Park Uses
and Features:

Branding and Community Participation

rParc

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Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Parks are a vital element of Toronto's urban fabric. They function both as open, natural spaces and centers for informal, social activity. More recently, parks have come to function as anchors for urban redevelopment projects. Beyond the health benefits and walking and recreating in parks, parks provide places where residents can interact with their neighbours in a casual, unplanned manner.

The purpose of this report is threefold. First, to provide comments and recommendations on the parks classification system outlined in the draft Parks Service Plan. Second, to explain how citizens can become more engaged in each type of park. Finally, this report contains recommendations as to how the City's park promotion and public information strategy can be improved in a manner that is informed by this new classification system.

The recommendations provided in this report are grounded in the principles of Toronto Parks and Recreation's 15-year strategic plan *Our Common Grounds*, as well as the Parks Renaissance Strategy and Parks Service Plan, which were both informed by the strategic plan. The Parks Service Plan provides a classification system for Toronto's parks, which rParc has used as a starting point for this report. Recommendations for improving the system are also provided. The classification system provides seven park categories. In order to highlight the identifying features of each category, eight of Toronto's park are profiled.

To create a model for citizen engagement in Toronto's parks, rParc has drawn upon literature including the Ladder of Citizen Participation developed by Sherry R. Arnstein. The degree and methods in which citizens can participate in the activities and development of their parks are explained for each park type. The proposed model is designed to meet concerns of both practicality and inclusiveness.

At present, Toronto's parks suffer from a lack of promotion and availability of information to the public. The promotional model proposed in this report uses three primary tools to raise public awareness about the features and activities in Toronto's parks. First, web space should be allocated for all of Toronto's parks. For the more prominent parks (e.g. High Park) these sites should be developed and maintained by Toronto Parks staff. Smaller parks should have web space allocated for use by park community groups. The second tool is an online, searchable database of all the amenities and features provided in Toronto's parks. Finally, on-site signage should be significantly improved, and methods for doing so are provided.

The synthesis of these three elements is vital to the success of Toronto's parks system. User feedback should be used to continually improve the classification system and methods of promotion. In turn, effective promotion of the activities of community groups will make the city's parks even more functional, vibrant, and inclusive. As such, all of the methods recommended in this report should be considered not as ends in themselves but as parts of a complete strategy for the revitalization of Toronto's parks.

1 Background

For a large part of the 19th century, early city planning often focused on the development of built-form using the city as a means to maximize economic production. Urban design was often driven by financial incentives, and consequently lacked civic engagement and public participation in the decision making process. Because cities were built to serve the market, many of the other important aspects that compose a healthy, vibrant city were ignored, leaving many cities lacking the open space and park areas vital to the health of its inhabitants and consequently city living standards suffered.

As Rabare et al (2009) note, the development and popularity of urban parks dates back to the mid 1800's where Frederick Law Olstead and Calver Vaux helped develop the influential Central Park in New York. Following this in the late 1800's, the City Beautiful Movement and the Garden City Movement helped demonstrate the importance of open space in a city context. Kwalski (2009) comments that today's cities are "focused on providing cultural and social benefits that create healthy places for us and other species to live, as well as creating economic success". The emphasis is on creating diverse spaces where people can live, work and play while effectively living healthy lifestyles within an urban setting. Kwalski (2009) also notes that in the past 5 years, many urban development projects in large cities such as Toronto or New York are being led by large park projects. Today, parks and open space have become an integral component in planning for and the design of healthy communities.

Open space and parkland within urban environments provide a range of benefits for a city's residents. For example, Rabare et al (2009) note that urban parks are now viewed as an important part of the broader structure of urban and neighbourhood development rather than just recreation and leisure facilities. They suggest that parks help to "raise property values, create quality townscapes and therefore, build business and community confidence" improving the economic viability of a given community. Parks and open space are also vital to the health of a city's residents. As Potwarka et al (2008) note, recent research has acknowledged the potential of parks as an important element of the built environment for promoting physical activity and reducing obesity, cardio vascular disease and other sedentary or lifestyle related diseases. Degraaf et al (2005), note that the design of cities and neighbourhoods and the utilization of green-space can encourage people to walk often and for relatively long periods of time. Lund (2003), notes that residents are more likely to walk in their neighbourhood if they have a favourable perception of their local environment, including parks and open space. Lund (2003) also suggests that respondents who walk more or engage in park activities are also more likely to engage in unplanned interactions with their neighbours and to form social ties with neighbours. This form of behaviour encourages healthy, safe communities where casual social interaction and physical activity are daily activities.

It is apparent that parks are vital to both the economic and physical health of a community. However, in order for a community to experience these benefits city residents must have equal access to and knowledge about the parks and open space in their community. Residents must be able to access the park, determining where the park is in proximity to their place of residence. They must also be able to access the park using city transportation networks and understand what type of amenities are offered in parks throughout the city based upon specific community and individual needs.

2   Toronto Parks

In July, 2004 Toronto City Council unanimously approved Toronto Parks and Recreation's 15-year strategic plan *Our Common Grounds.* This plan focuses on three strategic goals including Environmental Stewardship, Child and Youth Development, and Lifelong Active Living. In addition to setting these goals, the plan provides 53 recommendations to guide Parks and Recreation into the future and a number of targets to measure progress (City of Toronto, 2004).

2.1   The Parks Renaissance Strategy and Parks Service Plan Initiative

To act on the goals and targets of *Our Common Grounds,* City of Toronto staff from Parks, Forestry and Recreation have developed the Parks Renaissance Strategy. The Parks Renaissance Strategy is a re-investment program which aims to rethink the way that the city organizes and markets its parks to tourists and residents. Ultimately, this will help Toronto's parks infrastructure meet the diverse needs of its residents (City of Toronto, 2006a).

As a part of the ongoing Parks Renaissance Strategy city staff are currently in the progress of developing a Parks Service Plan (PSP). A draft of this plan outlines a classification system for city parks and trails, and sets out parks principles to guide ongoing decision making based on the themes of place making, parks and trails as city infrastructure, equitable access for all residents, nature in the city, supporting a diversity of uses, community engagement and partnerships, and environmental goals and practices.

2.2   Park Types

Toronto's park types were developed with the purpose of providing a foundation for new understanding of the parks and trails systems in Toronto. The classification system will help guide decision making based on seven park principles identified in the Parks Service Plan. The principles are Place Making, Parks and Trails as Infrastructure, Equitable Access for All Residents, Nature in the City, Supporting a Diversity of Uses, Community Engagement & Partnerships, Environmental Goals and Practices.

There are seven park types in the draft classification system, which will be used as an administrative tool to organize the 1,500 parks in Toronto. The park types represent a hierarchical classification system, excluding the Greenways classification, based primarily on size. For the proposed Toronto Park Types see Appendix 1.

2.3   Analysis of External Case Studies

The purpose of the development of park types and the park classification system through the Parks Service Plan in Toronto is to provide a foundation for a new understanding of the City's parks and trails system. This will guide effective, ongoing decision making based on the park principles identified in the Parks Service Plan. As such, a justified and well rounded parks classification system is something that rParc feel is important to the success of Toronto's Parks Service Plan, and parks in general. Using this as a framework we have looked at eleven external case studies of parks classification systems from within Canada and around the world. The locations of these areas of study range from Vaughan, Ontario to Sydney, Australia in order to give a greater, global perspective on how parks classification systems are created and managed. For the complete case studies see Appendix 2. The following is a critical analysis of the external case studies, comparing and contrasting each parks classification system to that

proposed by the City of Toronto. Through this we have identified the most significant similarities and differences for each of three categories (Classification, Promotion, and Civic Engagement) and informed a set of recommendations to be used in the further development of Toronto's proposed park classification system.

2.3.1 Classification Systems

A trend can be seen in the development and implementation of each parks classification system, specifically in the purpose of the creation of the parks classification system. In these cases the classification system was either created to facilitate an inventory for the general public highlighting the city's park features and amenities (Edmonton, Fairfax County, Portland, etc.), or the classification system was created as an administrative tool to preserve and protect natural resources (British Columbia and Idaho).

When analyzing parks classification systems that have been created for the purpose of facilitating an inventory, as discussed above, it seems that their classification types are comparable to those proposed by the City of Toronto. For Example, when Edmonton, Alberta developed their parks classification system, eight types were created. Each of these highlighted key features within each park, taking into account activities, recreational amenities, size, accessibility, and location. Similar types of classification can be seen in Fairfax County, Virginia as well as Portland, Oregon. These classification systems were created based on the uses of the park, the amenities present, recreation and programming, facilities, size and location.

This style of classification differs significantly from those which exist on a larger provincial or state-wide scale in British Columbia and Idaho. The classification systems that have been developed in these cases are concerned only with resource preservation within parklands. The development of these classification systems precede the examples discussed earlier, indicating that these systems were developed in direct response to historical circumstances.

Creating a classification system that categorizes these individual parks into groupings of parklands that share similar characteristics is comparable to what has been proposed by the City of Toronto. Creating a classification system that highlights the amenities and available features, capacity for use and programming, as well as categorizing the parks based on size and location will allow users to gain a better understanding of the opportunities for use of each park.

2.3.2 Promotion of Parks

The internet is the primary source of information sharing for the majority of people today and will be used for park promotion in Toronto. In Edmonton, Alberta the municipality has promoted its classification system through their municipal website, where a city-wide alphabetical parks list is available with corresponding addresses and maps. Using a technologically based means of promotion is not only more visually appealing, but its interactive nature allows the user to gain a better understanding of location of the park in question. Other examples that have been evaluated by rParc that use this kind of electronic inventory means of promotion include Fort Lauderdale, London, Portland,

and Sydney. Some of these cases include a detailed search engine, while some focus more on interactive maps and images.

Unfortunately not all of the case studies have provided good examples of promoting a parks classification to the public. In the case of Fairfax County, Virginia no means of promotion for their parks could be found, only a brochure that details some of the more significant parks of the area. Some case studies provided no example at all of any available parks promotional tools for the general public. Poor examples such as these shed light on the importance of the promotion of a parks as will be facilitated through the Parks Service Plan and the creation of an effective parks classification system.

When comparing these promotional tools to those currently used by the City of Toronto there are clear improvements that can be made to the current promotion of Toronto's parks and the proposed park classification system. By creating a web-based inventory of each park detailing the address, location and accessibility, and amenities provided by each of the parks, as well as providing a search engine for the user based on any of these factors rather than a simple alphabetic inventory, Toronto Parks and Recreation can improve communication between the user and the parks interface.

2.3.3   Citizen Engagement

The relationship between the public and the municipal government differs within each city. As rParc is fully aware of these varying relationships, we understand the importance of discussing a variety of methods for guiding citizen engagement in the development of a parks classification system. A notable example is Edmonton, Alberta where the creation of an Urban Parks Management Plan facilitated public consultation in the development of the parks classification system. A needs assessment was also completed within the municipality by a team comprised of private stakeholders and local residents. In Fairfax County, Virginia public consultation was conducted in three stages, the first being an informal and preliminary meeting, the second being a workshop which is used to help develop a park master plan, and the third being a formal public hearing. An active and robust civic engagement will not only improve the parks classification system itself, but will improve civic engagement in parks overall.

In analysing the external case studies two examples of civic engagement within the parks systems emerged. These two examples can be used as ideas for how to cultivate civic engagement within the City of Toronto and can be used to further develop ideas on how best to encourage residents to become involved in their community. The first example is Portland, Oregon. Within Portland residents have the ability to join or become members of a community garden, a community managed and facilitated garden within the municipality. Portland has made it easy for members to join community gardens, as well as included community gardens as part of their parks classification system. These two provisions encourage residents to become involved in their community and help foster a greater sense of pride, ownership and involvement in their parks. The second example of civic engagement was the ``adopt-a-park`` program within the City of Vaughan, Ontario. Vaughan has made allowances for certain community groups or community stakeholders to financially manage the park to have it function at its full potential, while also appointing park ambassadors and commissioners to oversee the maintenance of each park. Through innovative means, such as these two examples, civic engagement can be bolstered within parks.

2.4   Classification System Recommendations

rParc has reached the following recommendations regarding the draft Parks Service Plan. These recommendations are based on a synthesis of existing Toronto Parks policy with best practices from the eleven external case studies (Appendix 2).

1. The classification system included in the draft Parks Service Plan is generally intuitive and consistent with those described in the external case studies.
2. It is logical to allow size and capacity to dictate park type, with exceptions made where appropriate.
3. Ultimately, parks should be classified according to their purpose, location and programming within the park.
4. Parks should not be limited to remaining in the category assigned to them by this classification system. Through changes to amenities, programming and design that allow parks to reach their full potential, parks should be able to move within the classification system. Thus the classification system can be viewed as fluid rather than as static.
5. The distinction between Destination and City-Wide Parks as currently phrased is problematic. This could be rephrased to state that Destination Parks are visited more by tourists than City-Wide Parks, but also draw a significant number of Toronto residents.

