Green Areas
For any city, green areas can act as the lifeblood of the urban environment. They promote healthy lifestyles, focus community pride, foster social interactions and help create a sustainable future. They provide important functions for people of all backgrounds and identities, including active and passive recreation, pedestrian and cycling connections, gathering and event spaces, and places of refuge and reflection.

The City of Kitchener has established a range of park and open space types, which enhance the urban environment and character of neighbourhoods while providing both passive and active recreational opportunities.

The following park typologies has been developed as part of the City of Kitchener Parks Strategic Plan and is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Images</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="Photo_Monarch_Woods.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Natural Areas</td>
<td>Parkland generally intended to be preserved in its natural state (eg. forest, woodland and swamp, marsh, valleyland, etc.) including cultural communities (eg. plantation and cultural meadow).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="Photo_Kiwanis_Park.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>City Parks</td>
<td>Parks that provide multi-activity or multi-sport venues and/or serve specialized recreational, social and economic functions for the entire City that may also draw regional-scale audiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="Photo_Budd_Park.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>District Parks</td>
<td>Community-level parks providing access to scheduled and/or unscheduled outdoor and indoor recreation facilities and amenities serving multiple neighbourhoods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="Photo_Eby_Park.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Neighbourhood Parks</td>
<td>Local parks providing walkable access and passive open space areas, playground facilities and other outdoor recreational and leisure amenities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="Photo_Lang_Green.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Urban Greens</td>
<td>Urban green spaces designed for high public use and aesthetics in a diversity of settings including the urban core, within neighbourhoods and along trails and typically include hardscaped areas, a concentration of public amenities and higher level of design detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="Photo_Lancaster_Business_Park_Greenway.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Greenways</td>
<td>Linear green spaces providing linkages among parks, trails and other open space areas and public realm elements within the urban environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="Photo_Lancaster_Business_Park_Trail.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Trails</td>
<td>Off-road pedestrian corridors providing opportunities for a range of recreational activities and active transportation routes connecting various destinations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Community Design**

**Part A**

**Green Areas**

### 08.2.0 All projects are expected to meet the objectives of the City-Wide Design section of this manual.

### 08.2.1

#### Inclusive Design

**Safety**

Design park circulation patterns to encourage street crossing at intersections and to maximize pedestrian safety.

Minimize points of conflict between pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Where unavoidable, mark these points through contrasting surface treatments, signaling, signage, and other markers.

Design and program green areas to maximize natural surveillance, provide clear sightlines into, through and from the space, and create circulation networks that discourage unsafe activity.

**Diversity**

Provide parks, open spaces, and recreational opportunities for persons of all identities, ages, abilities, and cultural and economic backgrounds. Green areas of all types are to be designed and maintained to meet community needs, respond positively to changing community standards, and prioritize the end user and the public.

**Universal Design**

Always design Green Areas to be accessible and inclusive for all potential users.

Design green areas to maximize inclusivity by providing equivalent means for all users to access the site and enjoy programming opportunities.

Design green areas for barrier free access. Minimize changes in grade where appropriate to accommodate persons of all abilities.

Provide equitable barrier-free access and circulation through green areas, including accessible pathways, seating/furnishing, play areas, signage, parking and any on-site facilities such as public washrooms.

Provide a variety of spaces for active and passive recreation for persons of all abilities.

Ensure that accessible pathways coincide with general circulation patterns, connecting to adjacent sidewalks and properties with appropriate grading and/or barrier-free ramps.

Provide wide pathways that can comfortably accommodate a full range of users including those with wheelchairs and other mobility aides (scooters, walkers, crutches, etc).

Provide level, firm, stable, slip resistant surface materials for accessible pathways and recreational areas.

Provide signage at trail access points with information about the physical characteristics and topology of the trail, including: length of trail, type of surface, and location of amenities.

**Age & Family Friendly Design**

Parks and open spaces should be designed with frequent rest areas, including barrier-free seating and pathways, weather protection and adequate shade.

Park spaces should be programmed for users of all ages including play equipment for young children, sports and fitness facilities for teenagers and seating areas and fitness equipment for adults and older adults.

Crosswalks to and within parks and open spaces should be frequent, well-designed and safe for older persons, persons with mobility aids, children and families with strollers.

Prioritize winter maintenance for those most impacted by adverse conditions.

**Social Infrastructure**

Parks and open space do not typically provide social services. However, park infrastructure such as seating areas or gathering spaces should be welcoming and accessible to all, with no hostile design elements that allow for the segregation of marginalized or low-income people.

