

PROPOSED OFFICIAL PLAN POLICIES

SECTIONS 4.3 AND 9.8.2

JUNE 11, 2013

4.3 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

The parks and open space system is an integral component to the liveability of Markham. The system includes parks and open spaces, multi-use trails and pathways, valleylands, vegetation protection zones, and natural heritage features generally as shown in Appendix C – Community Facilities. It plays an important role in the overall quality of life, health, transportation and social well-being of residents by providing areas for active and passive recreational uses, as well as for the protection of natural and environmentally significant areas and hazard lands.

The planning and delivery of a comprehensive parks and open space system is primarily the responsibility of the municipality, although other governments and agencies and private sector groups play an important role in augmenting the range and variety of parks and open space areas that are available for Markham residents, workers and visitors.

Markham is committed to ensuring that sufficient and meaningful parks and open spaces are conveyed and/or acquired; developed and/or enhanced; and maintained and/or managed, now and in the future.

Chapter 6 contains urban design and sustainable development policies related to the design, provision and management of private open spaces associated with development.

Markham's parks and open space system provides areas for active and passive recreational uses, as well as for the protection of natural and environmentally significant areas and hazard lands.

4.3.1 General Policies

It is the policy of Council:

- 4.3.1.1 **To achieve** a balanced distribution of parks and open space facilities and activities to meet the diverse recreational and leisure needs of Markham's residents, workers and visitors.
- 4.3.1.2 **To plan** and implement an interconnected system of parks and open spaces that, together with the Greenway System, streets, utility corridors, pedestrian and bicycle trails, contributes to the connectivity of Markham's communities, particularly new mixed-use neighbourhoods and intensification areas and placemaking in the public realm as identified in Section 6.1.6 of this Plan.
- 4.3.1.3 **To support** the implementation of Markham's Integrated Leisure Master Plan by ensuring that the standards for the provision of parkland are met or exceeded, and that parkland facilities are sufficient to meet or exceed the needs of projected residential populations.
- 4.3.1.4 **To design and develop** high-quality parks and open spaces that provide for comfortable, safe, accessible, and year-round use and that address objectives related to:
 - a) Connectivity of parks and open space: to create an integrated system or network of parks and open spaces that are connected to one another via trails, bikeways, streets, utility corridors, pedestrian

- walkways, ravines and/or *valleylands* and **greenspace corridors**.
- b) Location: to locate parks and open spaces to balance community-wide interests and the interests of neighbourhoods and individuals ensuring that parks are central to the population they serve, to the extent possible, and that they are accessible by public transit and within a reasonable walking distance
 - c) Distribution: to distribute parks and open spaces equitably throughout the municipality by allocating needed parkland to areas that are currently underserved, including *intensification areas* and other areas of high projected growth.
 - d) Facility Planning: to consider the placement of schools, community centres, libraries and other recreation or cultural facilities in relationship to where parks and open spaces are planned to maximize programming, maintenance, and operational efficiencies.
 - e) Inclusiveness: to provide park, open space and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages, abilities, and cultural and economic backgrounds and to ensure that the municipality is responsive, accountable and creative in meeting community needs and reflecting the desires and priorities of all residents.
 - f) Sustainability: to promote and incorporate an ethic of preservation, conservation, and sustainability in the planning, design and maintenance of parks and open spaces including incorporating appropriate low-impact development opportunities and sustainability standards and best practices supported by Markham's Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan.
 - g) Cultural Diversity: to ensure that the goals and objectives of Markham's Diversity Action Plan are implemented in the planning and design of parks and open spaces.
 - h) Ecology and the Environment: to incorporate significant natural areas, woodlots and **greenspace corridors** into the overall park and open space system such that these areas are protected and enhanced in perpetuity.
 - i) Programming: to ensure that the **year-round** programming, planning and design of new as well as existing parks and open space areas are consistent with demonstrated community need as identified in Markham's Integrated Leisure Master Plan, including opportunities for education and learning.
 - j) Design Excellence: to strive for design excellence in the planning and design of parks and open spaces by using a variety of methods, processes and procedures including informed research, community engagement, resident consultation, multi-disciplined team-based approaches, and award-winning professional expertise.
 - k) Operational and Maintenance Leadership: to budget, operate and maintain parks and open spaces to maximize efficiencies and stewardship system-wide by developing and updating park maintenance standards and costs annually, and creating asset management plans that identify routine, preventative, and long-term maintenance strategies.
 - l) Accessibility: to strive to make all facilities and amenities



geographically, physically, socially and economically accessible to all members of the community.