3   Toronto Park Profiles

This study will draw on eight City of Toronto parks that represent the seven park types defined by the Parks Service Plan (two examples of Neighbourhood Parks), as well as representing distinct elements of parks in the city, in order to accurately sample Toronto's extensive network of nearly 1500 parks. They are:

- High Park (Destination Park)
- Earl Bales Park (City-Wide Park)
- Riverdale Park East (District Park)
- Withrow Park (Community Park)
- Dufferin Grove Park (Neighbourhood Park)
- Greenvale Park (Neighbourhood Park)
- Sonyas Park (Parkette)
- The Lower Don Trail (Greenway)

Figure 1 Toronto Park Profile Context Map

3.1 Destination Park: High Park

3.1.1 Location

High Park is located in the west end of Toronto and is bounded by the Queensway to the south, Parkside Drive to the east, Bloor Street West to the north, and Ellis Avenue to the west. High Park is 161 hectares in size.

3.1.2 Amenities and Activities

High Park has an extensive inventory of amenities, which include:

Recreational Amenities:

- Play grounds
- Swimming and wading pools
- Hiking trails
- Bike paths
- Ice rinks
- Tennis courts (private and public)
- Baseball diamonds
- Soccer field

Other Amenities:

- Colborne Lodge (a historical site)
- An outdoor theatre
- High Park Zoo
- Fruit market
- Picnic areas
- Gardens
- Chess house
- Greenhouse
- Fishing ponds
- Nature centre
- Dog park
- TTC service
- Concession stands
- Grenadier restaurant
- Washrooms
- Public telephones

3.1.3 Citizen Engagement

There are numerous community organizations active in High Park. These include: the High Park Community Advisory Council established in 1995; High Park Initiatives, a not for profit organization established in 2003; the Toronto Gardens Department; the High Park baseball association, dating back to 1952; the Howard park tennis club since 1909, The Canadian Stage Company; and The Ontario Foundation for Visually Impaired Children's Forest School, since 1975.

3.1.4 Promotional Strategy

High Park is listed on the City of Toronto website and has a map of the park at each entrance of the park.

3.1.5 Park Supervisor

The park supervisor at High Park is Hellen Sousa who can be reached by telephone at 416-392-6599 or by email at hsousa@toronto.ca.

3.2   City-Wide Park: Earl Bales Park

3.2.1   Location

Earl Bales Park is located on the site of the old York Downs Golf Course in the West Don River Valley. The property was originally owned and settled by John Bales, great-grandfather of Robert Earl Bales and a former Reeve of the township. The historic Bales homestead, built in 1824, remains intact at the north-west corner of the park. The park is large in size and the service area extends across the entire city, accommodating a large number of people of all ages (City of Toronto, 2009a).

3.2.2   Amenities and Activities

Earl Bales Park covers an area of approximately 36 acres and offers 2.81 kilometres of trails and provides an ideal habitat for birds and wildlife (City of Toronto, 2009a).

Amenities provided by the park include:

- The 1,500 seat Barry Zukerman Amphitheatre
- North York Ski Centre
- Earl Bales Woods
- Community Centre Theatre
- Playground and snack bar
- Holocaust Museum

3.2.3   Citizen Engagement

Earl Bales Community Day Camp is a community run, not for profit day camp designed to meet the needs of four to ten year old children. The camp is a cooperative effort between a volunteer parent committee and the Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation department. The camp offers a wide variety of activities for children with the help of community volunteers, artists and performers. Further information and registration for the Day Camp can be accessed from the Earl Bales Community Day Camp website: http://www.earlbalesdaycamp.ca/earlbalescampprogram.html.

3.2.4   Promotional Strategy

In addition to the listing on the City of Toronto website, Earl Bales Park has a separate website for accessing more information about the park's Ski Centre. The Community Day Camp also operates their own website for people wishing to gain further knowledge about programming and for online registration purposes. Park information in a brochure is also available and promotes the park to citizens from all over the city (City of Toronto, 2009a).

3.2.5   Park Supervisor

The park supervisor at Earl Bales is Trish Power and can be reached at telephone number 416-395-7989.

3.3 District Park: Riverdale Park

3.3.1 Location

Riverdale Park is located along the Lower Don River, bounded by Cabbage Town to the west and Broadview Avenue in Riverdale, commonly referred to as East China Town, to the east. A foot bridge connects the east and west sides of the park, crossing over the river, Don Valley Parkway, Bayview Avenue, and railroad tracks. The footbridge also connects the parks to the Don Valley trail system.

In 1990, a grassy slope on the North-Eastern edge of the park was planted with trees. What used to be a typical city park with mowed grass fields was turned into a forested slope and a small wetland. This slope reforestation was the first effort by the Task Force to Bring Back the Don. (City of Toronto, 2009b).

3.3.2 Amenities and Activities

Recreational fields for soccer and baseball are available on both sides of the river with a swimming pool, tennis courts and outdoor hockey rink to the northeast, as well as a running track in the centre of the eastern side of the park. There is a monument to Sun-Yat Sen on the eastern edge of the park. On the north-west side of the park is Riverdale Farm which is a city operated farm. The Don Valley Parkway runs through the middle of the park, beside the river. Trails have been built along the highway for joggers and cyclists although there is no real exit from the trails which causes problems. The Friends of Riverdale Farm host multiple programs such as pottery classes, Tai Chi, and summer camps for children (Friends of the Riverdale Farm, 2009).

3.3.3 Citizen Engagement

The primary use of Riverdale Park is neighbourhood sports but it is also widely used by dog owners and recreational users for relaxation purposes. The park is also part of the Restoration Taskforce of Bring Back the Don, and has been added to the City's Community Stewardship Program. Riverdale Park also has a farmers market that operates every Tuesday from May 12th to October 27th, and is organized by the Friends of Riverdale Farm (Friends of the Riverdale Farm, 2009).

3.3.4 Promotional Strategy

Riverdale Park is advertised on community boards and currently has its own community website: http://www.friendsofriverdalefarm.com/programs.htm. The website is maintained by local community members and the organizers of the farmers market. A park profile for Riverdale Park is also available on the City of Toronto's website.

3.3.5 Park Supervisor

The park supervisor for Riverdale is Mark Hawkins. He can be contacted at telephone number 416-392-1758.

3.4   Community Park: Withrow Park

3.4.1   Location

Withrow Park is located one block south of an area known as Greek Town on Danforth Avenue between Carlaw Avenue and Logan Avenue. The park is easily accessed by transit, the closest subway stops are Chester and Pape on the Danforth Line.

In February 2004, community organizations held a meeting to discuss issues and set goals regarding the future of Withrow Park. The three main points of discussion were: children and youth, greening and lighting, and dogs.

3.4.2   Amenities and Activities

Withrow Park has many sports facilities, including:

- Football Field
- Baseball Diamond
- Bocce Court
- Ice Rink
- Pool
- Tennis Court

3.4.3   Citizen Engagement

Withrow Park is a focal point of the community, this is demonstrated by the popularity of the farmers market that takes place every Saturday morning.

3.4.4   Promotional Strategy

Withrow Park is advertised on community boards and has its own community website: http://www.withrowpark.ca. The website is maintained by the organizers of the farmers market and is regularly updated. In contrast, the City of Toronto's website does not mention the farmers market and was last updated in 2004.

3.4.5   Park Supervisor

The park supervisor is Sandy Straw and can be reached at telephone number 416-392-1918, fax number 416-392-0049, or by email at sstraw@tornoto.ca.

3.5   Neighbourhood Park: Dufferin Grove Park

3.5.1   Location

Dufferin Grove Park is located at 875 Dufferin Street, between Boor Street and College Street (Project for Public Spaces, 2009). Specifically, Dufferin Grove Park is bordered by Sylvan Avenue to the south, Havelock Street to the east and Dufferin Park Ave in the north.

3.5.2   Amenities and Activities

The park is 14.2 acres in size an offers a wide range of services and amenities (Friends of Dufferin Grove Park, 2009). Some of the most popular amenities include: skating rink, bread and pizza oven, theatre, playground, wading pool, baseball diamond, basketball court, chess and checkers, card playing, and gardens and shady areas (Friends of Dufferin Grove Park, 2009).

3.5.3   Community Involvement

Dufferin Grove is easily accessible by public transportation including the Dufferin subway station and the Dufferin bus (Project for Public Spaces, 2009). Dufferin Grove is a neighbourhood park and has a strong connection with the community. A community group, called Friends of Dufferin Grove Park, handles matters pertaining to the park and has approximately 80 to 100 members (Friends of Dufferin Grove Park, 2009).

3.5.4   Promotional Strategy

The Friends of Dufferin Grove Park have created a website advertising the park and the activities taking place there. A monthly newsletter is also available online, which includes information regarding farmers markets, sports activities, and arts activities. The website is updated regularly and is a valuable promotional tool for the park. The City of Toronto website also offers information regarding activities at the park, most notably the organic farmers market.

3.5.5   Park Supervisor

The park supervisor is Peter Leiss and can be reached at telephone number 416-392-4758 or by email at pleiss@tornoto.ca.

Dufferin Grove Park also has a website: www.dufferinpark.ca, a direct telephone number: 416-392-0913, and an email: mail@dufferinpark.ca .

3.6   Neighbourhood Park: Greenvale Park

3.6.1   Location

Greenvale Park is located in Scarborough on Greenvale Terrace (Kingston Road and Markham Road) in a newly developed residential neighbourhood.

3.6.2   Amenities and Activities

Amenities in Greenvale Park, while limited, provide opportunities for both active and passive uses. These amenities include:

- Playground
- Sand Pit
- Baseball diamond
- Park benches

3.6.3   Citizen Engagement

Greenvale Park provides many opportunities for citizen engagement and use by a neighbourhood with a diversity of citizens. The abundance of green space allows for an array of recreational activities, such as picnics, informal sports, walking dogs, or other passive uses. Greenvale Park is well lit at night and encourages use day and night. The playground and benches encourage social interaction between children and parents. Greenvale Park allows many groups of people to use the space, including cultural activities.

3.6.4   Promotional Strategy

No promotional tools have been used for Greenvale Park. One sign identifies the park by name.

3.6.5   Park Supervisor

The park supervisor for Greenvale Park is Gary Robinson and can be contacted by telephone at 416-392-4002.

3.7   Parkette: Sonyas Park

3.7.1   Location

Sonyas Park is located on Oxford Street between Augusta Avenue and Spadina Road in the Kensington Market area. It is situated between two residential lots that sit on the eastern and western borders of the park. Sonyas Park is the approximate size of a single detached residential lot. Sonyas Park was chosen as an example of a parkette because it encompasses the limited amenities typical of Toronto parkettes as set forth in the Parks Service Plan Fact Sheet, while promoting the distinct community identity of the Kensington Market Area.

3.7.2   Amenities and Activities

For its small size, Sonyas Park offers a variety of amenities that help contribute to a community atmosphere within the park. The eastern edge of the park is bordered by a stone wall that is decorated with artistic graffiti representative of the diverse Kensington Market area. Well maintained playground equipment and park benches encourage family oriented activities while a small community garden provides residents with a community meeting place and the chance to meet local residents.

3.7.3   Citizen Engagement

Sonyas Park is associated with the Green Cultural Festival, the annual fundraiser for the Kensington Community Garden Association, as well as being the location for the 10th annual Kensington Market Community Garden Association meeting.

3.7.4   Promotional Strategy

While the park does not provide any marketing tools itself, online resources can be found through other agency websites that advertise the community garden and other annual events that take place in the park.

3.7.5   Park Supervisor

The park supervisor for Sonyas Park is Mark Emslie and can be contacted by telephone at 416-392-1759.

3.8   Greenway: The Lower Don Trail

3.8.1   Location

The Lower Don Trail, also known as Lower Don Parklands or Don Valley Brickworks East District, is located in the community of East York at Taylor Creek and E.T. Seton parks, at the fork of the Don River. The Lower Don Trail is 63 acres and can be accessed through Moore Park and Rosedale Ravines. The Lower Don Trail is also accessible from the pedestrian bridge in Riverdale Park. Don Mills Road, Bayview Avenue, Beechwood Drive, Pottery Road, and Lakeshore Boulevard provide road access. The trails run the length of the land, totalling 5.74 kilometres from Don Mills Road to Riverdale Bridge, and 2.26 kilometres from Riverdale Bridge to Martin Goodman Trail (at the Waterfront). The Lower Don River has been an important area in Toronto's history, serving as a place of settlement, agriculture and industry (City of Toronto. Parks, Forestry & Recreation, 2009b). The Don Lands have been the subject of public attention surrounding the revitalization and reconnect of the natural habitats of the area. The Lower Don Trail will, in the future, also intersect the Waterfront Toronto West Don Lands Precinct Plan and the planned Don River Park (Waterfront Toronto, 2006).

