



**Town of Halton Hills**

**PARKLAND POLICY DISCUSSION PAPER**

**Phase 1 of the Town of Halton Hills Parkland Acquisition Strategy**

**August 18, 2015**

**Prepared by:**



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August 18, 2015

Mr. Terry Alyman  
Director of Recreation and Parks  
Town of Halton Hills  
1 Halton Hills Drive  
Halton Hills, Ontario L7G 5G2

Dear Mr. Alyman,

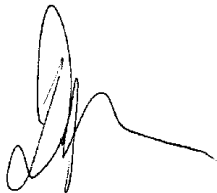
**RE: Parkland Policy Discussion Paper**

Monteith Brown Planning Consultants is pleased to submit the Parkland Policy Discussion Paper that has been prepared to support the Town of Halton Hills' development of a Parkland Acquisition Strategy. We trust it will provide a foundation through which the Town solidifies its strategy for obtaining needed parkland required to serve the best interests of the community, and for guiding decision-making over the next decade and beyond.

If you have any questions or if we can be of further assistance to the Town of Halton Hills throughout the remainder of the Parkland Acquisition Strategy process, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

**Monteith Brown Planning Consultants**



Todd Brown, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.  
President and Principal Planner

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The Town of Halton Hills is undertaking a Parkland Acquisition Strategy to understand current and future parkland needs, and to develop a framework in which to determine the quantity and quality of parks required to serve a broad range of social, recreational and cultural activities. Halton Hills' parks system is highly valued by the community as it serves residents of many ages, abilities, incomes and interests. The Parkland Acquisition Strategy is being driven by population growth, anticipated socio-economic diversification of the population base, and changes in land development patterns as Halton Hills responsibly plans how and where growth will be accommodated.

This Parkland Policy Discussion Paper represents the first phase of the overarching Parkland Acquisition Strategy being undertaken by Town staff. It is intended to provide guidance with respect to existing parkland policies contained in the Town of Halton Hills Official Plan and to inform the Vision Georgetown Secondary Plan. It will rationalize parkland ratios and designations based upon best practices, and identify whether a need exists for a Town Wide Park(s) based upon the existing inventory of parkland and projected Vision Georgetown requirements.

## **2.0 Methodology**

This Discussion Paper has been prepared in accordance with the agreement between Monteith Brown Planning Consultants Limited (MBPC) and the Town of Halton Hills, according to the terms of the Town's Request For Proposal that specifically identifies the following requirements/scope of work:

1. Review the following documents:
  - a. Section F7.3 – Parkland Development Policies of the Town's Official Plan
  - b. Inventory of existing parkland sizes and designations and outdoor recreational facilities
  - c. Vision Georgetown Parkland Review (May 2014): summary of parkland needs and shortfalls prepared by the Recreation and Parks Department; and
  - d. Meeting Notes – Vision Georgetown Technical Steering Committee Parkland Review (May 2014).
2. Outline the parkland ratios and designations applied by comparative municipalities and those within Region of Halton and distinguish between policy requirements and actual parkland inventory (i.e. is the historic  $\pm$  4 hectare per 1,000 residents an achievable target, noting that the current service level is at 3.7 hectares per 1,000?).
3. Identify any other best practices by comparative municipalities and those within Region of Halton to provide a comprehensive parkland classification system that could inform an update to the Town's existing Official Plan policies.
4. Summarise the impact of recent Ontario Municipal Board Decision on Case PL110189 - Town of Richmond Hill as it relates to the densities proposed within Vision Georgetown Secondary Plan and related parkland dedications.
5. Confirm the need for a Town Wide Park(s) to 2031 based on existing parkland inventory, projected Vision Georgetown requirements, and the range of uses outlined in the Town's current Official Plan.

All parkland and outdoor recreation facility data has been supplied by the Recreation and Parks Department while community population forecasts have been provided by the Planning, Development and Sustainability Department. As such, this Discussion Paper is based on information provided to MBPC which has not been independently verified. Community consultations have not been held to specifically inform assessments contained in this Discussion Paper but are ongoing through other Town initiatives such as Vision Georgetown and potentially as part of future tasking related to the Parkland Acquisition Strategy.

The disclosure of any information contained in this report is the sole responsibility of the Town. The material in this Discussion Paper and all information relating to this activity reflect MBPC's judgment in light of the information available to us at the time of preparation of this report. It is solely attributable to work conducted as part of 'Phase One' of the Town's Parkland Acquisition Strategy and thus the Discussion Paper's findings should not constitute final recommendations since subsequent works may be undertaken by the Town. Any use which a third party makes of this Parkland Policy Discussion Paper, or any reliance on or decisions to be made based on it, are the responsibility of such third parties. MBPC accepts no responsibility for damages, if any, suffered by a third party as a result of decisions made or actions based on this Discussion Paper.

### **3.0 Parkland in Halton Hills**

Municipalities typically measure their parkland service levels in two ways. The first is self-explanatory defined by the total area occupied by parks, usually expressed in acres or hectares. The second way is expressed through a population-based ratio, providing municipalities with the ability to measure how much parkland is being provided over time while also allowing them to benchmark themselves with parkland provided in other municipalities. Most commonly, parkland service levels are expressed in terms of total area (i.e. hectares, acres or another unit of area) per 1,000 population.

The Town owns and maintains nearly 200 hectares of Non-Local and Local forms of parkland, as defined under Section F7.3.3 of the Town of Halton Hills Official Plan. These classifications are described in further detail in Section 5.0 of this Discussion Paper while acreages associated with individual parks are contained in Appendix A.

As per the Halton Hills Official Plan, the definitions of Local and Non-Local Parkland are as follows:

- **Local Parkland** is intended to fulfill the needs and interests of residents in the surrounding residential area. The major components of Local Parkland include Parkettes and Neighbourhood Parks. Local Parkland is targeted at a service level of 1.2 hectares per 1,000 population.
- **Non-Local Parkland** is intended to fulfill the needs and interests of all Town residents and visitors to the Town. The major components of Non-Local Parkland include Community Parks and Town Wide Parks. Non-Local Parkland is targeted at a rate of 2.5 hectares per 1,000 population.

The origins of measuring parkland service levels through a population-based ratio can be traced to the early 1900s when the City of Chicago advanced a service level of 1 acre per 100 persons, which was subsequently adapted by the American Public Health Association in the 1940s to a level of 10 acres per

1,000 persons (equal to 4.2 hectares per 1,000 population).<sup>1</sup> The service level ratio was again reconfirmed and has been guiding planning practice across North America for the past three decades, based upon guidelines published by the United States National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) that suggest “a park system, at minimum, be composed of a core system of parklands, with a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres (equal to 2.5 to 4.2 hectares) of developed open space per 1,000 population” while the amount of ‘adjunct’ parkland will vary from community to community based upon the total amount needed to achieve a well-rounded parks system.<sup>2</sup>

Between Local and Non-Local forms of Parkland, the Town of Halton Hills targets a service level ratio of 3.7 hectares per 1,000 population. Accordingly, Halton Hills parkland service level is consistent with the aforementioned provisioning guidelines used across North America. Of the 200 hectares of parkland in Halton Hills, the Town records 132.6 hectares (65%) as being ‘useable’ through which most recreational and cultural uses can be accommodated on these developable tablelands – these ‘useable’ lands in Halton Hills generally representative of ‘core system’ defined in terms of the aforementioned NRPA terminology. The useable portion of parks excludes encumbered or non-developable lands such as woodlots, steep slopes, etc., which are representative of the NRPA’s ‘adjunct’ parkland category since the function of these lands would be relegated to a minimal amount of passive activity at best since the intended function is generally oriented towards conservation and/or buffering purposes.

The distribution of parkland by classification and geography is summarized in Table 1. This information, along with that contained in Appendix A, is assumed to be accurate as of the time of writing and forms the basis through which assessments contained herein are based upon.

**Table 1: Distribution of Parkland, 2015**

	Total Area (hectares)	Useable Area (hectares)	Official Plan Target	Service Level - Total (ha/1,000)	Service Level - Useable (ha/1,000)
<b>Non-Local Parkland: Community and Town-Wide Parks</b>			2.5		
Acton	13.26	10.91	hectares	1.3	1.1
Georgetown	104.30	66.84	per 1,000	2.6	1.6
Hamlets & Rural	29.05	17.01	population	3.5	2.0
<b>Sub-Total: Non-Local Parkland</b>	<b>146.61</b>	<b>94.76</b>	--	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1.6</b>
<b>Local Parkland: Parkettes and Neighbourhood Parks</b>			1.2		
Acton	17.23	9.78	hectares	1.7	1.0
Georgetown	29.41	21.06	per 1,000	0.7	0.5
Hamlets & Rural	6.74	5.02	population	0.7	0.5
<b>Sub-Total: Local Parkland</b>	<b>53.38</b>	<b>35.86</b>	--	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>199.99</b>	<b>130.62</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>2.2</b>

Note: Service levels based upon 2016 population estimate of 58,891 for Halton Hills, broken out as follows: Georgetown (40,544), Acton (9,973), and Hamlets/Rural (8,374).

Source: Town of Halton Hills Recreation and Parks Department (inventory); Planning, Development & Sustainability Department (population estimates)

<sup>1</sup> American Public Health Association, Committee on the Hygiene of Housing. 1948. Planning the Neighborhood. p.47.

