

PARKLAND STRATEGY



Growing Toronto Parkland

Preliminary Report | Primer
November 2017



Summary of Preliminary Findings

Toronto's city-wide parkland provision average highlights the relative strengths and weaknesses in provision.

- » Toronto has a city-wide provision average of 28m² parkland per person. It has been calculated using a "per capita" approach, by dividing the total park area by the total population within the city boundary.
- » This average is reflective of Toronto's natural geography, including its vast ravine system, which contributes considerably to parkland area within the city.
- » Toronto's history and pattern of development, results in the districts having a varying supply and distribution of parkland as shown in the graphic below.

PARK AREA PER PERSON (2016)



District figures were calculated using a per capita approach (park area per population) including a park catchment of 500m around district boundaries.

Without new parkland, estimated population growth will cause per capita supply to decline.

- » With population growth estimated to reach 500,000 new residents by 2032, the city-wide average supply would decline from 28 m² per person to 23.5 m² per person.
- » Areas experiencing higher growth rates, already well below the city-wide average, experience an even more significant impact to parkland supply. This is seen in the Downtown and Yonge-Eglinton area. Parkland supply would decline in every District by between 3 and 5 m² per person.

Employment population adds pressure on Toronto's park system.

- » Parkland provision is negatively impacted by non-residential population. Employment population adds pressure and decreases the current city-wide provision level to 18 m² per person.
- » Estimated future employment population decreases the provision level to 15 m² per person.

Large parts of the city have a low supply of District and City parks.

- » Large parks offer the space required for a range of features and functions.
- » Many areas of the city have a low supply (under 12 m² per person) of large parks within 3 km, stretching in a corridor from



Downtown to North York, and including parts of Northwest Scarborough and Etobicoke.

- » This is an important finding as the availability of large parcels of land for park acquisition in Toronto is rare and creative approaches must be planned for and considered.

There are pockets of very low parkland supply throughout the city.

- » Areas with a very low supply of parkland that is less than 4 m² per person, include the Danforth, St. Clair West and Yonge-Lawrence.
- » Downtown represents an area where a large concentration of neighbourhoods have a high population, and consequently a very low supply of parkland per person.

There are existing challenges to securing new parks.

- » The current parkland dedication rate has not kept pace with development intensity in Toronto. Acquiring adequate parkland in an infill environment is challenging due to small property sizes and high land values.
- » The purchasing power of cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication payments diminish as the cost of land rises.
- » In today's land market, increases in land values are outpacing the ability of the City to make effective use of the money it receives through cash-in-lieu. The City's current practice is to purchase parkland parcels outright, using cash-in-lieu revenues for funding, rather than a financing tool. Waiting to collect the full value of land parcels places the City at a disadvantage with respect to strategic land purchases and also because the relative value of cash-in-lieu accounts decreases as land values increase.

THE AMOUNT OF PARKLAND RESIDENTS HAVE WITHIN A FIVE-MINUTE WALK OF THEIR HOME:

0-4 m²
park area/person



16%
of Toronto's population

4-12 m²
park area/person



4 m² is about
the width of a
patio umbrella

22%
of Toronto's population

12-28 m²
park area/person



12 m² is about
the width of a
bus shelter

21%
of Toronto's population

28 m² is about
the width of
a mid-size tree

41%
of Toronto's population

Project Overview

Parks and natural environments are among Toronto's most cherished assets. Toronto's population is expected to reach 3.2 million by 2032, which will result in a greater demand on parks. As the city grows, parkland provision (i.e. supply per person) must respond to ensure a livable Toronto for future generations.

The Parkland Strategy is a 20-year plan that will guide long-term planning for new parks, park expansions, and improved access to existing parks. It will provide a comprehensive analysis of the availability and function of parkland, and provide new approaches and tools to support decision making and prioritization of parkland investment across Toronto.

The Parkland Strategy is being developed over two phases. The first phase focuses on developing a parkland measurement and assessment methodology. The application of this methodology provides an updated picture of Toronto's supply and distribution of parkland. This picture will inform the development of a planning, investment and policy framework that will occur during the Strategy's next phase.

Project Themes

Three themes guide the work of the Parkland Strategy and examine considerations on how the parks system needs to grow to meet the demand of future population, while improving access and connections through the existing system.

EXPAND

Toronto's parks are its common grounds: places where people come together as a city to play, celebrate and explore. Toronto's population is expected to grow to 3.2 million people by 2032, and as the city grows, its parks system must expand and improve to meet demand.

SHARE

Toronto was created out of six former municipalities, each with its own way of previously measuring and acquiring parkland. As a result, the park system looks different in each corner of the city. There are gaps in the parkland system where improvements are necessary to ensure equitable access to parks so that everyone can share in the benefits of parks.

CONNECT

Parks should be easily accessible to Torontonians. As the city's population grows, it is important that access to quality public spaces and places is improved. Improved connections to parks through a variety of green spaces (including hydro corridors, green streets and conservation lands) will not only have a positive effect on biodiversity and ecological functions, but will also create a more livable and green city.

