



Workshop 2: Ottawa River North Shore Improvement Plan

Consultation Report, June 17, 2015

Planning Workshop: Ottawa River North Shore Improvement Plan

I — Project Description

Background

The National Capital Commission (NCC) would like to develop an improvement plan for federal lands on the north shore of the Ottawa River in the Capital core area, including Ruisseau de la Brasserie (Brewery Creek).

Objective

The development of an improvement plan for federal lands on the north shore of the Ottawa River, in the Capital core area will allow for a comprehensive and consistent improvement concept for federal lands in this sector, by identifying improvement proposals and possible land uses, and establishing guiding principles and guidelines for improvement.

The study area comprises federal shoreline properties between Laurier Street and the river, from Jacques-Cartier Park North to Portageurs Park, and includes NCC lands between Brewery Creek and Montcalm Street. The sector covered by the consultation is shown in Appendix 1: Study Area.

Development Phases

Phase 1: Current conditions and overview of the issues

Phase 2: Preliminary design and development principles

Phase 3: Final plan

II — Consultation Process

Overview

Date and location: Wednesday, June 17, 2015, NCC Capital Urbanism Lab, 40 Elgin Street, Ottawa

Time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Format: Planning workshop

Purpose of Consultation

The public was invited to a second workshop on the development of the Ottawa River North Shore Improvement Plan. The study area includes federal lands between Jacques-Cartier Park and Brewery Creek.

The purpose of this second workshop was to gather public comments about the preliminary concept and the underlying improvement objectives.

Consultation Procedure and Tools

- **Workshop:** Three stations were set up, with each presenting a segment of the shoreline linear park. At each station, a 30-minute presentation was given, followed by a question period, during which participants completed a questionnaire. They were then asked to mark on a chart the elements they liked the most and least about each segment, and to make suggestions.
- **Online consultation:** An online questionnaire was available from June 17 to July 3, 2015.

Invitations and promotion

- Email invitations were sent to the following stakeholders¹:
 - Interest groups (resident, environmental, tourism and business associations)
 - Elected municipal officials
 - Municipal and federal partners
- Media were asked to attend.
- The workshop was advertised in local newspapers.
- Facebook and Twitter messages promoted the workshop.

Participants

Community

Thirty-four people took part in the workshop.

Twenty-four participants answered the paper questionnaire.

Media

Ici Radio-Canada Ottawa-Gatineau was present.

1. First Nations groups participate in an ongoing dialogue under a separate engagement process.

III — Consultation Highlights

According to participants, the plans should accomplish the following in the targeted sector:

- Improve the safety and comfort of recreational pathway users.
- Provide better connections between public places via the pathways.
- Provide swimmers, kayakers, paddle boarders and canoeists with better water access through improvements and user services.
- Enhance the natural character of the properties, and plant more vegetation.
- Encourage animation activities in public places through facilities and recreational services, in addition to festival sites.

IV — Public Comments

PRELIMINARY CONCEPT

Participants stated what they liked most and what they liked least in each sector, and offered suggestions.

Jacques-Cartier Park

What people like most

- Easy access to urban centres, neighbourhoods and paths in the bicycle pathway system; extension and improvement of bike paths
- Views of the river, Parliament, Ottawa and the many green spaces and wooded areas
- Heritage: historical building conservation
- Festivals, concerts, family-oriented recreational activities (interpretation panels along the pathways) and new businesses
- Access to the Ottawa River and docks at the marina

What people like least

- A bike path system that makes access difficult: intrusive pedestrians, lack of access to bridges from pathways
- Missing services:
 - Washrooms
 - Twilight and nighttime lighting
 - Shuttles
 - Reasonably priced parking
- Urban location under-exploited:
 - Not enough festivals and family activities
 - Few restaurants
 - Magnificent historical buildings closed to the public
 - Absence of landscaping improvements
- Inability to venture further into wooded areas; very few green spaces
- Over-exploited urban site: destruction of Jacques-Cartier Park caused by the large number of public festivals, construction of a national building and use of parking; disruption of the peace and quiet of nearby residents
- Poor use of the park's marina: operation described as inconsistent; the marina should be extended toward the south shore; no dock for motorboats

