

King|Parliament

SECONDARY PLAN REVIEW

PARKS AND PUBLIC REALM



Parks and Public Realm



Figure 1. Aerial view of the King-Parliament Secondary Plan area.

DEFINING THE PARKS AND PUBLIC REALM

Toronto's parks, streets and open spaces are among the city's greatest assets and are essential to the quality of life that Torontonians enjoy. These public spaces set the stage for daily social interaction and act as the canvas on which public life occurs. The social bonds created in these spaces are fundamental to the city's identity and quality of life. Parks, streets and other public spaces each have a unique role within the parks and public realm system. When considered together, these spaces are our largest civic assets and define the image of our city.

The public realm includes all public and private spaces to which the public has access. It is a network that includes streets, sidewalks and pedestrian connections, parks, open spaces and natural areas, Privately Owned Publicly-accessible Spaces (POPS), the public portions of civic buildings and other publicly owned and publicly accessible lands.

1. Parks

Parks are publicly-owned lands that are set aside for the enjoyment and use by people who live, work and visit our city. They have multiple roles, and are more than just green spaces between the city's hard concrete edges and its buildings. They are treasured parts of our city's heritage.

Parks are an extension of the home, which is increasingly important in dense, urban settings like Toronto's Downtown. They come in all shapes and sizes, from large, signature open spaces to small parkettes, squares, plazas, gardens and promenades. People gather, socialize, celebrate and plan in parks. They are used for cultural and community events that bring life and enjoyment to the city.

2. Streets

Streets traditionally functioned as meeting places, marketplaces and movement corridors. The functions of streets dramatically changed in the mid-1900s, when they were largely given over to the automobile. Recently, there has been a paradigm shift regarding the role that streets play in cities. They are once again being recognized as important civic spaces that can offer high-quality design and inviting options to move around the city or stay and linger.

3. Publicly Accessible Open Spaces

Downtown Toronto's parks and public realm system is supported by other open spaces that are both publicly and privately-owned. These spaces do not replace the need for parks. They complement and supplement the city's system of parks, providing additional open space and recreational opportunities where public use of these spaces is permitted. These spaces include but are not limited to: Privately Owned Publicly-accessible Spaces (POPS), churchyards, schoolyards, laneways and cemeteries.



Figure 2. King Street East looking west.



Figure 3. Open space at Front and Jarvis Streets.



Figure 4. A publicly accessible open space at 260 Adelaide Street East.

DOWNTOWN PARKS AND PUBLIC REALM PLAN

In May 2018, the Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan (PPR Plan) was adopted by Toronto City Council. The PPR Plan sets out a vision for parks, open spaces and streets, proposing a framework to re-imagine, transform and grow public space. It will:

1. Guide the development of an expanded, improved, connected and accessible network of high-quality open spaces for people;
2. Promote healthier, diverse natural systems to support a growing Downtown;
3. Create stronger connections to the natural landscapes that surround Downtown;
4. Reinforce existing, and provide new visual and physical connections; and
5. Improve active transportation within and beyond the Downtown.

The framework is built on Five Transformative Ideas: The Core Circle; 12 Great Streets; Shoreline Stitch; Park Districts; and Local Places.

The King-Parliament Secondary Plan will build on these ideas and provide area-specific direction.

