



Workshop: Ottawa River North Shore Improvement Plan

Consultation Report, November 25, 2014

Planning Workshop: Ottawa River North Shore Improvement Plan

I — Description

Background

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

Objective

The creation of an improvement plan for federal lands in the Capital core area on the north shore of the Ottawa River will provide a consistent, overall planning concept for federal lands in the area by putting forward planning proposals and possible uses for the lands, in addition to establishing design principles and guidelines.

The study area is composed of federal lands on the shoreline between Laurier Street and the river, from Jacques-Cartier Park North to Portageurs Park, including NCC lands between Brewery Creek and Montcalm Street. The map of the area that was the subject of the consultation is shown in Appendix 1: Study Area

Plan Development Phases

- Phase 1: Report on Existing Conditions and Issues
- Phase 2: Preliminary Concept and Design Principles
- Phase 3: Final Plan

II – Consultation Process

Overview

Date and Location: Tuesday, November 25, 2014, at the Capital Urbanism Lab, 40 Elgin Street, Ottawa

Time: 7 pm to 9 pm

Format: Planning workshop



Purpose of consultation

The purpose of the consultation was to gather participants' ideas and comments on the use and management of shoreline parks and green space in the years to come. The results of the consultation will contribute to the creation of the Ottawa River North Shore Improvement Plan and a future planning vision for NCC lands in designated areas.

Consultation process and tools

- **Workshop:** The discussion at each table centred on the lands under study. Using a guide-questionnaire, participants were asked to identify the strong points and drawbacks of the lands in question, write down or draw their ideas, and add their comments to a map. Appendix 2 contains the comments entered on the sector maps.
- **Plenary session:** Discussions were summarized, and written comments were gathered via a questionnaire.
- **Online consultation:** A questionnaire was made available online between November 25 and December 19, 2014.

Invitations and promotion

- An invitation was sent by email to the following stakeholders¹:
 - Interest groups (residents', environmental, tourism and business associations)
 - Elected municipal officials
 - Municipal and federal partners
- The media were asked to participate.
- The workshop was advertised in local newspapers.
- Facebook and Twitter messages promoted the workshop.

Participants

Community

Thirty participants representing 14 interest groups attended the workshop. Eleven people answered the online questionnaire.

1. Members of First Nations participated in an ongoing dialogue and separate mobilization process.

Elected officials

Richard Bégin, City Councillor and Chair of the Comité consultatif d'urbanisme (urban planning advisory committee), Ville de Gatineau

Mike Dugan, City Councillor, Ville de Gatineau

Denise Laferrière, City Councillor, Ville de Gatineau

Louise Boudrias, City Councillor, Chair, Board of Directors, Place des festivals

Media

The following media attended:

Le Droit

TC Media Gatineau

III — Consultation highlights

In terms of a plan for the area, participants want:

- To highlight the natural character of the lands.
- To improve access to the water by providing facilities and activities near or on the water.
- To maintain and improve the continuity of public spaces with trails and navigation routes; to create an “island tour.”
- To promote site-related historical interpretation activities.
- To establish a theme that connects all of the lands and to create an open-air museum.

IV — Public comments

Vision

While acknowledging the differences between the various sectors, participants defined the character and the intended visitor experience or atmosphere for the entire area under study:

- Enhance the rich historical heritage of the sites and the cultural convergence they represent. These locations symbolize the gateway to Quebec and the region's history and culture; they provide an opportunity to rediscover Hull Island.
- Develop the river and natural heritage of the area; take back ownership of the river by facilitating access to it.
- Make the site a place for gatherings and cultural activities, a meeting place for the enjoyment of families and the general public.
- Provide access to the site by public transit, on foot, by bicycle or car.

Participants identified the strong points and drawbacks of each sector and offered suggestions.

Portageurs Park and Brewery Creek

Some of the strong points included the following:

- The area's rich history (portage and the Wright-Scott House). The location is the jumping off point for the development of the Ottawa region, and part of the identity of the city and its residents.
- Its current and developing cultural attractions (Théâtre de l'Île, public art, Place de la Francophonie).
- Attractive potential from both a recreational perspective (walking, running, canoeing around the island and skating) and a contemplative perspective (public benches, view of the falls and hydroelectric works).
- A gateway to the Capital.