- m) Partnerships: to cultivate strong, positive partnerships with public, private and non-profit organizations to assist with the acquisition, development and maintenance of parks, recreation facilities and open spaces.

4.1.3.5 **To develop** parks and open space plans for the parks and open space system in accordance with Section 6.1.6.8

4.3.2 Parks and Open Space Classification

The type and variety of parks and open spaces will provide opportunities for diverse recreational and leisure activities that enhance and enrich the lives of Markham's residents, workers and visitors and promote a healthy lifestyle.

The parks and open space classification system **identifies** the types of parks and open spaces in existing and future parks and open system and establish criteria for per capita ratios, size, use, amenities and features, walking distance, location and programs, etc. for each classification category.

The parks and open space classification system **includes** a range of parks and open spaces **including Destination Parks, City -Wide Parks highlighting natural and cultural heritage features, Community Parks, Neighbourhood Parks and Open Space Lands.**

All City Parks will be acquired by Markham using an array of acquisition tools available, including parkland dedication requirements under the Planning Act.

It is the policy of Council:

4.3.2.1 **To plan** and develop a system of parks and open spaces that are integrated throughout the municipality, in accordance with approved secondary plans, community design plans, precinct plans and/or *comprehensive block plans*, and as **generally** described and classified within a parks and open space classification system.

4.3.2.2 **To implement and administer** a parks and open space system **generally** in accordance with the following classifications:

- a) **Destination Parks**, including large and unique parks which attract residents from across Markham and the Region and include conservation areas and lands associated with the Rouge Park that are intended to serve broader regional, provincial, and in some instances, national interests. In general, these parks perform an

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important environmental function. While Destination Parks provide additional uses and opportunities not typically provided by City Parks, they cannot compensate for the parks and open space facilities and services that would otherwise be required under the Planning Act as City Parks;

- b) **City Parks**, including parks which may be identified on Appendix C – Community Facilities, Map 13 – Public School, Place of Worship and Park Sites and/or within secondary plans, precinct plans or *comprehensive block plans*, that will be acquired by the City over time using an array of acquisition tools available.

City parks are classified as follows:

- i. **City-wide Parks**, generally in excess of 12 hectares, that provide programs and facilities for the entire City beyond those found in Community Parks and Neighbourhood Parks and include outdoor swimming pools, day camps, picnic areas, tournament-oriented sports parks with multiple active recreation facilities, and supporting infrastructure such as parking lots, field buildings and stadium seating. City-wide parks may also include special purpose parks that are generally designed to preserve natural heritage features and *cultural heritage resources*;
- ii. **Community Parks**, generally in excess of 6 hectares, that provide programs and facilities for a number of communities, neighbourhoods and areas and include water play, playgrounds, skateparks, basketball and tennis courts and organized sporting activities for all age groups and supporting infrastructure such as large park pavilions and maintenance facilities. Community Parks are intended to serve park users generally within a 10 minute walking distance (approximately 800 metres);
- iii. **Neighbourhood Parks**, including parks of various sizes which provide space for active and passive recreational needs of a local residential or mixed-use neighbourhood area. Neighbourhood Parks are intended to serve park users generally within a 5 minute walking distance (approximately 400 metres) and are further classified as follows:
 - Active Parks, generally 1 to 6 hectares, that provide space for field sports, playgrounds, and the recreational needs of a primarily low rise and mid rise residential neighbourhood;
 - Urban Squares, generally 0.5 to 5 hectares, that provide multifunctional flexible space and programming for social gatherings, festivals and civic functions and the recreational needs of a primarily mixed-use neighbourhood. Urban Squares accommodate special features such as public art that add visual interest and contribute the placemaking;
 - Parkettes, generally 0.5 to 1.5 hectares, that provide a passive recreational space generally within a 2 to 5 minute walk (approximately 150 to 400 metres) of residences in a primarily low rise and mid rise residential neighbourhood; and