3.8.2   Amenities and Activities

- Trails run the length of the land, totalling 5.74 kilometres from Don Mills Road to Riverdale Bridge, and 2.26 kilometres from Riverdale Bridge to Martin Goodman Trail (at the Waterfront).
- Flows from the Forks of the Don (the confluence of the East and West Don Rivers and Taylor Creek) to Lake Ontario.
- The Don Lands have been the subject of public attention with regard to the revitalization and reconnection of the area's natural habitats.

3.8.3   Citizen Engagement

There a number of community groups and cycling groups who have taken initiative to protect and promote the Don Valley Trail system, they include:

- Don Valley Trail Users Club DVTUC - www.donvalleytrails.com
- Task Force to Bring Back the Don

3.8.4   Promotional Strategy

The Trail is listed with a description on the City of Toronto website, but this information is not easily accessed. Signs indicating the trail's location are found on roads and right-of-ways near access points to the area.

3.8.5   Park Supervisor

There is currently no park supervisor or public contact person for the Lower Don Trail. Access Toronto suggests contacting the general parks inquiry line at 416-392-1111.

4   Citizen Engagement

4.1   Methods

4.1.1   *Literature Review*
Integrating Parks and People: How Does Participation Work in Protected Area Management?

Article Summary

Mannigel's (2008) article *Integrating Parks and People: How Does Participation Work in Protected Area Management?* discusses the practice of public participation in the planning and management of natural parks. The article first lays out a theoretical continuum of different levels of public participation, starting from the least public participation to the most public participation.

The different levels are as follows (Mannigel, 2008, p. 500):

- **Level A** - almost no public participation in the managing of parks occurs when an institution separate from the community such as the planning department, is responsible for the management of the park.
- **Level B** – some public participation occurs when information is sent to local stakeholders by the institution responsible for the management of the park.
- **Level C –** more participation occurs when local stakeholders seek out information from the institution responsible for the managing of the park.
- **Level D** – even more participation occurs when the institution managing the park actively consults and exchanges views and opinions with public stakeholders regarding issues of the management of the park.
- **Level E** – yet more occurs when local stakeholders are able to take part in the decision making process of the management of the park through negotiation with the institution responsible for the management.
- **Level F** – still more participation occurs when a formalized decision-making structure, such as a managing council, is created, to involve both local stakeholders and the outside institution responsible for the management of the park. They then share the responsibility of the management of the park.
- **Level G** – the greatest level of participation occurs when local stakeholders take over the primary responsibility of the management of the park.

Using three case studies of three parks from Brazil, the *Caparao National Park*, *Rio Doce State Park* and *Mata Do Sossego Private Reserve*, the article illustrates how each of these levels of participation can been used. The article explains the advantages of the different levels of public participation according to the amount of participation desired depending on the issue.

The examples include situations at all levels of participation (Mannigel, 2008, p. 505-507).

- **Level A** was used in *Caparao National Park* to create new boundaries for the park.
- **Level B** and C were practiced initially in *Rio Doce State Park* in the planning process.
- **Level D** was used in the development of the *Rio Doce State Park* in the creation of the new management plan.
- **Level E** was used in the creation of *Rio Doce State Park* forest fire management plan.
- **Level F** was used in *Caparao National Park* for the implementation of new environmentally sound agricultural practices.
- **Level G** was used in *Mata Do Sossego Private Reserve* for the planning and implementation of specific tasks such as training courses, shared work on plantations and support for local institutions.

The article goes on to say that the desired level of public participation varies according to the stakeholders and their prior contact with the park, education level and their social organization. Furthermore, institutional stakeholders tend to be more interested in participating in the management of parks at a higher level than local citizens are, especially when the park management areas affect those intuitions directly (Mannigel, 2008). The article also states that in order to reach higher levels of participation, it is necessary for the staff member(s) from the institution responsible for the management of the park to have local knowledge of the area and build personal relationships with the stakeholders, which includes the residents and businesses in the area (Mannigel, 2008). Finally, the article suggests that higher levels of public participation occur when participation is considered an end in itself designed to empower local stakeholders rather than a means to the goal of satisfying the requirement of involving the public (Mannigel, 2008).

Relevance of the article to the planning process of City of Toronto parks

rParc, in the creation of a model for citizen engagement for Toronto inner city parks can learn from the way that Brazil has employed the various levels of public participation in their park planning process. First, the different levels of public participation and the timing of implementation of participation has been shown through the case studies. Higher levels of engagement are not appropriate when there are too many interests to be represented on a stakeholder management council, or if only a small portion of all the interests would be served if the local community had primary responsibility for the management of the park. Lower levels of public participation should be used if the public has only a small amount of interest in participating in the planning of the park or none at all. However, higher levels of public participation are not appropriate when there is a great interest in the planning of the park and there are not so many interests that all cannot be represented on a council or in a negotiation meeting or all those interested parties could not be represented in the local community group responsible for the management of the park. To conclude, different levels of public participation should be given to different types of parks because of their different purposes which in turn, attract different stakeholder groups with different interests. Therefore, with respect to the seven park types, Destination Park, City-wide Park, District Park, Community Park, Neighbourhood Park, Parkette, and Greenway, designated in the draft Park Service Plan each park type should be given a different model to appropriately engage

public participation. Finally, different levels of public participation can be used for a number of aspects of the management of a park. For example, a park that is managed by a government appointed organization can have a community organization responsible for the community gardens inside the park.

Governing national parks in Finland: the illusion of public involvement

Article Summary

The Grönholm (2009) article *Governing national parks in Finland: the illusion of public involvement* discusses the practice public participation in the planning and management of national parks in Finland. The article briefly discusses the general characteristics of the proper process of public participation and explains that good public participation should be "credible and legitimate, showing respect and an authentic willingness to learn from the public by seeking out and valuing local knowledge and experiences and be competent and information driven, it being critical for all people to have a fair and just opportunity to participate and be heard" (Grönholm, 2009, p. 236). It goes on to say, as the title suggests that while Finland claims to practice participatory planning and to use public participation in the development of plans for managing their national parks, the actual public participation in the planning process is very limited . The article explains that the Natural Heritage Service (NHS), a department under the *Metsällitus*, the Finnish Administration of Forests, is responsible for the administration and management of all the country's national parks (Grönholm, 2009). The NHS is not legally obliged to practice participatory planning (Grönholm, 2009) but chooses to adhere to the *Metsällitus* policy of involving local stakeholder participation in an open and interactive process of creating management plans for each individual national park (Grönholm, 2009). The NHS attempts to achieve participatory planning through a variety of means. The NHS holds public meetings as a plan for a park is being drafted (Grönholm, 2009). Steering groups comprised of key stakeholder groups are created to support the professional planners creating the plan (Grönholm, 2009). Comments regarding the plans are solicited from as many stakeholder groups as possible and online services are provided for citizens and stakeholders to make comments about the plan (Grönholm, 2009). The article goes on to say that while these means of practicing public participation appear to work, an issue of communication exists, preventing proper participatory planning from occurring (Grönholm, 2009). The article uses the case study of Archipelago National Park (ANP) and a survey conducted between April and June 2006 of the public participation in the creation of the management plan for the ANP, to articulate this issue (Grönholm, 2009). The results of the survey revealed that the local stakeholder participation in the preparation of the management plan was relatively non-existent (Grönholm, 2009). The study revealed few local inhabitants or local nature tourism entrepreneurs, who comprise the majority of the local stakeholder, were aware that they had the opportunity to contribute in the planning process (Grönholm, 2009). Even if they were aware of their opportunity to contribute, few citizens were able to participate because they had no prior knowledge of the management plan, which was a requirement to participate (Grönholm, 2009). The survey went on to reveal that the main reason for the lack of public participation was a lack of information distributed to the stakeholders informing them of the topic (Grönholm, 2009). Furthermore, among the few who did receive information on the topic, it came in the form of a large pile of paper, delivered by mail and was not deemed to be adequately informative (Grönholm, 2009). Other reasons for poor participation, as expressed in the article, include

stakeholders' perception that their input would not be valued; the antipathy of stakeholders toward the ANP due to their differences in goals and values; and stakeholder fear that public involvement would simply mean a linear form of communication, whereby attending a public meeting would simply be a lecture on the plans by the administrator (Grönholm, 2009). Finally, the article recommends that communication between the NHS, stakeholders and citizens could be improved by more open discussion and personal contact and face-to-face meetings which would in turn improve public participation in the management planning of Finland's national parks (Grönholm, 2009).

Relevance of the article to the planning process in City of Toronto parks

rParc, in the creation of a model for citizen engagement for Toronto's parks, can learn from the mistakes that the NHS in Finland has made, specifically in the way in which they involved stakeholders in the planning process when creating the ANP management plan. First, local citizens, stakeholders and others, such as park users, should be involved in the park's planning process; initially by being informed of the fact that a plan is under consideration; that interested parties would be given an opportunity to participate in the planning process; and the specific means by which they may contribute to that process. Second, local citizens and stakeholders need to be given proper notice of the time and the place where they may contribute to the planning process. This information should include the meetings of steering groups, public meetings, surveys, online forums and any other methods deemed useful by planners. Third, before being asked to become involved, the public should be provided with an easy-to-read and easy-to-understand package of all information relevant to the plan and the issue that may be involved, in order that their input can also be relevant. They should also be provided with a contact where any questions that might arise concerning the information could be answered. Furthermore, at the beginning of a meeting, a brief overview of the information should be given to confirm the understanding of the issue by all participants while avoiding structuring this as linear communication as discussed above. Fourth, during the meeting the public should feel that their input is being listened to, respected and will influence the final plan. Fifth, follow-up should be done following any meeting to inform the public of the results of that meeting and the next steps that will be taken in light of the input from the meeting. Finally, everyone who would like to be involved in the process should be allowed to do so without the requirement of prior knowledge of the plan but those who do not wish to be involved in the planning process should not be required to participate in it.

The Planner in the Garden: A Historical View into the Relationship between Planning and Community Gardens

Article Summary

In recent years, Community gardens have gained more recognition as a legitimate tool to be used when planning a healthy, vibrant community. However, as Lawson (2004) notes in her article *The Planner in the Garden: A Historical View into the Relationship between Planning and Community Gardens*, the idea of communal land has actually been around since the late 1800's. Her article, which provides a historical analysis of the role of community garden programs in the United States, reveals a complex relationship between community gardens and the planning profession, and two contrasting perspectives. First

Lawson demonstrates that because community gardens are often thought of as temporary and opportunistic, they can be ignored in long range planning. However she also notes that successful community gardens can encourage local community participation and engagement and can help serve environmental, social and individual objectives. As such it can be beneficial to examine the history and changing dynamics of community gardens in an urban context.

Lawson (2004) begins by demonstrating the history of and the changing role of community gardens. For example she notes that community gardens have served as a means of unemployment relief through vacant lot cultivation, how they have served as a method of education through gardening or what came to be known as The School Garden Movement, and that during the first world war they were used to supplement domestic food needs in order for more food to be exported to Europe. However, Lawson also argues that community gardens have been used a means to achieve multiple social agendas such as community participation often serving as a focal point for community activism.

Lawson (2004) notes that community gardening became significant again during the 1970's in that it presented new ways for planners to consider advocacy planning and the idea of community open space. For example, she notes that "rather than conceptualize planners as technicians working toward proscribed ends, advocacy planning promoted proactive attention to the particular concerns of certain social groups and neighbourhoods" (Lawson, 2004, p.19). She also notes that the "concept of community open space that emerged identified the importance of user-initiated recreational spaces, with community gardens often serving as the model" (Lawson, 2004, p.19). Lawson shows that community gardens were often seen as a way to inspire other types of civic activism, such as clean streets and neighbourhood watch programs and in many cases the success of a community garden depended on the degree of community involvement.

Finally Lawson notes that community gardens continue to influence strategies for community development, particularly in low-income neighbourhoods. She states that "the community garden is associated with multiple far-reaching benefits, including environmental restoration, community food security, economic development, public health, and cultural expression" (Lawson, 2004, p.19), while to some the community garden "remains a place to grow food, to meet neighbours, or to participate in recreation" (Lawson, 2004, p. 20).

Relevance of the article to the planning process in City of Toronto parks

Community gardens not only require cultivation and maintenance by local residents but can provide a platform for a community to voice other personal and social needs, thereby serving larger social, economic or environmental objectives. As such community gardens can help generate community participation as well create connections between local residents and public spaces. Ultimately community gardens should be planned by the community in which they are located. This requires a high degree of participation on behalf of the community as well as promoting communication between local government and city residents. As Lawson notes, community gardens are important in that they are spaces which are created by the users and help planners pay particular attention to the needs of specific social groups and neighbourhoods. Ultimately aspects of this theory can be applied to the creation of a

participatory approach for the City of Toronto Parks system, such as the notion of user created spaces that promote public participation, encouraging civil pride and developing an ongoing system of engagement between community members and the local government throughout the planning process.