What people suggest

- Greater protection of nature:
 - Plant vegetation along the edge of the river and pathways.
 - Create an interpretation centre, a route or a museum that redirects tourists to interesting natural areas that are characteristic of our region, and that teach them about sustainable development.
 - Install boat cleaning stations.
 - Comply with regulations requiring a 15-metre distance between bicycle paths and the high-water mark.
- Develop a sandy beach.
- Improve the cycling network: finish the “tour de l'île” pathway, and create a path on the Macdonald-Cartier Bridge and along Laurier Street.

- Encourage a variety of sporting activities:
 - Develop a safe corridor for open water swimmers.
 - Install docking facilities for kayaks and canoes, floating docks under bridges to encouraging recreational fishing, and outdoor exercise and gymnastics stations.
- Public animation:
 - Present light shows on the facades of national buildings.
 - Create fireworks displays and increase the number of festivals.
 - Create viewpoints at the ends of neighbouring streets.
 - Organize activities on the frozen river in winter.
 - Erect a building at the marina; install fountains and dog parks.
 - Authorize the presence of food trucks.
- Protect the region's historical heritage; open Maison Charron to the public.

Canadian Museum of History and the shoreline corridor (between Portage and Alexandra bridges)

What people like most

- Improved cycling network: better bicycle access to urban centres and more pathways along the river shoreline (Portage Bridge to Voyageurs Park, and Victoria Bridge to the footpath)
- Views of Parliament, Ottawa, the river and falls, as well as water access
- Public animation: Canadian Museum of History and public festivals
- Conversion of the Kruger factory parking lot into a natural public square
- Wooded areas and green space around the museum: these are natural, relatively undeveloped and therefore very beautiful, making more urban improvement in the area unnecessary.
- Passive areas near the Portage Bridge

What people like least

- Insufficient green space protection:
 - Shoreline erosion
 - Little or no biological diversity in the species present on-site
 - Chemical pesticide and herbicide use
 - Natural areas very limited in size
- Ineffective local transportation system:
 - Heavy traffic puts cyclists at risk as they change pathways. (Participants particularly singled out the Eddy/Laurier intersection as an area requiring attention.)
 - Parking around the museum is scarce; access is more limited for Ontario residents
 - Lack of continuous sidewalks
- Obstructed view:
 - Black smoke from the Kruger factory hangs over the museum and obstructs the view of the museum's architecture.
 - Noise from vehicles travelling on Alexandra Bridge
 - Parking lots and large trees line the edge of the river, and space around the museum is limited.
 - Graffiti on walls and under the Portage Bridge

What people suggest

- Optimize the use of urban space by creating the following:
 - Restaurants and benches, both in the shade and in the sun
 - Beaches, new points of access to the water and fountains, floating docks under the Alexandra Bridge to encourage recreational fishing
 - Family play areas, pathway signage for greater interactivity
 - Agricultural greenhouses in winter
- Hold recurring festivals and concerts, and open the Kruger factory to the public, with the goal of attracting tourists to the site.
- Offer more visitor services, such as year-round bike path maintenance and lighting.

- Strive to protect natural zones within the urban area:
 - Add green roofing to the museum.
 - Respect the visitor capacity of these areas.
 - Protect all parts of the islands.
 - Develop botanical gardens, and create a scenic meeting place for holding conferences on how to make Gatineau a greener city.
- Develop more appealing vantage points by eliminating parking lots in the Domtar factory area, and by preventing the pulp and paper company from expanding its facilities.