Engagement Summary

Between May and October 2017, the City of Toronto held a series of engagement events to gather input and direction on the development of the Parkland Strategy. In addition to previous engagement feedback about the City's parks and recreation facilities and services, insights and feedback from these engagement sessions have contributed to the development of the first phase of the Parkland Strategy.

Summary and analysis of all engagement feedback and input will be presented in a comprehensive What We Heard Report. It will be published on the Parkland Strategy website (toronto.ca/parklandstrategy) in late fall 2017.

ENGAGEMENT NUMBERS

2400

survey participants

1300

pop-up event attendees

100+

open house attendees

60+

stakeholder participants

Parkland Planning Framework

The City of Toronto uses a range of tools to acquire land for parks, including parkland dedication requirements from development, purchases, internal transfers of City-owned land, and leasing and partnerships with other agencies and levels of government.

Policy Framework

Parkland acquisition is directed by the provisions of the provincial Planning Act (Section 42) and the policies in the City of Toronto's Official Plan. The Planning Act sets the parkland dedication requirements for new developments and allows municipalities to set Alternative Rate by-laws appropriate to their local contexts. The Planning Act also allows municipalities to accept cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication and prescribes that cash-in-lieu shall be used for the acquisition of land to be used for parks or other public recreational purposes.

The Official Plan provides direction on parkland acquisition strategies, including decisions about whether to accept parkland or cash as a condition of development. When determining the optimal form of parkland dedication requirement as part of the development review process, the City considers the amount of parkland, characteristics of the property, neighbourhood characteristics, anticipated development, land availability and cost.

Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Reserve Funds

The City's Cash-In-Lieu Allocation Policy directs funds from development to local and city-wide park improvements and acquisition. This allocation enables investment for acquisition and park development in low-growth areas. The capital projects that are funded by the cash-in-

lieu contributions are approved by Council through the adoption of the annual Capital Budget. In April 2017, the Status of Cash-In-Lieu of Parkland Staff Report provided Executive Committee with an update on the spending and reserves of cash-in-lieu funds over the past 10 years.

Between 2006 and 2016, a total of \$482,930,013 Cash-in-Lieu (CIL) of parkland payments was collected as part of the development review process. During the same period, the City spent a total of \$260,514,216 in CIL on 624 projects city-wide. See the Staff Report for further detail about recent, current and projected future cash-in-lieu reserves.

Successfully Securing Parkland

Within the current policy framework, the City has been successful in securing new parkland, using acquisition tools such as parkland dedication, jurisdictional transfer or purchases. Since amalgamation (1998-2016), the City has acquired a total of 245.7ha of parkland, including:

- » 27.7 ha in Etobicoke York,
- » 54.6 ha in North York,
- » 119.5 ha in Scarborough, and
- » 44.1 ha in Toronto East York.

The amount of land acquired in each district varies for many reasons. Under the guidance of PASDR (Council approved in 2001), the City has been directing acquisition resources towards areas with below average rates of parkland provision and areas with high population growth rates. The City does not typically direct acquisition resources to industrial areas, where there is little to no residential population, or in areas with high rates of parkland provision.

Challenges to Securing New Parks

Even though the City can leverage the suite of tools to secure new parkland, a number of factors challenge its ability to acquire the quantity and quality of parks required for a growing city.

The City's current alternative rate for parkland dedication is 0.4 hectares per 300 units with caps based on the size of the development site. A large site over five hectares will provide a park of one hectare (20% of site area), an adequate size for a neighbourhood park. By contrast, a condo with 300 or more units on a site 2,000 m² in size will provide 200 m² of land for parks. A park of this size does not provide much space for amenities or activities. If securing an on-site parkland dedication is not appropriate, then staff will recommend accepting cash-in-lieu instead.

