



Attachment 1

# INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

## **Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development Audit**

March 2024

## INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

### PARKS INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT AUDIT

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#### CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The City of Vaughan embraces sustainable growth that balances the need to expand with opportunities to enrich lives through arts and culture, parks and trails, recreation and dedication to fiscal responsibility. Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development has made significant strides to help achieve these objectives including: the development of new parks and facilities, upgrades to existing assets and the initiation of strategic initiatives. However, improvements are required to ensure risks related to Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development activities are efficiently and effectively mitigated. These improvements can be classified into 5 broader risk and control themes. They include:

- **Updating the content of City policies, procedures and guidelines while providing more clarity on roles, responsibilities, and expectations of stakeholders.**
  - Develop a Strategic Resource Plan
  - Enhance and Update Policies and Procedures
- **Developing processes to periodically evaluate direction, strategy, programs and service delivery to ensure efficient and effective deployment of resources to achieve the City's Term of Council Priorities and Strategic objectives.**
  - Provide Guidance on the Strata Parks and Privately Owned Public Accessible Spaces (POPS)
  - Address the remaining recommendations from the Active Together Master Plan Review and Update (ATMP)
  - Undertake a Parkland Observation Project
- **Improving budgeting and forecasting processes to better align Council directives and corporate strategy with resource allocation.**
  - Determine the Impact of Bill 23 on Municipal Finances
  - Update Park Asset Condition Assessments and Forecast for the Capital Asset Backlog and Requirements to Maintain a State of Good Repair (SOGR)
- **Improving project management, contract administration and management oversight.**
  - Improve General Design Standards and Procurement Strategy
  - Review Contractual Holdback Requirements
- **Leveraging advances in technology to improve business processes.**
  - Develop a Communication Plan Supported by Updated Technology

The Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development department has undergone a significant amount of turnover in the past few years, with most of the staff starting in their current roles in the last two years, primarily due to market conditions and staff that are in high demand. The City has been able to attract experienced staff to ensure that Department objectives are being met.

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Nevertheless, opportunities exist to streamline roles and responsibilities and business processes to ensure optimal efficiency and effectiveness.

The Department has developed several policies and procedures; however, they are not comprehensive and, in some cases, outdated. We recommend that management continue to draft and update key policies, procedures, and guideline documents that outline roles, responsibility and accountability to promote consistency, quality, and standardizes workflows in business activities.

Strata parks and POPS are part of an evolving reality in the provision of public space in rapidly urbanizing environments. As it currently stands, staff do not have clear guidance to work with a variety of these types of ownership structures. Vaughan is in the midst of a dramatic increase in population through intensification. It is important to implement comprehensive policies, design guidelines and by-laws to provide ongoing guidance regarding the development and maintenance of these spaces.

The 2018 ATMP did not fully consider an approach when assessing provision levels in areas of intensification and recommendations tend to be “suburban in nature”. The City is currently in the process of updating the ATMP and it should fully consider the intensification areas that are a significant source of growth in the City.

Municipalities are under significant pressure to get things done efficiently and effectively, while trying to serve a wide range of citizens, often with conflicting needs and interests. Having meaningful metrics that measure progress towards specific goals and objectives can ensure strategies are reaching those who they need to reach, and that actions are having their intended effect. Parkland observation data would help in prioritizing opportunities for unscheduled and casual use of park amenities. Learning more about usage patterns and their fluctuations could be highly valuable to park planners and management.

Bill 23 is part of a suite of legislative initiatives advanced by the Province to support the goal of increasing the housing supply across Ontario. Despite that, the changes will impact the ability of municipalities to finance capital works required to facilitate housing development through development charges and other means. It may also limit parkland dedication which will require a new way of doing business (i.e. parkland acquisition strategy and dedicated funding source, smaller park expectations, use of other facilities to meet resident needs, etc.). The Greenspace Strategic Plan currently underway will help the City explore this further. Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development should clearly model the implications and opportunity cost of this significantly reduced level of funding.

The City's capital program is driven largely by the cost of maintaining physical assets in a state of good repair. Managing the accumulated Park SOGR backlog is a key capital strategic objective and priority to ensure that current assets are able to support the delivery of City services and meet established service levels. Developing capital investment strategies to help address the continued pressure from the accumulated backlog helps ensure that capital projects are coordinated cross functionally.

Opportunities exist to look at longer term Vendor of Record agreements with contractors and other vendors that bid on work covering multiple periods and multiple projects. This will help with

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standardization and eliminate the need to go to market for each individual project. Additionally, the non-statutory contract holdback percentage should be commensurate with the level of risk associated with a particular capital project. Having clear, risk based, non-statutory holdbacks on contracts serves as an incentive to contractors to complete their obligations and reduces the risk of additional cost, increased administration and the potential litigation.

The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system was identified in the Service Vaughan Strategy and Implementation Plan and the Digital Strategy. The benefit of such a system is that it replaces obsolete technology in Public Works, but notably for Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development, it would provide staff with better tools to track, manage, follow up and report on communication inquiries.

Through these findings and recommendations for improvement, the report supports the strategic goals of Active, Engaged and Inclusive Communities, Community Safety and Well-being, and Service Excellence and Accountability, by identifying processes and procedures to improve the application of Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development service levels so that citizens can continue to receive a cost effective and consistent level of service. The Strategic Goal of Economic Prosperity is also reinforced through identified improvements to Parks Asset Management processes and procedures, understanding the implications of Bill 23 and further enhancing procurement and contract management practices.

This audit was conducted in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*.

Internal Audit will follow up on the status of outstanding management action plans related to this audit and will report the status at a future Audit Committee meeting.

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#### **BACKGROUND**

Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development is a service-oriented department dedicated to the planning, design and construction of innovative, sustainable and accessible parks and open spaces. The Department contributes to sound planning, design and construction administration of all municipal parks, playgrounds, and open space systems throughout the City of Vaughan.

The Department provides input on planning studies to ensure growth and new development areas reflect the recommendations found in the Active Together Master Plan (ATMP). The Department is also responsible for the review of Zoning Applications, Site Plans, Development Applications, and Subdivision Agreements as they relate to parks and open spaces.

Some of the typical park facilities that have been designed and implemented in the park systems include playgrounds and waterplay areas, soccer and baseball fields, tennis, basketball and bocce courts, shade structures and park furnishings. On an ongoing basis the Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development Division is directly involved with the capital repair and replacement works of existing sports facilities and playground systems.

There have been a number of legislative changes that will have a significant impact on parkland planning and development at the City. A central focus of the Provincial Government's second term has been defined by the pursuit of more affordable homes in Ontario and how to build them as fast as possible. To do this, the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 (Bill 23), was passed by the Ontario Legislature and received Royal Assent on November 28, 2022. As part of the Ontario government's plan to build 1.5 million new homes by 2032, this Bill aims to remove construction barriers in addition to other prosperity projects. Since its assent, the Bill has made fundamental changes to Ontario's land use planning system by revising the Development Charges Act (DCA), Planning Act, and Municipal Act, among others. To achieve Bill 23's goals, the Province assigned 2031 housing targets to the largest and fastest growing municipalities in the GTA, including 42,000 units for the City of Vaughan.