**Arts & Culture**

Parks and open spaces are important spaces for the celebration of arts and cultural traditions. Parks of all types and sizes should be designed to accommodate cultural events, celebrations and both temporary and permanent art installations.
**Design for Sustainability**

**Health & Well Being**

Green spaces are to comprehensively provide gathering places, recreational facilities and leisure opportunities for persons of all ages, identities, abilities, and cultural traditions.

Provide thoughtful outdoor recreation for all users including children’s playground equipment, sport and fitness equipment, programmed areas such as basketball courts, volleyball pits, skate-parks, skating rinks, climbing walls and other creative options which encourage participation and provide a low barrier to entry.

**Design for Climate Change**

Incorporate renewable energy systems into park and open space design, where feasible. Preserve for and accommodate new technologies as they are developed.

Design parks and open spaces for water efficiency including Low Impact Development (LID) measures. Prioritize a reduction in overall water use, innovative stormwater management, and grey water collection and re-use.

Parks and open spaces should be designed to adapt for climate changes and potential natural disasters. Use natural and resilient landscaping to withstand severe climatic conditions. Use preventative and precautionary strategies to limit the impact of extreme weather events.

**Design for Wildlife**

Design green areas to accommodate local birds and wildlife. Pursue opportunities to enhance and expand existing habitats and create new ones. Provide educational opportunities for green area users where possible, raising awareness and understanding of local wildlife.

Conserve, enhance and promote biodiversity of all forms and at all scales. Tree removal and grading should be scheduled to minimize impacts on seasonal wildlife and full cut-off lighting fixtures should be used to preserve the dark sky and to lessen migratory bird strikes.

**Design for Outdoor Comfort**

**Microclimates**

Provide for pedestrian refuge through landscape design and architecturally sheltered areas to offer protection from rain, wind and snow, and to provide shade.

Account for the microclimatic impacts of surrounding existing and planned built form, including shadows and cumulative wind impacts. These factors should inform the design and placement of rest areas and programmed spaces to ensure optimal conditions for users.

**Four Season & Winter City Design**

Provide four-season design for all green areas in Kitchener and consider all constraints and opportunities to create comfortable, useable, fun spaces year-round.

Consider snow disposition and how the removal and maintenance thereof affects the quality and usability of the space.

*Photo: Victoria Park in Winter. As a winter city, it is extremely important that Kitchener’s green areas remain useable, accessible, fun and comfortable year-round.*
PARK DESIGN

Access/Location

- **DYK?** Maximizing street frontage promotes safety, accessibility and visibility.
- **DYK?** Appropriate framing helps define and activate public spaces, improves natural surveillance, and increases visual interest for park users.
- Passive recreation includes trails, community gardens, seating/gathering areas, pavilions, art installations and interpretive or educational displays. Active recreation includes sports fields, skating rinks, playgrounds, event and performance areas.

Connectivity

- **DYK?** Providing a high level of connectivity requires coordination and cooperation among all involved parties; the public, private developers, city and regional staff, and all other stakeholders.

Design urban areas to allow for appropriate public access to natural areas and community assets. Maximize street frontages and number of pedestrian and cyclist access points. Larger scale parks should have greater street presence and a greater number of points of public access.

- Park frontages are to maximize pedestrian permeability, provide natural surveillance, and positively integrate the park into the fabric of the streetscape.
- Design and place green areas to be community focal points.
- Locate district and community scale parks as primary destinations which are visible and accessible from surroundings and offer a variety of activities and amenities for all users.
- Use surrounding built form to frame green areas, including development that fronts onto and directly accesses parks. Surrounding built form should minimize shadow impacts onto parks with no new shadows being created wherever possible. At minimum, preserve 5 hours of cumulative direct sunlight onto park spaces under equinox conditions.
- Design green areas to serve a variety of community needs including passive and active recreational programming for users of all ages, abilities and interests.
- Locate building entrances, active uses and transit stops along the edges of green areas.
- Locate elements such as vents and grates away from pedestrian routes.

- Connect, enhance and expand green areas to reinforce Kitchener’s open space network and provide a variety of green areas located within a 5 minute walking distance to most homes.
- Provide for a continuous off-road, open space community trail network with frequent connections to the on-road active transportation network at key transportation nodes. Connect to community facilities and destinations (such as hospitals, libraries, schools and community centres).
- Maintain and enhance pedestrian and cycling connections from adjacent streets, pathways and community amenities.
- Design green areas to accommodate a range of mobility options, desire lines, and ‘off-path’ travel by encouraging exploration through material selection, landscaping and spatial design.
- Provide unobstructed access between green areas and abutting public sidewalks.
- Private open spaces are to contribute positively to the open space network and integrate with the public realm. They are to uphold evolving standards for diversity, inclusivity and accessibility.

