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MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING ON SIR GEORGE-ETIENNE CARTIER PARK

December 5, 2022

19:00-20:30 Ottawa EST

In person – 40 Elgin

**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Staff:**

- Moderator: Madeleine Gomery
- Speakers: Andrew Sacret, Kelly McRae, Patricia McCann-MacMillan
- Note-takers: Hilary Koum Njoh

**Attendees:**

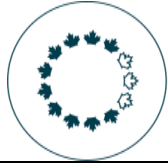
<b>Participant name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Ian Gadbois	Ski Heritage East
John Murray (*former member)	Rockcliffe Yacht Club
Anne-Carole Beauregard	NCC
Laura Reinsborough	Ottawa Riverkeeper
Meghan Hanlon	Ottawa New Edinburgh Club (ONEC)
Matthew Henderson	Rockcliffe Park Residents Association
Heather Matthews	Resident New Edinburgh, Board of New Edinburgh Community Alliance
Nicole Fortier	Société franco-ontarienne du patrimoine et de l'histoire d'Orléans (SFOPHO)



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**AGENDA**

#	Member	Item
	<b>Madeleine Andrew</b>	Welcome
	<b>Hilary</b>	Housekeeping
	<b>Kelly Patricia</b>	<p>Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The presentation should give you a better understanding of how the park functions, allow you to share what you value, and what could be improved upon</li><li>• We will be starting at the west end of the park to the east</li><li>• The study area on the map in front of you is 13 km</li><li>• We are currently in phase 3 where we are developing draft concepts, and this is where we are looking for your feedback tonight</li><li>• Our goal is to have the plan finalised in 2024</li><li>• We have also undertaken further studies since we met with you last year.</li><li>• During the summer we commissioned a cultural landscape study, from this information we are looking to identify future opportunities for enhancement of the cultural landscape</li><li>• We are commissioning a traffic and mobility study in the new year for any improvements in the infrastructure and possible pathway connections</li><li>• Last summer we also hired a summer student who produced a vegetation survey for the park. This study is a key component of the park plan as it identified the vegetation types and percentage of land cover. This information will help us determine management approaches at a high level.</li><li>• We developed a strategic table to provide direction to the planning which identifies the themes. The themes support the visions and identify the key areas that the NCC will be looking at</li><li>• Please note that Lower Duck Island is included in the park area, but we are not looking to attract people to the island. Instead, we are looking for opportunities to highlight its environmental significance and to develop policies that will help with its protection.</li></ul>
	<b>Kelly</b>	Q&A intro



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	<b>Patricia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why just Lower Duck Island? Lower Duck Island is owned by the NCC. The other islands are not.</li> <li>• At the beginning of this presentation we asked you for your input on the park and if we are on the right path. We now pass it on to you. Feel free to communicate in the language of your choice</li> </ul>
	<b>Madeleine</b>	<p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed notes will be sent in the next week or so (note: we apologize for the delay). They will outline the details of tonight’s session</li> <li>• Later this winter, there will be a public consultation online. When we launch the online consultation, we invite you to share that information within your network</li> <li>• If there are other questions, comments please feel free to message me directly</li> <li>• I want to thank all of you for coming tonight and sharing your thoughts and thank you to our team. It was a pleasure to receive you all</li> </ul>

**DISCUSSION**

#	Member	Item raised by participant	Response/Action by NCC
Q&A			
1	John	Has the plan dedicated space to greater commercialization? There is very little there for those who want to grab something to eat. Perhaps you can look into getting a few vendors and get people to both stay in the area and go there.	
2	Ian	I second that motion. We need some more facilities, potentially where the boat club is. There may be commercial opportunities in that location.  Washrooms are a big thing. It’s not just nature that attracts people to the river, there should be some blend with a food service.	
3	John	On the Gatineau side there is more commercialization.	We hear you say you want some additional food options.



