

16.

PARKS AND RECREATION POLICIES

INTRODUCTION

The City will provide parks and recreation services to meet the general interest and needs of the people of London. The City is responsible for providing facilities and services to meet the parks and recreation needs of the citizens of London.

Parks and recreation is an essential part of the quality of life and living in a city. It is also a key component of Community Vitality – a strategic priority identified in the 2007 – 2010 Council Strategic Plan. Parks include both passive and active park space. Recreation includes a variety of individual and group related activities. A parks and recreation system should provide opportunities to undertake a variety of recreational activities and be designed to satisfy the diverse needs of the population.

These policies provide direction for the provision of parkland and recreation services. Provision is made for a parks classification system to serve the citizens of the City. Each level in the hierarchy serves a different function to accommodate a variety of recreational activities. These policies also indicate the method by which parklands are obtained, and they promote the linkage of parks through pedestrian and bicycle path systems.

To facilitate ongoing parks and recreation planning, a Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be prepared by the City. The Master Plan will be used as a guide by the City, the general public and the private sector, in parks and recreation planning.

(Introduction amended by OPA 438 Dec. 17/09)

16.1.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

- i) Provide parks and recreation services to meet the needs of the entire population.
- ii) Develop an appropriate parks classification system to be used in the provision and development of public parkland.
- iii) Strive towards an accessible and equitable distribution of parks, recreation areas, and services throughout the City and overcome deficiencies where possible.
- iv) Improve the recreational potential as well as the aesthetic qualities of City parks.
- v) Promote the concept of a continuous or linked accessible public open space system.
(Clause v) amended by OPA 438 Dec. 17/09)
- vi) Recognize and develop the Thames River Valley and tributaries as major public recreational resources.

- vii) Ensure that all future park sites are suitable, appropriately located and designed to incorporate the principles of accessible design.
(Clause vii) amended by OPA 438 Dec. 17/09)
- viii) Promote the joint and multi-use of parks and related facilities.
- ix) Provide for public participation in the recreational planning process.
- x) Ensure the use of the City of London Facility Accessibility Design Standards in the retrofit, alteration or addition to existing facilities.
(Clause x) added by OPA 438 Dec. 17/09)
- xi) The provision of recreational opportunities within Environmentally Significant Areas is subject to the policies in Section 15 of the Official Plan. (Clause xi) added by OPA 514 Jan 31/12)

16.2. PARKS AND RECREATION

16.2.1. Jurisdiction The City operates and conducts programs for the Municipal Council by authority of the City of London Bill of 1912 as related to parks, and by the City of London By-law P.U.-38-331 as related to recreation.

16.2.2. Parks Clasification The Official Plan promotes the development of a four-tiered parks classification system in order to effectively match resource with the parks and recreational needs of City residents. These parks and recreation facilities are organized into the following hierarchy: neighbourhood, district, city-wide, and regional parks.

16.2.3. Neighbourhood Parks Neighbourhood parks and playgrounds are intended to be provided and developed in accordance with the following provisions:

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| Purpose and Functions | i) Neighbourhood parks and playgrounds are designed primarily for children's activities. Where there is a large number of other age groups, facilities and programs will be designed specifically to meet the needs of these groups. |
| Service Radius | ii) Neighbourhood parks and playgrounds should be accessible to the majority of neighbourhood residents. The optimum service radius of these types of facilities will be identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. |
| Size | iii) The size of neighbourhood parks and playgrounds will be specified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. |
| General Topography | iv) Neighbourhood parks and playgrounds should be flat and well drained in order to accommodate a variety of neighbourhood recreational activities. Depending on the site characteristics and park space needs, contour variations and vegetation will be retained and enhanced to create an attractive setting. |

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| Location | v) Neighbourhood parks and playgrounds should be centrally located, in order to be within safe and convenient walking distance of the majority of neighbourhood residents. The park will be designed with extensive street frontage for visibility and safety, and where practical and feasible, should be coordinated with public or separate elementary school sites. |
| Activities | vi) Neighbourhood parks and playgrounds should be of sufficient size to accommodate a range of recreational activities, such as, but not limited to, softball, soccer, and informal activities. |