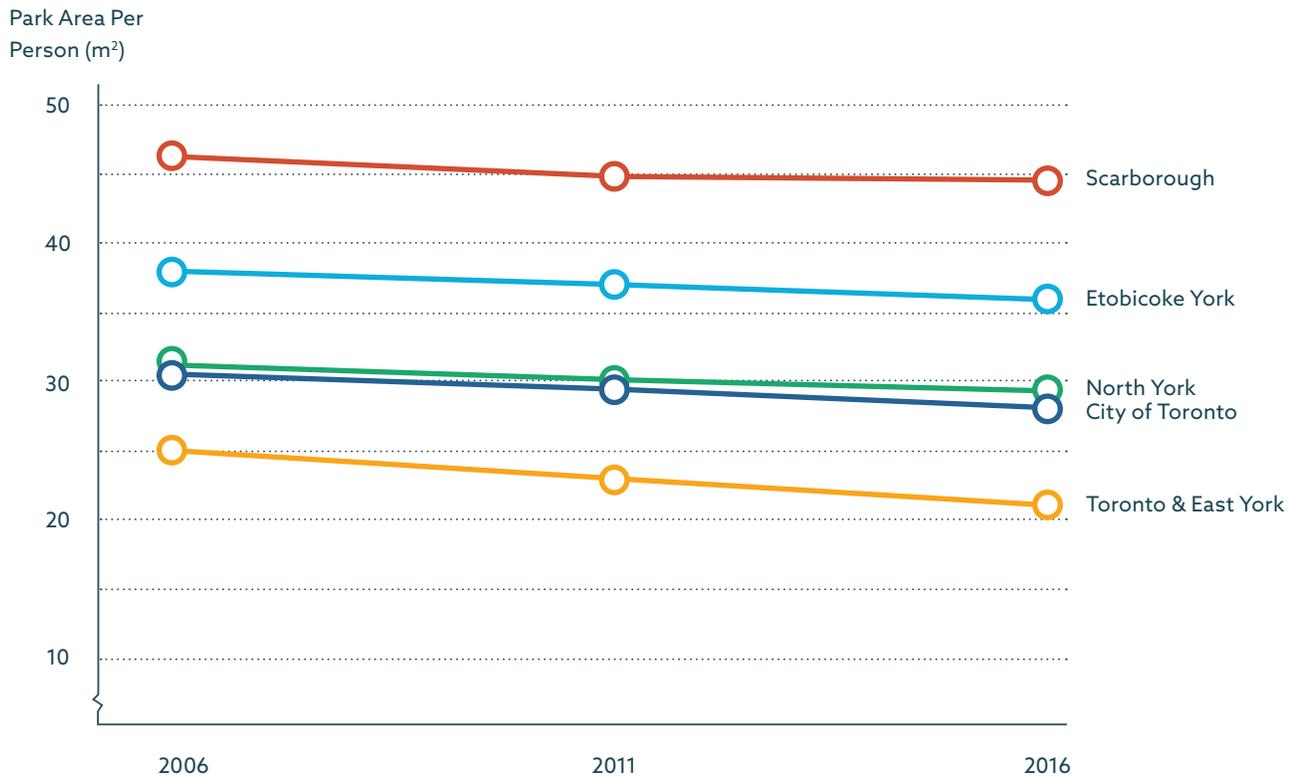
Due to the intensity of development in Toronto and the small size of development parcels in many high growth areas, the City is less likely to secure larger parkland dedications that are of usable shape and size. As a result, development growth often generates cash-in-lieu over parkland dedication. However, challenges also exist in using these funds for parkland acquisition:

- » Land values – In parts of the city, land values are high and have been increasing rapidly. As a result, funds in the parkland acquisition reserve accounts lose purchasing power.
- » Land availability – Many areas of the city where new parks are most needed have a lack of underdeveloped land, which makes park acquisition difficult.
- » Market Value – City policy requires that land be purchased at market value. Often, property owners wish to sell their property at values that exceed the City's appraisals.

- » Process – The private sector can act faster when purchasing land as the City must follow internal policies, procedures and regulations, which slows down the park acquisition process.
- » Coordinating Planning – Parkland dedication requirements are determined during each development application. It is often difficult to coordinate parkland dedication requirements of different development sites that are owned by different parties and are at different stages of planning approval.

Provision has declined over the last ten years city-wide and throughout the districts. Figure 1 shows the various rates of decline.

Figure 1: District Parkland Provision Over Time (2006 - 2016)



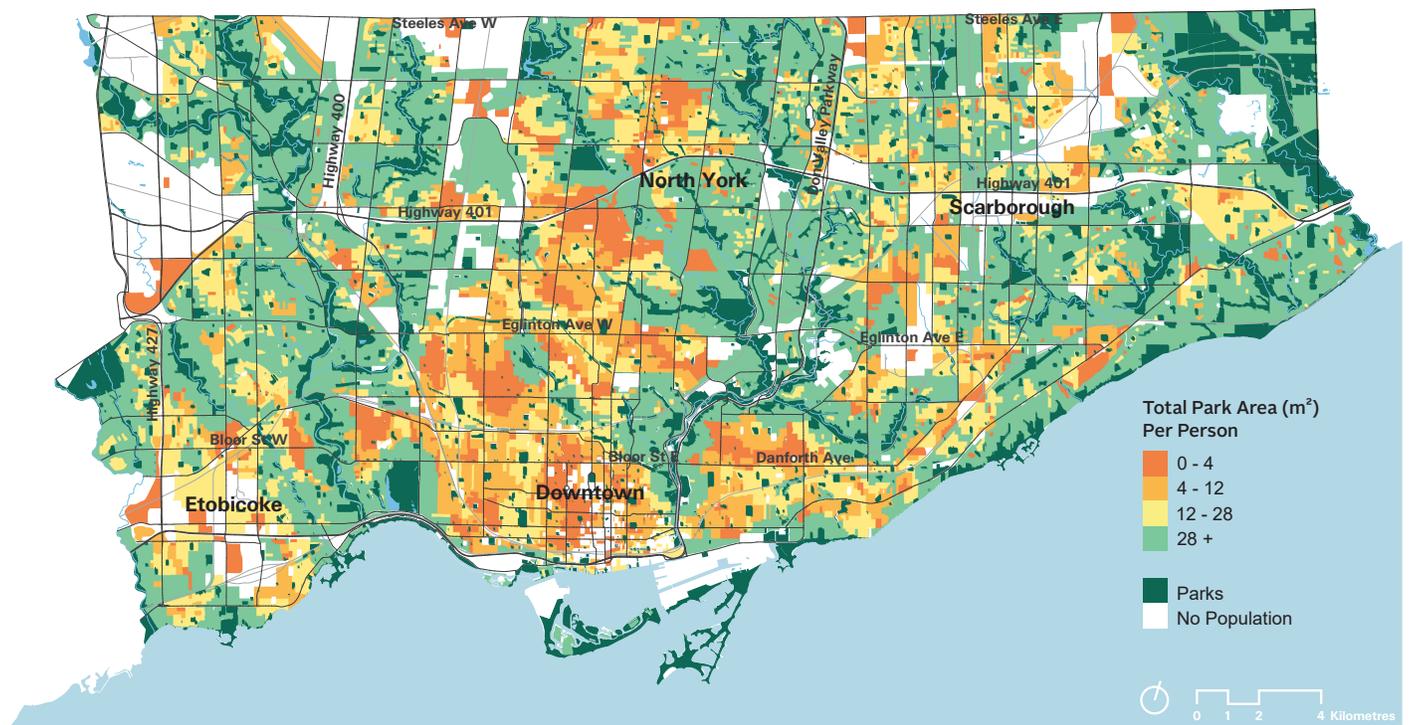
Parkland Measurement and Assessment Methodology

