

PARKS

MASTER PLAN



Phase 1 Public Engagement Summary

April 2022



Hamilton

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About the Project

Parks are important to our community. The Hamilton Parks Master Plan will guide the long-term planning of new parks and the expansion and improved access to existing parks across the city.

A Parks Master Plan is a guiding document that helps municipalities plan for and provide parks for residents. It is an important step in considering the development and enhancement of parkland over the short, medium and long term. It also aids in decision-making and helps prioritize investment in parkland across the city.

The Master Plan will focus on:

- All existing parkland within the City of Hamilton.
- City-owned properties that currently serve other uses but could serve as potential candidates for future parkland.
- Future growth areas, as identified by the City's [Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy \(GRIDS\)](#) currently underway.
- Public open spaces in Hamilton that are not owned by the City but are used by the public, such as school board properties, and utility corridor lands.

With the help of Hamilton residents, user groups, and other key stakeholders, this Master Plan will develop a shared vision for the future provision of parkland in Hamilton by listening and learning about what matters to the community. By aligning these values to policy and budget frameworks, the Master Plan will be a flexible working document that can adapt to changing values and emerging trends, recognize new opportunities, and identify new priorities for parkland provision.

The Parks Master Plan considers public and stakeholder input, demographic data and growth forecasts, park usage levels, parkland trends and best practices, ongoing planning initiatives, and more. In this way, the priorities and recommendations advanced in the Plan will be evidenced-based and respond to dynamic needs across the entire city.

Engagement Approach

The aim of the Hamilton Parks Master Plan public and stakeholder engagement is to develop a shared vision for the future provision of public park space in Hamilton by listening and learning about what matters to the community. We want to understand how residents currently use Hamilton's parks and open spaces, the needs and wishes of park visitors, and the barriers people face to access parkland. The input and insights will be essential in the development of the Master Plan to ensure the principles, policies, and recommendations reflect the lives of Hamiltonians.

Engagement & Project Timeline

The “Background Review & Information Gathering” phase of public engagement ran from **February 15 to March 20, 2022**. The insights gathered through this engagement will be used along with other inputs to develop the vision, goals, guiding principles and other strategic direction within the draft Parks Master Plan.

- **Phase 1: Background Review/Information Gathering | January to March 2022**
Review trends and best practices; analyze parkland supply, gaps and needs; prepare preliminary report and analysis. Collecting community input.
- **Phase 2: Strategic Direction | March to April 2022**
Develop and refine vision, goals and guiding principles. Provide the community with a progress update.
- **Phase 3: Recommendations and Taking Action | April to May 2022**
Develop parkland acquisition solutions; develop policy framework, recommendations and actions. Collecting further community input.
- **Phase 4: Report and Recommendations | June to July 2022**
Develop a final report to guide long term planning, prioritization and investment in parkland across the city.

Additional opportunities for public engagement will be available in upcoming phases of the project. Up-to-date engagement details are available at engage.hamilton.ca/parksmasterplan



Who We Engaged

Parks are for everyone, so involving a diverse range of Hamiltonians is essential to ensure a broad range of perspectives and experiences are represented. Targeted outreach to specific user groups, local experts, and potential partners also provides a depth of knowledge that will be essential to the success of the plan.

- Hamilton general public (including residents, park user groups, and equity-seeking populations)
- Community organizations (including environmental organizations, community groups, and business associations)
- Industry and agencies (including environmental authorities, development associations, and education institutions)
- The Project Team reached out to Hamilton's Indigenous groups (Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Haudenosaunee Development Institute, Six Nations of the Grand River, Huron-Wendat Nation), notifying each group about the project and sending a workbook with questions to review with any comments.



4730

PUBLIC SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

How We Engaged

Engagement Tools

To encourage meaningful participation, the engagement opportunities aimed to be accessible and easy to participate for everyone on their own time:

- **Public Survey:** An online survey acted as the primary tool to collect feedback in Phase 1. A printed version was available to those that could not participate online.
- **Stakeholder Workshops & Discussion Guides:** Community organizations were invited to attend workshops and/or submit a discussion guide to share their interests and perspectives with the project team.



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STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Communications Tactics

Several communications and outreach tactics were used to reach as many Hamiltonians as possible:

- **Park Signage:** Signs were placed in major city parks and along commercial shopping streets to reach existing park users and residents of underserved neighbourhoods.
- **Mailout Flyer:** A project flyer was mailed to 230,050 Hamilton residences.
- **Social Media:** Ads and posts were shared on the City's social media accounts.
- **Print Ads:** Project advertisements were placed in The Hamilton Spectator (5 ads placed), Hamilton Community News (2 ads placed), and The Bay Observer (1 ad placed)
- **Digital Ads:** Project advertisements were placed on The Weather Network (3 ads placed).
- **Email Invitations:** Stakeholder were invited to participate through targeted email invites.



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STAKEHOLDER SUBMISSIONS

Public Engagement Summary

The general public was invited to participate in an online survey to gather insights about current use of parks, potential park needs, and a vision for the future of parks in Hamilton. Through widespread communications, the survey received feedback from 4730 participants.

The summaries on the following pages highlight the findings from the survey questions below:

Vision & Values

- Are parks important to you?
- Why are parks important? Is anything missing?
- What is your parks vision? What 3 words would you use to describe your vision for the future of parks in Hamilton?

Frequency of Park Use

- How often do you visit parks in Hamilton?
- What park(s) do you visit most often?
- Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how frequently you use parks?

Access & Barriers

- Are your needs being served by local parks?
- How far do you typically travel to visit a city park?
- Does anything prevent or limit you from using city parks?

Demographics

- What is your age?
- What is your gender?
- Do you have access to outdoor space at home?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Strong agreement that **parks are important**.

Particular importance focused on **community health, well-being** and the **environment**.

Desire for **park improvements** (including maintenance, accessibility and safety) of existing parks to support greater use.

Desire for **more parks** in areas currently lacking park access.

Need for **safe access** through multiple modes of transportation (including cycling connections and parking challenges).

