



YORKLANDS GREEN HUB

Opening green doors to the future.

July 3/19 Yorklands Green Hub to Guelph Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Green space is becoming increasingly important to Guelph citizens. It is wanted for recreation, shade, beauty, and more recently for climate mitigation and hands on learning opportunities. We appreciate this opportunity to input to the Guelph Parks and Recreation Master Plan which is helping us to focus on our city's possibilities for meeting future park land needs.

At present, we have a unique situation in Guelph. In the near future, the provincially owned Guelph Correctional Centre's Parcel(s) 2 and 3 will be up for sale, offering a one-time opportunity to preserve them as an outstanding regional landmark park. The GCC lands also comprise a piece of exceptionally important Guelph heritage. As a provincial reformatory that modeled and inspired change in social reform, and as a federal historical site (Speedwell Hospital) that provided for the rehabilitation of World War I disabled veterans, they represent a place deeply imbued with local history. Today, with their landscaping, biodiversity, water features and stonework - added to their ease of public accessibility - the Yorklands offer an ideal locale for the creation of an active learning and research park that would benefit the city and its population in contributing importantly to a sustainable future.

On behalf of the hundreds of members and supporters of our non-profit organization, I am requesting that you give special consideration to this site, and factor it in to the green space allocations in our city.

In addition to traditional uses of park space, this site could be shared by many groups to further a community resilient in meeting climate emergency challenges in our future. (Eg. carbon sequestration, temperature regulation, urban agriculture, renewable energy demonstration, water and aquatic species conservation and increased urban forest canopy). The Yorklands Green Hub would like to lease these 70 acres from the city to deliver outdoor education and partner for sustainability research and demonstration for students of all ages, like the ones with whom we work voluntarily at present.

The GCC lands are greatly appreciated by a small but regular visiting group of local users. On the other hand, many Guelph residents are unaware of the existence of these public lands or of their special features. Since the prison was closed as an institution in 2001, its barrier gates at the entrance on York Road lead most people to assume it is private property.

The Evergreen Brickworks in Toronto is a an excellent model of re-purposed, multi-tiered management of public green space with a wide variety of active uses and visitors.

Currently, the Yorklands' meadows, trails, ponds and streams are enjoyed by participants at our group events on the property as we inspire interest in the urban forest canopy, biodiversity, pollinator habitat and environmental stewardship. We have been connecting the public to this “bit of country in our city” and to various environmental appreciation activities over the years. Our vision is that it can become an ecology centre for research and education as well as contributing to our available parkland in Guelph.

Could representatives from our board of directors make a 15 minute presentation to the Parks and Recreation Department in the near future, to elaborate on the Yorklands Green Hub vision for the future of this unique site?

Norah Chaloner
Chair
Yorklands Green Hub