High Park Movement Strategy

Existing Conditions Summary Report

November 2022

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Contents

1. Executive Summary

This summary report has been prepared as part of the High Park Movement Strategy (HPMS), a City-led study to improve the travel network in High Park, prioritizing safety, accessibility and the preservation of the park's ecological integrity. It highlights key findings from background analysis conducted by the City's project team led by Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Transportation Services and a consultant team from WSP. The findings presented in this summary report will be reviewed and considered alongside feedback collected through the consultation process in order to inform final recommendations on improvements to the travel network in High Park.

Total visits to High Park exceeded one million in both the pre-pandemic (2019), and COVID-19 pandemic (2020 and 2021) periods. This data also demonstrates that High Park is both a local and regional open space destination. In 2021, over 30% of park visitors were local (living within 5km of the park) while over 40% lived more than 10km from the park. Visitors are drawn to High Park by a range of recreational, cultural and educational destinations and activities offered year round which are supported by dedicated network of staff and volunteers. Understanding the specific mobility needs of these uses and their respective park users will be key to the success of the High Park Movement Strategy.

The environmental significance of High Park is well established through current planning policies and studies which identify important and rare ecosystems and landscapes within the park including the Grenadier Pond wetland and oak savannahs. Possible improvements to the travel network will be evaluated in the context of these policies and designations and will focus on areas that are already paved in order to minimize ecological impact.

A comprehensive assessment of the existing travel network was conducted through site visits, desktop review and collection and analysis of traffic data within and around High Park. High Park is well connected through numerous transit routes, active transportation infrastructure including bike lanes and multi-use trails, and a road network with local and arterial roads and regional highways.

Traffic counts indicate that the north end of the park (West Road and a portion of Colborne Lodge Drive) experiences highest traffic volumes with daily vehicle volumes exceeding 6000 and daily cyclist volumes at 800 in summer months. Both weekday and weekend pedestrian volumes were also highest at park's northern entrances along Bloor Street West.

An accessibility audit was conducted to determine compliance with AODA standards, focusing on pedestrian infrastructure. It identified several issues including gaps in sidewalks, sub-standard sidewalk clearance and slopes, the need for improved surface materials and pavement marking and other amenities such as wayfinding and seating areas.

Many of the park roads have wide travel lanes and smooth road conditions which may be contributing factors to the excessive traffic speeds observed in High Park. An estimated 85% of motor vehicle traffic is traveling faster than the regulatory speed limit of 20km/hour on park roads.

Reported collision data from 2006 to 2021 indicated 1 serious collision within High Park and 44 within the broader context area. Of these collisions, 68% involved a pedestrian or cyclists, which highlights the need for travel network improvements that prioritize safety of vulnerable road users.

There are over 1500 vehicular parking spaces within 800m of High Park, including surface lots and angled parking within the park and Green P lots and on-street parking in the surrounding area. A parking utilization study estimates that this parking supply is on average 60% occupied, with demand generally increasing on weekends. There is currently no formally designated pick-up and drop-off area for vehicular traffic within the park.

These findings and other key observations are described in further detail in this report, and will serve as a basis for developing, evaluating and refining recommended improvements to the travel network.

2. Introduction

High Park is one of Toronto's largest public parks, combining environmentally significant areas with maintained parkland, recreational facilities and popular attractions. As a regional destination offering a range of travel options, High Park is one of the most visited parks in Toronto.

The City has launched the High Park Movement Strategy (HPMS) to rethink the travel network within the park in the context of growing populations, shifting travel patterns, and impacts from COVID-19. The goal is to improve the travel network to better serve park users and the surrounding community, with a focus on safety and accessibility while prioritizing the park's ecological integrity.

This report summarizes existing and future conditions within and around High Park including information on park facilities, visits, and environmental factors, and an outline of the transportation assessment that considered road geometry, multi-modal traffic patterns, safety concerns, accessibility challenges, and parking. These findings will help to inform recommendations for travel network improvements.

2.1. Study Origins & Objectives

As part of the City's pandemic response, the system of roads, driveways, and parking lots inside High Park were closed to all vehicles on weekends and holidays, with physical barriers preventing vehicle access at all entrances. Weekend vehicle closures began in March 2020 and have continued into 2022. These closures aimed to provide additional space for people to practise physical distancing within the park and improve safety conditions for park users. Weekend closures restrict vehicle access only; the park remains open to pedestrians, mobility device users, people with strollers, cyclists, roller skaters and other non-motorized wheeled devices. Visitors arriving by vehicle (driver or passenger), must park or be dropped off outside the park boundary.

The weekend road closures sparked a public conversation about the role and function of the High Park road network. Park users are interested in exploring a broader range of long-term options for managing movement to, from and within the park, while minimizing impacts to surrounding communities and naturalized areas within the park.

The result of the public conversation and intent of this study is to address some of the long standing mobility issues such as: vulnerable road user safety and comfort, improved wayfinding and infrastructure consistency, and ultimately to provide a comprehensive mobility strategy for High Park.

The HMPS will explore issues related to park access, road safety, and promotion of active transportation. Particular attention will be paid to improving safety conditions for vulnerable road users, reducing the impact of vehicular traffic, ensuring accessibility, and minimizing conflict among users, all while respecting the environmental significance of High Park. The High Park Movement Strategy will advance through early and ongoing engagement with internal partners, external stakeholders, and the broader public.

The objectives and deliverables will be pursued within the context of the City of Toronto's guiding principles for Transportation: safe and healthy communities; quality service; access for everyone; and resilient solutions. This is understood to include a Vision Zero orientation to road safety; a multi-modal orientation to mobility; and a diversity and inclusion orientation to accessibility.

2.2. Study Area & Scope

Figure 1 identifies the geographic scope of work for the High Park Movement Strategy which focuses on two areas, the Study Area identified in orange (solid line), and the Context Area identified in purple (dashed line). The Study Area is defined by Bloor Street West to the north, Parkside Drive to the East, the Queensway to the south and Grenadier Pond to the west. The Context Area is defined by Annette

Street to the north, Roncesvalles Avenue and Dundas Street West to the east, Jane Street and South Kingsway to the west, and the waterfront to the south.

Figure 1 - High Park Movement Strategy Study Area

Within the Study Area, the project will focus on the travel network serving High Park, comprised of roads, driveways, parking lots and paved trails. The Study will also consider the impact of strategic recommendations on the broader Context Area.

The Study will not evaluate major changes to the travel network outside of High Park but may provide key input for aligned transportation studies including review of Parkside Drive. Other important park matters such as land use, conservation and facility maintenance will continue to be addressed through established City plans and policies including the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan, Parkland Strategy and Ravine Strategy.

3. Park Profile

3.1. Environment

High Park is often recognized as a centerpiece of the City's open space network. With over 400 acres of publicly accessible park space, and over one-third of that space remaining in its natural state, High Park is a popular location for local residents and visitors to experience nature in a dense, urban environment. Understanding and enhancing the environmental factors that add to the natural experience of High Park is a key consideration when developing recommendations for the future of movement in the park.

High Park is part of the Humber River watershed and ravine system and contains a distinct variety of natural features and habitats. This includes forests, oak woodlands and savannahs, meadows, and aquatic habitats and wetlands found in Grenadier Pond, Wendigo Creek and Spring Creek. Most of the natural areas within High Park are designated as Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) through the City's Official Plan. ***Figure 2*** displays a map of Environmentally Significant Areas in High Park.

Environmentally Significant Areas reflect remnants of the original ecosystem. Each ESA has one or more of the following environmental qualities:

- They are home to rare or endangered plants or animals.
- They are large, diverse and relatively undisturbed which many plants and animals need to survive and reproduce.
- They contain rare, unusual or high-quality landforms that help to understand how Toronto's landscape formed.
- They provide important ecological functions that contribute to the health of ecosystems beyond their boundaries, such as serving as a stopover location for migratory wildlife.

Provincially identified Areas of Natural or Scientific Interest (ANSI) are closely related to ESAs. This layer generally overlaps with the regulated ESAs within High Park and represents areas with biodiversity and natural landscapes. They include specific types of forests, valleys, prairies, wetlands, native plants, native animals and their supportive environments. Life science ANSIs contain relatively undisturbed vegetation and landforms and their associated species and communities.

City Council recently adopted Official Plan Amendment 583 (OPA 583) which contains Official Plan policy updates related to biodiversity, natural heritage, water resources, stormwater management, and urban forests, among others. OPA 583 adds two new Provincially Significant Wetlands, including the Grenadier Pond Wetland Complex within High Park. ***Figure 3*** illustrates the new Council adopted boundaries for Provincially Significant Wetlands and ANSI areas within and near High Park.

The Official Plan states that development or site alterations is not permitted within these areas, with the exception of trails and conservation projects, and that new or expanding infrastructure should be avoided unless there is no reasonable alternative, adverse impacts are minimized and natural features and ecological functions are restored or enhanced where feasible.

