

INTRODUCTION



REDISCOVER OUR PARKS THE CITY OF WINDSOR'S PARKS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION MASTER PLAN; A living document that guides the direction of the park system and its operational management for the next twenty years. This document will review and analyzes the existing park system and will outline opportunities and constraints, strengths and deficiencies to move forward with a vision, strategies, goals and objectives to ensure and preserve a healthy parks and open space system for the future.

The City of Windsor Culture and Recreation Master Plan was first adopted by Council in April of 1989, and has been the document providing vision and guidance to parks development and the operation of parks, recreation and culture for its citizens. The City of Windsor's park system has grown extensively over the years and we have achieved many of the goals and recommendations outlined in the 1989 plan (see Appendix 'A' for recommendations being carried forward. In 2010 Council recommended the development of a separate Culture Master Plan to complement the existing plans. After a public consultation process, as well as benchmarking exercise of other Ontario communities, Council adopted a separate Municipal Culture Master Plan to provide guidance with respect to investment in the human and financial resources in support of the community's arts, culture and heritage sectors. While there is some overlap in the two master plans, especially where it related to cultural features in parks, the breadth of parks includes aspects which provide opportunities for people to enjoy and discover for recreational enjoyment, healthy wellbeing, and experience.

Windsor is currently in a transitional stage of its parks evolution, and although the plan's direction is for a twenty year period, it will be necessary to conduct regular reviews on an as needed basis to assess progress and make amendments to the plan where adjustments may be necessary based on current information.

As part of the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Master Plan process the Parks Department has undertaken a number of studies to update the background data including; a preliminary park inventory, preliminary amenity inventory, benchmarking, playground audit, and initial public consultation..



THE IMPORTANCE OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Public parks offer outdoor quality of life options for Windsor residents by providing both active and passive recreation opportunities, as well as access to natural settings. City parks, open spaces and recreational trails offer a variety of opportunities for people to gather, formally or informally; to socialize; play; learn; or just relax in an outdoor environment.

Parks and open spaces in the City of Windsor vary in size, activity, nature and character. Conventional philosophy is that they provide either passive or active recreation opportunities in a traditional park-like setting. Windsor, like many other cities, has open space in the urban core that is not considered 'traditional parkland' in the sense that there is not wide open areas of green space and trees but instead offer more of a civic space in the form of a plaza and or pocket parks where people come to gather.

TYPES OF PARKS

TRADITIONAL PASSIVE PARKS

The generally established perception of parks is passive in nature, with open fields of green lawn, occasionally shaded with trees for refuge from the sun, meandering pathways and benches to relax, or a shelter to offer picnicking for larger family gatherings. Passive parks and open spaces are open to the public and seldom scheduled for events. Examples of passive recreation that may occur in this environment are; sitting, picnicking, photography of wildlife; ornamental displays of plants, jogging; walking, or leisure (not commuter) cycling and community gardening. Playgrounds and off-leash dog facilities may be located in passive open spaces as well.



ACTIVE RECREATIONAL PARKS

With a focus on sports-oriented facilities, active recreational parks cater to the organized sports groups and organizations in the city. These parks may include community and recreation centres offering a variety of recreational activities such as arenas, baseball diamonds, soccer complexes, sports courts, tennis courts and specialized sport fields, swimming pools, splash pads and active recreational trails. As these facilities attract large volumes of families, players and spectators, they require ancillary services of vehicular parking for cars and buses, transit access, cyclist accommodations in addition to general pedestrian accessibility. On a smaller scale, multi-use linear trails serve active recreational purposes at the community level by linking people with parks, and parks to other parks through, cycling, jogging as well as casual pedestrian strolling.



NATURAL & NATURALIZED AREAS

Natural areas are those which have for the most part retained their natural state while naturalized areas have been rehabilitated to an environment that provides habitat through wetlands, tall grass prairie, forest, or riverbank floodplain. Environmentally sensitive, they offer restricted public access to provide ecological conservation in an effort to preserve; natural drainage, identified species at risk, and opportunity for passive recreation through natural observation (i.e. bird watching, photography, landscape painting etc.). Due to their significance, they often appeal to users from beyond the city limits. Windsor has several natural parks and preserving these natural resources is a key component in the city's parks system.



URBAN PARKS & PARKETTES



These parks are primarily within the downtown core. More often, they are open spaces that traditionally accommodate larger volumes of pedestrian activity for festivals and civic purposes. Urban plazas tend to be hard surface areas of high quality paving, with landscape and architectural elements acting as civic landmarks. These spaces are highly accessible for pedestrian mobility and occasional service/events

vehicular access. Though primarily hard surface plazas, it is common for temporary or portable planters with vegetation or seasonal displays to be introduced to provide greater visual interest.

Located in predominantly commercial areas, parkettes act as a social refuge amidst the dense urban fabric of the city where space is limited for residents, local businesses and their patrons. Parkettes are smaller scale parks that cater to passive park needs in the form of urban plazas with benches, possible games tables, trees, and occasionally where landmarks or monuments may be located.

TYPES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

While recreation in general is the engagement of physical, social intellectual, creative or spiritual activity, it is primarily done to enhance personal well-being. Recreation can be engaged in solely for the enjoyment and amusement, or pleasure of by an individual or in groups participating in the activity. Outdoor recreation can take several forms, however, it essentially has two main purposes; to provide beneficial activity and pleasurable appreciation for the participant(s).

PASSIVE RECREATION

Passive recreation is generally self-generated and leisurely. It offers constructive, restorative and pleasurable human benefit without significant impact on the environment in which it is occurring. Passive recreation areas can be defined as outdoor recreation space that is generally minimally developed, providing health and well-being of the public and preservation of wildlife for the pursuit of hobbies.

Examples of passive recreation include: walking, jogging, leisure cycling on trails, fishing, canoeing or kayaking on the Detroit River or in a wetland, taking a lunch to an open-picnic area, taking pictures of nature/floral displays/ family picnics, wildlife or bird watching, or sitting on a park bench or a blanket on the riverfront while reading or socializing with friends or family, painting outdoors, or kite-flying.