Chaudières Falls and Brewery Creek

What people like most

- Improvements to the cycling network:
 - New bicycle and pedestrian connections (in the Portage Bridge and Portageurs Park area, in collaboration with the Zibi project, through the Kruger factory area)
 - Extended pathways and better safety
- Access to the Chaudières Falls, the river and scenic views; boat docking facilities
- Conservation of the Wright-Scott House, and creation of a skating rink on the property
- Appealing activities along Brewery Creek

What people like least

- Very dangerous bike paths (Eddy/Alexandre-Taché and Alexandre-Taché/Montcalm)
- Neglect and deterioration of the creek: very high levels of bacteria and sediment that clogs the waterway
- Insufficient urban amenities:
 - Lack of animation and public services
 - Water access is difficult
 - Unused area on Montcalm Street
- Weaknesses in the protection of plants and wildlife
 - Deforestation caused by emerald ash borer
 - Tiny natural area

- Increased urban activity anticipated with the plan to upgrade the two bridges; the location must remain a small commercial corridor
- Low walls of the creek block views of the river.

What people suggest

- Create new, north–south cycling connections along the river; separate bike lanes from pedestrian lanes; repair the railway bridge.
- Focus on urban development of the site:
 - On the Chaudières Bridge, improve views of the falls and have a boat service to take passengers close to the falls.
 - Open a kayak, canoe and river surfboard rental kiosk.
 - Open a restaurant at the Wright-Scott House.
 - Encourage year-round portable trailer use.
 - Present classic plays and concerts.
 - At night, project light displays on government buildings.
- Preserve the location’s natural character:
 - Create botanical gardens.
 - Use aquatic plants to clean the creek.
 - Develop rain gardens to limit rainwater runoff into the watercourse.
 - Replace traditional grasses with natural lawns (clover and fescue) that require less water and maintenance.
 - Plant new species of trees to improve the area’s biodiversity.
- Enhance views by lowering the concrete walls of the creek, improving views of the falls from the Chaudières Bridge, and planting a greater variety of trees and shrubs.

ANIMATION SITES

Participants gave their opinions on the proposed type and intensity of animation.

- Most participants considered the project vague and insufficiently detailed or innovative, but said they liked its environmental vision.
- Many people supported the project, saying that parks should be natural, tranquil places, and that the plan provided an ideal mix of passive and active activities in these public areas.
- Others supported the type of animation proposed, but disagreed with its low intensity. In their opinion, we must include other festivals and activities, install interpretation panels on the pathways to stimulate visitor interest, and invest in public amenities like washrooms, cafés and infrastructure.

Respondents also indicated the kinds of activities they considered appropriate for these sites.

- Non-motorized sports: river surfing, kayaking, canoeing, cliff jumping, open water swimming, cycling, walking, fitness activities (at outdoor fitness and gymnastic stations) and volleyball
- Festivals (fewer “ear-splitting” rock concerns and more tranquil music, like baroque song and classical music)
- Scenic restaurants and picnic areas
- Shoreline conservation and nature trails lined with interpretation panels to attract the attention of tourists
- Botanical garden or museum on sustainable development and the protection of natural areas
- Public amenities:
 - Year-round maintenance of pedestrian and bike paths
 - Picnic tables
 - More parking near Jacques-Cartier Park

Participants mentioned upgrades, services or infrastructure that would make the sites more attractive outside planned activity periods.

- Impressive landscaping improvements:
 - Practical and decorative fountains
 - Shrub and flower plantings
 - Improvements to the gardens at the Wright-Scott House
 - Easier access to the water and views of the region's landscapes
 - Benches
- Public amenities:
 - More site entry and exit points
 - Washrooms
 - More parking
 - Restaurants (establishments or street food trucks)
 - Year-round portable trailer use
 - Picnic tables
 - Shaded areas in public parks
 - Pathway lighting for evening walks
- Sports and tourism upgrades:
 - Bicycle parking
 - Low-level docks
 - Exercise stations
 - Widening of shared pedestrian-cyclist pathways
 - Beach and kayak/canoe rentals
 - Family play areas
 - Interpretation panels and monuments near heritage buildings
 - Botanical museum
- Increase the amount of green space, giving priority to natural lawns (clover, fescue, etc.).