Bill 23 will have a substantial impact on municipal financial sustainability, with the most significant changes occurring to the DCA. The DCA (Development Charges Act) enables municipalities to enact by-laws that impose development charges (DC) against land developers in order to pay for infrastructure required to provide municipal services to the new development. Bill 23 reduces development charge funding necessary to pay for the infrastructure. The DCA will provide a discount for purpose-built rental and attainable units, with an even higher discount for larger units, in addition to the existing DC freeze and deferral of payments over five years.

Bill 23 made important amendments to the Planning Act affecting parkland dedications, including:

- Caps the amount developers are required to pay for new parkland.
- Setting a maximum parkland dedication cap of 10% for sites less than 5 hectares in area, and 15% for larger sites.
- Reducing the maximum parkland dedication rates in half for land and cash-in-lieu.
- Allowing the possibility of encumbered lands and privately-owned parks to be counted for parkland credit.
- Requiring 60% of DC and Parkland funds to be spent or allocated to be spent on an annual basis.
- Developer defined Parkland.

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Bill 23 makes fundamental changes to the land use planning system in Ontario. Multiple municipalities have expressed concerns with the implementation of this legislation. It will cause municipalities to go back to the drawing board with respect to the calculation of development charges, as well as parkland by-laws.

#### **OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE**

The objective of the audit was to evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal controls, processes and procedures in place related to Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development, and that they are adequately designed and operating as intended to mitigate business risks.

The audit scope included assessing that:

- Policies and procedures exist, are regularly reviewed, updated and applied consistently.
- Effective business processes have been established to support the delivery of projects.
- Service levels have been developed, reviewed, approved and updated appropriately.
- A framework is in place for asset management including related directives, standards and guidelines.
- Roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined.
- Interactions between internal and external customers and key City departments occur and required information is exchanged in a timely manner to support management in the life cycle management, planning and development decision making process.

The scope of the audit covered Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development activities for the period of January 2022 to September 2023. Where necessary, transactions and events pertaining to other periods may have been reviewed.

This audit was conducted in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*.

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#### DETAILED REPORT

##### **1. Develop a Strategic Resource Plan**

The Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development department has undergone a significant amount of turnover in the past few years, with most of the staff starting in their current roles in the last two years. The City has been able to attract experienced staff to ensure that Department objectives are being met. However, opportunities exist to streamline roles and responsibilities and business processes to ensure optimal efficiency and effectiveness. For example, Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development are expected to complete Park development inspections. All prerequisite inspections must be passed before proceeding to the next phase of the work. However, the Department does not have the resources or even the defined mandate to execute this function in an effective manner.

The 2018 ATMP made a number of recommendations for improvements where accountability for some actions at the City has not been clearly defined, for example:

*Recommendation # 17: "Establish policies and location criteria for the provision of park and trail lighting (excluding sports fields) and washrooms in District and Regional Parks."*

*Recommendation #23: "Promote appropriate community and public-private partnerships in the municipal parks system in order to leverage additional resources, expedite development, improve accessibility, and enhance maintenance and programming."*

The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) is one of a growing number of intensification centers in Vaughan. To encourage agile response to operational needs, the VMC has established many parallel functions to other City departments within their operation. However, this approach necessitates a significant amount of coordination between various City departments and the VMC to ensure consistency in level of service and prevent duplication. For example, the VMC has a parallel Urban Design and an Infrastructure Planning and Engineering function. Decisions that they make impact City policy and practice as a whole. There have been cases where Developers have been apprised of a City policy decision when dealing with the VMC and then informed of a different policy decision when dealing with other City departments. Interaction with internal and external stakeholders can be negatively impacted if these interactions are not consistent or effectively coordinated with other City departments.

Further, decision making on parkland dedication, Cash-in-Lieu collection and DC expenditure is dispersed among five different groups within the City: Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development, Urban Design, Real Estate, Development Finance and the VMC. This results in roles and responsibilities and business processes that are not streamlined for effective and consistent application.

City staff have also expressed concerns regarding current practices and processes for parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu collection, such as how the City can better use cash-in-lieu and land dedication in new growth areas, what new park typologies the City needs in order to provide recreational facilities in new growth areas and how the City can secure an appropriate amount of land for the future recreational needs of its citizens. These and the impacts of Bill 23 on future parks planning and development should be modeled.

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When roles are vague, there is room for misunderstanding, duplication of work and confusion which can lead to decreased output. Moreover, a lack of clearly defined job responsibilities can lead to friction between individuals, departments and external stakeholders.

#### **Recommendations**

We recommend that management:

- Develop a strategy to better coordinate practice in intensification areas to help ensure that policies and procedures are consistently applied. Alternatively, as intensification areas increasingly become part of normal operations at the City, consideration should be given to the consolidation of functions within established City departments. For example, considering a “one window review” of parkland acquisition, dedication and provision, credit review, Cash-in-Lieu collection, and expenditure<sup>1</sup>.
- Develop a strategic resource plan to facilitate estimation of future resourcing needs and where they best fit within the organization.

#### **Management Action Plan**

Management agrees with the recommendations.

- Staff will undertake a city-wide resource review of parkland functions, roles, and responsibilities, gap analysis, opportunities and constraints, RACI analysis, etc. and develop recommendations to streamline functions and areas of responsibility (Q4 2024).
- Staff will conduct a review to develop a strategic resourcing plan for Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development (Q4 2025).

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<sup>1</sup> The “One window Review” process that has been adopted by the Ontario Provincial Government; a similar approach to consolidate services and decision making would benefit the City. [https://www.sdgcounties.ca/sites/default/files/2021-01/citizens\\_guide\\_to\\_plan\\_review.pdf](https://www.sdgcounties.ca/sites/default/files/2021-01/citizens_guide_to_plan_review.pdf)



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#### **2. Determine the Impact of Bill 23 on Municipal Finances**

Developers are required to invest in public services in the communities where they build. The municipal tools to secure these investments are: Development Charges, Parkland Dedication Fees, and Community Benefit Charges. These investments flow to municipalities and are used to pay for essential services like parks. Bill 23 will significantly reduce park budgets and the amount of parkland created to support new growth, which will likely hurt access to quality parks and nature in many municipalities across Ontario, including Vaughan.

Municipal staff are still in the process of understanding the full extent and impacts of the sweeping changes that have been introduced through Bill 23, not to mention the various other related legislative, policy and regulatory changes that are still under consideration by the Province (e.g., natural heritage planning, natural hazard regulations etc.). That said, as a starting point, City staff have prepared the preliminary assessment of resource implications of the enacted and proposed changes for Council's consideration. Based on information currently available, management has estimated a cumulative total tax impact to the City ranging from \$110.3 million to \$133.8 million. Specifically, for Community Services<sup>2</sup>, the annual net impact of Bill 23 is estimated to be \$29.3M over a 10-year period.

The most financially impactful change resulting from the revisions to the DCA is the DC rate phase-in. With this change, full recovery of DCs is not achieved until year five<sup>3</sup>. This would impact the City's ability to fund the necessary growth-related infrastructure to support new development and maintain the timing of projects as identified in the long-term capital plan. To-date, the City has received no formal guarantees from either level of government that they will be made financially whole.

