Rideau Heights Regeneration

Community Engagement Update & Recommended Design Directions for Shannon Park

May 2014
This report summarizes the feedback received from two community open house events held on January 28th, 2014 as part of the Rideau Heights Regeneration Strategy and provides a recommended design scenario for the renewal of Shannon Park. These events offered an opportunity for Rideau Heights & North Kingston residents to provide feedback on findings gathered from prior community engagement, as well as proposed improvements to Shannon Park and the Wally Elmer Community Centre. This information will inform the broader neighbourhood regeneration process and the detailed park and community centre planning process that will commence later this spring.
About the regeneration process

The Rideau Heights Regeneration project, led by the City of Kingston and Kingston & Frontenac Housing Corporation (KFHC), is developing a comprehensive community regeneration strategy. When complete, the strategy will provide a master plan and business plan for the renewal of the Rideau Heights community that will address improvements to housing, parks, and community amenities.

The City has retained a consultant team, led by Urban Strategies Inc., consisting of experts in urban planning, design, public engagement, housing, architecture and engineering. The consultant team is currently half way through the study process. Since project inception in August of 2013, the project team has consulted with Rideau Heights residents and conducted a detailed analysis of the study area. Neighbourhood regeneration options will be presented to the community this summer, with a draft plan presented in fall. A final strategy is expected to be completed by early 2015. More details about the project can be found on the study website at www.rideauheights.com.

As part of its commitment to improving the quality of life in North Kingston, the City has committed funding to construct a new and improved community centre connected to Rideau Heights Public School, and to redesign Shannon Park. These improvements are based on years of consultation and planning, dating back to 2006. In order to ensure the park and community centre redevelopment projects proceed without delay, design decisions regarding Shannon Park and adjacent KFHC-operated housing are required sooner than for the rest of the study area.
Community engagement to date

Community engagement with Rideau Heights and North Kingston residents began in August of 2013 and will continue throughout the regeneration study process. The engagement efforts to date include both key stakeholder interviews and direct engagement with residents. This section provides an overview of these efforts and what’s been heard throughout this process.

Key Stakeholder Interviews

Prior to active resident engagement, the community consultation process focused on gathering information through conversations with key stakeholders regarding the state of community development and engagement, and the key issues for residents.

Key stakeholders were selected in consultation with City staff and community leaders to ensure a range of perspectives and a depth of insight to inform the active engagement phase.

Interviews focused on setting the context, assessing response to the regeneration process, identifying issues and challenges as well as opportunities, and identifying local settings, groups, and organizations helpful to the engagement process. Stakeholders provided essential input, and their early inclusion was also helpful to building support for the regeneration process.

An interview guide was developed to ensure interviews generated commensurable data, and it was reviewed with City staff prior to the start of interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Stakeholder</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Henderson</td>
<td>Housing Programs Administrator, City of Kingston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Lynn Cousins Brame</td>
<td>CEO, Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Managers</td>
<td>Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna Van Luven</td>
<td>Skyline, Property Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tori Hawley</td>
<td>Eviction Prevention, Housing Help Centre, Home Base Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillian Moss</td>
<td>Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (CRNC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Bell</td>
<td>Kingston Community Health Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Shore</td>
<td>Street Health, Kingston Community Health Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijana Matovic</td>
<td>Rideau Heights Market/Activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skyline staff</td>
<td>Operators of private rental housing in North Kingston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Mayberley</td>
<td>Better Beginnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Ross Done</td>
<td>Kingston Community Legal Clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather Vuyk</td>
<td>Kingston Community Health Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spencer Hope</td>
<td>Junior CRNC (Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally Martin</td>
<td>Food Bank worker, Salvation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvin Shibley</td>
<td>Bread of Life coordinator, Salvation Army</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Direct Engagement

The first phase of direct engagement with the community began following the key stakeholder interviews. This was a “listening and exploring” phase, which focused on understanding the aspirations and concerns of community members by using a variety of interview and workshop formats tailored to specific groups.

Community events organized by local community groups and organizations were important venues for distributing information and soliciting feedback from residents. In order to share information on the process and solicit preliminary feedback, the consultant team worked with local community groups and organizations and City staff to identify community events to participate in over the summer months.

The project team was at a number of community events throughout the summer (above) and fall (below) to build an understanding of what Rideau Heights residents value in the neighbourhood or would like to see changed.
Through the use of a gazebo tent, project staff created a space at summer community events oriented around the regeneration and branded specifically for it. At each community event, residents had materials developed specifically to encourage participation in the regeneration process and to gather feedback, including:

- A large map of the community where residents identified areas they use, areas they like, areas that feel unsafe, etc. Residents used different coloured dots to identify the different aspects of their community.
- A feedback form for residents to share written and verbal input about what they like and dislike about the community, things they hope for, and things they don’t want.
- Materials for visual arts feedback for residents to draw the things they like about their community and the things they want to see in their community. This was used to encourage children and youth to participate in the process.
- Coloured comment cards for residents to write one word about what Rideau Heights means to them. These coloured comment cards were then displayed in the gazebo.
- Flip charts documented individual conversations between project staff and residents.
- A half-page background handout explaining regeneration was distributed to residents.

