City recognize that tree replacement costs should be a significant future budget consideration and that there will be a need to encourage/facilitate additional planting.
- ❖ That the City consider adopting a community stewardship program to assist with protecting and preserving the urban forest.
- ❖ That the City continue to plant a diverse variety of trees, including native tree species.

### **8.3 Environmental Protection**

Environmental management, protection and enhancement are increasingly being identified as a priority in municipalities nation-wide. People are recognizing the

importance and fragility of the natural environment and its ecosystems. The City's 1995 forward-thinking *Green Plan* identified the green spaces in St. Catharines that should be protected and enhanced. The recommendations of the *Green Plan* were incorporated into the City's Official Plan.

Through the consultation process, the community has conveyed the importance of protecting and enhancing natural areas such as valley lands of the Twelve Mile Creek and the Francis Creek Systems. Generally, it is felt that the City has done a good job at protecting its watercourses and extensive tributary system. Shore erosion and protection practices have changed, with "soft" practices (e.g., use of vegetation and planting, use of policies such as "no mow strips" along shorelines) being the preferred approach rather than hard engineering (e.g., gabion baskets). The City needs to continue to place a high priority on the protection of its water courses. Newer techniques such as constructed wetlands provide opportunities to improve water quality. Areas identified for such treatment include Twelve Mile Creek and the Canal lands (Mountain Locks Park).

There remains a need to educate the public about the importance of maintaining a "no mow" strip along St. Catharines' numerous water courses and to limit brush clearance. This is a role, not just for the City but for groups such as the Green Committee, the Friends of Twelve Mile Creek and other public bodies such as the Conservation Authority who are committed to improving the health of the natural environment.

Many of the principles and recommendations of the *Green Plan* are still valid and should be brought forward. These include greening, naturalization, the ecological importance of open space, and education. The City should consider undertaking a review and update of the *Green Plan*. Furthermore, the Green Committee should be encouraged to complete an "annual report card" as to how successful the *Green Plan* is in meeting its goals and objectives.

#### **Action Plans**

- ❖ Green Committee to update the 1995 *Green Plan* and continue to undertake an annual review and report card to assess the effectiveness of the Plan.

*Many of the principles and recommendations of the Green Plan are still valid and should be brought forward.*

- ❖ Continue to protect the natural environment including its watercourses and tributaries and associated valley lands, using a best practice approach.
- ❖ Promote environmentally sensitive landscaping practices (including the planting of native species, “no mow” strips along water courses through environmental education and in partnership with local environmental groups.

#### 8.4 Encroachment

*The City needs to discourage and prevent further private encroachments onto public land.*

Encroachment onto City-owned lands is an ongoing issue in St. Catharines in particular in the area around Martindale Pond. The City needs to discourage and prevent further private encroachments onto public land. The City should consider developing an awareness campaign that informs the community of the impacts of encroachment. Currently the City issues a letter and a 60 day warning. This approach has not been effective. The City should implement a program to demarcate City property with priority being assigned to areas of particular environmental sensitivity. This can be an expensive endeavour requiring costly surveying. However as this issue continues to plague the City, a program should be initiated to demarcate its public lands. That coupled with more public education should serve to reduce the negative effects of encroachment.

#### Action Plans

- ❖ That the City develop an awareness or education program to inform the community about the impacts of private encroachment on City owned lands.
- ❖ That the City implement a program to demarcate City property with priority being assigned to areas of particular environmental sensitivity. This is a long term plan that recognizes that the costs associated with surveying may be significant.

#### 8.5 Greening

Through the consultation process, participants conveyed a strong commitment to community renewal and greening. Greening is more than simply providing parks. Greening or “new urbanism” entails providing smaller parks or green spaces that are



located within a walkable distance of neighbourhoods. They provide benches, special landscape treatment, pathways, picnic benches, public art and gardens and are considered to be appropriate in core areas where a lack of green space may exist. In response to this identified need, this Plan has recommended that the City's parks classification system be amended to include a *Special Urban Park category* which provides for smaller parks in the urban area including the core. Greening also includes transforming bleak landscapes into green spaces, and incorporates environmentally friendly management techniques.

The City's *Green Plan* advocates that St. Catharines' green spaces need to be protected and enhanced. The Plan promotes enhanced naturalization and it has been recommended that this still very relevant document be updated and brought forward.

