

Lake Ontario Park Revitalization Study

Staff Advisory Group Workshop #3: Meeting Minutes

Time and Place: Thursday, May 25, 7:00-9:45, Press Lounge, Portsmouth Olympic Harbour

Attendees:

Guest Consultants:

- Barry Hughes , Manager Parks and Recreation , Parks of the St. Lawrence
- Jack Wright, Retired Director of Parks, Retired Landscape Architectural Professor U of Guelph, Noted Park Historian
- John Wright, Corush, Sutherland Wright Landscape Architects

Lake Ontario Park Revitalization Staff Advisory Group –Attendees:

1. Councillor Beth Pater (City of Kingston Council: District representative)
 2. Mark Fluhner (Director, City of Kingston Culture and Recreation)
 3. Kristine Hebert (Parks & Open Space Planning Co-ordinator, City of Kingston)
 4. Robin Etherington (Manager, Culture and Heritage, City of Kingston)
 5. Shirley Bailey (Acting Manger –Policy Planning)
 6. George Speal (Kiwanis Club of Kingston)
 7. Jim Cannon (Portsmouth Villager’s Association)
 8. Clint Hierlihy (Portsmouth Villager’s Association)
 9. Suzanne Hamilton (Portsmouth Villager’s Association)
 10. Hans Vorster (Commodore’s Cove resident’s Association)
 11. Barbara Bennett (1000 King Street West resident’s Association)
 12. Mary Vincent (Friends of Lake Ontario Park)
 13. Alida Moffatt (Friends of Lake Ontario Park)
 14. Wendy Mayoff---- (Friends of Lake Ontario Park)
 15. Jennifer Payne -Oddie--- (Providence Continuing Care)
 16. Mark Lewis (Kingston Chamber of Commerce)
 17. Carl Bray (Heritage consultant, lead consultant/facilitator)
 18. Krista Wells (PCC)
- (Regrets: Jay Gazeley (Cataraqui Golf & Country Club; Blayne Mackey-SLC ; Eartha-Urban Aboriginal Alliance)

Observers:

Graham Lodge (Memorial Centre Revitalization Committee)
 Jana Mills (Memorial Centre Revitalization Committee)
 Alexandra Zakos- SLC student
 Jeffery Lee- Area resident

Carl Bray called the workshop to order at 7:05pm and gave an overview of the agenda for the workshop. He introduced the guest speakers who are experts in park design, construction and park management.

Jack Wright, Retired Director of Parks, Noted Park Historian, Professor University of Guelph

- Jack spoke to modern trends in parks and recreation planning and referenced his book titled, Urban Parks in Ontario/ The Modern Period.

- **Trends in Use:**

From 60-70's	To 80's plus
Structured use in parks	Flexible non structured uses
Narrow age band of users	Broad age band of users
Planned programmed activities	Self-directed, spontaneous
Large and small groups	Individuals /small groups
Competitive uses	Non-competitive uses
Activities	Experience/Self actualization
Recreation-physical elements	Integrated Physical/Social/Cultural
Formal social groups	Informal social networks
Sedentary Lifestyle	Fitness walking

- **Trends in provision of Public Open Space**

From 60-70's	To 80's plus
Parks	Open Space
Single function	Multiple uses
Site specific-Unitary	Linked Linear O.S. Systems
Formal maintenance	Lower cost/variety of standards
Development	Re-use /redevelopment
Blue print	Strategy and Policies
Planned for	Planned with
Utilitarian	Functional Aesthetic
Public space	Private/public mix
Horticulture	Eco-friendly /sustainable
Public funding	Public /community partnerships

Most Popular Recreation Activities (1995) (in order-highest to lowest by percentage):

- Walking (85%); Gardening (72%); Home exercise (48%); Swimming (44%); Bicycling (44%); Skating (34%); Baseball (30%); Bowling (24%); Jogging (24%); Weight training (23%); Golf (23%); Alpine skiing (17%); Volleyball (17%); Exercise classes (17%); Cross-country skiing (14%); tennis (13%); Hockey (12%); Soccer (12%)

Shifting context for New Millennium:

- Acquisition of large public parks is unlikely due to budget deprivation and apathetic societal attitudes to the public good.
- Demands for public parks will be for a diversity of recreational opportunity. Greater demand from a wider age band of potential clients of all skill levels.

- Demographic changes as evidenced by an aging population are affecting the purpose and functions of urban core open spaces where social interaction of these spaces is the highest and best use in a spontaneous, non-competitive nature.
- There has been a shift towards providing family-oriented picnic areas and unstructured open space opportunities within the city limits as opposed to outside urban limits as in past practices.
- Emphasis on the effective use of open space rather than the quantity of open space.
- A growing demand for quality outdoor experiences, including interpretative and outdoor skill programs.
- An ever-growing recognition of the links between preservation and protection of historic and cultural sites, natural areas and recreation.
- Public open space has become a measure of local culture; the quality of the public realm reflects the local quality of life
- David Foot quote. “That future growth in outdoor recreation is likely to be found in the natural environment and general recreation activities.”