Vision & Values

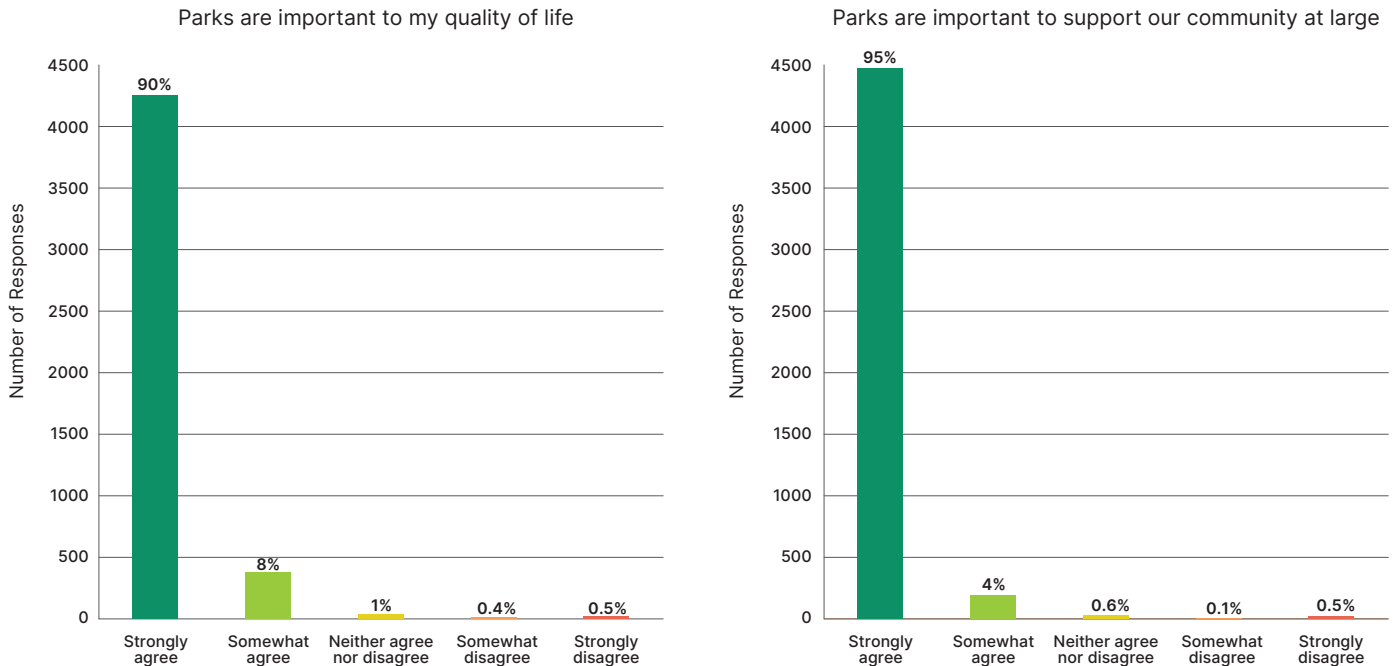
The Importance of Parks

Parks are highly valued and very important to Hamiltonians. Over 98% of all survey participants indicated that they agree that parks are both important to their quality of life and support the community at large.

When asked why parks are important (see page 6), most participants strongly agreed that Community Health & Wellbeing (92%) and Environment (86%) were key benefits of parks, followed closely by Culture & Arts (66%) and Economy (65%). All four factors were supported by the majority of participants.

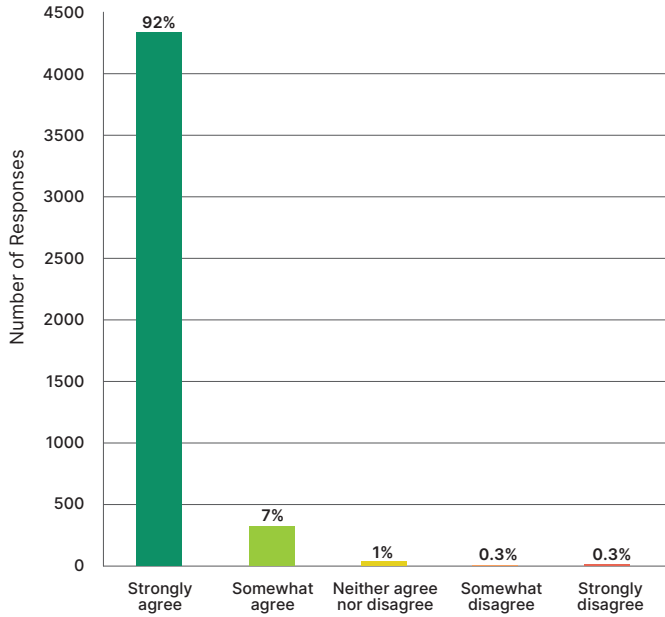
Participants also provided additional insights to the importance of parks, including how they enhance quality of life, provide community/multi-generational space, support equitable public access to activities, create green space, support peace and well-being, and generally provide things to do. (These comments are summarized in more detail on page 7).

Are parks important to you?

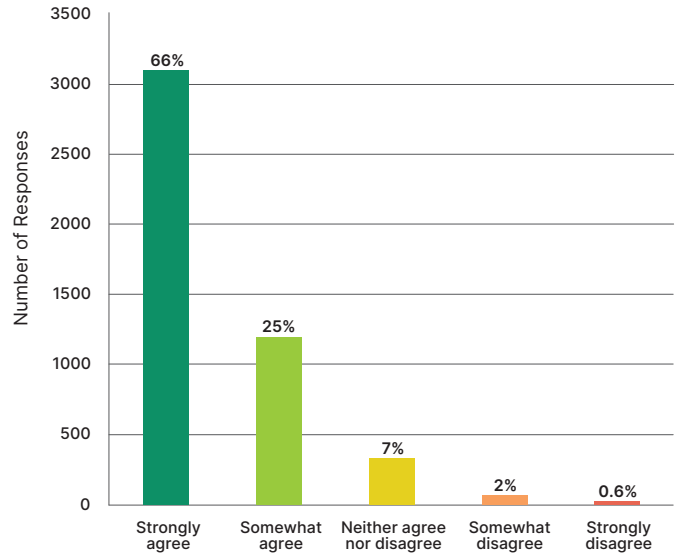


Why are parks important?