There were several changes made to the Planning Act, which was initiated with Bill 108, the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019, which received Royal Assent on June 6, 2019. Originally proposed to consolidate development charges for community soft services, parkland dedication and Section 37<sup>4</sup> Height and Density bonusing provisions into a single, consolidated Community Benefit Charge ("CBC"), based on a capped percentage of the land value for development sites (4%). As of February 2020, the provincial government proposed that development charges could also pay for the capital costs of certain community services such as public libraries, parks development (other than acquiring land for parks) and recreational facilities. As needed, a number of City departments used Section 37 (Community Benefit Funding) funding to upgrade existing City assets. Parks improvements are now no longer eligible for the Community Benefit Charge benefit under the City by-law<sup>5</sup>, since they had been consolidated into the revised cash-in-lieu amounts paid by developers. However, this cash-in-lieu provisions has been subsequently impacted by Bill 23. It should be noted that Community Benefit funds that were earmarked for Parks between 2016 to 2023 is estimated to be \$10 million.

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<sup>2</sup> Includes Parks and Recreation

<sup>3</sup> A mandatory phase-in of a development charge would be required for by-laws passed on or after June 1, 2022. The phase-in would start in year 1 with 80% of the charge required to be paid and ending in year 5 with 100% of the charge required to be paid (i.e. 80% in year 1, 85% in year 2, 90% in year 3, 95% in year 4 and 100% in year 5 and beyond).

<sup>4</sup> Section 37 Community Benefits Charge: Section 37 of the Planning Act authorizes the City to adopt a community benefits charge (CBC) by-law and collect CBCs to pay for the capital costs of facilities, services and matters that are required to serve development and redevelopment. CBCs are collected on developments and redevelopments that are at least five stories in height and that add at least ten residential units. Developments that do not meet the above criteria are not subject to CBCs.

<sup>5</sup> By-law 201-2022

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Bill 23 is part of a suite of legislative initiatives advanced by the Province to support the goal of increasing the housing supply across Ontario. Despite that, the changes will impact the ability of municipalities to finance capital works required to facilitate housing development through development charges and other means. Accordingly, it is likely that a greater proportion of the costs of new development will be required to be financed by the local existing tax base.

#### **Recommendations**

We recommend that management:

- Continue to monitor Bill 23 and related legislation with consideration to its impacts on the City's parkland planning and development and report further as more information becomes available.
- As part of the budgeting process, Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development should clearly model the implications and opportunity cost of this significantly reduced level of funding. These changes place the City in a position where other funding sources would need to be identified in order to cover any shortfall (i.e., property tax, water / sewer rates). Alternatively, the City may want to consider changing the services levels when it comes to Parkland (or a combination of both service level changes and taxation).
- Consider a review of the Community Benefit Charge by-law 201-2022 to including parks improvement funding allocations from the reserve.

#### **Management Action Plan**

Management agrees with the recommendations.

- Staff will continue working with Development Finance to update monitoring of the financial impacts and estimated funding gaps as a result of Bill 23 and report findings for consideration in the 2025 Budget process (Q4 2024).
- Building upon the parkland financial models completed in 2022 through completion of the Parkland Dedication Guideline Study and the outcomes associated with the GSP, staff will develop a revised data dashboard to support regular monitoring and risk management of parkland provision levels and associated financial considerations (Q2 2025).
- Parks Infrastructure staff will initiate a review of the by-law 201-2022 to consider the provision to reinstate parks improvement allocations (Q2 2025).

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#### **3. Provide Guidance on the Strata Parks and Privately Owned Public Accessible Spaces**

By-law 168-2022 Section 3 allows for Privately Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces (POPS<sup>6</sup>) 100% credit towards satisfying the parkland dedication requirements. Prior to Bill 23 and By-law 168-2022, POPS were not subject to Parkland Credits. Typically, transactions with Parkland Credits would be the responsibility of Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development. Now that POPS are eligible for Parkland Credits, it is unclear if Urban Design or Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development are responsible to manage these files.

Strata parks<sup>7</sup> and POPS are part of an evolving reality in the provision of public space in rapidly urbanizing environments. Strata Parks and POPS are site and scenario specific, only to be considered appropriate when land for parks is needed and, where available land is scarce or unaffordable for municipalities to purchase. As it currently stands, staff do not have the guidance to work with a variety of ownership structures e.g., condominium vs commercial strata arrangements. This includes developing policies to ensure condominium boards have the necessary financial reserves to address associated costs of strata parks. The January 2022, the Parkland Dedication Guideline highlighted this issue as follows:

*“Strata parks require sound legal agreements that delineate ownership between the vertical parcels of land. These agreements need to balance the risks of City ownership of the park above private infrastructure and recognize that the park will require public investment to maintain...”*

Many cities have developed Privately Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces for several decades. Over time, the policies have been subject to amendments revising the calculations as well establishing further requirements from developers (ex: New York has standards on minimum levels of amenities such as seating, planting and lighting; Sapporo, Japan, POPS must be accessible in the winter). In Toronto<sup>8</sup>, there has been criticism of the quality of spaces. These concerns have arrived as some owners of POPS have allowed their spaces to fall into disrepair or have walled off portions of the space and restricted access. It became a significant issue as residents and Council complained that many of the spaces were being replaced or removed.

Vaughan is in the midst of a dramatic increase in population through intensification. This has resulted in rapidly rising land prices as well as a lack of vacant land supply. It has motivated the City to look to other means to create accessible space. However, it is important to implement comprehensive policies, design guidelines and by-laws to provide ongoing guidance, consistency, efficiency, and clarity regarding the development and maintenance of these spaces.

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<sup>6</sup> POPS are not owned by the City. They are parkland elements that remain in private ownership, nonetheless, may form an important component of the overall parkland system. The City may consider counting POPS toward the parkland dedication requirement only where they are secured through appropriate legal agreements that guarantee that the park space is designed, built, and maintained to City standards, and that it is always open and accessible to the public (or otherwise to the satisfaction of the City).

<sup>7</sup> A Strata Park is a public park developed above infrastructure, typically subways, parking garages, or storm water management facilities (public or private). The park space is deeded to the municipality by the property developer and is publicly owned (and typically publicly operated), whereas the underlying infrastructure may be maintained within private ownership.

<sup>8</sup> <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/160283159.pdf>

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#### **Recommendations**

We recommend that management:

- Model the impact of Bill 23 on future parks planning and development, incorporating its impact on levels of service in areas of intensification. Also clearly defining what developer land is acceptable for parkland use and defining various property rights (i.e., surface rights) for the City and updating by-law 168-2022.
- Review policy gaps and develop policies, guidelines, and standards to address off-site dedication, parkland credit transfers, strata parks and POPS (together with legal agreement templates).
- Develop policies to ensure condominium boards have the necessary financial reserves to address associated costs of strata conditions and collect and build appropriate reserves to mitigate against future failures and routine preventative maintenance costs.
- Develop educational modules to inform staff of legislative requirements, policies and processes when reviewing agreements, conditions and processes when accepting parklands.

#### **Management Action Plan**

Management agrees with the recommendations.

