

Dublin City Parks Strategy

2019 - 2022



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

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FOREWORD

Like other old European cities, Dublin's development has in part been organic and in part planned. Fortunately for us it has included the creation of fine public parks and spaces both urban and natural that are highly valued. This city landscape reflects our heritage and our hopes for the future sustainability of Dublin.

The vision of this strategy 'Growing towards a greener and more liveable Dublin City' reflects the desire to see Dublin's growth and development positively linked to the well-being of its population by using nature based solutions and providing opportunities for recreation.

While our city is experiencing continued demand for economic growth and development, our parks and natural areas provide space for people removed from the countryside to come in contact with nature. In doing so they make a significant contribution to creating a sense of place for local communities and they provide the space for rest, relaxation, recreation and cultural activities.

A liveable city is also one that provides space for wildlife. Our policies must support a full diversity of species by conserving, creating and

managing habitats for them. Recent measures such as the designation by UNESCO of Dublin Bay as a Biosphere Reserve and our action plan for the management of alien invasive species positively support this objective.

In consideration of this vision, this document reviews the range of services and resources now managed by the Parks & Landscape Services of the City Council and in so doing sets out its strategic direction, policies and actions to 2022.

Consultation with the public and elected representatives has been an important part of developing the strategy, as the resources and services provided are for the communities that make up the city. We will continue to promote the responsible use of our parks, public spaces and natural areas and we will continue the positive engagement with communities in the provision of our services.

As Ireland's capital city and as an international city we desire the highest standard of quality in the presentation of the city landscape. This desire is expressed in this strategy and the ambitious programme of the City Council's Parks team over the next four years.

Owen P. Keegan
Chief Executive

Paul McAuliffe
Lord Mayor of Dublin

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the first strategy prepared for Dublin City Council's Parks and Landscape Services (Parks Services). It presents the wide range of resources and services under the Parks Services portfolio and states current policy and intended actions to seek the strategic vision of a greener and more liveable Dublin. The strategy is comprised of 6 chapters which are outlined below:

Section 1. Introduction:

The introductory chapter outlines the purpose of the strategy, the expected users, its vision and objectives and the methodology. The strategic vision statement is defined as: *Growing towards a greener and more liveable Dublin City.*

The strategic vision of city parks and landscapes is to provide and enhance the experience of living in Dublin, working in Dublin and visiting Dublin through the provision of park resources and services befitting Ireland's capital and its role as an international city.

Section 2. Parks and Landscapes in Perspective:

This chapter relates the development of the city landscape over time from the original natural landscape centred on the River Liffey, through the Viking and Norman period, medieval period, Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian eras and on to pre and post-war periods to contemporary Dublin. The parks and landscapes that we

have today help to tell the story of the historical development of the city. The policy context in which Park Services operates, based on international, European, national and local level policy, is then reviewed.

This chapter also outlines the value of our city parks, including their contribution to meeting the recreation needs and good health of the population, contributing to the identity of the city, enhancing social and community interaction, providing environmental benefits, enhancing biodiversity and contributing to Dublin's tourism economy. The chapter concludes with an international case study review highlighting some contemporary achievements including Singapore's Garden City vision and New York's One New York vision with a focus on revitalising its public spaces.

Section 3. Public Engagement:

A public online questionnaire was created in advance of the main strategy work as part of the strategy's public consultation process and this chapter reviews the findings. The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions to determine the views of the public on park resources and services. Just under 1000 responses were received and results include the importance of parks as a local community resource, the importance of providing a balanced range of facilities within parks, the issues that act as barriers to visiting parks, the importance of recreation as

the key value of parks to the city, as well as a very positive view of engaging further with parks through volunteering. The objective of engaging with the public is expanded further in this chapter with a look at volunteering and contemporary communication through digital and wayfinding methods.

Section 4. Resources and Services:

This key chapter examines the full resources and services of Parks Services and includes parks and their recreational facilities, visitor facilities, natural areas and biodiversity, public realm, public housing, cemeteries, trees, civic decoration, allotments, planning and development management, art in parks and research. Under the first chapter section a park typology is defined, which categorises parks into Flagship and Community Parks. The quantity of parks (approximately 17% of the City Council's administrative area) and their distribution is then analysed, which indicates an unequal city-wide distribution. A key policy proposal of providing a range of 2.5ha to 3.6ha of parks per 1000 population is made.

Access to parks is then analysed and this indicates unequal access to flagship parks and relatively good access to community parks. In the city centre areas, while access is reasonable, it is typically to smaller sized parks. Solutions to address access and quantity deficits are outlined, including the provision of a series of new city centre parks themed on Dublin writers.

Recreational facilities (playgrounds, playing pitches, etc.) are analysed. Access to these facilities is examined on their geographical distribution and deficits are addressed.

Dublin's natural areas and biodiversity form part of the urban ecosystem in which human activity dominates. Parks play a key role in providing natural areas and their proper management enables conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. The recent designation of the UNESCO Dublin Bay Biosphere highlights the value of the bay as Dublin's key natural resource. The Biodiversity Action Plan,

which is reviewed every 5 years, outlines our approach to biodiversity. The Parks Services biodiversity section has a strong community engagement role, with projects involving business organisations, schools and NGOs.

Parks Services provide input into enhancing the city public realm by building on the shared vision under the Dublin City Public Realm Strategy. Key projects include the completed Liberties Greening Strategy, the current City Centre Masterplan and the Docklands Public Realm Masterplan.

Public housing remains a key issue for the City Council. Parks Services continue to play a role in design and implementation of the associated housing landscape provision including the current redevelopment of St Teresa's Gardens and Dolphin Estate.

Park Services manages and maintains a number of smaller closed cemeteries in the city that are somewhat hidden, yet provide a curious insight into those who lived in and contributed to the development of Dublin. The Jewish cemetery in Fairview and Huguenot cemetery on Merrion Row are monuments to two distinct communities, many of whom settled here to escape persecution in other countries. Appropriate interpretation of these graveyards is a policy initiative under this strategy.

City trees, both in public and private management, form the urban forest that benefits Dublin by greening, carbon sequestration and urban beautification. Parks Services manage public street trees and those within our parks. A new City Tree Strategy has now been prepared to comprehensively define city tree policy and present a five-year action plan. Parks Services is also active in promoting appreciation of trees in the city through tree trails and assisting with the annual National Tree Week event.

Civic decoration in the form of flags, floral decoration and Christmas trees helps to bring vibrancy to Dublin and mark particular events. Development of further civic decoration through

engagement with community and business groups forms part of the proposed policy of Parks Services.

Allotments in Dublin have had a resurgence in popularity in recent years. Parks Services contributes in the provision and management of a number of allotments for public use, as they are seen as a strong community building resource. The proposed policy under this strategy is to provide allotments subject to demand and to enhance overall coordination through the appointment of an allotment officer.

Landscape planning and development management is undertaken by Parks Services with assistance given to the Planning Department on planning application assessments and Development Plan preparation. Industry consultation through the Irish Landscape Institute was conducted as part of this strategy and areas were identified that would help improve the planning application process, including updating current guidance for landscape and arboriculture submissions.

Parks provide an outdoor gallery for art in the city and Parks Services is fortunate to hold over 30 public sculptural artworks. Parks Services in association with the Arts Office manages and promotes appreciation of art in parks. A comprehensive guide to the artwork was recently completed as well as a smartphone multi-lingual guide to the popular Oscar Wilde sculpture in Merrion Square. The proposed policy includes the desire for a more equitable distribution of public art across city parks and assessing the potential to create a Dublin City Sculpture Park.

Parks Services uses and commissions research that directly contributes to its role in planning, designing, implementing and managing its resources. Current research includes conservation studies on historic parks as well as a Dublin Tree Canopy Study in partnership with UCD, the OPW and the other Dublin local authorities.

Section 5. City Landscape Vision:

This chapter presents a broader discussion of the city landscape under the headings of the coast, arrivals and departures, the inner and outer city landscape and city waterways. It sets out broader concepts for the city landscape and will act as a precursor to more detailed city landscape plans, commencing with our waterways and coast, which aim to bring these concepts to reality.

Section 6. Implementation:

In this concluding chapter the implementation of the proposed actions described in the strategy are categorised into short (1-5 year) medium (5-10 year) and long-term (10 year plus) actions. As this is the first parks strategy, it is expected that conditions and constraints affecting delivery of actions will change over time and this will be reflected in future strategy versions.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the major contributory elements to the ‘liveability’ of a city is the quality and quantity of parks and open space. The city landscape, being the accumulation of our entire open spaces, gardens and trees canopy, is a precious asset to Dublin, which is not entirely quantifiable, particularly in economic terms. City parks and landscapes are important for numerous reasons; environmental, cultural, historic, community and economic.

The landscape is the living component of the city, it is dynamic in itself and as a result of the influences and changes occurring in the city, such as population growth.

It is a valuable asset, providing a living link to our past through the eras of city development. Our parks and open spaces express the evolution of landscape design in the city from Georgian square parks to contemporary parks with contemporary themes, such as at Fr Collins Park or Grand Canal Dock. They facilitate the concentration of life that is found in the city, creating the spaces for nature to live alongside man while also providing the spaces of respite for man to live and enjoy the city.

Now more than ever, after a period of intense urban growth and development during the Celtic Tiger boom years, it is time to reflect on what makes Dublin city’s parks and landscape unique and inspiring and how they should be guided into the future.