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			Are there other areas in the park where that could be optimal?
4	Heather	There was a pavilion and a window that sold ice cream back in the day. Something as simple as ice cream in the summer and hot chocolate in the winter would be great.	
5	John	The Blair Boat Launch may be another spot to consider.	
6	Ian	Are there plans to improve the Blair Boat Launch? There are no docks there?	It was recently improved and there is a ramp.
7	Meghan	Connectivity, access, and experience is identified for Node 4.  Why was culture and heritage not identified in Node 4 since the River House has recently celebrated its 100-year anniversary?	When we did our cultural landscape study, we made several observations. Generally speaking sector A had more heritage areas, sector B contains more cultural areas, and sector C is characterized by its environmentally significant lands.  This is not exclusive and many of the themes are found in each of the sectors.
8	Meghan	ONEC has existed in several places along the river. Water sports and canoeing was a big part of Ottawa heritage as it developed as a space. ONEC itself was a cultural centre for the city.	Is there something in the built heritage that we should identify?  Some survey respondents suggested the NCC should highlight / commemorate the beacon and explain why the area is called Beacon Hill.
9	Meghan	Could we have a skating rink on the river?	We don't know the feasibility of this, but we are indeed aiming for a recreative function in that node.
10	Ian	Who do you expect the major tenant of the River House to be?	We have the Ottawa Riverkeeper as a major tenant.
11	Meghan	Washrooms are a necessity. I've seen people jump in the bushes to use the washroom.	
12	Nicole	There should be 3-4 areas where people could go to the washroom. Otherwise you cannot go for a long trip especially for women.	



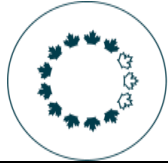
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		We wanted to stop but we felt that we couldn't stop at the Yacht Club because we felt that we were infringing in the area.	
13	John	If there is flooding the washrooms may be impractical.	We do have the floodplain mapping, depending on the infrastructure we are expecting we can see what is practical and analyse the risk. It is information that we use.
14	Laura	Do we know the demographics of who will use this park and who we anticipate will use this park?	In the summer of 2021, the NCC did a survey and demographics were included. Generally, it was a younger demographic, and it was mostly people who were in the areas. Young families, more affluent, and more local people. These lands are being planned as a capital park that will aim to attract visitors to the capital.
15	Matthew	Ottawa New Edinburgh Club (ONEC) currently does not have an adequate space to store kayaks, shells, and supplies. As a result, these items are blocking the public path. It is my hope that ONEC could have a home in the NCC River House, which would provide a suitable space for storage.	To be discussed.
16	Matthew	Community members have expressed a variety of concerns to me: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People like that the current area a hidden gem. They like that the natural space is a little rough and not too manicured.</li> <li>• Concerns over the mile circle. If a structure is built, it may block residential views (along Sandridge Road) and reduce green space.</li> <li>• Worries about parking on residential streets.</li> <li>• Concerns about cutting down trees to create river views.</li> </ul>	The NCC prioritizes protecting existing trees and avoiding tree removal whenever possible. There are options for creating views without cutting down trees.



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17	Matthew	<p>Years ago, construction debris were dumped on the shoreline and were eventually made into the lower path. This is evident in places where large chunks of cement with metal girders protrude from the shoreline. It's interesting to note that the "natural" shorelines are not in fact natural.</p> <p>An interpretive panel with information on the history of this section of the river could be interesting. There could be more done to educate people about the history of the area.</p>	<p>Interesting idea and background – thank you for sharing.</p>
18	Ian	<p>In terms of access, are there some suggestions that could be done more quickly than others? (E.g., lower the speed limits and crosswalks).</p> <p>Consider adding a crosswalk or two or lowering the speed limit.</p>	<p>We need to know more about both the pedestrian and vehicle traffic. We are commissioning the traffic study to better understand the opportunities.</p>
19	John	<p>There are renewed concerns in Orléans about a new bridge across the Ottawa River. Has the NCC committed to that?</p>	<p>It is a PSPC-led project that is currently in a geotechnical study phase, in which the NCC is assisting as part of the joint project team. At this stage tonight we are here to talk about the SGEC plan.</p>
20	John	<p>Bridge heights interfering with flight paths and moving it to the east. The bridge height is an unresolved issue.</p>	
21	Matthew	<p>There are two trails with very different experiences. Have you thought about them?</p> <p>The lower path is slower and better for family.</p> <p>If you are trying to move quickly people could use the top path but sometimes the bikers move too quickly.</p>	<p>There is no continuous path there at the moment.</p> <p>There are concerns for pedestrians and it has been noted that they avoid using the path during commute times.</p> <p>Public consultation will take place in the new year where we will be soliciting comments.</p>