The City should review its maintenance practices with a view to identifying any additional areas for naturalization and for enhanced plantings that will allow for additional greening opportunities.

The landscaping guidelines in the City's Zoning By-Law and the site plan guidelines should also be reviewed and updated to enhance greening opportunities.

The City has identified a number of greening projects that should be considered and implemented on an opportunity basis including:

- planting more street trees along St. Paul's Street West.
- installing a landscaped median along Glendale from Mountain to Merritt Street.
- undertaking small-scale greening projects in the core such as developing a park at 92 Geneva Street to be known as BME Freedom Park. The City in conjunction with the Green Committee and the Downtown Association should undertake an assessment of the area in order to determine where greening should occur.
- undertaking a review Site Plan Control Agreements in order to incorporate greening in downtown redevelopment projects.
- undertaking small greening projects through Port Dalhousie with an emphasis on providing shade.
- incorporating a greening initiative in every municipal public works project.

**Action Plans**

- ❖ Review current maintenance practices and identify additional areas for naturalization and enhanced plantings.
- ❖ Review and update the landscaping guidelines in the City's Zoning By-Law and site plan guidelines in order to enhance greening opportunities.
- ❖ Implement the identified greening projects on an opportunity basis.
- ❖ Show leadership by incorporating greening initiatives into municipal public works projects and into every park development/re-development.

## **SECTION 9 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

### **9.1 Overview**

Financially, it is not possible for the City to address all of the park and trail improvements that are identified in this Plan, nor do residents expect that the City should tackle them alone. The following addresses the role of the City's partners in parks in improving the quality of St. Catharines' parks and trail system and the City's role in supporting these partners.

### **9.2 Partners in Parks**

The following groups are recognized as the City's key partners in parks:

- District School Board of Niagara
- Catholic Board of Niagara
- Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority
- St. Catharines YMCA (YMCA Niagara)
- Region of Niagara
- The Seaway Authority
- Parks Canada
- Niagara College
- Ontario Ministries of Natural Resources and Environment
- Niagara Grape and Wine Festival
- Brock University
- Ontario Power Generation/Ontario Hydro
- Green Committees
- Service Clubs
- Community partners such as Friends of Morningstar Mill, Friends of the 12, Friends of Malcolmson Park, Bruce Trail Association ( Niagara Club)
- Neighbourhood Associations
- Business Associations

Service delivery is beyond the mandate of this Parks Policy Plan. A more in-depth analysis of partnership opportunities should be undertaken through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

There is a need to pursue a stronger partnership with both school boards especially given that school facilities (playing fields) may be one of the only avenues to meet the anticipated peak demand for playing fields.

Brock University is a potential partner with respect to trail development and the University has expressed an interest in reviewing this Plan to identify potential areas of synergy.

Ontario Power Generation (OPG) is a major landowner, particularly in the Twelve Mile Creek corridor. The City is currently reviewing OPG land holdings with the intent of identifying parcels that have potential for public use.

*... the municipal tax dollar cannot fully support park renewal to the extent that it is needed in St. Catharines.*

### **9.3 Community Involvement in Park Renewal**

As previously noted, the municipal tax dollar cannot fully support park renewal to the extent that it is needed in St. Catharines. Fortunately, there are many community groups that are active and involved in the community. The City needs to encourage greater community involvement in park renewal. There are many positive examples of this in St. Catharines already, notably the efforts of *the Friends of Malcolmson Park* and the *Walker's Creek Association*.

There are a number of ways in which the City can encourage greater community involvement within the parks system. By harnessing the energies of the community, the City will also be in a better position to renew the City's parks. Specifically:

*Adopt-a- Park:* The City should develop an adopt- a- park program whereby residents are encouraged to take greater ownership of their local park spaces (e.g. community partnership-type program such as "Friends of ... group"). The benefits to such a program are many but a significant benefit will be increased use of local parks, which in turn will result in increased safety and reduced vandalism.

*Promote the Priorities of the Park Plan with Local Service Clubs and Foundations:* The City is not the only source of funds for park improvements. Non-profit groups can tap into a number of potential funding sources that are not available to the City. There are a number of available funding sources including the Niagara Foundation, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Evergreen Foundation and The Laidlaw Foundation to name but a few. With the Parks Policy Plan in place, the City needs to ensure that service clubs and funders such as the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Niagara Foundation are aware of the priorities thereof.

