



RIVERDALE PARK EAST REVITALIZATION PLAN

Final Report
Prepared by Ryerson Urban Planning Graduate Students
April 2013



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April 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our client team, Kim Statham of the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department and David Stonehouse and Melissa Yu of Evergreen Brick Works for embarking on this project with us. Many thanks go to our professor Nina-Marie Lister for her guidance throughout the project and for her immeasurable insights. We would also like to acknowledge the members of community stakeholder groups who generously shared their first-hand experiences in Riverdale Park East and their wishes for the park's future.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Riverdale Park East Revitalization Plan provides a long-term vision and strategies for the improvement of the park. This plan builds upon the 2000 Master Plan and 2010 Design Charrette. As well, our Interim Report, inventory analysis, vision, guiding principles have led to this final plan of a strategic vision of the “Big Moves” and revitalization recommendations for the future direction of the park.

This plan has been commissioned by the City of Toronto in conjunction with Evergreen at a crucial time. The broader area is under tremendous development pressure with over 70,000 residential units slated for completion within the next five years in the Lower Don. As the population within the Lower Don watershed grows, so will the need to optimize existing recreational, cultural and ecological assets of the Lower Don Trail. As such, The City of Toronto and Evergreen have identified Riverdale Park East as a strategic parks recreation asset within the Lower Don Trail that has considerable potential for improvement.

Vision

To Transform Riverdale Park East into a widely used destination park in the heart of Toronto where people come to have memorable gatherings, discover the rich cultural and natural heritage of the park and surrounding area, and experience a remarkable gateway into the Lower Don Trail.

Guiding Principles

In order to provide direction and a focus to achieve the overall park vision, key guiding principles and objectives were established:

- 1) **Enhance the park’s draw as a destination for diverse users reflecting surrounding demographics**
- 2) **Foster cultural engagement**
- 3) **Practice ecological stewardship**
- 4) **Enhance connectivity within the park, the surrounding community, and the entire lower don trail**
- 5) **Promote diverse uses and users**
- 6) **Encourage community engagement**

Summary of Recommendations

Based on our analysis of existing conditions and guided by our vision and principles for the park, the recommendations for the revitalization of the park are two-fold. First we have established broad enhancements to meet the overall vision. These recommendations are: enhancing the current recreational areas including the children’s playground in the northern-end of the park and updating the sports fields. Creating an outdoor amphitheater from the natural slope to provide a formal space for existing activities. Improving connections between the upper and lower portions of the park, which entails implementing a barrier free set of stairs between the upper and lower plateaus. And finally improving lighting along major pathways and key nodes and edges to enhance safety.

Big Moves

The second set of recommendations are three strategic projects that are important steps towards realizing the park's potential as a major destination for surrounding communities and a prominent node along the Lower Don Trail. These "Big Moves" are: enlivening the St. Matthew's Lawn Bowling Clubhouse, creating a welcoming Broadview Promenade, and enhancing the Riverdale Bridge. These ideas also invite a platform for public art animation and community engagement. The concepts for these "Big Moves" are outlined alongside a phasing implementation strategy. Phasing the projects will allow for some "quick wins" that can enable revenue generation and build community support and volunteers for the next strategies. As such, we start with the Clubhouse's patio and end with the Riverdale Bridge.

The three "Big Moves" fulfill our vision of transforming Riverdale Park East. Each project is distinct and can be implemented on its own, while also complementing each other. With the transformation of Broadview Ave into prominent path that draws visitors, the edge is seamlessly integrated with the St. Matthew's Lawn Bowling Clubhouse as a meeting place to welcome users into the park and finally encourages them to continue their journey through the Riverdale Bridge into the Lower Don Trail.

Phase I	Enlivening the Clubhouse	Implementation order:
	The St. Matthews Lawn Bowling Clubhouse is a prime location for building a cultural and ecological learning hub. The site can act as a community facility, welcome centre, a gateway as well as a tool for revenue generation to achieve the Park's revitalization strategy. The concepts for enlivening the clubhouse consist of patio, pavilion and a naturalized playground. A patio can serve as a "quick win" revenue generation tool through the sale of food and drinks. A Natural Playscape will provide more activities for different park users in the southern quadrant of the park. Finally, a pavilion structure is envisioned to be host to cultural or community events or be rented out for weddings and birthdays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patio - Natural Playscape - Pavilion
Phase II	Broadview Promenade (the "Broadwalk")	Implementation order:
	Broadview Avenue forms the eastern edge of the Park. It is also a key entry point into the park given its landmark tobogganing features. Moreover, Broadview Avenue serves as a lookout with its stunning views of Toronto's skyline. By transforming this edge into a promenade/boardwalk, affectionately referred to as the "Broadwalk", this move will strengthen the park's character and attraction. This concept proposes a gateway with public art animation at Montcrest-Broadview Avenue entry point. Moreover, landscaping and paving of the sidewalk will enliven the Broadwalk experience and add to the Park's destination hallmarks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Montcrest Gateway - Landscaping and paving
Phase III	Riverdale Bridge	Implementation order:
	Finally, Riverdale Bridge completes the park circuit. This new vision for the bridge can better connect the Park with surrounding communities and the Lower Don Trail. It also presents a next wave of interest for unifying the two parks — East and West into a single regional and destination park in the heart of the Lower Don. The concepts for the bridge consist of repurposing and redecorating the bridge through public art animation and gateway features and providing for an accessible ramp leading to the Lower Don. An alternative bold and transformative proposal is envisioned that replaces the bridge with a new innovative structure, which has potential for a wildlife corridor and a more seamless integration with the ecological landscape.	<p>Option A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Public Art animation and gateway -Landscaping and paving -Accessible ramp <p>Option B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -New transformative bridge

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW / CONTEXT

Riverdale Park East is located on the eastern side of the Don Valley, with Danforth Avenue approximately 10 minutes to the north, Gerrard St. approximately five minutes to the south and Broadview Avenue bordering the site on the east. Immediately to the north is Montcrest School, an independent K-8 school. This school uses the forest on the north side of the park for some of its programming. To the east is Broadview Ave and a collection of well-maintained low-rise homes. The Don Valley Parkway borders the site to the west, beyond which is the Lower Don Trail (or the “Trail”), which is connected to the park via Riverdale Bridge. Bridgepoint Health – currently undergoing a major redevelopment – borders the site to the south. The park, though separated by the Don Valley Parkway, is connected ecologically and functionally with the Don River watershed and the Lower Don Trail: a paved, multi-purpose path. Riverdale Park is a major recreational and ecological asset within this larger context.



1.2 PROJECT PURPOSE / OBJECTIVES

The City of Toronto and Evergreen Brickworks have identified Riverdale Park East as a strategic Parks Recreation asset within the Lower Don Trail that has considerable potential for improvement. The Lower Don Trail is an integral component within the world's largest ravine system and is rapidly gaining attention as one of Toronto's most essential protected natural assets. Although there have been notable improvements over the years – such as the development of the Evergreen Brickworks and ecological restoration efforts – the Trail remains severely lacking in access points and connections to neighbouring communities and amenities. As the population rises in the Lower Don watershed, so will the need to optimize the existing recreational, cultural and ecological assets of the Trail and parks along it. Revitalizing existing parks and improving their connections with the Trail and adjacent communities are essential to meeting the demands of an increasing population and maximizing the potential of the Lower Don Trail for the future.



This Revitalization Plan builds on an Interim Report, which provided an inventory of the existing conditions and amenities of Riverdale Park East in the context of the Trail, and created a strategic vision and guiding principles that led to the “Big Moves” for future direction. This report adds the following elements: a justification for the “Big Moves”, some concept plans for each, as well as an overall, ‘blue sky’ concept for the park and some suggested next steps for making this a reality. The final plan will assist the City of Toronto in understanding and prioritizing the short- and long-term needs of the park for funding applications and park planning and management initiatives. Two site-specific planning exercises have already taken place: a Riverdale Park East Master Plan (2000) and a Design Charrette (2010). We have taken what we felt were the best ideas from these documents and directions, and combined them with our own analysis gleaned through site visits, document analysis, and best practices to offer a reinvigorated revitalization strategy for the park.