<sup>2</sup> Lancaster, Roger. May 1983. *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*. National Recreation and Parks Association. p.56-57.

Applied to 2016 population estimates,<sup>3</sup> the Town is achieving the following service levels collectively between Local and Non-Local forms of parklands:

- A Town-wide service level of 3.4 hectares per 1,000 population, of which 2.2 hectares per 1,000 population is considered to be ‘useable’;
- A service level of 3.3 hectares per 1,000 in Georgetown, of which useable parkland accounts for 2.1 hectares per 1,000;
- A service level of 3.0 hectares per 1,000 in Acton, of which useable parkland accounts for 2.1 hectares per 1,000; and
- A service level of 4.2 hectares per 1,000 in the Hamlets and Rural Areas, of which useable parkland accounts for 2.5 hectares per 1,000.

In addition to Non-Local and Local Parks, the Town maintains a robust Greenlands system as defined under its Official Plan. The 275 hectares of Greenlands are passive open spaces that are largely intended for the purposes of conservation, and as such, are not considered to be part of the Non-Local and Local forms of parkland as defined through the Official Plan.

## **4.0 Provincial Policy Considerations**

### **Ontario Planning Act**

The Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990 is the guiding document for all land use planning in Ontario to promote sustainable economic development in a healthy environment. The Planning Act establishes a framework for parkland dedication in Sections 42 and 51.1 which provide approval authorities with powers to impose parkland dedication requirements as a condition of development or a plan of subdivision. These Sections maintain that 2% of commercial and industrial land and 5% of residential lands be conveyed to the municipality for parkland or other public recreational purposes. In certain cases, where the approval authority has established specific policies regarding parkland dedication, the Planning Act allows the approval authority to require parkland at a rate of one hectare for each 300 dwelling units proposed. Alternatively, the Planning Act gives the approval authority to accept payment in lieu of parkland equal to the value of land required. The Planning Act establishes that the value of this land is determined the day before the draft plan of subdivision is approved or the issuance of a building permit.

### **Proposed Bill 73 to Amend the Development Charges Act and the Planning Act**

Bill 73 has the potential to reduce the amount of cash-in-lieu of parkland that could be conveyed to municipalities in the future. Bill 73 has passed first reading (i.e. it is presently in its second reading and thus has not received Royal Assent), and proposes a change to the alternative standard whereby cash-in-lieu of parkland payable with respect to residential subdivisions would be calculated by using a rate of up to one hectare for each 500 dwelling units, down from the current one hectare for each 300 units. As municipalities are presently able to collect parkland or cash-in-lieu thereof under Sections 42

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<sup>3</sup> Service levels are based upon population forecasts by Traffic Zone supplied by the Town of Halton Hills. In the absence of a 2015 estimate, 2016 forecasts are used as the baseline year. The forecasts estimate a Town-wide population of 58,891 broken out as follows: 40,544 residents in Georgetown; 9,973 residents in Acton; and 8,374 residents in Rural Areas.

and 51.1 of the Planning Act, a decrease in this requirement could result in an increased reliance on the property tax base if maintaining parkland service levels at their current ratios.

It is worth emphasizing that Bill 73 only affects cash-in-lieu payments – if taking physical land, 1 hectare per 300 units would still apply through the Planning Act’s alternative requirement. The implications of any changes arising from Bill 73 is when the municipality is contemplating whether to take cash-in-lieu versus the physical amount of land (or a combination of the two).

Bill 73 would also require municipalities to have a ‘parks plan’ in place, though it does not prescribe what exactly would constitute an acceptable ‘parks plan.’ Bill 73 does specify, however, that a parks plan must involve consultations with every school board having jurisdiction in the municipality, along with any other persons or public bodies that the municipality considers appropriate, although the Bill does not specify what matters should be discussed and any obligations of each party to reach agreement. The Bill also proposes a greater degree of financial transparency on the part of the municipality to report on balances and spending details pertaining to the special account reserved for cash-in-lieu of parkland contributions.

## **Provincial Policy Statement, 2014**

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), issued under the Ontario Planning Act, sets a vision for land use planning in Ontario. A new PPS came into effect on April 30, 2014, replacing the previous PPS issued in 2005. The PPS is a significant document since it provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest as it pertains to land use planning and development, and accordingly, regional and local planning policies (including those prescribed through Official Plans) must have regard for, and be consistent with the PPS.

The 2014 PPS places a strong emphasis on building strong and resilient communities, through which recreation, parks and open space are part of what is considered to be necessary to sustain healthy, liveable and safe communities. Section 1.5 of the PPS establishes policies for public spaces, recreation, parks, trails and open space, and states that healthy, active communities should be promoted by:

- a) planning public streets, spaces and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of pedestrians, foster social interaction and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity;
- b) planning and providing for a full range and equitable distribution of publicly-accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, public spaces, open space areas, trails and linkages, and where practical, water-based resources;
- c) providing opportunities for public access to shorelines; and
- d) recognizing provincial parks, conservation reserves, and other protected areas, and minimizing negative impacts on these areas.

Among other things, the PPS also underscores the importance of active transportation and green infrastructure, mitigating impacts of climate change, building communities for persons of all ages, and conservation of natural heritage systems and their associated biodiversity. With respect to the latter, Halton Hills’ location within the Ontario Greenbelt requires certain land uses, including some active recreation facilities, to maintain a 30 metre setback from certain ‘key natural heritage features’ as defined through the Greenbelt Plan (2005). The intent of such a buffer is to preserve the ecological



integrity of sensitive areas, however, can also limit the ability of the Town to co-locate recreation facilities (and any associated infrastructure such as stormwater management facilities) in proximity to natural heritage areas and forces the Town to seek alternative locations. While the Greenbelt does not affect new developments in southwest Georgetown, the Region of Halton articulate setbacks from the natural heritage system through Official Plan policies, Zoning By-law regulations and other guidelines. Town Staff will thus need to coordinate with the Region where strategically co-locating parkland near or adjacent to natural features, particularly where there may be lack of opportunities to locate the desired types of parkland in a given area of Halton Hills.

## **Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006**

The Growth Plan provides a framework to guide sustainable development within the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). As one of the fastest growing regions in Canada, this growth plan was necessary to address urban sprawl putting Ontario's natural heritage areas at risk, encouraging the development of higher densities across the GTA while improving quality of life and standard of living. With regard to parks and recreation, the Growth Plan maintains that urban centres will be the focal point for recreation opportunities, supporting large concentrations of residential, commercial and employment areas. The role of parks and recreation will continue to be a key factor in urban areas, particularly given that the Growth Plan establishes a target of 40% of all new residential development will occur within built-up areas.

The Growth Plan also guides development of less urbanized areas, also known as Greenfield Areas. These areas will be promoted as livable areas, complete with a mix of parks, housing and employment opportunities, as well as a multi-modal transportation network that also supports walking, cycling and transit. This transportation network is generally encouraged throughout the GGH. In these Greenfield areas, the Growth Plan establishes density targets of fifty persons and jobs per hectare.

A review of the Growth Plan is presently underway. The Province is taking a co-ordinated approach to reviewing the Growth Plan along with the Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, and Niagara Escarpment Plan. Pending the completion of these reviews, the Town of Halton Hills may need to update policies contained within various documents including the Official Plan and the Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan to ensure conformity with provincial policy where necessary to do so.

## **Ontario Municipal Board Ruling – Town of Richmond Hill**

Richmond Hill Council adopted the Town's new Official Plan in July 2010. On February 10, 2011, the Plan was appealed by a number of parties to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) pursuant to Section 17(40) of the Planning Act. Despite the appeals, the Official Plan was subsequently approved by York Region Council on May 19, 2011. Following this, the Official Plan was granted partial approval by the OMB by way of an Order and amending Order issued in April 2012. A new Parkland Dedication By-law was brought forward in 2013, consistent with the Town's Official Plan and Parks Plan (the latter of which is a parks master plan).

Richmond Hill's parkland policies are contained in Section 3.1.8 of its Official Plan of which the majority were approved by the OMB, with the notable exception pertaining to the Planning Act's alternative parkland dedication rate (i.e. conveyance of one hectare per 300 dwelling units, or cash-in-lieu thereof). A number of land development stakeholders appealed Section 3.1.8 on the basis that it

should prescribe reductions in the Planning Act's alternative dedication standard depending upon the density of the development, including an overall cap that would limit parkland dedication to a fixed percentage of the site. This appeal was rooted in the argument that the financial viability of a development on a small piece of land (common in intensification scenarios) can be unduly constrained by the amount of the site that would have to be devoted to parkland or the cash-in-lieu that would have to be conveyed using the alternative requirement.

Through a preliminary hearing, the Town argued that the Planning Act provides the jurisdiction for a municipality to decide how to apply Section 42, including use of the alternative requirement or a lower rate at the municipality's discretion, and that the OMB does not have jurisdiction to make such a determination. The OMB, however, ruled that it did have the jurisdiction to determine if the alternative requirement should be used.