*Combating the Littering problem:* Littering is a big issue in St. Catharines' parks system. Recently, the City launched an anti-littering campaign. It also has a 'Clean Streets' initiative. The City should continue to encourage community partners to become involved in cleaning up the parks and trails. It has also been suggested that the City needs to have more frequent garbage pick-up in some of the major parks.

*Engaging the community to be park stewards:* Safety and security issues can be addressed more quickly if there are "eyes on the park". The City should consider Edmonton's park steward program as a potential model. In Edmonton, park users agree to report maintenance and safety concerns within the parks system. Given the extent of the littering problem, community stewards could also report where there has been dumping in the trails and parks or report on incidences of tagging (graffiti). The experience of other municipalities suggests that removing graffiti quickly leads to a gradual reduction in the amount of tagging.

*Community gardens:* A community partnership involving the City of St. Catharines, Regional Niagara Public Health Department and Jeffery's Garden has resulted in a public garden project in Torosian Park. Developing garden plots in parks is a trend throughout North America and one that the City should continue to encourage.

### **9.4 Recognition of Community Partners**

The City recognizes the efforts of volunteers and volunteer groups but there is a need to do more in this area. The City should keep records on the financial contributions of groups and individuals to the park system and of the number of volunteers. The annual volunteer banquet would provide a forum to announce the annual contributions.

*This Plan proposes that the City develop a special fund for park renewal which would provide a ready source of funds for legitimate projects that correspond to the identified priorities of this Plan.*

There are benefits to tracking for community organizations and the City. For the community organizations, keeping track of volunteer hours and contributions are a necessary component of many grant applications. For the City, tracking the investment of the volunteer sector in the parks system provides a better picture of the total investment that has been made and will be needed in the future to maintain the parks system.

Generally, groups that have engaged in projects involving City parks have operated with a fair degree of autonomy. The results are impressive. For example, the Friends of Morningstar Mill have, it is estimated, made a very significant contribution to the City in this restoration project - estimated to be over \$4 million. However, looking to the future, there is a need for the City to identify the types of support available to groups and to have some role in establishing projects that are taken on which involve municipal parks. The Parks Policy Plan, with its established priorities, provides a basis for evaluating which projects the City should support in the future.

In order to encourage residents to become involved, the City should provide a funding incentive such as the potential of matching funds from the City for approved park improvements. This Plan proposes that the City develop a special fund for park renewal which would provide a ready source of funds for legitimate projects that correspond to the identified priorities of this Plan. One of the issues identified during the public consultation process was the City has not in the past been always able to provide a City contribution to match community contributions in a timely fashion.

### **9.5 Facilitating Special Events in the Parks**

During the public consultation process, it was indicated that more could be done to assist groups involved in running special events in the parks. The City of Brantford, for example, has a special event co-ordinator that facilitates the efforts of groups who run local festivals and special events. This is an area that St. Catharines should investigate further

### Action Plans

- ❖ Undertake a more in-depth analysis of partnership opportunities in the context of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- ❖ Explore relationships with both school boards in order to develop opportunities that may complement the City's infrastructure.
- ❖ Enter into discussions with Brock University regarding potential trail development opportunities.
- ❖ Encourage greater community involvement in park renewal by developing programs like *adopt-a-park* and anti-littering initiatives.
- ❖ Develop a volunteers in partnership-type programs (e.g. "Friends of ... groups).
- ❖ Adopt a parks steward program to enhance the safety and security of St. Catharines' parks.
- ❖ Develop a special parks renewal fund that can be used to provide funding incentives for community based parks improvements.
- ❖ Continue to support the efforts of the Community Garden Committee and encourage the development of more community gardens such as the one that is currently in place in Torosian Park.
- ❖ Promote the identified priorities of this Parks Policy Plan with service groups, funders such as the Ontario Trillium Foundation.
- ❖ Review City practices to encourage and enhance opportunities for special events while working to make it easier for groups running special events.
- ❖ Continue to recognize the contribution of groups and individuals to the parks system and introduce a tracking system to keep track of the number of volunteers and financial contributions of groups and individuals.

- ❖ Working with Economic Development and Tourism and the Tourism Committee, investigate opportunities to increase assistance to groups that run special events in parks.