SELF-DIRECTED RECREATION

Often recreation is self-directed, or guided by an individual, for personal gain such meditation activities including Tai Chi, Yoga or walking a labyrinth, or painting landscapes in a park. Play is also freely chosen and self-directed mental or physical activity that is undertaken for enjoyment and that is separate in some way from "real" life. Many self-directed recreations types can be either passive or active in nature. Where active recreation is often associated with organized sports or events, the activity associated with it such as running, kicking a ball, or even cycling, can also be for passive meditative purposes.

ACTIVE RECREATION

Active recreation is generally any recreation activity that requires significant infrastructure or structured organization for the purpose of participation by several people. Due to the intensity of the activity or volumes of people involved, active recreation is generally centrally administered, scheduled or programmed and usually involves a registration or entry fee. Active recreation can have considerable environmental impact on the recreational area or the natural environment due to the number of people engaged in the activity and generally requires specialized parkland development to facilitate the activity or event.

Examples of active outdoor recreation include; organized or adventure sports such as baseball, cricket, soccer, rugby, ultimate volleyball; tournaments and cross-country track meets and organized runs, tennis and basketball, lawn bowling, dog parks, golfing, marina activity, swimming, skating, skateboarding, performances in a park, festivals, and other events such as weddings, and family picnics at a park shelter, playgrounds, splash pads, commuter cycling, running, the use of motorized vehicles..

Many recreational activities are organized, typically by public institutions, voluntary group-work agencies, private groups supported by membership fees, and commercial enterprises.



BENEFITS OF PARKS AND OPEN GREEN SPACE

City parks and open spaces contribute to the well-being of both physical and psychological health of the people that use and live near them. They strengthen communities both physically and economically, by making neighbourhoods more attractive places to **“live, work and play”**. The health of the entire City environmentally is largely contingent upon the amount of natural resources, natural areas, green space, tree cover and wetlands provided, and more importantly how well we promote and take care of these precious resources for future generations.

Stewardship of these finite resources is increasingly more significant by the day in a world where fresh water resources are limited. Global warming and the resulting rapid climate change are causing natural resources to disappear. Parks have so many environmental benefits that they must be looked upon as an integral part of the health and wellbeing of a city’s infrastructure. The benefits are without limits. Whether formally developed or left natural, parkland offers park users venues for recreational and cultural activities. Aside from the ecological health that ‘Green Infrastructure’ offers, in the form of parkland, it also facilitates improved quality of life in various forms.

Collectively landscaped areas, including private and public properties, contribute to the overall green infrastructure of the city. Green infrastructure not only consists of public open spaces and parkland, such as the urban forests, street or boulevard trees, playgrounds, sports fields, and other parkland types, but it also includes privately owned natural and landscaped areas as well. In a public opinion survey from 2009 conducted by Parks and Recreation Ontario, it was found that 98% of Ontarians believe that recreation and parks are essential services that benefit their entire community.

Several studies conducted throughout North America demonstrate that the increase in urban vegetation can counteract the effects of climate change through adaptation of methods to improve air and water quality by removal of airborne pollutants and other particulates. It can also assist in the making of healthier environments that encourage people to participate in outdoor activities whether through passive or active

recreation. This leads to social interaction among people which builds stronger and healthier communities. As communities grow they establish a cohesive culture among the people who use parks and recreation facilities within the area. This fosters stewardship of the natural environment and helps create a sense-of-place within the greater civic collection of communities.

The National Benefits Hub is an online collection of evidence-based research, identifying four classification areas supported by parks and recreationⁱⁱ. The areas include:

- Health,
- Social,
- Economic, and
- Environmental

Although *Rediscover Our Parks* focuses on the built environment, it is appropriate to classify outdoor recreational activity in itself as a benefit. Given the rich heritage associated with Windsor’s parks and the diverse demographics of the city, this master plan also recognizes cultural benefits that are afforded by parks.



ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- ✓ Protects the significant and unique natural features and indigenous biodiversity
- ✓ Protects habitat for vulnerable at risk species
- ✓ Protects riparian and wetland communities
- ✓ Reduces effects of climate change through mitigation of urban heat island effect, through greenhouse gas reduction and carbon sequestering
- ✓ Improves air and water quality through pollution reduction and natural water flow management
- ✓ Encourages education through awareness of nature through participation in conservation efforts
- ✓ Provides opportunities to reconnect with and educate through the natural heritage of the region

CULTURAL BENEFITS

- ✓ Provides opportunities for the preservation of culturally significant resources
- ✓ Provides opportunities to express the area's cultural diversity
- ✓ Provides opportunities to develop multipurpose cultural initiatives (i.e. community centres that service different groups)
- ✓ Promotes cultural identity of community and neighbourhoods

SOCIAL - COMMUNITY BENEFITS

- ✓ Encourages inclusion and access for all people
- ✓ Encourages community stewardship through volunteerism, which fosters leadership in the community and individuals
- ✓ Positively impacts youth development
- ✓ Provides venue for community events and family gatherings
- ✓ Promotes outdoor life skills development
- ✓ Provides a place for socialization to promote strong communities through recreational programming, events, volunteers, and promotes civic pride
- ✓ Contributes to safe communities

RECREATIONAL BENEFITS

- ✓ Promotes strong social interaction between people
- ✓ Promotes motor skills
- ✓ Provides venue for active and passive recreational activities
- ✓ Provides venue for organized sports and healthy personal competition
- ✓ Provides venue for swimming and other water-related sports activity

HEALTH & PERSONAL BENEFITS

- ✓ Sustains strong family relations and fosters healthy communities
- ✓ Reduces Health risks such as; heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer and diabetes
- ✓ Improves personal, physical, psychological and mental health
- ✓ Contributes to stress management
- ✓ Reduces reliance on social services
- ✓ Reduces medical costs
- ✓ Provides place for personal escape and reconnection with nature within the city, fostering psychological and spiritual health
- ✓ Reduces aggressive tendencies

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Economic benefits are at the heart of all parks development, operations and public service practices. Though value-based benefits are tangible and measurable, many of the benefits that are environmental in nature or pertain to the quality of life are intangible and difficult to measure.