After subsequent hearings concluded, on January 15, 2015 the OMB delivered its decision under file number PL110189. The OMB determined that it is incumbent on the Town to justify use of the alternative rate within its Official Plan. The OMB held that it also had the authority to leverage a cap on the amount of parkland that could be conveyed, and required that the Town limit dedications to 25% of a high density (i.e. over 75 units per hectare) site's developable area through which cash-in-lieu would also be calculated – this is notable in the Halton Hills context since the Vision Georgetown exercise contemplates high density areas exceeding 85 units per hectare. The OMB decision stated that “determining the correct cap is not an exact science” and based its calculation on rates and caps applied in other municipalities, which is a very different approach than municipalities have historically taken based on their interpretation of the Section 42 of the Planning Act.

An implication of the OMB decision is that the Town of Richmond Hill would not be able to secure parkland at the same rate as it has done historically or that was understood to be prescribed by the Planning Act, but instead the OMB can impose a lesser rate or cap through local Official Plan policy if it sees fit. This could mean less land from dedication being available for parks, trails and outdoor recreation/cultural facilities and could place a greater onus on the municipality to purchase or secure parkland through other means.

The Town of Richmond Hill has filed a request with the OMB for a review of its decision under Section 43 of the Ontario Municipal Board Act, and has filed a motion for leave to appeal to the Divisional Court. The appeal to the Divisional Court cannot proceed unless the Court grants leave, which is contingent upon the ability of the Town to demonstrate that: a) the proposed appeal raises an issue of law; b) the proposed appeal raises an issue of sufficient importance to warrant the attention of the Court; and/or c) there is a reason to doubt the validity of the Board's decision.

Municipalities including Mississauga, Oakville, Brampton and Vaughan have joined Richmond Hill in appealing the OMB's decision. At time of writing, a number of these municipalities have sought 'intervener status' based upon criteria b) listed above, to emphasize to the Court how important this matter is to municipalities across the province. The Town of Richmond Hill has encouraged other municipalities to seek intervener status. These municipalities are also testing the OMB decision with respect to option c) as the ruling appears to have established a cap on an arbitrary basis using non-local examples, and acknowledging that its set cap is not based on an “exact science” thus calling into question whether or not it is “correct.”

The concern among many municipalities is that the Richmond Hill OMB decision could be a precedent setting ruling that in turn could limit the amount of parkland that can be received through dedications. In Halton Hills, the implications could be less significant in the short to medium term as the impacts of the cap would be more significant in communities where higher density forms of housing are much more prevalent than in the local context. However, in areas such as Southwest Georgetown that are targeting a higher density mix, it still has the potential to impact how much parkland can be acquired through dedications compared to what would otherwise be acquired based on the historical interpretation of Sections 42 and 51.1 of the Planning Act.

## **5.0 Local Policy Foundation**

Section F7 of the Town of Halton Hills Official Plan contains policies pertaining to Public Parkland, the overarching objectives of which are to:

- a) establish and maintain a system of public open space, parkland and recreational facilities that meets the needs of present and future residents;
- b) enhance existing parkland areas wherever possible to respond to changing public needs and preferences;
- c) ensure that appropriate amounts and types of parkland are acquired by the Town through the development process;
- d) encourage the dedication and donation of environmentally sensitive lands into public ownership to ensure their continued protection;
- e) protect and enhance the public open space and parkland areas in a manner that is consistent with the 'environment-first' objectives of this Plan, while accommodating appropriate levels of public use;
- f) promote the establishment of a continuous linear open space system connecting natural, cultural and recreational land uses within the Town and to surrounding municipalities;
- g) coordinate with other public and private agencies in the provision of open space, recreational and cultural facilities; and,
- h) encourage the development of a walking and cycling trail system within the open space system that is accessible to the public utilizing trails, paths, streets and other public open spaces.

### **Parkland Classification and Development**

The Town's Official Plan encourages Council to target the provision of public parkland to achieve a minimum ratio of 1.2 hectares of local parkland per 1,000 residents and 2.5 hectares of non-local parkland per 1,000 residents (Section F7.2.3). The Local Parkland classification, consisting of Parkettes and Neighbourhood Parks, applies to lands that are intended to be used by residents in the immediate area. The Non-Local Parkland classification, consisting of Community Parks and Town Wide Parks, applies to lands that are intended to be utilized on a community or Town wide basis.

The definitions of Local and Non-Local Parkland are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: Town of Halton Hills Official Plan Parkland Classification System**

		Service Area	Park Size	Function / Siting Considerations
<b>LOCAL PARKLAND</b>	Parkettes	0.2 to 0.4 kilometre radius (i.e. 200 to 400 metres), depending on population density	0.2 to 0.6 hectares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a range of opportunities for active and passive activities, particularly for young children and older adults seeking close to home activities</li> <li>• Required when site conditions or neighbourhood design restrict access to other town facilities</li> <li>• Required for housing developments that provide smaller lots with reduced opportunities for amenity areas</li> <li>• Centrally located within the neighbourhood it is intended to serve</li> </ul>
	Neighbourhood Parks	0.4 to 0.8 kilometre radius (i.e. 400 to 800 metres), depending on population density	1.5 to 2.5 hectares comprised mostly of tableland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centrally located within the neighbourhood or neighbourhoods it is intended to serve</li> <li>• Have frontage on a collector road that is adequate for the provision of on-street parking and site visibility</li> <li>• Located adjacent to an elementary school, other community facilities where feasible, other open space lands or storm water detention areas to complement existing facilities and/or provide a neighbourhood focal point</li> <li>• Where adjacent to an elementary school have complementary facilities such as sports fields, hard surface play areas and components, and play apparatus</li> </ul>
<b>NON-LOCAL PARKLAND</b>	Community Parks	Secondary Plan Area or a specific <i>Urban Area</i> or <i>Hamlet Area</i>	6.0 hectares (min.) of primarily tableland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located adjacent to a secondary school or community facility such as a community centre, arena, pool or library where feasible, or other major open space lands to complement other neighbourhood facilities and provide a community focal point</li> <li>• Have frontage on an arterial or collector road</li> <li>• Where adjacent to a secondary school, have complementary facilities such as major sports fields, hard surface play areas and other active park uses</li> <li>• Be the site of primarily outdoor recreational uses with broader community facilities such as water play areas, gardens or special event staging areas with associated washrooms, pavilions or service areas</li> </ul>
	Town Wide Parks	Entire Town	11.0 hectares (min. of primarily tableland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located on an Arterial Road or Provincial Highway</li> <li>• Provide major athletic facilities or standard sports fields, hard surface play areas, special event staging areas, multi-use trails, and other major recreation facilities with associated play, water play, washrooms, pavilions or service areas</li> <li>• Where appropriate, integrate public cemeteries and other complementary public uses and community facilities</li> </ul>

Source: Town of Halton Hills Official Plan, Office Consolidation May 2008, Section F7.3.2

## Parkland Dedication Policies

With respect to parkland dedication permitted under the Ontario Planning Act (also refer to Section 4.0), Section F7.2.6 of the Halton Hills Official Plan states:

The Town shall require five percent of the gross residential land area within a Draft Plan of Subdivision in the *Low Density Residential Area* designation to be dedicated to the Town as parkland. The Town shall also require the dedication of 1.0 hectare of land per 300 dwelling units for development within all other Urban *Living Area* designations and wherever residential uses are permitted uses in the *Community Area* designations in the *Urban Areas*. Two percent of the land within industrial/commercial development shall be dedicated as parkland. For uses other than those listed above, the Town shall require a dedication equal to five per cent of the land value. In lieu of the above requirements, Council may require cash-in-lieu of parkland instead, as deemed appropriate.

Lands designated as *Greenlands* or required for stormwater management facilities shall not be considered as any part of the required parkland calculation. To the extent possible, stormwater facilities will be incorporated into the adjacent parkland and designed in a manner to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the overall development.

Where applicable, lands to be reserved for future public open space and trail linkages will be identified as part of a development proposal.

All lands dedicated to the Town shall be conveyed in a physical condition satisfactory to the Town.

The Official Plan specifies that “Lands dedicated for park purposes are intended to fulfill the requirements for Local Parkland...In special cases, as determined by Council, such land may be utilized to fulfill some Non-Local Parkland requirements” (Section F7.2.7). The Official Plan (Section F27.2.9) provides direction on when cash-in-lieu of parkland may be required, after considering whether:

- a) the application of the rate of parkland dedication would render the remaining portion of the site unsuitable or impractical for development;
- b) existing municipal parkland is available in sufficient quantity and quality to accommodate further development in a particular area; and/or,
- c) more suitable parcels of land are available for municipal park purposes on other locations.

Where cash-in-lieu of parkland is considered, the Official Plan (Section F7.2.8) indicates that such monies may be used for:

- a) acquisition of additional land to expand existing parks where appropriate;
- b) acquisition of vacant infill sites to create new small parks;
- c) acquisition of redundant properties owned by public agencies;
- d) improvement of park design and development within existing parks; and/or,
- e) establishing priorities for acquisition through updated Recreation Master Plans.

In addition, Section F7.2.10 establishes that Council shall enact a Parkland Dedication By-law that, among other things, establishes the rate of parkland dedication in accordance with the Official Plan and the Planning Act. The Town of Halton Hills By-law 2002-152 fulfills this requirement and will be reviewed once the Parkland Acquisition Strategy is completed.