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22	Ian	Widen the shoulders of the pathways.	
23	Meghan	Enforcement of the no-wake zones and boat speed limits in the area where the River House is located. This could make people feel safer in the water.  There are some areas that could be a bit concerning depending on the weather and the number of people.	
24	John	Speeding on the water is a terrible problem.	
25	Matthew	Public swimming is terrifying with speeding on the water.	
26	Matthew	With regards to the presentation, the nodes may be a little confusing. Perhaps think of using examples that are closer to home.	The NCC will provide reference maps for nodes in future consultations.
27	Heather	Not enough seating offered.	We have heard similar comments about sun shelter.
28	Matthew	Suggest providing water bottle filling station or water fountains.	
29	Matthew	On the western end, use public transportation to get people on the ONEC/River House side and improve access there	The NCC's current policy is not to have public transportation on the pathways.
30	Ian	There is a new path that would create a continuous cross-country ski loop, which would be a major bonus.	
31	Matthew	What does it mean to enhance skiing opportunities?  What about grooming?	More ski trails and providing warming stations.
32	Heather	There are some interpretive panels along the river. In terms of public engagement, has there been thought of something similar to the freedom trails in Boston which tells you a story as you go along the path about the area and its history?	



33	Ian	We're not very good at telling our history.	
34	Laura	<p>Who could be attracted to this place within the theme of accessibility? What would consultation look like from different racial demographic and class backgrounds so that all could feel welcomed? What amenities would best support them?</p> <p>In choosing the investments made in development it does exclude and unintentionally mean that maybe visitors and other residents don't feel welcomed. We want to ensure that the programming that we do is inclusive as possible.</p>	The NCC will do more and follow up with you with a more fulsome comment.

**FOLLOW UP:**

**Manor Park Community Association** (\*invited to, but could not attend the meeting)

- This renewal of the area is such a great opportunity to feature culture & heritage and it is wonderful to see more active use of the river and paths in the plan.
- SECTOR A
  - Node 1
    - improve river access and cross-country skiing is good
    - Could this plan also look at better on road or trail - bike facilities from the Governor Generals to Node 1? More pedestrian facilities needed in general at node 1
  - Node 2
    - Opportunity to reuse the space under the pavilion (where they used to serve ice cream) and this space would benefit from open/accessible washrooms and water fountains near the pavilion.
    - Could there be a playground as well (saw some great [examples] recently installed 'playgrounds' in Montreal that are designed to blend with landscaping and were fun/usable and interesting for kids AND adults).





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- Node 3
  - Unsure if we need "River view" here also - if there are already a few scenic outlooks on the parkway (Rockcliffe lookout, Rockcliffe Park by P1 & P2) - would a new "River view" increase visitor traffic/need for parking to an area that has been identified as one where preserving natural character is key?
  - Better connection to northern pathway would be beneficial to residents and visitors - more details on this would be helpful to provide comments.
- Node 4
  - In-river swimming would be a valuable new recreational opportunity
  - Is access from the boathouse to the rockeries (stairs? ramp?) being explored - will there be opportunities for public rentals of water vessels here?
  - Enhance Rockeries experience - art installations would be a wonderful way to enhance what is already there - please add benches - Upper grassy area along Acacia could be used better with some benches, picnic tables and could also be a new location for some garden beds (so that it could be identified better as public property)
- Node 5
  - Any new permanent building - could this be integrated with the Aviation and Space Museum so as to have less of an impact on greenspace (and sharing parking) or perhaps Node 4 (Sector C) might be a better place for medium scale outdoor entertainment and/or cultural facility as it is close to the LRT station and can accommodate high traffic during events good ideas.
  - Not all meadow greenspace needs to be developed - this is a great viewshed and open area that is close to downtown and can benefit many. This area could be used for groomed cross-country skiing in the winter? Good place for skate-skiing tracks (less conflict with classic trails if these are separate). Also, field could be used for temporary and/or removable stage infrastructure if needed.
  - Would benefit from raised pedestrian / cycling crossing from gravel path along Birch to P5 to improve ability of people coming from Vanier, Rockcliffe, Manor Park etc. to access river using active transportation / OC Transpo (bus stop at Birch/Sandridge).
  - Facilities should include public washrooms that are accessible - close to river paths.