The Preliminary Report introduces an updated parkland measurement and assessment methodology for determining parkland provision across the city. Several key improvements distinguish this methodology: an updated reporting unit that is fine-grained and replicable; an updated parks classification system that classifies parks by size and determines park catchments based on a reasonable travel distance to each park; and a new method to measure parkland, the Park Catchment Tool, which considers access to parks by using walkability as an evaluation metric. Parkland provision is measured against current population using Statistics Canada 2016 Census information, and against estimated future population using City Planning's development pipeline.

This updated methodology has been used to assess parkland supply and distribution across the city and offers an updated picture of Toronto's current and future parkland provision, communicated through the supply maps in the following section.

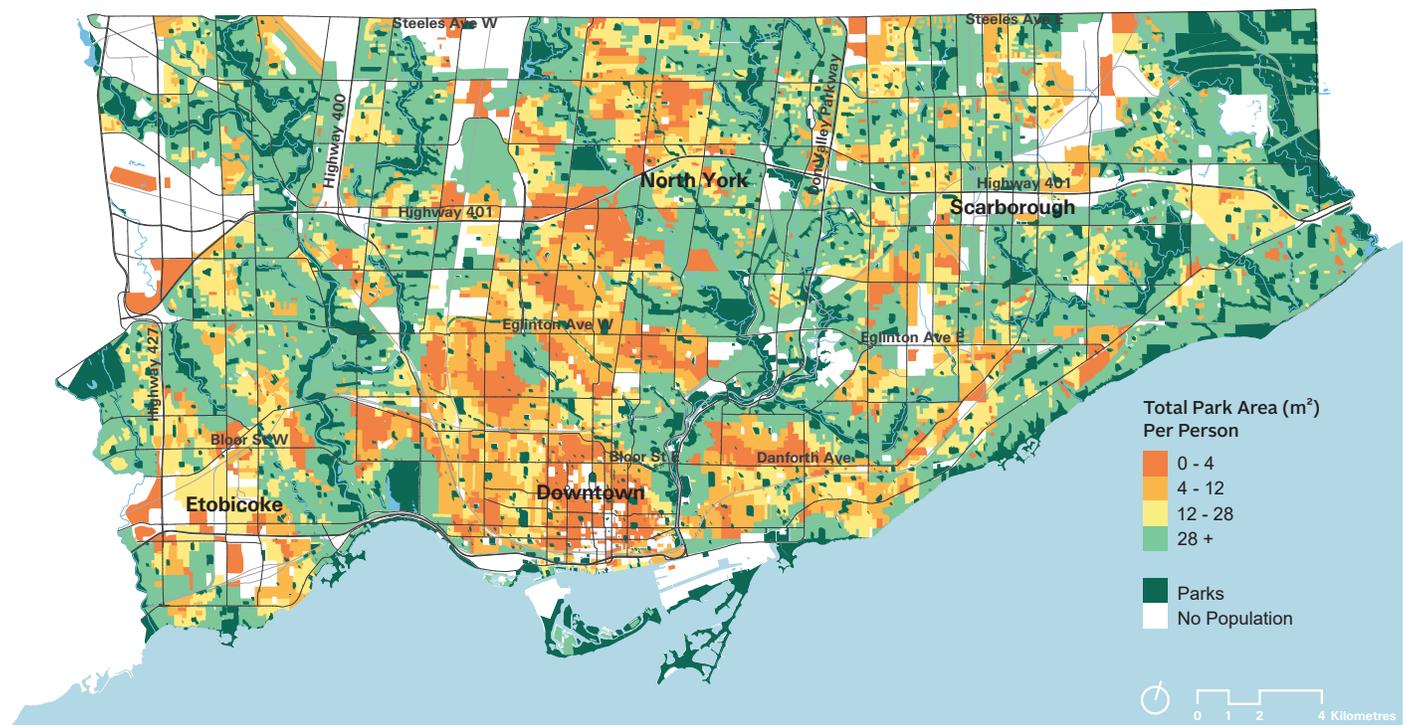


Figure 2: Toronto Parkland Supply (2016)