The strategy examines the resources, facilities and services that are available to residents and visitors and how the current provision can be improved. The community’s view has been fundamental in the formulation of this strategy through public engagement and consultation and will continue to inform and develop the services and resources offered by Dublin City Council’s Parks and Landscape Services.

The Dublin City Parks Strategy is the first of its kind for the city. It is envisioned that this document will guide Parks and Landscape Service’s delivery of service over the coming years and will evolve with updated versions in the future. The Strategy’s policies aim to further connect people and communities with parks, advance greening, biodiversity and environmental sustainability, improve the provision of parks and facilities, foster innovation and create a legacy for future generations to enjoy.

“The more successfully a city mingles everyday diversity of uses and users in its everyday streets, the more successfully, casually (and economically) its people thereby enliven and support well-located parks that can thus give back grace and delight to their neighborhoods instead of vacuity”

– Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

The purpose of the Parks Strategy is to:

- Provide an over arching framework and strategic direction for parks and landscape development and future management.
- Inform city wide policy-making and guide decision-making.
- Provide a review and understanding of existing resources and services.
- Provide the wider community’s view as part of the community engagement process.
- Inform investment and management decisions by the Parks and Landscape Services Division of Dublin City Council.

1.3 USERS OF THE STRATEGY

The strategy has been developed for five main audiences:

- Residents – The public engagement process let us know what the public think of the current provision of parks and green spaces in the city and informed the vision and objectives of this Strategy.
- Public and Private Interface – The Strategy ensures that there is a clear understanding of the relationships between new development and the parks and landscape resource.
- Council – The Strategy has been developed to reflect Council priorities and to assist Council with decision-making, particularly through the Dublin City Development Plan.
- Dublin City Council Staff – The Strategy proposes directions and actions to address issues and emerging trends that will require collaboration between departments.
- Visitors – The Strategy aims to enhance visitor’s connection with Dublin’s parks and landscape resource. Their impression of Dublin as a destination is influenced by the quality and experience of its public spaces.

“Growing towards a greener and more liveable Dublin City”

1.4 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 Vision Statement

The vision statement of this strategy is: “Growing towards a greener and more liveable Dublin City”.

The strategic vision for Dublin’s city parks and landscapes is to provide for a greener Dublin, both through enhancing its visual quality and providing environmental services for the city. Additionally the experience of living in, working in and visiting Dublin is improved through the provision of good park resources and services befitting Ireland’s capital city and its role as an international city.

1.4.2 Objectives

The identified objectives are summarised below:

- Defining and understanding parks resources and services and their contribution to Dublin at the present time and planning for the future.
- Assessing quantity, quality and accessibility of park resources to the public and addressing shortfalls where they occur.
- Understanding the public’s view and how to engage further with the public.
- Defining policy on resources and services.
- Reviewing international cities and their vision and approach to their park and landscape resources.
- Expressing Dublin’s history and culture through its parks and enhancing the visitor experience .
- Protecting and enhancing parks, landscape and biodiversity into the future as the pressure for development continues.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

A number of actions form the methodology for this strategy as follows:

The initial step in the development of the strategy was to take cognizance of the context in which it will operate. To do this the historical development of the city landscape was reviewed to look at what has influenced our present day parks, as what we have today is a product of our past. The contemporary policy context which is defined by international, European and domestic policy is also reviewed with emphasis on the key policy and guidance affecting the development, conservation and management of our park and landscape resources.

As part of the consultation process on the strategy, an online public questionnaire was used to gauge the public’s interaction and views on Dublin’s parks. Parks are provided for the enjoyment of the public so their experience of them together with our experience in their provision and management assist to frame relevant policy. The consultation process concluded with a public online consultation on the draft strategy document, which informed the final published strategy.

Parks form the key component of the strategy. A hierarchy/typology of parks was determined based on defined characteristics of parks. Data collection and analysis deploying GIS was used to further look at their distribution and accessibility and quantity, which allowed the determination of deficit areas and policy on levels of provision.

GIS analysis was also deployed to review provision and access to recreational facilities provided within parks. Deficits in provision of facilities were determined and potential solutions outlined for future action.

Biodiversity, public realm and arboriculture (city trees) are resources with existing strategies and this document provides an overview and outlines their key policies.

Other services and resources, including civic decoration, allotments, planning and development management, cemeteries, public housing landscapes and art are reviewed. This review is based on the many years of experience in their provision by Parks Services and provision in collaboration with other sections of the Council.

A broader conceptual understanding of the city landscape is presented in the City Landscape Plan. It takes an unrestricted look at the city and is intended as a precursor to the future development of more detailed landscape plans for the city.

Section 2: Parks and Landscapes in Perspective

2.1 GROWING DUBLIN

Dublin's landscape today is the product of many years of evolution of both natural and man-made development. What our city is today, particularly its defining landscape, reflects the collective values of our predecessors and ourselves.

2.1.1 Geology and Vegetation

Dublin City originated where the River Liffey meets the Irish Sea. Originally this landscape consisted of the unhindered Liffey meandering its way to the coast with its many contributory streams and rivers forming a broad drainage basin. It is notable that many of these waterbodies have since disappeared underground in our contemporary city.

The underlying geology is largely of calp limestone bedrock formed by marine sediments and harder Leinster granite is also present from the Blackrock area in South Dublin.

Overlaying the bedrock is glacial till of sediments deposited by the ice sheets (over 10,000 years ago) and the predominant soil that is derived from this till is grey brown podzolics which are typically well drained and fertile. Alluvial deposition from the rivers and coast is also present. This fertile land would have been forested with species established since the retreat of the ice sheets and was dominated by oak and ash.

2.1.2 Pre-Historic Dublin

The arrival of man after the ice age commenced with the hunter gatherers of the Mesolithic period (7,500–3,500 BC). They lived throughout the country and depended mainly on the sea and rivers for their survival. Evidence of Mesolithic-era fish traps formed of interwoven hazel and alder was found in what is now Spencer Dock.

The Neolithic period (3,500–2,500 BC) followed and with it people who farmed the land by grazing and shifting cultivation. They formed settlements, cleared woodland and left burial mounds and tombs. The Phoenix Park contains evidence of their existence by the presence of a burial mound at Knockmary.

Later Bronze Age (2500–500BC) sites are evident around Dublin. These include fulacht fiadhs cooking pits, one of which was found in Fr Collins Park in Donaghmede and an interesting wooden revetment at Islandbridge formed with willow, hazel, oak, blackthorn and elm. Later in the Iron Age (500–400BC), a hurdle path and brushwood platform were constructed at what is now Ormond Quay.

The trend of human interaction with the then original natural environment within these very early historical periods slowly moves from one living as part of the environment into one commencing its control and management.



Mesolithic fish trap
(Image:Melanie McQuaid)

2.1.3 Viking and Norman Dublin

By the 9th and 10th centuries, two settlements were in existence on the south side of the river — Duiblinn, named after a tidal pool on the river Poddle and Atha Cliath or ford of the hurdles, a crossing point of the Liffey.

The arrival of the Vikings (840AD) and Normans (1169AD) saw further developments, with the surrounding landscape being cleared of woodland for permanent agriculture. Such settlements could be defended and remained through the Middle Ages.

The Vikings and Normans introduced planned settlements. This resulted in the street pattern and parts of the defensive city wall that are evident today in the areas of Dublin Castle and Temple Bar.

2.1.4 Medieval Dublin to 18th Century Dublin

The arrival of the Anglo-Normans (1171) saw the establishment of a town council and craftsmen's guilds, creating structured development in the city, along with fortifying the city walls with stone. The River Poddle (augmented by the Dodder) supplied water to the city.

The city spread outside the walls forming four distinct areas. The old Dubh Linn district, a common pasture area stretching from St Stephens Green to St Patrick's Cathedral; Oxmantown, from St Mary's Abbey to Oxmantown Green, the western area from Thomas Street, and the eastern area encompassing Hoggen Green (now Trinity College). These areas developed around

monastic abbeys, which provided services such as hospitals. The religious orders were also landlords in the area, thus ensuring a stable suburb was established; with income used for charitable purposes. Following the Reformation in 1541 many churches were converted to industrial use.

Speed's map of Dublin of 1610 depicts the extent of development on both sides of the Liffey where land was reclaimed and the quays were developed. Christ Church Cathedral was also central to the urban area of that era. By the end of the 1600s the population of Dublin was at 60,000. The city started to develop further as private citizens acquired and developed former monastic land, particularly after the reinstatement of the Irish Parliament in 1661. Hoggen Green, formerly a priory, was gifted back to the city, and Trinity College was established on that site.

Oxmantown Green became a cattlemarket in 1541, and was due for development in the 1660s, however there was a petition to the council for the space to be kept for the citizens to walk and take the open air in 1665, it was then named Smithfield, with walls built and trees planted to keep out cattle.

The development character of the city in the 1700s moved away from being defensive to a more open settled character surrounded by agricultural fields and orchards. The presence of Dublin's first and oldest park, St. Stephen's Green, created in the 1660s, is present on Molls map of 1714 and while the Phoenix Park was also formed in this period, it did not permit public access.

The City Basin water reservoir, located near the modern Guinness distillery, was built in 1724, and became a popular promenade area for the next century with walkways planted with elms and lime trees.