CULTURAL & NATURAL HERITAGE

- Locate and design green areas to respect and complement the scale, character, form and siting of on-site and surrounding cultural and natural heritage resources.
- Conserve and integrate built and natural heritage resources into green areas in a manner that conforms with heritage conservation policies, principles, standards and guidelines as well as in a manner that follows best arboricultural practices.
- Integrate, feature and focus open space design around cultural and natural heritage features.
- Sensitive integrate public art, signage, information displays and other features such that they respect and complement cultural and natural heritage features.
- Consider the existing and desired public experience and level of interaction with cultural and natural heritage features when designing green areas.
- Create and enhance views to and from cultural and natural heritage resources, including visibility from related resources, streets, pedestrian paths, open areas and adjacent properties.

If a park or open space is located within a Heritage Conservation District or Cultural Heritage Landscape, the guidelines detailed in the according district plan should be read in combination with guidelines detailed within this manual.
Incorporate materials that are sustainably and certifiably sourced.

Incorporate surface patterns and designs that add visual interest, encourage interactivity and exploration, and contribute to public art, cultural heritage and wayfinding objectives.

Create a comprehensive strategy for surface treatment throughout a green area-- both hard and soft surfaces-- that encourages freedom of movement, creates barrier-free access, and promotes the active use of the full extent of the space.

Surfaces are to support both passive and active travel and recreation options.

Surface materials should promote sustainable practices, including porous materials to reduce surface runoff, reclaimed and recycled materials, and native species for softscaped areas.

Create, reinforce and enhance greater network connectivity by thoughtfully connecting internal circulation patterns to nearby sidewalks, trails, lanes, connections and open spaces.

Provide comfortable, accessible seating options that accommodate and encourage a range of social, community and individual needs. This includes scalable configurations made of both fixed and moveable furniture that can cater to small groups or large events, provides options to sit in either the sun or the shade and protects from harsh weather elements. Provide elements that are multi-functional, adaptable, and encourage the creative use of public spaces.

Where appropriate, provide seating other than standard benches. Precast or cast-in-place concrete, low masonry walls, cut boulders, raised planters and linear seat walls can create a variety of options for a variety of users.

“Hostile” or “Defensive” design is not an acceptable practice. Hostile design involves techniques meant to discourage people from using spaces in unintended ways. This includes studs embedded into flat surfaces to prevent sleeping and skateboarding and bench design that intentionally reduces user comfort to prevent loitering. Hostile design targets vulnerable end users while simultaneously making public spaces less desirable for everyone, particularly seniors, children and people with mobility or mental health needs.

Concentrate seating in areas adjacent to-- and accessible from-- pedestrian pathways and where good natural surveillance is provided.

Where planter walls provide for seating, design both the planter and plant materials to complement the user experience.

Locate and maintain seating such that it can function year round.
This conceptual rendering demonstrates many of the design objectives for green areas.

Public Art

Provide high quality public art that is meaningful, visually expressive, inclusive and accessible.

Public art should be spatially and contextually appropriate.

Public art should encourage public interactivity, via physical, visual, aural or other associations.

Public art should reward curiosity and exploration, whether through location, contextual responses, or the nature of the art itself.

Locate public art thoughtfully and sensitively, framing or establishing views, responding to prominent natural or built features, marking or creating gateways and focal points, and providing meaning through the art’s placement and orientation.

Integrate public art into the overall design of the green area.

DYK? Art creates subjective interpretations of its value, intent and purpose. Good public art challenges our senses and assumptions, elicits emotional responses and acts as a fulcrum for debate and reflection. The best public art does not shy away from its role in creating social exchange or speaking with a point of view. As long as it is respectful and inclusive, public art should be allowed to perform these functions freely.

Lighting

Provide pedestrian scaled lighting for any areas of pedestrian movement or activity.

Create a lighting plan that identifies ways to sensitively design lighting that is creative and appropriate for a given green area’s size and type.

Design lighting that is specific to the intended function of each space, minimizes light pollution, spill-over and trespass, is bird friendly and dark sky compliant, is high efficiency and supports sustainability objectives.
All projects are expected to meet the objectives of the City-Wide Design section of this manual.