## 6.0 Regional Policy Scan

A review of parkland designations and service level ratios was undertaken for municipalities in Halton Region, as well as for the Cities of Markham and Brampton, as directed by Town Staff. This information was obtained through a scan of Official Plans and/or Parks and Recreation Master Plans, and is presented in Table 3. Through this benchmarking exercise, the following points were gleaned:

- Halton Hills' parkland classification system is generally consistent with each of the other benchmarks, with parkland generally categorized at a sub-neighbourhood, neighbourhood, community and municipality-wide level.
- The intent/function of parkettes, neighbourhood parks, community parks and municipally-wide parks is also generally consistent among the Official Plans, with more unstructured activities being the primary focus of lower order parks and structured recreation activities and special uses (which require facilities) being the intent of higher order parks.
- Only Halton Hills and Milton define a targeted service level ratio (i.e. hectares per 1,000 population) within their respective Official Plans, though these do not differentiate between active and passive use park spaces. Oakville's ratio is specified in its Master Plan, though Oakville is also different in the sense that its service level ratio applies only to 'active parkland' which is defined as "tableland parks for active recreation uses" that accommodates most of the Town's outdoor recreation facilities (i.e. excludes lands associated with schools, community centres, woodlots, etc. as is common). Brampton also defers to its Master Plan to establish service levels, however, that City's Master Plan is not a publically available document (it is only intended for internal Staff use based on Brampton Council's decision to simply 'receive' it).
- Certain municipalities identify special purpose parks largely for the purposes of preserving/conserving large natural areas including Destination Parks (Markham) and Special Resource Parks (Burlington). For these unique and specialized parks, service level ratios are typically not applied.
- For those municipalities articulating a service level ratio, these ratios are generally not being achieved for the park system as a whole. There are, however, instances where specific typologies of parkland may have been exceeded while other typologies may be below what is required. This underscores the need for a municipality to have flexibility when targeting specific forms of parkland in order to be responsive to specific-needs of the community over time – for example, a municipality may bolster Community Park levels to a greater extent than Neighbourhood Park levels if it finds that it has a shortfall of sports fields, or vice-versa integrate a greater number of parkettes if warranted by geographic gaps.
- Further to the above point, it is not possible to directly compare parkland service levels due to differences in the way that parkland supplies are inventoried and categorized. The most notable challenge is inconsistency in whether passive open spaces (e.g. wooded areas, non-developable or non-tableland portions, etc.) – some municipalities included non-developable acreage into their supply numbers which inflates their service level relative to municipalities that only factor in the developable portion of their parks. While inclusion of passive spaces may be appropriate, particularly if such uses are defined within an Official Plan's parkland hierarchy, best practice would be to differentiate between useable (or core) parks and non-developable (or adjunct) parks as the Town of Halton Hills currently does.

**Table 3: Benchmarked Parkland Classifications and Service Levels**

	Parkland Classification	Park Size	Service Radius	Parkland Service Level Target (ha/1,000 pop.)	Parkland Service Level ATTAINED (ha/1,000 pop.)	Source(s)
<b>Halton Hills</b>	Parkettes	0.2 to 0.6 ha	0.2 to 0.4 km	1.2	0.9	Official Plan, 2006 (May 2008 Consolidation)
	Neighbourhood Park	1.5 to 2.5 ha	0.4 to 0.8 km			
	Community Park	6.0 ha (min.)	Secondary Plan or specific area	2.5	2.5	
	Town Wide Park	11.0 ha (min.)	Entire Town			
<b>Brampton</b>	Neighbourhood Park	0.8 to 1.2 ha	0.4 km (4,000 to 5,000 persons)	unavailable	0.7*	Official Plan, 2006 (Nov. 2013 Consolidation)
	Community Park	10 to 12 ha	3.0 km (15,000 to 20,000 persons)		0.5*	
	City Park	undefined	Entire City		0.5*	
<b>Burlington</b>	Parkette	undefined	Sub-neighbourhood	undefined	unavailable	Official Plan, 1997 (Dec. 2013 Consolidation); Parks, Recreation and Cultural Assets Master Plan, 2009
	Neighbourhood Park	undefined	Neighbourhood			
	Community Park	undefined	Several Neighbourhoods			
	City Park	undefined	Entire City			
	Special Resource Park	undefined	Entire city			
<b>Markham</b>	Urban Parkettes	0.2 to 0.5 ha	0.15 to 0.4 km	1.2	2.0*	Official Plan, 2014; Integrated Leisure Master Plan, 2010
	Parkettes	0.5 to 1.5 ha	0.15 to 0.4 km			
	Urban Square	0.5 to 5.0 ha	0.4 km			
	Neighbourhood Park	1.0 to 6.0 ha	0.4 km			
	Community Park	6.0 ha (min.)	0.8 km			
	City-Wide Park	12 ha (min.)	Entire City			
	Destination Park	undefined	Regional	n/a	n/a	
<b>Milton</b>	Village Square	0.2 to 0.5 ha	Sub-neighbourhood	1.0	1.1	Official Plan, 1997 (Aug. 2008 Consolidation); Draft Community Services Master Plan, 2015
	Urban Square	0.5 to 1.0 ha				
	Neighbourhood Park	3.0 ha (min.)	Neighbourhoods in a Planning District	2.0	1.0	
	District Park	6.0 ha (min.)	One or more Planning Districts			
	Community Park	20 to 50 ha	Entire Town	1.0	0.6 (excl. large naturalized parks)	
<b>Oakville</b>	Village Square/Parkette	undefined	Sub-neighbourhood	2.2 (active parkland only)	2.1*	Parks, Recreation, and Library Facilities Master Plan, 2012
	Neighbourhood Park	undefined	Neighbourhood			
	Community Park	undefined	Entire Town			

\* Based on data that is between three and four years old as current inventory figures were not available at time of writing

## Key Elements of Parkland Classification Systems

Each Official Plan, with the exception of Oakville, contains reference to a parks classification or hierarchy, though the amount of detail varies by Official Plan. Halton Hills, Brampton, Markham and Milton provide the greatest detail with respect to the size and function of each park typology while the Burlington and Oakville Official Plans defer to their respective Parks and Recreation Master Plans to define the key characteristics of individual park types. Whether contained in the Official Plan and/or a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the following commonalities were observed between the different classifications of parkland.

City and Town Parks are focal points which serve residents on a city or town-wide basis as well as from other surrounding regions. These parks are designed to attract users who seek a variety of parks and recreation pursuits which provide major or specialized opportunities including, but not limited to, major sports facilities and stadiums, swimming pools, gardens, and venues for major recreational or cultural events, in addition to amenities and facilities provided in lower parkland classification types. To accommodate a range of parks and recreation opportunities, these parks represent the largest parks in the classification system and are generally 12 hectares (30 acres) or more in size (among municipalities that defined a size for such parks).

Community Parks are designed to serve specific communities or a group of neighbourhoods. These parks provide a wide range of active recreation opportunities including multiple major sports fields, large skateboard parks, shelters, splash pads, playgrounds, and are associated with community centres and indoor recreation facilities. Among benchmarks articulating a size for their Community Parks, the land area generally ranges between 6 and 12 hectares (15 to 30 acres).

Neighbourhood Parks provides a mix of active and passive recreation opportunities that serve local neighbourhoods, typically within a 10 minute walking distance or 400 to 800 metres. Activities may include unlit sports fields, playgrounds, and other facilities appropriate at the neighbourhood scale such as hard surface courts. The size of these parks generally range from 1 to 3 hectares, though there are some outliers such as Markham that state a maximum size of 6 hectares (though that municipality further breaks its Neighbourhood Park into four categories including 'Active Parks', 'Urban Squares', 'Parkettes', and 'Urban Parkettes').

Parkettes and Village Squares are identified in all but one Official Plan (Brampton). Parkettes are typically located in urban areas providing passive and open spaces that serve as meeting places for people to meet, gather, and socialize. These areas can be public court yards and plazas smaller than 0.5 hectares (1.25 acres) in size, though Markham utilizes an 'Urban Square' classification which serves a similar purpose but is up to 5 hectares (12 acres) in recognition that it can "provide multifunctional flexible space and programming for social gatherings, festivals and civic functions and the recreational needs of a primarily mixed-use neighbourhood." While Brampton does not define a parkette classification, it states that "Neighbourhood Park blocks less than 0.5 hectares (1.2 acres) will only be permitted in exceptional cases and in special situations."

While not contained in any of the reviewed Official Plans, Linear Parks are another typology that is used by some G.T.A. municipalities. These parks typically serve recreational and transportation needs



as corridors, trails, and linkages for the urban open space and parkland system, often supported by associated amenities. Some of the benchmarked Official Plans accommodate such corridors and linkages within their 'Open Space' (or similar) designations.

A few Official Plans, including that of Halton Hills, emphasize that certain parks (particularly at the Community and Neighbourhood level) should consist of tableland park parcels in order to maximize recreational, cultural and social activities that can take place while also minimizing the cost incurred by the Town to construct and maintain facilities within the park. In addition, Official Plan classification systems in Halton Hills, Brampton and Markham establish location criteria that guide the siting of parks by their typology. This is considered to be a best practice so that parks are readily accessible via arterial and collector roads, transit, etc., particularly higher order parks drawing from beyond a single neighbourhood.