In summary, these centuries of early Dublin saw the establishment of the pattern of the centre that is familiar today and the commencement of the provision of public spaces, some of which fortunately remain.



Speed's Map of Dublin 1610



St Stephen's Green 1796

2.1.5 Georgian Dublin

Dublin's population expanded rapidly from 75,000 in 1710 to 150,000 in 1756.

The Georgian era Dublin (1714-1830) saw a more plan-led and controlled form of development. Due to major congestion in the medieval streets, the Wide Streets Commission was established in 1757. The Commission widened medieval streets and constructed bridges, which changed the axis of the city from east-west to north-south. The Grand Canal and the Royal Canal were also constructed in the 1700s, and had an influence on the development of the city, with the suburbs developing outside these city "rings". They were the transport corridors of this time but now serve the city as linear recreational and biodiversity resources.

One of the most significant characteristics of this period, and indeed to the development of parks within the city, was the emergence of well designed terraced residential squares with a central open space. The park was the

established feature with, in some cases, a double line of trees surrounding the perimeter which later became enclosed by railings. As these squares were developed by the ruling elite, many of the parks adopted a 'Jardin Anglaise' (English garden) approach with contoured grass areas, informal tree clumps, sunken curved paths and perimeter planting. Access to these parks was restricted to keyholders living in the surrounding elegant residences.

On the northside (bound by the North Circular Road), which was considered a more upmarket area of the city at this time, two major squares emerged – Parnell Square (formerly known as Rutland Square) and Mountjoy Square. Rutland Square was the first Georgian Park developed (early 1750s), and was intended as a grand termination of Sackville Mall (O'Connell Street). Mountjoy Square (1793) was considered the best planned square, and is the only "square" square.



The southside saw the development of three new squares – Merrion Square, Fitzwilliam Square and Mount Pleasant Square. These squares are still present and form the centerpieces of Georgian Dublin, which attracts many visitors. The original park layouts have changed over the years, (except for Fitzwilliam Square) and conservation and restoration is ongoing to help maintain their historical character.

Dublin ceased to be the seat of the Irish Parliament in the early 1800s, and entered into a period of economic downturn. The elite of Dublin society left the city and impoverished rural Irish migrated to it en masse. Many of the grandiose Georgian houses were subsequently converted in to multiple tenement units and fell into disrepair, notably in the north inner-city.

Dublin's new tenement museum at 14 Henrietta Street relives the hardship of that period.

2.1.6 Victorian and Edwardian Dublin

In the Victorian and Edwardian period (1837–1910), the city expanded beyond the perimeters of Georgian Dublin, in particular to the southern suburbs of Ballsbridge, Terenure, Rathmines and Rathgar, which accommodated the middle classes and wealthy who left the central areas of the city.

Parks in the early part of the century were limited and exclusive and it was only in later years that the general public gained access. St Stephen's Green was only opened up to the middle classes in the 1860s and after remodeling of the park in 1880, it opened its gates to all. The People's Park in the Phoenix Park was originally opened as Promenade Grounds in 1840, and was improved and re-opened as The People's Garden in 1864. It was completed by the 1870s at the eastern end of the Phoenix Park, inclusive of Victorian era bandstand, kiosk and seating which are still present.

By 1880, the northside development expansion was less pronounced and concentrated along the coast beyond the North Circular Road.

The formation of Bull Island, now an important city nature reserve, occurred after the construction of the Bull Wall in 1825. The new wall facilitated tidal scouring at the River Liffey mouth, to assist shipping, however it also created deposition north of the wall that over time created the island.

New parks were developed in the suburbs towards the end of the century, such as Palmerston Park and Belgrave Square, contributing to what we now describe as Dublin's leafy suburbs. In between these new suburbs and beyond was rural in nature, with large houses and their demesne, many of which would give their names to modern day suburbs. Development of rail systems, tram and bus routes also contributed to this suburban expansion.

However, 19th century Dublin included many living in extreme poverty and overcrowded conditions with the potato famine (1845–52) exacerbating conditions as many people moved to the city from rural areas to survive. Outbreaks of cholera and typhoid then followed in poverty-stricken areas of Dublin, creating a crisis of health and housing.

In 1875 the Government passed legislation giving favourable loans to those involved in building working class housing, and the building of artisan housing commenced. As slums were cleared some small pocket parks opened in spaces left behind, such as Blessington Street Basin, St. Audoen's and Hill Street in 1898.

2.1.7 Dublin in the Early 1900s

In the first half of the 1900s, Ireland's political status changed through a period of turmoil from the 1916 Easter Rising to the Civil War and the establishment of the Free State and later the Republic in 1948. Dublin's population rose through the 1900s from just over 400,000 in 1926 to over 1 million in 1980. Nationally the trend was towards an urbanised population.

Dublin remained a compact city at the start of the century but expanded its suburbs significantly to create better housing to accommodate the growth of population. The inner-city slums were gradually cleared and improvement of sanitary conditions through new sewer and waste disposal systems occurred. Slum clearance helped form St Patrick's Park, which was opened in July 1902 by Lord Iveagh, (creator of the Iveagh Trust), who actively acquired land with existing tenements which were cleared in order to construct the park.

Town planning emerged during this time, and the recently established Civics Institute held a competition on planning for Dublin, which was won by Sir Patrick Abercrombie in 1914. The Abercrombie plan envisaged river parkways along the Tolka and Camac which are still objectives of contemporary city landscape planning.

Ireland's first Town and Regional Planning Act was introduced in 1934 and allowed for the preparation of planning schemes that gave power to authorities to reserve lands for parks and open space, however there was little uptake of planning systems until the later 1963 Planning and Development Act.

Waste disposal for Dublin at this time included sea and land dumping. A night time tram was used to dump on Fairview slob lands, which subsequently formed present day Fairview Park.

St Patrick's Park





2.1.8 Post-war Dublin

Decentralisation and Garden City concepts formed a focus of emerging town planning principles, which included the provision of open space as a central feature. Suburban growth pushed the city to new limits each decade (Marino in the 1920s and 1930s, Crumlin and Cabra in the 1940s, Ballyfermot and Artane in the 1950s and Finglas and Ballymun in the 1960s).

With decentralisation, the inner-city population decreased. Even as the county's population increased over the years, Dublin's inner-city continued to decline and urban decay blighted areas. Some older city parks changed during this period as new demands required new facilities. Mountjoy Square, for example, changed from a park with restricted public access to an open public park with tennis courts by the 1930s.

While the new housing suburbs succeeded in creating better housing, their provision of public open space tended to be quantitative rather than qualitative. Large areas of grassed and featureless green space were common, in direct contrast to the earlier elegant city parks that were focal points and received more design attention and investment. These new parks required further input and this has been a focus of work for the Parks and Landscape Services of Dublin City Council since its establishment in the 1950s.

2.1.9 Contemporary Dublin

The growth internationally of concern for the natural environment, particularly in the second half of the 20th century, influenced the city landscape through designations and management for conservation value.

Following the Planning and Development Act of 1963, the first Special Amenity Area Order was made for Liffey Valley (1987) and subsequently for North Bull Island (1994) and

Howth (1999). Irishtown Nature Park (1987) which was formed on a landfill site and the linear parks along other city rivers (Camac, Dodder and Tolka), have all enhanced and conserved the natural environment within the city as well as creating recreational assets such as walking and cycling routes.

Contemporary global environmental issues of sustainability, biodiversity and climate change now influence decisions in the design and management of city parks and natural areas. The Planning and Development Act, 2000 also brought about significant changes in how the city has developed with a strong emphasis on the principles of sustainable development. The enhancement and provision of natural resources can be seen in the development of constructed wetlands at the Tolka Valley Nature Park as well as the introduction of a Biodiversity Action Plan.

The majority of the City Council administrative area is now developed with little green-field lands left. This has resulted in intensified development density toward the city centre, which raises particular issues for the city landscape. These include reduction of private open space for residents and a reliance on public parks for recreation, drainage problems due to the increased run off from man-made surfaces, pressure on space for good tree growth and pressure on historic parks to fulfill less compatible functions.

Demand for land has, however, promoted urban regeneration with the transformation of Ballymun and the docklands as primary examples. Institutional lands, many with significant attendant grounds, are also being redeveloped with impact on original parkland style landscapes that surround their buildings.

International influence is also a trend in contemporary provision of public space in the city. Design competitions and direct appointments, such as for the award winning Fr. Collins Park and Grand Canal Square, have allowed for the creation of parks by designers from abroad and introduced fresh

thinking and inspiring new places. The adoption of contemporary new design is balanced by advancing the conservation and restoration of Dublin's historic designed landscapes. To this end, conservation and restoration plans are underway for the City Council's earlier parks which complement the fine work undertaken by the Office of Public Works on their city parks, notably the National Botanic Gardens, where restoration of the glasshouses received a Europa Nostra award.





The Diamond Park —
Community Artwork

Grand Canal Square
(Image: Martha Swartz Partners)



2.2 GUIDING POLICY

The work of Parks Services takes cognisance of international, European, national, regional and local policies and standards to ensure compatibility. The key policy and guidance is reviewed below.

2.2.1 International and European Policy

EU Habitats Directive/EU Birds Directive

These Directives give protection to species of flora and fauna, habitat types and species of birds. Designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) by EU member states is central to the objective of both Directives. Both South Dublin Bay and North Dublin Bay (including Bull Island) are designated SACs.