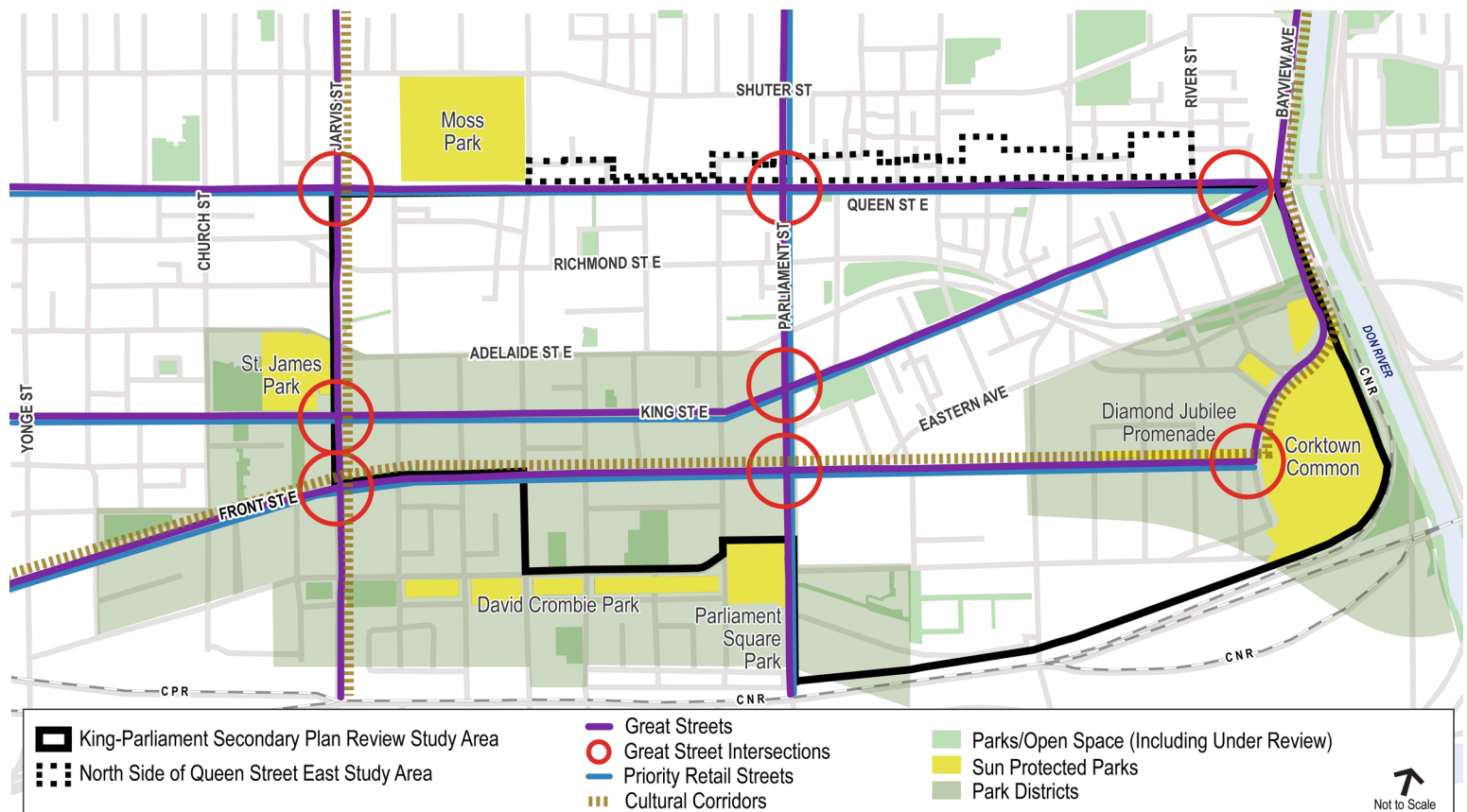


Figure 4. The Downtown Plan provides direction for Great Streets, Park Districts, Sun Protected Parks, and other aspects of the public realm.

The Core Circle

The Core Circle is a connected system of topographic and natural features that encircle Downtown. It is composed of the Lower Don Valley to the east, the Lake Ontario shoreline and Toronto Islands to the south, the alignment of the buried Garrison Creek to the west and the former Lake Iroquois escarpment and Rosedale Valley Ravine to the north. Improving access to this network for pedestrians and cyclists makes better use of these invaluable assets.

The King-Parliament study area touches on the south east portion of the Core Circle, the Lower Don Valley, with Corktown Common as a primary access point. There are opportunities to explore improving access into the Core Circle from the study area, making this asset more available to the community.



Figure 6. The Core Circle.

The Great Streets

All streets are important and are expected to be beautiful, comfortable, safe and accessible. Great Streets have city-wide importance with a diverse character that conveys Toronto's public image to the world. They are destinations within themselves, lined with landmark buildings, historic fabric and important public spaces. The Great Streets in the King-Parliament area are:

- Jarvis Street
- Parliament Street
- Bayview Avenue
- Queen Street
- King Street
- Front Street

These streets will be prioritized for public realm improvements that will enhance their civic role and public life. Each Great Street has its own character which will be reflected in the King-Parliament Plan.

Within the King-Parliament study area, Great Streets intersect with each other on eight occasions. These intersections will be recognised as significant public spaces that respect the character of the intersecting Great Streets.



Figure 7. Queen Street has been identified as a Great Street in the Downtown Plan.



Figure 8. The Shoreline Stitch.



Figure 9. Park Districts.



Figure 10. Local Places.

Shoreline Stitch

The Shoreline Stitch generally comprises the area encompassing the Union Station rail corridor, Gardiner Expressway and ramps, and Lake Shore Boulevard reaching from Ontario Place to Corktown Common. Within the Shoreline Stitch is a series of interventions intended to limit the barrier effect of the existing transportation infrastructure and to stitch the communities to the north to the parks and open spaces along the waterfront.

The Shoreline Stitch is generally along the southern edge of the King-Parliament study area.

From the study area, the rail corridor can be crossed at Cherry Street, Parliament Street, Lower Sherbourne Street and Lower Jarvis Street. Improving these connections will provide better access to the waterfront parks and will encourage the community to cross the transportation corridor. In addition, improvements to east-west connections, such as Front Street East and The Esplanade will contribute to stitching the King-Parliament area and neighbouring park systems such as David Crombie Park together.



Figure 11. Lower Jarvis will connect over the rail corridor as part of the Shoreline Stitch.