4.2   Implementation

4.2.1   Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

Determining the appropriate level for citizen engagement in any policy decision making paradigm is a daunting task. There are a number of concerns to be addressed regarding not only the level of citizen engagement necessary to achieve optimal performance but also the level of control that citizens should be delegated. Sherry R. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation outlined in her article *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* has acted as a method of evaluating levels of citizen engagement since its formulation in 1969. In this article Arnstein has created a visual representation of an appropriate breakdown of not only the level of citizen participation required, but the amount of power delegated to citizens at each level. As citizen engagement moves higher up the ladder there is not only more citizen engagement but responsibilities and control in decision making by citizens is also increased.

The Ladder itself consists of eight levels of citizen participation ranging from, lowest to highest (Arnstein, 1969, p. 218-223):

1. Manipulation - The bottom rung of the ladder. An illusionary and distorted form of participation where people are placed in advisory committees or advisory boards in order to educate them or generate support.
2. Therapy – A dishonest form of participation where administrators assume that powerlessness is the same as mental illness. When involving citizens in planning the administrators subject the participants to a form of clinical group therapy to cure them of their pathology rather than changing the problems that create it.
3. Informing – A top down form of participation where there is no opportunity for feedback or power for negotiation. Although citizens are informed of their rights, responsibilities, and options. When this opportunity is provided late in the planning stages there is little chance for citizens to influence the program designed for their benefit.
4. Consultation – A form of participation where attitude surveys, neighbourhood meetings, and public hearings are used but offers no guarantee that their ideas and concerns will be taken into account unless paired with other modes of participation. In this form of participation, participants are viewed as statistical abstractions and can be used as proof that the power holders have involved people.
5. Placation – A form of participation where citizens begin to have a little more influence, although it is a strategy that employs methods of hand picking participants where people who disagree can easily be outvoted or ignored.
6. Partnership – A form of participation where power is redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders and an agreement is reached to share planning and decision-making responsibilities through policy boards, and planning committees.

7. Delegated Power – A similar for of participation as partnerships but can also result in citizens becoming the dominant decision-making authority over a particular plan or program and hold a significant level of accountability.

8. Citizen Control – A full form of participation where citizens obtain control and power to govern a program or institution where participants can negotiate the conditions under which others may change them.

As the names of each category suggest moving higher up the ladder of participation will result in more control being delegated to the citizen. Using Arnsteins Ladder of Citizen Participation rPARC has outlined the levels of public engagement appropriate for each park type in the City of Toronto's classification system. The following chart illustrates the relationship between the City of Toronto park types, potential appropriate methods of citizen engagement and Arnstein's Ladder of Public Participation:

4.2.2   Citizen Engagement Model for Toronto Parks

Park Type	Degree of Participation	Method(s) of Participation	Description
Destination Park (High Park)	Consultation and Information	Consultation Meetings, Surveys, Internet Forums, Information Sessions, Information Documents	Citizens from across the city are given the opportunity to influence parks by having their opinions heard. However, ultimately the plan is created by a separate decision making body that is able to consider the interests of those unable to be represented in consultation forums. The citizens should be informed of the final park plan following its completion through information sessions and information distributed electronically as well as in print documents such as newspapers and flyers.
City-wide Park (Earl Bales Park)	Consultation and Information	Consultation Meetings, Surveys, Internet Forums, Information Sessions, Information Documents	Citizens from across the city are given the opportunity to influence parks by having their opinions heard. However, ultimately the plan is created by a separate decision making body that is able to consider the interests of those unable to be represented in consultation forums. The citizens should be informed of the final park plan following its completion through information sessions and information distributed electronically as well as in print documents such as newspapers and flyers.
District Park (Riverdale Park)	Placation and Information	A taskforce of stakeholders representing all interest groups to inform decision making. Information sessions and documents inform the public.	Local citizens and other park users from outside the local community are given the opportunity to influence parks directly. A taskforce will represent the interests of all stakeholders allowing citizens to contribute to park initiatives, programming, maintenance, and planning by communicating their values, opinions and concerns to the decision makers and planners. The decision makers will then create park plans incorporating citizen input in the design.

			Citizens are informed of decisions through information sessions and the distribution of information online and in print.
Community Park (Withrow Park)	Placation and Information	Taskforce of stakeholders representing all interest groups to inform decision making. Information sessions and documents inform the public.	Local citizens and other park users from outside the local community are given the opportunity to influence parks directly. A taskforce will represent the interests of all stakeholders allowing citizens to contribute to park initiatives, programming, maintenance, and planning by communicating their values, opinions and concerns to the decision makers and planners. The decision makers will then create park plans incorporating citizen input in the design. Citizens are informed of decisions through information sessions and the distribution of information online and in print.
Neighbourhood Park (Dufferin Grove Park)	Partnership/ Delegated Power	A decision making body comprised of citizens that create the park plan. Special tasks can be delegated to a citizen group for implementation.	Local citizens are given the ability to influence parks based on their values, opinions, and concerns. Local citizens' interests should have a direct impact on parks, including programming, activities and maintenance. However, a representative of the city should help guide the planning process through consultation. Citizen groups should be delegated the responsibility of implementing specific tasks within the park.
Parkette Park (Sonyas Park)	Partnership/ Delegated Power	A decision making body comprised of citizens that create the park plan. Special tasks can be delegated to a citizen group for implementation.	Local citizens are given the ability to influence parks based on their values, opinions, and concerns. Local citizens' interests should have a direct impact on parks, including programming, activities and maintenance. However, a representative of the city should help guide the planning process through consultation. Citizen groups should be delegated the responsibility of implementing specific tasks within the park.
Greenway (The Lower Don Trail)	Consultation and Information	Consultation Meetings, Surveys, Internet Forums, Information Sessions, Information Documents	Citizens from across the city are given the opportunity to influence parks by having their opinions heard. However, ultimately the plan is created by a separate decision making body that is able to consider the interests of those unable to be represented in consultation forums. The citizens should be informed of the final park plan following its completion through information sessions and information distributed electronically as well as in print documents such as newspapers and flyers.

4.2.3 Rationale

Citizen engagement in the planning of parks helps to create a sense of pride and ownership among local community members. Through increased engagement it is anticipated that residents will be encouraged to visit local parks more frequently, to treat parks with respect and to value them as assets to their city and neighbourhood, and consequently, to help to maintain them. Citizen engagement should be encouraged and facilitated wherever possible, allowing the public to participate in decisions made about the function, development and management of parks.

The suggested model for citizen engagement in Toronto parks has been created with the above goals in mind. The model created for Toronto parks is focused on enhancing and maintaining existing parks. As Toronto already has an established citizen engagement method for the planning of new parks, this model builds on the input of citizens related to programming, maintenance, activities and initiatives within existing parks. As such, the term planning is referring to a wide range of park matters.

Various circumstances constrain citizen involvement in park planning matters. As the distance from the park increases, the level of citizen engagement should decrease as there is an increase in number and variety of citizen interests. For a Destination Park for example, the users come from across the city as well as from outside the city. Consequently, the number of citizens interested in the park spans the entire city and it is impossible for all parties' interests to be heard in any or all of the consultation forums. Nor could all of these interests be properly represented on a decision making body. As such, it is necessary for a separate decision maker, such as a professional planner or member of city staff, to make the final decisions. This party should keep in mind local interests as well as the interests of the population as a whole. This should include tourists and other groups who are unable to participate in the consultation process but may contribute to a cities economic prosperity.

In the case of a City-wide Park or a Greenway the users and interested parties also come from across the city. Consequently, like a Destination Park there is the concern that all the citizens' interests cannot be represented in all the forums of consultation, nor could they be represented on a decision making body. In this case a professional planner needs to be responsible for the creation of plans for City-wide Parks and Greenways which consider the interests of all citizens.

In the cases District Parks and Community Parks the citizens interested in the park come from the local area or just beyond. Here it is possible for all interested parties to be identified and heard by a decision maker responsible for park planning. The most efficient way to hear all of the opinions and concerns would be to create a taskforce, on which all interested parties have representation and are able to inform the decision maker of the things they want to see in the park. It should be at this stage that negotiation of opinions should take place and the results of the negotiations should be what the decision maker plans to achieve in the park.

A higher form of public participation for a District Park or Community Park is not viable. Although there are fewer interests to consider than in a Destination park, City-Wide Park, or Greenway, there are still too many interests for a decision making body of citizens to manage and to consider. The juggling of

such diverse interests by citizens would become overwhelming. Citizens would become discouraged and disinterested in parks. The result would be chaotic, and a poor plan would be created at best.

 For a Neighbourhood Park or Parkette the users are the residents of the area immediately surrounding the park. Here it is possible to employ a higher level of citizen engagement and to have all parties' interests represented on a decision making body, and for that body to be managed by the citizens themselves. However, it is not in the best interest of the city to leave all responsibility of managing a park in the hands of the citizens since the park remains the ultimate responsibility of the city. Consequently, the city must maintain some control by appointing a consultant to sit on the decision making body to help guide the process.

There are a number of tasks that should be completed to facilitate the engagement of citizens in the park planning process, and to ensure that their involvement is meaningful and beneficial for all parties. For example, citizens and relevant stakeholders should be informed of park initiatives that are under consideration. Interested parties should be given an opportunity to participate in the planning process and be informed of the specific ways they can become involved. Additionally, citizens and stakeholders need to be given proper notice of the time and the place where public meetings will take place. Before becoming involved, the public should be provided with an easy to read and easy to understand package of information relevant to the park. This information should be accessible both online and in print and should include information for a contact that can answer any questions concerning the information. Furthermore, at the beginning of a meeting, a brief overview of the information should be given to confirm the understanding of the issue where citizens can ask questions. During all meetings the public should feel that they are being listened to, respected, and that they have a meaningful influence on park planning. Follow-up should be done after all meetings to inform the public of the results of that meeting and the next steps that will be taken in light of the input from that meeting. Finally, all citizens who wish to be involved in the process should be allowed to do so without restrictions based on prior knowledge or any other factor. However, those who do not wish to be involved in the planning process should not be required to participate.

5   Promotion

5.1   Methods

In the terms of reference for this project, rParc was tasked with determining how the marketing of parks should be linked to the Parks Service Plan draft classification system. rParc has developed three methods of reinventing and revitalizing the promotion of Toronto's parks system: an active online presence for all of Toronto's major parks, coupled with space for community run sites for smaller parks; a searchable database of parks and amenities; and finally improved signage on site. These three methods are based on commonly employed theories of social marketing.

Social marketing theory is grounded in the belief that people will adopt new ideas if they feel that they provide additional value to their current lifestyle. One of the principles of the theory is to clearly identify a consumer need and then promote a product or service that satisfies that need (Meiscke, 2007). This theory is often used by government organizations and community groups to promote social goals, such as public health. This type of marketing strategy emerged in the 1980's when the Government of Australia promoted a "SunSmart" campaign, which informed the public of the link between the sun and skin cancer (Andreasen, 1995). In this regard, rParc recommends that the City of Toronto consider parks a clear consumer need, and to promote the City's parks as the product that satisfies this demand.

5.1.1   Community Group Websites

In conducting a web search for information about Toronto's parks rParc discovered that there are multiple active, parks-based community groups that exist within the City of Toronto (Withrow Park, 2009; Friends of Dufferin Grove Park, 2009). These groups actively promote their respective parks and park uses through community message boards and web logs. In these cases, the need for community information has been satisfied by the local community, rather than the City of Toronto.

rParc recommends that the City of Toronto further enable the efforts of these community groups by offering web space within the City of Toronto website. This would position the Parks Department as the link between community needs and satisfaction. This public web space should be built in a way that allows groups to update information without advanced programming knowledge, such as the 'blog' format. 'Blog' websites allow users to post text and pictures in a universal format. It may be more efficient for the City to use one of the existing systems available for a small monthly fee (such as blogger.com or wordpress.org), rather than creating a new system. Park community groups would receive a direct URL for users to navigate to, such as www.toronto.ca/parks/withrowpark (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Example of community web space

5.1.2   Websites for Larger Parks

For Toronto's larger and more prominent parks, City of Toronto Parks should create and maintain more extensive websites. These sites will serve both as promotional materials and as functional sources of information about park amenities. The content and design of these sites will be explained in more depth in the Implementation section of this report.