- Urban Parkettes, generally 0.2 to 0.5 hectares, that provide social spaces animated by their adjacent uses such as cafes and shops generally within a 2 to 5 minute walk (approximately 150 to 400 metres) of residents, visitors and businesses within a mixed use neighbourhood; and
- c) **Open Space Lands**, which provide benefits to the parks and open system beyond those provided by City Parks, but are not suitable for City Park programs and facilities and therefore, not accepted as parkland dedication under the Planning Act. Open Space lands may be public lands or privately owned lands that are publicly accessible. Examples of Open Space Lands may include portions of the Natural Heritage Network lands and associated *vegetation protection zones*, transportation and utility corridors, stormwater management facilities, lands required for pedestrian and bicycle routes, and other open space lands encumbered by easements or use restrictions.

4.3.2.3

That City Parks shall generally meet the following criteria:

- a) have frontage on one or more public streets or publicly accessible private streets;
- b) serve park users within a 2 to 10 minute walk from residential and mixed-use neighbourhoods;
- c) not be encumbered by driveways, access lanes, garbage storage areas, utility vaults or other such uses that would take away from the enjoyment or use of the park; and
- d) be recognizable by the park user as a public and publicly accessible park.

4.3.2.4

To develop additional criteria for each of the parks and open space categories, which may include:

- a) per capita ratios;
- b) size;
- c) use;
- d) amenities and features;
- e) walking distance;
- f) location; and
- g) programs.

4.3.2.5

To use the parks and open space classification system to assist in determining appropriate maintenance practices, service levels and resource requirements for each park and/or open space.

4.3.3 Rouge Park

The Rouge Park in Markham is located along the Rouge and Little Rouge watercourse corridors forming part of a larger inter-regional and inter-jurisdictional parks system. The Rouge Park is identified on Appendix C – Community Facilities. The park is a significant ecological area extending from the mouth of the Rouge River in Toronto into Pickering and

Markham encompassing approximately 1,540 hectares in Markham. Markham has been an active participant in the management of Rouge Park lands since the Rouge Park formed in the early 1990s.

The Rouge Park is currently under transition into a national urban park, led by the Federal Government under Parks Canada. The federal government has made a commitment to support the creation of the Rouge National Urban Park including expansion of the park in Markham within the Transport Canada Airport Pickering Lands. The Rouge National Urban Park study area consists of approximately 3,800 hectares in Markham with a combined total of more than 5,600 hectares in Markham, Toronto and Pickering. Once established, Rouge National Urban Park will celebrate and protect a diverse landscape in Canada's largest metropolitan area offering connections to its natural beauty and rich history, and a vibrant farming community.

The Rouge Park in Markham is located along the Rouge and Little Rouge watercourse corridors forming part of a larger inter-regional and interjurisdictional parks system.

It is the policy of Council:

- 4.3.3.1 **To work**, in collaboration with Parks Canada, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, adjacent municipalities, non-government agencies and the public to support the creation of the Rouge National Urban Park which protects terrestrial and aquatic resources, aboriginal and pioneer cultural and heritage resources, and agricultural lands while providing for recreational, educational and other public activities.
- 4.3.3.2 **To work**, in cooperation with Parks Canada to ensure that the public use components of the parkland including trails and trailhead locations within the Rouge National Urban Park are integrated and connected with Markham's pathways and trails system.
- 4.3.3.3 **To ensure** that the approval of development applications in the vicinity of the Rouge National Urban Park:
 - a) minimize hydrological impacts;
 - b) protect and enhance the significant views into the park; and
 - c) provide compatible and appropriate edge treatments.
- 4.3.3.4 **To integrate** the Rouge National Urban Park as a key element of Markham's parks and open space system and promote its benefits to Markham residents.
- 4.3.3.5 **To ensure** future design and reconstruction of roads located in the Rouge National Urban Park will enhance the rural heritage and character and provide for pathway access to farm landscapes, where appropriate.

4.3.4 Pathways and Trails

The trails network links pedestrians and cyclists throughout Markham along natural heritage features, stormwater ponds, parks and open spaces. Where necessary or desirable, trails run along the road network, and change in character where adjacent to variation in land use. It is a priority of Markham to connect off-road pathways and trails throughout the community to provide a continuous linked network.