Respondents expressed ideas that should be taken into account, especially when the time comes to redevelop the properties.

- Maintain water access as much as possible.
- Protect nature:
 - Reduce the number of activities in Jacques-Cartier Park.
 - Add greenery to NCC properties with natural lawns.
 - Develop rain gardens and a botanical museum.
 - Plant a greater variety of plant species along shorelines and trees along pathways.
 - Respect wild animals and plants.
 - Establish a nature interpretation centre to redirect tourists to points of interest.
- Make provision for urban development:
 - Open an NCC conference centre at this location.
 - Present plays at Portageurs Park and light displays at Jacques-Cartier Park.
 - Create family play areas, food truck stations and landscaping.
 - Cultivate an awareness of the region's history.
- Foster site access:
 - Allow entry to festivals free of charge.
 - Complete the “tour de l'île” pathway.
 - Improve connections between the two shores of the river.
 - Establish a shuttle service.
 - Limit vehicle traffic to encourage active transportation.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Priority Ideas

The following are the main ideas raised by participants.

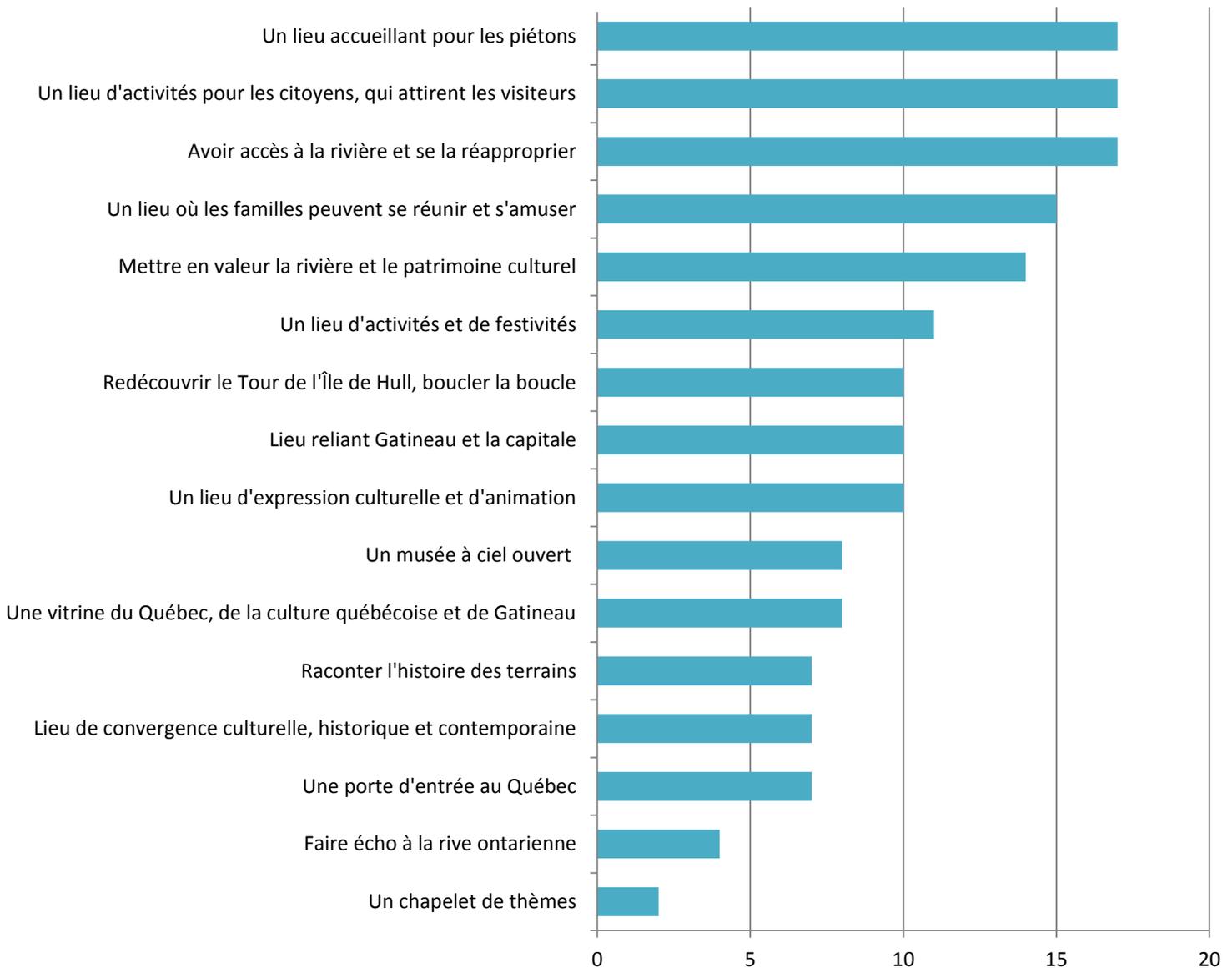
- Bicycle path improvement:
 - Widen pathways, or create separate lanes for cyclists and pedestrians on multi-use pathways.
 - Create a link to Brewery Creek and surrounding neighbourhoods.
 - Maintain pathways year-round.
 - Increase the number of connections, for example, between Alexandre-Taché Boulevard and the Chaudières Bridge, above the water, between the Portage Bridge and Portageurs Park through the Zibi project, from the Laurier/Alexandre-Taché intersection to the sites.
 - Make the pathways safe (intersections under Eddy / Chaudières Bridge to the north and under the Eddy / Portage Bridge).
 - Install self-serve bicycle stations like Bixi at central locations, ending at the “tour de l’île” pathway in Hull.
 - Install signs indicating the distance to urban locations.
- Green spaces and natural areas:
 - Recover the two parking lots behind the Kruger factory, and convert them into green space.
 - Develop relaxation areas and “green homes” on the sites.
 - Protect and decontaminate soils and watercourses.
 - Create gardens in Jacques-Cartier Park.
 - Install boat cleaning stations to prevent watercourse contamination.
 - Take action to prevent shoreline erosion.
- Public animation:
 - Develop playgrounds for children at the sites.
 - Increase the number of celebrations and cultural and sporting activities.
 - Improve river access at Jacques-Cartier Park.
 - Develop the Brewery Creek shoreline.
 - Develop an open-air museum and open the Wright-Scott House to the public.
 - Inform tourists about the history of the Chaudières Falls and the region.