- Staff will identify all existing parkland related policies requiring updates and new policies to be considered, including:
  - a. Review policy gaps and develop policies, guidelines, and standards to address off-site dedication, parkland credit administration, strata parks and POPS.
  - b. Policies to ensure condominium boards have the necessary financial reserves to address associated operational and maintenance costs of strata and POPS conditions and collect and build appropriate reserves to mitigate against future failures and routine preventative maintenance costs.

Complete the assessment, policy updates and development of new policies in coordination with the findings of the Greenspace Strategic Plan (Q4 2025).

- Staff will complete the development of a Parks Planning and Development Guidebook for staff use that includes background information, educational modules, relevant legislation, policies, and processes (Q4 2024).

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#### **4. Update Park Asset Condition Assessments and Forecast for the Capital Asset Backlog and Requirements to Maintain a State of Good Repair (SOGR)**

Asset Management Plans are required for each municipality, as outlined in Ontario Regulation 588/17<sup>9</sup>. However, under Ontario Regulation (O. Reg) 588/17, parks assets are not considered to be core assets (i.e., like wastewater and stormwater systems) and it specifies measures for core assets only.

The 2024 Vaughan Asset Management Plan – Non-Core Assets Parks<sup>10</sup> shows that the City owned parks assets are valued at approximately \$243M, with sports fields and parks amenities comprising approximately 36% and 35% of the total replacement value, respectively<sup>11</sup>. The Asset Management Plan states that continuous improvement is an important component of any asset management program and is achieved through the implementation of improvement initiatives which support sustainable service delivery.

All assets are expected to deteriorate over their lifetime, and their assigned condition reflects the physical state of the asset. The physical life of an asset is not the same as its estimated service life. The service life of an asset is how long it will be useful; its physical life is how long it will be functioning. The City categorizes the condition of assets based on four classifications: Very Good, Good, Fair and Poor.

In 2016, a condition assessment was done on fixed assets, including park assets. That assessment determined that 33-35% of the assets were in poor condition<sup>12</sup>. However, our discussion with Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development indicated that on-site condition assessments were being done infrequently (on a 5-year cycle<sup>13</sup>) and in some cases they found that the assets did not always reflect the condition indicated in the asset management file<sup>14</sup>.

Additionally, the asset ranking looks at each asset element verses a more holistic approach (i.e. Asset Class). This is evident in playground replacements where components are ranked separately verses a complete assessment of the whole playground (for example replacing playground equipment one year, then having to move that equipment again to replace the playground surface material the following year). Further, the current ranking of assets does not indicate a level of criticality in the review of infrastructure. Hence the actions are not based on a risk assessment and become one of immediate, reactive, rapid response. This shifts other priorities and workload to address what may be less critical and unplanned issues and results in unplanned scope changes within projects.

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<sup>9</sup> A regulation made under the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2015, stating that every municipality shall prepare and update a Strategic AM Policy, and that every municipality shall prepare an AM Plan for its core infrastructure assets by July 1, 2022, and an AM Plan for all other infrastructure assets by July 1, 2024. The regulation outlines several requirements that each AM Plan must follow, such as including current and proposed level of service. Core municipal infrastructure assets include water, wastewater, stormwater, road, and bridge assets.

<sup>10</sup> Aecom - <https://aecom.com/>

<sup>11</sup> Note that the real estate value of parklands is not included in this AMP. Furthermore, park related washrooms, storage bunkers, and club buildings are under the Facility AMP. In addition, bridges and trees are captured under the Transportation AMP, and Urban Forestry AMP, respectively.

<sup>12</sup> This was based on some level of actual physical asset verification and estimated service life of the assets.

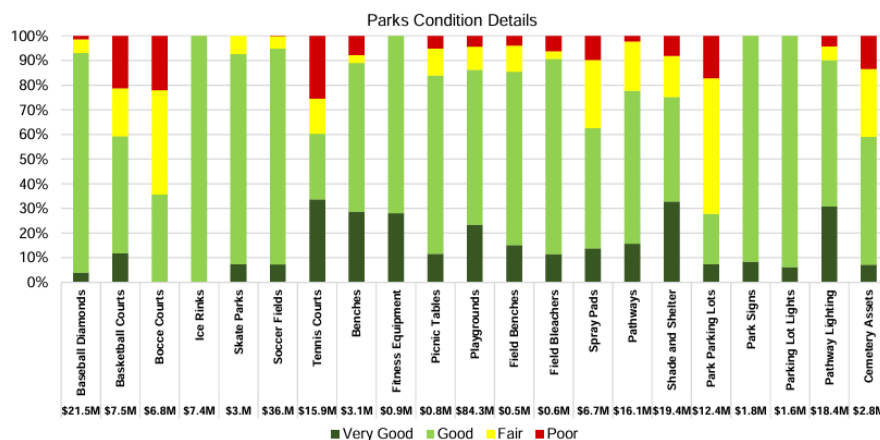
<sup>13</sup> Note: From a health and safety perspective Parks operations inspect playground equipment regularly.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that Parks Operations performs inspections of equipment to confirm if it has been damaged or is unsafe. If it is in dire need of repair or replacement action is taken by the City to remedy the situation to ensure the safety of residence.

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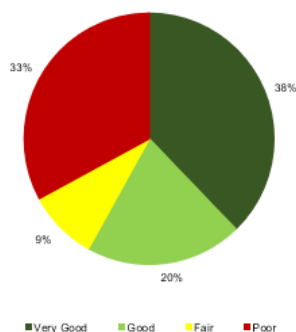
Asset Management has acknowledged that the City needs a more accurate picture of the condition of park assets and the repair/replacement backlog. Historically, condition assessments were based on the estimated useful life of the asset and some level of physical verification. In 2023 Asset Management took steps to evaluate and record the actual condition of the Park assets based on onsite inspection. The updated 2024 Vaughan Asset Management Plan – Non-Core Assets Parks indicates that in fact, 6% of the assets are in poor condition and 13% are in fair condition.



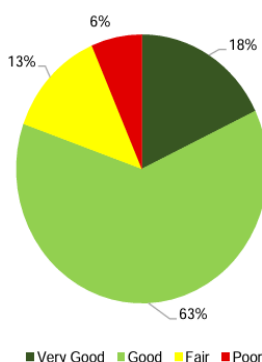
This is a significant variation from the previous asset condition estimates that were principally based on estimated service life:

#### Condition Summary

Parks Condition Summary



Parks Condition Summary



*Previous Condition Summary from 2023 Asset Management dashboard vs 2024 Vaughan Asset Management Plan – Non-Core Assets – Condition Summary*

This variance in estimates illustrates the benefit of physical inspection of the assets. A systematic method for regular condition assessment (inspections) is crucial in determining the actual levels of deterioration in the life of an asset. The assessment should consider the current condition of the asset with reference to their original condition, identify deterioration



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mechanisms, assess and rate the risk of failure and make appropriate recommendations regarding the prioritization of any interventions.

The City's capital program is driven largely by the cost of maintaining these physical assets in a state of good repair. Managing the accumulated SOGR backlog is a key capital strategic objective and priority in order to ensure that current assets are able to support the delivery of City services and meet established service levels.