The European Landscape Convention (Florence Convention)

This convention promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues. The convention was adopted in 2000 and came into force on 1 March 2004. Ireland is a signatory to this convention. The general purpose of the Convention is to encourage public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, regional, national and international level for protecting, managing and planning landscapes (natural, rural, urban and peri-urban) throughout Europe so as to maintain and improve landscape quality. This in turn aids the public, institutions and local and regional authorities to recognise the value and importance of landscape and to take part in related public decisions. In response to Ireland's commitment to this convention a National Landscape Strategy was published by the Irish Government in 2015. This Strategy is, in part, Dublin City Council's fulfillment of the obligations of this Convention.



National Landscape Strategy for Ireland



Dublin City Public Realm Strategy

ICOMOS (The Florence Charter 1981)

ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, is an advisory organisation to UNESCO. The Florence Charter sets forth the principles and guidelines for the preservation of historic gardens and has relevance to historic parks in the city. The Charter defines historic gardens as architectural compositions and recommends their preservation as living monuments. It outlines strategies for maintenance, conservation, restoration and reconstruction of gardens, including their plans, vegetation, structural and decorative features and use of water. It recommends limiting use in order to protect the gardens' fabric and cultural message. It also addresses legal and administrative issues.

2.2.2 National Policy and Guidelines

The National Landscape Strategy (2015–2020)

This policy document was delivered by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht as a response to meeting Ireland's obligations under the Florence Convention. It recognises the complexity and relevance of the Irish landscape and seeks to protect, manage and plan for the sustainable stewardship of the Irish landscape.

Six key objectives are defined:

1. Recognise landscapes in law.
2. Develop a National Landscape Character Assessment.
3. Develop landscape policies.
4. Increase landscape awareness.

5. Identify education, research and training needs.
6. Strengthen public participation.

Planning & Development Act

The Planning and Development Act is the legislative framework controlling development in Ireland, which includes requirements for the preparation of Development Plans by Local Authorities. Development Plan objectives include the zoning of land for recreation and open space, as well as the conservation and protection of natural heritage. The Act also gives Local Authorities the power to create Landscape Conservation Areas (LCA) for preservation of the landscape and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). There are currently no LCAs designated in Dublin City, however the Phoenix Park, North Bull Island, the Botanic Gardens and St Anne's Park are under consideration. There are 6 existing Tree Preservation Orders. Development management duties by Park Services include the provision of public open spaces.

National Planning Guidelines

The Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas guidelines sets out the key planning principles which should be reflected in Development Plans and Local Area Plans and guide the preparation and assessment of planning applications for residential development

in urban areas. Qualitative and quantitative guidance is given in relation to the provision of open space.

Ready, Steady, Play: National Play Strategy Guidelines

The Government, under the National Children's Strategy, launched in November 2000, included a commitment to develop National Play and Recreation Policies. This strategy aims to create better play opportunities for children. Its overall objective is to plan for an increase in public play facilities and thereby improve the quality of life of children living in Ireland by providing them with more play opportunities.

Actions for Biodiversity 2017–2021

The National Biodiversity Plan is developed in line with the EU and International Biodiversity strategies and policies. The measures Ireland will take are presented as actions under a series of 7 strategic objectives. The objectives include the mainstreaming of biodiversity across the decision making process in the State, the strengthening of the knowledge base on biodiversity and increasing public awareness and participation.



Actions for Biodiversity



National Play Policy

2.2.3 Local Policy

Dublin City Council Corporate Plan

The corporate plan's vision for Dublin states it is the best place in which to be, to live, to work, to do business and to enjoy. A city that has everything by being friendly, progressive, different and brilliant. The Council's mission is to provide quality services for its citizens and visitors and act to protect and promote Dublin's distinct identity in a way that acknowledges these key points. Under the plan's goals, this strategy will contribute to Goal 4 of the Place To Be theme: To manage and promote city parklands and support the development of biodiversity measures and projects.

Dublin City Development Plan

Dublin City Development Plan guides and acts as a blueprint for the future development of the city. It includes land-use zoning for the whole administrative area, thus planning and controlling development on or adjacent to open space areas. The current plan also outlines key policy and objectives within the Green Infrastructure, Open Space and Recreation chapter.

Dublin City Council Policy, Strategies and Plans

The following is a list of key Council strategies and plans whose directions and recommendations are relevant to the effective delivery of parks and landscape services:

Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan, 2015–2020:

www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/content/RecreationandCulture/DublinCityParks/Biodiversity/Documents/DublinCityBiodiversityActionPlan2015-2020.pdf

Dublin City Sport and Wellbeing Strategy, 2017–2020:

www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/content/RecreationandCulture/SportsFacilities/Documents/STRIDE2017-2020.pdf

Dublin City Local Economic & Community Plan, 2016–2021:

www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/content/Community/DublinCityLocalCommunityDevelopmentCommittee/Documents/Dublin%20City%20LECP%202016%20-%202021_Web%20version.pdf

Dublin City Play Plan, 2012–2017:

www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/content/Community/childrensservicesunit/Documents/DublinCityPlayPlan2012-2017.pdf

Your City, Your Space – Dublin City Public Realm Strategy, 2012:

www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/content/Planning/Documents/YDYVPublicRealmFinal.pdf

Public Realm Masterplan for the North Lotts & Grand Canal Dock SD2:

www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/content/Planning/PublicRealm/Documents/PRMasterplanDocklands-SDZ-2017



2.3 VALUE OF CITY PARKS

2.3.1 Recreation and Health

The value of parks as recreational space is widely recognised, as highlighted in the public survey findings outlined in Chapter 3.

Recreation is either passive (e.g. strolling) or active (e.g. sports), and generally suitable for all age groups and abilities. Parks also provide space to relax away from busy city living. Research supports the importance of green spaces on better mental health. The World Health Organisation (WHO), in its European Mental Health Plan, states actions under Healthy Places, Healthy Communities, that highlight the importance of recreation and contact with nature for mental well-being.

Currently one of the most significant health concerns in Ireland and Europe is obesity and its associated health problems, including premature death and diabetes. Of particular concern is the rise in childhood obesity. The financial costs of these resulting health problems are also significant (€1.13 billion in 2012, Safefood).

Diet and physical activity are the key methods of combating this problem, the latter being assisted through the adequate provision of accessible public open space and recreation facilities. Over 17% of Dublin City's land area is green space. The provision of playing pitches and playgrounds assists in the promotion of active, healthy lives through sport and play. The natural areas of the city landscape also allow people to have contact with nature, de-stress and relax.

Healthy places, healthy communities:

- (j) promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for all age groups, through sport and other activities, and provide safe play space for children;*
- (k) promote the establishment and protection of healthy places outdoors and contact with nature;*

Report extract: The European Mental Health Action Plan, World Health Organisation, 2008

In Ireland at the present time 39% of adults are overweight and 18% are obese. Of these, slightly more men than women are obese and there is a higher incidence of the disease in lower socio-economic groups. Most worrying of all is the fact that childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions in Europe, with body weight now the most prevalent childhood disease.

Report extract: Obesity –The Policy Challenges, National Taskforce on Obesity, 2005.





2.3.2 Identity of the City

Cities around the world espouse different identities. For Paris it's romance. For Oxford it's learning and for New York it's ambition. A city's identity is made up of numerous components or attributes, none more important than the provision of exceptional and accessible parks and open spaces. Dublin's identity influences perceptions both at home and abroad. It influences decisions, from where people wish to live or visit or to where companies wish to invest.

Dublin's parks and urban landscape contribute to a greener, more liveable city identity for Dublin. The recent designation of the Dublin Bay Biosphere is an important step in the development of Dublin as a green city at an international level.

Parks also contribute greatly to historical identity. Dublin's landscape is steeped in history, which is a physical record of its development over time from the earliest archaeological monuments to the Georgian-era parks; Dublin's past can be read through its parks.

Culture and art are further components of Dublin's identity to which parks contribute. Its the fourth city in the world to be designated as a UNESCO City of Literature. This identity provides a unique cultural experience with literature, thus spreading the city's literary importance on an international scale. Its relationship with such literary greats as Oscar Wilde and James Joyce along with its cultural, arts and social scene create a powerful international image of the city as a place with literature at its core. This strategy

recognises this strong identity and proposes a series of new city centre parks that reference recent writers connected with the city.

Art has played an important role in the development of Dublin parks, and over the years a collection of sculptural art has evolved adding further interest to the parks that exhibit them. To celebrate this and to interpret the story of the artwork and the artists who created them Parks and Landscape Services have recently published an Art in Parks Guide and created a smartphone orientated multi-lingual guide to the Oscar Wilde sculpture in Merrion Square.

Dublin City parks are also used for many regular and once-off cultural and community events, for example the annual Rose Festival in St. Anne's Park and the Harold's Cross Festival. There are also regular community fun-runs, Hallowe'en festivals and pop-up events, such as open-air cinema. These events bring life and enjoyment to the city.



2.3.3 Social Interaction and Community

Dublin’s parks and landscapes provide space and facilities where all members of society can interact. This interaction helps to break down barriers between social groups and enhances integration and the concept of community within the city.

Today some 19% of the city’s population are of migrant origin and the majority live in the inner-city area. The diverse population of Dublin was also reflected in the Parks questionnaire, with 12% of respondents being of non-Irish nationalities.