1.3 PLANNING PROCESS AND METHODS

This project was conducted over 12 weeks and consisted of the following six phases:

- 1) A background analysis of the site context, policy framework, and existing plans;
- 2) Developing an overall strategic vision and guiding principles as a lens through which to conduct our analysis;
- 3) Analysing and assessing the baseline conditions;
- 4) Researching precedents and case studies for each of the “Big Moves” being proposed;
- 5) Creating conceptual diagrams for each Big Move as well as the overall revitalization plan for the park; and
- 6) Providing strategies and recommendations for possible next steps to making the revitalization plan a reality.

2.0 PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE PLAN

2.1 SUMMARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Aspects of the current uses, facilities, and conditions of Riverdale East Park are known by various users and stakeholders but, thus far, no comprehensive inventory exists. Thus, in an effort to provide such a consolidated list, we have summarized the major existing conditions. This section explores existing conditions under six major themes or headings:

- 2.1.1 Destination and Character**
- 2.2.1 Heritage and Cultural Uses**
- 2.1.3 Recreational Uses**
- 2.1.4 Access & Linkages**
- 2.1.5 Ecological Stewardship**
- 2.1.6 Community Engagement**



2.1.1 Destination and Character

At approximately 42 hectares in size, Riverdale Park East is centrally located and acts as a focal point, unifying the Lower Don Trail. The importance of the park as a destination for local residents, businesses, the City and the region is fundamental to the success of the Park itself, the surrounding neighbourhoods, and the Lower Don Trail as a whole. As a destination, the Park has the potential to bring economic benefits to the local community. Although a more in-depth analysis can be found in the Interim Report, the main elements of the Character and Destination of Riverdale Park East are as follows:

Destination: Fundamental in establishing Riverdale Park East as a destination requires an understanding of the parks significant activities and features, which attract visitors from the City and region. Currently, the local neighbourhood of Riverdale (and to a lesser degree, the adjacent neighbourhoods) uses the park for a plethora of activities. However, two major features attract visitors from outside the local neighbourhoods: the tobogganing hill and the skyline views.

Character: Aesthetic features of any environment, be it urban, suburban or rural, aid in providing a 'sense of place' for residents and users of the space. A well-kept and designed public realm offers economic advantage to businesses as well as landowners. It fosters a sense of community, assists in the development of community pride and ownership and aids in development of a park as a destination.



2.1.2 Heritage and Cultural Uses

Contemporary urban parks provide a multitude of functions for the city's residents: from enabling contact with nature and each other, to creating places for recreation, interaction and privacy, to providing residents with a role in the design of their community. Urban parks allow a sense of communal identity to be expressed (Matsuoka and Kaplan, 2008). Moreover, park spaces in cities not only provide engagement with natural processes but they also celebrate cultural diversity and conserve memories (Thompson, 2002). Indeed, the guiding principles of park planning in the City of Toronto acknowledge the need to celebrate natural heritage, local history, and cultural expression. Toronto recognizes the opportunities that parks and trails present to locals and visitors of Toronto, so it emphasizes the use of destination parks and select trails as features and calls for their effective promotion as attractive destinations (City of Toronto, 2010).

Riverdale Park East is an example of one such urban park. A prominent feature in the City of Toronto, it has a rich culture and a unique heritage. Recognizing this is essential to the Park's vitality and vibrancy, and provides a strong foundation for its future revitalization strategy. It is important to realize that, like any other urban park, Riverdale Park East does not exist in isolation. Its central location within the City of Toronto means that many mature communities surround it, each with their own historic value and cultural facilities. Riverdale Park East is also part of a larger network known as the Lower Don Trail that contains remnants of industrial heritage such as the Evergreen Brick Works site and Todmorden Mills, which have been revitalized and repurposed for modern day cultural and community uses. The history and cultural programming currently happening in the vicinity of Riverdale Park East is as important to understand as what is happening in the Park itself.

Community and cultural facilities along the Lower Don Trail:

- **Evergreen Brick Works**
- **Todmorden Mills**
- **Cabbagetown Regent Park Community Museum,**
- **Riverdale Farm**

Nearby farmers markets and festivals

- **Withrow Park Winter Farmers Market**
- **Riverdale Farmers Market**
- **Evergreen Brick Works Farmers Market**

Community events:

- **Taste of the Danforth Festival**

Other activities and events:

- **Movies in the Park**
- **Ovarian Cancer Walk**
- **Chinese Chamber of Commerce's Canada Day celebration**
- **The Councilor's Environmental Day**



St. Matthew's Lawn Bowling Clubhouse

History: Designed by architect Robert McCallum and built by the City in 1906, the clubhouse represents a classic example of Riverdale's early 20th century architecture. The clubhouse's deep porch was designed to overlook the park setting and provide respite from the sun during lawn bowling activities (City of Toronto, 2013; 2013a; 2013b).

Original Site: South of the Old Don Jail near Gerrard Street East

Historical Designation: 2006

Relocated: In 2010, due to expansion of Bridgepoint Health

New Location: The upper, southwest plateau of Riverdale Park East, adjacent to Broadview Avenue

Specifications: Entire floor area of main floor and basement is 345 sq. meters or 3,714 sq. ft. (City of Toronto, 2013).

Current Uses:

Basement: will house the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation — a charitable public foundation dedicated to enhancing Toronto's parks

Main floor: vacant

Future Uses: New uses for the Clubhouse are proposed in this report. The current, more prominent location of the Clubhouse in Riverdale Park East presents the potential for it to be a gateway and focal point of the Park. Its southern access off of Broadview Avenue, and its proximity to the sidewalk, cycling routes, and transit stops ensures its discernibility and accessibility. Additionally, the Clubhouse is situated on a flat, grass covered plateau that is the only southern area of the Park that is level with the street.

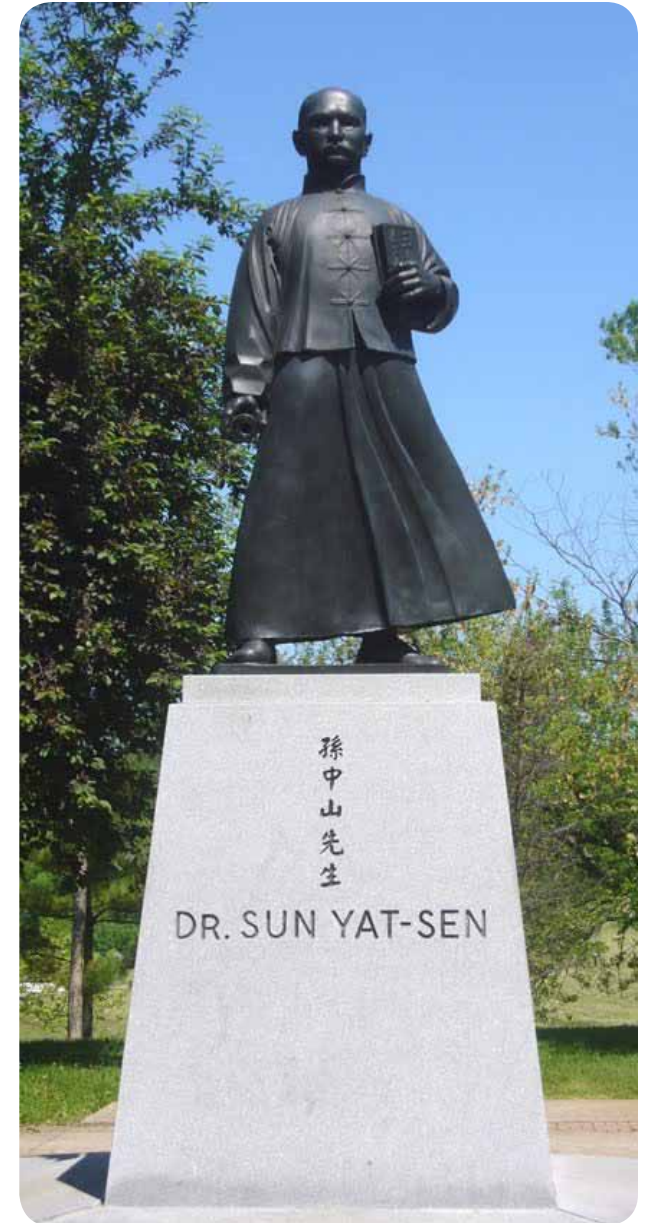
Monument to Sun Yat-sen

History: The statue of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, a well-known revolutionary and the first president of the Republic of China, was erected in his honour to commemorate his stature as the "father of the nation". Dr. Sun Yat-sen visited Toronto about a hundred years ago, and gave a speech at Victoria Hall to raise funds for the revolution in China. In 1983, a National Open Sculpture competition was held to create a statue of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Joe Rosenthal was selected as the sculptor, and he completed the monument in 1985 (Toronto Public Library, 2010).