5.1.3   Parks Database

By evaluating the current City of Toronto parks information system rParc has recognized the need for an interactive tool that bridges the gap between the needs of a park user and the ability to locate a park that meets those needs. Using the principles of the social marketing theory, rParc recommends the implementation of an online database system (see Figure 3 and 4), which would provide users with a new way to explore the City of Toronto park system.
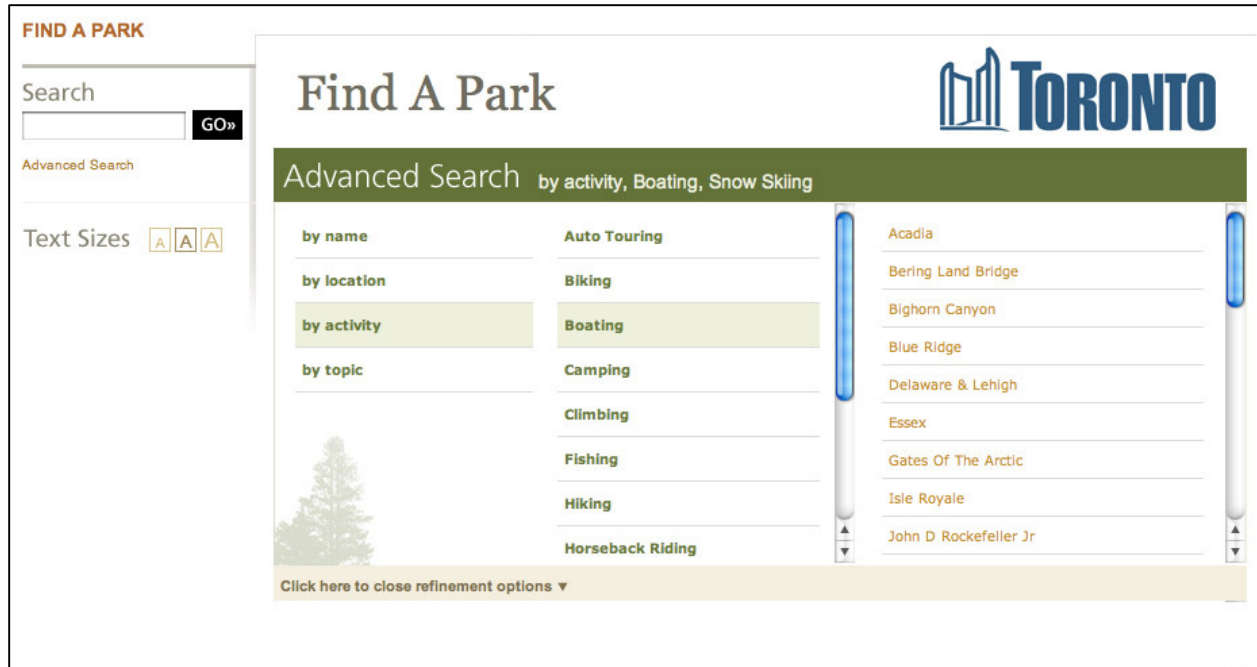
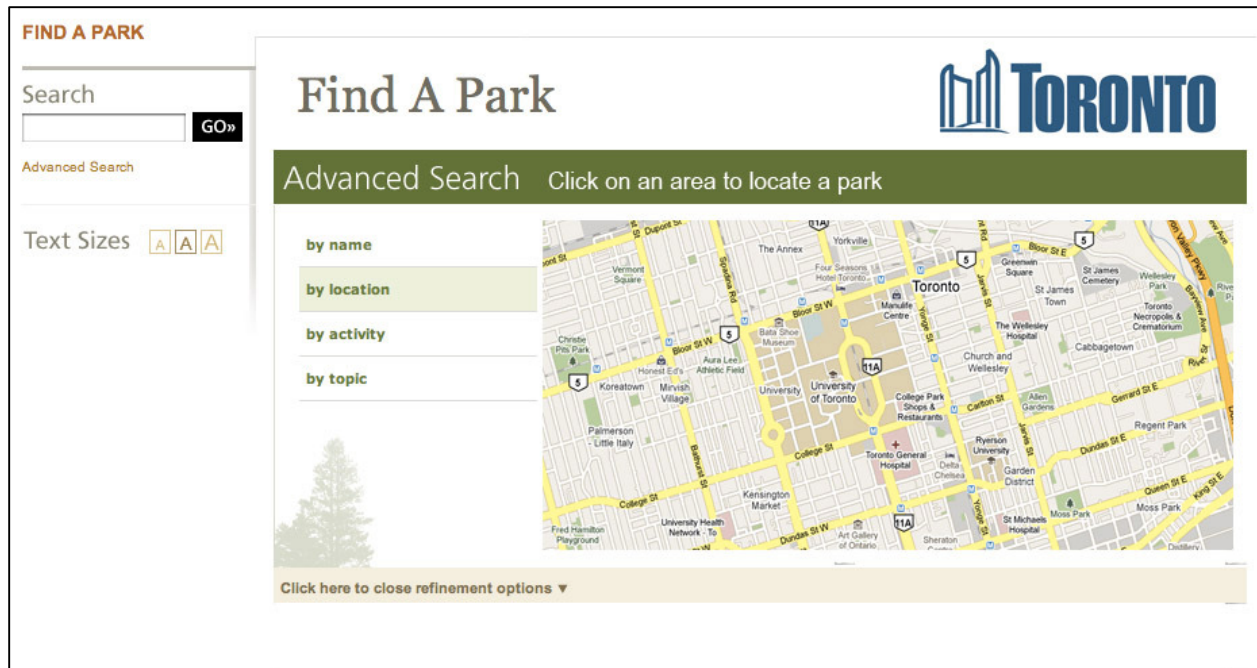**Figure 3 Example of a park amenity search database system**

Figure 4 Example of a park locater database system

Currently the City of Toronto has a non-interactive database for parks that simply lists them alphabetically. The website does not allow the user to search for a park by proximity or amenities, such as ice rinks, soccer fields, or off-leash dog parks. The current database inhibits users who are not familiar with Toronto's parks from acquiring adequate information.

By creating a "Find a Park" feature on the City of Toronto website citizens and visitors will be able to better access information and become informed about parks that may be of interest to them. The "Find

a Park" feature should contain a database of all parks in the City of Toronto, their location, available amenities, and other information. The database should also provide for a search engine where users can input what area of the city they are interested in and a checklist of the amenities they are looking for. This would provide a list of parks with the selected criteria and their exact locations, directions, and further information regarding the park. Databases and search engines are used in many major cities around the world, such as Portland, Oregon and London, England, to help residents and visitors access the city's parks. This tool could be adapted to other media such as applications for smartphones. Search criteria should include:

- Accessibility: For the disabled, for cycling, and for public transportation.
- Attractions: Vistas, historic features, ecological features, public art, gardens, community gardens, etc.
- Children's Amenities: Playgrounds for various age brackets and outdoor pools.
- Pets: Off leash areas, dog friendly parks, and related events.
- General Amenities: Picnic areas, information booths, shelter, washrooms, etc.
- Sports: Various types of sports and recreation facilities that the city operates including fishing, athletic tracks, walking/jogging paths, cricket and soccer pitches, and public pools.
- Seasonal Activities: Seasonal amenities in parks including swimming pools and ice rinks.

5.1.4 Signage

The current signage displayed in Toronto parks is limited to basic information such as the name of the park and contact numbers. This leaves it to park users to locate amenities, nearby attractions, and transit stops. rParc recommends that the Park Department implement a more informative signage system to serve the needs of park users.

Offering users multi-functional park signage will provide applicable park information, improve navigation through the park (particularly parks of a larger scale), and promote learning experiences available within the park (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 Example of improved signage in parks

Various methods should be used to establish the park signage system, which will be designed to strengthen the physical and social relationship between users and the park. Ultimately, park users will find improvements in the identification of parks and in their ability to obtain useful information to facilitate meaningful engagement in parks. Signage will vary between park types as seen below.

Park signage will also be improved through the integration of parks with the surrounding community. This will be accomplished through further incorporating unique and historical aspects of parks in the signage system to enhance a sense of place and foster educational experiences by users (see Figure 6). The names of donors who have provided funding for park improvements may also be recognized as part of signage design.

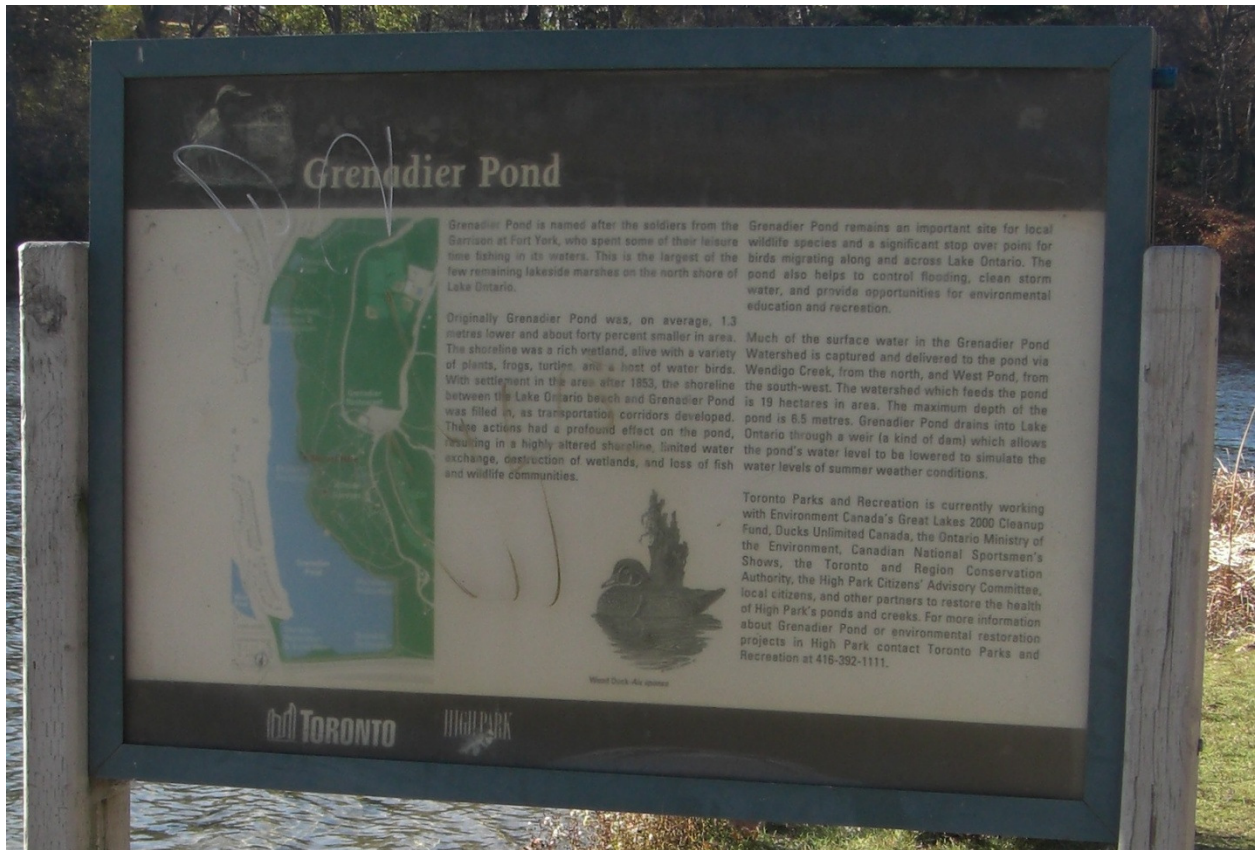**Figure 6 Example of existing signage identifying historical aspects of High Park**

Bulletin boards for public use should be placed at key points in parks of all sizes (see Figure 7). Two types of boards should be provided: one for information about public events and activities within the park, and one for local businesses to post promotional materials. Both will be free for public use by all park users.

Figure 7 Example of an existing public bulletin board from Earl Bales Park

5.2   Implementation

Using principles of social marketing theory and community engagement, rParc has developed models of implementation for each park classification category. The implementation models were developed around the theory that each park classification type is unique, and each requires a unique approach in order to successfully build community engagement and achieve effective promotion.

5.2.1   Destination Parks

Website

For destination parks, websites dedicated specifically to each park will be a vital tool in raising their profile. These websites should be marketed actively on the City of Toronto's opening splash pages. Users presently navigating to www.toronto.ca are greeted with an automatically rotating series of announcements - the destination parks should be promoted in this manner.

Each web page should prominently feature an interactive park map, which highlights all significant features and attractions within the park. Maps should be colourful and attractive to the eye, while encouraging the visitor to explore the park's amenities, rather than simply providing a simple listing of services. As the user rolls their mouse cursor over the map, highlighted features should pop out in a visually appealing manner.

Database

The database will serve a less important function for the destination parks as most of the information accessible through the search feature will also be available on the dedicated websites. However, it is important for the database to be complete, and thus all available amenities and features of the destination parks should be listed. It is also important to include links to each destination park's main website.

Signage

Equally important to the online presence is the active implementation of effective signage within the parks themselves. Users entering the park at all major entrances should be greeted with highly visible maps of the park. These maps should be print versions of the online maps and show all amenities and features of the park. Flexibility in formatting should be used in order to highlight the unique character or features of each park. For example, creative licence could be taken with signage for High Park to reflect the natural, wooded character of the park (e.g. a forest-oriented theme).