Parks Services has an ongoing relationship with many organisations, from sporting to community. The changing population demographics has an impact on the change in use of sports facilities, an example is the refurbishment of Bushy Park Tennis courts and pavilion, where padel courts are being installed, based on public demand. Padel is a racket sport, similar to a cross between tennis and squash, and is a fast-growing sport, particularly popular in Spain and South America.

Diversity in the resident population will continue to grow with globalisation and Dublin’s role as an international city.



“Dublin City is a city of welcome, that creates trust, appreciation and protection for all its people, all its communities and consciously celebrates diversity.”

– Vision Statement of the Dublin City Integration Framework

2.3.4 Environmental Benefits

Our parks and open spaces perform specific environmental services for the city. The generation of carbon dioxide through human activities, in particular the use of fossil fuels, is recognised as a leading contributor to greenhouse gases and global warming. In Dublin the CO₂ emissions per head of population is 9.72 tonnes (The Green City Index), which is higher than the European average for cities.

Balancing Dublin's carbon footprint to significantly reduce our above average CO₂ emission is assisted by city greening. City vegetation, through the process of photosynthesis, actively takes in carbon dioxide and stores it, which is known as carbon sequestration. Air pollution is mitigated in urban areas by green spaces providing a buffer from sources of air pollution, as well as filtering out components of this pollution. Particulate matter (PM), for example, which is known to be produced by vehicular traffic and causes breathing problems such as asthma, is filtered by tree leaves. Research in London indicates that between 850 and 2000 tonnes of PM₁₀ (particles less than 10 microns in diameter) are filtered out per year by urban trees in the Greater London Authority.

Flooding is also a problem that the city experiences on a regular basis, both from coastal waters and during high rainfall periods. Impermeable surfaces, which are extensive within built-up areas (e.g. roofs, roads and pavement), produce unwanted water, which is directed to the sewer systems. The volume of water runoff during high rainfall periods can exceed the capacity of the system to drain it effectively, resulting in flooding. In addition, rising sea levels, together with tidal and wind events, can lead to coastal flooding along Dublin's shoreline.

Dublin's green spaces help to alleviate the problem by providing permeable surfaces, thus allowing natural drainage as well as providing space to alleviate both coastal flooding and river flooding. Vegetation also helps to protect surfaces from washing away and by taking up water through the process of transpiration.

Improving the city's resilience to high rainfall events can be assisted through improved city greening initiatives, such as planting on road corridors and buildings.





Viking Festival at St Anne's Park



Terenure Village Market at Bushy Park

2.3.5 Biodiversity

In an age of accelerating biodiversity loss, Dublin City Council was the first local authority in Ireland to produce a Biodiversity Action Plan in line with international, European and national legislation and policies. The purpose of this Plan is to increase community awareness of biodiversity, to protect local biodiversity hotspots and Natura 2000 sites and provide guidance on conserving Dublin City's natural heritage.

Biodiversity contributes to our general wellbeing by providing the raw materials for good health. Strong communities and a thriving economy need a healthy natural environment. The city's natural heritage and ecosystem is a mosaic of natural features and functions that include watercourses and associated riparian areas, floodplains, wetlands and beaches.

The city's green space provides habitats for flora and fauna to thrive and thereby enhances our biodiversity. In particular, Dublin's coastal habitats provide a space for marine and coastal species, such as seals and migrant geese to survive. The wide range of habitats, biodiversity and ecology raises Dublin city's environmental protection profile on an international level, attracting thousands of visitors and enthusiasts each year.

Other environmental benefits can also be seen in our coastal wetlands. Such areas can improve protection against rising sea levels. Healthy floodplains and other wetland ecosystems can also limit the effects of river flooding. Inland parks and gardens, even with the demands of the visiting public, allow a range of wild species to thrive.

2.3.6 Tourism

Tourism is important to Ireland, and also to Dublin, with visitor figures continuing to increase annually. In 2017, 9 million overseas tourists visited Ireland with 5.9 million people spending all or part of their visit in Dublin.

Parks and gardens are a significant draw for tourists. The National Botanic Gardens achieved in excess of 540,000 visitors in 2015 and over 1.5 million overseas tourists visit gardens in Ireland per year.

While statistics are not available for visitor numbers to all Dublin parks, it is expected that they are a significant component within Dublin's overall tourism portfolio which generated overseas visitor revenue of over €1.7 billion in 2015.

Visitor numbers are enhanced with events, such as the Bloom Garden Festival (120,000 visitors in 2017) in the Phoenix Park, and the Rose Festival in St Anne's Park, (up to 5000 visitors per day).

Parks express the culture and the story of the city and are therefore potential visitor attractions. In particular, historic parks can relate to particular periods in the capital's history, such as Georgian-era Dublin. Contemporary parks also play a role in expressing Dublin as a modern city by incorporating relevant themes into their design. Fr Collins Park, for example, puts a focus on sustainability and particularly on renewable wind energy.

Fáilte Ireland's Destination Dublin Strategy identifies a Culturally Curious sector of leisure

tourism with growth potential to direct marketing investment. Culturally Curious visitors are mostly older couples or solo travelers with time to spend. They are independent 'active sightseers' looking to explore new places. They want to 'do a place', both its culture and the beauty of its landscape. They respond well to a range of information and are best disposed towards Ireland as a destination of all the visiting groups. The Strategy indicates city parks and squares and their link, in particular, to the Culturally Curious groups' interest in gardening.

Parks as a tourism resource require further research to determine what levels of visits are achieved, how they can be successfully marketed, what visitors enjoy about Dublin's parks and what further work needs to be done to enhance their appeal to visitors.

"...to find ways of packaging Dublin as a city that offers an interesting mix of the built and natural environments..."

– Destination Dublin, A Collective Strategy for Tourism Growth to 2020





City Cycling (Image: Coca-Cola Zero Dublinbikes)

2.4 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Key international trends influence Dublin; how we live here and how we compete in the global community. In this section, such trends are reviewed with respect to Dublin and its parks resources.

2.4.1 Population and Urban Areas

The world's population has grown at an increased rate since the 1800s. In 1820 the population was 1 billion, by the 1970s it was 3 billion and today it is 7 billion. This growth will lead to further demand on resources and the environment unless more sustainable growth levels are achieved.

Reflecting the growth of population is the rise in urban areas. It is estimated that half of the world's population now live in urban areas. As this trend continues, it is essential to plan and design sustainable new urban areas that are liveable places as well as investing in the renewal of older urban areas.

In Ireland the historical population trends reflect the global trend with a growth in population from about 3 million in the 1970s to 4.75million people today. The population has also become more urbanised with a shift of people from the west to the east of the country due the importance

of Dublin and its hinterland as an urban and employment centre. In Dublin the population has risen from just under 500,000 a century ago, to 1.3 million today.

The trend in population increase and urbanisation (including denser urban development) is likely to influence the city landscape in the following manner:

- The need to service an increasing population will require identification of new parks, in particular in the denser central areas or those areas with a concentration of apartments where private garden space is limited.
- Development on remaining institutional lands with private/semi-private landscape may reduce the greening and recreational benefits to the city.
- Loss of greening, due to conversion of private open/green areas to parking areas or amalgamation of older housing stock into larger development blocks.
- Greater need and use of public space for infrastructure and services, such as underground utilities.
- New and revived methods to green urban areas and urban living, such as living walls, green roofs, edible gardens, urban farming, allotments, etc. will continue to evolve.

2.4.2 Sustainability

Sustainable development is defined by the Brundland Commission as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The city landscape helps urban sustainability by:

- Providing accessible park facilities and recreational resources close to the growing urban population.
- Providing carbon storage and other environmental services through maintaining the urban forest.
- Recognising opportunities for biodiversity lands for conservation into the future.
- Recycling resources, for example, the use of construction and demolition waste in parks construction, the composting of green waste and the avoidance of the use of peat in horticultural practices.
- Facilitating green transport such a walking and cycling through linked green urban spaces (e.g. greenways).

The principle of sustainability must continue to permeate through the planning, design, management and operation of Dublin's parks and natural areas.



Clontarf Promenade Flooding

2.4.3 Climate Change

Climate change is defined as the significant change in the environment due to both natural and human influences. This change has been more significant in recent times due to the negative effect of an increase in greenhouse gases, for example, by the use of fossil fuels for energy.

This is a global issue where temperatures are increasing, sea levels are rising and extreme weather conditions are becoming the norm. In response to these issues, international binding agreements, such as the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Agreement (2015) were undertaken to target reduction in greenhouse gases, emissions and global warming. Dublin City must play its part and aim to reduce its contribution to climate change but also take measures to protect itself from the worst effects of it:

- An increase in flooding, both coastal and inland pluvial flooding, due to high rainfall, continues to impact Dublin. The city landscape has the potential to alleviate this to some degree. In Clontarf, for example, the waterfront promenade park acts as a buffer to sea flooding while city parks and river corridor landscape provide permeable surfaces and natural drainage systems for water to make its way to the sea.

- With increased intensity of development in the city, there will be a greater rate of potential runoff affecting drainage capacity. Greening of development sites and individual buildings provides a means of mitigating this problem and will need to be considered in planning stages of development. Examples of green building infrastructure include living walls, green roofs, rain gardens and permeable paving.
- City-wide greening and tree canopy enhancement, both in public and private land, will assist to reduce carbon emissions due to the uptake and storage of carbon by plants. This, however, will not fully compensate Dublin's carbon footprint and more innovative ways may be considered, such as woodland planting projects in surrounding counties.