Location: The street-level plateau at the southeast corner of Riverdale Park East

Use: The monument itself serves as the inspirational focus for Tai Chi practitioners who gather on the shaded, grassy area that surrounds it.

Considerations: The statue is difficult to identify due to the large trees that surround it. There is no paving or landscaping around or leading up to it, thus minimizing its impact on the Park. In the light of this, an opportunity exists to highlight the landmark while taking into consideration its existing recreational and cultural uses.



2.1.3 Recreational Uses

Riverdale Park East has numerous facilities, that give rise to various active recreational uses. With an anticipated 70,000 new residents expected to join the surrounding neighbourhoods in the near future, there will be an increased need for extra recreational and leisure public spaces in the area. The development of Bridgepoint Health adjacent to the Park invites the possibility of renewed connections and partnerships to provide additional quiet places for passive leisure uses.

As mentioned in the Riverdale Park East Design Charrette (2010), inclusivity to different users (elderly, children, and people of different incomes, abilities and cultural groups) should be a central principle of a public park. Other ideas that came from the Charrette consist of: chess games tables, picnic areas, BBQ spots, creative play areas such as playgrounds and jungle gyms, fitness/wellness classes, greater variety of sports, and more contemplative and meditative areas to connect the park with the Bridgepoint Hospital campus. The Master Plan for the Park (2000) identified a number of challenges related to the sports fields related to drainage issues and a lack of lighting. These ongoing issues need to be addressed to revitalize and upgrade the open fields.



Existing Recreational Facilities

- Soccer Fields
- Baseball Diamonds
- Running Track
- Outdoor Swimming Pool
- Children's Playground
- Ice Rink/Dry Pad
- Tennis Courts

Existing Recreational Uses

- Cross-country Skiing by Montcrest School through permits
- Cyclists along the Lower Don Trail pass through the park
- Joggers pass through the park and sometimes use the track
- Summer movie nights on the hill
- Relaxation, resting and lunch by Bridgepoint staff and community on the south side of the park
- Dog owners using the off-leash area
- Tobogganing down the landmark hill
- Hikers use the naturalized trail
- Special Events permits for Ovarian Cancer walk, Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Canada Day celebration, Councilor's Environmental Day.
- Summer recreational programs and camps
- Film shoot permits
- Tai Chi

2.1.4 Access & Linkages

Successful large urban parks are easily accessible and provide a connection to a Trail system, enabling users to explore a larger trail network to help expand their sense of open space (Steiner & Butler 2012). The Lower Don Trail Master Plan project indicates improving connectivity and movement along the Trail as a primary objective. Mobility will be improved by: improving existing trail access points and adding new ones on Danforth Ave; creating new gateways at key sites, specifically on the mouth of the Don River and Evergreen Brick Works; and finally, connect the east and west side of the Don Valley through building new bridges. Riverdale Park East is relatively well connected from various directions to the surrounding communities. Importantly, Riverdale Bridge, which crosses over the Don River, the Don Valley Parkway and the Bayview extension, connects the park to the Lower Don Trail and Riverdale Park West. This connection provides linkages to other open spaces and parks, popular destinations, communities, and the Toronto Waterfront. However, the Riverdale Bridge is inaccessible for individuals who require walking assistance with only a staircase to the Lower Don Trail.



Currently, the Park has two stair structures: at the corner of Montcrest Blvd and Broadview and further south on Broadview Ave near Tennis Crescent. The Montcrest Blvd stair access point is the most visible entrance into the park, as there is a signpost indicating the name of the park. The second stair access point is further set back into the park and is surrounded by mature tall trees. This stair structure is wooden and shows signs of deterioration. During the winter months, after a heavy snowfall due to poor maintenance, this stair structure is difficult to traverse. The steep slopes on the southern end of the Park provide open access to the park off of Broadview Avenue. Additionally, the steep slopes along Broadview Ave are also inaccessible for individuals who would need mobility assistance. The stair structures and steep slope make many of these key access points not universally accessible. Individuals with walking aids, wheelchairs, strollers, and other general walking impediments would have a difficulty accessing the park from these points.



A Discovery Walk footbridge over the Don Valley Parkway onramp provides access from the northern end of the park connecting Danforth Avenue. However, there is a lack of signage and visibility for this path. Multiple visible informal trails found along the slopes, through the wooded area, and along the western fence of the park provide an indication of user linkages throughout the park. The lack of paved and structured trails and pathways in the park is also another point to the inaccessibility present at the park. There are approximately 4 paved pathways in the northern end of the Park acting as linkages between the recreational facilities in the upper level. Multiple visible informal trails found along the slopes, through the wooded area, and along the western fence of the park provide an indication of user linkages throughout the park





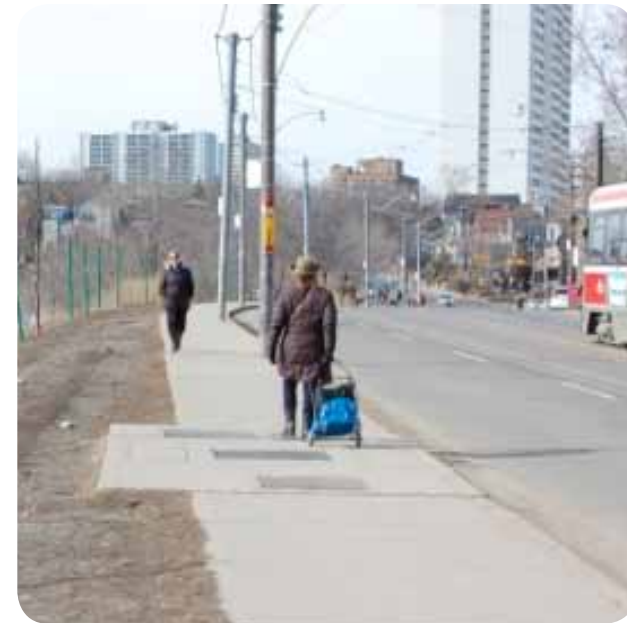
Transit

There are eight streetcar stops along Broadview Ave that border the vicinity of the park. Broadview Station is approximately a 5 to 7 minute walk away from the park with efficient subway service connecting the eastern side of Toronto with the downtown core. Riverdale Park East is well connected to the surrounding transit service, which is a major asset as it is more accessible, and thus potentially attracting a wider range of individuals from across the city and region.



Vehicle Movement

The park is situated between a highway the Don Valley Parkway (DVP) and a major thoroughfare Broadview Avenue. Vehicle traffic along Broadview Ave can be partially attributed to providing access to Danforth Ave, as this street has the entrance to the DVP. To the south, the location of Bridgepoint Health along Gerrard St E also has heavy traffic. Currently, there is no parking offered in the park. Only service and emergency vehicles are permitted into the park, as such the traffic flow into the park is minimal.



Pedestrian Movement

Movement through the northern end of the park is constrained due to the large recreational facilities. Park users entering the park through the stair structure at the corner of Montcrest Blvd and Broadview are forced to walk around the facilities along a narrow pathway. In order to access the southern end of the park from the northern stair structures, individuals have the option of going through the forested area along an informal pathway around the tennis facilities. The southern end of the park circulation is free flowing and not constrained by activities. The open boundaries off of Broadview Ave provide multiple access points and a variety of circulation patterns. However, movement can be depicted differently in this section of the park when organized sports are taking place. When activities are taking place, park users entering the park from the north end and wanting to access the Riverdale Bridge need to use the informal trail at the western end of the park by the DVP fence. Overall, due to the lack of structured pathways in the south and hidden recreational facilities in the north, pedestrian circulation is varied and dependent on the types of uses in the park.

2.1.5 Ecological Stewardship

The ecological value of the Don River and its associated watershed has been increasingly realized since the Bring Back the Don campaign began. As more people in the GTA realize the ecological importance of the Lower Don Trail, the more likely it will be that they will act as Ecological Stewards of the area — ensuring its protection, revitalization, and enhancement in the future. Within the Lower Don Trail itself, lies Riverdale Park East — a Park whose ecological importance has experienced neglect but has also been the site of community stewardship initiatives. Riverdale Park East still holds many potential opportunities to be a regional, destination Park that emphasizes its ecological value within the greater context of the Lower Don Trail.