Drawbacks included the following:

- The sites' state of neglect (contaminated lands, creek retaining wall and neighbouring infrastructure); the creek's changing water level; the limited expanse of public space.
- Lack of consistent planning of the site: absence of public amenities (washrooms, drinking fountains and lighting); strategic lands for activities used as parking lots; remoteness from other sites; and poor pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- Potential development of amenities is limited by the permanent exhibition at the Portageurs Park.
- Intervention is complicated by the large number of partners involved.

Planning suggestions included the following:

- Include the Wright-Scott House in the area covered by the shoreline plan.
- Enhance the sector's landscape and cultural/heritage components.
- Improve cultural components by presenting activities smaller in scale than those held in the Jacques-Cartier Park sector; add visual art works; commemorate the birthday of painter Jean Dallaire; turn the Wright-Scott House into an educational or interpretation centre.
- Review the overall development of Brewery Creek and its shorelines.
- Improve the network of connections between Portageurs Park in the city and shoreline on the Domtar lands, ideally to the south of the E. B. Eddy heritage

building; extend the bicycle path connection to the west of the creek; build a bridge between the Théâtre de l'Île and the Wright-Scott House property.

- Create community partnerships to expand the range of available services.
- Expand the range of available recreational activities (kayaking, skating rink, “natural” playground).

Sector behind the Kruger plant

Some of the strong points included the following:

- Recreational pathways along the river and the corridor’s natural character.
- Scenic views of the river, the Parliament Buildings and Ottawa.
- Heritage elements: the digester tower; Kruger is the last vestige of the location’s industrial past.

Drawbacks included the following:

- The limited aesthetic appeal of an industrial area.
- Poor access to the recreational pathway to the west of the plant.
- Poor access to the recreational pathway near Alexandre-Taché Boulevard.
- Shoreline instability, i.e., erosion problems.
- The area’s isolation facilitates illicit activities.
- Lack of user services.

Planning suggestions included the following:

- Convert the parking lot behind the Kruger plant into a natural, public space.
- Retain the bicycle path and maintain it in winter; improve lighting; ensure a connection between the Domtar plant and Portageurs Park.
- Provide interpretation of the site’s industrial history, its connection to the river and its importance in the region’s economy and growth.
- Create an official access way to the scenic site east of the Portage Bridge at Scott Point.
- Make room for public art and provide space for graffiti artists on walls and under the Portage Bridge.

Canadian Museum of History

Some of the strong points included the following:

- Canadian Museum of History; elegant design; spectacular views; the natural character of the area; the high-quality recreational pathway.
- Contact with the river and access to the waterway.
- Cultural networking and activities or cultural events for everyone; extensive use in summer; very pleasant atmosphere.
- Access to public washrooms.

Drawbacks included the following:

- River is inaccessible and shoreline is artificial.
- Limited programming; passive outdoor space of limited appeal to visitors.
- Under-utilization of river shuttle; no link to other sites on the north and south shores.
- Few locations for sitting or eating outdoors in the area; poor pedestrian access; limited restaurant services.

Planning suggestions included the following:

- Heighten the profile of Aboriginal culture, as well as interpretation activities pertaining to shoreline wildlife and the industrial sector, particularly the digester tower; presentation of historical information.
- Improve recreational services: children's play areas (including water games); floating spa, Rabaska canoe tours, tables and park benches; a wedding pavilion; extend the hours of museum services.
- Expand river taxi services to include other sites, and improve related facilities (bicycle stands, umbrellas, lighting, etc.).
- Install a covered stage for cultural programming performances.
- Maintain the bicycle connection.
- Reduce grassy areas, and restore shorelines to their natural condition.

Jacques-Cartier Park South

Some of the strong points included the following:

- Proximity of the Canadian Museum of History, the downtown cores of Ottawa and Gatineau; area accessible on foot; plenty of parking available.

- Site of large cultural gatherings in summer and winter.
- Heritage, historical and archaeological wealth (Maison Charron heritage building).
- River access: natural shorelines, boating and fishing potential.
- Continuity and quality of the recreational pathway system linking all of the parks.