Other interesting observations pertaining to siting and design include:

- Markham's Official Plan states that parks should "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 that parks should "be recognizable by the park user as a public and publically accessible park." These policies help define the identity and the parks brand, while maximizing the park user experience.
- Brampton's Official Plan states that Neighbourhood Parks should be "preferably located at the corner of two streets" to maximize frontage and visibility and thus creating a focal point in the neighbourhood. It also envisions "residential development fronting on to the Neighbourhood Park where practical to create visually attractive edges with no dwellings backing onto these facilities." These policies recognize that quality park design and siting align with municipal placemaking and urban design objectives.
- In Brampton, policies also specify that the design of parks should be consistent with municipal guidelines pertaining to accessibility for persons with disabilities, safety (e.g. CPTED) or other design standards.
- Most of the reviewed Official Plans encourage co-location of parks with schools and other major community facilities to allow for shared use of buildings, sports fields and parking facilities. That being said, co-location should be considered as a guideline rather a requirement particularly where the adjacent land use has the potential to generate heavy impacts on the park and thus a greater cost to the Town (for example, heavy use of parks by abutting schools is an issue in many communities as the quality of the park can deteriorate rapidly).

## **Parkland Dedication and Development Policies**

Similar to the Town of Halton Hills, Official Plan policies in each benchmarked community require development proposals to convey 5% of residential lands and 2% for non-residential lands for parkland dedication in accordance with the *Planning Act*. Each Official Plan, with the exception of Milton, has policies referencing an implementing Parkland Dedication By-law that is necessary to permit use of the Planning Act's alternative dedication requirement of 1 hectare per 300 dwelling units.

Notable policies relating to the calculation of parkland dedication include:

- In Burlington, policies specify which Planning Act conveyance standard is to be used according to proposed density. For example, low density residential development (less than 15 units per net hectare) requires 5% dedication while medium density (15 to 50 units per net hectare) and high density (50+ units per net hectare) both require dedication per the alternative rate at 1 hectare per 300 units.
- Markham also ties the alternative dedication standard to density, but also builds in a service level ratio established in its classification system. For developments comprised of townhouse and small multiplex dwellings, the City requires “1 hectare per 300 dwelling units or 1.2 hectares per 1,000 persons, whichever is lesser, provided that in no case shall the conveyance be less than 5 percent of the land proposed for development or redevelopment” and that “where residential development is comprised of apartment buildings containing more than 6 units, 1.2 hectares per 1,000 persons, subject to any dedication adjustment permitted by an implementing parkland-dedication by-law, provided that in no case shall the conveyance be less than 5 percent of the land.”
- Burlington and Markham also establish parkland dedication policies for mixed-use development. Burlington maintains that the residential portion will apply to residential dedication policies and that 2% of parkland is required based on the total non-residential floor area. Markham states that “conveyance requirements are the sum of the parkland conveyances for each individual use.”
- In Markham, the City may accept ‘strata parks’ that are situated above private property, such as over an underground parking garage. Typically such parks are located in mixed-use neighbourhoods as an Urban Square or Urban Parkette, though the value of the contribution to parkland conveyance is discounted relative to non-strata parks due to inherent encumbrances on the use and development of the strata park (the value of conveyance is determined at the discretion of the City).

While the City of Toronto was not benchmarked for this Discussion Paper, its Alternative Parkland Dedication By-Law established alternative parkland dedication rates for priority areas established by the City. This alternative dedication by-law establishes that the City will require the conveyance of 0.4 hectares for every 300 dwelling units. The City of Toronto also maintains that parkland dedication will not exceed 10% of the development area for sites less than one hectare, 15% of the development area for sites one to five hectares in size, and 20% of the development area for sites greater than 5 hectares in size. The City of Toronto maintains that in cases where parkland dedication is not feasible, payment will be accepted in lieu of parkland, but will not exceed the percentage value of the development area for sites as previously specified for land conveyance. It is important to view Toronto’s by-law in the context that reductions to the Planning Act requirement are a function of the City essentially being built-out and land prices per acre are significantly higher than elsewhere in the province.

Across the G.T.A., certain municipalities acknowledge opportunities to gain parkland through bonusing provisions allowed by Section 37 Planning Act. Halton Hills, Brampton, Burlington and Markham were among the benchmarked communities that contain language within their Official Plans regarding use

of bonusing for parkland related purposes, and have been particularly successful in acquiring additional parkland amenities such as pathways, playgrounds, multi-use courts, and conveyance of remnant parcels and natural areas in exchange for additional height and/or density provisions.

## Cash-In-Lieu of Parkland Dedication Policies

Pursuant to Sections 42 and 51.1 of the Planning Act, most benchmarked communities consider accepting cash-in-lieu of parkland equal to the value of parkland required, based on certain situations or criteria. Halton Hills' Official Plan stands out in that it establishes criteria for accepting cash-in-lieu of parkland, while certain others define such criteria through their implementing parkland dedication by-laws.

Typically the municipalities accept payment in instances where:

- Parkland is not required to achieve local provision targets;
- There are existing parks and recreation facilities in the area which will adequately serve the projected population;
- The dedicated parkland fails to provide an appropriate size, configuration, or location, or the dedication would compromise the site, rendering it unsuitable for development.

The amount of cash remitted in-lieu of parkland is calculated based on the value of the land as of the day before the building permit is issued, pursuant to the Planning Act, thereby ensuring cash received reflects the appropriate market rate of the development site (i.e. with land use approvals and infrastructure servicing, etc. in place). The value is based upon the amount of land that would have otherwise been conveyed physically through the Planning Act's parkland dedication requirement or alternative requirement.

The primary objective of having cash-in-lieu policies in place is to ensure that a municipality collects sufficient revenues to acquire parkland that is necessary to meet municipal standards and targeted service levels/ratios. In communities that are reaching build-out of developable greenfield lands, discussions suggest that they are increasingly seeking cash-in-lieu of parkland due to the increasing scarcity of available open spaces; that being said, some municipalities have accepted lands for park purposes in other parts of their community that were under ownership of the developer and will work with applicants if the potential to add onsite parkland exists.

There are a number of methodologies that are used across the province to determine the cash-in-lieu contribution, briefly described as follows.

1. **Fixed Percentage of Land** – this is the simplest way of calculating the payment as it is based on straight application of the Planning Act requirement to convey 5% of residential land and 2% of all other lands, based on the market value of the land the day before the building permit is issued.
2. **Percentage of Land Value** – caps the cash contribution at a fixed percentage of the land value, which is usually less than would be required through the Planning Act. The City of Toronto's Alternative Parkland Dedication By-law caps its cash-in-lieu at 10% of the land value for most higher density developments.

3. **Fixed Unit Rate** – establishes a dollar cap per dwelling unit, usually calculated on the basis of the market value of 1 hectare of developable land divided by 300 dwelling units. A variation of the fixed unit rate is similar to a Development Charge whereby a fixed rate is applied across the board regardless of location within the municipality, usually differentiated by density/unit type, provided that the payment does not otherwise exceed what would be required under the Planning Act.
4. **Persons Per Unit Rate** – establishes a multiplier for one and two bedroom units, based on the estimated market value of the development site or broader area.

## **7.0 Potential Amendments to the Halton Hills Official Plan**

### **Park Type**

The terminology used by the Town to define and differentiate parks in Sections F7.3.3 to F7.3.5 of its Official Plan (i.e. Parkettes, Neighbourhood, Community, and Town Wide) largely **remains appropriate for the future**. The differentiation of parks by function and geographic area served is optimal for a community such as Halton Hills to effectively allocate needed facilities and functional uses to specific park sites that are to be constructed through future land developments. The definitions provide guidance to Town Staff, the development industry and the community at-large as to what types of uses are appropriate as parks are constructed and renewed over time.

Recognizing future growth patterns, the Town should **consider adding language to indicate that Parkette developments will be suitable only in areas of medium and high density, as well as established areas where infill and intensification is the predominant form of development and redevelopment, subject to the discretion of the Town**. Depending upon the ultimate vision for Southwest Georgetown and other Secondary Plans, should greater densification in terms of townhomes, apartments, etc. be envisioned then parkettes or urban squares could play a larger role in quality of life elements. The definitions of Parkettes as contained in the Markham Official Plan could be applied should Halton Hills move towards higher density forms of housing through intensification. Terminology such as 'Urban Squares' or 'Urban Parkettes' may also be considered provided they are interchangeably linked to the existing Parkette classification.

A secondary intent of relegating parkettes to higher density areas is to encourage larger, contiguous parcels of parkland in lower density greenfield areas recognizing that the ability of the Town to acquire Neighbourhood Parks and other parks greater than 1.5 hectares in size will be constrained in the future due to:

- A diminishing supply of developable land to the 2031 planning horizon;
- an inability to secure larger park parcels outside of urban areas due to restrictions imposed by the Greenbelt and other constraints such as the Niagara Escarpment, Highway corridors, etc.;
- and
- the cost of having to purchase parkland beyond what is received through Planning Act dedications to meet needs, particularly when considering costs will be higher in the future due to aforementioned land scarcity and lack of greenfield opportunities.

