

Views on Stanley Park Vision

The importance of Stanley Park in the daily life of the New Edinburgh Community cannot be overstated. With its bordering Rideau River, its connection to the (NCC) trails, its mature trees and its wild life, Stanley Park is a jewel of an urban park that is highly valued by New Edinburgh residents.

The park's natural environment is the reason many have chosen New Edinburgh as their home and community and why they have fought hard and paid a high price to protect this living natural environment for generations to come. Stanley Park is the only park this community has.

In Stanley park, families walk with their children to the playground and meet with neighbors while the children play. Adolescents skate or play hockey in the winter, baseball or soccer in the summer and run on the trails or simply exercise in the fresh air.

In this park, dogs are free to play while their owners socialize and where senior residents go regularly for a walk in nature or sit on a bench and watch the dogs play. It is a place where everyone can relax and enjoy the calmness of the river and the beauty of the sunset after a stressful day.

In this park, residents participate in community organized cultural activities held throughout the year, such as, the lights festival, the plants market or the horse drawn sleigh ride and deceased member of the community are honored by planting memorial trees. These activities strengthen the social fabric of the community.

Every day for the past six years, rain snow or shine, my dog and I enjoyed the fresh air and peace of Stanley Park's natural environment. We enjoyed the beauty of the sunrise and sunset on the river; the changing colors of the landscape through the seasons; and the sound of the birds in the trees and the wind in their leaves.

We were lucky and delighted to see a Great Blue Heron and birds in migration, to come across a turtle or a rabbit, to connect with neighbors through the exchange of good mornings and community news, and, for my dog, to check on the local news with a good sniff with his friends. This warmed our hearts and was the best way to start the day.

Most of the time, we preferred entering the park from the children's playground, walking under the trees canopy along the National Capital Commission (NCC) multi users trail, turning left after the odor control facility to take the wooden walking trail to the river before entering the dog park. I called that stretch of woodland, our little forest.

Research indicates that the well-being my dog and I experienced during our walks were real. It recognizes that contact with nature is essential to our overall health, that time spent outdoors is a truly solid investment in mental wealth, that being in the woods

reduces stress and boosts the immune system and that time spent in nature benefits childhood development. (See **Annex I** on the benefits of nature)

When the City's Combined Sewer Storage Tunnel (CSST) needed space for its infrastructure, our little forest was the first to go and with it, the wellness benefits of our daily walks through the park.

Damages to Stanley Park's natural environment from CSST activities are extensive and for the most part irreversible. Further more, they are concentrated in that section of the park that hosts its living, natural environment. Also, not to forget the threats to the park's wild life protected by the park's natural environment.

In his 2008 book entitled *Ottawa the Unknown City*, Rob McLennan recognizes the importance of Stanley Park's wild life: "**New Edinburgh Park. Stanley Avenue and Dufferin Road: On the eastern bank of the Rideau River, this park has plenty of wildlife, including blue herons, muskrats, turtles, and butterflies. In the winter, there is an outdoor skating rink.**" (p. 65)

When all is done, the regeneration process of the park's natural environment will take decades and much care and resources for new trees and plants to take roots and mature, and for the woodland to reclaim its place. (See **Annex II** for more on the extent of CSST activities in the park; the regeneration process of nature; and resource requirements)

The Vision

The importance of Stanley Park to the community; the extent and permanency of the damages to the park's natural environment; the health and wellness benefits of nature; the complexity of nature's regenerative process; and the time and resources required to support the restoration of its living, natural environment suggests a vision supported by:

A community love affair focussed on Stanley Park as a place where one can experience nature and is committed to support the restoration and protection of its natural environment for the enjoyment of generations to come;

A philosophy that adheres to the values of love and respect for our living, natural environment, its wild life, its land and its diversity;

A Charter that includes commitment and support by the three levels of governments in partnership with the New Edinburgh Community to the restoration and protection of Stanley Park's natural environment;

A Fund for restoration of the park's natural environment to come from where accountability lies for its destruction — the three levels of government responsible for financing the CSST infrastructure;

Friends of Stanley Park as guardians and promoters of the Park Charter with the ability to form partnerships to ensure the long term sustainability of the park's natural environment;

A broader scope for the Crichton Community Council's activities to include opportunities for nature observation and education.

