



Park People
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Re: EX34.3 Growth Funding Tools - Alternative Parkland Dedication Rate - Interim Report

To Members of the Executive Committee:

As a Toronto-based national charity focused on activating the power of parks, Park People is writing in support of a density-responsive parkland dedication rate as recommended by City staff.

We want to thank City staff for their work on this new approach, which will help Toronto ensure our parks meet population demands and contribute to a more equitable city.

The current alternative parkland dedication rate has been in effect since 2008, and is not reflective of the growth and funding reality of Toronto in 2022. By capping the amount the City receives for parks based on the size of the site being developed, it leads to high-density developments providing the same contribution as smaller developments on equivalently-sized sites. When hundreds or thousands of new residents move into a new high-rise development, the amount of new parkland being created to respond to their needs is the same as what would have been provided for a low-rise building with dozens of residents. This is inequitable, and the issue compounds the longer we continue with the current system.

By 2031, the City of Toronto estimates that the downtown core alone will have 500,000 more residents. In addition to a growing population, we are also seeing increased park use across the city. The pandemic-related surge in city park use shows no signs of declining, with 76% of Canadian municipalities reporting in a Park People survey that park use had increased in 2021 over 2020.

The proposed density-responsive model will create an approach where greater parkland dedication is required as the density of a project increases. This is urgently needed to ensure we are able to secure new parkland and adequate amounts of cash in lieu to support the growth of our parkland system. We believe this change is both strongly needed and likely to be broadly supported by Torontonians. Our research shows that residents want to see more money going into parks, with 88% of Torontonians strongly in support of increasing public funding for city parks and green spaces (2021 Canadian City Parks Report Survey).

Again, we commend City staff on this new, more responsive and equitable approach to the alternative parkland dedication rate. We need our parkland to grow in tandem with our population, and our current tools are simply not adequate. We urge Executive Committee and City Council to accelerate the adoption of a density-responsive rate so that we can ensure the resources needed to create a more equitable, connected, and green city.

Sincerely

Dave Harvey
Co-Executive Director, Park People

