

Park Vision Report – 2018 NECA AGM

At its May 16, 2017, Board Meeting, NECA began work to develop a comprehensive vision and plan for New Edinburgh's park, based on stakeholder and community input and consultation.

As many may be aware, there have been numerous issues and concerns raised over the years regarding various aspects of our much-loved park; issues such as bike/pedestrian pathways, flood protection berms, traffic and safety at park entrances, Fieldhouse use and configuration, ice clearing damage reduction, tree planting, and others. Solutions have been explored piece-meal and without benefit of a larger vision for the park supported by the local community and various other park and river stakeholders (which include NCC, City of Ottawa, Province of Ontario, Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, CCC and NECTAR).

Given the decimation that our park is now undergoing with the CSST project and to be prepared to provide well-consulted requests for re-instatement measures, a rigorous process of information gathering, option analysis and broad community and stakeholder consultation is being undertaken to provide a solid framework to assist planning and decision-making with regard to New Edinburgh's park for the immediate post-CSST work and for years to come. At its core, this initiative is very similar in nature to the one taken a number of years ago to define a vision for the Beechwood corridor and culminating in the Beechwood Community Design Plan.

The first step of the process was the definition of overarching principles to be applied to the analysis of issues and options.

At last year's AGM, NECA hosted a community forum to collect the community's input on the vision for the park. The Park Vision working group was subsequently formed and has been busy over the past year pulling the community's input together into a vision statement and gathering further information to explore options for the current three priority areas. The information gathering is still ongoing, however initial information on potential options include the following:

- Re-greening post CSST – A review of the proposed “reinstatement plan” was conducted with a landscaping expert from the City (Laila Gibbons) on June 27. The outcomes of this meeting were a clarification of the height of the approx. 220 new trees (70mm, 3' high, with a 2-year warranty); 32 to be relocated, 9 dead trees removed and 43 other trees removed. It was noted that proposed changes to the plan would need to be contingent on the other priority work (e.g. pathway configuration and flood mitigation).
- Pathway system through the park – On August 28, working group members met with a pathway planner from the City (Adam Hortop) and from the NCC (Bruce Devine). The two main areas of discussion included :
 - The congestion point along the path near the off-leash dog park, where there are often conflicts between the various users (off-leash dogs, speeding cyclists and slow-moving pedestrians). Straightening out the pathway (where there used to be a near right angle) was not recommended as it encourages higher speeds. Splitting into two paths, one for pedestrians and one for cyclists, was also discussed. The downside to doing this is that it takes up more of the park's greenspace and would be expensive put in place and maintain. The NCC suggested that we look at changing the zoning at this pinch point to reduce the friction (e.g. remove the off-leash designation on the Stanley side of the pathway and compensate by extending the off-leash area south along the river. The other suggestion was to install benches a bit further off the pathway to allow for room for

walkers, wheelchairs, strollers, etc. Adam Hortop mentioned that the City is looking and using different surface solutions to discourage speeding.

- The “disappearing” pathway – Possible solutions to the disconnection of the pathway at Dufferin were discussed. One option is to reconfigure the street to allow for a continuation of the path along the park side between the road and where the skating rink is established in the winter. This would require NCC approval and a lot of money. Other options are to remove parking on the park side to allow for the installation of the pathway and adding diagonal parking on the other side (which already happens frequently).
- Flood prevention measures – March of last year, a flood preparedness meeting was held in New Edinburgh (organized by Tobi’s office). The 2016 New Edinburgh Preliminary Flood Control Study was discussed. However, as Pierre Poirier, Manager of the City’s Security and Emergency Management Department, was relatively new and unfamiliar with the study, the working group is planning to meet with him again in the near future to discuss the options presented in the study.

It is important to note, that prior to moving forward on any options, further consultation with the community and park stakeholders will be undertaken.

Park Vision Working Group:

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- Jeff Smith
- Chris Straka
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If you would like to know more or would like to contribute to the park vision work, please contact me at newedinburgh@outlook.com.