

## How a big park in the middle of the city can make a huge difference

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*A story by Alvaro Palazuelos and High Park, Toronto, ON.*



Since I landed in Canada six years ago, I lived in a small city surrounded by nature in the middle of British Columbia. I had beautiful trails going through magnificent forests just a five minute walk away from my office. Needless to say, I became an even greater outdoor enthusiast that I already was, and spent at least an hour walking, hiking, running or rock climbing outside every day.

When I got to Toronto in September 2014 I moved downtown. I couldn't find a large park close to my house and I was finding that the tall buildings, traffic, and limited green spaces were asphyxiating me. By the end of February I was noticing that I wasn't as cheerful as I usually am and that I wasn't concentrating as much in my work.

Finally, around mid-March 2015, I decided to move a block away from High Park. This was probably the best decision I made since moving to Toronto, as I can already feel the difference. I am spending at least 45 minutes either walking, running, or exercising in that park every day. Just being outside on a regular basis has changed my mood completely. I am happier, I feel more energized, I engage in conversation with people more often, and I would swear that I am also being much more productive in my work. At least for myself, there is a huge impact to quality of life and well-being when I can access natural environments on a regular basis. Maybe I have a strong connection to our ancestry as hunter-gatherers which makes me need to have my time moving through nature in order to be happy. All I know is that I feel healthier, happier, and even smarter since I've started spending more time in nature once again.

