



# City of Cambridge Parks Master Plan

City Council Workshop  
May 29, 2023







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# Introduction to the Parks Master Plan and Consultation Results

**Nicole Beuglet, Dillon Consulting**



# Introduction

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- What is the 30-year Parks Master Plan aiming to achieve?
- Project timeline, public engagement and consultation, examples of park types
- What have we heard so far? (Survey, Stakeholder Interviews, Public Meetings)



# The City's Strategic Goals and Objectives

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## PEOPLE

Foster a community with heart, where everyone belongs and is cared for

- WELLBEING
- BELONGING
- VIBRANT NEIGHBOURHOODS
- INCLUSION



## PLACE

Embrace and celebrate our city's unique character while enhancing the spaces where people connect

- STRONG CORES
- ECONOMIC INCLUSION AND SUPPORT
- GETTING AROUND
- RESILIENCY

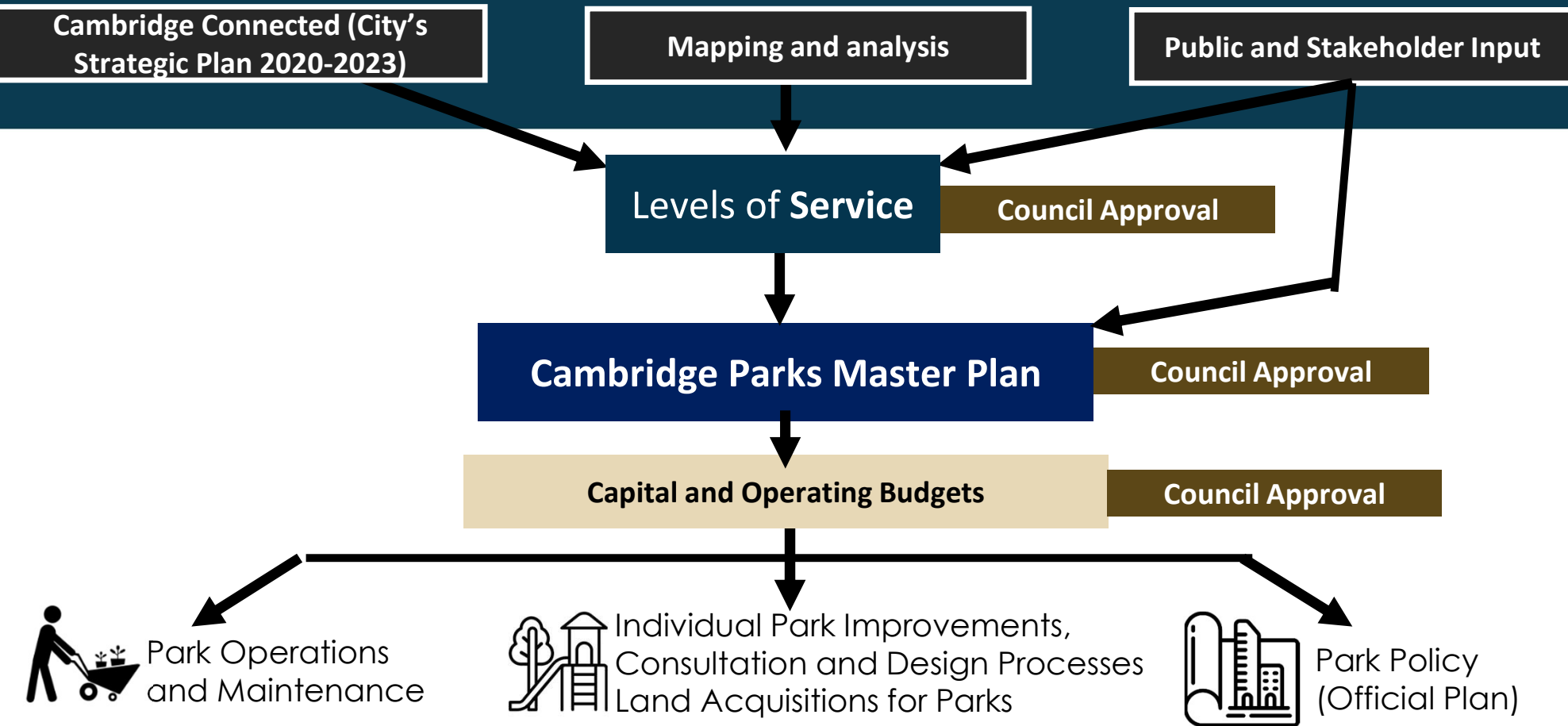


## PROSPERITY

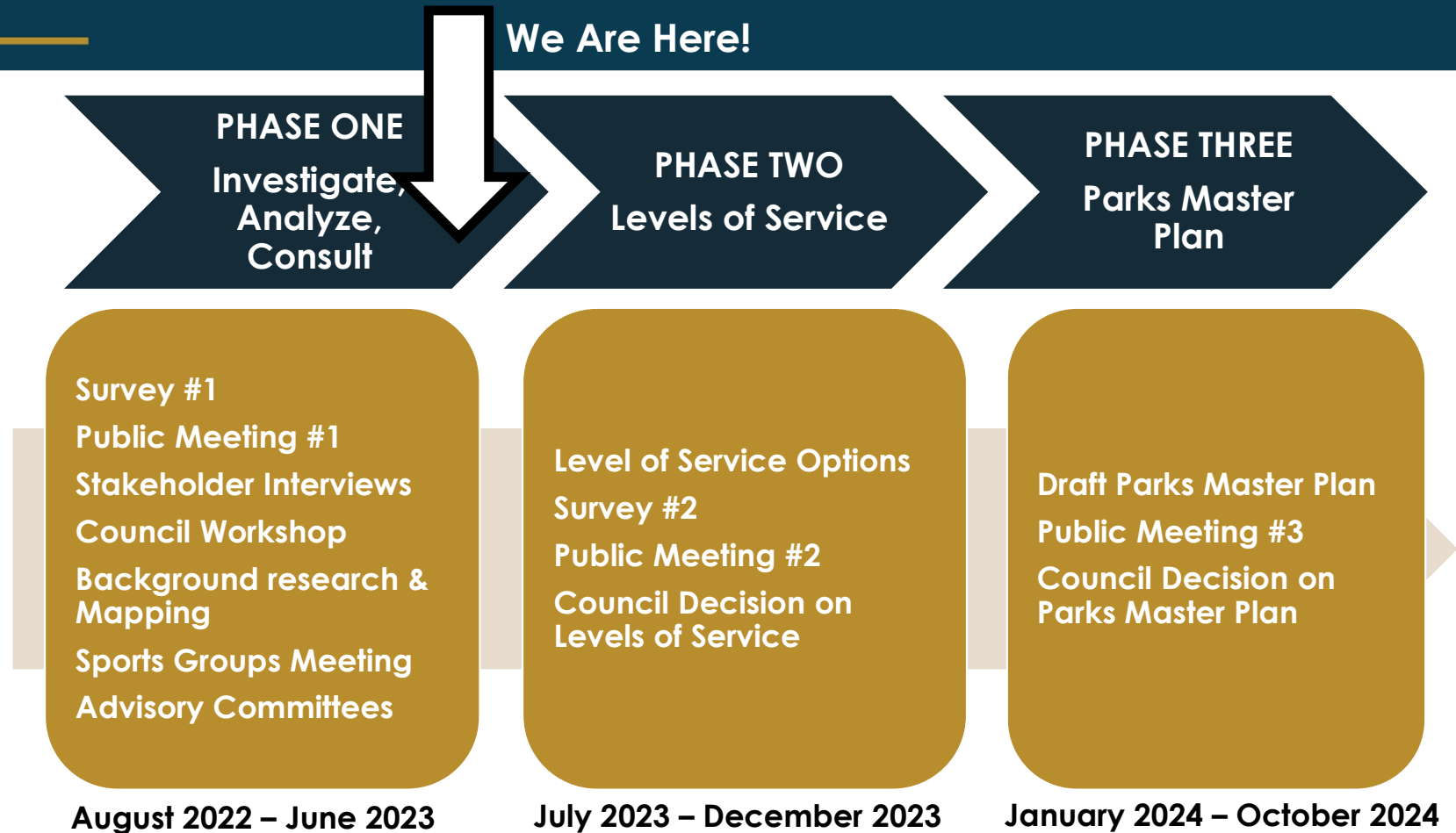
Build a vibrant and resilient city where current and future generations will live well