The 20-year forecasted needed to address the Park backlog of asset replacement or repairs has been estimated by Asset Management to be approximately \$15.7 million a year over the next 20 years<sup>15</sup> (or a total of approximately \$314M over the 20-year period). However, the past 6-year average investment that has been budgeted is \$5.7 million (approximately one-third of what is estimated to be needed going forward<sup>16</sup>).

The average annual reinvestment rate for the City's parks assets is \$15.7M over the next 20 years in inflated dollar values. This is equivalent to a total of approximately \$314M over the next 20-year period, as presented in [Figure 5-1](#).

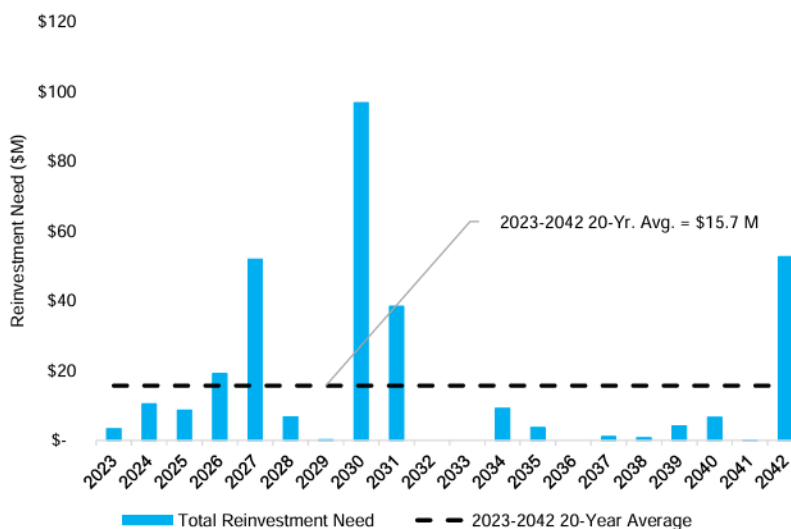


Figure 5-1: Parks Assets 20-Year Reinvestment Need

There are backlogs for reinvestment on the parks assets that has already exceeded their estimated service life. Factors contributing to the increase in accumulated SOGR backlog includes:

- The City, along with other cities globally, is experiencing a high inflationary environment. The inflationary pressure is causing a series of cost escalations across City's projects, such as increasing in costs of labour and materials.
- The City is continuing to receive updated asset values and condition assessments from asset inspections that more precisely account for SOGR needs.

<sup>15</sup> Asset Management Plan Non-Core Assets Parks City of Vaughan January 2024 (v.1.0)

<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that the budgeted \$5.7 Million is estimated based on funds in projects and not on dollars spent on specific asset classes. Further, these are funds that are budgeted and not necessarily spent.

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- As the City continues to mature its asset management best practices and better information is received about the condition of the infrastructure, SOGR needs are expected to continue to be refined and possibly rise.

In theory, all the assets in poor condition should be immediately repaired or replaced. However considering actual available resources, during the budgeting period, Asset Management and Parks, Forestry & Horticulture Operations staff identify asset lifecycle replacement needs and the PMO office creates a work bundle for assets to be repaired or replaced. Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development has produced monthly Project Delivery reports that outline the status of various capital projects. However, they often receive requests outside of their control (both internal and external), which sometimes result in a disruption to the planned workload.

Additionally, at times it is difficult to coordinate priorities and resources with different groups. Operational departments should be involved in developing standards regarding what it takes to maintain these parks after they are developed. However, it is not clear if any such standards are currently in place.

Further, it is not always clear to Parks management as to who determines what needs to be replaced or repaired, who determines how it gets into the capital cycle and how it is communicated. Depending on which Department undertakes parkland improvements, such as walkway replacements, the identification and documentation of these new asset changes may not be disclosed between portfolios. Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development has encountered cases where work was being done in a Park by another City department without them being aware of the work or that there was even an available budget for that work.

Asset management allows the City to maximize the value of assets throughout the different stages of the asset lifecycle. It helps reduce redundant or unused assets, properly maintain and repair assets, and purchase new assets as needed to help improve service levels. As City programs continue to mature its asset management best practices, SOGR backlog funding pressures tend to become clearer as information is received about the condition of City assets.

#### **Recommendations**

We recommend that management:

- Complete and report on the assessment of park assets condition based on physical inspection and ensure this is done on a cyclical, systematic basis.
- Develop a budget book by Asset Class or fixed asset ledger to help precisely tie projects to specific fixed asset portfolios associated with the work being undertaken.
- Implement the next stage of asset management planning in the Non-core Asset Management Plan 2022 including:
  - Improving data analysis and data collection methods.



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- Updating and standardizing both Parks and Facilities Management asset condition and performance assessment data based on criticality of the asset and actual physical condition not just estimated service life.
  - Continuing the shift from reactive to preventative maintenance when planning programs.
  - Fully integrating asset information into Asset Management system to better understand the lifecycle costing of park assets.
  - Updating and defining appropriate levels of service.
  - Developing methods to measure performance of park service levels.
  - Reviewing and improve maintenance strategies, specifications, and standards.
- Developing capital investment strategies to help address the continued pressure from the accumulated SOGR backlog ensure that capital projects are coordinated cross functionally including the feasibility of potentially adding an infrastructure levy to the tax bill.

#### **Management Action Plan**

Management agrees with the recommendations.

- Staff will collaborate with Corporate Asset Management, Parks, Forestry & Horticulture Operations, and the Program Management Office to further refine the Parks Asset condition assessment process, project pre-planning and budget submission process, and to develop a long-term State of Good Repair parks asset plan (Q4 2025).
- Staff will implement the next stage of asset management planning in the Non-core Asset Management Plan including working with Asset Management to develop a budget book by Asset Class to help tie projects to specific fixed asset portfolios associated with the work being undertaken (Q4 2025).
- To help address the need for State of Good Repair capital delivery, an Additional Resource Request to hire an additional full-time capital delivery Project Manager was submitted for consideration to the 2024 Budget process and subsequently approved by Council. Recruitment for this position is currently underway. Further consideration of staff resource needs required to effectively delivery State of Good Repair capital projects for park assets will form a key aspect of the Strategic Resourcing Plan discussed in Section 1 of this report.

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#### **5. Undertake a Parkland Observation Project**

Developing KPI measures in local government is an essential part of strategic plan implementation, effective service delivery, the successful roll-out of new initiatives, and ensuring the core functions are running effectively and efficiently. Accordingly, many municipal departments have a clear method of measuring the services they provide. For example, Recreational Services uses Foot Traffic Counters<sup>17</sup> at the City recreation centers and benefits from the usage information they provide. However, this becomes more difficult when considering measures for parkland utilization.

Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development principally uses anecdotal evidence, ad hoc reviews, and focused studies to determine park needs and facilities. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) or comprehensive analytical tools systems are used at a rudimentary level to develop the optimal analytical methods to review needs. Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development has tried to develop KPI's, but this is only in the preliminary stages and that adequate analytical tools are not available.

