

## **Deputation**

**I am saddened that Markham is even considering a reduction in parkland dedication because there are so many benefits that greenspace provides to local residents. In case not everyone on council has had the opportunity to research this topic, I would like to share some of my findings with you. You may be as surprised as I, to learn that there are huge benefits to parkland.**

**Urban parks and open spaces provide many important benefits including improving overall health, increasing social and spiritual wellbeing, and enhancing environmental quality.**

**Some benefits that I have found include:**

- 1. Protection of natural environment**
- 2. Residents' identity and pride**
- 3. Community visual appeal and function**
- 4. Development of strong communities**
- 5. Individual growth and development**
- 6. Prevention of social problems**
- 7. Reduction health problems and costs**
- 8. Integration of disabled, disadvantaged and socially alienated**

**There are also many economic benefits listed in a publication called, “Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space: How Land Conservation Helps Communities Grow Smart and Protect the Bottom Line”. It states, “Communities around the country are learning that open space conservation is not an expense but an investment that produces important economic benefits.”**

- 1. Attracting Investment: Parks and open space create a high quality of life that attracts tax-paying businesses and residents to communities;**
- 2. Preventing Flood Damage: Floodplain protection offers a cost-effective alternative to expensive flood-control measures;**
- 3. Safeguarding the Environment: Open space conservation is often the cheapest way to safeguard drinking water, clean the air, and achieve other environmental goals.**

**The Faculty of Health, Medicine, Nursing and Behavioural Sciences Deakin University Burwood, Melbourne states:**

**“...research indicates that ... humans may be dependent on nature for psychological, emotional, and spiritual needs that are difficult to satisfy by other means. Findings so far demonstrate that access to nature plays a vital role in human health, wellbeing, and development that has not been fully recognized.”**

**In terms of health, parks and other natural environments have been viewed almost exclusively as venues for leisure and sport. Yet recent research shows that ‘green nature’, such as parks, can reduce crime, foster psychological wellbeing, reduce stress, boost immunity, enhance productivity, and promote healing. In fact, the positive effects on human health, particularly in urban environments, cannot be overstated. As a result, urban planning should ensure that the communities have adequate access to nature.**

**Evidence shows that among other benefits viewing nature is positive for health in terms of recovering from stress, improving concentration and productivity, and improving psychological state, particularly of people in confined circumstances such as prisons and hospitals. Studies clearly demonstrate that being in a natural environment affects people positively, particularly in terms of mental health. Nature is important to people.**

**Most relevant to parks and nature are Cardiovascular Health and Mental Health.**

**Exposure to Nature and Greenery Makes People Healthier**

**A growing body of research shows that mere contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health.**

**One important study reviewed the recovery of surgical patients in a Pennsylvania hospital. The rooms of some patients offered views of a**

**stand of trees, while others faced a brown brick wall. A review of ten years of medical records showed that patients with tree views had shorter hospitalizations, less need for pain killers, and fewer negative comments in the nurses' notes, compared with patients with brick-wall views.**

**“...research on recreational activities has shown that savanna-like settings are associated with self-reported feelings of ‘peacefulness,’ ‘tranquility,’ or ‘relaxation,’” Frumkin writes. “Viewing such settings leads to decreased fear and anger ... [and] is associated with enhanced mental alertness, attention, and cognitive performance...”**

**At this point we do not know when or where reduced parkland dedication may rear its ugly head, but we do know that it will have negative consequences on the young, the elderly, the infirmed, and for everyone in between. And, by proposing to swap parkland from those living in concrete in the sky to lower cost land away from these greenspace deprived taxpayers is cruel and unhealthy.**

**A very interesting fact is that “Park and recreational service use continues throughout the life cycle. Recreational participation declines with age, but park use does not. In fact, people between the ages of 65 and 74 use local parks more frequently than any other age group from those 15 and older.”**

**Parks Support Play and Brain Development:** For small children, playing is learning. Play has proven to be a critical element in a child's future success. Play helps kids develop muscle strength and coordination, language, cognitive thinking, and reasoning abilities.