In 1990, the Task Force to Bring Back the Don planted and reforested the northern, sloped end of Riverdale Park East, and today there is a mature woodland of Ash and Maple trees. Due to the sloped nature of this area, the base of the woodland exists as natural wetland, storing runoff water from both the woodland, and the field to the south. Since this area also exists within the floodplain of the Don River, it is important to note the role of the wetland in flood mitigation. Vegetation planted and used in Riverdale Park East should be native varieties that are flood-tolerant whenever possible in order to absorb and retain any excess water. The Riverdale Park East wetland is a single entity of wetlands that exist along the Lower Don Trail, such as the Beechwood Wetland, Belt Line Pond, Binscarth Swamp, Chester Springs Marsh, Don Valley Brick Works, the Riverdale Farm Ponds, and at Todmorden Mills.



2.1.6 Community Engagement

Increasing community engagement and encouraging partnerships was recognized as a strategic principle to the sustainability of parks in the City of Toronto's parks strategic plan – Our Common Grounds (City of Toronto, 2004). Community engagement has also been identified as a principle in the upcoming parks master plan (Parks Plan). Riverdale Park East is well loved and used by numerous constituencies. Currently, the City has classified the Park as a district park, however, it is both a neighbourhood park for adjacent residential communities, and a regional park for those seeking tobogganing and sports facilities, and is literally the backyard of Bridgepoint Health. Its location on the Don River has made the park a strategic interest of environmental advocacy groups, most notably, the Task Force to Bring Back the Don. In 2010, a Design Charrette led by the Design Exchange, engaged teams in a visioning exercise including 15 community members and landscape designers, architects, planners drawing from the private sector and the City. Evidently, there has been significant community interest in the planning and revitalization of this park. Two major community engagement projects are:

- The restoration efforts by the Task Force to Bring Back the Don volunteers of the early 1990s
- Continuous ecological management by the Toronto Parks and Recreation's Community Stewardship program.



2.2 KEY ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

In this section, some key issues are emphasized as they relate directly to the “Big Moves” described later in this plan. A more extensive analysis of the issues and opportunities can be found in the Interim Report. Issues are conditions that have been identified as weaknesses, constraints, or other challenges (such as funding and ongoing financing options) that exist with Riverdale Park East and in relation to the Lower Don Trail as a whole. Opportunities are the areas of strengths that provide potentials for the revitalization of the Park as a destination within the context of the Lower Don Trail.



Broadview Avenue Edge

Issues:

- The strong street wall created on the east side of Broadview Ave is poorly supported by the accompanying infrastructure, including sidewalks, street poles, overhead utility and streetcar wires and other infrastructure components. The sidewalk specifically adjacent to the park is narrow, in a poor state of repair and littered with garbage cans and street furniture placed at sporadic locations.
- As a result of the waste dumping that took place up until 1962, methane exhaust vents are required and line the eastern edge of the park providing unsightly poles (measuring approximately six inches in diameter and above seven feet in height), which protrude from the ground at various locations.
- Providing streetscape improvement may pose challenges as working with the city departments may pose tactical problems in addition to the cost that such a project would contain.

Opportunities:

- Continuous street wall running the entire eastern length of the park helps define the park from the neighbourhood to the east while providing a continuous element tying the north end of the site to the south.
- The edge allows for the pass through of east-west running streets.

Skyline Views: Riverdale Park East’s unobstructed views of the Toronto skyline from Broadview Avenue has made this park one of the most popular lookout destinations in the city.

Issues:

- Lack of seating, quality of seating
- Disruption from the noise and light produced by the Don Valley Parkway.
- Any planting of trees along the upper portion of the slope could limit the range of views provided at that location. Any placement of trees should be considered with the view in mind.

Opportunities:

- Unobstructed View
- The unobstructed skyline views of Toronto from the top slope of Riverdale Park East along Broadview Avenue provide a uniqueness vantage point not found in the City. The park’s western facing slope provides a natural seating arrangement for city onlookers to take in city lights. On any given warm summer night, people are seen simply relaxing under the stars and enjoying the city views.



Riverdale Bridge / Gateway

Issues:

- The single gateway connecting Riverdale Park East with its cousin to the west is located where the footbridge meets Riverdale Park East. Currently, there is no indication (signs, landmarks, plaques, gateway features) that you are entering Riverdale Park East of West
- The Bridge has poor lighting and is not protected from noise traffic of the DVP
- The Bridge's access point to the Lower Don Trail consist of a staircase structure which is not universally accessible
- Location at the flood plain makes it a tricky structure and gateway to repurpose. There is also very narrow room for adding an accessible ramp at the Lower Don Trail point.

Opportunities:

- The bridge is a major access point between East and West Riverdale Parks and is well-used by joggers, neighbourhood residents and Trail users



Heritage/Cultural Uses (relating to the Clubhouse)

Issues:

- Lack of learning opportunities (signage, displays)
- Proximity to other cultural facilities is not apparent.
- Minimal cultural programming in the park; existing Clubhouse is under used
- Lack of dedicated spaces where cultural programming and learning can occur
- Predominantly utilitarian nature of park use (recreation) not conducive to cultural engagement
- Limited funding
- Limited size of the Clubhouse
- Topography of the park limits the space for cultural programming and learning
- Large areas of the park are already dedicated to sports activities and natural habitat

Opportunities:

- There are some cultural facilities and programing in the immediate vicinity of park
- Park is connected by the Lower Don Trail to Brickworks and Todmorden Mills
- Local cultural events and facilities are already very popular with patrons from adjacent neighbourhoods
- The park is centrally located within the City of Toronto and the established neighbourhood of Riverdale and is easily accessible by public transit, making it a strong candidate for hosting cultural events

Safety & Lighting

Issues:

- Park is not very well lit at night, which raises user concern of safety and security against crime

Opportunities:

- Improve lighting especially on pathways so that users feel more comfortable using the space after dark

Recreation

Issues:

- Limited space and seating available for picnicking and social gatherings
- Insufficient amount of children's playground space

Opportunities:

- Expand existing play structure and/or create a Natural Playscape near Bridgepoint Health and the Clubhouse

Ecology

Issues:

- Park is located on a floodplain, and a great storm has potential to cause a great deal of flooding; the park will need to have flood control measures in place to help mitigate the effects
- The ecological value of the local wetlands are not very well known to the public
- Poor signage and connections along the Lower Don Trail fail to maximize opportunities to educate park users about the ecological activities that are going on around them.

Opportunities:

- Good planning and the incorporation of natural water management measures will help lessen the effects of a catastrophic flood of the area
- Potential exists to incorporate engaging signage and public art within the park — especially at key gateways — to assist with providing interesting, easy-to-understand information about the park's ecological value



2.3 VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Riverdale Park East is notable for its tobogganning activities and iconic skyline views of the city. Enhancing its destination features and connectivity can transform the Park to fully achieve its strengths and opportunities within the context of the Lower Don Trail. We identified key principles to help guide our understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and both current and future challenges of Riverdale Park East and the surrounding context. Six key principles were identified based on a number of considerations including: previous park revitalization projects, common characteristics found in great parks, synthesis of ideas from both the Riverdale Park East Master Plan (2000) and the Riverdale Park East Design Charrette (2010), and our preliminary analysis of existing conditions. Upon determining our six principles, a number of objectives for each principle were identified. Each objective provides a focus to our park analysis and will help guide us in developing future park opportunities.



Principle 1: Enhance the park's draw as a destination for diverse users reflecting surrounding demographics

Objectives:

- Develop high-quality design strategies for the park to strengthen its character through edges, nodes, districts, landmarks, pathways and gateways
- Maintain and improve popular activities in the park including tobogganing, tai chi, and skyline views
- Build on the park's existing connection to the Trail by enhancing and promoting the experience of the park and along the Trail
- Establish Broadview Avenue as a beautiful promenade, helping tie the park into the adjacent community

VISION

To transform Riverdale Park East into a widely used destination park in the heart of Toronto where people come to have memorable gatherings, discover the rich cultural and natural heritage of the park and surrounding area, and experience a remarkable gateway into the Lower Don Trail.