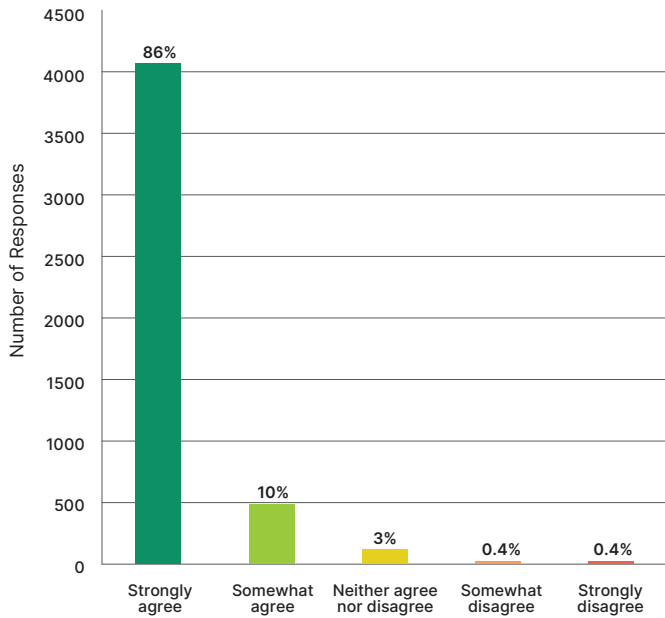
Community Health and Wellbeing



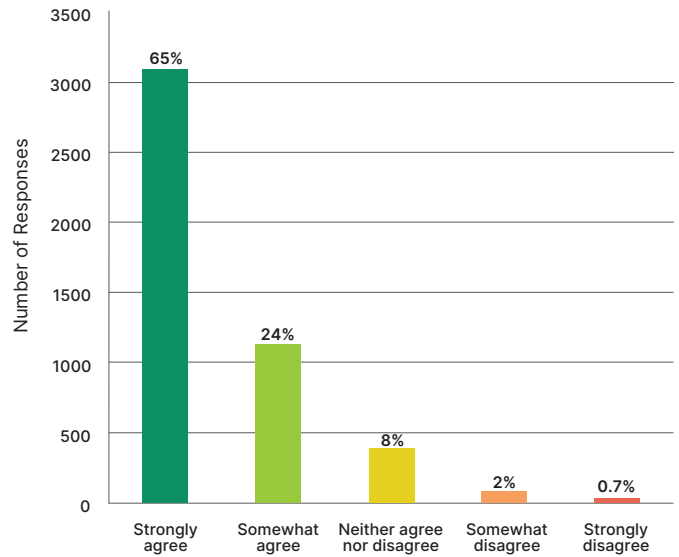
Culture and Arts



Environment



Economy



Other Comments

Survey participants added a wide variety of additional and insightful reasons why parks are important for Hamilton, with 2,143 open ended comments shared. Comments represented a wide variety of themes and subjects, which are briefly summarized below.

Essential for Quality of Life

Nearly one-half of respondents to this question commented on the importance of parks as necessary places for quality of life. Many commented on the need to preserve and protect the existing park network in Hamilton, and to expand the network with more parks where possible. Given the overall importance of parks to Hamiltonians, several participants noted the need to focus investment and energy in updating or improving the design and functionality of existing parks, to ensure they continue to meet various social, recreational, and ecological needs into the future.

A significant number of comments were shared that relayed the importance of parks to physical, mental and spiritual health, as well as general well-being. The wide variety of activities, uses, and functions of Hamilton parks were noted as being beneficial to personal and community well-being. For instance, comments noted improvements to mental health by having safe spaces in parks to rest and relax near nature, accessing outdoor spaces to gather and meet up with friends, as well as to attend and participate in social events and festivals. Several participants noted the importance of Hamilton's parks have increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, as parks provide local, accessible outdoor places to socialize safely, given public health measures and restrictions. The fact that parks provide recreational, play, and sport opportunities, typically for free or at a low-cost, was also highlighted by respondents as providing physical health benefits. Many commented on the inclusion of pathways, trails, and scenic natural areas as providing important well-being benefits to parks users as well.

“It should be a safe place for people to congregate, both young and old. It is a place to enjoy fresh air, for kids and adults to play sports and other games, to walk your pet. It should have garbage cans and recycling bins that are easily accessible.”

“Interact with people we normally wouldn’t.”

Community and Multi-Generational Space

The parks system's ability to facilitate community gatherings, from family barbeques to large city-wide festivals and events, was highlighted by many respondents. Other participants added to these themes by noting that many parks provide spaces and activities that allow for multigenerational gatherings and enjoyment, from young children to older adults. Some commented on the possibility of spontaneous social interactions and connecting with different people from different walks of life as being the primary reason parks are important to Hamilton. Examples shared included meeting new friends and families at a playground or a soccer tournament, sharing a picnic table with another group, or running into neighbours while walking or biking on a public trail.

Public Space, Equitable Access to Activities

Some participants specifically identified that the most important aspect of parks is that they are public and open to anyone. Other respondents added that they felt parks are important because they are equitable and inclusive. Reasons for this shared with the project team include the low or no cost to access, variety of types of parks spaces available, and relatively good distribution across Hamilton. Some noted that free access to certain amenities and park activities, from playgrounds, to dog parks, to community programs, was the most important aspect of parks being equitable.

Green Space, Trees, and the Environment

Nearly a thousand comments were shared that spoke to parks being important because of the natural, green space, environmental and ecological benefits they provide. Respondents spoke to the importance of natural systems in their own right, with parks providing vital habitat for local flora and fauna, and ecological corridors for wildlife. Others identified various ecosystem services, such as naturalized stormwater management, flood mitigation and protection, and reducing the heat island effect as the main reasons why parks within the city are essential. For many other participants, parks that provide treed and shaded areas and primarily green or planted land cover were seen as most important, functioning as green and natural oases within more urban and busy areas.

Peaceful and Restorative

Building off of themes regarding human well-being and the greenness of parks above, many residents commented on the primary importance of parks as peaceful places for quiet contemplation, rest and relaxation, and other passive uses. Some commented on parks being important for providing safe public spaces to be alone, noting that parks provide important open space for people who live in apartments and for those with low incomes or limited ability to travel long distances to other amenities. Some respondents commented on park importance in relation to housing development and urban intensification, where private open space access may be limited. Therefore, for many Hamiltonians, parks act as the backyard of the city.

Things to Do: Amenities, Sports, and Play

For others, the most important role parks provide is places and amenities for play, active recreation, and organized and informal sports. Of these respondents, a large number commented on how much they enjoyed park amenities and infrastructure generally, ranging from playground equipment, spray and splash pads, sportsfields and courts, as well as more passive items such as seating, benches, and picnic areas. Many participants took this opportunity share that more and higher-quality amenities, such as tennis courts, disc golf courses, bicycle single-track trails, and water play features would improve the importance and their use of the parks system.

“Builds respect for our resources and pride that motivates stewardship of our community. A place to learn about the natural environment and what grows around us all the time. Plants, insects, animals, weather etc. a place of peace and security.”

“Parks are valuable for the mental & physical health of individuals and families, across generations. Even a short walk in nature/ parks has measurable effects on the body and mind such as lowering blood pressure and improving mood.”

For many dog owners, parks were identified as being most important for the opportunity to exercise with their pets and attend dog-friendly outdoor gatherings. Some commenters asked the City to add more off-leash or dog specific park areas, particularly for those without private backyards or open spaces to allow their dogs to run free. A few other respondents noted park benefits for other types of pets too, such as cats.

Other comments highlighted the ability to enjoy and learn about both cultural and natural heritage through parks, and associated commemorative and interpretive features, as being an important function of city parks.

Other Themes: All-Season Use, Climate, Economy, Safety and Maintenance Feedback

Several other themes arose from the comments provided to this question. Additional entries identifying reasons parks are important include winter activities and the ability to use parks year-round, the ability for parks to contain ecological functions that mitigate climate change (such as carbon sequestration and flood protection), and their benefits to the local economy through tourism, benefits to property values for land owners, and providing attractive amenities to workers. A small number of respondents identified concern for the impact park development and operations have to the tax rate relative to their perceived importance.

Some participants submitted comments regarding parks maintenance and upkeep, as well as safety and security. However, the sentiment of these comments were mixed. Some respondents noted that the cleanliness and feelings of safety and security within Hamilton's parks were a reason why they are important to the city. Others felt that park upkeep, improvements, and availability of waste and recycling bins needs to be improved in order for parks to live up to their potential. Similar sentiments were shared regarding safety and security, noting that lighting and patrols could be increased for those who felt parks were not already safe. On this note, a few respondents expressed concern for the safety and wellbeing of persons experiencing homelessness in parks, while others were concerned about the impact to other parks users.