- ✓ Increase revenue for businesses
- ✓ Provide more attractive places to live
- ✓ Perform as a major marketing tools for a city's desirability

ENVIRONMENTAL
BENEFITS

CULTURAL BENEFITS

SOCIAL -
COMMUNITY BENEFITS

RECREATIONAL
BENEFITS

HEALTH BENEFITS

ECONOMIC
BENEFITS

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN AND OTHER CIVIC DOCUMENTS

Rediscover Our Parks is a document that will help shape our city into a livable city. Many other documents exist in collaboration with this document to provide direction for the city's parks system.

20 YEAR STRATEGIC VISION

Rediscover Our Parks is a parks and outdoor recreation master plan that provides benefits and opportunities which effectively aligns with the themed goals of proposed *City of Windsor 20 Year Strategic Vision* including :

- **Local economic development**
- **City image & brand**
- **Strengthened innovative strategies to support neighbourhoods and districts, and**
- **Responsible, balanced fiscal and services choices**

LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Healthy parks and recreation facilities in a community are economically one of the major marketing tools for a city's desirability. The outward appearance and health of our parks system and outdoor recreational experiences that our city parks provide is essentially the "*welcoming face of our city*". Recent studies have shown that businesses, enhanced with trees and well designed landscaping are attractive to visitors.ⁱⁱⁱ When established trees are present on developed properties, the assessed values show a dramatic increased of up to 15% in comparison to a similar property with no significant soft-landscaping.^{iv} Pre-established parkland helps to attract prospective developers for both commercial and housing development opportunities.

The Trust for Public Land outlines the "Benefits of Parks", in terms of economic worth for both tangible and intangible benefits as follows:

- ✓ *Supports economic sustainability by promoting property values*
- ✓ *Promotes tourism by providing venues and attractions*
- ✓ *Protects natural areas through eco-tourism opportunities*
- ✓ *Impacts local business economy through destination setting ; thus encouraging local spending by visitors to parks and recreational facilities*
- ✓ *Contributes to job creation through enhanced competitiveness for business relocation near parkland for employees during lunches and breaks*
- ✓ *Supports and protects local Recreational Industry through occasional bookings and large scale events*
- ✓ *Promotes new business starts-ups; and economic growth in close proximity to parks and recreation venues*
- ✓ *Promotes residential development near parkland which contributes to improved tax base*

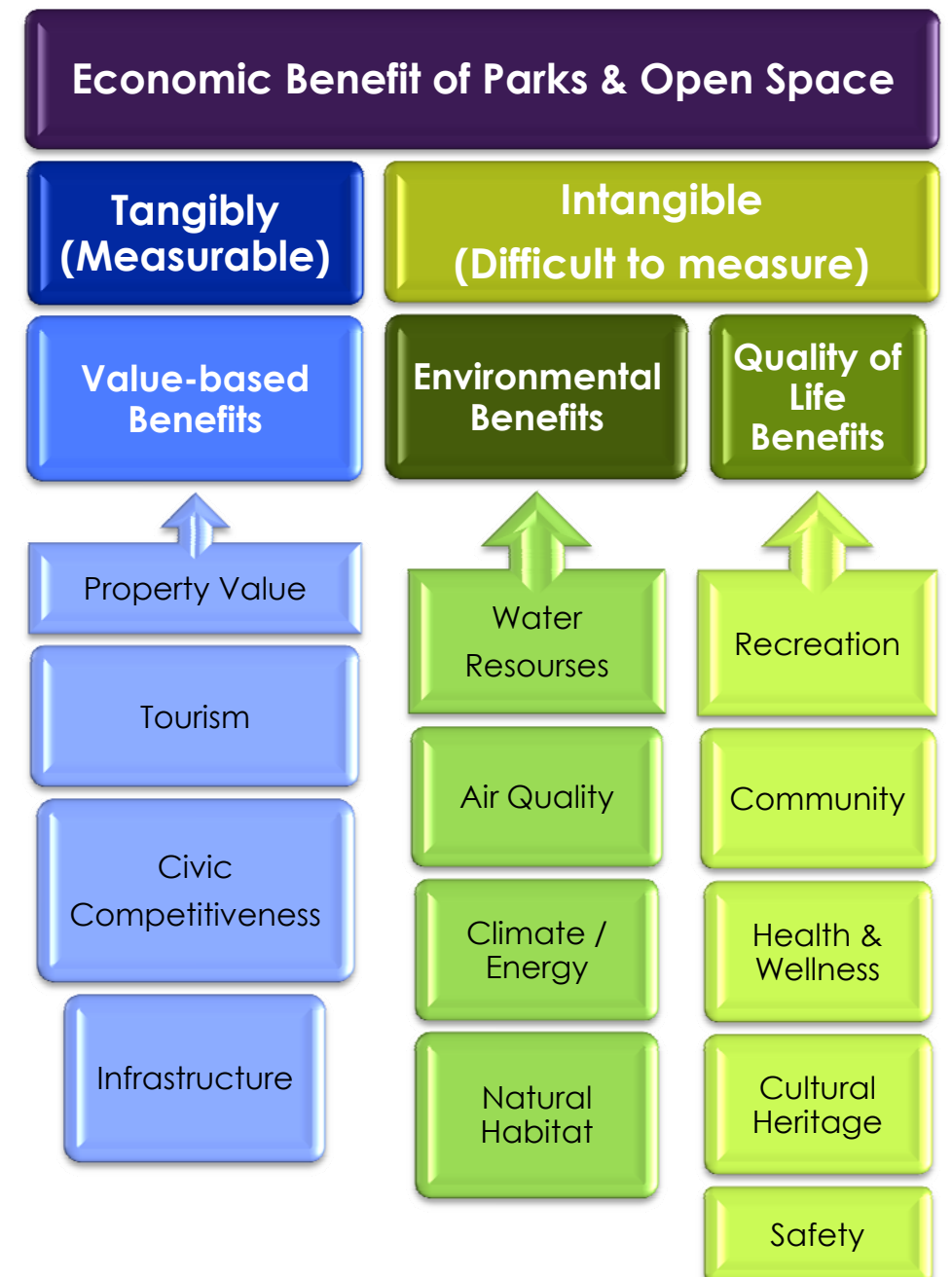


Figure i-1: Economic Benefits of Parks and open spaces (source: Trust for Public Lands)



CITY IMAGE & BRAND

“To change our future, we need to change our attitude about our city, our partners and our prospects”^{vi}

Windsor's Parks System has much to offer including parks and green spaces with natural significance, a riverfront that offers many means of access and activities, as well as major sports complexes that provide tourism potential to capitalize on our strength as a healthy and vibrant community.