- PLACEMAKING
- PLANNING FOR GROWTH
- GREEN SPACES

# Parks Master Plan Process (and beyond...)



# Project Timeline



# City of Cambridge Parks by the numbers....

- Cambridge has 165 park properties\* and growing! The 165 properties include one City-wide park, 17 Community Parks, 53 Neighbourhood Parks, 2 Outdoor Recreation Facilities, 1 POPS, 8 Parkettes, 9 Urban Squares, 8 Trailheads, 66 Natural Areas
- More than ~500 hectares\* of parkland: Only 131 ha of the ~500\* ha is “developed” and the majority of lands, ~300-350 ha out of ~500 ha, are “natural” (and undevelopable / protected)
- 80km of trails within park land PLUS 57km along roads, storm ponds, walkways.

\*concurrently being updated for the Parks Master Plan through mapping

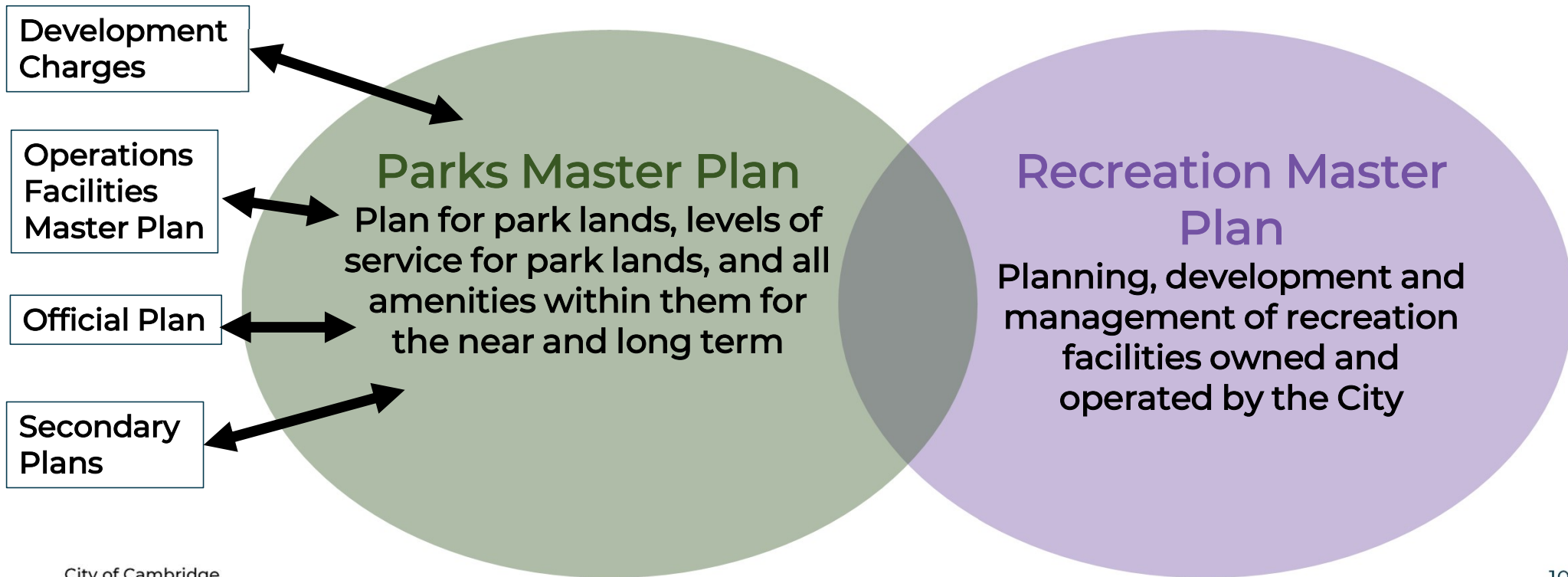


# Parks Master Plan objectives

- 30-year plan (time horizon is consistent with Official Plan) with short term 10-year priorities
- stakeholder engagement at various stages in order to reflect the community in this plan
- Plan for growth - 68,000 new residents by 2051.... need for approximately 64 hectares of new “developable parkland”. Additionally, identify the amount of land needed to be acquired to meet current demands for various growing sports (e.g. cricket, tennis, etc.)
- Manage existing parks - redevelopment of parks process (and responding to requests) and addressing underserviced areas going forward
- Plan for new parks, new types of parks, demographic changes, intensification
- Update mapping, asset management, levels of service, budgets, operations