Signage should also reflect the local context of the park in order to orient visitors within the surrounding neighbourhood. For example, the nearest TTC stops or stations and nearby public facilities should be shown on small context maps.

5.2.2   City-Wide Parks
Website

The online presence of the city-wide parks should reflect the public profile and number of visitors to the park. Those parks which warrant a level of promotion similar to the destination parks should be treated similarly. Those parks which tend to serve a smaller, more local community should be given the public web space for information to be provided by local park user groups. One distinguishing factor could be the frequency of public events occurring within the park. Those smaller parks which host a large number of events should be treated with a scaled-down version of the destination park websites.

Database

City-wide parks offer a wide variety of unique features and facilities, all of which must be included in the database.

Signage

Signs for the city-wide parks should also include area maps of the park and context maps of nearby transit and governmental facilities. Although the level of detail may be less than that in signage for the destination parks, it is important to have maps indicating the local of major facilities in these relatively large parks.

5.2.3   District Parks

Website

Parks under this designation draw users from beyond the local community so promotional methods should involve a broad segment of the population. Park users interested in locating this type of park would benefit from a web-based approach wherein park features and amenities will be clearly identified. A park website would identify the location of the park and provide a listing of all features and amenities included on the park grounds.

Database

A database outlining the range of activities available at district parks will provide the public with a user-friendly method of accessing information related to parks within this park type.

Signage

Appropriate signage, including maps and a listing of amenities, would offer park users useful information and facilitate navigation throughout the park.

5.2.4   Community Parks

Website

Many community parks would benefit from their own websites that could be operated by a community association. This would promote the park to the community as well as to the public beyond the immediate area. Events and activities hosted at community parks will reach a wider population when they have access to web-based promotion. A website would allow residents to stay informed about the news and events relating to the park.

Database

Community parks offer a wide range of features and amenities which will need to be included in a searchable database.

Signage

Signage at community park entrances also play an important role in identifying park uses to passersby as a street-level promotion method. Park signage presents an opportunity to communicate particular information to park users and give an indication of which types of activities take place.

5.2.5   Neighbourhood Park

Website

Each of Toronto's neighbourhood parks should have a public webpage dedicated to the park and the local community group. In the implementation process neighbourhood park web pages will be added after those of larger parks, and based on community demand. For example, each park will be allocated web space but the site's content will be produced by the community of park users. This will not only

facilitate a higher level of citizen engagement, but will allow the City of Toronto to maintain service level standards with limited resources.

Database

All of Toronto's neighbourhood parks will be included in the database. The database is very important for neighbourhood parks because users can search for local parks with the various criteria they want met.

Signage

Signage will be a very important tool in the promotion of neighbourhood parks in order to reach community members who do not use the internet. Signs should include a map of the park and a context map of the local community and nearby transit and governmental facilities. Signage should also reflect the local context of the park in order to orient visitors within the surrounding neighbourhood. Additionally, signage should include boards where community groups and local businesses can post notices. This will help to organize local events, and show where local businesses are for park users.

5.2.6   Parkette
Website

Most parkettes will not have a specific public webpage because of their size and the relatively small amount of activities that occur within them. If there is demand from the local communities however, space will be provided in a similar manner as in neighbourhood parks.

Database

All of Toronto's parkettes will be included in the database. Parkettes are included although they are small in size because the database should include amenities and features of all parks and green spaces in the city.

Signage

Signage will be the major tool used in parkettes. Parkettes are small and are catered towards local residents. An improved signage system will help local residents organize events and strengthen the physical and social relationship between parkette users. Signs should have a context map of the surrounding community with other nearby parks, transit and public facilities.

5.2.7   Greenways
Website

Trails and greenways should have their own webpage that maps out the entire system. The trail system webpage should be broken down into regions, wards, or similar administrative areas so that users can see the trail, local parks and amenities nearby.

Database

The trail system will be included in the park information database. The primary amenities that Toronto's trails features are biycle paths, walking and running paths. Some may also feature children's playgrounds, etc. that should be listed as well.

Signage

Signage of the trail system is vital. More signs needed to be added along Toronto's trail network that have a map of the trail route, the distance to the next exit, closest transit and public facilities and local parks near each sign.

6   Synthesis

Citizen engagement efforts and the promotion of parks are both vital to the success and prosperity of Toronto parks and should be integrated in order to form an effective, cohesive system. It is imperative to not only have a strong system of citizen engagement within the parks, but to promote these initiatives as illustrated in Figure 8. Ensuring that the public is aware of their opportunities for involvement is necessary and can be accomplished through the use of several promotional tools. Similarly, it is important to allow the residents and park users to be involved in and consulted on different ways that particular parks are promoted. Through this a strong sense of ownership of parks can be fostered. Combining these two elements allows for a greater amount of citizen input and ultimately enhances the promotion and overall engagement of the park within the city.
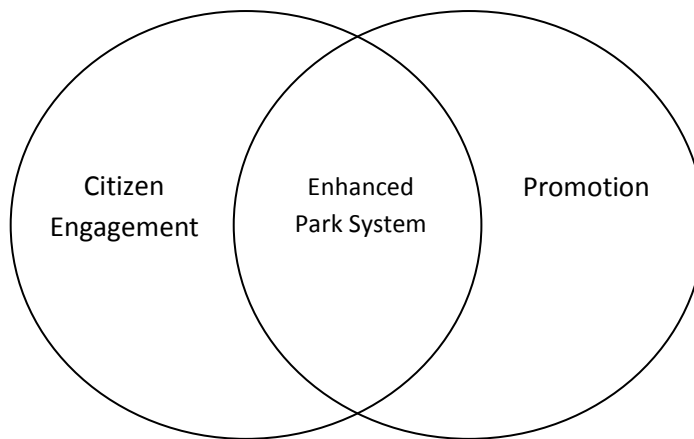

Figure 8 Syntheses of Citizen Engagement and Promotion

An important synthesis of citizen engagement and promotion in rParc's recommendations is the use of websites that are maintained by the community and interest groups, as discussed above. By allowing engaged community members to update and share information in a public forum the activities and programming in parks will be greatly enhanced. rParc feels that this is the perfect union of a high level of citizen participation and a strong system of promotional tools.

Although the particular services, amenities and the level of programming will differ and generally dictate the current classification of a park, parks will maintain the ability to move between the classifications. If interested parties such as community groups feel that the level of citizen engagement or programming within the park should be changed or enhanced, at this time the park should move into a different classification. This allows for and encourages a continual process of strong park programming and engagement by local communities.

7   Next Steps

Throughout this report, rParc has placed great emphasis on the importance of community engagement and promotion in achieving the desired goal of improving the relationships between the people of Toronto and their parks.

While the research and recommendations presented by rParc have provided direction for the future of Toronto's parks, additional studies may be undertaken to complete the revitalization of the park system. For example, a collaborative effort involving students from various academic disciplines, in the form of a charrette, could help focus the marketing and promotional efforts. This would in turn increase community participation and park usage, ultimately leading to the revitalization of the park system.

A team involving students majoring in marketing could offer additional expertise to enhance the promotion of parks. Similarly, certain design aspects with regards to park signage may benefit from closer examination and study by design and architecture students.

By integrating the aptitudes and interests of a diverse group of participants, meaningful and lasting solutions may be generated that will prove invaluable to the success of Toronto's parks.

8   Conclusion

Toronto's park types were developed with the purpose of providing a foundation for new understanding of the parks and trails systems in Toronto. The classification system will help guide decision making based on seven park principles identified in the Parks Service Plan. In order for this to be an effective tool in the revitalization of Toronto's extensive system of over 1500 parks, a citizen engagement and promotion strategy must be created that complements the system of classification.

This report has outlined recommendations for the promotion of and engagement of citizens in Toronto's parks. These recommendations build on the park types proposed by the Parks Service Plan to identify appropriate levels and methods of engagement in parks of each type. These levels of engagement range from consultation to partnership and delegated power in park planning issues. In addition to this rParc has recommended promotional methods aimed at making parks accessible, attracting interest, and getting citizens engaged in parks of every type.

Following rParc's recommendations the City of Toronto can use the classification system to generate meaningful engagement in their parks that will enhance the parks system and help achieve parks excellence in Toronto.

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Appendix 1 – Toronto Park Types

PARK TYPE	DESCRIPTION	SIZE	EXAMPLES
Destination	Parks with unique or exceptional features, specialized recreation amenities and/or major events which are promoted to tourists from outside Toronto	Typically over 15 ha. *(varies with key features and amenities)*	Toronto Island, High Park (multi-use); Rouge Park (natural heritage); Edwards Gardens / Toronto Botanical Garden, Toronto Music Garden (horticulture); Centennial Park (sports and special events)
City-Wide Parks	Parks with unique or exceptional features, specialized recreation amenities and/or major events which draw users from across the city	Typically over 15 ha. *(varies with key features and amenities)*	Cummer Park, Earl Bales Park, East Point Park, Sunnyside Park, Christie Pits Park, Sunnybrook Park, Bluffer's Park, Eglinton Flats
District Parks	Larger parks with a wider range of features and recreation amenities (primarily sports-oriented) which draw users from beyond the local community. District Parks also fulfill a neighbourhood function (at edges, in passive use areas and in facilities such as playgrounds) for adjacent residents	Typically 5 ha. to 15 ha.	Amesbury Park (12.1 ha.), Riverdale Park East, L'Amoreaux Park South (30.9 ha.), Jack Goodlad Park (5.0 ha.), Stan Wadlow Park (8.5 ha.), Eglinton Park (9.2 ha.), Caledonia Park (11.6 ha.), Memorial Park (5.5 ha.)
Community Parks (under consideration)	Larger neighbourhood-type parks but with a wider range of features and recreation amenities (including active uses not typical of a Neighbourhood Park) which draw users from the local community	Typically 3 ha. to 5 ha.	Being piloted as part of Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Study
Neighbourhood Parks	Small parks offering a range of features and recreation amenities oriented to local users	Typically 0.25 ha. To 5 ha	Bickford Park (2.8 ha.), Dufferin Grove Park (5.3 ha.), Burrows Hall Park (2.7 ha.), Prince Charles Park (1.2 ha.)
Parkettes	Very small parks with limited amenities (plantings, seating areas, public art) and user draw; includes traffic islands, boulevards and road allowances maintained by Parks, Forestry & Recreation	Typically under 0.25 ha.	Twenty-eighth Street Park, Frank Stollery Parkette, Wilson Heights Parkette, Raleigh Parkette, Varna Parkette
Greenways	Linear parkland that focuses on trail use (recreation and transportation) with associated amenities to support that use. Typically in utility corridors, road rights-of-way, lost creeks.	Varies	CP PS Lead rail -trail, Belt Line Trail, CN Leaside rail-trail, Lower Don Trail, Lake Shore Blvd. East - north side R.O.W

(City of Toronto. Parks, Forestry & Recreation, 2009a)

Appendix 2 – External Case Studies

2   External Case Studies

This study will draw on eleven case studies of parks classification systems in Canada and abroad. These include two case studies of parks classification on the state wide or provincial level, and nine at the municipal level in cities of varying sizes. These range in proximity to Toronto from Vaughan, a nearby municipality, to Sydney, Australia (Figure 1). Cases were selected based on the inclusion or absence of elements, such as a classification system for parks, citizen engagement, and promotion. rParc believes that these elements can be used to help improve Toronto's parks classification system.

Figure 1 External Case Studies Context Map

2.1   British Columbia

2.1.1   Background

In 1911 the first Parks Act came into existence in the province of British Columbia. The main reasons for its creation were the protection of parks and maintenance of natural beauty in the province. This legislation protected natural landscapes against signs of industrial development like mining and logging. Through the 1920s and towards the 1940s there were a large number of established provincial parks in British Columbia, along with legislation that protected these parks. Although the main objective was to provide protection to these natural features, one of the issues that arose in the 1950s was the absence of a legislated classification system for the various parks and the many forests within the province. Prior to this time these parks and forests were protected under the same threshold, while the majority of these natural features varied in form.

In early 1957 the first ever classification system within the Province was set forth. It was dictated that parks and forests were to be separated for the purposes of management and control. A Department of Recreation and Conservation was created at the Provincial level where the classification system was adopted. In 1965 the Parks Act was re-vamped by the provincial government, the Department of Recreation and Conservation, and the Ministry of Environment, where the Act set forth a brand new classification system for the current and future parks within the province. This classification system, which is still in use, employs a Class A, B, and C classification for parks (British Columbia. Ministry of Environment, 2009).