Figure 2 - Environmentally Significant Areas within High Park

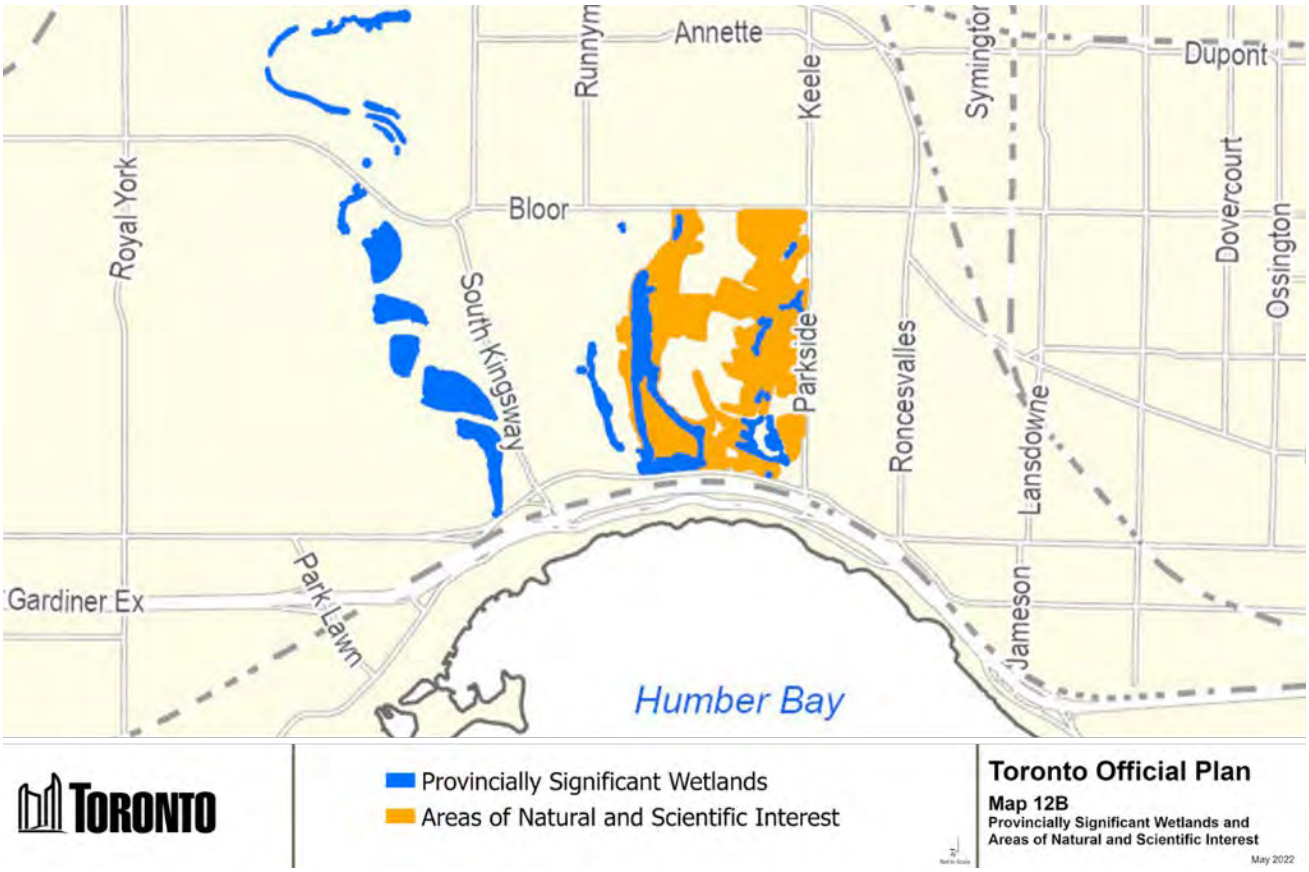

Figure 3 - Council approved Provincially Significant Wetlands and ANSI areas within High Park

The vast majority of High Park also falls within the Natural Heritage System, shown in ***Figure 4.*** This system is comprised of significant environmental landforms and features, watercourses and aquatic habitats and is essential to supporting biodiversity and increasing resiliency. In addition, these areas carry the Official Plan land use designation of *Natural Areas.* The Official Plan generally prohibits development with the Natural Heritage System. When development is proposed on or near lands shown as part of the natural heritage system, the proposed development's impact on the system is to be evaluated and an impact study may be required.

Finally, the City of Toronto Ravine Strategy recognizes High Park as a Priority Investment Area, where improvements and investment will be focused to enhance access while also managing and reducing park user impacts.

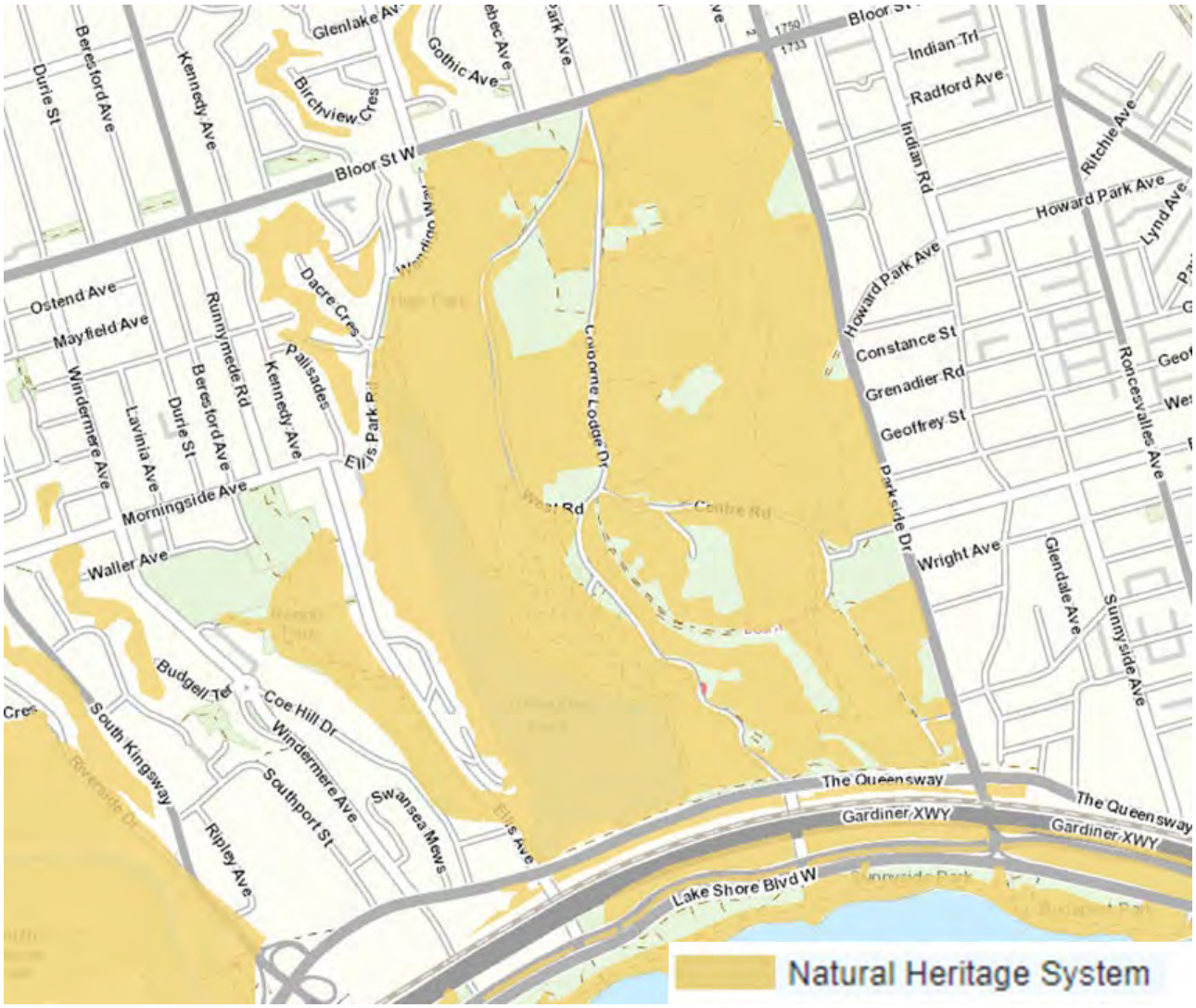

Figure 4 - Areas within the Natural Heritage System in High Park

3.2. Indigenous Significance

High Park is situated upon the traditional territories of the Wendat, Haudenosaunee, Anishnabeg and the Mississaugas of the Credit. It is an area with a significant pre-colonial Indigenous history, with archaeological evidence and oral history establishing activity and inhabitation by Indigenous people for thousands of years. The Humber River watershed, within which High Park is located, provided connection to a vast and vital network of trade and travel routes including the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River.

The Humber River Valley forms part of an important route known as the Carrying Place Trail, extending 45 kilometers between the mouth of Lake Ontario to Holland River near Lake Simcoe, illustrated in ***Figure 5***. The Carrying Place Trail served as a major portage route used by the Wendat, Seneca and the Mississaugas of the Credit, and later by European settlers.

High Park is formally recognized in the City's Archaeological Management Plan, which identifies areas of archaeological potential and requires archaeological assessments on these lands prior to development. High Park is considered a *Greenfield* land in the Archaeological Management Plan, due to its minimal ground disturbance, environmental setting, and proximity to Grenadier Pond. The locations considered for potential archaeological deposits are shown in ***Figure 6.*** In addition to these broadly-defined areas of archaeological potential, there are a number of known and documented archaeological sites of Indigenous significance within High Park.

The unique natural landscape found in High Park today can be attributed to thousands of years of environmental stewardship by generations of Indigenous peoples. Oak savannahs, characterized by tall grasslands and low shrubs and punctuated by fire-resistant black oak trees, were once a common landscape found in southern Ontario. Indigenous peoples used controlled burns within oak savannahs as part of their land management practices to attract game and grow edible and medical plants. This practice was suppressed with the arrival of European settlers and, with pressure from urban development and invasive species, much of this savannah landscape was lost. The rare oak savannah found in High Park is estimated to be thousands of years old and is one the most significant remnant portions of this important pre-colonial landscape in Ontario.