In addition, the Halton Hills Transportation Master Plan (2011) has emphasized ‘active transportation’ modes as a key component of the overall transportation system, building upon philosophies contained in the Cycling Master Plan (2010). For this reason, the Town should **create a ‘Linear Park’ category** reflecting parklands that are oriented to off-road trailways and/or providing connecting links between other forms of parkland or major community destinations. The Linear Park category would supplement existing Official Plan policies centred upon the municipal trails system and should be viewed as strategic spatial linkages particularly where it is not otherwise possible to do so (and could create connections to other green spaces associated schools, stormwater management ponds, etc.).

## Service Level Ratio

The parkland service target of both Local and Non-Local forms of parkland is 3.7 hectares per 1,000 population, while the existing service level achieved stands at 3.4 hectares per 1,000 (see Table 1) and Planning Act dedications. Through parkland dedications (as outlined in the *Planning Act*, implementing policies in Halton Hills Official Plan and parkland dedication by-law), the Town can generally expect to receive parkland to serve new developments at a rate in the range of 1.2 hectares per 1,000 residents (depending on proposed densities), which is generally sufficient to meet ‘neighbourhood park’ needs, but not ‘community park’ or ‘town park’ needs.

**Table 4: Parkland Dedication Requirements under Hypothetical Development Density Scenarios**

Development Scenario	Low Density Development	Low-Medium Density	Medium-High Density	High Density
Net Developable Land Area	10 hectares			
Density	10 units/net hectare	30 units/ net hectare	100 units/ net hectare	250 units/ net hectare
Persons Per Unit	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.5
Unit and Population Count	100 units, 350 persons	300 units, 900 persons	1,000 units, 2,500 persons	2,500 units, 6,250 persons
Parkland from 5% Requirement	0.5 hectares (5% net coverage)	0.5 hectares (5% net coverage)	0.5 hectares (5% net coverage)	0.5 hectares (5% net coverage)
Service Level from 5% Requirement	1.4 ha/1,000	0.6 ha/1,000	0.2 ha/1,000	0.1 ha/1,000
Parkland from 1:300 Requirement	0.3 hectares (3% net coverage)	1.0 hectares (10% net coverage)	3.3 hectares (33% net coverage)	8.3 hectares (83% net coverage)
Service Level from 1:300 Requirement	1.0 ha/1,000	1.1 ha/1,000	1.3 ha/1,000	1.3 ha/1,000

Table 4 presents hypothetical scenarios applying the Planning Act’s two parkland dedication requirements to low, medium and high density developments across a standard 10 hectare site. The table illustrates the balance that is required to determine the most appropriate conveyance requirement, recognizing a couple of key points:

- the 5% requirement is well suited for lower density developments but as the density increases, the service ratio diminishes rapidly in terms of hectares per 1,000; and
- the 1:300 requirement provides a consistent service ratio across all densities, however, the net site coverage consumes a greater portion of the site as density increases which could make higher density development proposals less feasible.

Regardless of which Planning Act dedication requirement is applied, parkland dedication alone will not be sufficient to extend existing supply ratios to residential growth areas. For example, the assessment of sport field demand (refer to Appendix B) indicates that a large sports park is likely required in order to meet a portion of existing and future field needs unless an existing municipal property such as the Trafalgar Sports Park and/or the Acton Quarry can accommodate a considerable portion of future demands. It is not likely that this park will be provided to the Town through the dedication process (as this would come at the expense of needed local parklands) and alternative acquisition methods will be required. A large sports park could add upwards of 25 hectares to the supply, however, at the current provision target, the Town would still be in a deficit situation that would need to be offset by parkland dedications and possibly alternate parkland acquisition methods.

It is on this basis that the Town of Halton Hills should continue to target an overarching service level in the range of 3.4 to 4.0 hectares per 1,000 population, remaining consistent with existing Official Plan policy and published historical guidelines for parkland service levels. Within this overarching target, however, the Town should differentiate between useable (or core) parkland and non-developable (or adjunct) parkland whereby it strives to attain **a service level ratio of 2.2 hectares of useable parkland per 1,000 population is recommended on a go forward basis** (where 'useable' parkland is defined as developable tablelands with the ability to accommodate active uses, exclusive of building footprints, schools, woodlots, valleylands, etc.).

The proposed service level ratio for useable parkland aligns with the 'useable' portion of Halton Hills existing parkland supply which presently equates in a service ratio of 2.2 useable hectares per 1,000 population. Since it is this 'useable' portion through which a diverse mix of active and passive usage can take place (as it is largely constituted by tablelands), the Town would thus be targeting its existing level of service for future populations in this respect. While a greater service level ratio may continue to be targeted when including non-useable, adjunct or passive parklands (i.e. the overall parks system), shifting the focus of the service level to useable/active parkland recognizes that it will be increasingly difficult for the Town to obtain sufficiently sized parks capable of accommodating broad activities and interests as discussed in the preceding paragraphs and, therefore, the Town will be able to target the parklands that it requires the most.

Further subdividing the useable quantum of parkland, of the total 2.2 hectares per 1,000, a minimum of 1.2 hectares of Local Parkland (i.e. Parkettes and Neighbourhood Parks) should continue to be sought. This would leave 1.0 hectares per 1,000 for Non-Local Parkland categories provided that these are applied in new development areas.

**Accordingly, Sections F7.2.3 and F7.2.6 of the current Official Plan will need to be amended to reflect this new service level ratio.** By focusing on active parkland as a whole, the intent is to bolster the

supply of useable, active tableland in the parks system as a whole as a means to acquire quality parklands that are free of constraints and encumbrances that in turn facilitate the cost-effective development of the park itself.

Such an amendment continues to be in the spirit of the current Official Plan which presently emphasizes that Neighbourhood and Community Parks should primarily consist of tableland. The proposed amendment should also define active parkland in support of its reference in the Official Plan whereby active parkland is tableland parks for active recreation uses and includes (but may not be limited to) land containing: lit and unlit sports fields, tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds, splash pads, BMX/skateboard facilities, etc. Active parkland does not include school sites and excludes valleylands, woodlots, community linkages, natural heritage areas and land for community facilities.

Focusing on active parkland will allow the Town to secure the Neighbourhood and Community Parks that will be essential to serving future residents. While portions of future Town Wide Parks may also contribute to the service level ratio, it is generally recognized that these are well established in Halton Hills and thus their inclusion is only critical where needed to address a major deficit area (such as a sports field complex) or protect a significant natural or cultural heritage area and thus are more likely to be developed strategically or as “one-off” basis.

Furthermore, targeting active parkland based on a defined service level should not be construed as a direction to avoid bolstering the supply of passive or non-tableland parkland as these areas offer significant benefits beyond recreation. The intent is simply that such non-tableland, non-developable parklands should not be part of parkland dedication and builds upon existing Official Plan policy that discourages acquisition of hazard lands and such.

Targeting a service level ratio of 2.2 hectares of active parkland per 1,000 will necessitate a supply of 202 hectares of useable active parkland by 2031, approximately 72 hectares over and above the current supply of useable parkland (based on a 2031 population forecast of 91,885 as articulated through the Region’s Best Planning Estimates).

## **Parkland Dedication and Development**

The Town’s existing Official Plan policies regarding parkland dedication pursuant to the Planning Act remain appropriate despite the ongoing Ontario Municipal Board decision in Richmond Hill and the proposed Bill 73 to amend the Planning Act. There is no basis to recommend policy changes until one or both of these cases are resolved. That being said, the Town of Halton Hills will need to remain apprised of both Bill 73 and the Ontario Municipal Board decisions since either one could mean that: a) taxpayers will be responsible for bearing a higher portion of purchasing needed parklands, assuming that the Town continues to target parkland provision according to current levels; and b) the Town could potentially have less parkland to service future residents.

Learning from other best practices, it is recommended that the Town also explore the following amendments to its Official Plan and/or Parkland dedication By-law as that document is reviewed, along with outcomes of other land use planning processes.

- Add language regarding conveyance requirements for **mixed-use developments**;

- Integrate the **ability to accept ‘strata parks’ or parks above private property** at a discounted conveyance rate in conjunction with Planning Act Section 37 (community benefits through bonusing), in recognition that private lands may become more important sources of providing parkland in the context of growing scarcity of developable land;
- Establishing criteria to **determine when and how to apply Planning Act Section 37 provisions** to permit density bonusing in exchange specifically for additional and/enhanced quality parkland, building off existing criteria in Section G4.3 of the current Halton Hills Official Plan;
- **Associating a service level ratio (e.g. 1.2 to 2.2 hectares per 1,000 residents) to parkland dedication** as the City of Markham has done, potentially using a graduated approach (sliding scale) for higher density areas;
- Establishing criteria to determine **when to take the 5% land conveyance versus the 1 hectare per 300 unit conveyance**, including whether to rely on density definitions and/or to use a sliding scale;
- Building upon the above point, amending Section F7.2.6 of the Halton Hills Official Plan language that specifies that the 5% requirement shall apply only to low density areas (presently defined as up to 20 units per net residential hectare), particularly with low density forms of housing changing with development trends (e.g. lot sizes are becoming smaller and number of units is increasing in many modern low density developments) – residential areas with a greater density may take either the 5% or the 1 hectare per 300 unit conveyance at the Town’s discretion;
- Establishing the preferred model for **calculating the value of parkland dedications**, including whether to implement a fixed unit charge for cash-in-lieu of parkland contributions (which may provide greater cost certainty for the development industry and for the Town), as well as assist the Town in determining when to take land versus cash-in-lieu as noted above;
- Continuing to **coordinate parkland planning and development efforts through secondary plans** to identify sufficiently sized and contiguous blocks of parkland;
- Through Section F6.2 of the current Halton Hills Official Plan (and/or other appropriate Sections), identify the Town’s right to **require dedication of land for bicycle and pedestrian pathways**, as the approval authority considers necessary, under Section 51(25) of the Planning Act; and
- Identifying and encouraging pursuit of parkland securement options beyond parkland dedication (e.g. purchase, lease, land swaps, etc.).