It is important to preserve and protect all our parks, open space, natural heritage and natural resources in the city, as they are finite resources that cannot be easily replaced. They alone are integral elements in providing and improving the quality of life for residents, as well as establish a sense of place of which to be proud. The consciousness of global climate change and trends toward environmental stewardship with appropriate natural/green infrastructure, and open space management through parkland development, is paramount in demonstrating that Windsor is on the cutting edge of understanding these issues and our goal is to strengthen the parks system to bring people back into parks, and foster Windsor as an *outstanding place to live, work, and visit*.

Acquisition of riverfront properties in the mid- to late 1900's for the purpose of parkland development was an innovative idea that inspired many other cities across Canada to do the same. However, the need for innovation hasn't stopped and contemporary ideas reflect the current diversity of our citizens needs to be incorporated in that vision to help foster a change in the perception of community. As the southern-most city in Canada, sharing a border with the United States via the Detroit River, the riverfront parklands have contributed to a desire from Detroit visitors to experience Canada through our riverfront parks. Similarly the opportunities for outdoor sports events at many of the City's outdoor facilities, places Windsor at an advantage. The moderate climate with respect to the rest of Canada, results in a longer than average outdoor recreation season, which creates a greater demand for park use by all ages. That demand includes activities related to the riverfront parks, water-based activities, trails, sports fields, outdoor events (concerts, theatre festivals etc.) as well as a general appreciation of the natural and man-made environments within the city and the surrounding area.

Figure i-2: Charlie Brookes Memorial Peace Fountain at Coventry Gardens in Reaume Park

STRENGTHEN THE CITY WITH INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES AND SAFE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES TO SUPPORT NEIGHBOURHOODS

Parks provide the public with immediate opportunities for society to enjoy the great outdoors in an economical manner. Enhancing our public spaces through parkland development improvements provides civic investment in ensuring that residents can maintain an enjoyable quality of life. Improving parkland adds to the opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation, ensuring citizens can pursue a healthy lifestyle.

City Parks embrace the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design also known as (CPTED principles) for all parkland developed in the City. Ensuring public safety is paramount. Studies show that development of safe and quality neighbourhoods include the opportunity for residents to access public green space and parkland amenities in order to promote healthy lifestyles. Playgrounds in neighbourhood parks are maintained to the most current Playground standards and guidelines including (CSA/ISEMA/AODA/ASTM etc.) to ensure the health, welfare and safety of the public are being met.

Public Parkland and Open space provides equal opportunity for many types of programs to assist various user groups of all abilities to engage in healthy outdoor activities. Current demographics for Windsor indicate changes in the immigrant and low income populations where many are unable to engage in organized recreational activities due to costs. Preliminary interviews and surveys undertaken as part of this master plan have included special interest groups such as new residents groups through workshops in order to address these issues and provide for the needs of a changing and diverse population.

Preservation and rehabilitation of heritage landscapes such as Ojibway Park Complex and Willistead, is fundamental to the natural and cultural heritage of the City of Windsor. Similarly, the incorporation of appropriate and well placed public art installations helps to promote the artistic value, of the City as well as supporting local artists by showcasing their works.



Figure i-3: Ojibway Nature Centre



RESPONSIBLE BALANCED FISCAL SERVICE CHOICES

The master plan aims to improve the financial health of the corporation by capitalizing on those service areas that are functioning efficiently, addressing and recommending action to improve areas that are not optimal, to provide cost saving measures through reduction of redundancy, and promote partnerships whenever such opportunities arise. Engaging the public through consultation at various stages of the process provides a sense of ownership and helps to identify and strengthen rapport with the citizens of Windsor.

The fundamental purpose of *REDISCOVER OUR PARKS* is to guide the development and preservation of our parks system in order to preserve, enhance and protect our natural environments and urban green spaces for future generations to enjoy. New Parkland development and park re-development will aim to enhance our parks in an environmentally efficient, attractive and responsible manner.

Climate change will direct a strong focus on green infrastructure improvements to mitigate storm water through natural management processes and reduce the burden on the current storm water infrastructure. Integration of bicycling facilities in parkland and multi-use trails helps to enhance mobility in alternative ways to better serves, the economic and social needs of all citizens through active transportation.

Figure i-4: Seniors admiring the horticultural display in the Queen Elizabeth II Sunken Gardens at Jackson Park

The *Official Plan* is a policy document adopted by Council under the provisions of the *Ontario Planning Act*, providing guidance for the physical development of the municipality over a 20-year period while taking into consideration important social, economic and environmental matters and goals as follows:

- Where new development can locate
- How existing and future neighbourhoods will be strengthened
- How Windsor's environment will be enhanced
- What municipal services, such as roads, water mains, sewers and parks, will be provided
- When, where and in what order Windsor will grow

Chapter 5 of the *Official Plan* relates to the environment and lists the policies with respect to environmental quality for:

- A Greenway System
- Natural Heritage Lands Protection
- Environmental Policy Areas
- Candidate Natural Heritage Sites
- Urban Forestry
- Atmospheric Air and Water Quality

“A healthy and sustainable environment represents a balance between human activities and natural features and functions. In order to attain this balance, Council will enhance the quality of Windsor's natural environment and manage development in a manner that recognizes the environment as the basis of a safe, caring and diverse community and a vibrant economy.”