# The scope of the Recreation and Parks Master Plans...

## ...(and coordination with other plans)



# Types of Parks – City Park

A very large (>30 hectares) open space area that may draw users from all over the city and tourists from outside the city and contains multiple and unique amenities

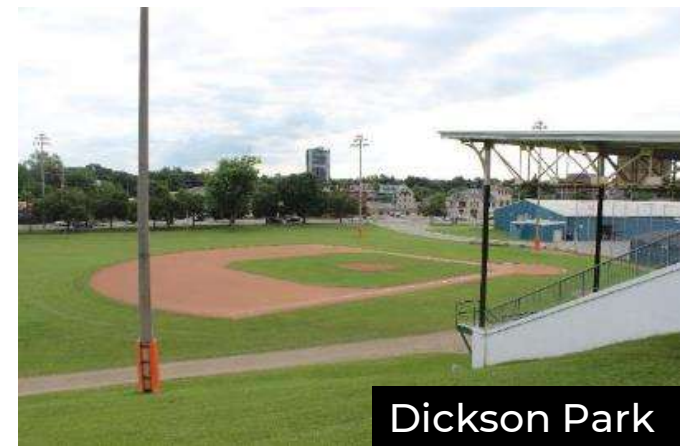


Riverside Park



# Types of Parks – Community Park

Large (2-30ha) open spaces that serve the recreational needs of several neighbourhoods or the entire city. These parks accommodate both vehicular and pedestrian access and facilities that are intended to provide both informal and organized recreational pursuits.





# Types of Parks – Neighbourhood Park

Small (< 2 hectares) open space that provides active and/or passive recreational opportunities and are intended to be centrally located within a neighbourhood and have no (or very limited) vehicular access. *Generally not suited for organized sports play due to lack of parking and smaller size although many neighbourhood parks contain sports amenities.*



Birkinshaw Park



Mill Pond Neighbourhood Park



Civic Legion Park

# Types of Parks – Urban Park

Small (< 0.5 ha) open space destinations in urbanized core areas with seating, special event, vista, and other functions but rarely recreation or sport activities. In contrast to parkettes they are primarily hard-surfaced.



Central Park



Mill Race Park



Hespeler Village Square

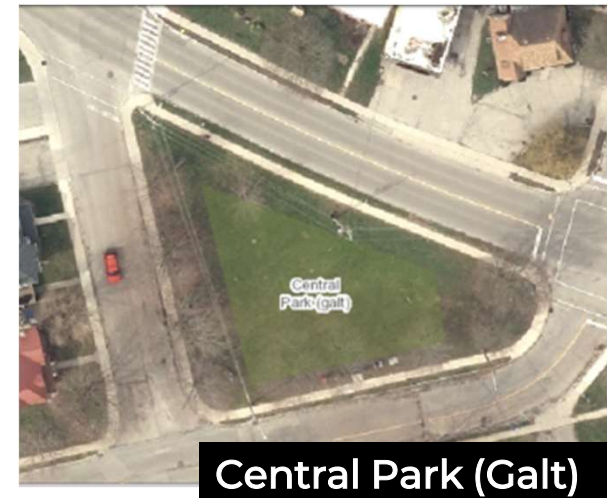


# Types of Parks – Parkette

Small (<0.5 ha) open spaces that offer seating, vista, and gardens. They are differentiated from Trailheads as not being linked to a trail and from Urban Parks by being more vegetated than hard-surfaced as well as located all around the city.



City of Cambridge



# Types of Parks – Trailhead

Open space that connects to trail locations throughout the City. These spaces may include parking, seating, wayfinding signage and pavilions, garbage facilities and other amenities mainly associated with the trail.



**Apple Dr. Trailhead**

City of Cambridge



**Bob McMullen Trailhead**



# Types of Parks – Outdoor Recreation Facility

These are bookable, limited access, premium outdoor recreation facilities with little or no other (neighbourhood) “park” amenities and are usually dedicated to a particular sport or recreation interest.