The following **Landscaping design elements** are inspired by "*Gardens of the High Line - Elevating the Nature of Modern Landscapes*" by Oudolf Piet and Rick Darke. I found this book, especially the process for the creation of the High Line gardens most inspiring for the task at hand. (See **Annex III** for more on New York High Line Gardens)

- **A landscaping theme** that eventually could take us from the entrance at Beechwood and Crichton through Stanley Park and to the Rideau Falls.
- **Natural spaces and woodland areas** to be forever protected for people to enjoy the biodiversity and beauty of nature, for children to learn from nature, and for everyone to experience the wellness benefits of meditative walks.
- **Places in nature for people to pause and for the community to gather** that would take advantage of the river view, offer a unique perspective on Parliament and contribute to the enjoyment of the liveliness of the dog park.
- **A Butterfly Meadow** for attracting butterflies and bees;
- **Areas dedicated** to indigenous species and primitive plants;
- **A water garden** where CSST activities will have left too compacted or too shallow a soil for planting; and,
- **The assurance** that elderly, children, dogs and everyone else will be able to enjoy the park's natural environment in **security**.

Nicole Poitras,
New Edinburgh resident and lover of nature

Annex I

On the Benefits of Nature

The wellness of individuals and nations depends on recognizing that contact with nature is essential to **human health**. (*The Science of Nature's influence, on your Health, Happiness and Vitality*, by Joyce White in *Herb Quarterly*, April 2017)

Time spent outdoors is a truly solid investment in **mental wealth**: Green-Time promotes long-term gains in attention and impulse control — domains which largely shape how well our brain functions, and therefore how well we function in school, work relationships, and health (Victoria L. Dunckley, psychiatrist, in *A Mindful Morning* by David Dillard-Wright, PhD)

Researchers from Chiba University had 280 people walk both in the woods and in a city area. After walking in the woods, the participants had reduced blood pressure, a slower heart rate, and lower levels of the hormone cortisol, all indicators of **reduced stress**, compared with the levels attained when they walked in the city. (Evidence from Field Experiments in 24 Forests across Japan *Environmental Health and Preventive Medicine* 15, 2010)

Being in the woods also boosts the **immune system**. In a pair of studies, researchers brought groups of men and women into the woods for a three-day, two-night trip. The trip involved some walking, but it wasn't intense exercise. ...By the second day of the trip, in both studies, the level of (immune) cells had increased 56%. ...even a month later, immune function remained significantly higher than before the people spent time in the woods. (*Japanese Journal of Hygiene* 69, 2014, and *Journal of Biological Regulators and Homeostatic Agents* 22, no.1, 2008)

There is also evidence that time in nature benefits **childhood development**. ...the positive health effects of time in nature for kids ...lower levels of obesity, ADHD, and a variety of mental health disorders. ...time in nature also boosts kids' creativity, perception, and problem-solving skills. ...Our exposure to nature is so important to our **overall health** that we should think of it as vitamin N. (Richard Louv, *The Nature Principle and Last Child in The Woods*)

Scientists and shamans alike know that all of life is woven into a web of infinite connections, contributing to the larger whole in a system that is complex beyond our imagining. When we sit quietly at the edge of a lake or hike through a wildflower-strewn meadow, or walk through a cool dark forest, we quickly become aware of our unity with the natural world. We fall back into natural rhythms ... Nature has a way of recalibrating us and helping us gain a new perspective on our stressors so that they seem less overwhelming. (Carl Greer, PhD, PsD, *Change the Story of Your Health*)

Annex II

On the extent of CSST infrastructure activities in the park

As a key site for the CSST infrastructure, Stanley Park's mature trees and green spaces have been claimed to make room for a much bigger activated-carbon odor control facility; a surge attenuation tank, the launch site for the tunnel boring machine; a CSST/IOS connection chamber; and a large retention tank where combined sewer flowing from 4 areas of the urban core will be stored.

CSST activities are concentrated in that one-third section of the park that hosts its alive, natural environment. The other sections of the park — the baseball and soccer fields, the tennis court, the 'hebertisme' outdoor exercise section and the children playground having been spared.

The CSST long term goal to provide redundancy to the existing sewer system will permanently disturb the peacefulness of the park natural environment including continuous noise from the outlet chamber and the requirement for access to a section of the park for the daily maintenance and repairs to the sewer storage system.

