



The Green Door

Citizens Supporting Ontario's Prosperous and Sustainable Future

The Yorklands Green Hub Newsletter

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Yorklands bridge over a winter Clyde Creek. Photo James Walters.

City of Guelph and YGH: Urgent need to push for provincial support of green innovation plans on former Reformatory lands

In 2001, after nearly 100 years of operation, Ontario closed the Guelph Correctional Centre. It was built to be a self-sustaining prison farm reformatory; the rolling landscape still reflects its agricultural history. After its closure, part of its land was sold. Of the remaining 263 provincially-owned acres, 70 were designated as cultural heritage (the proposed YGH site), 144 as floodplain/natural features, and 49 as appropriate for new development.

In 2014, the City of Guelph approved a plan to create a 426-acre

[Guelph Innovation District](#) in its south-east corner— an “economic cluster focused on green economy and innovation sector jobs.” The plan's vision is for a compact, mixed-use housing and employment development of 7-9,000 new residents, with a focus on “carbon-neutral development activities.” The GID would encompass a mix of currently city-owned land, former prison land, and nearby, currently owned provincial land including the Turfgrass Institute, whose lease shortly expires. This new development would largely be in the area bounded by York Road, Watson Parkway, Stone Road and Victoria Road.

The province has recognized and included Guelph's vision in its reporting documents. But in December 2016 Guelph city hall wrote a report expressing concern that Ontario no longer seems to support its ambitions for the Innovation District project. Two years of efforts have

failed to persuade the province to agree to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would advance the city's vision: they continue to respond “positively but tentatively.” Guelph's provincial member of Parliament Liz Sandals, who has always been supportive of YGH, stressed that she will investigate Infrastructure Ontario's position on the property.

Guelph mayor Cam Guthrie took a stand. “It's time to elevate things,” he said, “and show the province that we really want them to grab hold of the city's vision for this land.”

The same approach holds true for YGH. After three years of proposing a timely green option – a research, demonstration and education hub on the heritage portion of the reformatory lands – there is now, still, an urgent need to push for a priority place for municipalities and non-profits in the “expression of interest” process for land transfer on this site.

YGH's Norah Chaloner made a deputation at the December 2016 Guelph City Council meeting to support the City's plan to pressure the province. Her statement reiterated the



City, province, YGH: Guelph city councillor James Gordon, Guelph MPP Liz Sandals, and YGH deputant Norah Chaloner are among our local enthusiasts.

City of Guelph (con't)

group's wish to purchase the 70-acre heritage parcel between the administration building and York Road, and noted that a fundraising campaign will move ahead in 2017.

The proposed YGH site has now been designated as Parcel #2 of the Guelph Correctional Centre lands being readied for sale. The plan is to purchase this parcel when the sale is open to Ontario non-profit organizations in the near future. YGH continues to pursue counsel and support from various organizations, institutions and governments as well as with the Ontario Land Trust Alliance. By putting the property into a land trust, Yorklands Green Hub would be able to protect it for public use in perpetuity. (For more details about Parcel #2, please see the Ministry of Infrastructure Ontario link:

<http://yorklandsgreenhub.ca/update-sale-former-guelph-correctional-centre/>)

Artspiration: Drawing Inspiration – and Support – from the Land

It was inspired – and inspiring. It was a unique event, organized by Yorklands Green Hub volunteer, University of Guelph professor of theatre arts Pat Flood. It began with an invitation to local artists to walk the proposed, pastoral YGH site, and discover that elusive quality – the *genius loci*, or distinctive spirit of a place – to inspire their creative process.

Aptly dubbed Artspiration, the invitation drew fifteen local artists to discover the charms and attributes of 70 green acres of the heritage Guelph Correctional Centre lands. They wandered the fields, among the ponds, trails, stone fences, buildings and arching bridges over bubbling Clythe



An Artspiration piece: *Fall Colours* by Sharyn Siebert. Acrylic collage.

Creek. From their explorations they derived imagery which translated into a range of beautiful, multi-media artwork.

reporter/photographer Rob O'Flanagan, himself an artist. Sale proceeds went to the artists, with a percentage contribution to YGH.



Artspiration opening night at 10 Carden Street. Photo Rob O'Flanagan/Guelph Today.


On the evening of November 5, 2016, YGH held a public opening in downtown Guelph for a month-long showing and sale of the resulting artwork. The gathering was captured by well-known *Guelph Today*

Artists are an enormously valuable part of a community, creative eyes and minds who enable us to see things differently. This event gave us a mosaic of a part of our city which is about to undergo rapid intensification

Artspiration (con't)

and development. The artists interpreted the beauty of a place for which we at YGH have a vision of a sustainability learning site to provide skill-sharing and outdoor learning experiences for all ages.

"I was very happy with the number of artists who came out to support Yorklands Green Hub in this exhibition," said Professor Flood. "Regrettably we had to turn people away. I was particularly impressed with the variety of work submitted and the unique interpretations inspired by our site."