## **8.0 Summary of Outdoor Recreation Facility Needs**

The Town of Halton Hills provides the following major outdoor recreation facilities within each of its parks (note that there are other minor facilities and structures beyond these including seating areas, internal trails, etc.). Inventories are assumed to be current at time of writing.

- 36 soccer fields (including 8 lit fields);
- 28 ball diamonds (including 14 lit diamonds);



- 12 tennis courts;
- 3 community level splash pads;
- 2 community level skateboard parks; and
- 53 playground structures distributed across 43 parks.

In 2014, a high level review was initiated of the parks and recreation facility assessments contained in the Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan (2007). This review was initiated as part of the Vision Georgetown - Southwest Georgetown Integrated Planning Project (SWGIPP), culminating in a Background Report that is appended to this Discussion Paper.

The intent of this Discussion Paper is to verify that the preliminary findings contained in the Background Report remain relevant. The demographic forecasts that formed the basis of the Background Report are generally consistent with population projections available at present time and thus do not alter those assessments. Additionally, the indoor recreation facility supply remains unchanged from that time while outdoor facility inventory has added one new unlit soccer field.

Based upon a review of the SWGIPP Parks and Recreation Background Report, its findings remain valid at present time. With respect to outdoor facility needs, the Background Report identifies the need for the following facilities to meet the forecasted number of residents by 2031:

- 15.5 unlit equivalent soccer fields (i.e. 15 unlit fields, 10 lit fields, 5 artificial fields, or a combination thereof) – note that with the addition of one unlit field in the time since the Background Report was prepared, the present needs amount to 14.5 unlit equivalent fields.
- 10 unlit equivalent ball diamonds (i.e. 10 unlit fields, 7 lit fields or a combination thereof), including two hardball diamonds.
- 7 tennis courts and 6.5 full basketball court equivalents (i.e. for the latter, 6 full basketball courts, 13 half courts, or a combination thereof).
- 1 community level splash pad, 1 community level skateboard/BMX park.

Clearly, the greatest land requirement will be attributable to sports field development if developed to the extent identified above. Through the SWGIPP, the point has been raised to clarify “who we are building parkland for” and potentially cap the number of sports fields recognizing aging population trends, a greater diversity of recreational interests including growing popularity of unstructured pursuits, and growing emphasis towards denser compact communities where the public will have a greater reliance on passive open spaces for socialization and informal play. Ultimately, the exact number of sports fields (and other recreation facilities, for that matter) would need to be rationalized through an update to the Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan and its associated facility needs assessments, recognizing the evolution of the population base and the need to re-engage residents and stakeholders through formal consultations since the Strategic Action Plan is nearly eight years old.

## **9.0 Summary of Indoor Facility Needs**

Based upon a review of the SWGIPP Parks and Recreation Background Report, its findings remain valid at present time (subject to confirmation to an update to the Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan or similar facility needs assessment). However, the Town is beginning to experience capacity pressures on its facilities, particularly those geared to older adults and youth. Town staff expect that the Gellert Community Centre and other community facilities will be able to accommodate these facility needs to approximately the year 2021 based upon present and anticipated participation levels.

After 2021, additional indoor recreation space is expected to be required to meet population growth-related needs, particularly those associated with the southwest Georgetown population. Town staff have also noted that school gymnasium space is becoming more limited due to competing demands on this space. Recently, the Town effectively lost significant access to one school gymnasium. As a result of these factors, it is expected that community space will be required focused on older adults and youth combined with a complementary/companion gymnasium space. This facility could create a community hub possibly combined with a branch library as a recent study prepared by Halton Hills Public Library identified southwest Georgetown as a preferred location for a new branch. Appendix B of this report estimates a minimum 2 hectare site as being required for a new community centre (building footprint of recreational components only).

While one additional indoor ice pad (arena) has been identified as needed in the longer term to meet needs, it is anticipated that such a facility would be located outside of the SWGIPP area.

## **10.0 The Need for a Town Wide Park in Halton Hills**

The need for a future Town Wide Park in Halton Hills will be largely driven by an inability to meet future sports field requirements within existing or planned parks or the need to create a concentration of like-facilities for improved programming, competitions and tournaments. The greatest opportunities through which additional sports fields can be accommodated in Halton Hills are within Neighbourhood and Community Parks developed through the Southwest Georgetown Secondary Plan area, the undeveloped portion of Trafalgar Sports Park, and the Acton Quarry lands (recognizing the latter is only likely to be available many years from now and may not address field needs when required to serve the population). Town Staff have undertaken a process to illustrate how potential sports fields and other facility needs could be addressed as part of preliminary analysis conducted in May 2014 for the secondary planning work, shown in Appendix B.

Town calculations illustrate that soccer field and ball diamonds collectively required by the southwest Georgetown would generate a land requirement of 75 hectares of land. The quantum of land for sports fields alone represents all of the future parkland that would be necessitated by the proposed service ratio of 2.2 active hectares per 1,000, and thus would not meet any other recreational needs beyond field sports. As it would not be in the Town's interest to consume all future land required by the service ratio into a single sports field complex (which would be Non-Local form of parkland), but rather it will be important to ensure good spatial distribution of parkland and thus the Town should strive to

achieve at least 1.2 hectares per 1,000 in Local Parkland with Non-Local Parkland making up the balance to attain the overall service ratio.

Appendix B, however, illustrates that some sports field needs can be accommodated within future phases of Trafalgar Sports Park and Gellert Community Park (i.e. 4 of 15 soccer fields and 3 of 10 ball diamonds). While not included due to the fact that its availability is projected to be many years away, the Acton Quarry is also a critical piece in determining the sports field implementation strategy since it can potentially accommodate 14 sports fields alone; unfortunately, it could be many years until the Town is able to acquire the quarry lands and sports field needs will emerge prior to when the quarry lands become available.

In the event that Trafalgar Sports Park, Gellert Community Park, future parks in developing areas cannot accommodate future sports field needs, and further that existing sports fields in other parks cannot be intensified using lighting, irrigation and/or artificial turf systems, then the Town will need to secure an alternative site(s) through which to provide fields. These could be accommodated through the development of larger Community Parks or potentially a Town Wide Park provided there are four or more sports fields that cannot be accommodated through other means.

## **11.0 Next Steps**

This Parkland Policy Discussion Paper summarizes the provincial framework for parkland acquisition, compares the parkland classification and dedication policies contained in the Halton Hills Official Plan to those in selected benchmarked municipalities, proposes amendments to explore through the Official Plan Review process, and discusses the need for a future Town Wide Park.

The Town's Project Charter (dated February 25, 2015), provided on the following page, identifies the following next steps for the Parkland Acquisition Strategy.

## Town of Halton Hills – Parkland Acquisition Strategy Project Charter

### **Phase One – What We Have, Where We’re Going** *(completed through this Parkland Policy Discussion Paper)*

- Confirm parkland ratios and designations based on other municipal best practices, OMB decisions, and a fair, equitable approach to achieving Provincial, Regional and Town policy objectives.
- Identify need for Town Wide Park(s) based on existing parkland inventory, projected Vision Georgetown requirements, and range of uses outlined in Town’s current Official Plan.

### **Phase Two – Striving for the “Emerald Necklace”**

- Develop criteria and related ranking for Town Wide parkland needs considering such factors as parcel size, location, connections to Town lands and natural areas, cultural significance and key planning constraints (land use compatibility, current OP and OZ designations, feasibility of servicing). The criteria may inform/amend existing Official Plan.

### **Phase Three – Who Owns What**

- Identify ownership of key land holdings within the context of major development initiatives: GTA West Corridor, Trafalgar Road North Widening, Vision Georgetown Secondary Plan, Greenbelt Plan Review (10yr review 2017), Growth Plan (2031-41).

### **Phase Four – Implementation Strategy: How to Get There**

- Determine major steps required to acquire and develop future Town Wide Park
  - Land acquisition budget
  - Scope of studies
  - Timing of approvals
  - Conceptual design and capital construction framework
  - Funding options

### **Phase Five**

- Develop terms of reference for securement approach including landowner approaches, negotiations and terms of purchase(s).