Figure 5 - The Toronto Carrying Place" 1615-1793" by C.W. Jefferys with approximate location of High Park highlighted

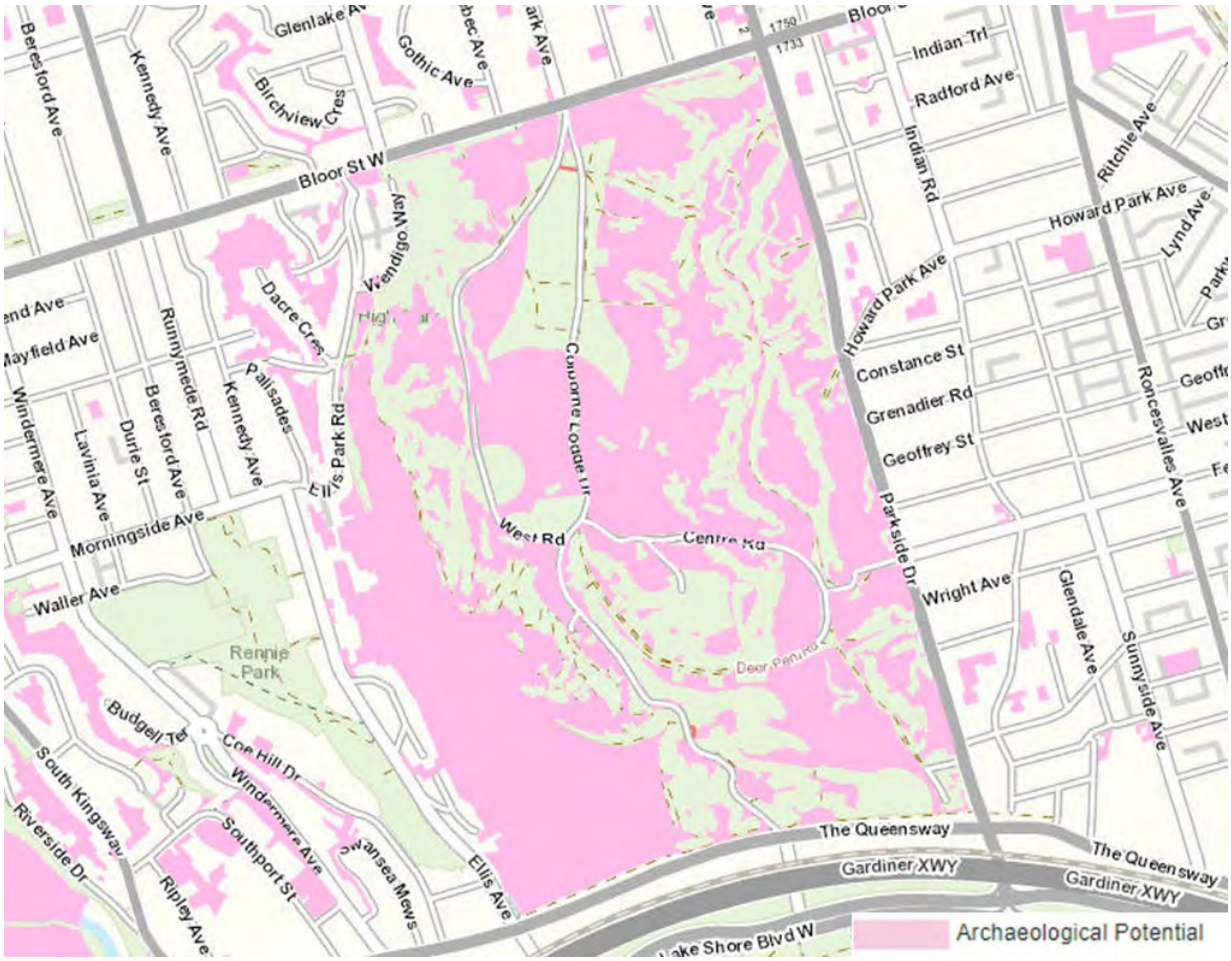

Figure 6 – Areas of Archaeological Potential

High Park remains an important place for Indigenous ceremony and Indigenous-centered programs, many of which are supported by Indigenous-led organizations, including the Taiaiako'n Historical Preservation Society, the Indigenous Land Stewardship Circle, Msit No'kmaq and the Ojibiiikaan Indigenous Cultural Network, and also the High Park Nature Centre. These groups support year-round programming and events such as guided nature walks, workshops and ceremonies that focus on sharing and celebrating Indigenous history and knowledge.

In addition to events and programming, Indigenous-led groups are at the center of advocacy work in High Park including the promotion of Indigenous stewardship practices, opposition to pesticide use, preservation of sacred sites, and protection of the park's biodiversity. For instance, Carolynne Crawley, Turtle Clan, co-founded Turtle Protectors in 2021, an Indigenous-led turtle nest protection program. This initiative promotes Indigenous knowledge and leadership in High Park, raises awareness of turtle relatives living in High Park, engages park visitors to report sightings of nesting turtles via their hotline, and places and monitors nest protectors. During the 2022 nesting season, some turtle nest locations were identified as being at greater risk given their proximity to busy park roads. Through volunteer support from this program, 29 nests were protected and 94 hatchlings were successfully transported by hand to the edge of Grenadier Pond. This program provides a valuable reminder of the broader environmental impacts and implications of the travel network within the park that extend to its animal inhabitants, an insight that should be reflected in the final recommendations brought forward through this study.

3.3. Facilities, Amenities and Activities

High Park is host to a range facilities and amenities which support recreational, cultural, and educational activities for over one million visitors year round. Many of these spaces are operated by the PFR and other City Divisions, while others are supported by private operators or not-for-profit organizations. Proposed changes to the travel network must carefully consider potential impacts to these important facilities and amenities which make High Park the popular destination it is today. These are summarized in ***Table 1*** and the main destinations are illustrated in ***Figure 7.***

Table 1 Main High Park Facilities and Amenities

Facility / Amenity	Description
Allotment Garden	Gated allotment garden with 109 plots, membership is available to the general public through application and waitlist.
Baseball diamond	3 baseball diamonds (class A and B) with seating areas and lighting. Often permitted by the High Park Little League for games and tournaments.
Colborne Lodge	Historic house museum that serves as a hub for community events with cottage and garden tours, special events and workshops. Colborne Lodge is currently partially closed for renovations. The Coach House is open Wednesday to Sunday, 11 am to 4 pm, and free guided tours of High Park are offered on the same schedule. General admission to the museum will be free when the building reopens.
Dog Off-Leash Area	A large off-leash area and trail network with a fenced perimeter, seating area, and fountain. A popular destination for pet owners and commercial dog walkers.
Grenadier Café and Restaurant, Black Oak Café and All Star Café	The main food and beverages vendors within High Park, the largest being Grenadier Café, open every day from 9am to 7pm. Food trucks are also available seasonally.
Grenadier Pond	An important ecological feature providing habitat to a variety of aquatic plants and animals and a popular recreational destination for photography, bird watching and fishing.
High Park Amphitheatre	An outdoor amphitheater that is frequently permitted for theatre productions and concerts including Dream in High Park.
High Park Children's Garden and Teaching Kitchen	A PFR-run facility that supports Children's Eco Programs where children and youth can participate in organic gardening, nature education and healthy cooking programs. It often hosts summer camps, birthday parties and workshops.
High Park Green House	A plant production facility operated by Parks that grows almost 1 million plants per year for use in gardens across citywide parks, for floral shows in City conservatories and for ecological restoration of the ESA's within High Park.
High Park Labyrinth	A passive meditation feature located north of Grenadier Café on Hawk Hill.
High Park Nature Centre & Forest School	The High Park Nature Centre, a charitable organization with a mandate to promote awareness and respect for nature, is headquartered in the

Facility / Amenity	Description
	Forest School, where a variety of programs are offered including kids nature camps, Indigenous programming, and other educational workshops and courses.
High Park Animal Attraction (often referred to as the zoo)	A City-owned attraction with domestic and exotic animals, supported by the Friend of the High Park Zoo. The attraction welcomes an estimated 600,000 visitors a year and hosts various camps, tours and programs. Admission is free and hours of operation are between 9:00am to 7:00pm daily.
Maple Leaf Garden and Hillside Gardens	Ornamental gardens maintained by PFR including horticultural beds, fountains, and seating areas.
Outdoor Pool	A large outdoor pool (class A) with accessible change rooms, offering a range of registered and drop-in aquatics programs.
Outdoor Rink	2 outdoor rinks which are available for bookings and drop-in activity including leisure skating and hockey during the winter. During the summer the outdoor rinks are often used for ball hockey and pickle ball.
Picnic Areas	5 covered picnic shelters and 8 picnic sites with tables
Play Area	4 playgrounds including the Jamie Bell Adventure Playground in the southwest corner of the park and new north playground that opened in 2020.
Public Art & Historical Monuments	A collection of sculptures and monuments including the Howard Monument, the Portuguese Monument, the Lesya Ukrainka Monument, and a series of public art sculptures located near the High Park Nature Centre.
Splash Pad	2 splash pads, one located in the north playground along with a wading pool and another located within the outdoor pool area.
Sports field	2 soccer fields (class B), often permitted by Toronto High Park football Club for games and tournaments.
Tennis Court	6 public tennis courts and 1 private tennis court (Membership via Howard Park Tennis Club)
Trackless Train	A privately operated shuttle that provides scenic rides through the park, running daily from 10:30am to dusk through the spring, summer and fall weather permitting.
Washrooms	7 washroom facilities

Figure 7 - Main Destinations in High Park

High Park's natural areas and open spaces attract many other activities beyond those accommodated in the facilities described above. Other common activities in the park, many of which are promoted and supported by dedicated volunteer groups, include the following:

- Bird watching
- Cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing
- Indigenous ceremony and culturally significant plantings
- Cycling and other wheel sports including roller blading and skateboarding
- Cherry blossom viewing
- Hiking and orienteering
- Walking tours
- Outdoor fitness programs
- Fundraising events including sponsored picnics, walk-a-thons and bike-a-thons

3.4. Park Visits

To provide a deeper understanding of park users, analysis on park visits and visitors was conducted using Environics Analytics MobileScapes data to better understand park use patterns and socio-demographic information of park users. This data product provides modelled estimates of visits and visitors based on information gathered from mobile devices observed in High Park. Limitations on this approach should be recognized – not everyone who visits the park has a mobile device (such as children) or a mobile device that would be captured (such as those using foreign mobile carrier) — however, Environics Analytics' modelling corrects for biases observed in the raw mobile data, and this is the best data available to us at this time. The data are privacy compliant and are collected only if consent or permission is provided by the individual device user.