Principle 2: Foster cultural engagement

Objectives:

- Seamlessly integrate the St. Matthew's Lawn Bowling Clubhouse as a cultural hub in the park
- Maintain and build upon existing cultural uses
- Promote cultural heritage education in the park and along the Lower Don Trail
- Allow for possibilities for expansion beyond traditional/current uses and boundaries of the park
- To be a resilient park that keeps its vibrancy as time goes on, by staying fresh and flexible enough to change with the times



Principle 3: Practice ecological stewardship

Objectives:

- Conserve, restore, and expand natural space by promoting biodiversity, providing natural habitat and encourage use of the park by a variety of species (and especially by species at risk). Whenever possible, native and regenerative plantings should be used.
- Promote the natural heritage of the park through active education and learning opportunities, as well as the protection of existing vantage points, views, and sight lines.
- To respect natural space through minimal interactions of natural processes throughout all seasons, and to utilize natural water flows by encouraging the restoration of natural water treatment processes such as bioswales or constructed wetlands.

Principle 4: Enhance connectivity within the park, the surrounding community, and the entire Lower Don Trail

Objectives:

- Identify new and enhance the current entry points into the park and the Lower Don Trail
- Develop a park signage system
- Improve infrastructure, pathways and trails into, within, and through the park and in relation to the Lower Don Trail and other surrounding areas to ensure a barrier free park
- Create a park spaces that are engaging and provide a comfortable park atmosphere
- Provide shelter from weather conditions and promote microclimates



Principle 5: Promote diverse uses and users

Objectives:

- Create space and reflective spots that allow for passive use
- Enhance opportunities for social gatherings and places that allow for leisure activities and games
- Transform recreational facilities and fields that enable dynamic and multi-purpose use throughout all seasons
- Strengthen community and city use by providing cultural and community programs



Principle 6: Encourage community engagement

Objectives:

- Provide more opportunities for volunteering
- Increase transparency of the governance process of the park
- Encourage private sector partnerships
- Ensure that the park remains a public space



3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 THE “BLUE SKY” IDEAS

Based on our analysis of existing conditions, and guided by our vision and principles for the park, we have come up with recommendations for the overall revitalization of Riverdale Park East. We break down our recommendations in two parts. To begin with, we present a number of recommendations that encompasses various areas and uses of the park. These broad enhancements address ecology, destination features, recreational uses, connectivity, cultural heritage, and community engagement at various scales. Our recommendations, as presented and discussed below consist of:

- Enhance the current recreational areas
- Upgrade sports fields
- Create an outdoor amphitheater
- Improve connections between the upper and lower portions of the park
- Improve lighting and safety

In the latter part of our recommendations, we focus our attention on three key projects that we have developed in greater depth for a revitalization strategy. These three ‘Big Moves’ are starting points and transformative concepts for Riverdale Park East. These consist of: St. Matthews Clubhouse, the Broadwalk, and Riverdale Bridge.



Enhance the current recreational areas

Existing Conditions: The current play area for children at the northern end of the park is underused and consists of dated play equipment. The area around the upper plateau consists of a number of tennis courts, an ice pad and a community pool. All three facilities are equipped with aluminum fencing, which protects passers-by. The amount of fencing and lack of softer surfaces creates an unattractive look and oppressive feel. The area between the public pool and the ice surface provides opportunity for a public viewing area. Currently, the opportunity to sit and watch the activities in the area are limited to a few small benches. Further, the ice pad boards prevent smaller children from viewing the activities on the pad.

Recommendations: Create a Natural Playscape for children (similar to the one that exists on the Montcrest Private School grounds to the north of the park) that is focused on holistic child development. Line the fences with vegetation or public art, which can help soften the oppressive feel of the area. Place seating between the public pool and ice pad. Seating should be high enough to view all three activity spaces.



Upgrade sports fields

Existing Conditions: The sports fields are in poor condition. The fences behind the baseball diamonds have holes and do not provide protection for onlookers. The infields are poorly defined and the surface is uneven with indents throughout. The soccer fields are poorly defined with no markings to distinguish the field and no netting behind the goals. The running track has weeds growing out of the surface and is uneven along its length. Some of the fields overlap one another and during busy periods cause interruptions during games. No seating is present in the area.

Recommendations: Re-sod sports fields and located them in positions that limit activity overlap. Provide seating along field perimeter, ensure that location does not impede with winter tobogganing activity.



Create an outdoor amphitheater

Existing Conditions: Currently the park does not offer a formal area dedicated to performance or learning space although the park is currently used for these activities informally.

Recommendations: The natural slope in the park provides an opportunity for an outdoor amphitheater to serve this purpose (though this should not compete with the tobogganing hill area).



Improve connections between the upper and lower portions of the park

Existing Conditions: The steep slope along the eastern edge of the park creates a physical barrier to park users trying to access the upper and lower plateaus. Currently, the lack of barrier-free access creates accessibility issues for many people. The lack of a delineated route has created multiple informal paths, disrupting the environment.

Recommendations: Provide a set of stairs with barrier free access, and a ramp to connect the upper and lower plateaus. The stairs should use slip-resistant material and should utilize similar materials as found along the boardwalk. The stairs should be lit with lighting located below the height of the railing to limit ecological disruption.



Improve lighting and safety

Existing Conditions: Lighting exists in select locations throughout the park. Existing lighting consist of high energy, low light output lighting. A number of informal paths are evident in areas of the park that are poorly lit. Illicit activity has become a problem in some areas, creating unsafe conditions for park users.

Recommendations: Lighting should be provided throughout the park along major paths and at key nodes and edges. Lighting should be placed in locations, at heights, and with luminosity, which minimizes effects on the local ecology of the Lower Don Trail.



3.2 3 “BIG MOVES” & RATIONALE

We have identified three strategic projects, or “Big Moves”, that we feel are important steps towards realizing Riverdale Park East’s potential as a major destination for surrounding communities and a prominent node along the Lower Don trail. These steps include:

- 1) **Enlivening the Clubhouse**
- 2) **Creating a welcoming promenade along Broadway Avenue**
- 3) **Enhancing the Riverdale Bridge**

These three Big Moves build upon a desire to: attract new audiences to the park; increase connectivity with Riverdale Park West, adjacent communities and the Lower Don trail; foster an enhanced sense of place; promote community-capacity building and sustainable parks governance; and create opportunities for learning. Once realized, these Big Moves will act as prominent gateways that welcome visitors into the park.

Each Big Move is a distinct project unto itself but the projects also complement each other, collectively creating a prominent desire path that draws visitors along the eastern edge of the park, welcomes visitors into the park and encourages them to continue their journey into the Lower Don Trail and Riverdale Park East. Each concept draws inspiration from nature through the use of materials and offers an enjoyable transition from the hardscape infrastructure of the city to the ecosystem of the Don Valley.

3.3 THE THREE BIG MOVES CONCEPTS & PRECEDENTS

A description of the existing conditions for each of the Big Moves is provided, then some before photos of the area, and followed by renderings of how we envision the site would look after the concept has been implemented.

3.3.1 CONCEPT 1: CLUBHOUSE

The St. Matthew's Lawn Bowling Clubhouse was built by the City in 1906 and represents a classic example of Riverdale's early 20th century architecture. The Clubhouse is 345 sq. metres (or 3,714 sq. ft.) and was designed by Robert McCallum, which showcases a beautiful deep porch intended to overlook the park setting and provide respite from the sun during lawn bowling activities (City of Toronto, 2013; 2013a; 2013b).

Currently, the Clubhouse is located at the southern end of the park, adjacent to Broadview Avenue and in close proximity to Bridgepoint Hospital campus, and is situated on a flat, grass-covered plateau. The prominent location of the Clubhouse has potential for it to provide access to the park through an enhanced gateway and be a focal point of the park.

There are opportunities for the Clubhouse to be destination node, as the park is lacking in an area that attracts visitors to the space and encourages them to linger, as well as a space for planned activities and programming to take place there in the future. The structure and its location create the opportunity for it to become a welcome centre to the Park that provides information and material on the park's culture, heritage, and ecology. During the cooler months, the Clubhouse offers the potential to be an important venue for indoor recreational or cultural programming.