“The Greenway System is based on the belief that the quality of life within Windsor will be enhanced by the establishment of a linked and continuous network of “green” land uses. This planned network of natural environment and recreational elements will provide a means to establish Windsor as a healthy and liveable city.”

Policies for Open Space are found in Chapter 6: Land Use, where Public Open Space is defined as those lands under the ownership and jurisdiction of the Municipality, Province or Federal Government as well as those governed by the Essex Region Conservation Authority. The *Official Plan* set out standards for development, accessibility, scale, and distribution ratio per capita, as well as standards for the conservation and protection of Natural Heritage Lands and how they relate to the community for recreational uses and connection to the Greenway System. (See APPENDIX 'A')

PLANNING DISTRICTS

The City of Windsor's *Official Plan* recognizes that the City of Windsor is an amalgamation of several smaller communities and neighbourhoods, known as Planning Districts that have been settled at various stages of the area's growth since the original French settlement of 1749. Current census data is tabulated by these districts and demonstrate the best demographic breakdown for the urban area.

Currently, there are 20 Planning Districts recognized by the *Official Plan*, along with 32 Special Policy areas which may or may not have significant residential populations however all have a parks component, whether urban or natural in character. The current *Official Plan* also focuses on complete neighbourhoods as the building blocks for the Urban Structure Plan; in which the Planning Districts play a significant role. By definition neighbourhoods are stable, low-to-medium-density residential areas and are comprised of local streets, parks, open spaces, schools, minor institutions and neighbourhood and convenience scale retail services. Detailed information of each of the Planning districts can be found in APPENDIX 'B'.

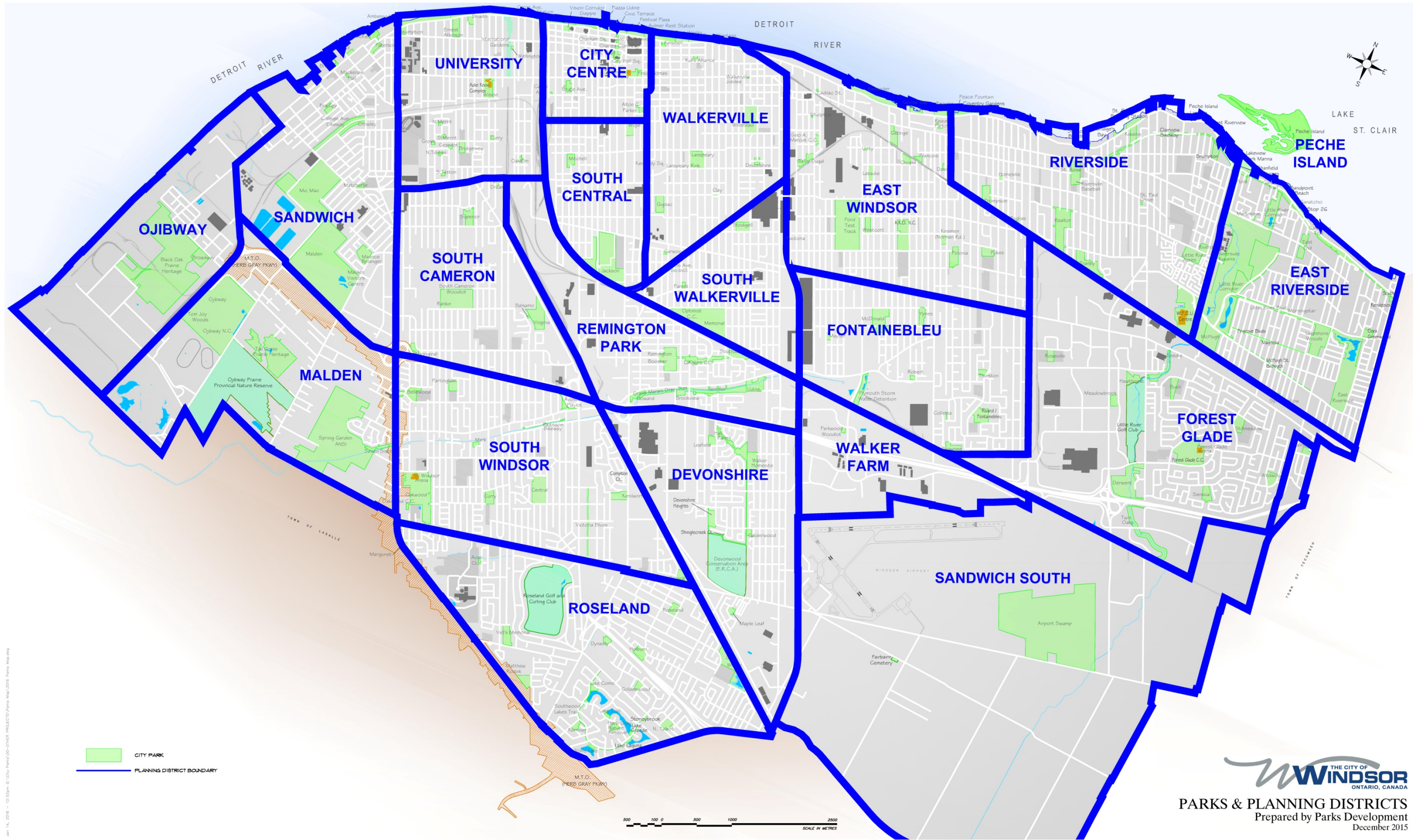
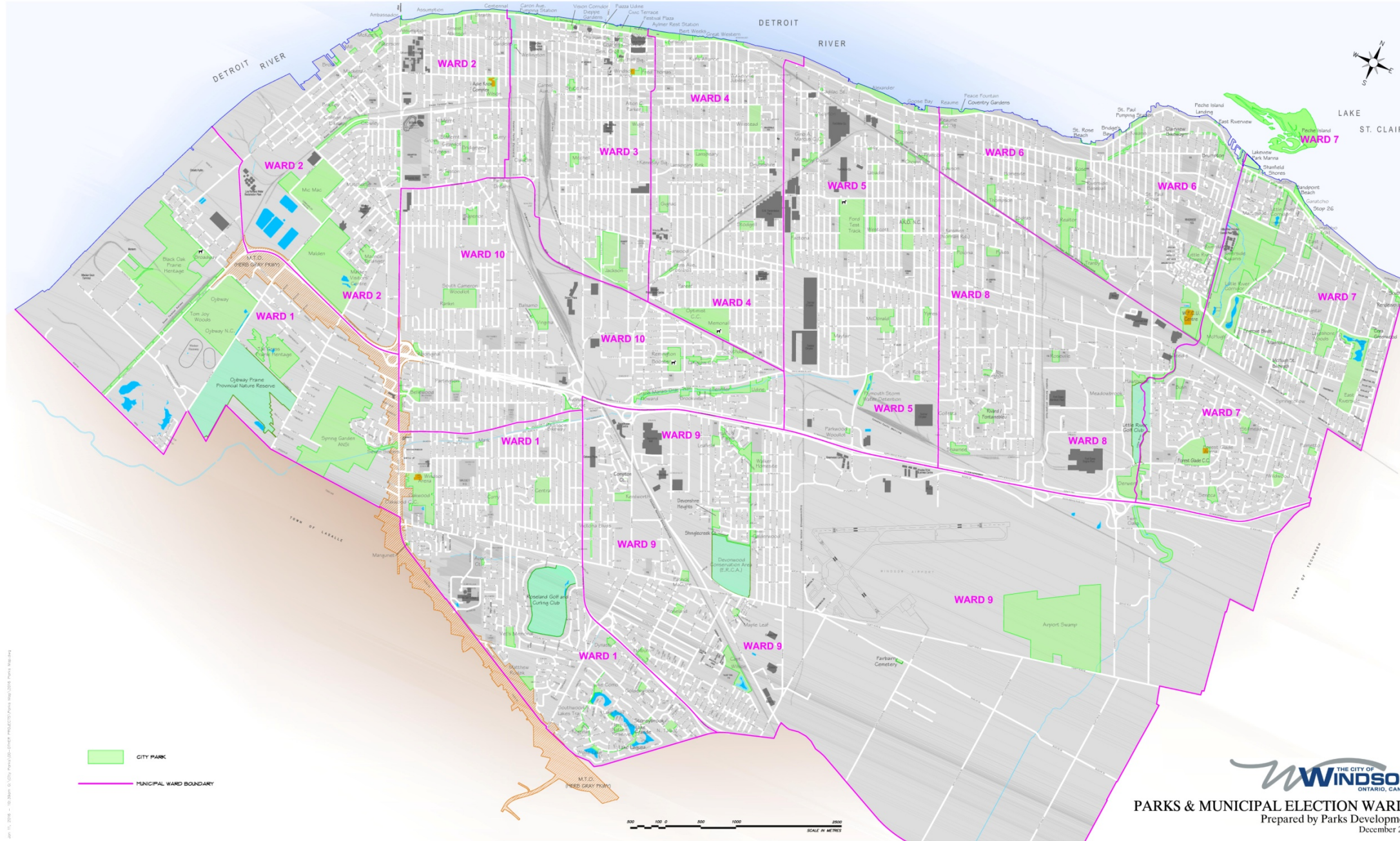