Remaining respondents noted they had nothing additional to add based on the selectable items provided in Question 2.

“Parks are extremely important now more than ever due to pandemic and people using parks a lot more to meet up in and plan social gatherings. Parks are especially important to children who create so many fun memories with loved ones while playing.”

Hamilton Parks Vision

What 3 words would you use to describe your vision for the future of parks in Hamilton?

Many Hamiltonians submitted responses regarding their vision for the future of the city's parks, with 4,720 comments received through the survey. A wide range of three word combinations that made up respondents' parks vision were received. Some three word submissions worked together as a theme or short sentence, such as "nature activates community." Others were a collection of key words that best represented what the participant felt was most important for parks' vision (e.g. "abundant, recreational, inviting").

Participants' vision for the future of Hamilton parks were across a wide range of subjects and themes, which are summarized on the following page along with frequent keywords used.



COMMENT SUMMARY

ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE

- Access
- Parking
- Welcoming
- Inviting
- Diverse
- Free
- Freedom
- Affordable
- Equitable
- Diverse
- Engagement

COMMUNITY

- Social
- Socialize
- Events
- Camaraderie
- Gathering
- Neighbour
- Friendly
- Together
- Community-Building

SAFE

- Safety
- Light and Lighting
- Enforcement

CONNECTED AND MORE PARKS

- Connected
- Network
- More Parks
- Space
- Spacious
- Generous
- Everywhere
- Plentiful
- Necessary
- Treasured
- Bigger
- Expanded

CLEANLINESS, MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

- Clean(er)
- Remediate
- Maintain
- Well Maintained
- Upkeep
- Enhance
- Protect
- Improve
- Update
- Better
- Innovative
- Design
- Modern
- More Trash/Garbage Bins

AMENITIES AND ACTIVITIES

- More of them! (e.g. tennis courts, disc golf, playgrounds)
- Sport
- Sportsfields
- Ball Diamonds
- Cycling
- Biking
- Walking
- Dog Parks
- Off-Leash
- Multi-Purpose
- Multi-Use
- Washrooms
- Outdoor Rinks
- Sit
- Seating
- Benches
- Barbeques
- Picnics
- Trails
- Paths
- Playgrounds
- Exercise Equipment

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- Healthy
- Wellness
- Exercise
- Fitness
- Mental Health
- Human Health
- Health Promoting

GREEN AND NATURE

- Greenspace
- Natural
- Environment
- Ecology
- Trees
- More Trees
- Sustain
- Sustainable
- Wildlife
- Animals
- Garden
- Water
- Lake and Lakefront
- Preserve
- Environmental Health
- Biodiversity
- Ecosystems

CHILD AND FAMILY FRIENDLY

- Child-Friendly
- Family
- Youth
- Teen
- All Ages
- Seniors
- Age Appropriate

ENJOYMENT AND FUN

- Peaceful
- Beautiful
- Play
- Playful
- Interactive
- Vibrant
- Engaging
- Entertainment
- Recreation
- Escape
- Livable
- Oasis
- Scenic
- Pretty
- Relaxation
- Restore
- Happiness
- Culture
- History
- Art
- Cool
- Food

OTHER

Other ideas shared by a relatively small portion of the total comments:

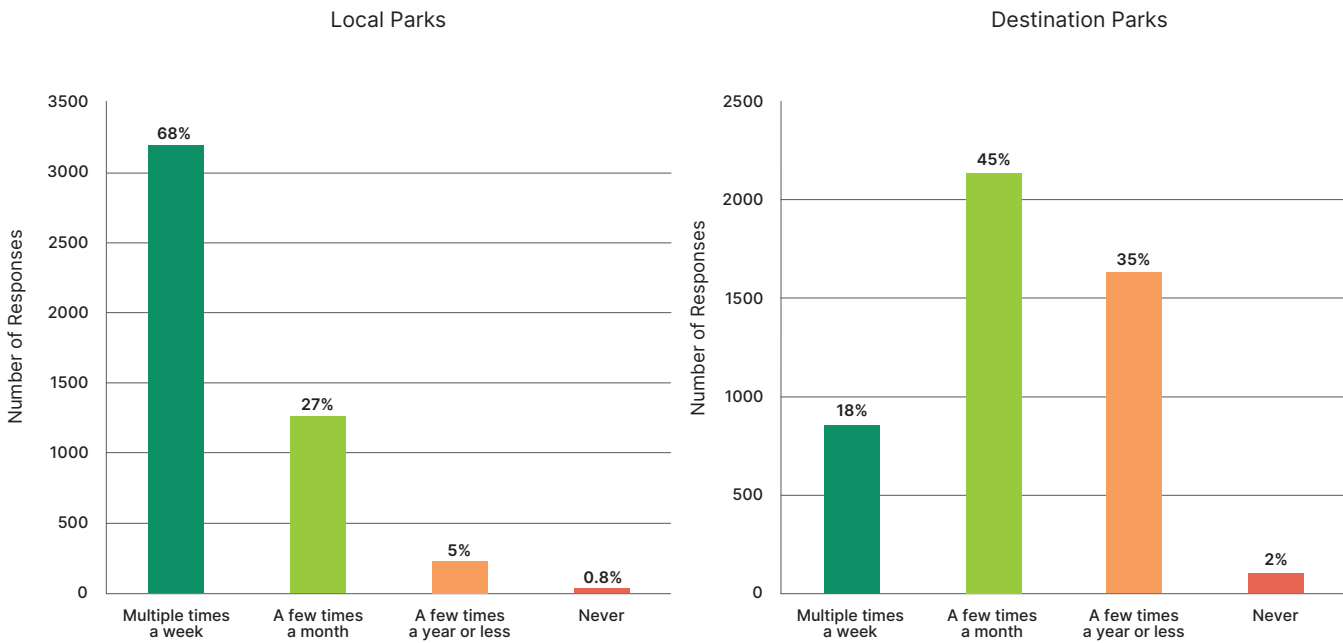
- Taxes and Cost
- Housing
- COVID-19 Pandemic

Frequency of Park Use

Park Visitation

Local parks are used more frequently, with 68% of participants indicating they visit their local park(s) multiple times a week. Less than 1% of participants never visit their local parks. Destination parks, on the other hand, are visited less frequently, with the majority of participants indicating that they visit those specialty parks only a few times a month (45%) or a few times a year or less (35%). It is important to note that 'local parks' refer to the closest park in walking distance to the home. This, in some cases, might include 'destination' or 'community' parks.

How often do you visit parks in Hamilton?



Top Park Visitation

What park(s) do you visit most often?

Survey participants were asked to rank their three favourite parks throughout the city. Participants mentioned roughly 179 different parks in their responses. The 20 most frequently-mentioned parks are listed on the right. These parks were generally spread out throughout Hamilton, with some of the larger parks located in more central locations.

Gage Park was the most popular park that participants mentioned. Dundas Open Space, Bayfront Park, and Dundas Driving Park were also quite popular. Within the most common parks, six were city-wide parks and five were community parks. This was well balanced with more local neighbourhood parks, of which there were five in the top 20.