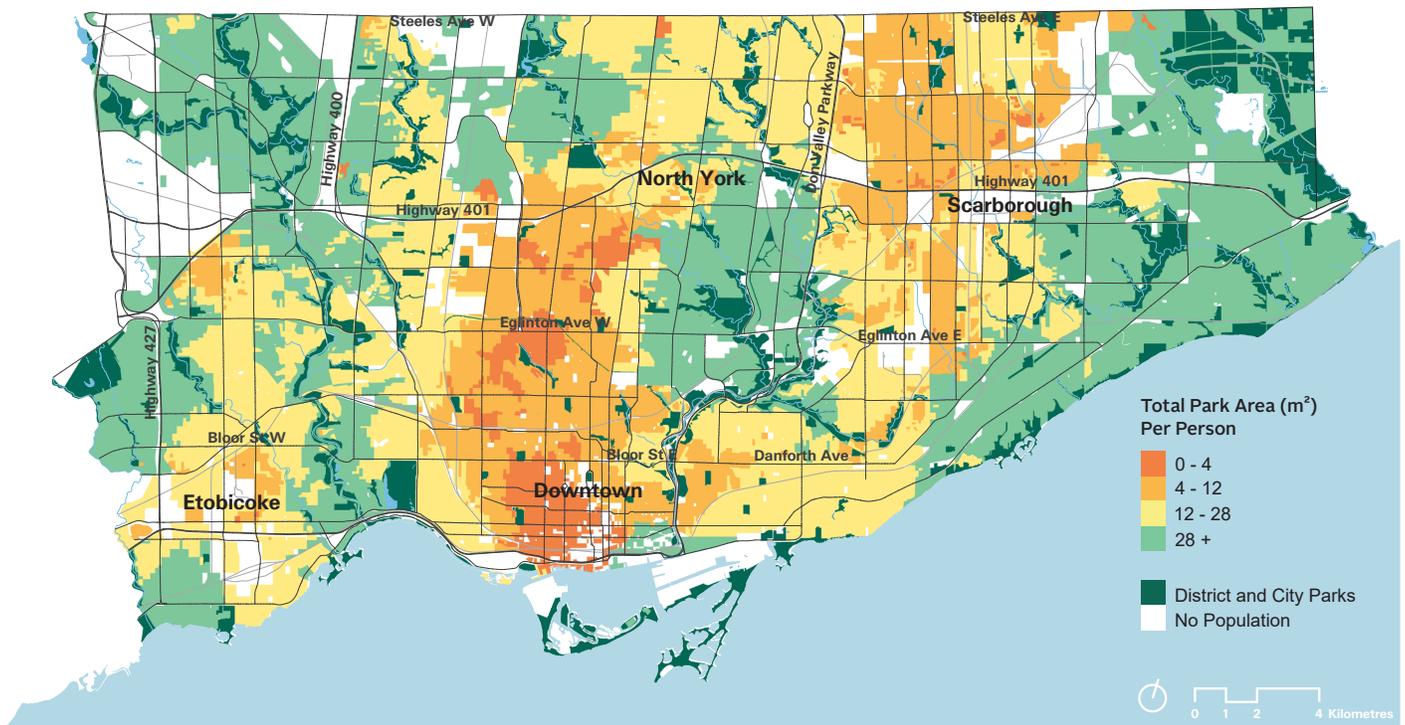
- » Figure 2 presents the park area per person across the city for 2016, reported through dissemination blocks.
- » Provision is shown as dissemination blocks that are below the city-wide average of 28m² per person.
- » The map uses four scales to show park area per person, relative to the city-wide average.
- » Areas in light green have a parkland supply that is at or above the city-wide average.
- » Generally, the amount of parkland per person is highest when located near large parks, the ravines or the waterfront where there are large amounts of parkland.
- » Neighbourhoods with both high amounts of parkland and lower population densities are shown on the map as areas where the light green stretches for a wider distance.
- » Areas with high amounts of parkland and higher population densities are shown on the map as areas where the light green is narrower, north and east of Cabbagetown for example.
- » Areas of the city with some of the highest parkland supply include Scarborough adjacent to Rouge Park and Lake Ontario, neighbourhoods along the Don and Humber rivers, and neighbourhoods bordering other ravines.
- » Areas of the city with some of the lowest parkland supply (under 12 m² per person) include Downtown, the Danforth, the Eglinton corridor, North York Centre, St. Clair West and parts of Scarborough.

