



To: City of Kitchener Council,  
Jeff Silcox-Childs, Director of Parks and Cemeteries  
Mark Parris, Manager, Parks and Open Space Design and Development  
Rebecca Roy, Landscape Architect

cc. Gaurang Khandelwal, Planner  
Josh Shea, Manager, Forestry and Natural Areas Management, City of  
Kitchener

From: Kitchener Citizens for Liveable Development - Tree Canopy Committee.

Subject: Places and Spaces Parks Master Plan - PLACES

Date: May 21, 2025

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Kitchener Citizens for Livable Development is a group of engaged citizens who advocate for liveable, affordable, sustainable, and socially inclusive neighbourhoods. We have several areas of focus including Kitchener's urban tree canopy. The goals of the tree canopy committee are:

1. Engage neighbourhoods in actions that contribute to meeting and surpassing the city's tree canopy targets.
2. Equip residents with information, evidence and tools to effectively participate in Council's decision making.
3. Advocate for municipal bylaws, policies and practices that protect and increase the city's tree canopy and woodlands.

We have reviewed the PLACES report and are pleased that it includes several priorities and recommendations that align with our interests.

The recommended policy to grow the urban tree canopy gets full marks.

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*Use parks and open spaces to help implement the Sustainable Urban Forest Strategy tree canopy targets.*

*Continuing to advance the Sustainable Urban Forest Strategy (SUFS) tree canopy targets in parks and open spaces is critical to the success of quality park service.*

*Nature Spaces and Climate Adaptation p. 26*

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We agree that there is a direct link between tree planting and the ability to mitigate the impact of climate change and that this is a sound premise on which to make decisions.

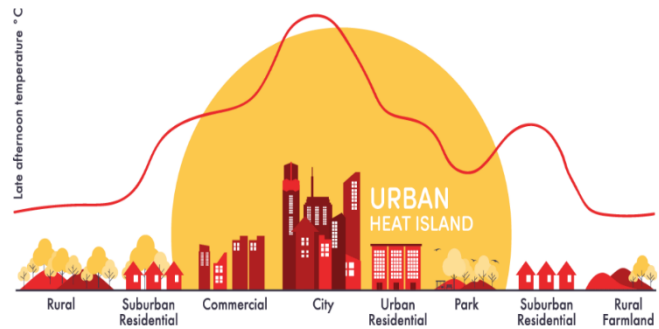
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*An equity driven approach to tree planting means...planting more trees in areas of the city where they will have a greater impact on climate change mitigations, or in areas where people must rely on tree shade for their well-being and to promote social equity.*

*Nature Spaces and Climate Adaptation p. 8*

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Research tells us that the heat island effect increases the air temperature in the built-up areas of the city, and that trees can reduce the temperature by up to 10 degrees.



Source: <http://coolparramatta.com.au>

In the ***Natural Spaces and Climate Adaptation*** booklet, the importance of cooling the environment on hot days is acknowledged.

But language in the ***Downtown Kitchener*** booklet raises concerns for us. We know from the SPACES report that neighbourhoods with high density, few backyards, and lower incomes have less park space than those with low density, plentiful backyards and higher incomes. These are neighbourhoods with the greatest need for greenspace.

Through community engagement, residents shared a vision of downtown parks that are green and comprised of natural elements. It is alarming that the report suggests that residents will have to adjust their expectations.

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*...the City has to adjust expectations, parkland area targets...*

*Downtown Kitchener p. 28*

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Public spaces primarily constructed out of cement are recommended as the alternative to green parks with natural elements. Pedestrian-first streets, lane ways and pseudo plazas have a place but will not provide what is required to support the urban forest strategy.

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*This will likely be in the form of publicly accessible passive spaces similar to the Kitchener Market and Regional Courthouse.*

*Downtown Kitchener p. 38.*

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We understand the challenges: increases in land values and the loss of parkland dedication funds.

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*There is a fundamental disconnect between encouraging intensification and the Planning Act tools available to provide public park space to support it.*

*Downtown Kitchener p. 27.*

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However, the alternative spaces proposed for downtown Kitchener and other neighbourhoods in the city core, abandon the PLACES priorities of equity, meaningful impact, environmental sustainability. Also discarded is the commitment to recommendations informed by local needs. The alternative spaces recommendation contradicts the position taken by city staff in the SPACES report that *other open spaces*, are in addition to a publicly owned and operated parks system.

We urge you to return to these priorities and plan for parks and green spaces in the downtown, civic center and KW hospital communities. Use green spaces to achieve the target of 30% tree canopy coverage and to cool our downtown neighbourhoods.

Remember you are planning for what will be the backyard for many residents living in the highly dense city core neighbourhoods who lack backyards and have lower incomes.

Citizens will be exasperated when they learn their expressed desire, and need, for larger park spaces has been rejected by the council and city staff who invited them to engage in the parks strategic planning process.

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*We asked to rank four options to help focus park expansion and improvements in the Downtown, Civic Centre and KW Hospital Communities.*

*Desired priorities included creating fewer but larger park spaces...*

*Signature and Feature Parks. P. 31*

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We would like to thank the staff and council for their work on providing parks and green spaces to the residents of Kitchener. We are excited about new and improved green spaces and parks in our neighbourhoods.