Figure i-5: Planning Districts Map

WARDS

The general population of Windsor is not familiar with the Planning District layout. Unlike Planning Districts, Wards do not respect physical barriers, such as highways, natural landscapes, railway lines, water courses, to name a few. As a result, planning by wards can often lead to disconnected neighbourhood goals. Though not fully aligned there are roughly 2 Planning Districts per each of the 10 wards.



- Ward 1:** Ojibway, Malden, the southern half of South Windsor and western half of Roseland.
- Ward 2:** Sandwich and University.
- Ward 3:** City Centre and South central
- Ward 4:** Walkerville and South Walkerville
- Ward 5:** Most of East Windsor, Fountainbleu and Walker Farms
- Ward 6:** Riverside
- Ward 7:** East Riverside and the eastern half of Forest Glade
- Ward 8:** Western half of Forest Glade and eastern halves of East Windsor and Fountainbleu
- Ward 9:** Devonshire, the eastern halves of South Windsor and Roseland as well as Sandwich South (which is for the most part sparse populated as much of the land is either agricultural or undeveloped)
- Ward 10:** South Cameron, Remington Park and the northern half of South Windsor.

Figure i-6: City Ward Map (left)

Figure i-7: Central Riverfront Lands east of the Downtown (right)

Electoral Wards are the most accessible way to consult with the City's residents.

The Parks Master Plan process met with residents through ward meetings.

During the consultation process, residents were provided with maps showing the location of parks, natural areas and schools in their specific Ward. Additional mapping demonstrated the classification of the parks in their Ward. (See Appendix 'C').

OTHER RELATED STUDIES

In collaboration with other Civic Administration Departments as well as public agencies and private consultants, City Council has endorsed many relevant documents that help provide direction and support to the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Master Plan. The following reports and documents have contributed to the development of this Plan:

PLANNING & ECONOMICS

- Central Riverfront Implementation Plan (CRIP) (2000)
- Bicycle Use Master Plan (BUMP) (2001)
- Glengarry Marentette Waterfront Village CIP (2003)
- Little River Acres CIP (2005)
- City Centre West CIP (2006)
- Riverside Drive Vista Improvement Project (2006)
- Ford Powerhouse CIP (2007)
- Detroit River International Crossing Study (2008)
- Brownfield Redevelopment Strategy CIP (2010)
- Economic Revitalization CIP (2011)
- Olde Sandwich Town CIP (2012)