# Types of Parks – POPS (privately-owned public spaces) and Strata Park

POPS are small (<0.5 ha) urban spaces on privately-owned lands that are used for “urban square” type of programming through agreements with the City in dense development settings and are maintained by the private entity. Strata parks are lands located on top of buildings or structures (usually underground parking garages) that are accessible to the public and are owned, or through agreement maintained, by the City in dense development settings.

Gaslight District POPS



City of Cambridge

Ketcheson (strata) Park, Richmond BC





# Types of Parks – Natural Area

Wetlands, Woodlands, Natural Corridors along streams and rivers - open space that is primarily a natural area except for limited development such as trails.



# Engagement and Consultation

Engage Cambridge SURVEY #1  
~ 690 responses

[Home](#) / [Engage Cambridge](#) / [Parks Master Plan](#)

Parks Master Plan



Let's imagine the future of parks in Cambridge!

PUBLIC MEETING #1 In-Person March 8,  
2023 ~ 40 in attendance





# Key themes from consultations



Increase variety  
of amenities



Improve /  
upgrade park  
amenities  
(newer  
equipment)



Improve park  
maintenance



More passive amenities  
within existing parks  
such as pathways,  
seating, shade and  
open space

# Key themes – what improvements?



More  
parks



More natural  
areas



Park  
washrooms



Shade

# Survey findings – park usage



On average, how frequently do you and members of your household visit the following types of parks or facilities operated within the City of Cambridge? For seasonal parks or facilities, identify your usage during the time they are available.

- Major Parks: 1-3 times a year
- Community Parks: 1-3 times a year
- Neighbourhood Parks: Weekly
- GRCA: 1-3 times a year



# Survey findings – importance of the following items

Items ranked in order or most important:

1. Passive amenities ( *benches, trees, open spaces, natural spaces, etc..*)
2. Trails and pathways
3. Active amenities ( *playgrounds, skatepark, etc..*)
4. Linear urban parks
5. Opportunities for casual, unstructured sports and rec ( *basketball, pickleball, public tennis, etc.*)
6. Opportunities for community events and gathering
7. Opportunities for athletic training and competition



# Survey findings – level of satisfaction

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**Overall people are somewhat satisfied with:**

- ▶ Opportunities for events and gatherings
- ▶ Opportunities for casual, unstructured events and gatherings
- ▶ Opportunities for athletic training and competition
- ▶ Bookable sports fields
- ▶ Sports courts

**People are more satisfied with:**

- ▶ Trails and pathways
- ▶ Natural areas within parks
- ▶ Linear Urban Parks



# Park improvements

How strongly do you support or oppose improvements bearing in mind that additions or improvements could require increased taxes?

Overall, there is strong support for all improvements

- Most supported includes:
  - Shaded areas
  - Nature trails
  - Park washrooms
  - Seating areas
- People are torn about wi-fi in parks
- Some don't know / less support for the following amenities within parks:
  - cricket pitches
  - baseball diamonds
  - and multi-use fields





## Trends and Issues for the future

- Inclusive and welcoming parks
- Increased pressure on Neighbourhood Parks to accommodate uses that require parking lots, servicing, and washrooms
- Opportunities beyond programmed facilities
- Population growth, demographic changes, and intensification
- Condo developments and “private parks”
- Parks for teens and adults and not just children
- Higher participation in outdoor activities
- Redevelopment of existing parks and the need for an intake process for amenity requests
- Demand for new and more amenities
- Spaces for cultural / religious celebrations
- Land Acquisition – in the face of Bill 23 and little room for additional amenities in existing parks

**02**

# **Levels of Service as the foundation of the Parks Master Plan**

**Mike Hausser – City of Cambridge**







## Levels of Service

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- Example Level of Service options (parkland/person, dog parks, walking distances)
- Mapping levels of service – example of walking distances to parks and underserved areas
- Levels of Service as the foundation for building the Parks Master Plan

# Levels of service – Types

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- **Land use planning** – walking distances to parks, sq.m of parkland per person....
- **Passive Amenities** – washrooms, garbage bins, gardens, natural features, trees/canopy, concessions, circuit path systems, turf maintenance, docks/water access, special event infrastructure, lighting....
- **Furniture** – benches, table games, shade structures, picnic pavilions, picnic tables....
- **Active Amenities** – disc golf, skateparks, public tennis courts, community gardens, off leash dog parks, splash pads, basketball courts, pickleball courts, bmx bike tracks, trails, beach volleyball, adult fitness stations, playgrounds, accessible playgrounds, ...
- **Organized Sports Facilities** – baseball, cricket, soccer, tennis, field maintenance....