Recommendation number 25 from the 2018 ATMP states the following:

*“Implement the 2018 Parks Redevelopment Strategy, including recommendations to animate parks through programming and events, undertake a park observation project for casual use amenities, repurpose aging and under-utilized facilities, and enhance high priority parks including sites in proximity to intensification areas.”*

This recommendation is still outstanding. As the ATMP suggests, observation would help in prioritizing opportunities for unscheduled and casual use of park amenities, but it may also have many more benefits. It provides accountability by showing the residents and elected officials the return they are receiving on their investments through tax dollars. Additionally, learning more about usage patterns and their fluctuations could be highly valuable to park planners and management.

The City is dedicated to creating city building processes and systems that intentionally create and hold space for empowerment and equitable access. Equity is a global challenge that bears responsibility at all levels of government and in our community. The list of potential equity analysis factors is long and could include data sets such as demographic patterns, vulnerability indicators, crime frequency, survey results, operational spending, past capital investment by location, and other factors that could influence access to parks and recreation.

Bill 23 has imposed a cap of 10% and 15% of development for lands that are 5 hectares or less or 5 hectares or more respectively. This effectively reduced the ability to secure meaningful parklands within areas of intensification and medium/low density significantly. Initial estimates indicated parkland securement is reduced by 60% and CIL collection redacted by 70-90%. The increased value of land in Vaughan, intensification and Bill 23 makes finding land for new parks an even larger barrier to equitable access, particularly in areas without

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<sup>17</sup> Foot traffic is a measurement of people who physically walk in and move around in a specific location such as a recreation center. Sometimes, foot traffic is called pedestrian activity and is most often used to measure the performance of an operational location. Foot traffic counters are a passive means of gathering information and allowing organizations to analyze it to determine the busiest areas and the busiest times to better understand public engagement.

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many existing parks. To address this significant challenge, reimagining public spaces can help provide places that meet community needs.

Park studies like the ATMP typically recommend that local level parks should ideally be located within a five to ten-minute walk of all residential areas (within 500-metres of all residents)<sup>18</sup>. In discussions with management, this is an accepted view that the general rule of a 5-to-10-minute walk to allow access to open space should likely be maintained as it is largely based on principals of delivering healthy, equitable, and active communities, however there may need to be a review of what amenities are essential within this catchment and which may be afforded to be provided within a larger catchment.

Park-use measurement can be readily implemented through a systematic, consistent observation methodology. For example, by selecting representative times of the day and days of the week, it is possible to get a general estimate of park use. If these varied park-use times are sampled, it is possible to estimate the total park use over time. Cellular data and community surveys can also be helpful.

Municipalities are under significant pressure to get things done efficiently and effectively, while trying to serve a wide range of citizens, often with conflicting needs and interests. Having meaningful metrics that measure progress towards specific goals and objectives can ensure strategies are reaching those who they need to reach, and that actions are having their intended effect.

### **Recommendations**

We recommend that management:

- Implement a park observation project that introduces a systematic and consistent methodology to assess parkland usage.
- Develop trackable metrics to measure against set goals and objectives to allow management to monitor performance.
- Develop equity access and sustainably tools to assist in prioritizing parkland distribution, area, programming, and typologies.

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<sup>18</sup> Seven Cities Join the Park Equity Accelerator:  
<https://10minutewalk.org/#:~:text=The%2010%2DMinute%20Walk%20Program,and%20green%20spaces%20for%20everyone.&text=Everyone%20in%20U.S.%20cities%20should,equitable%2C%20healthy%20and%20thriving%20communities;>  
A 10-Minute Walk to a Park for Your Health and Well-Being  
<https://www.planetizen.com/news/2020/08/110123-10-minute-walk-park-your-health-and-well-being>  
Are Your Residents Within a 10-Minute Walk to a Park?  
<https://www.nlc.org/article/2017/10/10/are-your-residents-within-a-10-minute-walk-to-a-park/>

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#### **Management Action Plan**

Management agrees with the recommendations.

Staff will undertake a Parks Observation project and develop a usage data collection methodology and system to supply on-going metrics to monitor park usage and assist in decision-making related to access, equity, and sustainability (Q3 2025).

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#### **6. Address the Remaining Recommendations from the Active Together Master Plan Review and Update (ATMP)**

The Active Together Master Plan Review and Update is a long-range planning study for parks, recreation, and library facilities. The ATMP is undertaken jointly by the City of Vaughan and Vaughan Public Libraries every five years to support the Development Charges Background Study and ongoing planning efforts, including the City's Official Plan and Service Excellence Strategy Map.

The 2018 Active Together Master Plan Update contained 102 recommendations (51 were related to parks and outdoor recreation). The recommendations included supporting rationale and preliminary cost estimates and each recommendation was assigned a preferred timeframe for initiation based on an assessment of need. Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development has been diligent in completing and/or acting upon most of the recommendations assigned to them. The ATMP has been an effective tool in justifying parkland needs when faced with development pressures. However, the ATMP needs to be reconciled with projected reduction in parkland due to Bill 23.

ATMP Recommendation 93 states the following:

*"In conjunction with the Real Estate Office, ensure that land needs identified in the ATMP are represented in the Land Acquisition Strategy, including active and passive parkland (with a focus on under-served areas) and land for recommended community centres and libraries. This Strategy should also analyze opportunities to secure land and fund the development of larger District Parks and Regional Parks (e.g., Northwest Vaughan) that provide a wide array of amenities serving a diverse base of users..."*

With the introduction of Bill 23 there will be significant challenges in meeting ATMP targets specifically for large format facilities in a context of receiving smaller parcels over time. Tracking of DC rates, expenditures and gaps based on forecasted needs is not in place. DC envelopes are currently reviewed on a case-by-case basis rather than basing it on strategic objectives.

There has been a transformative amount of growth and intensification in Vaughan since the 1970s. Going forward, to address the City's land-use planning challenges and to manage future growth, the City is planning to direct a minimum of 45% of residential growth through intensification and identifying intensification.

Planning and developing parks within urban intensification areas presents several new challenges and potential opportunities in comparison to a more traditional suburban context. Parkland policies, including provision, within subdivision and greenfield developments are well established and generally much easier to design and apply. In comparison, urban parks typically have higher daily use requiring more ongoing maintenance, they are characteristically more highly designed with unique plantings and materials requiring a higher quality of construction and in many cases more short- and long-term upkeep, land is more expensive and scarcer requiring innovative approaches to acquire suitable and adequate lands in areas of need, and the programmatic elements vary vastly from large open suburban parks. Planning for an urban parkland system requires nuanced policies that support the development of an appropriate level of service and diverse parkland system. Parkland

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policies should enable a variety of solutions for different contexts and locations, with built in flexibility and quality control mechanisms.

The 2018 ATMP did not fully consider an approach when assessing provision levels in areas of intensification and recommendations tend to be “suburban in nature”. The City is currently in the process of updating the ATMP and it should fully consider the intensification areas that are a significant source of growth in the City.

#### **Recommendations**

We recommend that management:

- Continue to act on and disposition the remaining recommendations from the 2018 ATMP.
- Factor in the impact of Bill 23 in the current update of the ATMP.
- Ensure that the updated ATMP and the Greenspace Strategy comprehensively considers the new challenges, service levels, and potential opportunities in Vaughan’s intensification areas.

