

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report develops design guidelines for urban open spaces in Kingston in order to remedy a shortcoming with the current practice and policy of open space planning in Kingston. The study process used here in the development of design guidelines is closely modeled after Toronto's *Cityplan '91*, which classified Toronto's open spaces, and then compared examples of each type of open space to 'classic' examples from around the world. These comparisons directed the development of open space design guidelines best suited to Toronto. This study, however, will not rely on comparative world examples to identify principles of good design, rather it will draw on important design concepts found in literature on the subject of urban open spaces.

This study was primarily concerned with design guidelines for open spaces where adjacent built form is an influential element in the form and character of an open space. These spaces are typically located within the higher density areas and almost exclusively within the urban core of a city. In order to focus on these types of spaces specifically, the study area was delineated to include only those areas of Kingston with dense urban fabric: the City's urban core and Portsmouth Village.

Because there is more than one type of open space, one set of guidelines would not be sufficient to reflect the design requirements of all types. The first stage of this report was the development of a typology to classify urban open spaces in Kingston.

- Forecourts and Landscaped Setbacks
- Downtown Squares
- Neighbourhood Squares
- Courtyards
- Urban Parks
- Pocket Parks

- Linear Parks
- Intersection Parks

For each of these eight types of open space, design guidelines were developed based on principles of good urban design identified in the writings of Jan Gehl, William Whyte, Kevin Lynch, Clare Cooper Marcus, and others. The following eleven design considerations represent some of the general components of a successful open space derived from the literature.

- 1) Edge Elements            The architectural features of the urban built form which create the edges of an open space
- 2) Enclosure                The built form which surrounds an open space, creating the walls of an outdoor room
- 3) Size                        The size of an open space should be related to human scale and reflect pedestrian densities in order to create a vital space
- 4) Surrounding Land Use    The land use activities surrounding an open space can have a significant impact on the type and intensity of activity in an open space
- 5) Focus                      Open spaces should have a site feature such as public art, water features, or architectural features which dominates the space, creating a memorable design
- 6) Coherence and Intricacy    An open space should combine an easily understandable design with physical features to create elements of interest
- 7) Views                      The visual interest of open space users must be maintained by orienting activities to views of pedestrian activity or other vistas
- 8) Safety                      In addition to lighting and emergency phones, all areas of an open space should be visible from adjacent streets and surrounding land uses should encourage after hours activity
- 9) Places to Sit              Seating in open spaces should be provided and oriented to sunlight, focal points and pedestrian activities
- 10) Microclimate            Building heights and massing can block solar access and intensify wind speeds, reducing user comfort in adjacent open spaces
- 11) Attractions              An open space should contain some form of attraction which acts as a stimulus to social interaction

These general design guidelines for open spaces were used to develop a detailed set of guidelines for each of the eight types of open space identified in the classification scheme. Because not all of the general design guidelines are appropriate for each of the eight types of open space, modifications were necessary. Type-specific guidelines were developed and then applied to each type of open spaces in case studies. Eight case studies were undertaken and included: St. Andrew's Church Grounds, Market Square, McBurney Park, Rochleau Court, Boucher Park, City Park, Breakwater Park, and Pine Street Parkette. Case studies were used to demonstrate an application of the proposed guidelines, ensure their effectiveness, and identify any oversights or problems. Recommendations for changes to Kingston's open space planning policy and practice were based on the experiences of each of the case studies.

Changes to Kingston's planning policy regarding urban open spaces must begin by recognizing the various types of open spaces within the City and by recognizing that each type has its own individual design requirements. Having successfully implemented urban design policy in Section 3.10 of the *Official Plan*, the City currently regulates streetscape design and site design. These policies demonstrate that the implementation of design guidelines for open spaces in Kingston is possible.

Section 4.18.6 of the City's *Official Plan* pertains to special open space areas such as shoreline areas and environmental protection areas. These areas are strictly regulated in terms of design and use. A similar arrangement would be ideal for implementing design guidelines respecting open spaces and each type of open space could constitute a type of special open space. It is, therefore, recommended that for each of the eight types of open space identified in Chapter 2, design guidelines be set out that establish appropriate: surrounding built form and land use, edge elements such as building facades, internal elements such as landscaping, standards to ensure a pleasant microclimate, and facilities for recreational and leisure activities