MobileScapes data suggest that High Park is one of the most popular parks in Toronto and surrounding areas according to visitor data. The total number of total visits to High Park exceeded one million in both the pre-pandemic (2019), and COVID-19 pandemic (2020 and 2021) periods, as presented in ***Figure 8***. The number of unique visitors exceeded 265,000 in 2019 and 2021, with a decline that could be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and public health protocols. ***Figure 9*** presents the total number of unique visitors to High Park in 2019 to 2021, with 2021 seeing the highest total number of visitors.

According to the MobileScapes data, High Park is most often visited in May during the Cherry Blossom season. It's important to note that High Park was closed to all visitors during cherry blossom season in 2020 and closed to visitor vehicles in 2021, which could have impacted the number of park visits. The visit rates from June-September were similar in 2019, 2020 and 2021. The total number of monthly visits is displayed in ***Figure 10.***

MobileScapes data uses the devices' common evening locations (the postal code where the device is most commonly observed between 6 pm and 8 am) to model the aggregate home locations of High Park visitors. In 2019, pre-pandemic conditions, approximately 23% of all visitors lived within five km of High Park. In 2020 and 2021, 37% and 31% of park visitors, respectively, lived within five km of the park. This could again be attributed to the impacts of COVID-19 protocols, with residents relying more heavily on their local parks. About half of all visitors to High Park came from a distance of eight km less in 2020 and 2021. A higher proportion of park visits originated from over eight km away in 2019. ***Figures 11, 12 and 13*** display the total number of visitors in 2019, 2020 and 2021, respectively, by census tract.