Neighbourhood parks were generally well represented throughout the survey, with participants including many different neighbourhood parks as one of their favourites. Given that they serve less people, many popular neighbourhood parks were not ranked as highly as community and city parks that serve more people, despite being highly valued by participants.

The most popular parks were generally sports parks, with some passive and active park spaces as well. The major exceptions to this were Bayfront Park (a waterfront park) and Dundurn Park (a historic park), as well as Dundas Open Space, William Connell Park, and Binbrook Park.

The most popular parks also ranged in size. Seven of the most popular parks were quite large (over 10 hectares), with Gage Park and Bayfront Park being the largest of these. Most of the top 20 parks were between two and 10 hectares, but there were a few smaller parks that were also quite popular, including High Park and Chedoke Tot Lot. However, the most popular of these were generally larger and offered a range of different amenities to cater to different users. They also contained a number of destinations to draw people to the park, such as the Gage Park Greenhouse or the Dundurn Castle.

TOP 20 PARKS

1. Gage Park
 2. Dundas Valley Conservation Area
 3. Bayfront Park
 4. Dundas Driving Park
 5. Churchill Park
 6. Valley Park
 7. Memorial Park
 8. Victoria Park
 9. Bruce Park
 10. Dundurn Park
 11. Sam Lawrence Park
 12. Parkdale Park
 13. Montgomery Park
 14. Chedoke Tot Lot
 15. Dundas Valley Secondary
 16. Inch Park
 17. William Connell Park
 18. High Park
 19. Sanctuary
 20. Binbrook Park
-



Pandemic Impacts

Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how frequently you use parks?

When asked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their use of park spaces, most survey participants mentioned that their park use had changed over the course of the pandemic. Comments generally indicated either an increase or decrease in parks usage during the pandemic.

Increase in Visitation

Most survey participants that saw a change in their park use revealed that they visited parks more frequently during the pandemic. One of the main reasons for this was an increase in free time. Many participants mentioned that they were spending less time commuting. This meant that they had more free time in the evenings to visit parks. Others mentioned that since they were working from home, they used parks as an opportunity to get outside their home. A number of participants mentioned that they replaced their daily commute with daily walks at their local park. Participants also mentioned that they went to parks to walk their dogs or take their kids outside. Others mentioned that they went to parks because they had nothing else to do.

A number of participants stated that their park use increased for mental and physical health reasons. During lockdowns, parks provided an escape from the stresses of the pandemic and were key to many participants' mental health. Parks were also used as an alternative space for exercising, since gym spaces were closed. These benefits heightened the importance of parks, particularly for renters who often do not have access to private greenspace.

Decrease in Visitation

On the other hand, a number of survey participants revealed that their park use decreased over the course of the pandemic. One of the main reasons for this were COVID-19 public health measures. During the pandemic, many facilities were closed, including parks. This was particularly a concern for parents with young kids, who were unable to access playground equipment during the periods of restriction. The lack of organized sports also resulted in decreased park use for many participants. The closure of washroom facilities was also a major concern for participants, as many seniors and families need to have washroom facilities nearby. This was an issue throughout the pandemic, not just during the lockdowns. Masks and social distancing policies were another reason for reduced park use for many participants. Some participants felt uncomfortable with these policies while others were concerned that these policies were not being adequately enforced in parks.

“Yes, more frequent use by both adults & children. Parks were lifesavers for parents & kids during lockdowns.”

“My use of parks had increased during COVID. Working from home had me trapped in my house and I needed an escape. I normally use the parks a lot but during COVID it increased.”

“Aside from the time we weren't permitted to use the parks, no it hasn't changed our park habits at all.”

Another reason for decreased use of parks was for health reasons. Many participants voiced feelings of fear or apprehension at going out into public. This was particularly a concern for older people who wanted to stay home to avoid getting sick or were encouraged by their family members to stay at home. There were also increased concerns about the cleanliness of park amenities and playground equipment. Participants also mentioned that they reduced their park visitation due to other users' behaviour. This included people who chose to ignore masking requirements or who poorly treated those who were wearing masks and following health guidelines.

“Use a little less frequently as the pandemic has made it such that it is not as peaceful. Sometimes too crowded to enjoy.”

A lack of park space was also a factor for decreased park usage for some participants. These participants mentioned that they wanted to use the city's parks, but none were available within walking distance. Due to pandemic restrictions, it was difficult for many users, particularly lower income users, to access parks that were further away.

Other COVID-19 Park Trends

Survey participants mentioned several other trends related to their use of parks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many participants mentioned that they were less likely to travel to parks that were located further away. Instead, they used more local and neighbourhood parks that were located closer to their homes rather than larger city-wide parks. Many participants also mentioned that they used conservation areas more during the pandemic. Others mentioned that they tried to go to parks where there was less people or at off-peak times.

“We use the smaller parks closest to us more frequently, but the parks that are located near the waterfront we go to less frequently now.”

A number of participants were also concerned about perceived increases in people experiencing homelessness and illicit behaviour in local parks. They mentioned that they were concerned for their children and their own safety, which often discouraged them from visiting certain park spaces.

Access & Barriers

Park Service & Location

Overall, the majority of participants feel that their core needs are being served by Hamilton parks. However, it is important to take note of the areas that could be improved to ensure parks are accessible and serve the needs of all residents.

Quantity: Most participants (74%) feel they have enough, or nearly enough, local parks near where they live. A combined 19% disagreed, indicating that there may be key gaps in the parks network.

Access: 88% of participants indicated that they strongly or somewhat agree that they can easily get to their local parks. Conversely, 8% indicated that they strongly or somewhat disagree and cannot easily access their local parks.

Crowding: Again, the majority of participants (69%) indicated that their local parks do not feel crowded, but 15% noted that they are over-crowded.

Needs: While 65% of participants indicated that local parks currently meet their needs, this question had the highest percentage of disagreement at a combined 25%.

Are your needs being served by local parks?