On the complexities and regeneration process of nature

In *The Hidden Life of TREES*, Peter Wohlleben explains *"the amazing processes of life, death, and regeneration he has observed in his woodland. He makes the case that trees are social beings. They are like human families: tree parents live together with their children, communicate with them, support them as they grow, share nutrients with those who are sick or struggling, and even warn each other of impending dangers."* (From the jacket of the book)

Diana Beresford-Kroeger, botanist and medical biochemist is an expert on the medicinal, environmental, and nutritional properties of trees. She lives in Ontario (about 30 kilometers south of Merickville) surrounded by her research gardens filled with rare and endangered species. Critics say about her:

"All of life as we know it, according to renowned scientist Diana Beresford-Kroeger, hangs on trees in a matrix of complexity we call the living earth. ... Her indisputable passion for the subject matter will inspire readers to look at trees, and at their own connection to the natural world, with newfound awe." (Bill McKibben, in *Earth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*)

"Beresford-Kroeger ground-breaking research is helping us understand how trees not only breathe and communicate, but also reproduce, heal, and nurture. You have simply to read one of the forty short chapters of her book, ... to be absorbed into the invisible, magic world where 'the king of the forest' reside." (*The Ecologist*)

On Resources for implementation of the Park Vision

The City's choice of Stanley Park, as the key site for the CSST infrastructure, was made in haste, without consideration of technical and ecological alternatives, and most important without an assessment of the social, human and environmental costs supported by the residents and the community.

The costs to New Edinburgh residents attributable to CSST activities in the park include: health and security risks to the residents and their pets; chaos introduced in the daily life of the community from the tunnel digging in the park and trucking activities in the neighborhood streets; and reduced access to the park and permanent damages to Stanley Park's living, natural environment.

Accountability for the costs supported by New Edinburgh residents and the permanent damages caused to the park natural environment lies with the three levels of governments that provided funding for the CSST infrastructure activities in the park.

As compensation for the damages caused to the park natural environment and the costs borne by New Edinburgh residents, the three levels of government to make a contribution, equivalent to 10% of the costs of CSST activities in the park, to a Fund dedicated to the long term restoration and protection of Stanley Park's natural environment.

The Fund to be managed by a reinstated Friends of Stanley Park in partnership with the funding partners.

Annex III

On Design of the High Line Gardens

From: *Gardens of the High Line - Elevating the Nature of Modern Landscapes* by Rick Darke and Oudolf Piet, architect of the High Line gardens in New York City)

In 1999, Robert Hammond first stepped on the abandoned New York Central Railroad High Line and fell in love. With Joshua David he founded Friends of the High Line to try to share that magic. They thought New Yorkers should have a say in what happens on the High Line and asked the public for their ideas at a series of community input sessions.

During one of these sessions, they received a card that said, “*The High Line should be preserved, untouched, as a wilderness area. No doubt you will ruin it. So it goes.*” He kept that card posted above his desk because it has always been his biggest fear that they couldn’t capture that naturalistic beauty in its wild state.

With an image that conveyed what they had in mind, they hosted a design competition, looking for visionaries with more experience and talent who could conceive and carry out what the space called for, something as unexpected as the original — the design that James Corner Field Operations, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and Piet Oudolf created.

Drawing on the dynamic community of plants that had crowded the High Line for decades, the team designed a totally new experience that captured the soul of the space. Breaking with design tradition, Piet envisioned a multi-season garden of perennials, where the skeletons of plants have as much a part in the landscape as new growth.

Three decades after the New York Central Railroad were abandoned, the trackway was transformed into a series of biologically diverse gardens, the abundance and diversity of life on the Line exploded in response.

Today, owned by the City of New York, the High Line is a public park maintained, operated and programmed by Friends of the High Line in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Each year Friends of the High Line raises all of the funds and provides all of the personnel required to care for its gardens.”

“For me, garden design is not just about plants, it is about emotions, atmosphere, a sense of contemplation. You try to move people with what you do. That is the big part. A garden isn’t a landscape painting that you look at, but a dynamic process that’s always changing. You must keep in touch with it all of the time.” — Piet Oudolf, architect of the High Line Gardens.

Principles

- The Garden should remain perpetually unfinished, sustaining emergent growth and change over time;
- Creatively integrating the context, defining garden spaces to increase ecological and functionality in response to changing context;
- Color, form, scent, sound and opacity of organic architecture that changes with seasons;
- Areas devoted to regionally indigenous species;
- Areas of transition, places to pause and gather, or intimate alcoves.

Goals

- Encouraging intimate contemplation through developing a distinct identity that draws on the unusual conditions found on the site and a variety and intimate choreography to encourage visitors to keep a slow pace and allow themselves to be distracted;
- Promote the use of native flora. The wild garden promoted an authentically naturalistic approach that welcome the vitality and functionality of wild plants into deliberately designed gardens;
- Promoting a global mix of perennial plants that are capable of thriving in local conditions, requiring a minimum of care and resources;
- Sustaining regional ecologies. A garden character model based on continual observation that best serves local, regional and global human and non human communities;
- Friends of the High Line staff and volunteers to contribute to garden craft by mentoring and supporting a new breed of gardeners with unprecedented skills in managing dynamic landscapes.