Figure 3: Toronto Parkland Supply (2032)



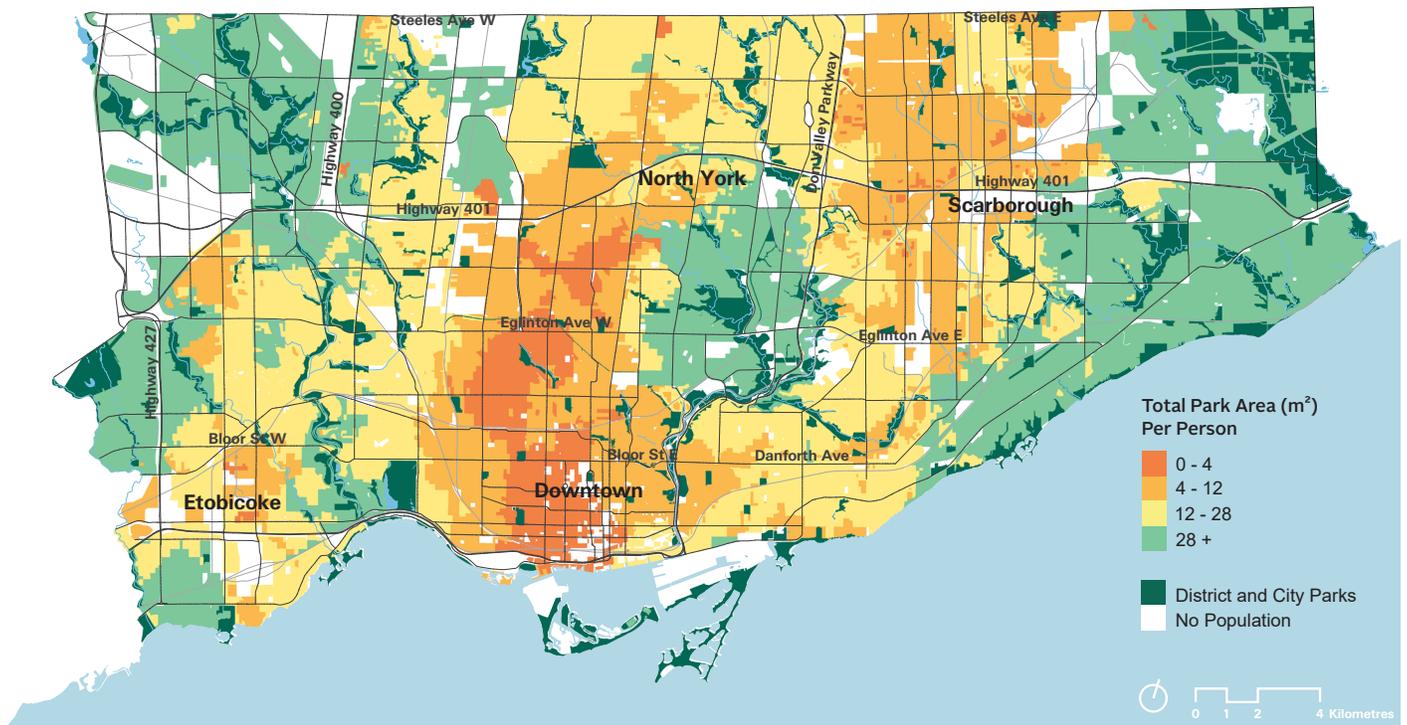
- » Figure 3 presents the park area per person across the city for 2032 using development pipeline data provided by City Planning.
- » This map illustrates what will happen to the parkland supply city-wide in 2032 when the population increases by approximately 500,000 people, and no new parkland is acquired.
- » Under these conditions the city-wide parkland supply would drop from 28 m² per person to 23.5 m² per person.
- » Parkland supply would decrease in every City District by 4-5 m² per person.
- » The most striking difference between this estimated population map and the existing population map (Figure 2) is the expansion of yellow, orange and red areas, and the contraction of green areas, signaling a decrease in per capita supply.
- » The decrease in per capita supply occurs in many areas of the city and across the scale of current provision, which shows as a transition from the green or yellow areas of the map further toward the red end of the spectrum.
- » Some of the worst impacts of decreasing per capita supply will occur in growth centres like Downtown and North York Centre, where planned population growth will place severe pressures on an already strained existing supply of parkland.

Figure 4: Parkland Supply of District and City Parks (2016)



- » Like the Toronto parkland supply map (Figure 2), this map also illustrates parkland supply. However, to get an understanding of the distribution and supply of large sized parks, this map only includes District and City Parks.
- » Instead of a 500 m catchment, the analysis conducted to create this map used a 3 km catchment in keeping with the updated parks classification system. The larger catchments can be observed by the smaller amount of variation between dissemination block colours compared to what has been seen in previous maps.
- » With all parks smaller than 5 ha removed from the analysis, the parkland supply of large parks city-wide is much lower as noted by the large proportion of the map coloured in red, yellow, and orange.
- » The main pockets which have a low supply of large parks include the Downtown to North York and northwest Scarborough.
- » Neighbourhoods adjacent to the Don and Humber Rivers, Rouge Park, High Park, the Scarborough Bluffs, and Centennial Park have a much higher amount of large park space per person as noted by the light green colour on the map.
- » While consolidating and building large parks is challenging in a developed city like Toronto, this map is helpful in identifying where they are most needed, and where improved connections could be made between large sized parks and neighbourhoods that are currently isolated from them.