The prominent location of the Clubhouse in Riverdale Park East presents a unique opportunity to incorporate a heritage building by enhancing the clubhouse and the surrounding space to become a focal point and gateway into the Park. The Clubhouse's location connects well with the other two "Big Moves" (Promenade and Riverdale Bridge) in order to collectively welcome users and provide for way-finding. The following section will describe the proposed strategies for the Clubhouse and has been organized in the following order:

General Clubhouse Recommendations

- Landscaping and Paved Trails
- Gateway Features
- Children's Play Area
- Picnic/Seating Areas



Landscaping and Paved Trails

Existing Conditions: Currently, the Clubhouse is situated on a grassy plateau and surrounded by mature trees. The land surrounding the Clubhouse is empty. During the summer months, the grass is often worn with informal trails created by users entering or exiting the park from the south end. During the rainy season and winter thaw, the area is often muddy from heavy foot traffic. Directly adjacent to the Clubhouse is an access road and adjoining trail that leads to the Riverdale Bridge.

Recommendations: Landscaping surrounding the Clubhouse will improve the area's current aesthetic appeal. Options for sustainable landscaping such as xeriscape gardens, combined with structured trails will enhance the current space around the Clubhouse. The material for the structured trails should be consistent with the promenade ("Broadwalk"), as it will provide continuity and wayfinding for individuals.

Gateway Features

Existing Conditions: The Clubhouse is a prominent and beautiful structure, however, it is currently at a setback from the sidewalk and lacks an inviting presence into the park and clubhouse. The front entrance of the Clubhouse facing Broadview Avenue is currently underutilized. Interlocking stones provide the foundation for two benches and a water fountain, as well as bike racks just outside of the stone slab are located in front of the Clubhouse.

Recommendations: There are opportunities to enhance and enliven the Clubhouse and the surrounding space to welcome users to the park such as through the creation of a pavilion. There is potential to make the Clubhouse more of a gateway that will connect this space with the Broadwalk and the Lower Don Trail.



Children's Play area

Existing Conditions: The area around the Clubhouse currently lacks play space for children, and in fact, the only existing playground for children is a dilapidated one located at the northern end of the park.

Recommendations: Create a Natural Playscape near the Clubhouse that caters to the holistic development of children. This Natural Playscape can be used by children and families who are visiting the park for leisure, or because they are visiting patients of Bridgepoint Health and are in the area and need a safe, fun place to play. A naturalized playground will reflect the ecology of the park and the Lower Don, as well as provide aesthetic beauty for natural healing and therapeutic recreation for Bridgepoint Health patients.

Picnic/Seating Areas

Existing Conditions: Currently, the park is lacking in areas with structured sitting, such as shaded and open picnic areas, benches, and ledges in which individuals are able to relax and enjoy the park.

Recommendations: The addition of picnic and sitting areas in proximity to the Clubhouse is ideal; as any future plans to sell food and beverage in the Clubhouse would benefit from this already established space. Furthermore, individuals from Bridgepoint Health will also benefit from this proposed strategy.

**OPEN SPACE OUTSIDE OF CLUBHOUSE
(BEFORE)**



**PAVILION ADJACENT TO CLUBHOUSE
(AFTER - RENDERING)**



**OPEN SPACE OUTSIDE OF CLUBHOUSE
(BEFORE)**



**NATURAL PLAYSCAPE ADJACENT TO CLUBHOUSE
(AFTER - RENDERING)**



**OPEN SPACE OUTSIDE OF CLUBHOUSE
(BEFORE)**



**OUTDOOR PATIO ADJACENT TO CLUBHOUSE
(AFTER - RENDERING)**



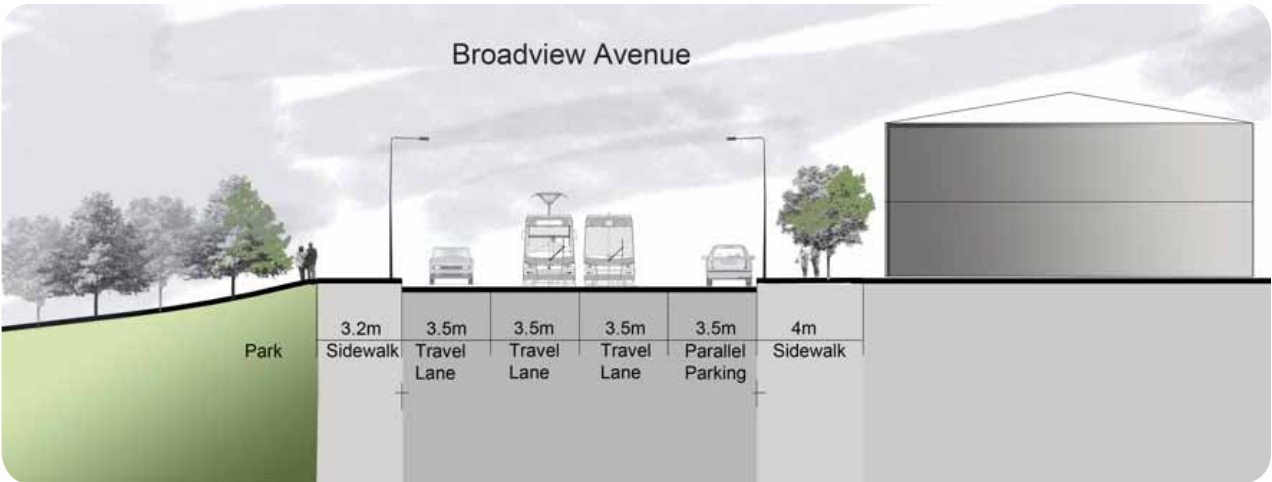
3.3.2 CONCEPT 2: “BROADWALK”

Introduction

Broadview Avenue runs north-south along the entire eastern edge of Riverdale Park East. This Big Move proposes to maintain the streets strengths, while enhancing element of the street, which will strengthen the streets connection with the park and the Lower Don Trail.

This section describes the general streetscape amenities that are proposed along the street to make Broadview Avenue into more of a promenade/boardwalk, affectionately referred to as the “Broadwalk”. The general amenity proposals are organised in the following sections for ease of recommendation:

- Sidewalk
- Service Road
- Trees
- Benches
- Bike Racks
- Garbage and Newspaper Receptacles
- Methane Exhaust Vents
- Top of Slope Conditions
- Wayfinding
- Signage - Gateways
- Crosswalks
- Access Points



Sidewalk

Existing Conditions: The sidewalk along Broadview Avenue is narrow and provides inadequate space for street trees and pedestrian amenities. Portions of the sidewalk towards the southern half of the parks edge is paved with asphalt and is in poor condition with cracks and weeds growing throughout. Directly adjacent to, and running parallel with, the sidewalk is an informal trail, which has ruined the grass cover and created undesirable walking conditions, particularly when the ground is wet.

Recommendations: The existing concrete sidewalk along on the West Side of Broadview should be maintained with minor maintenance done on select portions that show damage. Portions of the sidewalk currently covered with asphalt should be replaced with a similar concrete treatment for the remainder of the sidewalk. Adjacent to the sidewalk and running parallel along its entire length, should be a pedestrian boardwalk made up of a material consistent with the character of the park, which will soften the transition between the hard edge concrete sidewalk adjacent to the road, and the soft edge of the Riverdale Park East upper slope. The material used will be unique to the Lower Don Trail and will provide a continuous identifiable pattern along the edge and throughout the Lower Don Trail. The boardwalk will more than double the width of the walking area and will provide greater opportunity for joggers to run.



Service Road

Existing Conditions: The service road is in fair condition with a few cracks visible in the asphalt surface. The road connects Broadview Avenue with the park washrooms, maintenance building, and the pedestrian bridge connecting Riverdale Park East and West. The road is well protected along most of its length by the large tree canopy overhead.

Recommendations: The asphalt surface material should be removed in favour of the same material used throughout the Broadview Boardwalk. This material will be carried through to the pedestrian bridge connecting both sides of Riverdale Park East and West.

Trees

Existing Conditions: Very few trees exist along portions of the west side of Broadview midway along the parks length. The few trees that do exist appear to be suffering from poor health and are located at sporadic locations on the west side of the street. Trees located towards the northern end of the park along Broadview Avenue are more mature, provide greater canopy cover and are organised in a rhythmic pattern, specifically those immediately adjacent to the street. The Riverdale Park East Master Plan (2000), identified the potential challenge of planting trees along the upper portions of the slope, as unstable soil conditions beneath the surface will make it difficult for healthy, mature tree growth).

Recommendations: An Arborist should be contacted to identify the potential for future street trees along the sidewalk portions of the street. The use of new technology, such as Silva Cells, may aid in tree health and provide opportunity for tree placement. Tree type, spacing and planting techniques, should be conducted based on City of Toronto Standards. All healthy trees will be maintained and protected. Trees should be protected by raised planter beds, which also act as informal seating areas.