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It is the policy of Council:

- 4.3.4.1 **To support** the implementation of Markham's Pathways and Trails Master Plan by planning and developing a connected network of off-road pathways and trails through natural areas and hydro corridors.
- 4.3.4.2 **To integrate**, where possible, pathways and trails and adjacent land uses, and improve connections to the pathway and trails systems, and the cycling network identified in the Cycling Master Plan.
- 4.3.4.3 **To plan and support** an inter-regional system of trails that, together with the trail system planned for the Rouge National Urban Park, would provide a high level of connectivity for Markham residents.

4.3.5 Parks and Open Space Acquisition, Design and Improvement

It is intended that new development and *redevelopment* will be planned on a comprehensive basis through the secondary plan, precinct plan, and/or *comprehensive block plan* process to ensure that the public parks and open space requirements identified in this Plan and the implementing Parkland Dedication By-law are achieved. The City may permit the establishment of an Area Specific Parkland Agreement that is based on an approved secondary plan, precinct plan and/or *comprehensive block plan*, and is intended to deliver the identified parks and open space system in a way that is both equitable and acceptable to the City.

In order to meet Markham's need for parks facilities and services, the City will seek to exceed a minimum provision of 1.2 hectares of City Parks per 1000 persons. Markham will undertake a parkland deficiency analysis to determine the existing level of service for parks and open space facilities and programs, and identify a strategy to acquire additional parks and open space for underserved areas and/or to enhance existing facilities and programs to bring the service levels up to City standards, and to recognize the specific demographic/cultural circumstances of the area.

The acquisition of parks and open space will take full advantage of the provisions of the Planning Act, ensuring that the appropriate amount of public parkland is conveyed to Markham, or in the absence of land, cash-in-lieu of parkland. The acquisition of new public parkland shall be prioritized in accordance with the parkland dedication policies in Section 9.8.2 of this Plan. Where a strata park is built on a development site, overtop of an underground structure, it may contribute to the parkland conveyance requirement of the development. Typically, strata parks are located in mixed-use neighbourhoods in the form of a Neighbourhood Park such as an Urban Square or Urban Parkette. However, given the inherent encumbrances on the use and development of land in a strata park, the value of the contribution to the parkland conveyance of any strata park shall be discounted at the discretion of the City. In addition to parkland dedication, Open Space Lands will continue to be required through the development process, **but outside of the parkland dedication**

process.

Growth and *intensification* will place increasing pressure on existing parks and open space, as well as increase the demand for new parks and open spaces. In *intensification areas* and established neighbourhoods, cash-in-lieu of parkland reserves may be needed to acquire vacant lands or built lands in the vicinity that can be *redeveloped* as public parkland to satisfy dedication requirements. Where Markham communities fall short of active and passive parkland targets as established in the Integrated Leisure Master Plan, these areas will be considered priority areas for additional public parks and open space acquisition and improvements.

Markham will also monitor growth and acquire lands as needed for City-wide parkland.

Markham will oversee and manage the design and improvement of all public parks and open space and ensure general per-capita and locational standards for parkland are met or exceeded. Markham will ensure that design concepts are prepared and presented to the community for input and comments, and that as required, presentations are made to Standing and Advisory Committees as applicable.

Funding for parks and open space improvements will be in accordance with the Development Charges By-law, as amended from time to time. Servicing and grading requirements for future parkland will be funded and provided by the development in accordance with the obligations set out in the respective subdivision or site plan agreement. Where authorized by Council, a developer may up-front the cost of the design and improvements of public parkland to Markham's satisfaction.

Alternative approaches for acquiring parks and open spaces and funding parks and open-space improvements, beyond the parkland dedication provisions of the Planning Act and the provisions of the Development Charges Act, may be considered.

Markham will oversee and manage the design and improvements of all public parks and open space and ensure general per-capita and locational standards for parkland are met or exceeded.

It is the policy of Council:

- 4.3.5.1 **To promote** innovation in the planning, acquisition and design of Markham's parks and open space system.
- 4.3.5.2 **To provide** for more detailed planning and design of the parks and open space system, including the development of a parks and open space plan in accordance with Section 6.1.6.8, as a component of a required secondary plan, precinct plan and/or *comprehensive block plan* as outlined in Sections 9.1.1, 9.1.2 and 9.1.3.

4.3.5.3 **To provide** for City Parks at a rate in excess of 1.2 hectares per 1000 persons.