PART A
GREEN AREAS

AREA SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

GREEN AREA TYPOLOGIES

Natural Areas

Conserve natural features such as woodlands, wetlands, and valleylands and the natural connections among them, to sustain healthy habitats for plants and animals.

Provide ecological connectivity to adjacent and broader natural systems to create, enhance and reinforce continuity for native plant species and bird, insect and animal habitats.

Work to increase tree canopy coverage where appropriate.

Preserve, enhance and complement native and existing plant communities.

Provide landscape buffers around natural features, such as woodlands, wetlands and valleylands to protect ecological functions.

Locate multi-use trails and pathways outside of buffers and vegetation protection zones.

Integrate natural areas as public open spaces and community assets to provide a range of natural heritage-focused amenities and recreational opportunities, including educational components, stormwater management features, and trails.

Design natural areas to incorporate public access and utility without compromising natural heritage features or habitats.

Pursue opportunities to educate the public on the importance of natural areas.

City Parks

City Parks are the highest order park space in the city and serve as focal points in Kitchener.

City Parks are to be designed as major destinations for residents of and visitors to the city.

Plan and design City Parks to provide passive and active recreation opportunities for all users.

City Parks should be located at the intersection of major streets to act as gateways into communities and the city.

Design City Parks to offer the widest possible range of programming opportunities.

District Parks

Locate District Parks to balance community-wide interests and the interests of the neighbourhoods and individuals, ensuring that parks are central to the population they serve and that they are accessible by public transit and within a reasonable walking distance.

Distribute District Parks equitably throughout the City by allocating needed parkland to areas that are currently under-served, including intensification areas and other areas of high projected growth.

Provide significant frontage on adjacent streets to promote views and reinforce their focal nature.

Consider the placement of schools, community centres, libraries, and other recreation or cultural facilities in relation to where park and open spaces are planned to maximize programming, maintenance, and operational efficiencies.

Hard and soft landscape elements and features are to be fully integrated into the design of District Parks, with thoughtfully defined and articulated activity areas, circulation, entry points, seating and gathering areas.

Locate District Parks as primary destinations which are visible and accessible from the surrounding public realm and offer a variety of activities and amenities for all users.
Neighbourhood Parks are to be designed as community focal points, with two street frontages. Achieve a balanced distribution of parks and open space facilities and activities to meet the diverse recreational and leisure needs of the public.

Connect Neighbourhood Parks directly to school areas and other community facilities to encourage mutual use of outdoor facilities, where applicable.

Where viable, local retail uses and cafes should face directly onto parks and open spaces.

The perimeter of parks should be lined with buildings that face onto the park. Backlotted housing, or housing with the rear property line against parks, should be avoided.

Community gardens provided as part of the park space should be placed in a visible, easily accessible area.

Provide Urban Greens in key commercial and mixed use areas which have street frontages and are highly visible and accessible to pedestrians.

Provide adequate screening with landscape and/or architectural features where it is unavoidable to locate an Urban Green away from back of house activities (e.g. close to an existing building) or where building servicing/mechanical elements are visible or audible.

Streetscapes along Urban Greens are to be designed to a high standard, with high quality materials. Streetscape elements are to integrate seamlessly into the park space.

Consider creative approaches to site layout, programming, public art, recreational amenity, seating, shelter and other design elements toward the goal of creating Urban Greens which are unique, expressive, and a highly valued part of urban life.

Prioritize safety when designing trails. This can be achieved by separating trails from areas of vehicular movement, minimizing vehicular crossings over trails and ensuring trails do not create hidden areas or obstruct visibility.

Design for safety also includes providing natural surveillance, pedestrian scaled lighting, avoiding dead ends or entrapment areas, and providing frequent, easy access to and from trails to surrounding sidewalks, streets and neighbourhoods.

Connected lengths of trails make long trips possible and increase usefulness for commuting and exercise. Seek and plan for opportunities to extend trails to increase their connectivity to existing areas and infrastructure.

Provide trail access points along the existing and planned bicycle and pedestrian networks.

Provide a range of trails to meet the needs of all ages and abilities.

Where trails may serve a recreational and commuter cycling function in high user areas, consider separate lanes for pedestrians and cyclists, to minimize conflicts.

Provide significant frontage for Stormwater Management Facilities to promote views and reinforce their focal nature within the community.

Provide opportunities for passive recreation with particular attention to safety and access.

Coordinate the landscape design, such as look-outs, seating areas, fountains and gazebos, with the overall character of the community.