Singapore's Gardens
by the Bay

2.4.4 City Comparison and Competition

Cities are in competition with each other on a European and global basis. This competition is for trade, investment, tourism and human capital. The quality and liveability of cities is fundamental to their attractiveness and creating a city environment with access to good parks and green spaces plays an important role.

The environment of cities is now becoming an important factor in making comparisons and rankings between cities. The Green City Index (Siemens/Economist Intelligence Unit), for example, evaluated 120 cities globally based on 30 indicators, one of which was green space policies. This 2009 study ranked Dublin in 21st position out of 30 European cities reviewed. There is an opportunity for Dublin to learn from environmental best practice methods of other better performing countries to improve its environmental performance and endeavor to become an internationally recognised Green City.

Different city rankings, however, use different 'green' criteria and obtaining impartial comparisons may be a challenge. In response to this, the International Organisation for Standardisation has issued a new standard, ISO 37120:2018, which will allow cities to compare themselves with peer cities in terms of sustainable development for communities. This standard establishes indicators to measure the performance of services and quality of life in cities. Of particular importance to Parks Services are indicators for green area per 100,000 population and the number of trees planted yearly per 100,000 population. Such

standardised systems are useful if comparing cities but can also help implement and formalise city plans and help streamline environmental programmes and resource management.

A number of cities are promoting and developing their green credentials, which sets an example for others to follow:

Singapore – A City in a Garden

Singapore has a small land area of just over 700km² (less than the area of County Dublin) and a population of 5.4 million. Between 1986 and 2007, the population grew by 68%, yet the green cover grew from 35.7% to 46.5%.

It is the top performer in the Asian Green City Index. Since gaining independence in the 1960s, the government has strongly emphasized the importance of sustainability through high-density development, and green-space conservation with the idea of a green city environment that improves the quality of life for its citizens. This was the start of its development into a Garden City, strengthening Singapore as a destination for tourism and foreign investment.

The city has developed a 15-year vision, with one of the major themes being the importance of greenery for a quality living environment with a City in a Garden approach.



**School of Art, Design & Media,
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore**
(Image: CPG Consulting)



All London Green Grid
(Image: Kinnear Landscape Architects)

Green Space can be everywhere

Engagement with the public and government has been key. The Public Utilities Board has opened up and developed its water bodies for recreational activities, developing an initiative that aims to transform the country's water bodies beyond their functions of drainage and water supply into beautiful clean rivers and lakes with new spaces for community bonding and recreation.

Due to Singapore's limited land space, rooftop 'skyrise' greenery has increasingly become an important component of sustainable 'green' urban development and is being incorporated into new iconic buildings, such as the Nanyang Technological University's School of Art Design and Media and the Solaris building.

Green Links

A matrix of park connectors as green links and recreational corridors among parks is one of the ways Singapore is expanding its green space in the city. The park connector network is a series of seven connecting cycle or green paths.

Gardens by the Bay

One of the most iconic contemporary projects is the Gardens by the Bay, a development of three world-class gardens around the Marina Bay waterfront built on 250 acres of reclaimed land. This has attracted over 20 million visitors since its opening in 2012.

London – The All London Green Grid

London has developed the concept of a "Green Grid", which integrates green, blue and open spaces. The All London Green Grid policy framework promotes the delivery of green infrastructure across London, conserves landscapes and environments through strengthening green infrastructure and urban greening, shifting the focus from grey to green infrastructure.

Key benefits are increased recreational space, reduced flooding, improved air quality and cooling of the urban environment, thus adapting the city to the impacts of climate change. Biodiversity and ecological resilience also improve.

In a city as large as London there is a large range of projects. The River Wandle Valley Trust is a project that coordinates four boroughs developing a regional park stretching from Croydon to Putney. A charitable trust coordinates the projects, leading the vision for the 830 hectare space, enhancing links and improving biodiversity and water quality. A key aim is that the environmental benefits improve the quality of life for its citizens and bring economic regeneration to the area.

In contrast the Victoria Business Improvement District, run by the Borough of Westminster, has an innovative approach, developing a Green Infrastructure Audit that is used as a baseline for "green" developments, where flooding and overheating are key issues. Completed projects include a large green living wall, bee-keeping on roofs, and a rain garden project replacing cobbled paving.

Copenhagen – Carbon Neutral Capital

Copenhagen has developed in a planned manner over the past 60 years with the suburbs developing in five fingers from the city centre palm as the transport system grew. Copenhagen has been at the centre of good urban design, in particular with the influence of Jan Gehl, the world renowned urbanist who developed the concept of Strøget – the car-free zone and walking street. 96% of the population live within 15 minutes walk of a large green or blue open space.

In 2011 Copenhagen experienced major flooding from a sudden storm, causing \$800 million worth of damage. A 'Cloudburst Management Plan' was developed to safeguard against extreme weather, and seek a holistic solution, incorporating the blue into the green infrastructure, similar to London, but for different reasons. The concept is to manage rainwater locally, using sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), thus preventing the water entering the main sewage system.

Copenhagen intends to be carbon neutral by 2025, and has developed ambitious plans to achieve this target.

Cycleways are key to the carbon neutral plan, with a network of over 390 km green cycleways. In peak commuting hours, traffic lights are coordinated for continuous flow for cyclists, known as the green wave, which is reversed in the afternoon.



Copenhagen's Strøget
(Image: Wonderful Copenhagen)



One New York (Image: Hyperakt)

Barcelona – Nature and urbanity converge

The Barcelona Olympics held in 1992 started the transformation of the city with Olympic facilities developed in neglected urban areas. Realignment of the railways and the creation of artificial beaches changed the alignment of the city from the mountains to the sea.

Barcelona is creating a network of green spaces, ensuring they are part of the city infrastructure, serving an environmental and social function. The Barcelona Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Plan 2020 is a strategic document that sets out long-term actions.

It is a compact and dense city bounded by two rivers, the coastline, and two mountain ranges, all of which create a wide variety of habitats. The various habitats and spaces were evaluated and a ranking system developed, which gives a structure to develop the plan. Other forms of urban green infrastructure, such as vacant spaces, roofs and balconies, were also included. A strategy was developed of strengthened environmental infrastructure, biodiversity appreciation and community involvement. The plan also allows the city rebalance urban density, using the green network as a guide.

A key project is the creation of six green corridors into a network, which create structural green fringes that interconnect with pedestrian and cyclist priority.

New York City – A strong and just city

New York City recently published One New York, which outlines plans to make New York a sustainable, resilient and equitable city.

The plan involves significant investment in revitalising existing parks and public spaces, and strategically planning new spaces. The plan targets the areas with growing population and changing needs and with areas of higher than average poverty.

An objective has been set that 85% of the population will be within walking distance of a public space by 2030. New York City's Parks Without Borders program enhances neighbourhood access to parks and increases connectivity within areas. The plans also engage the citizens with a core plan of expanding the use of streets as spaces to play and congregate.

New York has been at the centre of innovative solutions for creating new green spaces. The High Line in Manhattan is a public led initiative that turned a disused railway line to an aerial linear park stretching 2.33 km. The popular park has had an economic impact on local neighbourhoods with reinvestment occurring.

New York is also converting landfill sites into public parks, with the largest being Freshkills Park, which will be over 2,200 acres when completed. The city also facilitates urban agriculture and community gardening, with the city actively targeting vacant spaces for use as community gardens, along with commercial and community farms on building rooftops.

Section 3: Public Engagement



3.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The City Council's parks resources and services are provided for the benefit of the Dublin community, the people and visitors who use them. In order to appreciate the public view, a consultation was held at the beginning of this strategy's preparation and this is presented in this chapter. How to further engage with the public and help connect people with their parks is also explored.

3.1.1 Questionnaire

A public questionnaire was created as part of the development of this strategy. Its objective is to find out the views of the public on Dublin City Council parks, and to act as a first step in the consultation process. The responses analysed have helped quantify and develop policy presented in this document as well as giving practical opinions on particular parks that individual respondents use.

The questionnaire was distributed online by Dublin City Council from September 2013 until August 2014, and by hardcopy questionnaires, which were placed in city libraries.

The replies to the questionnaire provide a sample of the general population's views. Dublin City Council's administrative area contains a population of approximately 500,000 and the actual number of completed questionnaires received was almost 1,000, which represents a good sample size.

3.1.2 Findings

The survey set out to investigate 14 specific questions which were themed on the following:

1. Local Parks
2. Other Parks
3. Concerns, Activities and Impressions
4. Value of Parks and Volunteering
5. Respondent Characteristics



Theme 1:
Local Parks

Question 1:
What is your local park / What street is it on?

Most people’s opinion on parks will be influenced by their local park, with which they are most familiar. This question was responded to by over 97% of respondents.

Question 2:
How often do you visit?

The question was answered by over 98% of respondents.

The majority of respondents use their local parks on a weekly basis (42%) and on a daily basis (26%). This indicates that parks as a resource in the City are frequently used by the majority of the population, with only 2% stating they never use their local park. The returns indicate that parks are a valuable asset to the city.

Question 2a:
When visiting, where do you travel from?