#### **Management Action Plan**

Management agrees with the recommendations.

- Staff will review the outstanding ATMP recommendations and develop an action plan to address as noted below. As noted above, staff have taken steps to implement the recommendations of the 2018 ATMP, with many accomplishments achieved over the past five years. Staff are committed to addressing the outstanding recommendations of the 2018 ATMP, with several to be referred for consideration and re-evaluation through the new study called the Long-Range Facilities Plan for Parks Development, Recreation Services, and Libraries to be initiated in 2024 (Q2 2025).
- The 2018 ATMP update identified that overall Vaughan residents and organizations are pleased with investments being made by the City but noted that the current mix of greenfield and vertical growth will create pressures on existing and proposed parks, facilities, and services, requiring new and innovative levels of service and provision strategies. These pressures are being experienced today. A particular urgency was identified to establish an infrastructure framework for intensification areas to ensure that sufficient land is set aside, and funding allocated for delivery of parks, recreation and library services in these areas. The current update to the ATMP and the Greenspace Strategy will further consider the on-going challenges, service levels, and potential opportunities in Vaughan’s intensification areas (Q2 2025).

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#### **7. Improve General Design Standards and Procurement Strategy**

Discussions with Procurement Services, Legal Services, and Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development confirmed that vendors are appropriately assessed to verify that work and assets have been provided as per contractual agreements and the terms of reference. However, opportunities exist to expand the Vendors of Record (VOR<sup>19</sup>) available to Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development and how the City engages the vendor community.

Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development has indicated that procurement policy is lengthening the delivery of projects by requiring additional quotation and tender issuance for products outside of their typical design RFP's. Examples include playground equipment, shade structures, fitness equipment, splash pad equipment and site furnishings. This has a compounding effect for a Department where much of the work is seasonal and weather dependent. In some cases, projects have fallen months behind.

Additionally, management has indicated that detailing within both design RFP's and construction tenders needs to be more specific to avoid ambiguities in the interpretation of the contract requirements and contract pricing. The use of lump sum contracts does not always include enough requirements for special provisions to detail scope within each component of the work. Contractor misinterpretation of the project requirements can lead to financial cost increases above tender awarded values.

Asset standardization can contribute toward improving operational readiness and driving decisions very early during the design cycle. Standardization of equipment specifications has the added potential to improve purchase price, reduce working capital, and minimize operating expense. Additionally, working capital is reduced by decreasing multitudes of different manufacturer parts and maintenance to support the same types of equipment.

The concept of standardization was alluded to in recommendation #46 of the 2018 ATMP.

*“Review standards for playground design, development and replacement (including surfacing and accessibility) to ensure that funding is aligned with requirements...”*

Opportunities exist to look at longer term VOR agreements with contractors and other vendors that bid on work covering multiple periods (i.e., potentially spanning years) and multiple projects. By default, this will help with standardization and eliminate the need to go to market for each individual project. Contractors can bid on a larger portfolio of projects (versus multiple smaller projects), more effectively source equipment and leverage economies of scale. This would significantly reduce administration, comply with procurement policies, and expedite the procurement process.

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<sup>19</sup> The key feature of a vendor of record is their pre-approved status. This means they have gone through a vetting process and have met certain criteria set forth by the City seeking their services.

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#### Recommendations

We recommend that management:

- Develop asset standards for reoccurring similar projects for use by staff, vendors, and consultants when designing and constructing Vaughan's Parks projects.
- Consider longer term VOR agreements with contractors and other vendors that bid on work covering multiple periods and multiple projects.
- Ensure that lump sum contracts include the requirements for special provisions to detail scope within each component of the work to avoid contractor misinterpretation of the project requirements.

#### Management Action Plan

Management agrees with the recommendations.

- Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development staff meet monthly with Procurement Services to review planned procurements and to confirm priorities. Resource constraints can cause delays in the procurement process, which management is working to address.
- Standardization of park asset classes, such as artificial turf fields, and development of Vendor of Record lists for services such as Geotechnical Consultants and Site Surveys are already in place and are effective for helping to streamline project delivery. Additional standardization and establishing Vendors of Record and/or multi-year contracts for key assets as well as a review of strategic procurement methods will be reviewed through this process (Q2 2025).
- Additionally, management will work with Procurement Services to review historical procurement data (type, quantity, asset class) and future planned procurements to identify opportunities for taking a strategic procurement approach that ensures value for money while streamlining project delivery rates (Q2 2025).



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#### **8. Review Contractual Holdback Requirements**

Construction contracts include different forms of holdback that serve different purposes. Warranty<sup>20</sup> and holdback provisions are considered by the Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development Design and Construction division when executing work and capital projects.

Parks construction contracts include a maintenance holdback of 2.5% to 5%<sup>21</sup>. Since this is considered to be a contractual form of holdback<sup>22</sup>, the amount and terms of the holdback can vary from contract to contract. The maintenance holdback is held back to secure a contractor or subcontractor's post-construction maintenance obligations under the contract. However, this has not always been sufficient motivation for contractors to effectively get the projects completed or even to formally declare substantial completion.

Internal Audit noted examples of projects where the amount of the maintenance holdback was less than the amount that the contractor would have to spend to address the deficiency. This causes reluctance on the contractor's part to disposition deficiencies due to the higher cost. In one case noted, this caused significant delays in completing the parks project. This situation was further exacerbated by the level of staff turnover at the City, causing the file to transition to new staff members on multiple occasions.

The holdback percentage should be commensurate with the level of risk associated with a particular capital project. Statutory holdback requirements are often supplemented by contractual holdback requirements (ex. deficiency holdbacks). Having clear, risk based, non-statutory holdbacks on contracts serves as an incentive to contractors to complete their obligations and reduces the risk of additional cost, increased administration and the potential litigation.

#### **Recommendations**

We recommend that management:

- Ensure that the City staff and consulting firms providing supervision of project work fully understand the terms and conditions of the contract.
- Consider increasing the level/percentage of maintenance/deficiency holdback based on risks associated with specific types of projects.
- Ensure that there is effective continuity in contract management at the City so that issues are addressed on a timely basis. Management should ensure that contract

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<sup>20</sup> Tracking of ongoing warranties is the responsibility of Park Operations and Asset Management. Once the project is completed and if equipment needs repair Park Operations determine if it was due to vandalism, poor maintenance or abuse. If that is the case, the warranty is nullified. However, if it deemed to be an equipment defect, then operations contact the supplier. From time-to-time Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development do get involved in discussions with suppliers (due to their relationships with suppliers), but Asset Management and Park's Operations are responsible for warranty claims. Once Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development deliver the capital project, the ownership of the equipment is with Park's Operations.

<sup>21</sup> For capital projects the holdback is up to 2.5% depending on the contract value. The 5% is reserved for the development projects.

<sup>22</sup> Versus a Statutory holdback. For example, in Ontario everyone making a payment in a construction project (such as the owner paying the contractor, or the contractor paying subcontractors) must hold back 10% of every payment made as a form of security for any liens that may be registered against the project. This Construction Act holdback applies to every construction project and is mandatory.

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disputes do not linger for an excessive period of time and that files are transferred effectively in cases of staff turnover.