2.1.2   Park Classification System

The province wide park classification system establishes the following categories of parks in British Columbia:

- Class A Park
  - Crown land designated under the Park Act or by the Protected Areas of B.C. Act, no extraction of any natural resources can be passed unless otherwise issued by the Minister.
- Class B Park
  - Much like a Class A park, this classification only allows for a wider range of activities to occur within the park, all or most of these activities must include a permit in order to occur.
- Class C Park
  - A crown land designated under the Park Act is also constrained by the act itself, the only difference between a Class A and Class C Park is size, and Class C parks must have a local board appointed by the minister.
- Class A or C
  - The Majority of parks in British Columbia fall under this classification. Nothing within these parks can be sold. No resource extraction or wildlife manipulation is allowed in any of these parks. The Park Amendment Act in 1995, increased the total minimum area

of the province to be designated as protected parks to almost triple its original size in hectares.

- Recreation Area
  - o These parks are reserved strictly for recreational uses. The Minister has greater ease in issuing these permits, especially when it comes to sporting events and booking fees. No industrial activities are to occur in and around these areas. Under the newest act to be passed which is the Protected Areas Strategy all current recreational lands are to be evaluated from a protected area value and economic opportunity agenda.
- Ecological Reserve
  - o To reserve crown land for ecological purposes including the following areas: areas suitable for research, areas with natural ecosystems, and areas of lands with endangered species.

2.1.3   Citizen Engagement

The research conducted found no citizen engagement was enacted when creating this classification system.

2.1.4   Promotional Tools

This classification system, although still in use, was created in 1965 and is not widely promoted. Users of these parks can view the B.C. Parks and Recreation Department website for a more detailed description of the classification system.

2.1.5   Comparison to Toronto

As a classification system that classifies parks primarily for the purpose of conservation, this classification system is not easily comparable to Toronto's proposed parks classification system. In Toronto, an urban landscape, there is no need for resource extraction from parks and thus no need for conservation of this kind. There should be two separate agencies within the government administration when it comes to the management and control of natural landscapes. Parks and Recreational areas should be administered by one agency while forest services and management should be administered by another.

2.2   Idaho

2.2.1   *Background*

The Idaho Parks Classification System was created in 1973 and included all units of the state park system existing at that time. The system was adopted by the Idaho Park and Recreation Board, which is charged with the dual mission of protecting and preserving the resources of the state park system and of providing recreation opportunities and facilities for public use.

The purpose of the classification system was to balance public recreation opportunities and resource integrity state wide. Through classification of its parks, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation was able to define the dominant character and principal values of open space areas. Suitable programming and orderly development could be established based on use and management policies (State of Idaho Parks and Recreation, 2006).

2.5.2   *Parks Classification*

The state wide park classification system establishes four categories of state parks in Idaho:

- Natural Park
    - Containing natural resources of statewide significance, natural parks are intended to maintain ecological integrity in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Recreational Park
    - Provide areas that are adaptable to a broad range of intensive outdoor recreation uses for large numbers of people.
- Heritage Park
    - Established to preserve, restore and interpret structures and related lands which illustrate an historic or cultural event.
- Recreation Trailway
    - Defined as a linear land or water-based corridor for recreational travel designed to provide physical challenges and foster an appreciation of the natural environment.

Each classification has a distinct purpose, unique criteria, appropriate development intensity, specific management principles and compatible uses. Furthermore, each park classification attempts to provide opportunities for desired visitor experiences such as solitude, a leisure atmosphere, observation of natural features, a friendly and safe environment, cultural and historical experiences, and pleasant positive and social interaction and athletic challenge. Programs and facilities are carefully evaluated in order to avoid conflict with the visitor's ability to have these experiences (State of Idaho Parks and Recreation, 2006).

2.2.3   *Citizen Engagement*

While the Idaho Parks Classification system does not specifically outline a model for citizen engagement, each park classification explains management principles, compatible uses, and physical developments. The "compatible uses" section includes opportunities for community involvement that are deemed appropriate to each park type. Examples of community involvement include historical re-enactments in

heritage parks, educational tours provided by park volunteers, concerts and plays as well as various courses and field events (State of Idaho Parks and Recreation, 2006).

2.2.4 *Promotional Tools*

The Idaho State Parks website offers prospective visitors information regarding the types of activities and events happening at each park. An illustrative map provides a user-friendly method of identifying parks, and a calendar of events allows visitors to plan for specific events or activities.

2.2.5 *Comparison to Toronto*

Toronto parks would benefit from a classification system similar to the Idaho State Park system. The Idaho system is informative and well managed. Toronto's parks would be greatly improved with a more informative and user-friendly approach to accessing park data. Adopting a classification system that is more descriptive would also facilitate the promotion of parks to residents and visitors in Toronto. Park visitors often wish to enjoy a specific activity or experience but may find it difficult to determine what is offered at a given park under the current Toronto classification system (State of Idaho Parks and Recreation, 2006).

2.3   Bellingham, Washington

2.3.1   Background

The parks classification system in Bellingham was created to support the surrounding community by effectively communicating the characteristics of each park.

2.3.2   Parks Classification

The structure of the classification system is based on a scheme designed by the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) and outlines the specific attributes of each site (City of Bellingham, 2007).

The Bellingham Park matrix includes information for:

- Neighbourhood Parks
- Community Parks
- Special Use Sites
- Open Space
- Trails

As well as the type of park, the listings also take the following into consideration:

- Size of Park
- Amount of Service Areas
- Topography
- Access to Major Roadways
- Park Lighting

These guidelines and categories are only used to help market the parks to the general public. They contain no protection mechanisms over development.

2.3.3   Citizen Engagement

In addition to the information for their parks Bellingham considers the citizen engagement in the parks in their promotional material. Although there are no direct channels of community input, Bellingham park administration is very active in promoting community events. Bellingham also uses volunteers to contribute to the restoration of wildlife along the trail system (City of Bellingham, 2009).

2.3.4   Promotional Tools

The City of Bellingham promotes its trail and parks system primarily through their website.

2.3.5   Comparison to Toronto

Compared to Bellingham, the information that appears on the City of Toronto's park website is limited. The website does not rank the parks in terms of classifications, such as a Neighbourhood or Community Park. The website also fails to provide any topography or lighting information for their parks.

2.4 Edmonton, Alberta

2.4.1 Background

The City of Edmonton's Urban Park Management Plan notes that Edmonton is home to more than 460 urban parks. In the mid 1980's these parks were divided into 3 classifications; Neighbourhood, District Campus Site, and City Level. However changing city demographics, evolving community needs, demand for preservation of natural areas and green space to accommodate the cities aging population and other recreational trends led to a more comprehensive classification. Developed in June, 2006 the new classification includes eight classifications. Each of the park classifications specified in the Urban Parks Management Plan is based on the criteria of the park's location, context, and activities offered (City of Edmonton, 2006).

2.4.2 Parks Classification

Edmonton's Urban Park Management Plan includes the following eight park classifications:

- Pocket Parks
    - Small parks that accommodate passive recreation activities such as reading or bird watching and other unstructured activities.
- Urban Village Parks
    - Situated within the center of a neighbourhood but offer a diverse landscape rather than sports fields.
- School and Community Parks
    - Similar often serving and being located in the center of a community but either connected to a school or a community center.
- District Activity Parks
    - Large parks that accommodate high schools, major recreation centers, sports-fields and are used for active indoor and outdoor recreation.
- River valley and Ravine parks
    - Located in or adjacent to river valleys and accommodate active and passive recreation activities in a natural setting, often drawing people from across the city.
- City Level Parks
    - Unique or "one of a kind" and also tend to draw people from across the city providing a mix of active or passive recreation activities.
- Natural Areas
    - Public spaces specifically designed to preserve natural elements primarily outside the river valley area and offer trails for walking, biking, or jogging.
- Greenways
    - Linear parks or public open space that connects parks and other public open spaces to each other (City of Edmonton, 2006).

2.4.3 Citizen Engagement

During the development of the Urban Parks Management Plan public participation came primarily in the form of public consultation offered at strategic points throughout the process. A secondary study titled

Consultation Plan: Needs Assessment Phase was created to highlight the first phase of the consultation process (Needs Assessment) and to identify the target audiences for consultation throughout the development of the whole Urban Parks Management Plan. The consultant team was hired to effectively listen to and understand public's views, ideas, concerns and priorities, utilizing a variety of methods such as survey questionnaires and personnel interviews to ensure the public could provide feedback.

2.3.4 Promotional Tools

The City of Edmonton's Park Classification system provides a variety of classification types that are easily recognizable to the public. Marketing and promotion of Edmonton's parks comes primarily through the use of the city's webpage. There you can find the Urban Parks Management Plan, which provides the outline for the rational for each individual park classification. The Parks department also offers a city wide, alphabetical park listing and an alphabetical listing of the neighbourhoods where parks are located. An interactive map divided into city districts allows users to highlight a specific community and see a detailed map of where each park is located. Major parks are provided with a further link that shows the facilities of each park and distinct features such as walking paths, fountains, playgrounds, picnic sites and recreation or family centers. Finally, there is an easily accessible events page that shows all the annual events that take place in parks across the city (City of Edmonton, 2006).

2.4.5 Comparison to Toronto

Edmonton's classification system primarily focuses on creating a set of design guidelines which will govern current and future development of park lands. However, the proposed park classification system for the City of Toronto is quite similar to that of Edmonton's Urban Parks Management Plan and their park designations as both contain classifications for Neighbourhood parks, Greenways, and District parks. As such it may be possible to extract part of the rational for the individual park types as well as the relevant design guidelines and apply them to the City of Toronto. Edmonton's online park resources can also be used as an example of marketing promotion. Internet resources such as a user friendly webpage that provides residents with the ability to pick a park and easily see what activities are offered, and a map showing park location within the city and on a neighbourhood scale may also be tools the City of Toronto could utilize.

2.5   Fairfax County, Virginia

2.5.1   Background

The Fairfax County, Virginia parks classification system was created in order to guide the planning of parks. The classification system aids in the development of new parks and open spaces, and sets out to comply with the County Comprehensive Plan (Fairfax County, 2009).

2.5.2   Parks Classification

The Fairfax County classification system includes the following five different types of parks:

- Local Parks
- District Parks
- Countywide Parks
- Resource-Based Parks
- Regional Parks

The criteria used within each park classification include: the purpose, the location and access, as well as the character and extent of park development. The purpose is simply the main use of the park. The location and access deals with where the type of park should be located such as near schools, while the access implies how a user would get to the park. Access to public transportation or bicycle use would be included in this section. The character and extent of park development describes the size range, amenities provided as well as the experience that may be expected at the specific type of park (Fairfax County, 2009).

2.5.3   Citizen Engagement

Public consultation plays a large part in the park planning process in Fairfax County. Within the park planning process there are at least three required public meetings to seek public involvement. The first is an informational meeting. The second is a planning workshop, and after a consensus has been reached the park master plan is developed. The third is a formal public hearing to collect final comments. "Better Parks through Community Participation" is the goal of the Fairfax County Park Authority (Fairfax County, 2009).

2.5.4   Promotional Tools

A planning brochure has been published and emphasizes citizen engagement. This has been distributed throughout Fairfax County and can also be found electronically online. The brochure does not market the classification system, rather the planning process of parks as a whole and outlines the level of engagement that is provided for.

2.5.5   Comparison to Toronto

Many aspects of this classification system are similar to the draft classification system of Toronto. There is an emphasis on size and amenities within the parks. Toronto could use this classification system as a guide to build on the description of each park type. In particular, the experience that may be expected at a specific type of park would be a beneficial addition to add to the proposed Toronto classification system.

2.6   Fort Lauderdale, Florida

2.6.1   Background

Fort Lauderdale, Florida has 83 parks which total 942.84 acres. No information could be found on the Fort Lauderdale website regarding when, how and why the classification system was developed.

2.6.2   Parks Classification

Within each classification the parks that qualify for that title are listed, with their individual acreage, address, and a list of the facilities and amenities available at the site. There are six classifications in the City of Fort Lauderdale as follows.

- Mini – Parks:
    - These are small parks of five acres or less with a variety of uses. The purpose of these parks is to enhance the immediate surroundings (e.g. streetscapes and utility sites). A quarter mile service radius is standard.
- Neighbourhood Parks:
    - These parks are medium sized of five to ten acres and serve a variety of uses. Typically they are used for passive and recreational activities and support a social focus. A half mile service radius is considered typical.
- Community Parks:
    - These are medium sized parks of 10 to 40 acres. These parks are focused on meeting the needs of several neighbourhoods or communities and preserve unique landscapes and open spaces. They have a two mile service radius.
- School/Park:
    - This type of park expands the recreational, social, and educational opportunities available to a community in a cost effective way. The sizes vary and they can serve a variety of purposes (neighbourhood parks, athletic fields, schools). A joint agreement between the City and school must be reached for this partnership to be effective.
- Large Urban Parks:
    - These parks are 50 acres or more in size and serve a broader purpose than the community parks. These parks meet community and recreational needs and preserve unique landscapes and open spaces.
- Special Use Parks/Facilities:
    - A broad range of uses are allowed under this classification but are often single-purpose uses that fall into one of three categories: 1) historic, cultural, social; 2) recreational facilities; and 3) outdoor recreation facilities. These parks are community facilities and not specific to a single neighbourhood. A 30 minutes drive service radius is considered standard.