City staff and consultants engaged in a series of community events, including:

- The Skyline community picnic – Saturday July 6, 2013
- The CRNC summer celebration – Wednesday July 10, 2013
- The Harvest Market special event – Wednesday August 28, 2013
- The Harvest Market five year anniversary – Wednesday July 31, 2013
- The Scarecrow Festival – Saturday September 21, 2013

At community events, maps were provided so residents could identify how they use the neighbourhood. Residents identified where they lived, what they like and don’t like about their community, and what they would like to see changed.

To support project team members in engaging the neighbourhood, three local residents who have lived in the neighbourhood were hired to connect with residents using a variety of interview and small group discussion formats that were tailored to specific groups and utilized a structured set of predetermined questions. Approximately 180 residents were engaged through this process through a variety of means including door-to-door conversations and attendance at community events and local programs including:

**Community Events/Programs**

- St. Matthews Church
- Pathways to Education
- Rideau Heights Parent Council
- Teens Loving Children program
- Better Beginnings
- Kingston Community Health Centre
- Bread of Life
- Boys and Girls Club
- Parenting Today
- Local school yards
Resident Feedback

During the direct engagement, residents identified a strong attachment to their community, articulating an appreciation for their neighbours and overall community and identifying them both as things that they liked about the Rideau Heights neighbourhood. Anecdotally, residents shared being able to count on neighbors as well as the sense that there is mutual support of neighbours to watch over each other’s children. Unsurprisingly, the sense of community is segmented into clusters based on the physical layout of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood’s strong sense of community results in concern for how drastic changes may impact the community.

Residents spoke at length about the importance of, and their deep attachment to, the parks. They identified the open space the parks provide as a benefit for the community, naming the green space (trees and grass) as aspects of the parks that they like and do not want to see changed. Residents value existing park equipment, particularly the splash pad. However, residents sought improvements, including increased safety, cleaner playgrounds, and more organized programming to encourage opportunities for residents to gather and socialize.

The Wally Elmer Community Centre, along with other similar amenities, were identified as neighbourhood strengths aspects of the community that should not be lost. As with residents’ descriptions of the local parks, residents articulated a need to provide an enhanced community centre as a place that could support increased programming and activities for people of all ages (with particular focus on older children and teenagers).

The Wally Elmer Community Centre (above) and Shannon Park Splash Pad (below) were identified as highly valued parts of the neighbourhood.
Residents reinforced the need for more organized programming in the neighbourhood as a benefit for families. They mentioned a previously volunteer-run baseball league in which children in Rideau Heights had participated. Residents noted that organized programming provides a structure that supports children and teenagers and would be of greater benefit when coupled with physical facilities and equipment.

While residents spoke of the benefits of being close to amenities such as the community centre, grocery stores, and other shopping on Division Street, most acknowledged their lack of information about local community and social services available to them. Perhaps in relation to the lack of information about available services, residents spoke at length about feelings of neglect and limited attention from the City, which has led to low expectations and very limited ambitions.

Residents articulated a variety of other relatively modest concerns and issues to be addressed through the regeneration project, particularly small scale housing issues. Few residents expressed any ideas for new homes to be introduced through the project, focusing far more on issues with current building conditions rather than future infrastructure. The quality of flooring, leaky windows, and the high cost of utility bills dominated conversations about homes. Residents noted challenges with getting repairs done within a reasonable timeframe and highlighted concerns about the quality of repairs.

Residents also focused on the need for a safe and clean neighbourhood. They consistently spoke of their concerns about drugs and crime, not as an imminent threat, but as an ongoing drain on the quality of life. They said the neighbourhood stigma is a psychological barrier. A surprising number of residents spoke of the need for more community policing in the neighbourhood to help address the drug and crime issues.

Residents overwhelmingly named garbage and animal waste as challenges to overcome in the neighbourhood. A number of residents identified the need for a stronger presence of KFHC staff in the neighbourhood to reinforce tenant accountability around garbage, while others spoke of building a better environment through community clean-up days and community gardens.
Draft Principles

Feedback from this round of resident engagement informed the creation of principles which guided initial planning for early success opportunities, including Shannon Park, the new Wally Elmer Community Centre, and early environmental and safety improvements. There was general consensus on the established principles to guide the regeneration strategy in Rideau Heights.

The Rideau Heights Regeneration Strategy will respect the needs and experiences of residents by ensuring that the following principles will help guide the renewal of the neighbourhood:

1. **Create an affordable, safe and healthy community** - utility costs hurt affordability; people need to feel safe in their neighbourhood parks; streets should be clean. These issues should be tackled to make a healthy community.