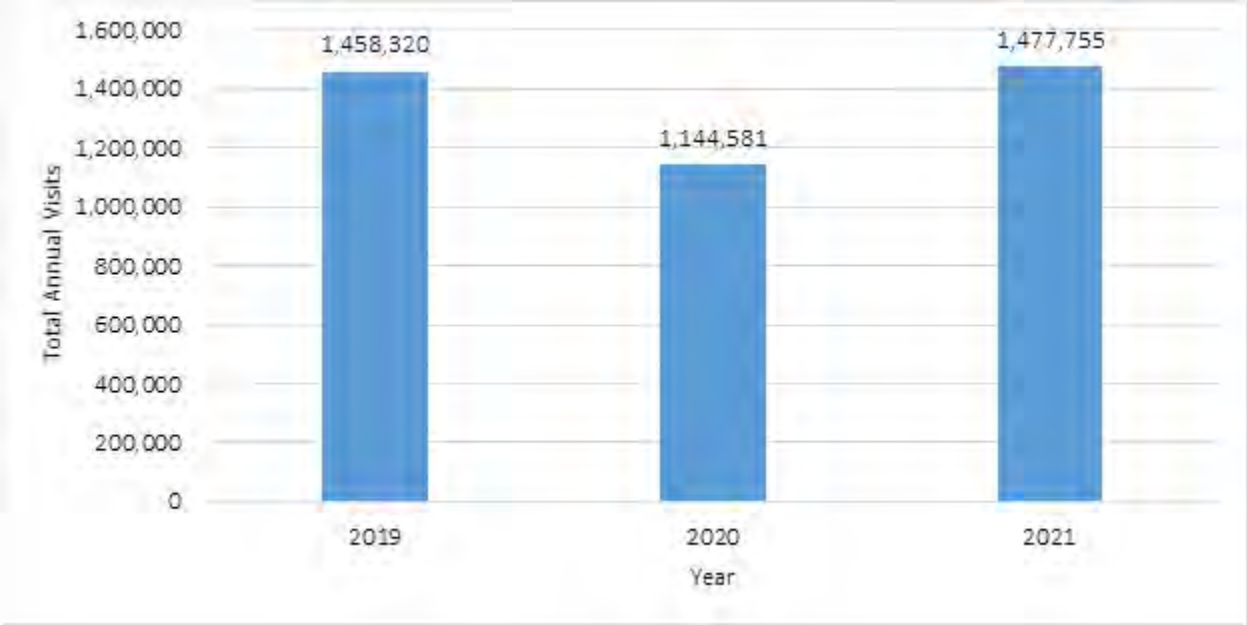

Figure 8 - Total Number of Annual Visits to High Park in 2019, 2020 and 2021

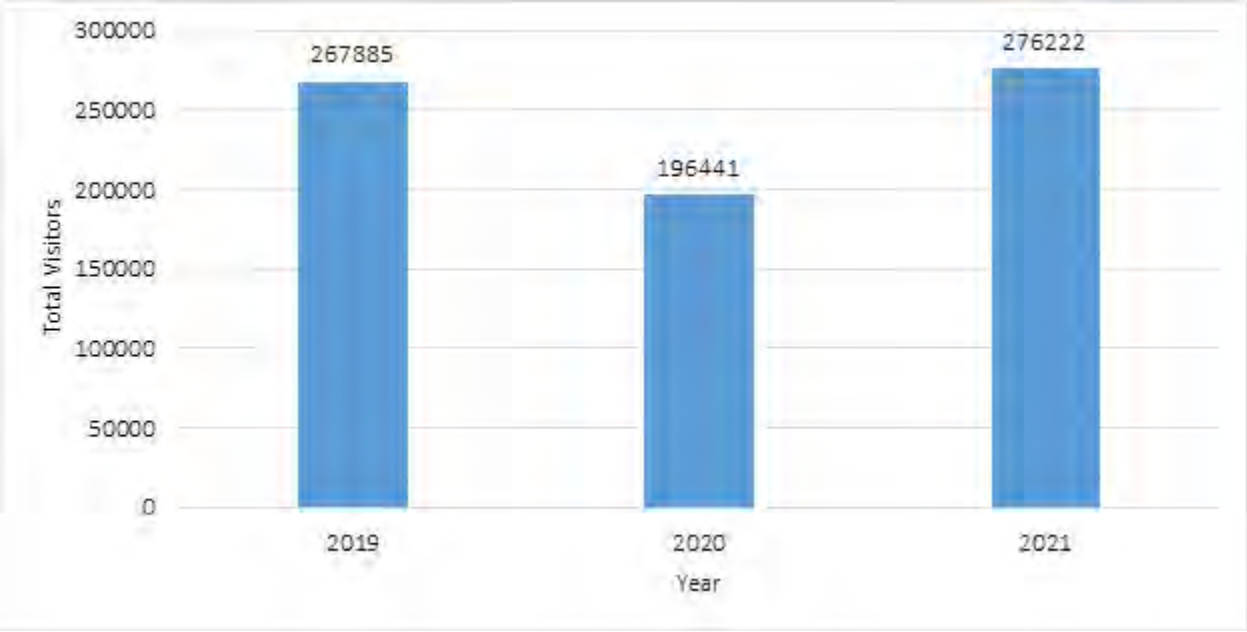

Figure 9 - Total Number of Unique Visitors to High Park in 2019, 2020 and 2021

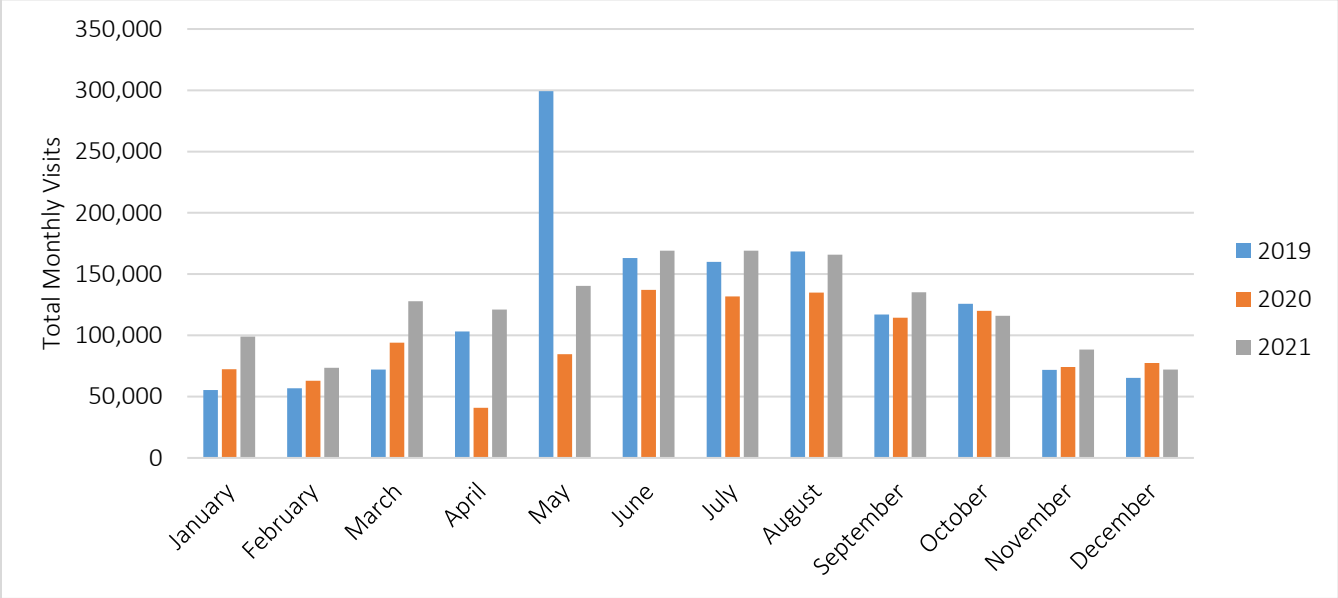

Figure 10 - Total Number of Monthly Visits to High Park in 2019, 2020 and 2021

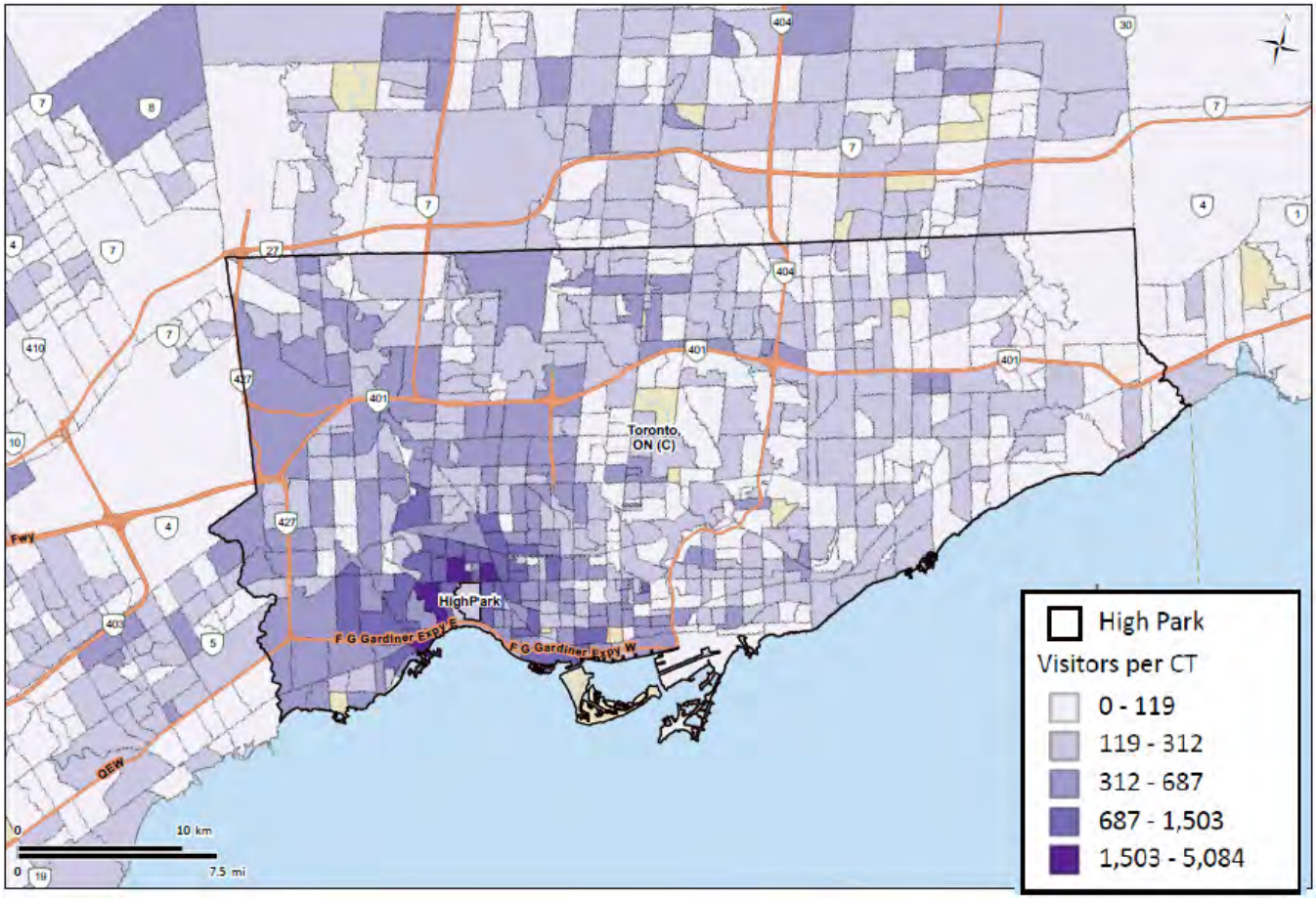

Figure 11 - Visitors to High Park in 2019

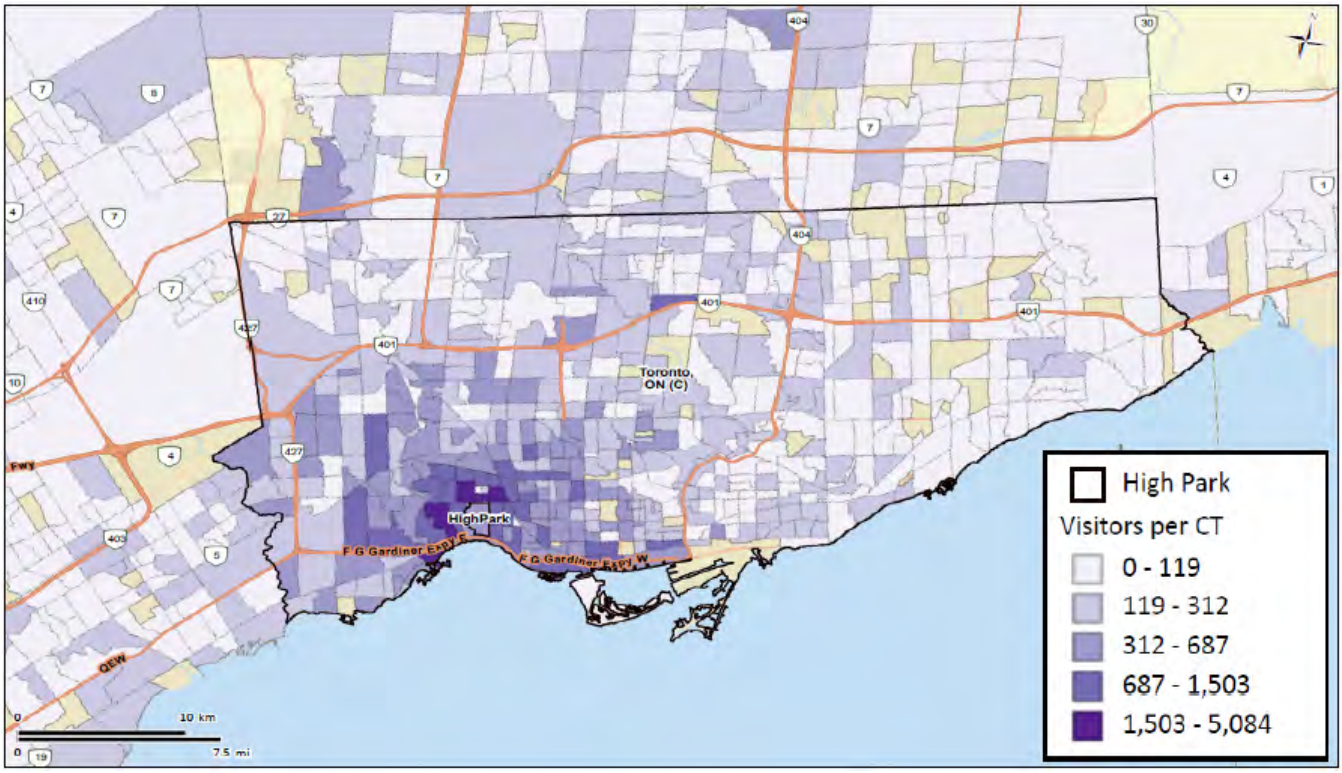

Figure 12 - Visitors to High Park in 2020

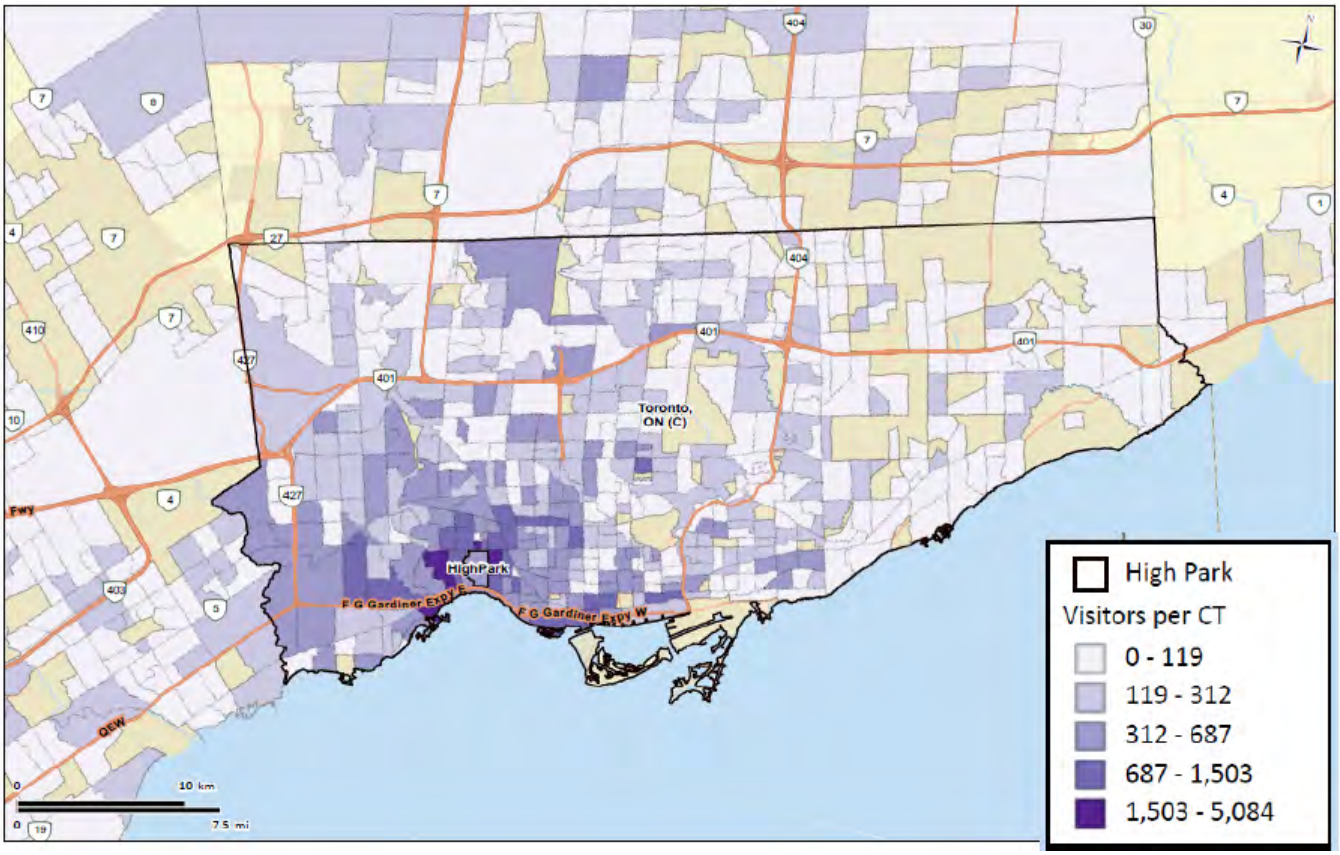

Figure 4 Visitors to High Park in 2021

4. Transportation Assessment

High Park benefits from direct connections to rapid transit, active transportation infrastructure, arterial roads and regional highways. High Park is serviced by TTC streetcar, subway and bus routes, with stops and stations at main park entrances along the periphery. A trackless train operates seasonally within the park. Cycling infrastructure is available inside the park, and within close proximity of the park boundaries in the form of bike lanes (Bloor Street West, The Queensway), multi-use paths and trails (internal park network, Martin Goodman Trail), nine Bike Share Toronto stations, and bicycle parking. Major arterial roads make up three out of the four park boundaries, and the Gardiner Expressway entrances and exits are nearby. The park contains an internal travel network comprised of roadways (totaling approximately five km) and over 550 surface parking spaces distributed around the park, as well as over eight km of paved trails. The park also contains natural surface and informal trails.

This section provides a summary of the current transportation network in and around High Park and traffic operations within this network.

4.1. Travel Network Characteristics

High Park is served by a travel network of park roads, driveways, formal trails and parking lots, as shown in ***Figure 14*****.** High Park bounded by major arterial roads on the north, south and east sides, and a collector road on the west side. The internal road network has a speed limit of 20 km per hour. The internal park roads and transportation assets are operated and maintained by the City's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division.

Park roads are between 6.8 to 9.6 metres, wider than the current guideline that recommends a maximum of 3.0 metres per travel lane for streets operating at 30km/hr or less. Sidewalks are available on at least one side of all park roads. Sidewalk connectivity is a concern along park roads, as the orientation of sidewalks flip in some instances. Sidewalk widths range from 1.5 metres to over 3 metres. Sidewalks below 2.1 metres in width are below ideal standards. The pedestrian network also includes paved multi-use trails, soft-surface trails, and park roads which are permanently closed to private vehicle traffic (such as Deer Pen Road and portions of Spring Road). For the purposes of this study, formal soft surface trails (such as the pathway along portions of Grenadier Pond) are differentiated from smaller informal natural surface trails within natural areas, which are not actively maintained, the latter of which will not be a focus of this study.