**Parks Provide Therapy for Attention Deficit Disorder:** Attention deficit disorder (ADD), is a condition that negatively impacts academic performance, peer relationships, and family harmony. In addition, children with ADD are at greater risk than their peers for low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. Current treatments of medication and behavioral therapy have serious side effects or limited efficacy.

**Researchers have recently discovered that children with ADD can concentrate on schoolwork and similar tasks better than usual after taking part in activities in green settings, such as walking through or playing in a park. And the greener a child's play area, the less severe the symptoms.**

**Research suggests that humans prefer nature in their landscapes because it is a key ingredient of human habitat, it is essential to our psychological and social health, and has an apparent beneficial effect on blood pressure, heart rate, mood, day-to-day effectiveness, social behaviour, cognitive functioning, and work performance.**

**Parks Promote the Social Health of Communities:** Research shows that residents of neighborhoods with greenery in common spaces are

more likely to enjoy stronger social ties than those who live surrounded by barren concrete.

Parks and greenways can mitigate air pollution and increased temperatures. Mature tree canopies can reduce air temperature five to ten degrees and trees filter pollutants out of the air. According to American Forests, trees in Atlanta remove 19 million pounds of pollutants annually, a service worth \$47 million.

In presenting this information to you today, it is my hope that this council will realize that a reduction in parkland dedication would be a very negative and short-sighted move that may pacify Markham developers, but it is definitely not in the best interests of any future Markham community.

And, the only reason that I see for a reduction request is avarice -- in other words developers' greed. As distasteful as this sounds, I cannot find another benefit to a reduction in parkland dedication.

I respectfully ask each and every councillor, to vote with current and future Markham residents -- the young, the seniors, the infirmed, and all those who want to extend their good health and say NO to a reduction in parkland dedication.

Thank you

There have been many studies comparing the health of people related to the green space that surrounds them.

Many of us know intuitively that green space, parks, forests and trees make us feel better. They refresh and recharge our batteries, bringing peace and tranquility.

It improves our wellbeing by reducing stress and fatigue and improving mental health and longevity.

The closer the green space is to our homes, the more benefit we derive from it. In fact, there's a growing body of research on green spaces and their positive impacts on the health and wellness of children and communities.

A classic study demonstrated that patients with views of trees vs. views of a brick wall had shorter hospitalizations, less need for painkillers, and fewer negative comments in the nurses' notes.

The percentage of green space inside a one kilometre and a three kilometre radius had a significant relation to perceived general health. The relation was generally present at all degrees of urbanity. The overall relation is somewhat stronger for lower socioeconomic groups. Elderly, youth, and secondary educated people in large cities seem to benefit more from presence of green areas in their living environment than other groups in large cities.

This is not hard, and the complicated math that is shown in the reports is not necessary.

The higher the building the more people, the more people the more parkland and green space is needed, not less. All builders charge a floor premium- the same unit on a higher floor is more money. Floor premiums range from \$500 to \$2000 per floor.

For example Greenpark, on Markham Rd is charging \$1000 per floor after the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

So a unit on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor is essentially \$18000 more than the same unit on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

Builders are charging more and making more- it doesn't cost them anymore money to build the same unit on a higher floor, yet they are asking us to give them a discount.

It is interesting, that we are asking the developers for money to build an Arena, and now the developers want a break on the development charges, I guess they want to cut the costs somehow, even though all charges are passed on to the new homeowner.

Exemptions for retirement homes and affordable housing and non-profit is not acceptable. Everyone needs green space and everyone has the right to have some fresh air, and a place to relax, regardless of age.

Parkland is a high quality public realm that has a tremendous value for all

As citizens, residents, taxpayers of Markham, we urge city staff and the City Council to not lower the required amount of parkland dedication required by builders. We should be actively conserving, protecting, restoring, enhancing, and expanding natural areas and green space for public enjoyment, community health, and ecosystem resiliency.”

Karen Rea