

Parkdale Green Space



Backgrounder

Green space can be defined as any public or private space with natural or planted vegetation in an urban or rural setting that can contribute to the health, social, economic, and environmental well-being of a community. Some examples of green spaces are backyard gardens, vegetable gardens, community gardens, rooftop gardens, recreational parks, or conservation parks.

Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Infrastructure Renewal has addressed the need and importance of managing the growth of Ontario through supporting economic prosperity, protecting the environment, and helping communities achieve a high quality of life. The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has also stated that land use planning can help communities set goals that keep important social, economic, and environmental concerns in mind. Within the Citizen's Guide to Land Use Planning, the Government of Ontario also states that effective planning leads to efficient provision of services, as well as orderly growth that helps build a better community.

The 2007 updated City of Toronto Official Plan highlights an initiative aimed at ensuring that there is the social and environmental infrastructure in place to serve Toronto's present and future residents. The Official Plan also outlines the City's initiative to protect, restore and enhance regional green space systems. It also states that green space provides natural beauty, a variety of landscapes for reflection, contemplation and appreciation of nature, as well as offers opportunities for passive and active recreation, community gardens and environmental education.

Within the Official Plan there are multiple policies addressing green space initiatives, including Policy Number 6, which indicates the need for enhancement and improvement of parks, creating community facilities to address the health and recreational needs of neighbourhoods. Toronto's principles for success as outlined in its official plan include equitable access to a range of leisure and recreational opportunities, and nature within easy reach throughout the city. Further principals include a well-maintained city with clean and beautiful green spaces, including community and rooftop gardens.

The Ontario College of Family Physicians endorses the importance of green space, as it is an essential part of human health. Incorporating green space into a community has many physical, psychological, and social benefits for all who live there, young and old. Green spaces enhance social inclusion, community pride and increased self-esteem, are related to decreased crime and attract businesses. Public and private green spaces create positive energy drawing together visitors and residents. The benefits of physical activity, including reduced stress and blood pressure are increased when they are performed outside. Such activity, called ecotherapy, is quickly becoming a mainstream addition to many psychological care plans.

Political action in Whitehorse, Yukon has helped to support and protect the residents' opinions and interests about green spaces in their communities. On June 22, 2006, a referendum was held in Whitehorse, resulting with a by-law put in place to ensure future subdivisions go through green space planning and a community vote (a plebiscite) before being accepted by City Council.

A declaration is a formal statement from the viewpoint of the people who sign the document. Declarations discuss an ethical or political issue and state how the group feels about the issue. Sometimes declarations state that everyone deserves equal treatment or resources and that people with power need to make sure that this happens.

Declarations bind the signers to the statement and remind them to be mindful of how this statement interplays with other work that they do such as making rules or policies.

Declarations are a tool that can:

- Support a cause
- Guide policy writing
- Keep important resources in place
- Advocate for new resources

It is our hope that the Parkdale Green Space Declaration will become a tool that will spark green space efforts, encourage partnerships, and support community members when they approach people with power to preserve or build Parkdale green space.