The majority of the respondents travel from their home (90%) with only 4% from the work place and a surprising low 1% from schools/colleges.

This reinforces the importance of parks to the resident population, however with the city serving as a major place of employment a higher usage by city workers would be expected.

Accessibility may be a factor in a low return for usage by the work force. There also appears to be an opportunity for greater participation/use from schools and colleges of local parks where education programmes could be explored and developed.

Question 2b:
How long do you normally stay?

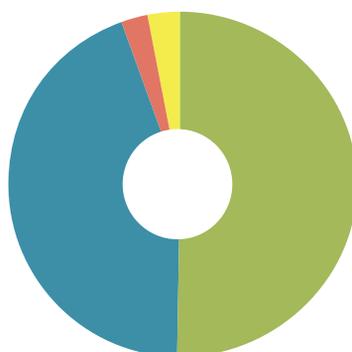
The majority of park visitors stay for more than 20 minutes (61%) while 28% stay between 5 and 20 minutes.

This is a positive result and indicates that parks are places that the majority of people want to spend time in.

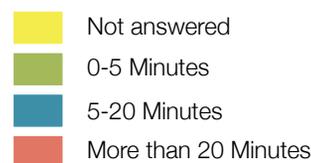
Question 3:
How long does it take to get there?

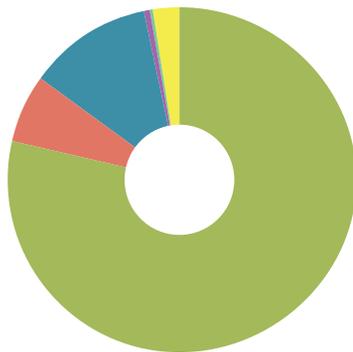
50% of respondents indicated that it took up to 5 minutes to get to their park while 44% indicated it took 5 to 20 minutes.

This indicates a reasonable travel distance for about half the population. As a rule of thumb, 5 minutes equals a walking distance of approximately 300 to 500 meters. 5 to 20 minutes presents a longer distance and could pose problems to those with children and disabilities. The closer park resources are to the population, the greater the value they are to them. Improving access to parks and the facilities they contain is examined further in the next section.



How long does it take to get there?





How do you get there?

- Not Answered
- Wheelchair
- Bus
- Car
- Bicycle
- Walk

**Question 4:
How do you get there?**

Walking is the most frequent mode of transport to parks at a high 79%, followed by car at 12% and bicycle at only 6%. This indicates that transport modes used to go to parks are highly sustainable. It also indicates that accessibility by bicycle is preferably improved.

Access by cars at 12% indicates a need to allow for parking near parks. Access by wheelchair is low at 0.2% and on review of this particular group of respondents, it is noted they all indicated barriers to visiting parks. Use of most forms of public transport to go to parks is also quite low according to the survey returns.

Accessibility standards for parks are based upon reasonable walking distances from residents’ homes. It is therefore helpful to confirm that the majority of people walk, as it supports the methodology.

Where possible more sustainable means of travel to parks should be encouraged, not only for environmental reasons but also as there is normally only limited car parking available.



Theme 2:
Other Parks

**Question 5a:
Do you visit other parks in Dublin?**

The majority of the population visit other parks (90%) besides their own local park. In the main, parks such as the Phoenix Park, St Stephen’s Green, Iveagh Gardens, Merrion Square, Herbert Park and St Anne’s figure prominently as destinations, with the Phoenix Park being the most popular other park destination.

The stated reasons why people go to other parks are variable, however dog walking, events, bringing children to the park or running are frequent responses, with park size and quality being important.

It is important to note that most stated reasons are for some form of active recreation, which underlines the importance of parks and green space for healthy communities. It is also notable that the majority of these parks are of ‘flagship’ status under this Strategy.

**Question 5b:
How often do you visit other parks?**

Respondents visit other parks occasionally (35%), weekly (34%) and monthly (20%) which overall is less frequent than their local parks visits. Again this highlights the importance of highly accessible local parks forming the broader community resource for a city parks hierarchy.



Theme 3:

Concerns, Activities and Impressions

Question 6:

Does anything prevent you from visiting any parks?

55% of respondents considered that something does prevent them from visiting a park.

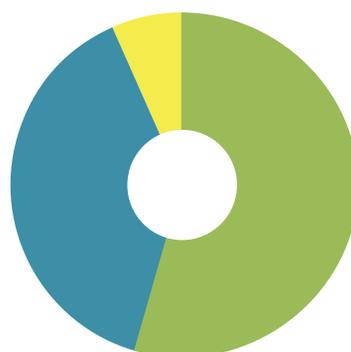
The key responses given were vandalism/anti-social behavior (30%), dog fouling/control (20%), lack of facilities in parks (19%), safety concerns (17%), distance (14%), other reasons (10%) barriers to getting there, e.g. roads or bridges (6%), disability (0.7%).

Other reasons stated included issues with park opening times, events held in parks and difficulty parking.

Anti-social behaviour was highlighted as a significant issue. The percentage affected is relatively large when considering the whole population and highlights, in particular, issues on the policing and control of public open space.

It is interesting to note the 20% response rate preventing people visiting parks due to dog fouling/control is in contrast to the 27% (in Question 7) who state walking the dog as their reason for visiting parks.

A range of solutions will require consideration to satisfy both camps including stricter control on leash requirements and dog fouling, fenced dog run/off-leash areas, better provisions for dog waste disposal and possible dog-excluded parks.



Does anything prevent you from visiting any parks?



Question 7:

What do you do when visiting parks?

The majority of respondents stated passive recreation activities in their replies, including walking (89%), relax/peace & quiet/fresh air (68%), enjoy flowers & trees (62%) enjoy nature & wildlife (48%) and meet friends (37%).

Active recreation responses were however not insignificant with answers of sports; football games (19%), jogging (24%), cycling (26%), keep fit exercise/health (30%), bring kids to playground/play (43%) being the most prominent. Other prominent activities stated include photography and reading.

The results indicate the importance of providing parks with a balance of facilities to serve the majority of the population and avoidance of excessively large areas with a single function. This is an issue in some city parks where there is a high level of provision of pitches to the detriment of other activities and uses.

The results indicate the importance of providing space in parks for all recreation types and to promote healthy communities.

The results also reveal the underlying importance of parks that appeal to certain sectors of communities, such as families with children, sports clubs and dog owners, for example.

Question 8:

What is your overall impression of the quality of your local park in Dublin?

The overall impression is that Dublin parks are of good (39%) to very good quality (27%). This is a positive result but indicates room for further improvement. Only 7% indicated a poor to very poor result.

Question 9:

How would you rate the following ?

Design & appearance of parks:

Very good	(28%)
Good	(42%)
Fair	(17%)
Poor	(6%)
Very poor	(4%)
None:	(2%)

Cleanliness & maintenance:

Very good	(24%)
Good	(37%)
Fair	(20%)
Poor	(7%)
Very poor	(8%)
None:	(1%)

Range of facilities available:

Very good	(12%)
Good	(27%)
Fair	(28%)
Poor	(15%)
Very poor	(10%)
None:	(6%)

Trees & planting:

Very good	(31%)
Good	(38%)
Fair	(16%)
Poor	(6%)
Very poor	(4%)
None:	(1%)

Wildlife/nature:

Very good	(22%)
Good	(29%)
Fair	(23%)
Poor	(10%)
Very poor	(7%)
None:	(6%)

Seating/lighting/signage:

Very good	(10%)
Good	(26%)
Fair	(28%)
Poor	(15%)
Very poor	(12%)
None:	(6%)

Sports facilities:

Very good	(13%)
Good	(27%)
Fair	(19%)
Poor	(9%)
Very poor	(5%)
None:	(20%)

Playgrounds:

Very good	(21%)
Good	(31%)
Fair	(17%)
Poor	(6%)
Very poor	(5%)
None:	(15%)

Art:

Very good	(5%)
Good	(7%)
Fair	(13%)
Poor	(17%)
Very poor	(10%)
None:	(42%)

Based on these results the key areas of concern and areas for improvement are in the range of facilities, seating/signing/lighting, sports facilities, playgrounds and art. There may be a greater need to consult with sports groups and schools to further establish the need for sports facilities.

Question 10:

What recommendations would you suggest for your local park?

This open ended question was answered by over 84% with a variety in the responses given. Common recommendations included, better areas for surveillance, a better variety of play equipment for different age groups, additional seating, cafés, toilets, events and art and more control of dogs and anti-social behaviour.

A large number of answers were park specific, which is useful information for future park upgrades and improvements.



Theme 4:
Value of Parks and Volunteering

Question 11:
What do you consider is the value of all parks to Dublin?

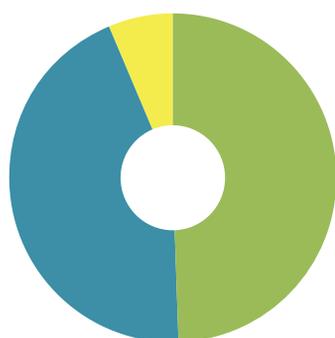
The majority of respondents (93%) answered this question with recreation as the main value, followed by greening and peace/tranquility.

It is also worth noting that some of the respondents stated a lack of private residential open space and the significance of parks to city (apartment) living. Yet again the points raised in Section 2 on the value of parks to Dublin City have been raised and supported by the views of the community survey.