The works from the Artspiration project can be seen on our website at <http://yorklandsgreenhub.ca/artspiration-2016-slideshow/> 

Reclaiming Visionary Lands: G360 - a new YGH partner for ground-water protection

In this new century, water quality and protection has become a highly critical issue. Along with sustainable urban agriculture and renewable energy, it therefore comprises a key focus of the Yorklands Green Hub's activities. It is also closely related to planning for demonstration food production on the 70-acre heritage site at the former Guelph Correctional Centre prison farm lands.

There's a wrinkle, however. Reports from the landowning province of Ontario indicate some contamination in the soil and groundwater. While quick to assure the public that existing toxins "pose no risk to the community, the Eramosa or drinking water aquifers," and that fish on site are safe to eat, they indicate some areas of concern. Most of these are specific, and fenced in behind the prison proper, localized

What is the Yorklands Green Hub?

The Yorklands Green Hub is a non-partisan citizens' group that is promoting the creation of an Ontario sustainable eco-centre at the former Guelph Correctional Centre (GCC). The goal: a self-sustaining forum where institutions, groups and sustainable businesses can come together in a structured setting to promote greater understanding and participation in making the transition towards a low-emissions, climate-stable future.

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You can contact YGH at info@yorklandsgreenhub.ca

near buildings formerly engaged in light manufacturing, dry-cleaning, automobile-repair, and storage of fuels and chemicals. The province is now engaging in cleanup of these sites in preparation for the sale of the property.

The heritage lands in front of the administration building, rolling green landscapes interspersed with ponds, stone walls and wandering creeks, are possible subjects for soil and water research. YGH will need good soil and water analysis before doing any planning for agricultural activity.

Soil or water contamination are never assets, but there is one benefit here that's worth a positive look. And that's the opportunity for research and collaboration on the important topic of land reclamation techniques for



The Centre for Applied Groundwater Research

potentially valuable post-industrial sites. When modern cities grow, areas slated for urban expansion often bump up against abandoned former outside-of-town industrial sites. Investment in cleanup of these "brownfields" yields very valuable renewed space.

A recent new YGH endorser is an expert in a key aspect of land health: groundwater. The University of Guelph's Groundwater Institute, or G360 as it's known, conducts and teaches groundwater research. G360 is the focal point of a global collaboration with 20 institutions in 11 countries. Fifteen principal investigators oversee more than 150 academic experts. Multinational corporations, industrial sponsors and government contribute over \$8

Reclaiming (con't)

million per year to the their work. An impressive ally!

In their letter of YGH endorsement from professor/ researcher Beth Parker, she states "We focus on advancing fundamental knowledge of groundwater flow and contaminant transport and fate, groundwater-surface water interaction and environmental remediation... Collaboration between G360 and Yorklands would enhance scientific research, teaching at various levels, and public outreach events supported by professors and students at the University of Guelph."

Partnerships on leading-edge research for enhanced groundwater quality and repurposing land will be a valuable asset as YGH becomes an important ally in building resilience to climate change. Predictions of future climate stress indicate that some agricultural production must be above ground in greenhouses where more control is possible, to avoid extreme drought. Guelph will stimulate a new kind of urban farming to produce vegetables, fruits – and new farmers. Connecting to local food producers can start with our sustainability hub. ■

Volunteer with Yorklands Green Hub!

Our organization is an all-volunteer citizens' group. There are lots of opportunities for our supporters to share their knowledge and skills.



Contact us [here](#)...to sign up!

To succeed, the Yorklands Green Hub vision needs YOU!

If you believe that a sustainable future depends on what we all learn and do today: JOIN US!!



Transformation!

Be part of our big vision, to transform part of a former self-sustaining reformatory farm into an environmental learning hub in Guelph's most exciting new Innovation District.

Mobile Learning Lab!

Support our unique traveling knowledge centre, bringing green learning to schools and events.

Become a YGH Member!

Join our growing numbers - to acquire, develop and promote a unique Guelph centre for active engagement in building a sustainable future.

<http://yorklandsgreenhub.ca/become-member/>



YGH will be at the 36th Annual Guelph Organic Conference & Trade Show - Guelph University Centre
Conference: January 26-29
Trade Show: Jan 28-29

Come out for all things organic! Workshops, gala organic dinner, keynote panel (on genetic engineering), meet and greets, permaculture, homesteading, market gardening, hemp, root cellaring, plant breeding, carbon farming. We'll be there on Saturday and Sunday at the Daily Grind in the University Centre, with information, new buttons and membership forms of course!

Don't miss this year's annual 2Rivers Festival celebrating Guelph's two beautiful rivers, the Speed and the Eramosa.

There will be a wide variety of free river-related events in May and June of 2017. YGH will be on hand to help you imagine the possibilities at this future heritage ecological centre inspiring resilient communities in the face of climate stress. Join us for an outdoor tour along the creeks and trails. among the stone walls at this site. Watch for detailed activities soon on our website and Facebook. For festival details, please visit <http://www.2riversfestival.org/>

"The Green Door" is a publication of the Yorklands Green Hub Promotions Committee. We welcome news, articles and letters. Each must include the author's name and full contact information.

We reserve the right to refuse or edit all submissions. Questions should be directed to the editor or a member of the Board of Directors at info@yorklandsgreenhub.ca