# Developing Level of Service Options - format

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## Start with community and technical definitions

- *Community* = “parks should be within a reasonable walking distance of my home”
  - *Technical* = “400m / 5 minutes; 800m / 10 minutes...”
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## Develop four LoS Options for consideration:

1. Lower LOS – *Less Resources / Funding*
  2. Current LOS - *Current Resources / Funding Provided / Some User Fees*
  3. Higher LOS – *Additional Resources / Funding Needed / More User Fees*
  4. Premium LOS - *More Resources / Funding / Additional User Fees / PPP / Fund Raising*
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## Develop a meaningful and measureable performance indicator

- “90% of households are within 800m of a neighbourhood park”

# Building Level of Service Options - considerations

In building Level of Service Options we need to consider:

- What are the cost AND feasibility considerations for moving between Levels (e.g. from Current to Higher or Premium Level of Service)?
- Do we have good data (or ANY DATA) to inform the options?
- Do the options reflect what we have heard during consultation?
- What are our comparable municipalities' Levels of Service?

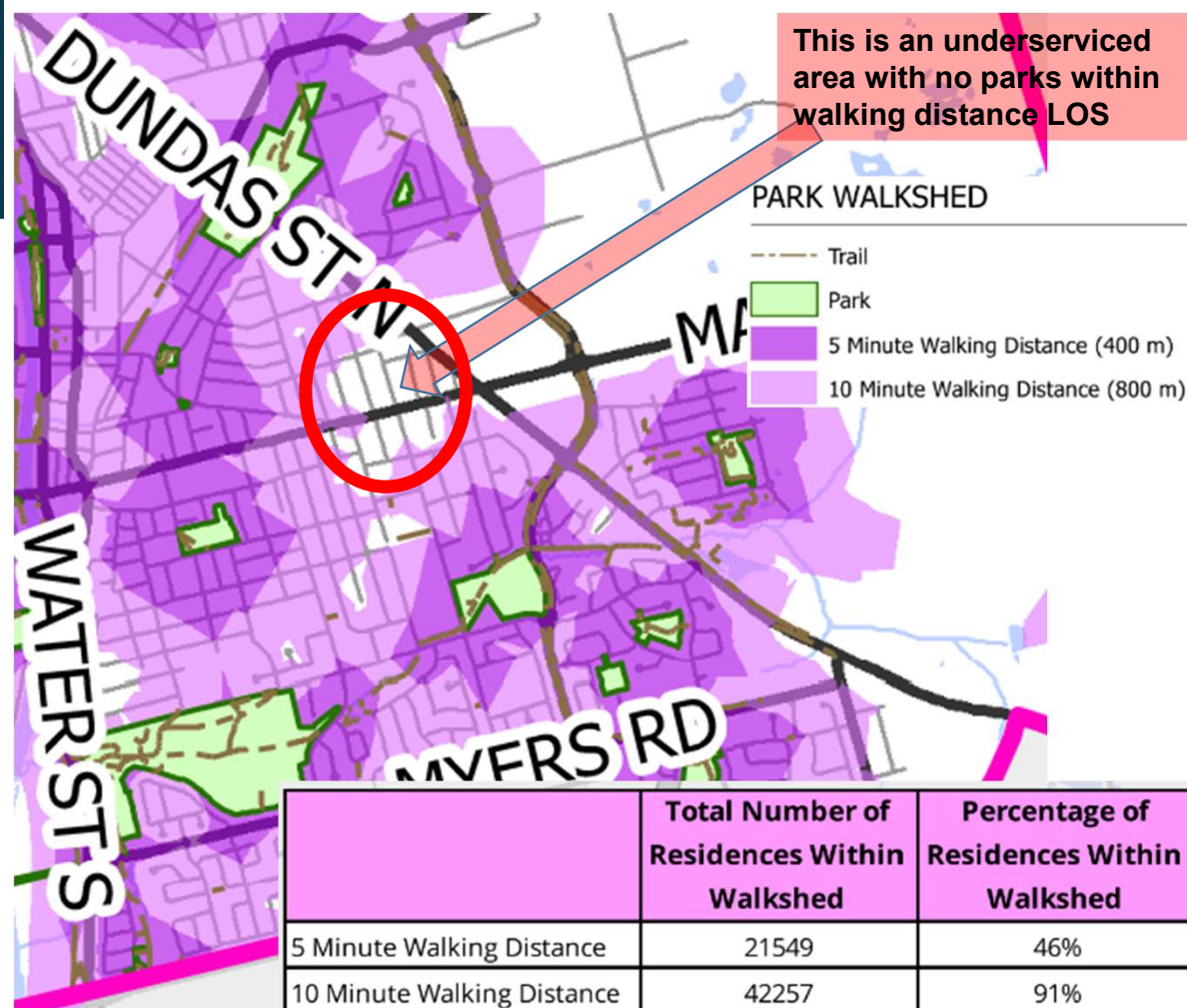


# LOS example – Walking Distances to Neighbourhood Park

- Current LOS – 800m / 10 minute walk
  - ( 91% of city meets this LOS )
- Current LOS – 400m / 5 minute walk
  - ( 46% of city meets this LOS )
- Lower LOS – 1000m / 15 minute walk

## Comparable municipalities

- Waterloo: 500-800m
- Kitchener: 500m
- Burlington: 800m
- Oakville: 800m





## LOS example – Parkland per person

- Current LOS – 9.25 sq.m / person  