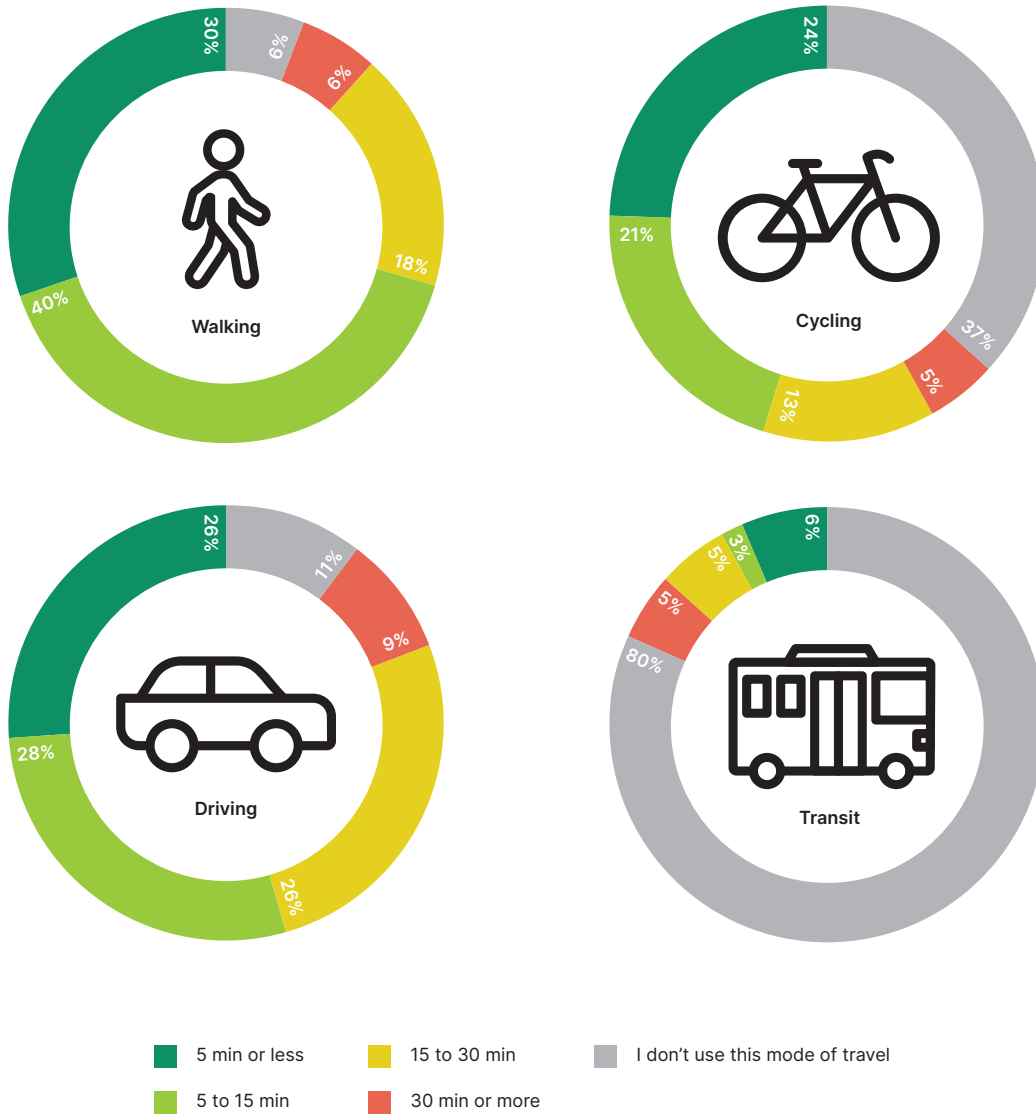


Travel to Parks

Most participants travel to parks by walking (94%), following closely by driving (89%). Only 20% of participants indicated they access parks on public transit.

Trips by walking, cycling, and driving are most often under 15 minutes in length. However, at least 5% of participants of every mode indicated that it typically takes 30 minutes or more to travel to a park.

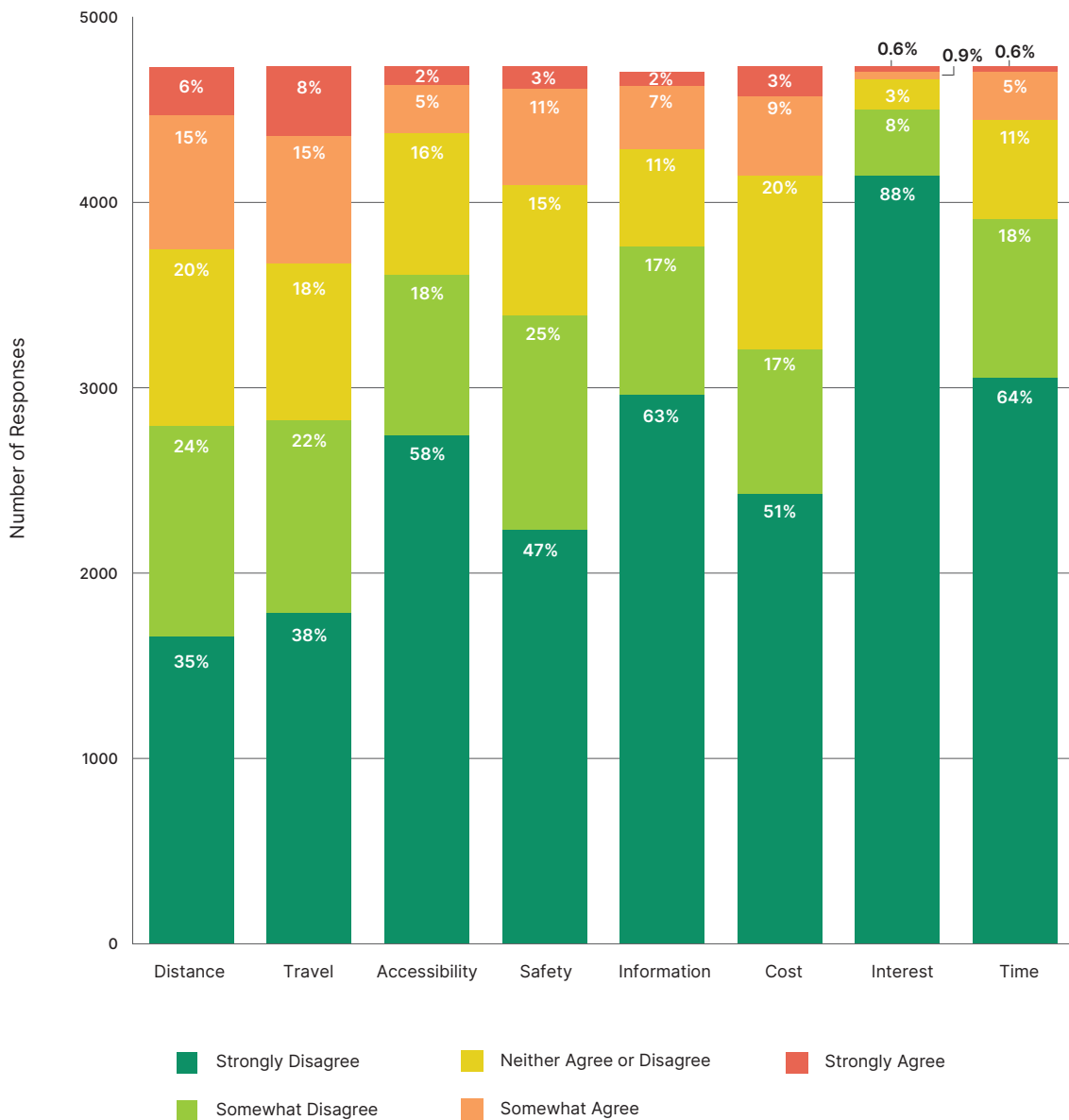
How far do you typically travel to visit a city park(s)?



Barriers to Access

To garner a more complete picture of the reasons people are, or are not, accessing parks in Hamilton, participants were asked about any barriers that they face that may be preventing or limiting their use of parks. Overall, the majority of participants indicated that they do not face significant barriers to accessing parks. Travel and distance were the highest barriers, with over 21% of participants noting they strongly or somewhat agree. Safety and cost were also key barriers.