4.3.5.4 **To undertake** a parkland deficiency analysis to determine the existing level of service for parks and open space facilities and programs, and identify a strategy to acquire parks and open space for underserved areas and/or to enhance existing facilities and programs to bring the service levels up to City standards to achieve a minimum provision of 1.2 hectares per 1000 persons, and to recognize the specific demographic/cultural circumstances of the area.

4.3.5.5 **To monitor growth and acquire lands as needed for City-wide parkland.**

4.3.5.6 **To acquire** public parkland through the *development approval* process in accordance with the parkland dedication policies of Section 9.8.2 and the Parkland Dedication By-law and to secure public park sites, as generally identified in secondary plans, precinct plans and/or *comprehensive block plans* and on Map 13 – Public School, Place of Worship and Park Sites, through the *development approval* process, including the establishment, where appropriate, of Area Specific Parkland Agreements.

4.3.5.7 **That** a strata park may be considered by the City as a parkland contribution under the Planning Act, subject to:

- a) the value of the parkland contribution being discounted at the discretion of City, particularly where the parkland is encumbered by below-ground infrastructure or structures such as a parking garage; and
- b) the owner entering into an agreement with the City to secure park design standards and specifications, and public access and park maintenance arrangements, all to the satisfaction of the City.

4.3.5.8 **To consider** alternative approaches for acquiring additional public parkland and open space and securing funding for parks and open space improvements, beyond the parkland dedication requirements of the Planning Act and the provisions of the Development Charges Act, to achieve active and passive parkland targets as established in the Integrated Leisure Master Plan, such as:

- a) Land purchases;
- b) Land exchanges;
- c) Section 37 community benefits in accordance with Section 9.2.4; and
- d) Partnerships and/or joint provisions of land; and promotion of parkland donations and conservation easements.

4.3.5.9 **To actively engage** Markham communities in the design and improvement of the parks and open space system.

9.8.2

Parkland Dedication

It is the policy of Council:

9.8.2.1

That as a condition of *development approval* of land, Markham may, through the implementing parkland dedication by-law, require that land be conveyed for parks and other recreational purposes in an amount not exceeding:

- a) for lands proposed for industrial or commercial purposes, 2 percent of the gross land area;
- b) for lands proposed for all other land uses, except for residential purposes, 5 percent of the gross land area; and
- c) for lands proposed for residential purposes:
 - i. where the residential development is comprised of detached and semi-detached dwellings, 1 hectare per 300 dwelling units, provided that in no case shall the conveyance be less than 5 percent of the gross land area;
 - ii. where the residential development is comprised of townhouse, stacked townhouse or small multiplex buildings containing 3 to 6 units, 1 hectare per 300 dwelling units or 1.2 hectares per 1000 persons, whichever is the lesser, provided that in no case shall the conveyance be less than 5 percent of the gross land area; and
 - iii. where the residential development is comprised of apartment buildings, 1.2 hectares per 1000 persons, subject to any dedication reductions permitted by an implementing parkland dedication by-law, provided that in no case shall the conveyance be less than 5 percent of the gross land area.

9.8.2.2

That for lands that include a mixture of land uses, conveyance requirements are the sum of the parkland conveyances for each individual use as identified above. For uses described in a) and b) above, the land area for the purposes of calculating the amount of required parkland conveyance shall be determined by the sum of:

- a) the gross floor area of that part of the ground floor exclusively devoted such uses, and
- b) any surface parking area exclusively devoted to such uses.

9.8.2.3

That notwithstanding 9.8.2.1 above, the City may make further adjustments to the parkland conveyance requirements for any *development approval*, in accordance with the Planning Act, the parkland dedication by-law and/or any applicable development agreement.

9.8.2.4

That in addition, Markham may, at its sole and absolute discretion, accept the payment of money, or a combination of land conveyance and payment of money, up to the value of the land otherwise required to be conveyed in lieu of the sole conveyance of land, in accordance with the parkland dedication by-law.



- 9.8.2.5 **That** the conveyance of land for park purposes shall be applied equally to all types of residential development regardless of sponsorship, tenure or occupancy.
- 9.8.2.6 **That** all lands dedicated to Markham shall be conveyed in a physical condition satisfactory to the City.

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