Painted bike lanes are available on West Road and Colborne Lodge Drive. The conditions of Colborne Lodge Drive change south of West Road. The southbound travel lane is a shared route for motorized vehicles and bicycles. The remainder of park roads operate as shared routes, and contain sharrows and other visual indications that the roadway is shared. Multi-use trails within the park support cycling movement in addition to other forms of non-motorized transportation options. Separated bike lanes were recently installed along Bloor Street West in 2020. The "High Park Loop" (West Road and Colborne Lodge Drive) is a common recreational route for road cyclists. This counter clockwise circle has been cited by park users as an area where cyclists exceed the 20km/h speed limit and conflict with other park users, specifically slower moving cyclist and pedestrians.

Figure 14 - Main features of the travel network in High Park

Cycling activity is also supported by eight Bike Share stations located within or immediately adjacent to High Park. From 2019 to 2021, Bike Share Toronto ridership around and inside the park generally doubled, with an average of 73 trips per day starting or ending in High Park. The most popular trips were between Bloor Street West and the centre of the park around the Grenadier Cafe. People also commonly travelled between the stations to the south of the park along the Waterfront Trail and Bloor Street West. Round trips were also common, making up 10-15% of trips for stations in and around the park. Bicycle parking is available at key destinations within the park and along the park boundaries.

High Park's main entrances that serve all travel modes are located at Bloor Street West and High Park Ave (northern edge), Parkside Drive and High Park Boulevard (eastern edge) and The Queensway and Colborne Lodge Drive (southern edge). Another vehicle entrance is located near the southeast corner of the park, primarily serving a surfacing parking lot. The main pedestrian entrances are found at the Bloor Street West/Parkside Drive intersection, and the Howard Park Boulevard/Parkside Drive intersection. There are three other formal pedestrian gateways on Bloor Street West, two on Parkside Drive, two on the Queensway and one on Ellis Park Road. There are also a number of unpaved informal access points along the park's edges which are not maintained by the City and which will not be the focus of this study.

Overall, the park is permeable to pedestrian activity with the exception of the eastern edge due to vegetation and grade changes. Permeability is important from an accessibility and connectivity perspective, but must also be understood from an environmental impact lens. The study will not promote new points of access that could impact ecological sensitive areas and will encourage pedestrian traffic to be directed to formal gateways and pathways. Infrastructure that supports active transportation is illustrated in ***Figure 15.***

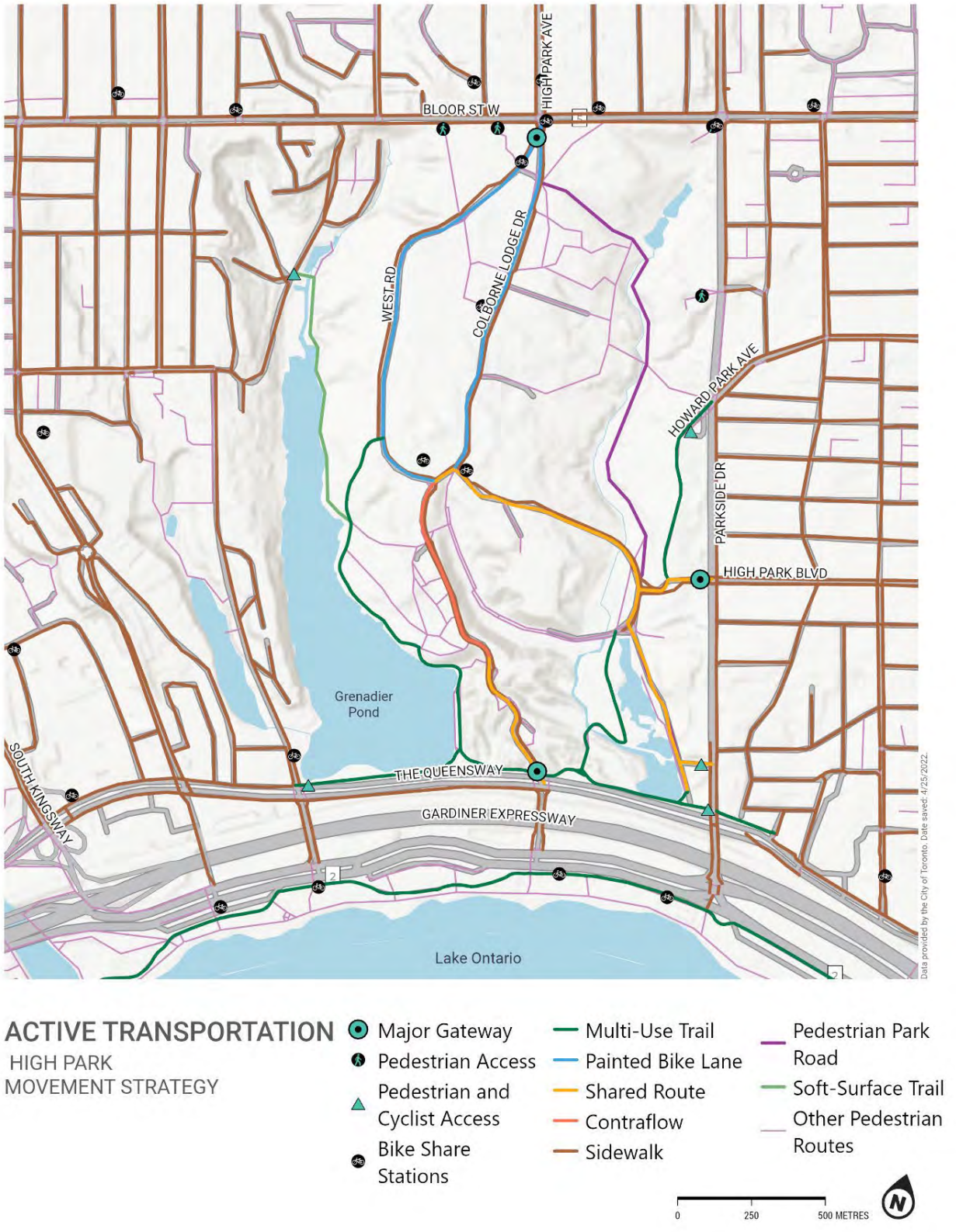

Figure 15 - Active transportation infrastructure in High Park

4.2. Transit Service

High Park is well-served by a range of transit options, which are illustrated in ***Figure 16.*** There are three subway stations on the TTC Line 2 Bloor–Danforth located within 650 meters of a park entrance: Keele Subway Station High Park Subway Station and Runnymede Subway Station. Additionally, the Bloor GO/UP station is located one km east of the park and access to the Union Pearson Express Train and the GO Kitchener Line.