Question 12:
Would you consider volunteering in parks?

This question was answered by 94% of which 50% said yes and 44% said no.

Half the respondents indicated a significant interest in volunteering, which is a positive outcome for successful community engagement in parks services and programmes. When asked what areas of volunteering they would like to engage in, most responded with cleaning or planting activities. Volunteering is discussed further in the next section.



Theme 5:
Respondent Statistics

Question 13:
About you.

A series of questions was asked to help profile the respondents including age, gender, ethnic/cultural group, nationality, where respondents live, work or study and their use of social media.

The results indicated that the average respondent is 25 to 44 years old, female, Irish, living and working in Dublin City.

Nearly 40% of respondents were male, and 58% were female.

91% of respondents live in Dublin city with 6% answering as not living in the city. Finally, 70% worked in Dublin, 15% were students and the majority used social media.

Question 14:
Any other comments?

This question was answered by 56% of respondents. In the main, the comments were positive with a general sense that people are happy with park provision and resources.

Again, some respondents expressed concern at the amount of anti-social behaviour and control of dogs. Some park specific recommendations were also made.



General Findings

The response rate to the online questionnaire is low for the older age group. This may reflect the level of familiarity with information technology, as the majority of questionnaires were filled out online.

When age, gender, ethnic/cultural group and nationality are compared to the CSO national data for the same characteristics it is found:

- The survey response is not similar in age distribution with a much lower response percentage in the younger and older age groups.
- The survey response is not similar to CSO data in terms of gender, with a higher female response.
- The survey response is almost similar for Irish nationality (88% compared to 83% for CSO) but does reflect the full range of nationalities or population make-up percentage of other nationalities in CSO data.

Overall the questionnaire gives useful data and opinions which are directly relevant to the formation of the strategy policy and actions discussed in later sections of this report.

3.2 ENGAGING WITH PEOPLE

Parks services and resources are at the heart of the communities that make up Dublin. This section looks at some of the areas where engagement with the public can be enhanced through volunteering, parks events, technology and wayfinding.

3.2.1 Volunteering and Parks Events

The public response to the parks questionnaire indicated a strong and positive attitude towards the concept of volunteering within parks.

Volunteer programmes allow positive engagement with the public. In addition, many volunteers contribute through community-based, organised events. In order to explore this area, a number of case studies have been examined.

3.2.2 Case Studies

Dublin Mountains Partnership

The Dublin Mountains Partnership are a group of partners, both public and private, formed to improve the recreational experience of the public in the Dublin Mountains.

The key focus of the group is to manage the area as an integrated entity for recreation, along with creating a sustainable development plan.

The Dublin Mountains Partnership runs a Volunteer Ranger Service. The volunteers give two days a month on a range of activities from leading guided walks, assisting the public, conservation and trail maintenance. Education is a key part of the ranger role, along with practical conservation. The volunteers are an essential part of the organisation and are characterised by having a passion for the Dublin Mountains and the outdoors. Their interaction with the public is vital in the conservation of the mountains.



Ringsend Allotments

Selection of volunteers includes six month training and those who proceed are identifiable by their uniforms.

City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation

The City of Toronto runs a number of Parks, Forestry and Recreation volunteering programmes throughout the city in order to engage the public in taking ownership of its parks, open spaces, greening and wildlife.

Trees Across Toronto is the city's native tree and shrub planting program that responds directly to the tree canopy goal of 40% coverage and is a major step forward in reclaiming some of the city's underdeveloped lands. It is Toronto's signature tree planting event, funded by corporate partners, that takes place each year in April.



Dublin Mountain Partnership
Volunteers (Image: DMP)



Baisley Pond Park New York
(Image: City Parks Foundation)

City Parks Foundation New York

The City Parks Foundation is a non-profit organization that creates volunteer programs in parks throughout New York City with the aim of connecting New Yorkers through free and accessible arts, sports, education and community-building initiatives.

It's My Park Day activities are coordinated by local community groups, City Parks Foundation and NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. Activities include litter picks, bulb planting, painting benches and fencing, along with more intensive events, such as beach and coastal area clean-ups. The programme offers corporate groups team-building events, and ad-hoc events in non-profit institutions and local parks.

Free events are also hosted, including tennis lessons, face painting, historic house tours and nature walks.

3.3 PARKS VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

A parks volunteer programme is proposed to be established. The key components of the programme will include:

- Establishing a parks and volunteer coordination section
- Development of an individual volunteer programme
- Development of a corporate volunteer programme

The volunteer programme will not be established to undertake normal parks services, but for volunteers to take part in specific activities that gives them an opportunity to contribute to their local community and environment, and enjoy the social and educational benefits of volunteering.

Examples of possible volunteering activities include giving guided tours of parks within the city, establishing a photographic archive of city parks, helping with key events, such as the annual Rose Festival in St Anne's Park, Culture Night, Open House events or National Tree Week.

Corporate volunteer examples include working in specific areas around conservation and biodiversity, such as on Bull Island, thereby giving participants a unique opportunity to learn about natural heritage in Dublin City.



Policy

- To support and promote volunteering to realise public goodwill and enhance engagement with the community in their local environment.

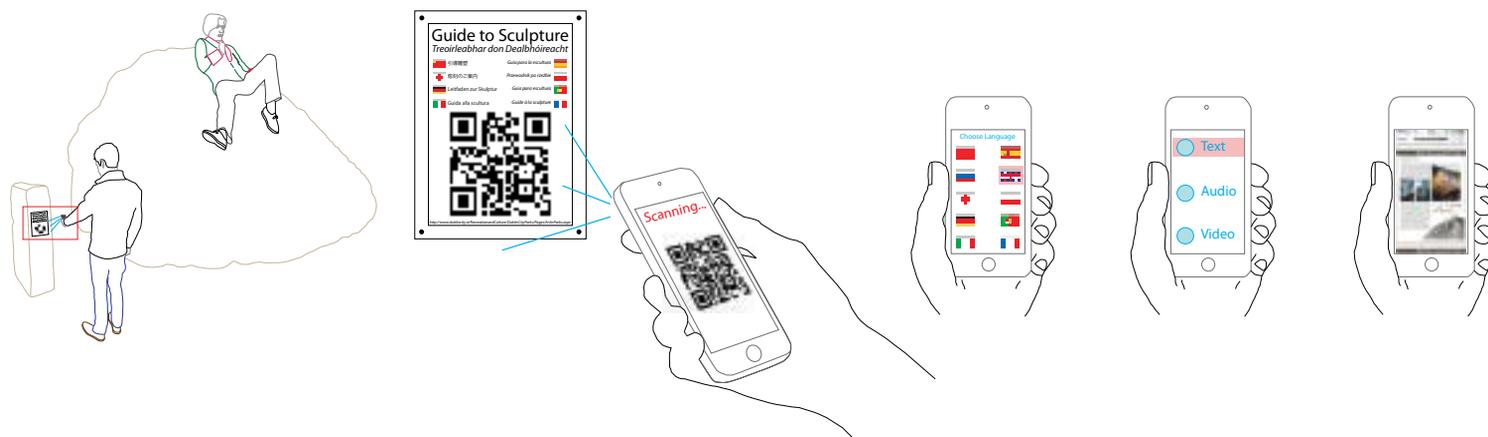


Action

- To study the feasibility of establishing a Dublin Parks Volunteer Programme.



Oscar Wilde Sculpture in Merrion Square Park



3.4 TECHNOLOGY

3.4.1 Digital Media and Devices

How we obtain information has changed significantly in the last few decades. Traditional sources are competing with social media sites and the internet, with the trend in favour of online mediums. Smartphone usage is also growing, with a high percentage of ownership amongst the younger generation. Information on park services needs to adapt to the new formats and devices to maintain engagement with the public.

Connecting to smartphones to enhance both residents and visitors experience of parks services is a significant area that can be developed. This ability to send information directly to the public creates new opportunities for parks. A multi-lingual guide was launched in 2015 for the popular Oscar Wilde sculpture (see www.dublincity.ie/DublinArtinParks). This pilot project incorporates a video, audio and text description of the sculpture, with the intention to expand it to the other artworks within the park.

3.4.2 Parks Information Portal

This project envisages a digital source of reports, drawings, maps and images linked to a map of Dublin’s parks and open spaces, which will be available on a City Council website. It will act as a source of general and detailed information, such as ecological reports for Bull Island, park management plans or historical mapping of parks. A multi-lingual component will be adopted for key visitor information.

Policy

- To enhance information availability on park services and resources through contemporary media and digital devices.

Actions

- To further develop smartphone multi-lingual guides for artworks located in Merrion Square Park.
- To develop multi-lingual digital guides to historic parks.
- To develop a parks information portal in cooperation with adjacent Dublin local authorities and the OPW.

3.5 INTERPRETATION AND WAYFINDING

City parks have an array of different information, interpretation and wayfinding signage, but in some cases there is an absence of such information. As a capital city and international city, it is important to help guide both visitors and locals with appropriate information in an appropriate format. The installation of Dublin’s new street wayfinding signage sets a good standard of this with a focus on formats for the visually impaired.

Policy

- To provide good interpretation and wayfinding for park visitors to enhance their experience and knowledge of park resources.

Actions

- To coordinate orientation for visitors and develop a Park Wayfinding System.
- To update the city parks brochure.