*(1 ha or a soccer field/1000 residents)*
- Higher LOS – 15 sq.m / person  
*(1.5 ha / 1000 residents)*
- Premium LOS – 20 sq.m/person  
*(2 ha / 1000 residents)*
- Lower LOS (Bill 23) – 5 sq.m/person  
*(0.5 ha or City Hall parking lot / 1000 residents)*

# LOS example – Parkland per person (continued) considerations and challenges

## Comparable municipalities

Difficult to compare as municipalities mix their “natural” and “developed” parklands together...Cambridge is comparable to Waterloo (34 sq.m/person) and Kitchener (32 sq.m/person) with ~30-34 sq.m/person but this is still being updated through mapping and will likely increase to ~40 sq.m with additional natural areas being recognized in the inventory

- Kitchener – new target 15 sq.m of “developed” parkland / person (not including “natural” areas)

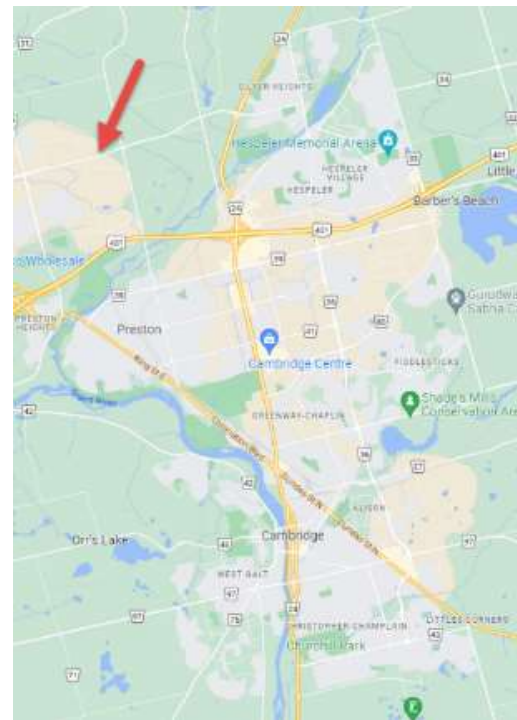
## Challenges – Bill 23:

1. cut in half the amount of land and cash-in-lieu parkland dedication at a time when we are looking for a 50% increase in parks (~64 ha of “developed” parks) to accommodate the 50% increase in population (~68,000) forecasted
2. Developer has final decision on location of park (and therefore shape, quality, developability)
3. Parkland dedication reserve fund must be spent annually making it difficult (impossible?) to save funds for acquisitions



# LOS example – off-leash parks

- Current LOS – 20 minute drive, 1 park, 1.3 ha property (0.6 ha fenced area), industrial area with parking
- Higher LOS – 10 minute drive 3-5 parks, Industrial/Commercial areas around the city with parking
- Premium LOS – 10 minute walking distance, 30-40 parks in residential areas (consuming at 30-50% existing parkland without parking )