Figure 16 - Transit routes serving High Park

The 501 Queen and 506 Carlton streetcar routes provide direct access to the park, with stops at key entrances of the park: Colborne Lodge Drive and The Queensway, Ellis Avenue and the Queensway, and the High Park Loop located at Parkside Drive and Howard Park Avenue. There are a number of bus routes that provide direct connection to various park entrances: 30, 41, 77, 79, 80, 189, 941 and 989. Lastly the 30B High Park bus route provides seasonal service on weekends to several destinations within the park and to High Park Subway Station

Within High Park, the trackless train operates during peak seasonal periods on a fixed loop around the perimeter of the park (West Road, along the eastern shore of Grenadier Pond, Spring Road returning to West Road). The train operates on a ticketed basis ($4 - $5 per person) between 10:30am and dusk everyday (weather dependent) during the peak period (May-September) and on weekends in April and October. Suitable (but not dedicated/designed) stops are located at key points in the park: West Road picnic/play area, Grenadier Pond, and High Park Zoo.

4.3. Accessibility Audit

An accessibility audit was completed in High Park to review the quality and condition of the park's transportation infrastructure, and its overall compliance with the 2021 Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines. The audit identified several gaps in compliance, built-form challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Sub-standard pedestrian infrastructure contributes to undesirable pedestrian conditions, accessibility issues and potential safety concerns. Pinch-points, physical barriers and natural features that impede on the pedestrian clearways were found. These features obstruct the sidewalks and provide sub-standard clearances for people walking and people using mobility devices. The sidewalk network is not connected continuously throughout the park and sometimes end abruptly with no warning. These conditions force people walking and people using mobility devices to turn around, enter the vehicle travel lane or continue on soft landscaped surfaces.

The topography and terrain of High Park provides natural challenges for accessibility, specifically in the south-east and north-west quadrants of the park. Steep slopes, stairs and unpaved trails make some spaces within the park inaccessible for people using mobility devices, people with strollers and people who have other mobility needs.

Opportunities to enhance accessibility within the High Park travel network will be pursued through the selection of a preferred scenario and delivery of improvements. Sidewalk widening, improved pavement markings, clear wayfinding and consistent seating will be explored for implementation.

4.4. Traffic Studies and Data Analysis

Traffic data was compiled and analyzed to assess traffic trends in High Park and the surrounding context area to identify existing behaviors and potential areas of concern. Traffic studies and counts provide insight into common travel behaviors relating to travel speed, vehicle volumes, route preferences and vehicle types.

The data suggest that the eastern and southern park roads have motor vehicle volumes consistent with a local road classification, 2500 daily vehicles or less. However, traffic counts around the north end of the park suggest that vehicle volumes on West Road and Colborne Lodge exceed 6000 daily vehicles. Park roads are not governed by the typical road classification system, and there is no standardized range for acceptable vehicle volumes. The data suggest that motor vehicle speeds exceed the regulatory speed limits. On average, vehicle speeds exceed the 20km/h speed limit by 10-23km/hr.

The data suggest that the north end of the park, the "High Park Loop", carries the highest volumes of people cycling. Over 800 daily cyclists were measured along these road segments in July 2021.

Traffic counts provide insight into travel patterns and how park users enter and exit the park. The Bloor Street West/High Park Avenue intersection appears to be the most popular entrance and exit of the park for motorists, with almost 66% of motor vehicles entering and 56% exiting the park at this intersection. Approximately 31% and 18% of motor vehicles enter and exit High Park via the Parkside Drive gate, respectively. The remaining 3% and 26% of vehicles enter and exit at the Colborne Lodge Drive/Queensway intersection, respectively. The Bloor Street West/High Park Avenue intersection also has the highest volume of bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

Turning movement counts (TMCs) provide context into motor vehicle volumes at intersections and crosswalks along the park periphery. They also measure volumes of people walking and people cycling at all approaches. The study found that weekday pedestrian crossing volumes are highest across Bloor Street, to the north of High Park. The study found that weekend pedestrian volumes are more than double those on weekdays, with the highest pedestrian volumes on Bloor Street West. ***Figures 17 and 18*** display weekday and weekend pedestrian volumes at crosswalks around High Park.

With regards to the number of people cycling, the study found that weekday and weekend volumes were highest on Bloor Street West. At most intersections the number of people cycling was found to double on weekends as compared to weekday counts. The 2021 extension of the Bloor Street West bikeway may contribute to the higher cycling volumes along this route. Turning movement counts and cycling volumes were conducted in December 2021. Cyclist volumes during warmer months or special events in the park were found to be higher in other traffic counts conducted on roads in High Park in July 2021. ***Figures 19 and 20*** display weekday and weekend cyclist volumes at crosswalks around High Park.

4.5. Road Safety (15 year History)

Collision history from the last fifteen years was reviewed with a special emphasis on collisions involving vulnerable road users, and those that resulted in a death or serious injury. Collision history provided by the Toronto Police Service for the fifteen-year period ending in December 2021, disclosed 1 collision that resulted in a serious injury within the High Park boundary, and 44 collisions that resulted in a death or serious injury (KSI) in the study's context area. The collision within High Park took place at the intersection of Centre Road and High Park Boulevard in 2020. A total of 68% of all recorded collisions resulting in death or serious injury (in High Park and surrounding context area) involved a pedestrian or cyclist. In areas of high pedestrian and cyclist activity, like High Park, safety improvements for vulnerable road users should be considered to mitigate potential conflicts priority in the future recommendations for this study.

In addition to reported collision data, feedback and observations from park users and City staff have emphasized the need to address conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. Public and stakeholder feedback has indicated that conflicts between road cyclists and other vulnerable road users exist along the High Park Loop. Specific areas of concern are the West Road/Colborne Lodge Drive/Centre Road intersection, on Colborne Lodge Drive near the pool and baseball facilities, and on West Road near the playground area. Safety of all park users will be prioritized through this study and while the City will continue to encourage recreational opportunities in the park, it is important that all visitors be considerate and respectful of each other and the rules that keep park users safe.