Park Districts

A Park District is a grouping of neighbourhood parks, streets and other open spaces including laneways, schoolyards, churchyards and ravines, which is designed to form a cohesive public realm network, with the goal of supporting community life and providing access to a wide range of experiences and programs. Each Park District will have a unique identity and be centered on one or more community parks or open spaces.

Within the King-Parliament study area, there are two Park Districts: West Don Lands and Old Town-St. Lawrence-Distillery. These Park Districts offer an opportunity to create a legible and distinct identity and/or reinforce the existing identity.

Local Places

Local Places provide an opportunity to re-imagine the physical design of the small spaces that form our everyday experience of the public realm. Where we lack larger parks to gather, or where they are simply too far away to experience on a day-to-day basis, we must look to the places in between to address our outdoor amenity needs. These spaces include: parkettes, laneways, schoolyards, churchyards, cemeteries, Privately Owned Publicly-accessible Spaces (POPS), mid-block connections, institution lands, and overlooked places.

Within the King-Parliament study area, land owners of Local Places will be encouraged to integrate their open spaces into the public realm. There are a number of small parkettes in the study area. Some of them, such as Sackville Playground have been revitalized to better serve the local community. Others, such as Little Trinity Church lands and Percy Park still have to be improved.

The following principles will form the basis of the parks and public realm work in the King-Parliament study area.

- 1. Acquire and Expand: Acquire new park space and expand existing parks whenever and where ever possible.
- 2. Improve: Improve existing parks and public realm to make better use of what we have.
- 3. Share: Collaborate with other land owners to share open spaces.
- 4. Connect: Connect public spaces to increase access and support community life.

PARKLAND PROVISION AND ACQUISITION

Parks and other open spaces are central pieces of infrastructure and a key component of complete communities. Equitable access to parkland is crucial to support urban life, particularly in high-growth, high-density areas like the Downtown. The forecasted population growth will result in an increased use and demand on existing parks and public realm. This will result in the need to provide additional parks and open spaces in all areas of the Downtown. Maintaining provision levels is challenging in urban environments where the intensity and rate of vertical growth generates parkland demand in areas where it is difficult to acquire new parkland. The response, in a complex built-up environment like the Downtown, requires creative approaches to maintaining an adequate supply of parkland that provides the full range of park experiences enjoyed elsewhere in Toronto.

Size	Downtown	King-Parliament
< 0.5 hectares	85	7
0.5 - 1.5 hectares	22	1
1.5 - 3.0 hectares	5	0
3.0 – 5.0 hectares	3	0
>5.0 hectares	6	1 (Corktown Common)
Total number of parks	121	9

Table 1. Park sizes in the Downtown and King-Parliament area

In 2017, the Parks, Forestry and Recreation division launched the City-wide Parkland Strategy. The Strategy is a 20-year plan that will guide the planning, prioritization and investment in the park system across the entire city.

Through the updated methodology for measuring and assessing the provision of parkland (developed in Phase One), the City-wide Parkland Strategy found that in 2016, the city-wide parkland provision for residents and employees was 18m² per person. In contrast, the Downtown parkland provision for residents and employees was 1.8m² per person. The availability of sites in the Downtown limits how much parkland the City can acquire. As such, every available opportunity for providing new parkland, from small to large is increasingly important. The King-Parliament area is fortunate to be surrounded by several large parks such as Moss Park, St. James Park, Regent Park and David Crombie Park. The proximity of these parks to the study area enables them to play a critical role in supporting local public life and recreation.

In the past 10 years, five new parks have been secured and built in the King-Parliament area. These are Lawren Harris Square, Power Street Off-leash Area, Underpass Park and Corktown Common. These parks added 9.02 ha to the King-Parliament park system. During the same time frame, three additional parks have been secured, but not yet built. When completed, these parks will add an additional 0.24 ha to the King-Parliament park system.

New large parks such Corktown Common are challenging to acquire within the mature urban fabric of Downtown. The acquisition of this 6-hectare park and the additional public spaces that have been secured and built in the West Don Lands in the past 10 year, have made a tremendous contribution to expanding the parks and public realm system in the King-Parliament area.

Some of the existing parks in the study area have been revitalized in recent years. These include Sackville Playground and Bright Street Playground. The revitalization of these parks was initiated as part of the Corktown Parks Master Plan, which examined how the existing parks can function as a recreation system and how their amenities can complement each other and provide diverse recreation experiences.

Park name	Size (ha)	Amenities
Bright Street Playground	0.03	Playground
Percy Park	0.04	Planted areas
Lawren Harris Square	0.15	Benches
Power St Open Green Space	0.17	Off-leash Area
Diamond Jubilee Promenade	0.4	Art/Sculpture Ornamental Fountain Splash Pad
Sackville Playground	0.4	Playground Splash Pad
Little Trinity Church Lands	0.4	Playground
Underpass Park	1.1	Playground Basketball Court Skateboard Area Picnic Site Planted areas
Corktown Common	7.2	Playground Multi-purpose Field Off-leash Area Splash Pad Trails and planted areas

Table 2. Park sizes and amenities in the King-Parliament area.