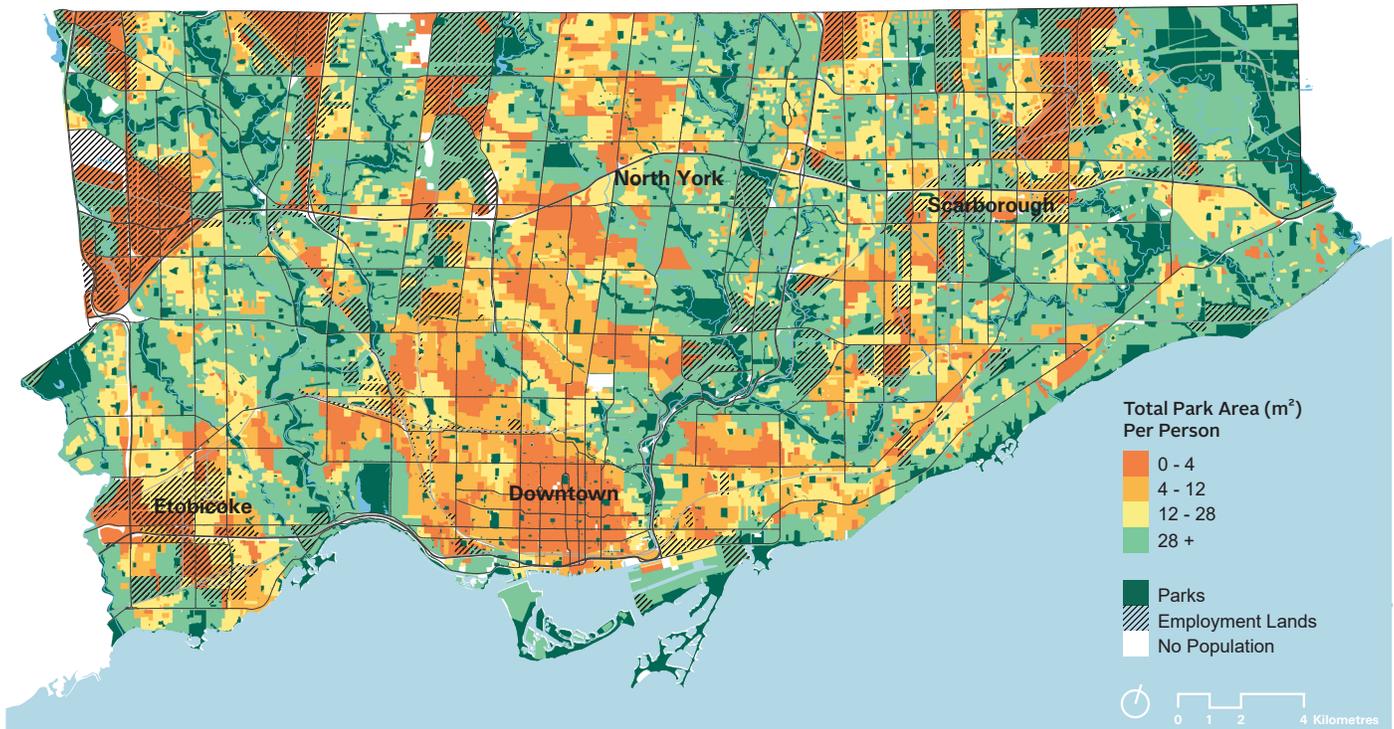
Figure 5: Parkland Supply of District and City Parks (2032)



- » Figure 5 presents District and City park area per person across the city for 2032 using development pipeline data provided by City Planning.
- » This map illustrates what will happen to the supply of District and City parks city-wide in 2032 when the population increases by approximately 500,000 people, and no new parkland is acquired.
- » Assuming that no new large (District and City) parks are constructed, supply of these parks declines, most notably in the corridor between Downtown and Yonge-Eglinton.
- » In high-growth neighbourhoods, the increase in population decreases the supply of large parks per person even in places with larger parks nearby, resulting in low (4-12 m² per person) or very low (0-4 m² per person) supply of large parks in Parkdale and