Benches

Existing Conditions: Benches facing the park along Broadview Avenue are in poor condition and in need of repair. The few benches that are available in the park are located in sporadic locations, which is not conducive to visitors who wish to take in the beautiful Toronto skyline.

Recommendations: New benches should be installed at 25-foot intervals along the western edge of Broadview where a clear line of city towards the city skyline is visible. New benches should be located within 40 to 60 feet of all intersection crosswalks and 10 to 20 feet of all mid-block crosswalks and transit stops.



Bike Racks

Existing Conditions: Currently, very few bike racks exist. Those that do exist are City of Toronto standard post and ring racks.

Recommendations: New bike racks should be installed within 20 feet of all transit stops and entry points into the park, including at the heritage building, front entrance to Bridgepoint Health, Montcrest and Broadview Gateway, the entry point just south of Montcrest Avenue and the footbridge connecting Riverdale Park East and West.



Garbage and Newspaper Receptacles

Existing Conditions: Garbage and newspaper receptacles are currently placed in random locations and in some cases obstructing the sidewalk.

Recommendations: Garbage and newspaper receptacles should be consolidated into one standardized unit, or should be placed in contained areas, reducing the clutter that lines the sidewalk.





Methane Exhaust Vents

Existing Conditions: Methane exhaust vents are located on the upper portions of the Riverdale Park East slope spaced at frequent intervals and rising over six feet high.

Recommendations: The vents serve the purpose of exhausting methane gas produced by the composting landfill underneath the surface. Opportunities exist to enhance the vents through public art and integrating the vents into the design of the boardwalk.



Top of Slope Condition

Existing Conditions: The grass along the upper slopes fronting Broadview Avenue is in poor condition due to the heavy use from pedestrians and tobogganers.

Recommendations: See recommendations for sidewalk



Wayfinding

Existing Conditions: Currently, No wayfinding exist in the park or along Broadview Avenue, with the exception of a sign at the Montcrest and Broadview Avenue intersection indicating the Discovery Walk Trail.

Recommendations: The park needs a comprehensive wayfinding signage system throughout. The system should include simple, easy-to-read signs that list key destinations along with simple arrows. Signs should be placed at strategic locations to help residents and visitors find key destinations within the park. Along the boardwalk/promenade, a continuous material pattern or design feature should help connect the Broadview Avenue, the service road and the pedestrian bridge.



Signage - Gateways

Existing Conditions: Two City of Toronto Park signs welcome users to Riverdale Park East (one at the Broadview and Montcrest Avenue intersection and one in front of heritage Clubhouse).

Recommendations: Primary Gateways should be enhanced through larger and more elaborate signage. An opportunity exists to build in signage into some of the streetscape improvements such as planter boxes or park benches.



Crosswalks

Existing Conditions: Crosswalks connecting the east and west sides of Broadview consist of two horizontal white stripes at the intersection of Montcrest Ave.

Recommendations: Existing crosswalks connecting the east and west sides of Broadview should be enhanced by pavers to make them more visible to motorists and extend the sidewalk. The pavement in the center of the intersections (between crosswalks) could also be enhanced with decorative pavement or special design features.



Access Points

Existing Conditions: Stairs exist at the intersection of Montcrest and Broadview and at the south of Montcrest Avenue near the tennis courts. There is a service road at the south end of the park near the St. Matthew's Clubhouse, and three informal paths present physical challenges and danger. None of these existing access points are barrier-free.

Recommendations: Staircases should be accompanied by a barrier-free access ramp where feasible. Informal access points should be removed by re-landscaping the area with formal stairs and ramps, and should be well-lit. Materials used should be consistent especially with materials used along the Broadwalk promenade.

**BROADVIEW AVE. AT MONTCREST BLVD
(BEFORE)**



**BROADVIEW AVE. AT MONTCREST BLVD
(AFTER - RENDERING)**



**BROADVIEW AVE. FACING NORTH
(BEFORE)**



**BROADVIEW AVE. FACING NORTH
(AFTER - RENDERING)**



3.3.3 CONCEPT 3: BRIDGE

Bridges and gateways play a key role in improving accessibility and drawing in users. While there are several locations for improving accessibility and movement in the park and the Lower Don, the pedestrian bridge over the Don River and Parkway that connects Riverdale Park East and West is the ideal candidate for a revitalization strategy. Improving the bridge will increase the connectivity of Riverdale Park East with the surrounding area (including Lower Don Trail and Riverdale Park West). Moreover, Bridgepoint Health is an important stakeholder in making the bridge more accessible, as it has an access point to the Lower Don Trail. In moving forward with a revitalization strategy for a bridge connection, we suggest two options:

1. A modest cost-effective proposal that implements an accessible ramp to the existing bridge, and repurposes the bridge into an artistically attractive path for users through modest art carvings, decorations and gateway features.
2. There is also an opportunity for a more transformative proposal where the existing bridge will be removed and new bridge infrastructure put in place. The new bridge can provide for better accessibility, a potential wildlife corridor, and innovating landscape design that fully integrate the bridge with the surrounding natural environment. One key precedent for this innovative bridge corridor is the Land Bridge in Fort Vancouver.

This section uses the existing conditions of the bridge and its surrounding context in order to make general recommendations under the following headings:

- Accessibility
- Public Art
- Gateway Features
- Wildlife Corridor
- Noise Reduction
- Lighting



Accessibility

Existing Conditions: The pedestrian bridge features a staircase facing south that allows entry to Lower Don Trail. There is no accessible entry to and from the Lower Don Trail.

Recommendations: An accessible ramp from the bridge to the Lower Don Trail should be constructed to allow for universal access (e.g. for cycling, strollers, mobility aids etc.). A design that provides organic and seamless integration between the natural landscape and design of the bridge can enhance access to the Lower Don Trail.

Public Art

Existing Conditions: The bridge is currently a plain corridor with green-coloured metal railings on each side. It has limited aesthetic features such as art or landscaping, and does not encourage user interaction or appreciation.

Recommendations: Modest artistic designs can consist of carvings and decorative design palettes along the walls of the bridge and metal railing. Community artists, or neighbourhoods and schools could implement the artistic elements. The materials should be carefully selected to be consistent with other paths to and from the park and the natural landscape of the Lower Don.

Gateway features

Existing Conditions: The bridge lacks any iconic gateway feature that welcomes or invites users to pass through the bridge. Also, there is no signage to provide directions to visitors about where the bridge leads.

Recommendations: Gateways at both ends of the bridge should be designed to augment the iconic and inviting feature of Riverdale Park East as a destination park. The opportunity exists to also provide signage at gateways to add to the wayfinding element.



Wildlife Corridor

Existing Conditions: The Riverdale Park bridge currently serves as transportation for pedestrians, joggers and bicyclists only. Currently, there are no wildlife corridors at this crossing or other crossings of the Lower Don.

Recommendations: A wildlife corridor can enable animals and wildlife to cross over Bayview Avenue, the Lower Don River and Don Valley Parkway as needed. Conduct a feasibility study on wildlife corridor of the ideal crossing location for and the kind of wildlife that may use it (see the wildlife corridors at Banff National Park for a precedent example). An opportunity also exists to provide educational signage along the corridor to inform and educate public about wildlife species.



Noise

Existing Conditions: The bridge is an overpass across the Don Valley Parkway and Bayview Avenue that have high traffic. Noise pollution from traffic makes the bridge crossing unappealing and unpleasant. The plain bridge structure with no landscape features fails to provide any separation for pedestrians from the noisy traffic below.

Recommendations: Design and landscape characteristics can be used to provide a mental separation between the busy highway and bridge, and can enhance the user's experience of the crossing. There is also an opportunity to consider innovative structural and design materials that provide an acoustic sound barrier.



Lighting

Existing Conditions: Currently, there is no lighting across the bridge or at its entry points, though some lighting from the Don Valley Parkway spills over onto the bridge.

Recommendations: The bridge should be well-lit in order to enhance the iconic features of the bridge during dusk and early parts of the night and invite users to feel comfortable and safe in the space after daylight falls. Proper lighting can also add to the public art and decorative elements of the bridge for both pedestrians and for a view from the park and trail. Ensuring that the lighting is sensitive to the ecology of the park and surrounding wildlife is also a key consideration.