#### **Management Action Plan**

Management agrees with the recommendations.

- Staff will collaborate with Procurement Services, Legal Services, and other infrastructure capital delivery departments to review contract requirements and develop new holdback measures to address current deficiencies in alignment with the Corporate Procurement Policy (Q4 2024).
- The Strategic Resource plan will include consideration for re-purposing one vacant staff position in Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development to a Municipal Services Inspector position to provide full-time on-site contract administration and oversight of contractors (Q3 2024).

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#### **9. *Develop a Communication Plan Supported by Updated Technology***

New residential, commercial, industrial, infrastructure and community development has increased the need for enhanced communications within the City and between the Municipality and the public. While Communications, Marketing and Engagement (CME) department staff (including Access Vaughan) have specific responsibilities for communications, often inquiries are routed directly to Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development staff. External communications with Parks staff range significantly in the types, number, and source of inquiries. This unpredictable and arbitrary type of communication is very disruptive to the day-to-day operation of the Department.

The vast majority of external inquiries and requests are circumventing Access Vaughan and are going directly to Parks staff through emails and telephone calls. These inquiries are managed ad hoc within the Department with limited tracking capabilities, using basic technology such as MS Word, Outlook and Excel. This can result in multiple calls going directly to various staff members for the same inquiry.

OCIO is in the process of implementing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system at the City. The CRM Solution was identified in the Service Vaughan Strategy and Implementation Plan and the Digital Strategy. It has been implemented in Environmental Services, Traffic Services, and Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations. It was also implemented in Infrastructure Delivery; however Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development was not part of the initial implementation plan.

The benefit of such a system is that it replaces obsolete technology in Public Works, but notably for Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development, it would provide staff with better tools to track, manage, follow up and report on communication inquiries. The use of this technology will also allow users to have a holistic view of all services being delivered to the public and will give them the benefit of data analytics and visibility across multiple portfolios. It will also allow users to access an online portal to review the status of their inquiries without having to necessarily contact the Department directly.

Moreover, Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development should develop a robust communications plan with the help of CME. For example, the promotion of Vaughan's greenspace is currently being done through ad hoc programming opportunities triggered by studies or other events. In some cases, outreach is driven by staff as opposed to being an institutionalized program.

A communications plan would help guide staff and enhance the services by working collaboratively across departmental lines. This includes outlining a cross functional methodology of promoting parks with other corporate stakeholders such as Recreational Services, Parks Ops, Forestry, Economic Development and the VMC. It should also include a community engagement plan to institute regular parks and open space outreach through specific programs. This would serve to improve the quality and practice of public engagement. Additionally, it would help ensure that communication related to Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development are consistent, effective, coordinated and meet the needs of the community.

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#### **Recommendations**

We recommend that management:

- Consider implementing CRM in Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development to enhance and facilitate the communication, tracking and reporting process for the Department.
- Work with CME to develop a Communications Plan to help guide and train staff and enhance services by working collaboratively across departmental lines.

#### **Management Action Plan**

Management agrees with the recommendations.

Management will implement the Corporate CRM system into the Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development department (Q3 2024) and continue to work with Corporate and Strategic Communications to enhance collaboration and communications and to help guide and train staff.

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#### **10. Enhance and Update Policies and Procedures**

Comprehensive and up-to-date policies and procedures encourage consistency and foster a cohesive environment whereby accomplishing tasks can be uniformly achieved and free from ambiguity. Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development has developed a number of policies and procedures; however, they are not comprehensive and, in some cases, outdated.

The City's Developer Build Policy (DBP) was issued in 1999. The purpose of the policy was to establish quality control over the development of parks and ensure adequate public consultation. However since the establishment of the policy, the City of Vaughan has changed significantly. Through 2051, Vaughan is expected to become home to 228,800 more people, bringing the total expected population to 570,400. A significant amount of this growth will be fueled through the intensification regions. However, the current DBP was established within the context of simpler greenfield development models. In order to meet the challenges associated with this level and type of growth, the DBP needs to be updated to reflect the current environment. The DBP should clearly define the policy for park design, construction, and acceptance, for the developer-built park assets, while continuing to serve as a reference to guide City staff, external stakeholders, the development community, and their consultants in the development of parks.

Having comprehensive and updated policies is especially important in an environment with new staff and a changing regulatory environment. The staff in Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development are for the most part relatively new to the City. This increases the risk of knowledge loss through turnover. Staff have indicated that they do not always understand the processes and practices in place at the City and point out that policies and procedures are not always documented. Management has started working on a Parks Construction Standards Manual and updated policies to guide the design of developer and City built parks. Although work has started on this manual, it has yet to be completed and formalized into practice. This has resulted in staff improvising and reviewing applications on a case-by-case basis, when faced with Bill 23<sup>23</sup> limitations due to policy gaps.

Vaughan Official Plan (VOP) was developed in 2010 after an extensive consultation and review process and has been subsequently modified by City Council on various dates. The VOPs objective was to address the City's land-use planning challenges and to manage future growth. Additionally, Council unanimously passed a Members' Resolution to declare a climate emergency in the City of Vaughan. To support this initiative, it is imperative for the City to analyze the impacts of climate change on parkland and recreation facilities and recognizes the critical role they play in helping achieve the City's climate change goals and building a city that is livable in future climate conditions. It is hoped that current work through the Greenspace Strategic Plan and the Urban Forestry Management Plan, will inform future policy updates, which include climate change considerations as part of land acquisition, open space design, and operational procedures.

Documented policies and procedures help to clearly delineate the control activities performed throughout the business unit's various operational processes. These will aid in the orientation

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-43/session-1/bill-23>; Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022. Bill 23 amends the Planning Act to create a new provincial threshold for what is permitted to be built by strengthening the additional residential unit framework and moving toward "as-of-right" zoning to meet planned minimum density targets.

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of new employees, help ensure continuity with all stakeholders, and ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

#### **Recommendations**

We recommend that management continue to draft and update key policies, procedures, and guideline documents that outline roles, responsibility and accountability to promote consistency, quality, and standardizes workflows in business activities, including:

- Updating the Developer Build Policy to reflect the current operating environment. For example, the City might consider leveraging the Developer Build Policy more effectively and mandating the requirement of parkland construction through policy, so that parks are built at the time of development construction.
- Embed climate change considerations as part of land acquisition, open space design, and operational procedures.
- Develop educational modules to inform staff of legislative requirements, policies and processes when reviewing agreements, conditions and processes when accepting parklands.
- Continue to populate the centralized document repository to maintain all key process related documentation and establish review cycles for all policies and procedures.

#### **Management Action Plan**

Management agrees with the recommendations.

Staff will undertake a comprehensive review and update of outdated policies and procedures to implement the recommendations emerging from the Greenspace Strategic Plan study and to ensure best practices in the provision of municipal park development services. Staff will also continue to liaise with other departments to update internal procedures where necessary and consider incorporation of climate change adaptability and resiliency related to parks planning, design, construction, and operations. The Department will also consider developing educational modules to inform staff of legislative requirements, policies and processes when reviewing agreements, conditions and processes when accepting parklands. This work is planned for completion (Q4 2025).