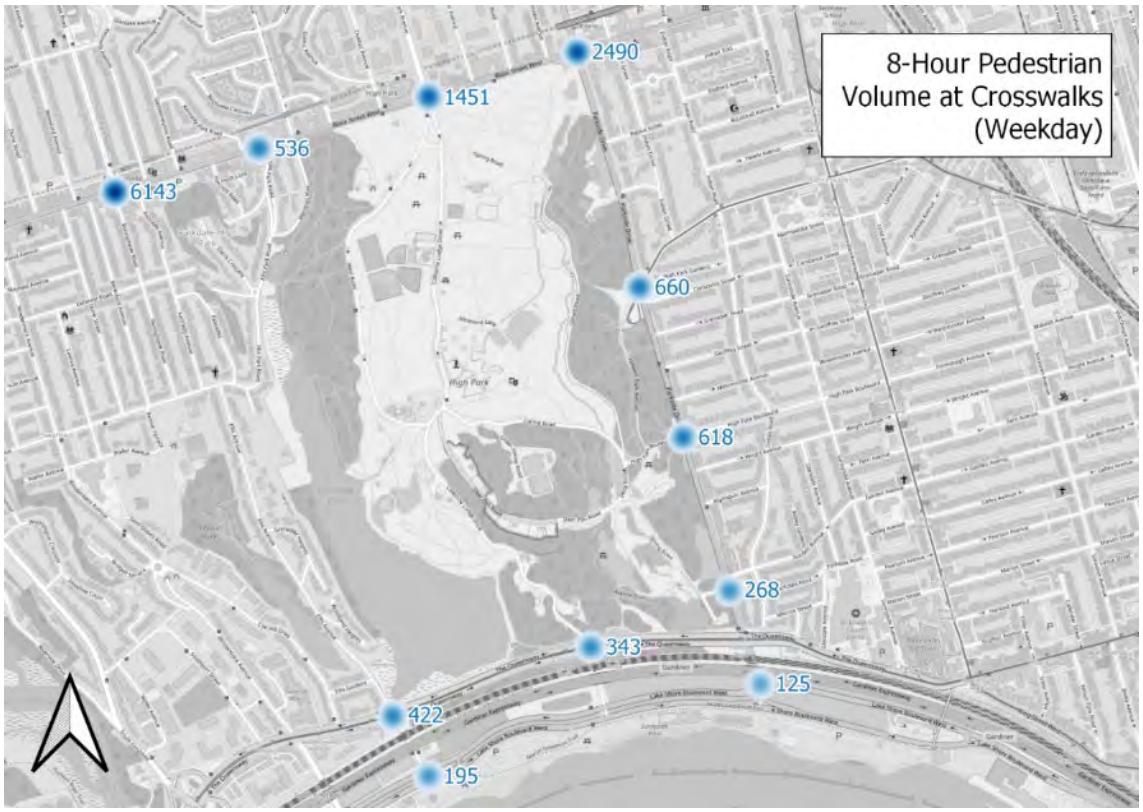

Figure 17 - Heat map of Weekday Pedestrian Activity at Perimeter Crosswalks

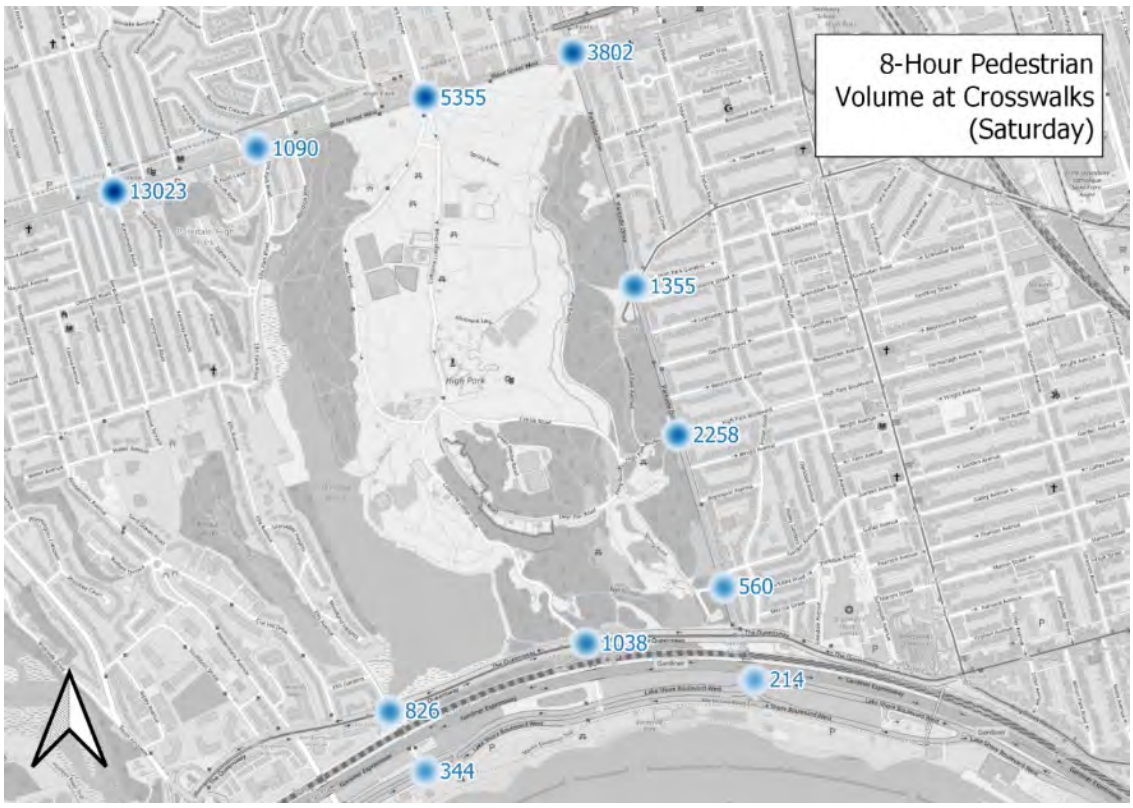

Figure 18 - Heat map of Weekend Pedestrian Activity at Perimeter Crosswalks

Figure 19 - Heat map of Weekday Cycling Activity at Perimeter Intersections

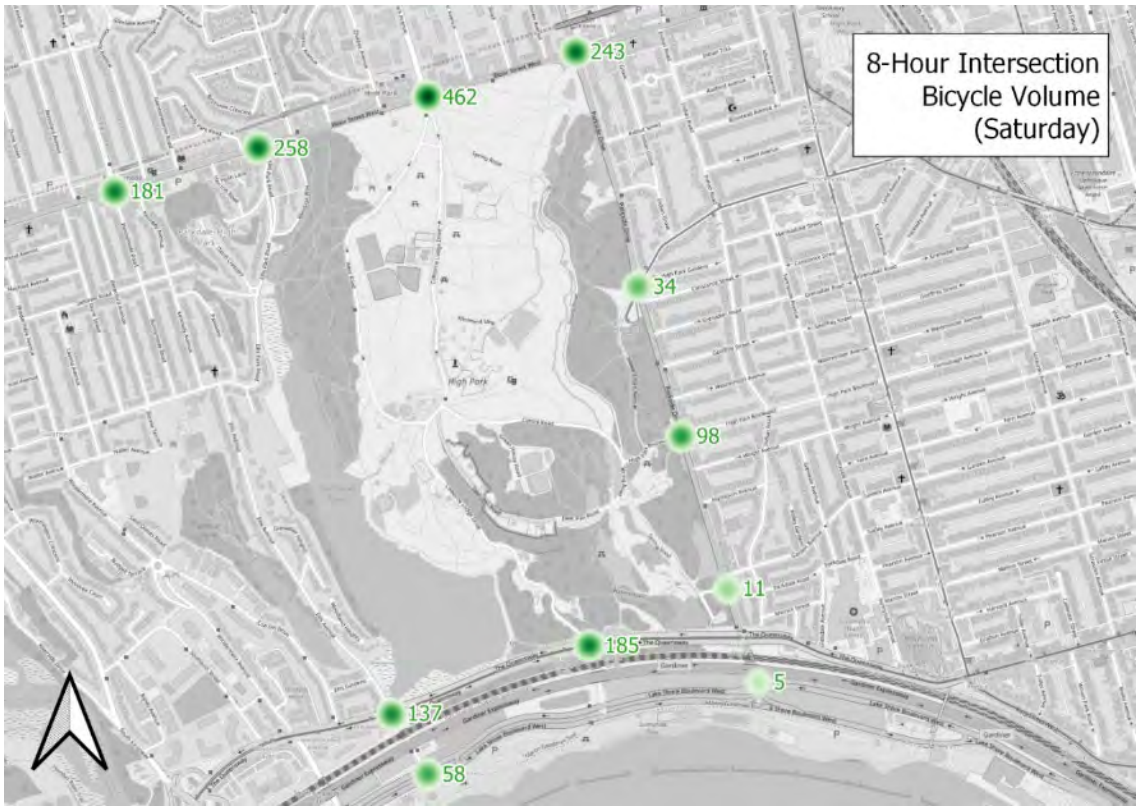

Figure 20 - Heat map of Weekend Cycling Activity at Perimeter Intersections

4.6. Parking Facilities and Utilization

A parking utilization study was completed in High Park and the surrounding context area to analyze occupancy rates of on-street permit spaces, Green P parking and in-park lots. Parking facilities for personal vehicles are available for free within High Park on weekdays, and in the context area on weekdays and weekends. High Park has three public parking lots and angled, on-street parking along the length of several park roads. In total there are 561 available spaces in High Park, 22 of which are accessible spaces. This represents approximately 6% of the available parking within the study's context area (roughly 800m surrounding High Park). Parking spaces in High Park were found to be frequently at capacity on weekdays, when the park is open to visitor vehicles. The average time for parked vehicles in the park is around 1hr 12mins.

The Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) operates ten parking lots within the context area, all of which are within 800 metres of High Park. Parking data was reviewed from September 2019 to capture pre-pandemic patterns. The parking lots provide a combined 1,193 parking spaces for paid use, of which 137 monthly permit passes were sold. In addition, the data suggest that collectively, the 10 parking lots operated at an average of 75% utilized during peak periods.

In addition to City-owned parking lots, TPA administers an on-street, paid parking area on Bloor Street West, between Runnymede Road and Dundas Street West, with a total of 283 spaces available. Parking data was collected for this section of Bloor Street West in May 2021. The data suggest that almost all paid parking spaces on Bloor Street West operate below capacity during peak weekday hours. However, each section of parking experiences an uptake in parking demand over the weekend. Parking usage rates for on-street spaces can be found in ***Table 3***.

Table 3: Toronto Parking Authority On-Street Parking Utilization

Street	From	To	Side	Spaces	Peak Usage	Average Friday	Average Saturday	Average Weekend
Bloor St W	Runnymede Rd	Clendenan Ave	N	36	24%	37%	56%	59%
Bloor St W	Kennedy Ave	Ellis Park Rd	S	32	22%	25%	39%	40%
Bloor St W	Indian Rd	Dundas St W	N	37	22%	19%	20%	10%
Bloor St W	Parkside Dr	Dundas St W	S	47	20%	19%	23%	11%
Bloor St W	Mountview Ave	Clendanan Ave	N	47	93%	116%	266%	232%
Bloor St W	Clendanan Ave	Parkside Dr	S	84	9%	13%	55%	60%

Short-term, on-street parking is also available on most collector and local roads in the context area surrounding High Park. Local residents have the opportunity to purchase parking permits that permit longer term and overnight parking on local and collector roads near their residences. Permit parking data has been analyzed to provide insight into parking capacity, and availability of short-term parking opportunities on the roadways surrounding High Park.

The parking utilization study indicates that the available parking supply is around 60% occupied. However, overflow parking, difficulty finding parking spaces and overall street congestion has been highlighted as a community concern. Parking spaces within 300 metres of High Park were found to have the highest utilization rates, with an above average utilization rate.

4.7. Traffic Management Tools

High Park has a limited number of volume, speed and safety management tools that are in place today.

Volume and infiltration management tools like one-way roads have been implemented to reduce the number of vehicles that use the park roads to bypass nearby arterials. One-way motor vehicle travel restrictions have been implemented on all public park roads except Centre Road, Deer Pen Road, High Park Boulevard and the section of Colborne Lodge Drive between West Road and Centre Road. A motor vehicle diversion is located on Colborne Lodge Drive near the High Park Children's Garden and Teaching Kitchen to prevent northbound traffic from entering the park.

The speed limit on all park roads is 20km/h. Few traffic calming measures have been implemented in the park to date; painted curb extensions can be found at the Spring Road/West Road intersection and Colborne Lodge Drive/West Road intersection. No vertical measures like speed humps, speed bumps or raised intersections have been implemented in High Park. Pavement markings that state the speed limit and ask vehicles to "slow" can also be found throughout the park.

Safety management tools like zebra markings are available at stop controlled intersections to improve safety and visibility for vulnerable road users. However, stop compliance has been cited as a community concern for both motor vehicles and cyclists. Additionally, there are several crossing opportunities adjacent to or near park facilities that are not controlled by stop signs or other traffic controls. For example, the crossing on Colborne Lodge Drive on the south side of the outdoor pool, and the north side of the rink and the crossing on West Road that connects the playground to the baseball diamonds. Pavement markings indicate the presence of pedestrians and other road users intending to cross, but these are not consistent in design or colour. At these crossing points vehicles have the right of way and pedestrians must wait for a gap in traffic.

5. Conclusion and Next Steps

High Park remains one of Toronto's most heavily visited public green spaces, drawing visitors from the local neighbourhood and from across the region, who use various modes of travel to access various to destinations within the park. The findings highlighted in this existing conditions report speak to the area's unique context, including park usage, park amenities and natural features, transportation infrastructure and travel patterns within High Park. These important trends and characteristics must be thoroughly understood and reflected in future recommendations for improving the travel network in High Park.

The information presented in this report will be reviewed in conjunction with feedback gathered through consultation activities in order to develop a comprehensive picture of park user experiences and priorities for improvements. Findings and feedback will inform the development of draft strategies, the preparation of an evaluation framework, and the subsequent review and refinement of possible changes to the travel network.