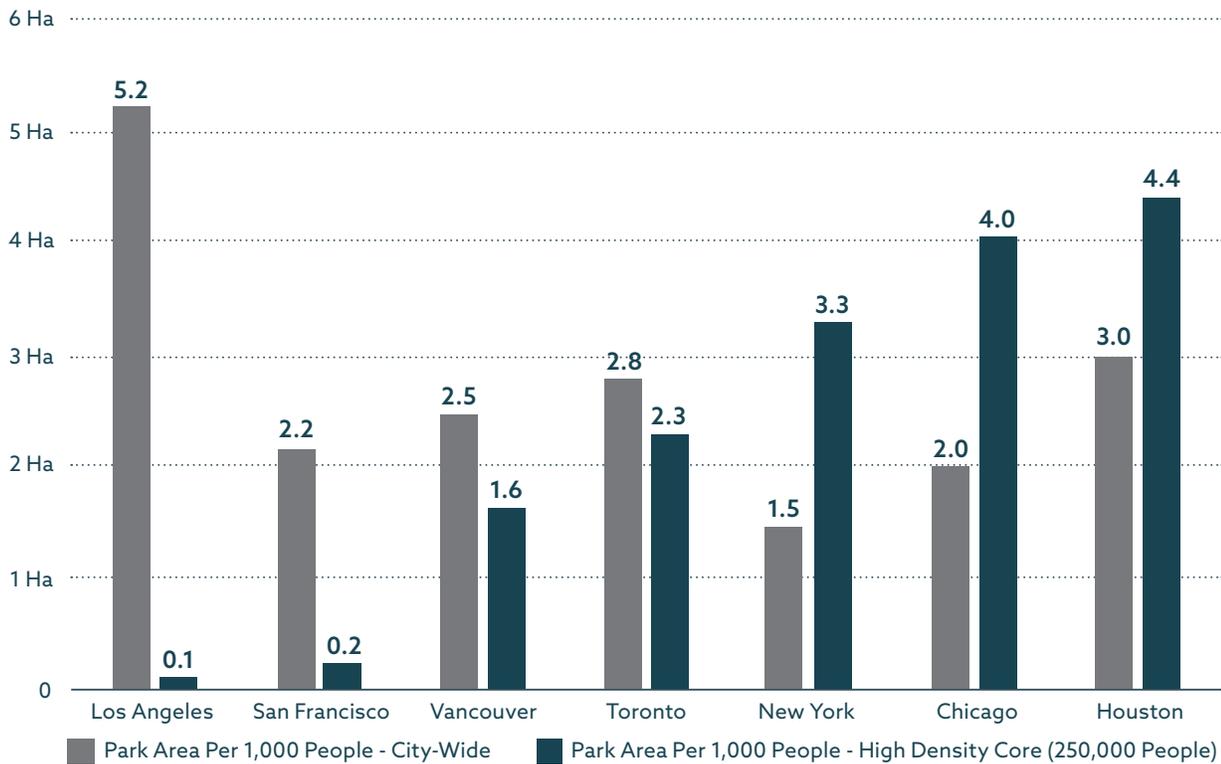
Roncesvalles (close to High Park), and in Bathurst Manor/Clanton Park in North York (close to Earl Bales Park).

Figure 6: Parkland Supply per Person and Employee (2016)



- » The Parkland Strategy uses residential population to consider and analyze city-wide parkland supply. However, there are benefits to assessing how employment population adds pressure to existing parkland and impacts provision levels.
- » Figure 6 combines residential and employment data to inform the degree of cumulative use and pressure on Toronto parks system.
- » Parkland supply per person and employee (Figure 6) follows similar patterns to parkland supply per resident (Figure 2) in some parts of the city. However in mixed-use areas, such as in the Downtown core, there is lower parkland supply, as seen by more areas coloured red or orange, because of the combined populations.
- » Areas adjacent to the ravines, rivers, large parks and the eastern waterfront have moderate or good supply.
- » Toronto’s Official Plan identifies Employment Lands as areas to be protected and maintained for employment uses. As the City would not plan for parkland in these areas, they have been shown with a hatch mark on the map.

Figure 7: Comparing Park Area Divided by Residential Population - 2016



- » Comparison of Toronto’s parkland provision with that of six other large North American cities, considers city wide, as well as the dense cores of each city. This is critical for comparison purposes, since these cities all have varying population densities and geographies that vary in built form and open space.
- » Figure 7 shows this comparison, highlighting which cities have more parkland closest to their densest population (New York, Chicago and Houston) and which cities have more parkland outside their densest population (Toronto, Vancouver, Los Angeles, and San Francisco).
- » This graph also shows that the cities of New York, Chicago and Houston historically planned for large central parks, and reserved or repurposed land for parkland purposes as the city expanded.
- » The high density core of each city was determined by selecting the densest census tract and spreading outwards until approximately 250,000 people were captured. The parks that are within or intersect with these selected census tracts were used to calculate the park area per person.

Next Steps

This analysis of city-wide parkland supply and distribution will be used to build an understanding of the scope, scale and location of parkland need across Toronto over the next 20 years.

Building on these preliminary findings and recommendations, the Parkland Strategy's next phase of work will focus on the development of an implementation, policy and investment framework which will support decision making to respond to Toronto's parkland needs in the future.

This includes assessing how a parkland metric could be determined to measure success at meeting future parkland needs; an analysis of city-wide extra space land values; a spatial and quantitative analysis to determine where parkland access can be improved through partnerships with other land owners; and recommendations and rationale for planning policy changes.

The Parkland Strategy is necessary and foundational work that will support concurrent City initiatives and guide long term planning for new parks, expansions and improved access to existing parks throughout the city.



