



Increasing Community Use of Outdoor Public Ovens in Parks

2025.EC20.1

Presentation to Economic and Community Development Committee

May 6, 2025

Today's Discussion

- What is an Outdoor Public Oven?
- Building an Oven in a Park
- Current Use of Ovens
- Grassroots Leadership
- Listening to Community
- 10 Actions to Respond to Feedback



Community Bake Oven: Regent Park

Outdoor Public Ovens

Outdoor public ovens are wood-fired brick or cob-covered ovens designed for communities to bake bread, pizza, and more, outdoors.

A Tandoor outdoor oven is made of clay and is traditionally used for Middle Eastern and South Asian cuisine.



Outdoor Oven: Fairmount Park

Grassroots Leadership

Toronto's outdoor ovens in parks were established with community-driven, grassroots leadership and were paid for through local fundraising or with local infrastructure/social development funding.

Thanks to these grassroots initiatives, Toronto has more outdoor ovens in parks than any other city in North America (11 ovens in 10 parks, including 1 Tandoor oven.)

Park	Oven Built
Dufferin Grove	1995 (30 yrs)
Dufferin Grove	2000 (25 yrs)
Fairmount	2000 (25 yrs) at Christie Pits 2019 (6 yrs) moved to Fairmount
Riverdale Farm	2001 (24 years)
Alexandra Park	2005 (20 years)
RV Burgess (Tandoor Oven)	2012 (13 yrs)
Edithvale	2013 (12 yrs)
Regent Park	2015 (10 years)
Christie Pits	2016 (9 yrs)
Sorauren	2017 (8 yrs)
Dentonia	2022 (3 yrs)

Building an Oven in a Park

Outdoor public ovens are unique park amenities.

An outdoor public oven may be installed in a City park if there is demonstrated **community interest and capacity** to activate the oven, and **local funding** to cover purchase and construction costs.

Costs depend on the site and oven design.*

Parks and Recreation is responsible for safe oven construction, maintenance, operations.

Ovens built in parks are received as donations to the City, for all residents to enjoy.



Outdoor Oven: Dentonia Park

*Example: 2022 Dentonia Park Outdoor Oven Construction: \$97,000 (\$79,000 to build; \$18,000 for site accessibility).

Funding source: Partnership Opportunities Legacy Fund (Social Development Finance and Administration Division)

Current Use of Ovens in Parks

Resident/Community Group Bookings

Individuals and community groups book the ovens via park amenity permit process (e.g. RV Burgess Park, Sorauren Park, Christie Pits).

- Arrange a timeslot
- Permit fee + insurance fee
- Complete short oven training
- Staff unlock the oven, provide materials and tools

City Programmed Ovens:

Community Recreation staff organize events for the public and for CampTO groups

e.g. Edithvale Community Recreation Centre;
Riverdale Farm

Community Feedback

What we Heard:

- Toronto's ovens are well-loved but underused.
- There are City processes that pose barriers to use.
 - Fees: communities that fundraised for ovens should not have to pay to use them
 - Insurance is expensive
 - Booking process takes weeks/ is too complicated
 - Inconsistent staff support
 - Inadequate education re: how to book/use
 - City hasn't made the most of these special amenities
- A deeper, more responsive community development approach is needed to activate parks through ovens, building on the experience and passion of local ovens champions.
- Long-term access agreements are important for ovens champions to deliver regular programming



Outdoor Oven: Christie Pits Park

Responding to Feedback

Actions in the Staff Report

- Enable longer-term permits for those who want them (multi-day, weekly, seasonal)
- Long-term/regular oven users have priority access to their preferred dates
- Streamline, simplify and shorten the booking process/wait time
- Deliver consistent, dependable, and experienced day-of support (e.g. for keys, tools and help)
- Work directly with an Ovens Champions Community of Practice to innovate and activate Toronto's network of outdoor ovens
- Support community-led learning and skills development and update the training video

Going Further

- Allow for long-term agreements for ovens use, including recurring days and times of use
- Publicize public ovens use in parks (e.g. social media, improve ovens webpage)
- Find ways to make insurance more affordable
- Improve transparency through regular reporting on ovens use and availability

Thank you!

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