**16.2.4.
District Parks**

District parks and playfields are intended to be provided and developed in accordance with the following provisions:

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| Purpose and Function | i) District parks and playfields should be designed primarily for youths and adults with emphasis on facilities for organized and non-organized sports. |
| Service Radius | ii) The optimum service radius of district parks and playing fields will be identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. |
| Size | iii) District parks and playfields should be large, in order to accommodate a wide variety of recreational facilities. The service standards and size of district parks and playfields will be identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. |
| General Topography | iv) District parks and playfields should be flat, with peripheral contour variations and landscaping provided for visual effect. Sites with topographic variety and tree cover are desirable. |
| Location | v) District parks and playfields should be located centrally to the population being served and should be directly accessible by public transit, automobile and bicycle. Frontage on a major traffic route is desirable with facilities provided for off-street parking. The preferred location is adjacent to existing secondary school sites where possible, in order to maximize the use of public open space and to achieve a complementary integration of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. |
| Activities | vi) District parks and playfields should provide a variety of outdoor and indoor activities, such as, but not limited to, soccer; softball; baseball; swimming; skating and community centre activities. |

**16.2.5.
City-Wide Parks**

City-wide parks are intended to be provided and developed in accordance with the following provisions:

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| Purpose and Function | i) City-wide parks should be developed for the enjoyment of a diverse population including individuals, family groups and community organizations. Opportunities for all types of recreational, social and cultural development will be provided and the preservation of natural environment areas, historic sites and |
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wildlife habitats will be encouraged at this level.

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| Service Radius | ii) | City-wide parks should be accessible to the entire community by means of public transit and automobile. Secondary means of public access in the form of pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths are also desirable. |
| Size | iii) | City-wide parks may vary in size depending on the nature and extent of facilities to be provided. |
| General Topography | iv) | City-wide parks should be developed to take advantage of prominent land forms and natural environment features. These include riverbank areas, stream valley lands, ravine lands, significant tree stands, wetlands, and marshes. Other sites with limited topographic variations and natural environment features may be more suitably developed for major sports activities and special events. |
| Location | v) | City-wide parks should be distributed throughout the municipality and should encompass areas of unique character and significance. |
| Activities | vi) | City-wide parks can be designed for multi-purpose or specialized functions. Multi-purpose parks should offer a wide range of recreational opportunities including but not limited to, picnicking; hiking; swimming; boating; winter sports activities; nature observation; and areas for play. Special-purpose parks should be designed for specialized uses, including municipal golf courses; bird sanctuaries; zoos; marinas; bicycle trails; art galleries; civic centres; botanical gardens; and major sports facilities; and where feasible should accommodate civic and cultural activities. |

**16.2.6.
Regional Parks**

Regional parks and recreation areas are those lands that serve a level of interest greater than the local community. Regional parks can preserve a portion of the natural landscape, supplement recreation facilities available in urban areas, and may also have a special purpose, including tourist recreation attractions and the provision of a single recreation function such as a golf course, ski area, botanical gardens, or racetrack.

**16.2.7.
Park/School
Complexes**

Co-operation with the local School Boards in the sharing of school grounds to supplement the supply of parklands is encouraged. Where feasible, new parkland will be acquired in concert with the acquisition programs of the School Board so that a complementary integration of facilities may be achieved.

Surplus School Sites

- i) In the event that school sites adjacent to park sites are declared surplus by a School Board, City Council may acquire all, or part of, the school site for parkland.

Reduction in Parkland Standards

- ii) Where a neighbourhood or district park is adjacent to a school site, City Council may reduce the amount of required parkland for that area.