2.6.3   Citizen Engagement

Public participation in relation to the classification system was not revealed. It was evident that there are many programs and services available to the community for their parks, such as *Walk Fort Lauderdale* where people are encouraged to get outside and use their parks.

2.6.4   Promotional Tools

Several maps are available on the City of Fort Lauderdale website that illustrate the locations of the city's parks. The main map has a list of the parks and is displayed under their appropriate classification. There was also a separate map produced for special programs, such as *Walk Fort Lauderdale,* mentioned earlier.

2.6.5   Comparison to Toronto

Similar classifications exist in Fort Lauderdale as are proposed for Toronto's parks classification system such as neighbourhood and community parks. The common focus of all classifications in Fort Lauderdale is the community and neighbourhood. Although this is similar in Toronto there are additional classifications that highlight and prioritize the natural environment instead of simply providing parks for recreational use. Similar to Toronto is the lack of clear information regarding parks readily available to the public.

2.7   London, England

2.7.1   Background

London parks are classified in two groups: the Royal Parks (larger parks), and all other parks. This split is historical, as the Royal Parks were originally hunting grounds for the royal family but have since been opened for public access (The Royal Parks, 2009a). London's park system benefits more from the range of public information tools than from a particular classification system. Smaller parks appear to be managed by the Borough in which they are located but information is distributed by the City of London government (Your London, 2005). The larger parks (equivalent to Toronto's High Park), are managed by a separate authority known as The Royal Parks (2009a).

2.7.2   Parks Classification

The London classification system includes the following one park type:

- Royal Parks
   - There are eight Royal Parks in London, all of which are former Royal Hunting Grounds, now open to the public. These eight parks are: Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, Regent's Park, Richmond Park, St. James's Park, Bushy Park, The Green Park, and Brompton Cemetery. All are freely accessibly by the public. The Royal Parks is an executive agency of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (The Royal Parks, 2009b).

2.7.3   Citizen Engagement

A group called the London Parks & Gardens Trust is active in providing public information about parks, as well as increasing awareness of the need to preserve parks and open spaces. Although the London Parks & Gardens Trust operates as a separate non-profit organization they appear to have a strong working relationship with the London government and Parks authority (London Parks & Gardens Trust, 2009).

2.7.4   Promotional Tools

The government of London hosts a searchable database of all London parks. The search capabilities are extensive. For example, one can select from a list of 35 different types of sports facilities desired. The user can also refine their search by district, accessibility features, attractions and amenities.

Each Royal Park has its own dedicated website, accessible directly from the central Royal Parks site. There is an interactive map for each park that shows attractions, places to eat and drink, sports facilities, and washroom facilities. The site also shows upcoming events in the parks (The Royal Parks, 2009a). In 2008, this website received over 1 million visitors (The Royal Parks, 2009b).

2.7.5   Comparison to Toronto

Toronto could benefit greatly from a web database as extensive and user-friendly as London's. It may also be beneficial to have a separate website and public image for the larger parks (e.g. High Park, Toronto Island, and Beaches) that places a greater emphasis on upcoming events in these parks.

2.8   Portland, Oregon

2.8.1   Background

In 1999 Portland created their Parks 2020 Vision, which laid out the city's plan to ensure Portland's park and recreation legacy for future generations. This vision also aims to preserve, protect, and restore Portland's natural resources and to provide nature in the city. Portland provides a wide variety of high quality park and recreation services, and opportunities for all residents. The current park system in Portland creates an interconnected regional and local system of trails, paths and walkways to make it "the walking city of the West". Portland has also developed their parks, recreation facilities, and programs to promote community and social linkages in the city (City of Portland, 2009).

2.8.2   Parks Classification

The City of Portland has the following nine park classifications (City of Portland, 2009):

- Regional parks
- Neighbourhood parks
- Community parks
- Golf courses
- Habitat parks/Greenways
- Community gardens
- Botanical gardens
- Urban forests
- Trailways

2.8.3   Citizen Engagement

Portland is committed to providing strong and supportive partnerships between the community and the Parks and Recreation department. Portland believes that it is integral to develop the investment and participation of the community in all programs and activities. They involve the public in the early stages of policy development, budgeting and programming decisions. Portland develops and implements the tools, training and resources that will support staff, at all levels of the department, to approach public involvement consistently (City of Portland, 2009).

Portland also administers its own community garden program and makes it easy for volunteers to get involved. The community garden program has provided gardening opportunities for the physical and social benefit of the people and neighbourhoods of Portland since 1975. There are 32 large community gardens located throughout the city, developed and operated by volunteers and the Parks and Recreation department, offering a variety of activities (City of Portland, 2009).

2.8.4   Promotional Tools

The City of Portland does most of the park promotion through their website using a park search engine with an inventory of all parks and recreation facilities. Portland has created a database of all the parks in the region and what amenities they have. The search engine allows people to find a park that provides the amenities of their choice within the areas of town they specify. For example you can find all the

parks with vistas in Northwest Portland or find all the parks with tennis courts downtown (City of Portland (2009d).

2.8.5 Comparison to Toronto

Toronto could benefit from including a park search engine such as the one available in Portland. An online database would make it easier for citizens or visitors to find a park with the amenities they desire. The park classifications in both cities are fairly similar with both placing an emphasis on a system of interconnected green spaces and protected watersheds. The one major difference is that Portland puts a great deal of importance on types of gardens and preserved habitats while Toronto focuses more on typical recreational parks.

2.9   Seattle, Washington

2.9.1   *Background*

Seattle Parks and Recreation is currently developing a Parks Classification System. The need for the development of a system of classification for the city's parks is identified in Seattle Parks and Recreation's *Strategic Action Plan, Goal 1* (Shiosaki, 2009). It calls for the creation and adoption of a consistent system of defining appropriate uses of land resources that classifies all Seattle parks and open space, and communicates these categories in terms of use and future development. A draft document effective November 1, 2009 outlines the proposed policy. The system will be implemented over time as changes are made to the programming of existing parks and new parks are created.

2.9.2   *Parks Classification*

Seattle Parks and Recreation's proposed parks classification system includes nine park types. Each of these park types are defined by a brief description and four categories of attributes (Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2009):

- Physical
    - Size, Setting, and Contributes to planning area Useable Open Space requirement
- Built Environment
    - Percent developed, Assets(desired), Assets(optional), Parking
- Natural Environment
    - Natural Area, Environmental Benefits
- Programs
    - Programming (desired), Programming (optional), Geographic range of users

The proposed nine park types are (Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2009):

- Triangles/Circles/Squares
- Pocket Park
- Downtown Park
- Neighbourhood Park
- Community Park
- Recreation Area
- Natural Area/Greenbelt
- Boulevards/Green Streets/Trails
- Special-Use Parks

2.9.3   *Citizen Engagement*

The parks classification system will provide guidance for the creation of policies related to programming in different park types, as is reflected in the Programs category of each park type. Neighbourhood Parks, for example define Programming (optional) as "Light scheduling for athletic teams, community gatherings, small concerts" (Seattle Parks and Recreation, 2009).

2.9.4   Promotional Tools

The proposed parks classification system does not define tools for, or provide policy guidance for the marketing of Seattle's parks to user groups.

2.9.5   Comparison to Toronto

Seattle's proposed parks classification system and Toronto's proposed park types have many similarities. Both are part of plans defining guiding principles including the development of a consistent system of classification for municipal park assets. Similarly, parallels can be drawn in the proposed park types. Both classification systems define Neighbourhood Parks and Community Parks, as well as comparable park types include Pocket Parks/Parkettes, and Greenbelt/Greenways.

One notable park type included in Seattle's plan which is not present in Toronto's is the Special-Use Park. The Special-Use Park serves a particular use such as a golf course or specialty garden. The value of this park type is debatable as it can be seen as a classification to catch parks which do not fit easily into the classification system. However, if administered correctly this park type could serve a valuable purpose in highlighting unique parks to best serve their needs and the needs of users.

Another feature notably absent from Toronto's park classification system is the use of categories in defining park types, perhaps most importantly the inclusion of programs as a category. Seattle's Parks Classification System defines park types based on four main categories noted above, while Toronto's draft park types include only size parameters and a brief description. Moving forward, further definition of these categories may be beneficial.

2.10   Sydney, Australia

2.10.1 Background

Sydney, Australia does not have a formal system of classification for its parks. These parks are however classified based on historic ownership, and its value as an asset to the level of government responsible. For example, The Royal Botanic Gardens is a state park because historically it has been the property of the state government, New South Wales. Since Governor Phillip, the first governor of New South Wales, set aside the land for himself as property of the state (Botanic Gardens Trust, 2009). Centennial Park in New South Wales is also a State Park and a $740 million asset to the state government (Centennial Parklands, 2009). The parks under the management of the City of Sydney have been further classified in the city's attempt to make its parks more accessible to its residents (City of Sydney, 2009a). As the city created an inventory of its parks' amenities and their uses, a description of each park was made. In this inventory each City Park fit into one of two categories based on its purpose as a local park or a park attractive to all residents of the city or visitors (City of Sydney, 2009a).

2.10.2 Parks Classification

There are two formal types of parks within the city boundaries; City Parks and State Parks. The City of Sydney's further classifies its parks as either a local park or a park attractive to all residents of the city and visitors.

If a park is located outside of the main tourist area and possesses few features other than those that would be attractive to local residents, the description of the park identifies it as such. For example Alexandria Park is a park located in the south-west quadrant of Sydney and is described as "popular with the local community" (City of Sydney, 2009b). If a park has features that could be attractive more than simply the local residents and that could be attractive to residents from all over Sydney or even tourists, the description will identify the features of the park that would be attractive to such an audience. For example, Giba Park which is located west of Darling Harbour, is described as having "Expansive harbour views" (City of Sydney, 2009c) and Hyde Park which is located in the Central Business District and of great historical significance to the city, is described as "a favourite recreation area since 1792" (City of Sydney, 2009d).

2.10.3 Citizen Engagement

The public's participation in the use, function, and development of the city's parks takes place in the development of each park's Plan of Management and Master Plan. The City consults the park users, surrounding institutions, residential and other property owners and other key stakeholders, using a variety of methods to assess their thoughts and opinions of how the park is being run and how they would like to see the park improved. For example, in the development of Hyde Park's Plan of Management and Master Plan the city used four methods of generating public participation. First, a mail-out of two different surveys was sent out to be completed and returned. One survey was sent to property owners and other stakeholders surrounding the park (The People for Places and Spaces, 2006a), and the other was sent to institutions of importance to the park (The People for Places and Spaces, 2006b). Second, an intercept survey was conducted which was completed by Hyde Park users on site (The People for Places and Spaces, 2006c). Third, an email survey or telephone interview of the

same surveys to stakeholders identified by council was conducted (The People for Places and Spaces, 2006d). Finally, personal interviews were conducted with other interested parties such as the police and café operators inside the park (The People for Places and Spaces, 2006e).

2.10.4 Promotional Tools

The City of Sydney's methods of promoting its parks involves providing Sydney residents with an inventory of all the parks located in the city and the amenities that each park offers via the internet and the city government web site (City of Sydney, 2009a). All parks are included in the inventory, including state owned parks. These are simply described as non-city council parks and the responsible agency is listed with a link to the parks official website. For example, The Domain and The Royal Botanic Gardens are described as "managed by the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust" (City of Sydney, 2009d).

2.10.5 Comparison to Toronto

The City of Toronto does not have the jurisdictional issue of provincial parks being located within the city and therefore does not need to differentiate its parks in such a way. Instead, The City of Toronto has proposed a classification system that uses formal labels for each park type and uses more than three classifications for more diverse public interests, which will be appreciate by the residents.

2.11   Vaughan, Ontario

2.11.1   Background

Although there is no specific classification system for park uses in the City of Vaughan, there is a classification system for the way they are maintained. There are vital citizen engagement models that have been utilized by the City of Vaughan that can act as examples for the City of Toronto (City of Vaughan, 2009).

2.11.2   Citizen Engagement

The first citizen engagement program is the 'Adopt a Park' program. Whether it is the contribution of an individual or a group anyone can adopt a park in the City of Vaughan. This type of program would not only reduce costs associated with the maintenance of parks but improve the available amenities in the parks.

The second citizen engagement program is the appointment of a parks ambassador. When a significant financial contribution is made for a park the City of Vaughan recognizes the contribution by creating a memorial garden in their name, and appointing that individual or group as the park ambassador.

The City of Vaughan does not offer a distinct park classification system that can be used in providing recommendations for the City of Toronto but Vaughan does have citizen engagement models that can be considered by the City of Toronto (City of Vaughan, 2009).