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

- Ojibway Park and Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (1976)
- Ojibway Prairie Resource Stewardship Plan., Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (1997)
- Candidate Natural Heritage Site Biological Inventory (CNHS) (1992 – updated 2007)
- Ontario Endangered Species Act (2007)
- Environmental Master Plan (2007)
- Detroit River Shoreline Assessment (2012)
- Adapting to extreme heat – Special projects completed in partnership with Health Canada (2012 – 2014)
- Climate Change Adaptation Study (2012)
- The Urban Heat Island Effect in Windsor, ON: An Assessment of Vulnerability and Mitigation Strategies (2012)
- Improving Thermal Comfort in Windsor, ON; Assessing Urban Parks and Playgrounds (2013)
- Designing City of Windsor Parks to Improve Thermal Comfort in Summer (2014)
- Community Gardens Policy (2014)
- DRIC Environmental Assessment Report (2008)

SOCIAL & DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act , 2005 (AODA)
- City of Windsor Accessibility Standards (F.A.D.S.) (2006)
- Enhancing the Welcoming Capacity of Windsor Essex (2014)
- Age friendly Windsor Action Plan (2014-2017)
- Municipal Cultural Master Plan (2014)
- Play Equipment Safety Audit (2013-2014)

(see Appendix 'D' for a synopsis of selected related studies)

WHY ARE CHANGES NEEDED?

The unique history and distinctive development and redevelopment patterns of Windsor, frame an interesting challenge for the community in expanding and maximizing the value of parks, recreation facilities and open spaces necessitates flexibility in the park spaces, to serve the needs of current residents without jeopardizing the ability of new residents to help shape the community as well.

“*REDISCOVER OUR PARKS*” espouses the City of Windsor’s Strategic Plan, through a 20 year vision with regular review to monitor its progress and accomplishments in achieving the Vision for the provision of Parks and Recreation services in the City .

- *To make parks accessible, enjoyable and useful to bring people back into our parks*
- *To Promote our city as a great place to live, work and play*
- *To be environmentally and fiscally responsible in our stewardship and management of our parks and natural resources*
- *To Promote Healthy active living for all*
- *To align with the City’s Strategic Vision and Official Plan by updating what is important to our park and outdoor recreation users*

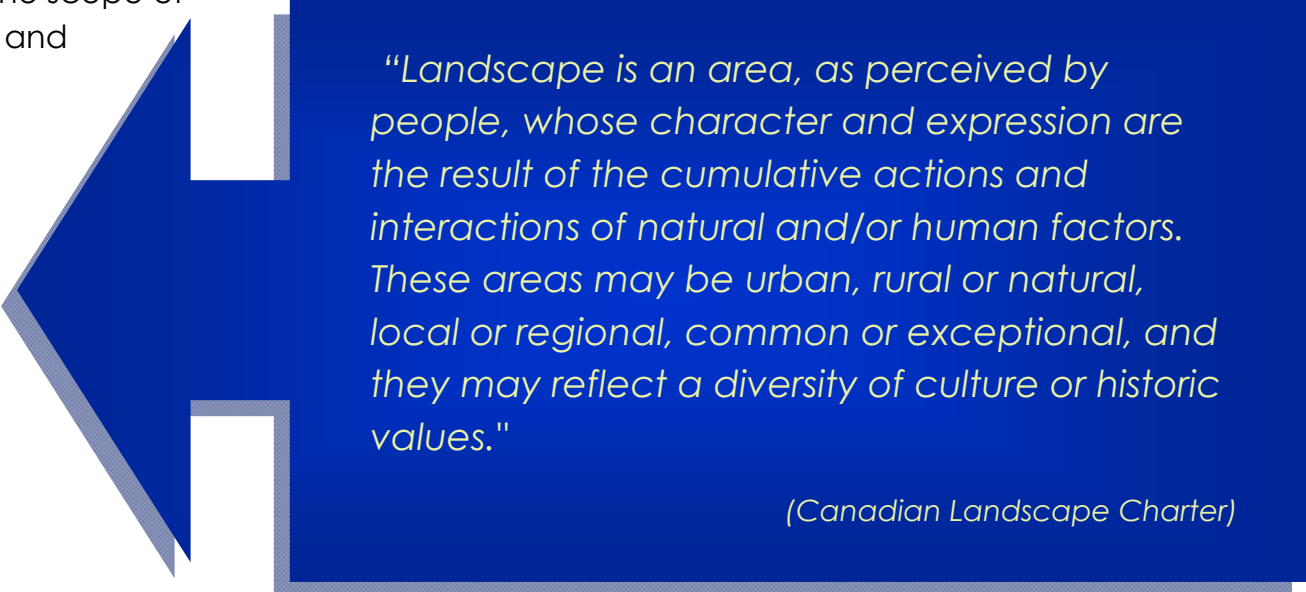
VISION: “To provide a robust parks and recreation experience for all to enjoy.”

MISSION: “To sustainably develop and maintain parkland and recreational activities with our natural and cultural resources; fostering economic growth within the city, while cultivating a quality of life for diverse, healthy, active and liveable neighbourhoods.”

SCOPE OF THE PARKS MASTER PLAN

The current parks system and recreational programming in the City of Windsor is relatively competent in meeting the current demands of its citizens and users. As with any complex system of parks there is always a need to ensure future generations are adequately supported with parkland and recreational opportunities that suit their changing needs. The population of the City of Windsor appears to be relatively unchanged since 1971; however, constant adjustment within the population's demographic has an effect on the types and levels of service that Parks along with Recreation and Culture will need to provide the community. The scope of the Parks Master Plan addresses the present and potential demographics as modeled by both local and national perspectives.

While **REDISCOVER OUR PARKS** recognizes gaps or issues that need to be addressed to ensure an acceptable level of service is provided to the community, it also identifies potential opportunities for immediate implementation within a five year program. The master plan makes recommendations as strategic directions for action and future studies; to be detailed with the specifics in order to meet the priorities of Council and the citizens of Windsor. It will also identify potential opportunities for funding with upper levels of government infrastructure programs and potential private sector partnerships along with community participation for an Action Plan.



"Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character and expression are the result of the cumulative actions and interactions of natural and/or human factors. These areas may be urban, rural or natural, local or regional, common or exceptional, and they may reflect a diversity of culture or historic values."

(Canadian Landscape Charter)

As the overall climate of the City of Windsor's economy, demographics and environment, is in a transitional stage. It is important that the city remains competitive and reflects a community that offers sustainability of these elements in an efficient yet vibrant manner, to ensure a positive experience for the residents and visitors. This study addresses and makes recommendation on emerging methods and procedures that can be put into practice, as well as identify those area where further investigation is necessary to ensure a healthy and robustly diverse landscape of parks and recreation services.

Figure I-8: Malden Park Recreation Area (left)

PROCESS FOR THE MASTER PLAN

To fulfill the objectives outlined in the Mission of the Parks Master Plan, it was necessary to conduct a high level of consultation practices in variety of delivery programs in order to capture the widest possible audience, to retrieve the greatest input within the time period allotted.

The Parks Master Plan process commenced in 2013 through 2104 with public consultation (i.e. individual Ward meetings, online surveys, stakeholder meeting with organized sports, public interest groups for new immigrants, etc.) to update the direction of parks into the next 20 years. **REDISCOVER OUR PARKS** will be instrumental in setting the direction for the development and maintenance of the park system for the next 20 years. As a civic document that will guide current operations and recreational practice in the city as well as future parkland development and partnerships through the next 20 years, the process for approval had many components which needed to be addressed.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION



As the Parks master plan will be directly affecting the recreational needs of the greater community, public involvement in various forms was deemed a high necessity to ensure that their voices were heard and needs are being met.

PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSIONS AND ONLINE SURVEYS

Consultations were conducted in an open forum manner through the City in late 2013 and early 2014 at various locations in each of the Wards. At those meetings feedback surveys were distributed to determine the level of satisfaction with the current parks in their neighbourhoods. During that period and for 6 months following, residents were also able to complete the survey on line.



After compilation and analysis of the results from this initial public consultation, a second public information session was held at Devonshire Mall on the weekend of June 13 and 14, 2015 to review the findings of the ward level consultations with the public, and to present the direction that Parks and Recreation Master Plan was heading. Again, feedback surveys were distributed as well as a new on-line survey that included aspects of recreational programming. The on-line survey closed on August 31, 2015, two months later than intended, due to an overwhelming interest by the community and support from the local media for participation.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

During the course of the public consultation process, parks staff engaged various civic committees and Parks operational staff, in an official forum. The primary purposes of the Stakeholder meetings were:

- **To inform of the findings from the previous consultations.**
- **To demonstrate an analysis of what direction those findings are leading the Parks & Recreation Master Plan Process.**
- **To receive detailed input for further Master Plan Development.**
- **To ensure inclusivity in the recommendations.**

Participants were encouraged to complete a questionnaire after the presentation in order to gather information in structured and measurable format. Those stakeholder committees were:

- Windsor Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Windsor Diversity Committee
- Windsor Essex Environmental Committee
- Age-friendly Windsor
- Windsor Essex County Health Unit
- Essex Region Conservation Authority

FOCUS GROUPS

Several groups were consulted for input into the process, content or direction of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Various organized sports organizations who rent facilities from the city were a primary stakeholder group. In a focussed meeting on June 19, 2014 at the WFCU Centre, the current condition of the recreational facilities and the desires of these organizations were discussed. Sports organizations in attendance included, All levels of Baseball, Soccer, Ultimate Disc Sports, Outdoor Basketball, Cricket, Football and Rugby, Lawn Bowling and Lacrosse.

A primary stakeholder group was that of the various organized sports organizations who rent facilities from the city. In a focussed meeting on June 19, 2014 at the WFCU Centre, the current condition of the recreational facilities and the desires of these organizations was discussed. Sports organizations in attendance included, All levels of Baseball, Soccer, Ultimate Disc Sports, Outdoor Basketball, Cricket, Football and Rugby, Lawn Bowling and Lacrosse.

In the summer of 2014, the Parks department was approached by the Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership to assist in gathering input from the new Immigrant populations of the region as part of their “*Enhancing the Welcoming Capacity of Windsor Essex*”. With assistance from Mary-Ellen Bernard of Social Policy and Planning, surveys were disseminated in the four major language populations (Arabic, French, Spanish (Latino) and Traditional Chinese), currently immigrating to the area. On December 9, 2014, Parks staff conducted a Public Information Session for members of the immigrant community to summarize those findings and facilitate additional information on how the parks system and recreation programming will better serve their individual communities.

Parks staff invited several institutional organizations to meet in order to discuss opportunities for input and potential cooperation in providing parkland and recreational activity awareness throughout the city. Those groups included:

- Greater Essex County District School Board
- Windsor Essex Catholic School Board
- Conseil scolaire catholique Providence
- The University of Windsor
- St Clair College

PROCESS TIMELINE



REDISCOVER OUR PARKS WORKING GROUP

The Parks Master Plan has been compiled with the collaborated efforts of individuals from various departments within the civic administration. The committee met in the summer of 2015 as a group and on an individual basis depending on their specific interests.

On various occasions, Parks operational staff and other Departments' staff were also consulted through a variety of delivery and information gathering processes to determine specific issues, opportunities and areas of concern which may need to be addresses in the Master Plan.

END NOTES

ⁱ The Value of Play I: The Definition of Play Gives Insights, by Peter Gray, published on Nov 8, 2008 in Freedom to Play

ⁱⁱ See The National Benefits Hub, an online collection of evidence-based research supporting the benefits statements for recreation. <http://benefitshub.ca> .

ⁱⁱⁱ Michigan State University Extension, Urban Forestry #07269501, "Benefits of Urban Trees"

^{iv} Nowak, David J., "Benefits of Community Trees", (Brooklyn Trees, USDA Forest Service General Technical Report, in review)

^v P. Sherer, 2006 "The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space" , The Trust for Public Land San Francisco CA

^{vi} City of Windsor 2015 Strategic Vision.