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- SECTOR B
  - Node 1
    - Public facilities here would be good
  - Node 2
    - Enhanced parking for boat trailers and others away from the river would be good - can locate up near north end of Blair Road - expand cul-de-sac so that greenspace\*\* by river is not impacted by needing to increase parking area. \*\* This wooded area is one of Ottawa's remaining larger woods within city limits and should be protected.
    - Safety between bike path and boat trailers to be addressed and public washroom facilities would be good here along with commercial facilities for food and water vessel rentals
- SECTOR C
  - Node 1
    - Access to lower pathway and cultural and heritage interpretation is good
  - Node 2
    - Connectivity over Green's Creek would be appreciated along with environmental connectivity to the island
  - Node 3
    - Public facilities and connectivity over Green's Creek would benefit this area
  - Node 4
    - This is a better site for a medium scale outdoor entertainment and/or cultural facility that allows great public access due to proximity to the LRT station
    - Connectivity to new municipal bridge would be key for this area opportunity for recreational bike rentals LRT stop and/or public bike share location
  - Node 5
    - Appreciate the focus on Lower Duck Island as environmentally significant
- GENERAL:
  - How can we encourage more active transportation (mobility and accessibility) for local residents? More ways to cross safely (raised cross walks, crossing lights, wider paths)



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- How can we separate various speeds of active transportation and increased activity/visitors for safety - is there any opportunity to have a safe bike lane along the parkway for higher speed active transportation? also need to consider slowing vehicle traffic - concerns about illegal speeding cars at night and commuter traffic - how can the parkway be redesigned to support this recreational use with slower car traffic for safety of everyone who is using it.
- Bike (and other - e-scooters?) parking is needed at all nodes along with more public washrooms and facilities
- New landscaping needs for nodes and facilities should be designed with native plants in mind agree - all new planting should be 100% native species. Also considerable invasive plants down along entire stretch of river paths here: lots of buckthorn and dog strangling vine - can removal / better management of invasives be incorporated into work to refresh these areas.

**Rothwell Heights Property Owners' Association** (\*invited to, but could not attend the meeting)

- Put **significant priority on conservation and enhancement** of the **asset of the linear park**. If any part of it becomes degraded by inappropriate or excessive use, its attraction and value to visitors and residents will fall.
  - For example, the natural conservation area adjacent to Blair Road, marked in beige on the introductory information board at the February Open House (but not labelled or colour coded in a key, so was an unknown quantity) seems to be highly valued by the NCC representatives at the Open House. And yet it is becoming a well-worn piece of woodland, criss-crossed by narrow, informal trails which have been shaped by dog-walkers and explorers who frequent the area. Increased use will degrade the area. And there is no indication that this area is of special value. Therefore, I suggest –
    - clearly defined paths to allow exploring but not over-running the area.
    - signs asking visitors to stay on the path.
    - Information boards describing why the area is valued.
    - descriptor boards along the path providing information about visible (or not visible) local species.
    - perhaps even a “pod” area where a bench or two are provided for those who may want to sit quietly in the woods.
- The above observations and suggestions also apply to the strip of woodland between the river path and the SGEC Parkway along this length of the park, although the woodland areas are not highly valued conservation areas.
- Be sure to **differentiate** in your thinking what **the unique asset values and uses of a linear park along a river** are, compared to large landscape park areas.