2. **Connect the community** - connections throughout the neighbourhood and to local services are a key part of what makes this a good neighbourhood.

3. **Support the community** - share information and promotion of programs that support residents including local, affordable programs for children and families.

4. **Enhance parks and public spaces** - our parks and public spaces are a big part of what makes Rideau Heights a good place to live. Parks should be enhanced to make them more usable for residents. Improvements should support spaces for residents to gather, socialize and grow.

5. **Get the little things right** - it’s important to fix immediate problems such as neighbourhood cleanliness and property maintenance issues that affect residents’ utility costs rather than only focusing on longer planning.

6. **Build trust through visible success** - achievable goals for neighbourhood improvement are important to help build the trust of residents in the regeneration process and should be implemented in the near future.

7. **Achievable, realistic planning** - neighbourhood improvements should start small and increase over time through planned phases of work.
Two community meetings held on January 28, 2013 provided an opportunity for North Kingston residents to offer input regarding the regeneration of the Wally Elmer Community Centre and Shannon Park.

Resident Meetings

On January 28th, two meetings were held for North Kingston residents. One was held during the day in the Salvation Army auditorium in Rideau Heights, and the other in the evening in the gym of Monseigneur Rémi-Gaul Elementary School in Markers Acres. About 40 participants attended overall, the overwhelming majority being Rideau Heights residents. Attendees were able to view information panels and a presentation detailing the project and work to date, and provided feedback and input into the process through a variety of workshop activities and direct conversations with the project team.

Participants were presented a summary of what’s been heard through community engagement to date and the planning principles and provided an opportunity to comment. They were also presented three layout options for Shannon Park, and were given an opportunity to share what they’d like to see in the park’s re-design.
Resident Feedback

Participants in both groups had no reservations about the basic outline and planning principles of neighbourhood regeneration. Conversations and notes in those areas were positive and tended to augment or reaffirm, rather than redirect, the existing plans for the regeneration process and the planning principles. The importance of services and facilities for children and youth were repeatedly reinforced. The need to progressively build the regeneration plan, get the little things right, and show ongoing communication with and responsiveness to the community were affirmed. The importance of a community-friendly plan that responded to the real circumstances of the neighbourhood, including the importance of affordability, safety, and the family character of the community, were underscored.

People specifically added picnic areas and gathering spaces to the things they wanted in the neighbourhood, as well as improved access for wheelchairs in both parks and public spaces. Concerns about transportation were reaffirmed, especially as it relates to accessing shopping areas west of Rideau Heights.

Residents were asked for their views on layouts for Shannon Park, including the location of a new park access lane or street. Option #1, which proposed a park lane winding through the center of the park, was the least popular. Residents had concerns about safety due to its proximity to play spaces and the location of key park destinations on both sides. Options #2 and #3 had a broader level of support. #3 was seen as
creating more visibility in the park, as the relocation of residential uses opened up all of the Daly Street side of the park. This improved visibility was seen as providing increased safety in the park. Some residents had concerns about 80 Daly Street for reasons unrelated to park planning and favoured Option #3 because it included the removal of those housing units. Others felt that more consultation was needed with residents of 80 Daly Street, and wondered about the cost of demolition and rebuilding. In response to this, the project team has been conducting direct consultation with the 80 Daly Street residents and will continue to do so moving forward to ensure residents’ needs are appropriately accommodated. In general, Options #2 and #3 were well received; however, Option #3 gathered the greatest level of support as it responded to neighborhood concerns related to visibility and safety in the park and the desire for better recreational and community facilities.

Regardless of the selected route, residents were eager to see the new street attractively designed, with some traffic-calming elements and room for a separate bike or multi-use path. There was considerable concern that the already frequent use of off road motorcycles in the park not be facilitated by the new street.

The expansion of community gardens in the park was encouraged. Residents wanted walkable park space as well as space that is bike-friendly. Questions were asked about access to trails and the challenges imposed by the rail tracks for both cyclists and pedestrians accessing the broader City. Residents also expressed interest in a dog park, preferably with distinct areas for large and small dogs. The provision of this amenity will be considered as part of the detailed design for Shannon Park, however, it is anticipated that the required size for an off leash park, of 1.5 acres, under the off leash dog park policy would restrict the development of other park amenities that have been seen as more valuable to the residents.

The City’s commitment to park improvements was well received, as was the prospect of a new community centre. Residents identified an interest in a local library, and were concerned about the loss of the indoor refrigerated ice pad in the Wally Elmer Arena that is slated for removal while expressing the importance of year-round sports and recreational facilities in the park.