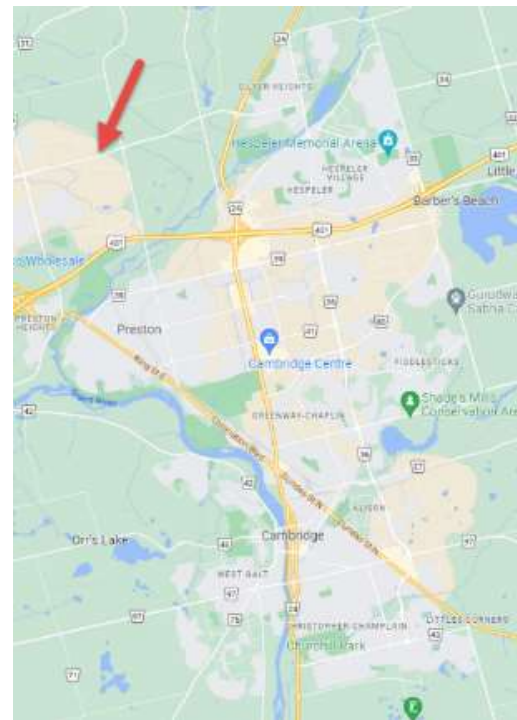
# LOS example – off-leash parks (continued)

## Considerations :

- Conflicts with non-dog residents (noise)
- Takes a similar land area than a neighbourhood park as well as parking and washroom facilities
- Typically not suitable within existing neighbourhood parks
- Land Acquisitions are required to support higher LOS or remove existing amenities to support

## Comparable municipalities

- Waterloo: 1 off leash park, 20 minute drive
- Kitchener: 4 off leash parks, 15 minute drive



# LOS illustration... examples where service levels are decreased or savings are realized

The consultations to date call for more and differing amenities (i.e. higher Level of Service options) for every category of service from benches to sports fields

However, examples of Levels of Service options that offer “savings” may include:

- Longer walking distances to neighbourhood parks, e.g. 800m/10 minutes as the standard instead of 400m/5 minutes
- Smaller minimum sizes of neighbourhood parks from 2 ha to 1ha or below
- Naturalizing additional developed areas of parks / decreasing mowing
- Standard 3m asphalt paths reduced to 2m
- 5 sq.m. per person of developed parkland instead of 9.25 sq.m
- Public tennis courts closed in favour of central tennis courts managed by the clubs and open to the public



# Financing and sponsorship options to explore ...

- Existing bench and tree dedication programs
- Examine the pros and cons of fundraising by local residents and groups for additional amenities (e.g. a specific playground equipment, stone table tennis, etc.) beyond the capital budgets and approved park concepts
- Explore potential new partnerships (e.g. Jumpstart, Tennis Canada)
- Utilize development charges for Outdoor Recreation Facilities
- City Sponsorship Policy
- Challenges of spending parkland dedication reserve funds each year when long-term saving is required to purchase properties
- High growth area / intensification and directing appropriate redevelopment funds



# Accessibility in the parks...

- Facilities Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) and a focus on park amenities
- Accessibility for all, universal design principles, accessible pathways to amenities...
- The evolution of “circuit pathways” in parks
- The need to do an “accessibility audit” of every city park
- Current consultation with Accessibility Advisory Committee on parks – what is working well, what could use improvement?
- Playground surfaces
- Develop Levels of Service on accessibility







## Next Steps for Levels of Service....

- Develop 30-40 levels of service and as much supporting information as possible to inform the public and Council's considerations of the options
- Consult through Survey #2 and Public Meeting
- Bring to Council late Autumn 2023 for a decision

03

# Next Steps and Discussion Questions

Chris Ziemski – City of Cambridge





# Next Steps

- Finish Phase 1 consultations (i.e. Advisory Committee, Home Builders', Neighbourhood Associations)
- Survey #2 and Public Meeting #2 on Levels of Service and Council decision
- Draft Parks Master Plan and Public Meeting #3
- Council decision on Parks Master Plan







## Council Workshop Discussion

- What are your thoughts about parks? What is being done well and what could use improvement?
- What are the largest issues the Parks Master Plan should address?
- What are you hearing from your constituents?
- What “Levels of Service” would be most important for improvement to bring to Council this fall?
- Are there any service levels that could be reduced to offset service level improvements?





**Thank  
you!**