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- **Plan changes and improvements** to each access point by a **goal of the intended number of people / vehicles / boat trailers acceptable** at each at above average or peak times.
  - For example, if planning for future use and access by vehicles (especially vehicles with boat trailers) at the Blair Road Boat Launch, decide on a goal of how and the number of vehicles for which parking will be provided, therefore how much increased parking space will be needed or appropriate to provide. Obviously, this has to be balanced with the loss to the valued natural greenspace, which is one of the assets of this linear park.
- **Plan for overflow parking** situations, as these have occurred, and will continue to occur.
- **Plan for garbage clean-up / waste management** wherever parking or overflow parking occurs. This was a significant problem on Blair Road during the covid lockdowns.
- **Plan for winter access** to the ski trail. This suggests opening parking lots along the Parkway, and also potentially allowing winter parking at the Blair Road Boat Launch. Now, winter users park on neighbourhood streets. During covid lockdowns, the on-street parking near the Boat Launch and on cul-de-sacs close to the Parkway were filled with vehicles, to the point that residents complained. Whatever is a reasonable parking plan needs to be decided between NCC and City and conveyed to residents.
  - **Note:** Currently, a group of skiers are devoted to submerging in cold water through holes in the ice at the Blair Road Boat Launch.
- Focus on your goal of **how to encourage access not by private vehicle**. This goal matches the City's goals of increasing **active transportation** as well as of reducing the use of energy / fossil fuels (although increased ownership of electric vehicles will eliminate that aspect). This goal of access by transit and active transportation appears to need significant collaboration (e.g. with the City), more ideas (e.g. micro-transit options, bicycle rentals from LRT stations, etc.), and more pairing with the access and parking plans than many other suggestions.
- Please continue and perhaps expand **no vehicle weekends** on Parkways. This has been highly-valued by residents (and probably visitors as well).
- Encourage **exploring of the river** by use of third-party **water-taxi service(s)** based centrally, with pick-up / drop-off locations at points along the full-length.
- Consider **guided water-taxi tours** with history and other stories of our Heritage River. There are many stories which could be told along its length. These could include viewing around Lower Duck Island and the remaining foundation of the old beacon.



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- Encourage **active transportation and exploring** with bicycle rentals. Provide **self-guided tours** along the full length of the park, highlighting park assets along the way. Tours can have **different themes** and can potentially **be varied with excursions into adjacent parks** or neighbourhoods. There are many stories which can be told – historical, cultural, biological,
- But also plan for **motorized wheelchair access** and other vehicles for the disabled along some parts of the path.
- Link with the **property owners of Kettle and Upper Duck Islands**, to ensure common goals and interests.
  - **Note** that campers and day users with boats are often on the west end of Upper Duck Island for lengthy periods of time in summer. And yet there are no public or waste facilities there.
- Conduct a **Best Practices Study** of other linear parks.
- Consider rules for **managing power boats, and especially jet-skis** near the on-water access areas. The Blair Road Boat Launch sees clearly inexperienced users of both (and therefore users are also likely inexperienced in the rules of water safety). Some jet-skiers only do circles and wake-jumping in the immediate area. The noise is summer extends a considerable distance, not to mention potential disturbance to wildlife. Recall that Ontario regulations require proof of training for anyone running a power boat.
- Consider how to enhance **security in parking areas**, including limiting the hours of access and use. The Blair Road Boat Launch area sees regular activity late at night, and this writer has witnessed a burnt-out vehicle on the river path east of the boat launch area.
- When considering commercial services, focus on those based on **active transportation** and food services based on **zero waste**. Ensure regular clean-up. Litter will quickly destroy the current character of the park.
- Ensure there are many and appropriate **waste / recycling receptacles** along the path.
- Provide **more park benches** along the path. Costs might be reduced by allowing residents to cost-share, in order to dedicate the bench to a loved one or to a vision of good.
- Provide **bike racks, potentially with lock-up capability** at key points along the path, as some cyclists may want to wander at distance from their stopping point.
- Provide more **signposts** to inform users of their location and distances to other places.
- Provide **numbered information signs** to inform users of information – historical, cultural, biological, identification of native and invasive species, etc. Ensure signs with information are resistant to degradation in weather. Consider using QR code signs to provide more detailed information, assuming there is mobile signal in each location.



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- Recommend annual funding allocation every year for a program to **remove invasive species**. We know this task takes years of repeated removals for many species. It is therefore suited to an ongoing program which gets tailored to balance funding allocations. **Also note**, that with appropriate communication with community associations, some residents would **volunteer time and energy** to the work if it were led by a knowledgeable and equipped person(s).
- Recommend a **planting and replanting program of native species** of trees and other vegetation. This might be best coupled with the information and education program of the Park. Many users would benefit from knowing more about what is valued in these natural areas.