Drawbacks included the following:

- Infrastructure and landscaping lower in quality than other parks in the Capital.
- Under-interpretation of the area.
- Infrequency of activities at certain times of the year and under-utilization of heritage buildings.
- Limited services: parking during activities, public washrooms; difficulty in using the land in winter; river access non-existent between north and south shore sites.
- Illicit activities in remote locations of the area.
- Impact of music festivals on the adjoining neighbourhood.
- Land developed up to waterway in certain locations.
- Limited recreational space due to wetlands and uneven grade.
- Presence of Canada geese on the pathway and lawns.

Planning suggestions included the following:

- Preserve use of the area as the site of major cultural and sporting events (on land or water) for the whole family.
- Develop the sector to make it a world-class site (botanical garden, flower exhibition); add a fountain.
- Enlarge the marina and develop a beach.
- When no major events are in progress, develop permanent activity areas (historical interpretation, theatre, museum-related exhibitions); organize a public market space; exhibit snow sculptures.
- Offer services: river taxi, bike taxi, shuttle, directional signage, public washrooms, drinking fountains, healthy food vendor booths, picnic areas.
- Increase the number of parking spaces by building an underground parking lot near the convent; reserve space for visitor parking at the marina.
- Improve pedestrian access to Jacques-Cartier Park from Verdun and St-Étienne streets.
- Illuminate historical buildings.

- Improve lighting at the site for greater security.
- Naturalize the shoreline more, plant trees and create access ways to the water, especially for swimming.
- Install a patio.
- Reduce noise from the bridge.

Jacques-Cartier Park North

Some of the strong points included the following:

- The possibility of developing water access sites.
- The natural character of the park as a tranquil, uncrowded location with vast open spaces; the park's location at the mouth of Brewery Creek and its magnificent view of Rideau Falls.
- The possibility of its use as the site of major activities.
- Its archaeological interpretation potential.
- Bicycle path network and services provided at the Maison du vélo (the Gilmour Hughson Lumber Company building)

Some of the drawbacks included the following:

- Access: the area is isolated; Jacques-Cartier North has limited parking and public transit; pedestrian access is difficult.
- Limited facilities: public washrooms and drinking fountains; signage for the Maison du vélo; no river access and no shuttle transportation to the south shore.
- The Maison du vélo is difficult to find; interpretation of its industrial history is non-existent.

Planning suggestions included the following:

- Capitalize on the sector's major potential for hosting large-scale events; create permanent facilities to accommodate performances; maintain a balance between periods of activity and periods of calm.
- Develop the site while conserving existing vegetation and densified tree planting to create an urban forest.
- Promote the Hull Island tour by featuring pathways or Brewery Creek.
- Highlight Aboriginal culture.
- Turn the Gilmour Hughson Lumber Company building into an interpretation centre and add a public art component.

- Develop lookouts downstream from the river and at the overpass behind the convent.
- Expand the range of services provided at the Maison du vélo: include adapted bicycle, kayak, canoe and kite rentals.
- Expand the amenities available in the area: public washrooms, benches, river taxis, a boat launch for non-motorized watercraft; offer winter activities such as snowshoeing, cross-country skiing or skating.
- Complete the missing link in the recreational pathway network between Fournier Boulevard and the highway; make the pathway safer by lighting portions of it.
- Create an entrance to the sector at Sacré-Cœur Street or from the highway; review the pedestrian entry way.
- Create play areas for children.

Priority ideas

The main ideas put forward are listed below and grouped into five themes:

- **Site development:** Protect the views (Kruger – lookout); building and bridge illumination; shoreline development that retains the natural character of the site; installation of pedestrian streets bordered by shops; respect for differences among the sectors.
- **Interpretation:** Open-air museum, a range of themes, historical and natural heritage interpretation, sculptures and monuments.
- **Occasional performance sites:** A window on Quebec, a place for activities and performances.
- **Recreational activities:** Hull Island tour, winter activities, bicycle connections, river activities, children’s play areas.
- **Infrastructure and services:** washrooms, water taxis, public transit, recreational paths, signage, safety features.

V — Compilation of results

The NCC will use the ideas and comments gathered during the public consultation to develop a preliminary concept for the Ottawa River shoreline improvement plan. The strong points and drawbacks that participants identified will help clarify existing site conditions and guide the proposed actions.

VI — Next Steps

The next public consultation will take place on June 17, 2015, and will focus on the preliminary concept.

Appendix 1

Study area



Group 2
Map 1



Map 2