**16.2.8
Environmentally
Significant
Areas**

Environmentally Significant Areas identified as components of the Natural Heritage System include lands that are to be maintained in their natural state through appropriate management for the purposes for which they have been recognized. These lands will be subject to the policies of Section 15.3. Details of the management and recreational use of identified ESAs may be contained within a Conservation Master Plan as provided for in policy 15.3.8 of the Plan. (Policy added by OPA 514 Jan 31/12)

**16.2.9
Urban Park**

Urban Parks are intended to be provided and developed in accordance with the following provisions:

Purpose and
Functions

i) Urban parks should be the focal point of the community and developed for the enjoyment of a diverse population including individuals, family groups and community organizations. Opportunities for many types of recreational, social and leisure development will be provided. The park is to satisfy the needs of the local community in more dense areas of the city and will maintain a higher level of design and service.

Service Radius

ii) Urban parks should be accessible to the community by means of public access generally in the form of pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths. Typical service area radius should be less than 800 metres (10 minute walk).

Size

iii) Urban parks may vary in size depending upon the availability of land, the nature and extent of the facilities to be provided, but the minimum size will be 0.25 hectares.

General
Topography

iv) Urban Parks should be flat and well drained in order to accommodate a variety of recreational and leisure activities. These parks are more urban in character and could contain a significant amount of hard surfaces. Depending on the site characteristics and available park space, contour variations and vegetation will be retained and enhanced to create an attractive setting.

Location

v) Urban Parks should be centrally located, in order to be within safe and convenient walking distance of the majority of neighbourhood. The park will be designed with extensive street frontage (50% minimum) and should integrate the street frontage into the design of the park. Where possible the park will be coordinated with other public space.

Activities

vi) Urban parks can be designed for multi-purpose or specialized functions; they are intended to be the focal point of the community. Multi-purpose parks should offer a wide range of recreational and leisure opportunities, ideally for all four seasons.

(Section 16.2.9 added by OPA 517 Feb 21/12)

16.3.

PARKLAND ACQUISITION

The acquisition of parkland to achieve the objectives of this Section of the Plan may occur through purchase, donation, bequest, expropriation, or

through dedication as provided for under the Planning Act. In some situations, particularly where the intent is to contribute to the City's continuous network of parks and open space, land suitable for parkland may also be acquired through joint funding programs between the City and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. In all cases, parkland acquisition projects will require the approval of Council.

**16.3.1.
Methods of
Acquisition**

Council will acquire lands for use as parkland primarily through the following methods: dedication; purchase; donation or bequest; and expropriation.

**16.3.2.
Parkland
Dedication**

Council will, as a condition of the subdivision, development or redevelopment of land for residential purposes, require that land in the amount of 5% of the land proposed for development be conveyed to the municipality for park or other public recreational purposes, pursuant to the provisions of the *Planning Act*.

Alternative Requirement

vii) Alternatively, Council may require the dedication of parkland at a rate of 1 hectare (2.47 acres) for every three hundred (300) dwelling units proposed, as provided for under the *Planning Act*.

Industrial, Commercial Development

viii) In the case of industrial or commercial development, Council may require that land in the amount of 2% of the land proposed for development be conveyed to the municipality for park or other public recreational purposes, pursuant to the *Planning Act*.

Cash-In-Lieu

- ix) Council may require cash in-lieu-of all or part of the required parkland dedication under the following circumstances:
- (a) where the required land dedication fails to provide an area of suitable shape, size, or location for development as public parkland;
 - (b) where the required dedication of land would render the remainder of the site unsuitable or impractical for development; or
 - (c) where existing park and recreational facilities in the vicinity of the site area are, in the opinion of the City, clearly adequate to serve the projected increase in population.

Cash Payment per Dwelling Unit

iv) In the case of residential development, Council may, by by-law, specify the amount of fixed cash payment per dwelling unit. The amount of cash payment shall be amended when deemed necessary to reflect the general rate of land values in the City.

Credit System

v) Where land in excess of the amount of land required for dedication has been conveyed to the City for park purposes in association with a development proposal, the excess may be applied as a credit to future development by the same proponent.