Does anything prevent or limit you from using city parks?



A Snapshot of Other Comments

Through open-ended comments, several additional themes emerged, including concerns over crowding, a lack of access and amenities, and safety.

Crowding

Many participants mentioned that they did not visit parks because they were too crowded. This was particularly an issue during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many participants were concerned about the lack of social distancing. These participants also mentioned the need for more park spaces that are better distributed.

Access

Another major barrier to park use was a lack of access. Participants mentioned that many of their local parks lacked sidewalks, which made them difficult to access by walking or other active transportation modes. Distance to amenities was also a barrier, as many participants mentioned that there were no parks nearby. This was a particular concern in lower income neighbourhoods. Finally, participants mentioned that they wanted to be able to access parks without a car. They revealed their desire for better transit connections to parks.

Safety

Safety concerns were another barrier to use that participants identified. Many participants mentioned avoiding certain parks due to the perceived presence of people experiencing homelessness and drug use in the park. A number of participants also revealed that, as a woman, they often feel unsafe in parks. They mentioned that improving the lighting in parks or adding emergency buttons might help alleviate some of their concerns.

Participants also mentioned safety issues regarding off-leash dogs in parks. They revealed that they often avoided parks with off-leash dogs because their children were scared of the dogs or dog owners were acting inappropriately. Several participants also mentioned that they were concerned with the amount of dog and animal waste present in park spaces. Participants with young children were particularly concerned about the effect of this on their children's health, as they would sometimes pick the waste up while playing.

Participants also mentioned that a lack of safety for pedestrians and cyclists was another barrier to their use of parks. In particular, a lack of sidewalks and pathways made it difficult to access parks by walking or cycling. Maintenance issues with pathways, such as uneven surfaces and erosion, also made it difficult to safely walk or cycle on these paths. There is also a lack of winter maintenance that makes pathways and other amenities difficult to use for fear of slipping.

“Local Parks are much too crowded in peak periods due to out of district visitors to enjoy ”

“In Spring and Fall it is hard to use some of the pathways, because of the mud. They are not always very accessible. Parking can be a problem, especially during the pandemic.”

“As a woman, safety sometimes prevents me from feeling like I can (safely) access parks.”

“Safety is my only concern that is why I don't use parks at night or early in the morning.”

Amenities

Survey participants mentioned that a lack of certain amenities posed a barrier to park use. Parking issues were raised by a number of participants. They mentioned that they often have difficulty finding parking at parks, which restricts their ability to use these spaces.

Survey participants also voiced concern over the lack of amenities addressing the needs of seniors. They pointed to the lack of seating and even paths, and washrooms in many parks. Several participants were also concerned with the absence of shaded areas to provide relief from hot weather. This was an issue for both parents with young children and older people who find it difficult to be outside in the heat for long periods.

Several participants also mentioned that parks needed to include more amenities targeted as youths and adults rather than just children. These participants mentioned that they do not frequent parks as much as they would like because there are no amenities targeted at them.

Other

Other barriers that participants identified include:

- Online directories can be confusing when trying to find information about parks
- A general lack of information on parks – need more maps and accessible information
- Belligerent youth frequent parks and make users uncomfortable
- Flooding often prevents park spaces and amenities from being used
- Parks in lower income neighbourhoods are not well maintained

“A lot of the parks will have areas that I can’t reach in my wheelchair. There won’t be paths between amenities.”

“Restricted or paid parking usually created by neighbours who do not want hikers or parking near their homes is very distressing. Parkland should not just be the province of the local neighbours.”

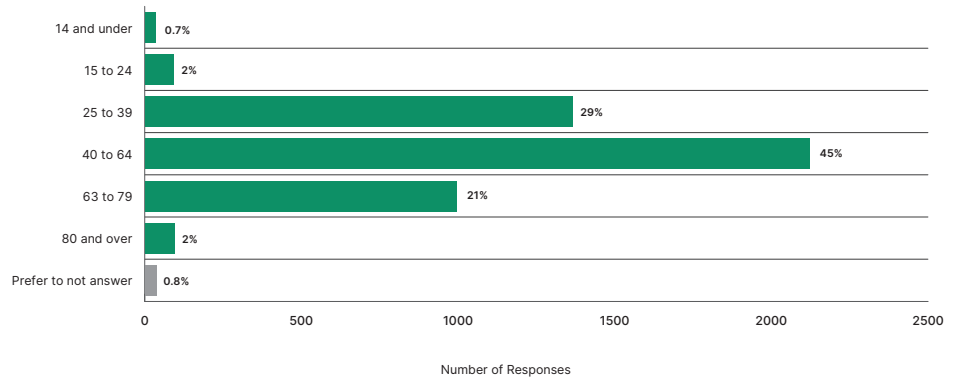
“More benches required, more lighting, more garbage/cleaning, more bathrooms”

“There are no parks that are close by enough that can be easily visited on a daily basis.”

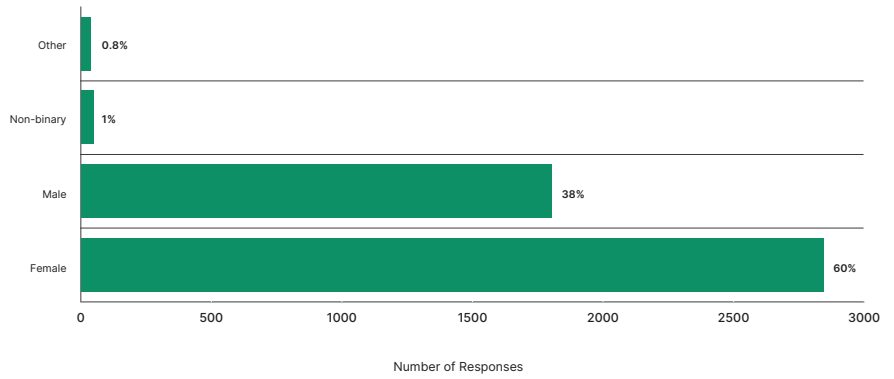
Demographics

To better understand who is—and is not—participating in the public engagement process, this page highlights the demographics shared by participants. All questions were optional.

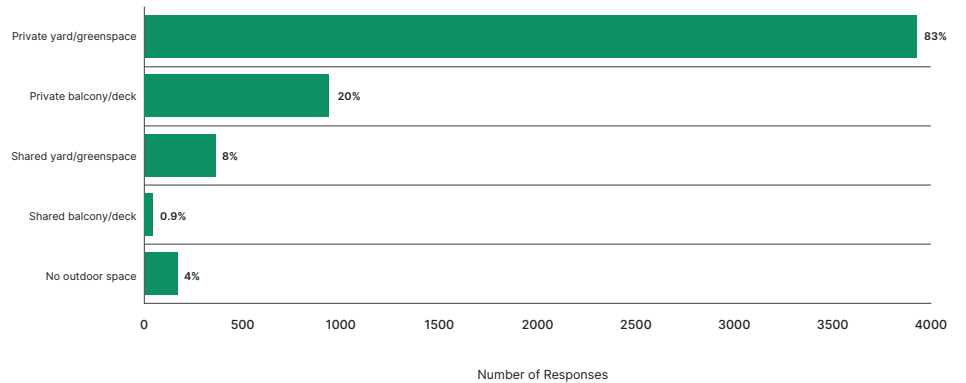
What is your age?