- Develop docks at Jacques-Cartier Park, as well as storage and access points for Aviron Québec.
- Develop a beach.
- Install interpretation panels about local wildlife and plants along the pathways.
- Scenic views: enhance views of Ottawa and the Chaudières Falls.

At the November 2014 consultation, we asked the public to submit proposals for inclusion in this improvement plan. At the second consultation in June, participants ranked these ideas based on their priorities.

Prioritization of ideas submitted by participants at the November 2014 public consultation

Ideas submitted at the November 2014 public consultation for inclusion in the development plan



Other suggestions

Here are other suggestions submitted to us by our workshop guests.

- Recognize the heritage of the First Nations.
- Increase the number of monuments.
- Emphasize activities that illustrate distinctly Canadian values, such as creativity, freedom, connection to nature, the inclusion of seniors, health and wellness.
- Identify rare species on natural pathways, or present maximum biodiversity.
- Clean and decontaminate Brewery Creek; cover its entire length.
- Encourage workers to use cross-country skiing as an active means of transportation and provide locations where they can store their skis during the day.
- Plant more trees on both shorelines to prevent landslides during heavy rains and to conceal urban development from the river.
- Collaborate with Ottawa Riverkeeper to clean up and protect the Ottawa River.

V — Integration of Results

The NCC will use the ideas and comments gathered during the public consultation to develop the Ottawa River North Shore Improvement Plan.

VI — Next Steps

The NCC will hold meetings with the parties concerned. A draft of the Ottawa River North Shore Improvement Plan will be finalized in 2017.