Three layout options for Shannon Park were presented for feedback. Residents were asked to identify which option they preferred, why they liked it, and if there was anything they would like to see changed.
Recommended Park Scenario & Design Directions

Supported by public feedback, it is recommended that the detailed park planning proceeds with the park layout presented as Option #3. This is based on the following:

- Option #3 provides the best passive surveillance and visibility into the park. This is achieved through the removal of the units located at 80 Daly Street providing street frontage and views into the park from the east. The provision of a new market based residential development on the north side of the park further increases visibility. Buildings oriented towards the park will provide more eyes on the space for improved safety and security in the area as well as further local ownership of the park space.

- Option 3 provides the best consolidated, useable park space and includes the same parkland area as the useable parkland approved by Council in Option 1.

- Removing the 80 Daly Street housing block and converting this land to park provides the greatest consolidated park space near the new community centre, which will be located directly west of Rideau Heights Public School.

- The new street will run along the northern park edge, providing the least amount of interference with park activity and increasing the park frontage by over 500% to the effect of creating a highly public configuration for the park.

- At the January 28th events, the community expressed support for the following specific goals: the road being at the perimeter rather than bisecting the park and a desire for sight lines into the park. Option #3 addresses both through the reconfiguration of park and residential uses to allow the most visibility into the park.

Option 3 will improve views into the park through the relocation of residential uses to the northwest portion of the park. This concept plan illustrates how a number of uses can be accommodated within the consolidated park space. The exact park features and their location will be determined during the detailed park planning phase, commencing later this year.
Design directions for the MacCauley Street Extension

The extension of MacCauley Street to Wilson Street within Option #3 will provide improved access to the new community centre and will provide frontage for the creation of the new residential block, and will provide a street along the entire northern edge of Shannon Park. This will provide the feeling of a highly public space with high visibility into the park, with traffic and people moving along it, as well as improved access and parking to centrally-located park features, such as sports fields that often attract large numbers of users.

The new street should be designed in a way that minimizes vehicle speed and prioritizes the pedestrian and cyclist. This will be achieved through a relatively narrow street design to City standards, suitable for its intended hierarchy in the subdivision and by offering pedestrian crossing methods such as speed tables or painted crossings and other traffic calming measures including curb extensions. The road will likely contain underground utilities to service the proposed new residential block.

The recommended MacCauley Street extension will provide better access through Shannon Park, with sidewalks and a multi-use path buffered from slow-moving vehicular traffic with street trees, safe crossings and on-street parking.
Design directions for new residential development

An objective of the regeneration study is to provide a greater mix of market and non-market housing in the study area. This objective is supported by residents who would like to see a greater diversity of households in the neighbourhood. This will be achieved through the introduction of market housing within the study area (which currently contains only KFHC-operated non-market housing). It is a requirement of the regeneration planning process that any existing KFHC-operated public housing units that are removed will either be relocated to newly constructed buildings, or to other KFHC-owned properties in Kingston. A phasing and relocation strategy to appropriately accommodate the public housing residents will be addressed in detail within the final Regeneration Strategy. In addition to determining the optimal neighbourhood layout, the neighbourhood regeneration strategy will consider appropriate locations for market housing within the neighbourhood. This will be based on the most desirable locations from a market perspective and the objective of integrating market and non-market housing in order to create a diverse community.

With regard to the new residential block proposed in Park Layout Option 3, it is anticipated this is an appropriate location for market housing in the form of freehold or freehold-condominium row houses. This new development would be in the form of 2 - 3 storey buildings, roughly no more than 13 metres in height. This residential format is compatible with the existing community character and would impose limited impacts on neighbouring residences.

The new housing would be designed with primary entrances oriented towards the new street and park in order to improve views onto the park. The depth of the new development parcel requires that some new units front pedestrian mews. Mews should include pedestrian paths, lighting and landscaping including trees and other planting, and will be accessed and viewable from the street. The new housing will be serviced and accessed from private lanes, to ensure the fronts of the townhouses are pedestrian-oriented. Parking for the new units will be off of the private lane, either in surface spaces behind a rear yard, or within integrated garages with patios above.
Above: Pedestrian mews, accessed and visible from the MacCauley Street extension, will provide entrances to units located deeper in the lot. Parking should be located to the rear of townhouses, accessible by internal laneways.

Next Steps

The project team and City staff will be working in the neighbourhood to gain input on the recommendations outlined in this report. An online survey will provide additional opportunities to provide input. The deadline for feedback on the content presented in this report is June 6, 2014. Once the feedback window is closed, findings will be reported to Council in later June. The City staff report will include recommendations to inform the detailed park planning that will commence this summer.

A broader community event will be held for KFHC residents and the public in July where neighbourhood-scaled development options will be presented for feedback. Following this event, a single draft regeneration plan will be developed for further consultation prior to finalization. The final Regeneration Strategy will be presented to Council early in 2015 with the work commencing on the new community centre and the redeveloped Shannon Park in spring 2015.