What is your gender?



Do you have access to outdoor space at home?



Stakeholder Engagement Summary

A total of nine submissions from key stakeholder organizations were received in response to the request for feedback to inform Phase 1 of the Hamilton Parks Master Plan. The submissions took the form of completed workbooks, which were created and shared by the Project Team to facilitate ease of response by stakeholders, as well as e-mails and letters. A wide range of organizations provided feedback, including:

- Hamilton Naturalists' Club
- Bruce Trail Conservancy
- West End Home Builders' Association
- Hamilton Conservation Authority
- Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
- Cycle Hamilton
- Environment Hamilton
- Social Planning Research Council
- Conservation Halton

The following pages summarize the feedback received from stakeholder organizations.

Vision for the Parks System

- Resilient with climate change
- Biodiverse and prioritize native planting
- Connects people with nature and natural systems
- Accessible and equitable distribution of parks across the city
- Parks are inclusive and barrier-free
- Creativity and innovation drive high quality parks
- Parks are loved and used by all residents
- Made up of an integrated network of parks and trails that allow for safe and sustainable access to parks
- Meets the needs of current and future residents
- Fully accessible by bicycle and other modes of active transportation
- Parks system is well maintained and feels safe
- Parks are diverse in character and offerings

Parks Opportunities & Challenges

- Increase access to nature, improve ecological connections, and promote naturalization and biodiversity
- Look at park-like spaces to convert to parks or provide public park functions (e.g. school sites, golf courses, underused City lots)
- Land acquisition and availability for parks is limited due to development pressures
- Improve safe access and connected routes to and within parks that promote active transportation and healthy living
- Impacts of municipal development charges and requirements, including for parkland, on housing affordability
- Park system design that allows for use by all ages and abilities, maximizes effectiveness and efficient use of the land, and provides high quality amenities and infrastructure
- Continued collaboration and partnership with other public agencies and organizations to acquire and program parkland

Recommended Park Improvements

Community Health & Wellbeing

- Access to nature to improve community health
- Fully connected active transportation and trail system that provides public access to all open spaces
- Safe access to outdoors for both physical and mental health benefits
- Safety and sound/noise considerations for both people and wildlife
- Growing medicines in these spaces and having more planting learning opportunities
- Connection to nature, truth and reconciliation, urban agriculture, in collaboration with other organizations' programming

Economy

- Quality parks will attract businesses and investment
- Infrastructure investments would lead to safer and greater use
- Natural and park spaces contribute to the local economy
- Provide opportunities for small mobile vendors (e.g. food trucks) in more parks
- Ensure parks are multifunctional and provide green infrastructure services to improve value

Environment

- Increased tree canopy and green-ness to reduce the urban heat island effect
- Enhance & grow natural heritage areas
- Naturalization and restoration opportunities
- More natural and park lands that contribute to a sustainable environment and decrease emissions
- Improved ecological connectivity
- Provide residents access to nature through safe and active transportation options

Culture & Arts

- Provide more gathering and celebration spaces in parks
- Spaces for performances by the arts community
- Educational opportunities to help people connect with the outdoors
- Providing cycling and protected bike lanes allows Hamiltonians to access public art around the city

Other Comments

- Neighbourhood consultation is important for creating new parks and redeveloping existing ones
- Equity considerations: natural assets and distribution should be considered along with other amenities like playgrounds and splashpads

Parkland Provision & Dedication

A wide range of current concerns or challenges were shared by stakeholder organizations regarding how the City currently acquires and provides parkland throughout the City. A similarly broad range of perspectives were shared on proposed changes, as well as some comments on the aspects of the current process that is working well. The following lists illustrate the range of comments received.

Concerns & Challenges

- Ensure all developments have land dedicated, not just cash in lieu, as people need the park space
- Land that is dedicated needs to be accessible and provide opportunities to enhance biodiversity
- Ensure the City is able to adequately manage and maintain all existing and future parkland, and not acquired at a rate higher than is manageable
- School sites should be exempt from parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu fees, due to the recreational and other public services they provide
- Increase the amount of parkland necessary for dedication

Proposed Changes & Improvements

- Use priorities to determine acquisition of parkland, based on lenses such as equity, green infrastructure, and natural area protection
- Prioritize acquisition in areas with little amount of private open space, such as backyards
- Acquire parkland early and more proactively
- Expand definition of parkland to include active and passive parkland
- Active parkland should include all forms including squares, plazas, pathways, pocket parks, and Privately Owned Public Spaces
- Consider the opportunity for off-site parkland dedication
- Implement green or sustainable development standards and provide associated incentives
- Acquire parkland to support all life within the region for the benefit of people and the environment

Parkland Level of Service

Identification of Particular Areas in Short Supply of Parks

- The urban and industrial areas north of Main Street are in need of improved quality of existing parks, more parks, and increased biodiversity and vegetation
- Strachan Street area has newly acquired land – underused, good spot for increased biodiversity
- Parks system should connect natural areas across the city, as per the Natural Heritage System
- Flamborough at this time seems to be deficient in community and neighbourhood park space
- Conservation areas provide passive recreational opportunities to nearby residents

Unique Approaches to Meet Parkland Demand

- Develop and use a metric to evaluate community accessibility to natural open spaces
- Include a list of different types of spaces that provide some nature benefit
- Consult with Trails and Transportation Departments to improve active transportation connections to parks that don't have them
- Look at available private space (i.e. backyards) when determining where investment should be made in developing parks
- Areas identified in low supply should be priority
- Consider using existing underutilized City properties as parkland
- Consider passive spaces that include recreational opportunities as parkland, including within the Greenbelt
- Look at other forms of parkland ownership, such as Strata and Privately Owned Public Spaces
- Greater collaboration with other public agencies to provide recreational and park access opportunities

Other Feedback & Knowledge Sharing

Other feedback and parks-specific knowledge shared by participating stakeholder organizations included concern for how people experiencing homelessness in parks are treated generally, noting a housing-first approach should be supported. Stakeholders also supported continued collaboration with organizations to deliver parks services across Hamilton and continued engagement in the Master Plan project. Specific opportunities were noted by school boards, conservation authorities, and environmental non-profits. Some noted that there exists further opportunities to have volunteers steward certain aspects of the parks system, such as community and pollinator gardens, and that both the City and volunteer groups can work together to improve access to such programs.

Next Steps

Thank you to everyone who participated!

The insights gathered through this first phase of engagement will help guide the next steps of development of the draft Parks Master Plan as we develop guiding principles and strategic directions to guide further recommendations and actions. Stay tuned for the next phase of engagement in the coming months to stay involved and share your voice.

Visit engage.hamilton.ca/parksmasterplan for more information about the project and to sign-up for project updates.