Condition of Dedicated Lands	vi) Land conveyed to the City as part of the required parkland dedication will be expected to meet minimum standards for drainage, grading, and general condition, as contained in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Prior to accepting any lands dedicated for park purposes, the City may require evidence that no environmental contamination has occurred on the lands. In the event that evidence shows that contamination may have taken place on or adjacent to such lands, the City may require that the site be rehabilitated or remediated to the satisfaction of the City and the Province prior to purchasing or accepting the lands. (Clause vi) amended by OPA No. 88 - OMB Order No. 2314 - Approved 99/12/23)
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Acceptance of Ravines, Wooded Areas	vii) Land conveyed to the City as part of the parkland dedication requirement will generally be flat, open land. However, in areas where the need for flat, open land is being met, lands containing features such as ravines, woodlots and other vegetation or variations in topography may be accepted at a rate which reflects their relative development potential.
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16.3.3. Priorities for Acquisition

Priorities for Parkland Acquisition will be based on:

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| Population Densities | i) existing and proposed population densities; |
| Existing Facilities | ii) existing facilities and their accessibility to the neighbourhood residents; |
| Funding | iii) the availability of funds for acquisition; |
| Available Lands | iv) the suitability of lands available for sale; and |
| Acquisition | v) acquisitions which will serve to create a more continuous or linked park system. |

16.3.4. Continuity

Wherever possible, the creation of a continuous linked open space system utilizing linear parks in addition to more traditional block shaped parks will be achieved by:

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| Linked System | i) encouraging continuous, linked park and open space systems in new subdivisions; |
| River System | ii) striving towards a continuous park system along river valley and tributary lands; and |
| Potential Pathways | iii) pursuing the potential use of Hydro corridors, the flood plain, wetlands, drainage courses, minor railway rights-of-way and similar features or facilities as linear parks. |

16.4. GENERAL

**16.4.1.
Pedestrian
Bicycle
Circulation
System**

In keeping with policy 18.2.14. of the Plan, Council will promote the development of a pedestrian and bicycle circulation system which will link parks to residential and other areas by pedestrian paths, sidewalks along certain roads and bicycle routes.

When development and/or redevelopment proposals are submitted for approval and where such proposals are on land that may be desirable for the purpose of linkage to a park, effort will be made to ensure that such proposals are integrated with the system through land dedication or acquisition.

**16.4.2.
Impacts of Major
Facilities Traffic**

Active recreational facilities shall be located and designed to minimize their potential adverse effect on adjacent residential uses. The development and/or redevelopment of recreational facilities will be guided by the following locational and buffering criteria:

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| Traffic | i) the facility will minimize the generation of traffic movements on local streets through residential areas; |
| Accessibility | ii) the facility is readily accessible from major roads; |
| Compatibility | iii) the facility is designed at a scale and in a manner which is compatible with adjacent land uses; and |
| Parking | iv) the facility is provided with adequate on-site, and off-street parking. |

**16.4.3.
Multi-Use
Centres**

This Plan encourages the development of multi-use community centres in the City combining uses such as an arena; library; day care centre; and meeting rooms.

**16.4.4.
Parks and
Recreation
Master Plan**

Considerations that will be taken into account in the planning of parks and recreational facility requirements include:

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| Population | i) population characteristics including density, age breakdowns, ethnic considerations and income; |
| Accessibility | ii) accessibility, including the nature of alternative recreational opportunities in the area and the ability to incorporate the principles of accessible design; |
| Residential | iii) characteristics of residential developments; |
| Parkland Acquisition | iv) opportunities for parkland acquisition in terms of costs and property condition; |
| Public Input | v) public input and expressed requirements; |
| Site Selection | vi) locations having site characteristics which lend themselves to |

- recreational use while being retained in a natural state;
- Type of Space vii) requirements for passive and active spaces;
- Parks by Schools viii) feasibility of locating parks adjacent to school sites; and,
- Alternative Sites ix) availability of alternate park facilities in the vicinity.

**16.4.5.
Review**

To provide more detailed direction for the implementation of the Park and Recreation policies, a Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be prepared and adopted by City Council as a Guideline Document pursuant to Section 19.2.2. of this Plan. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be reviewed and updated from time to time so that it is current with changing trends and priorities.