Source: Town of Halton Hills Project Charter, February 25, 2015

## Appendix A: Parkland Supply

Name	Location	Total Area (ha)	Useable Area (ha)
<b>NON-LOCAL PARKLAND: COMMUNITY AND TOWN WIDE PARKS</b>			
Acton Sports Park	Acton	6.27	4.75
Prospect Park	Acton	6.99	6.16
Cedarvale Park	Georgetown	16.32	4.05
Dominion Gardens Park & Old Seed House Garden	Georgetown	4.00	3.12
Georgetown Fairgrounds	Georgetown	9.28	8.4
Gellert Community Park (formerly Georgetown South)	Georgetown	30.19	13.27
Mold-Masters Sportsplex	Georgetown	4.54	2.28
Trafalgar Sports Park	Georgetown	39.97	35.72
Glen Williams Park	Glen Williams	10.90	2.74
Hornby Park	Hornby	5.20	4.57
Limehouse Park	Limehouse	5.90	2.65
Croatian Social & Cultural Centre	Norval	7.05	7.05
<b>Sub-Total: Non-Local Parkland</b>		<b>146.61</b>	<b>94.76</b>
Acton Portion		13.26	10.91
Georgetown Portion		104.30	66.84
Hamlet Portion		29.05	17.01
<b>LOCAL PARKLAND: PARKETTES AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PARKS</b>			
Acton Rotary Park	Acton	3.69	3.69
Birchway Place Parkette	Acton	0.09	0.09
Bovis Park	Acton	1.52	0.62
Danville Park	Acton	0.60	0.22
Greenore Park	Acton	0.81	0.21
McKenzie-Smith Bennett Park (MSB Park)	Acton	2.67	2.67
Rennie Street Park	Acton	2.00	2
Sir Donald Mann Park	Acton	2.00	0.73
Tanners Drive Park	Acton	0.85	0.85
Wallace Street Park	Acton	3.00	1.37
Barber Drive Park	Georgetown	1.34	1.34
Barber Mill Park	Georgetown	0.73	0.33
Berton Boulevard Park	Georgetown	2.24	2.05
Calvert Dale Parkette	Georgetown	0.17	0.17
Danby Road Park	Georgetown	1.76	1.76
Dayfoot Park	Georgetown	0.23	0.23
Delrex Parkette	Georgetown	0.49	0.49
Dr. Charles Best Parkette	Georgetown	0.28	0.15
Durham Street Parkette	Georgetown	0.34	0.34
Eaton Street Park	Georgetown	1.47	1.47
Emmerson Park	Georgetown	1.01	1.01
Ewing Street Park	Georgetown	3.70	0.21
John Street Park	Georgetown	0.58	0.45
Joseph Gibbons Park	Georgetown	2.22	2.22

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Total Area (ha)</b>	<b>Useable Area (ha)</b>
Jubilee Park / Woodlot	Georgetown	3.76	0.8
Kinsmen Parkette	Georgetown	0.16	0.16
Lions Club Park	Georgetown	0.58	0.07
Maple Creek Park	Georgetown	1.72	1.72
Maple Creek Parkette	Georgetown	0.16	0.16
Mary Street Park	Georgetown	0.17	0.17
McNally Street Park	Georgetown	1.72	1.72
Meadowlark Parkette	Georgetown	0.26	0.26
Miller Drive Park	Georgetown	3.15	2.85
Morden Neilson Parkette	Georgetown	0.21	0.07
Remembrance Park	Georgetown	0.49	0.39
Smith Drive Parkette	Georgetown	0.32	0.32
Standish Street Parkette	Georgetown	0.15	0.15
Ainley Trail Parkette	Glen Williams	0.26	0.26
Meadowglen Boulevard Park	Glen Williams	1.26	1.12
Shelagh Law Parkette	Glen Williams	0.15	0.15
Tolton Park	Limehouse	0.90	0
McNab Park	Norval	0.53	0.53
Norval Park	Norval	1.53	1.39
Willow Park Ecology Centre	Norval	2.11	1.57
<b>Sub-Total: Local Parkland</b>		<b>53.38</b>	<b>35.86</b>
		Acton Portion	9.78
		Georgetown Portion	21.59
		Hamlet Portion	4.49
<b>TOTAL PARKS</b>		<b>199.99</b>	<b>130.62</b>

Source: Town of Halton Hills Recreation and Parks Department, 2015

## **Appendix B: Vision Georgetown Parkland Review - Revised (prepared by Town of Halton Hills - July 29, 2015)**

### **Parkland Inventory and Needs**

**Table A -Future Parkland Based on Draft Approved Plans of Subdivision**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Area (ha) Approx.</b>	<b>Location</b>
West Branch Park	1.7	Georgetown
Fernbrook Ph. 3 Parkette	0.3	Georgetown
Upper Canada College Parkette	0.2	Georgetown
Maple Creek Park Ph. 2	0.4	Georgetown
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.6</b>	

\*it is assumed that the other future expansion areas of Norval and Stewarttown will not contribute significantly to parkland areas in this timeframe

**Table B - Potential acquisitions 2015-2031 To Offset Total Parkland Deficit\*:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Area (ha) Approx.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Status</b>
Gellert- Fernbrook Lands	2.8	Georgetown	Option Expires Jan 1/16
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.8</b>		

\* assuming no expansion opportunities at Trafalgar Sports Park or Acton Sports Park and that Acton Quarry Lands (43 ha usable) not available until 2060 (25 years after completion of Phase 4)

**Table C - Potential Outdoor Facility Provision in Future Parkland (Trafalgar Sports Park and Table B)**

<b>Potential Facility</b>	<b>Trafalgar Sports Park (undeveloped portion)</b>	<b>Gellert Phase 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
Soccer	3	1	4
Baseball	3	-	3
Tennis	4	-	4
Splash Pads	1	-	1
Multi-purpose Courts	2	2	4
Skate Park	1	1	2
Playgrounds	2	-	2
Beach Volleyball*	-	-	-
BMX	-	-	-
Off-Leash	-	-	-
Dedicated Special Events Areas	-	-	-

\*Area calculated for tennis at TSP

## Summary Table

Parkland Totals	Area (ha)
Current Usable Parkland	130.62
Draft Approved Parkland (Table A)	2.6
Potential Acquisitions (Table B)	2.8
Assumed minimum local parkland from SWGP*	24.0
Subtotal	160.02
Parkland Requirement to 2031 (91.885) at 2.2ha/1,000 usable	202.0 (usable)
<b>Potential Parkland Shortfall</b>	<b>41.98</b>

\*assumption based on amount of natural heritage areas to be retained, total developable area of SWGP, and density of proposed development.

Parkland generated by the planning area is 24 ha local and 50 ha non-local for a total of 74 ha parkland required based on population of 20,000 and Official Plan ratios of 1.2/2.5 per 1,000 residents.

Average park sizes in Town of Halton Hills: Parkettes 0.2ha, Neighbourhood 2.0 ha, Community 15 ha, Town Wide 30ha.

## Parkland and Recreational Facility Needs

### Department Priorities for Facilities Within Plan Area

Potential Facility	Provision Standard	Total Required per 20,000 Population	Area Required
<b>INDOOR</b>			
Community Centre*			2 ha for 30,000 sq. ft. facility
a) Youth Space	75-90 sq. ft. per 1,000	1,500 – 1,800 sq. ft.	
b) Seniors Space	270-415 sq. ft. per 1,000	5,400 – 8,300 sq. ft.	
c) Single gymnasium (companion program space)	NA	5,500 sq. ft.	
<b>OUTDOOR</b>			
Playgrounds	1 per 500m radius	13	3.25ha
Splash Pads	1 per 4,000 children (0-14yrs)	1	0.15ha
Soccer fields	1 field per 90 participants	15.5**	38.75ha
Baseball diamonds	1 diamond per 100 participants	10	36ha
Tennis Courts	1 court per 4,000 residents	5	1 ha
Multi-purpose Courts (full equivalent basketball)	NA	2	1.28ha
Track and Field (proposed High School)	NA	NA	NA
<b>Total Area Required</b>			<b>82.43 ha</b>

\*= 2 ha parcel recommended in combination with library (10-13,000 sq. ft.), cultural space and/or multi-purpose recreational facility

\*\* = may be 1 major sports field as part of proposed High School



**Potential Park Facilities Recommended by Vision Georgetown (subject to further public comment)**

<b>Potential Facility</b>	<b>Total Required per 20,000 Population</b>
Community gardens (growing spaces)	NA
Urban squares (seating, art, gazebos)	NA
Public gardens (display gardens)	NA
Passive spaces (natural, ecological)	NA

**Vision Georgetown Facilities Recommended Outside of Plan Area**

<b>Potential Facility</b>	<b>Total Required per 20,000 Population</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Twin Pad Arena	1	Population and participant levels
Gymnasium	0.4	Provision of double gym at Gellert Phase 2 addresses Town wide needs to 2031
Skate Park	0.6	Future facility at Gellert Community Park or TSP
Beach Volleyball	-	Future facility at TSP or New Town-Wide Park
BMX	-	Future facility at TSP or New Town-Wide Park
Off-Leash	-	Future facility at TSP or New Town-Wide Park
Outdoor Ice Rink	NA	Future facility at Dominion Gardens or TBD
Dedicated Special Events Areas	-	Future facility at TSP, Acton Quarry or New Town-Wide Park

**Recreational Facilities Not Required as Part of “Vision Georgetown”**

<b>Potential Facility</b>
Indoor Pool
Indoor Artificial Turf
Multi-use field