Barry Hughes: Manager Parks and Recreation, Parks of the St. Lawrence

- Barry showed examples of trends in parks and in particular parks under the care of the St Lawrence Parks Commission.
- Basic camping site (tenting) to construct \$2,000 - \$3,000.
- \$1,000 per site- revenue per annum
- RV's are the fastest growing business. Used to be just retirees now all age brackets are in the market. Sees Lake Ontario Park as good niche for RV's.
- To construct RV site (45-70 ft long) \$6-12,000 \$2,500 , revenue per annum.
- Basic cabins can be built for \$25,000 each –return \$5-7,000 per annum.
- YURTS – canvas structure to construct \$12-14,000 -return \$4-5,000 per annum. Charge \$16 night.
- Interpretive/educational centres in parks well received and used.
- Outdoor amphitheatre. Good site Lake Ontario Park –shows Nepean Kiwanis site. (\$80,000 to build) in the 1980s
- Gazebos-band shell- prefab models. \$20,000 plus.
- Beach- alternatives to sand/pea stone but basic importance of shade and grassy knoll concept.
- Alternative ideas- water spray parks
- Programming uses/event functions to animate park: i.e. Pizza/paddle and poker run; bird banding; dog shoes; antique car shows; ethnic picnics; arts and crafts; re-enactments; sand sculptures; gardens
- Camping should be organized within the 23 day maximum stay to preclude long term seasonal camping and encourage turnover
- Security is needed for campgrounds (e.g. all-night supervision, gated camping areas)

General comments from group:

- Alida Moffatt asked about a minimum and maximum number to make a profit re RV camping site. Barry indicated a minimum number would be 100. Space 70 feet long is ideal.
- Suzanne Hamilton- asked about success with restaurants in parks. Barry noted that there is dismal success with restaurants in parks because of the limited seasonal market. Basic canteen provisions of pop, hot dogs, sandwiches, chips etc are the best bet but do not make a profit. They are a service. A lot of folk bring their own food.
- Mary Vincent- noted that this is all well and good but she feels there is a secret agenda which staff may not be aware of and that will impact the park.
- Mark Fluhrer- noted meeting with CAO and confirmed that the city intends to maintain Lake Ontario Park as a park and that we are visioning to get the best plan for the park.
- Barb Bennett asked about small craft and whether they were a viable source for money for the park. Barry said no but again you have to look at the public service component for the park.
- Barry noted that Ahoy Rentals provides kayaks to his park in Belleville for PPP and that as they are based in Kingston there is an opportunity to have this in Lake Ontario Park.
- There was a question about admission charges at the gate to the park and it was noted that for special events this could be done but as a public open space, the site or portions of the site should always be open to the public. With the park configuration this could easily be done through modular fencing. (Upper terrace events separate from linear waterfront trail.)
- Hans Vorster asked if RV sites are easier to manager than tent sites. Barry noted they are easier to manage due to the demographics and that tenting attracts youth are more prone to noise and disturbances to other campers.

(Five Minute Break)

- John Wright put sketch paper over the aerial map of Lake Ontario Park and proceeded to walk the entire group through general park planning philosophies tied into spatial needs impacts. The goal was to clarify the vocation of the park in order to develop a vision statement and three schematic concepts for park development to be presented at the June 23rd Lake Ontario Park open house.
- John sparked an active discussion that revealed some of the following issues:
 - The park serves dual purposes (e.g. regional and local open space, weekday and weekend everyday and special events, tableland and waterfront, forested areas and open areas)
 - Its character should be developed as a natural area and vestiges of its past uses woven into the design in addition to interpretive signs
 - As far as special events go, the park may be best suited to mid-sized events and group picnics, with camping as a feature to support such events, but not as a primary attraction
 - The park can become a node on an extensive waterfront trail system (today it has little presence from the shoreline)as well as a primary means of gaining access to water for swimming, boating, and viewing

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- The park is not necessarily a “cottage” for the city but is a place for family day use with lots of activities for children and young adults but appealing to a wide range of users
 - Access to the water should be improved via better trails, docking for wind surfers and small boats, additional access points (e.g. the coal dock park)
 - The coal dock park south of the condos is not likely suitable for planting of trees etc. due to extensive soil compaction, thus is not a place for display gardens or allotments
 - The park could use a better visual presence on King Street: could there be an entry feature (e.g. campground office, interpretive centre) This structure could be a landmark and give a sense of the what goes on in the ‘upper’ park(mid – sized events)
 - Sustainable development and environmental regeneration should be a strong theme informing all development, from infrastructure to planting and programming
 - Interaction with PCC and St. Mary’s could allow the park to offer a healing landscape
 - The park’s core value is as a public open space that is egalitarian, welcoming to local residents and visitors (regional and tourists)
 - Most of the key park elements suit their current location and do not need to be moved, with the exception of:
 - the boat launch (access road too steep)
 - the beach (water quality problems may necessitate moving it further south, or require a pool as a substitute for swimming in the lake)
 - a possible events building to house portable washrooms, hold registration etc. near the road
 - General development principles could include:
 - Dividing the park into different zones (e.g. tableland, for regional, structured events; forested bank, as a transition zone for picnicking; and the water’s edge, for more local, non-structured activities and access to the water)
 - Weaving vestiges and echoes of the past into the park design (e.g. explicit interpretation via displays etc. as well as more subtle means of revealing the site’s history)
 - Laying out the park in an informal manner, highlighting its natural features (e.g. improving the wetland, renewing the forest with appropriate native species)
 - Potential three options being:
 - Recreation/event platforms with minimum camping
 - Recreation/event platforms with modest camping
 - Enhanced camping/food services and recreation/event areas.