**UNDERSIDE OF PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
(BEFORE)**



**UNDERSIDE OF PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
(AFTER - RENDERING)**



**ACCESS TO PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
(BEFORE)**





PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE WITH ART AND GATEWAY (AFTER - RENDERING)

**ACCESS TO PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
(BEFORE)**



**OPTION 1: GATEWAY
(AFTER - RENDERING)**



**OPTION 2: WILDLIFE CORRIDOR
(AFTER - RENDERING)**



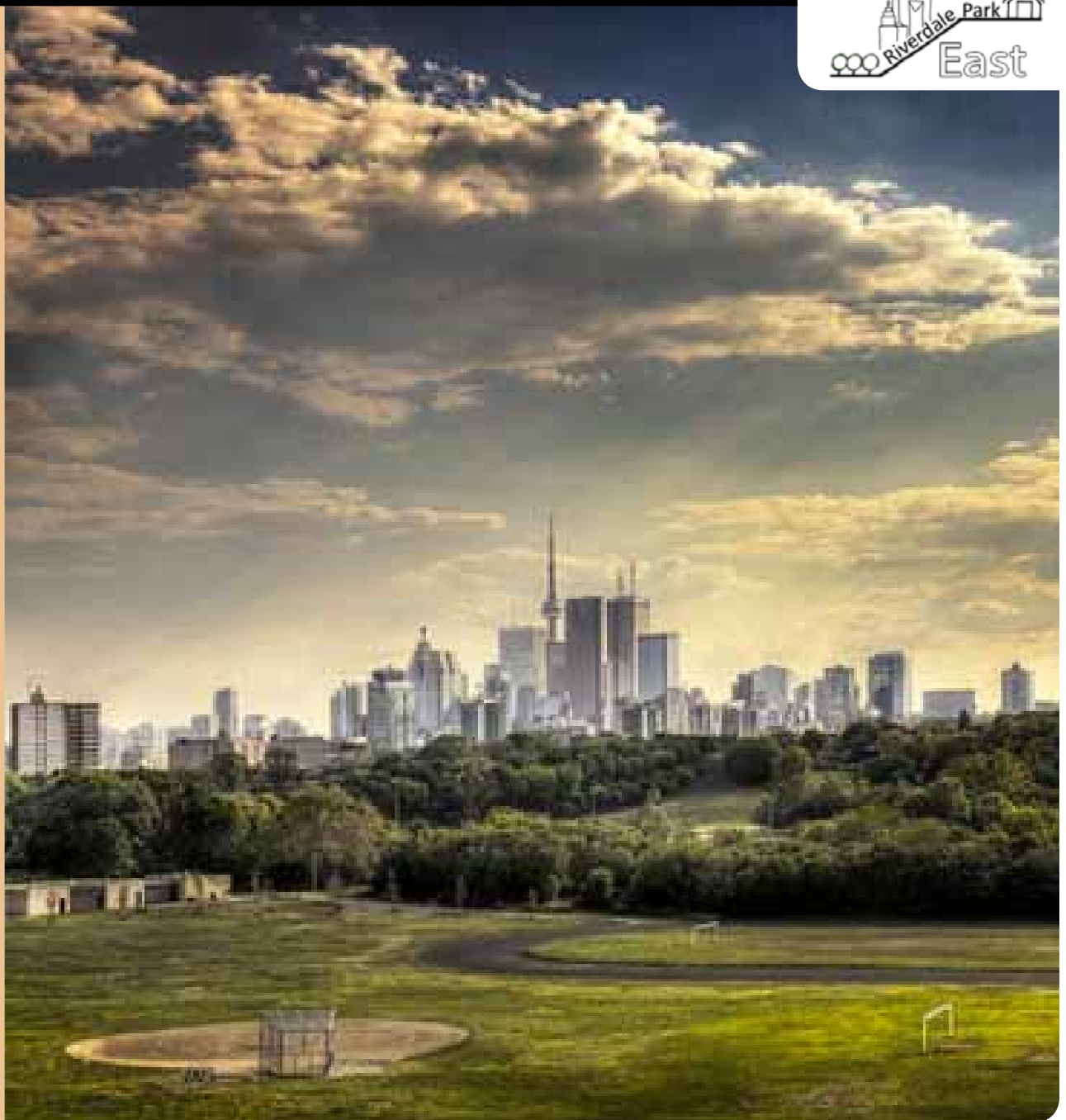
4.0 SUMMARY & NEXT STEPS



This planning report offers a revitalization plan with a focus on three transformational projects that speak to enhancing the edges, nodes, and gateways of Riverdale Park East. The vision, guiding principles, and work previously done by the 2010 Design Charrette for the park shaped and developed our key recommendations. In developing this revitalization plan, our team pitched some of the concepts of the Big Moves in partnership with Evergreen for The Weston Family Parks Challenge. If successful, this will be an important platform for funding some of the next steps in realizing the revitalization vision for Riverdale Park East.

But regardless of this funding, there are many next steps that still need to be accomplished to make this revitalization plan a reality, such as carrying out feasibility studies and project budgets for each of the Big Move concepts. The concepts presented in this report are by no means static, and implementing this vision will require money, hard work, and, most importantly, leadership — all of which could come from various avenues.

Evergreen has been a tremendous support throughout this project and has a strong track record of creating innovative revitalization projects as exhibited by the Evergreen Brick Works. This project provides the opportunity for the ward councillor to work with Evergreen to champion this project. Public support from local residents, schools (such as Montcrest), and other stakeholders such as Bridgepoint Hospital, Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation and the Danforth BIA is essential, and more work must be done to further engage with the parks supervisor for Riverdale Park East. It is also fundamental that public input and participatory design be incorporated into all aspects and stages of this process and we recommend that the ward councillor and Evergreen engage community members as early on in the process as possible in order to build excitement and to help shape the project.





4.1 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY - PHASING

Given the vastness of some of the Big Move project concepts, phasing is an ideal implementation strategy. For instance, community engagement through the implementation of one Big Move project can harness momentum and capacity building in support of the next Big Move in the implementation phase.

Through prioritizing and phasing these three transformative projects, we see it as highly strategic to begin with the heritage Clubhouse. The Clubhouse can act as a hub and gathering point for community, users, and volunteers who can be continuously engaged with other areas of the park's revitalization strategy and steps of the implementation process. Additionally, the Clubhouse can also serve as a "quick win" revenue generation tool through its patio service for food and drinks, and potential bookable pavilion space for weddings or birthdays etc.

Secondly, enhancing the Broadview Promenade will invite and draw additional users into the park and serve to strengthen the edges, which can then connect to the welcome gateway at the newly enhanced Clubhouse.

Finally, we recommend that the Riverdale Bridge be the final step in the phasing process as it involves a larger budget and time frame given its more extensive feasibility study and construction

requirements. Thus, there will be more time to plan and fundraise for the bridge. The new or repurposed bridge will act as a new wave of interest for Park revitalization and integration with surrounding community. The transformative bridge will enhance connectivity to Riverdale Park East and Lower Don Trail and serve as a potential platform for unifying the two parks — East and West — as one regional landmark park in the future.

The concepts presented through this revitalization plan represent the beginning of something great and have potential to be transformational. In particular, the three Big Moves are transformative projects that we believe represent major steps towards optimizing Riverdale Park East's capacity to connect with the Lower Don Trail, to serve diverse users, and to grow its constituents. Following a phasing strategy to implement the Clubhouse, Broadview Promenade and Riverdale Bridge will provide a seamless link to transform the park and more fully integrate it with the surrounding communities.

This will help improve the park to ultimately achieve the vision of maximizing Riverdale Park East's capacity as a major destination where people come to have memorable gatherings, rediscover the rich cultural and natural heritage of the park and surrounding area, and provide a more iconic and connecting gateway to the Lower Don Trail.

PHASING	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	
of Big Moves	Clubhouse	Broadview Promenade	Riverdale Bridge	
	Patio	Montcrest Gateway	<i>Option A:</i>	<i>Option B:</i>
	Naturalized Playground	Landscaping and Paving	Redecoration and Public Art Animation	New transformative bridge
	Pavilion Structure		Paving	
			Ramp	

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p. iii – vii (None)

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Skyline view: http://jasonallies.com/?page_id=315

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONFLICTING USES & SAFETY ISSUES

Existing Conditions:

There are some conflicting activities taking place in the wooded areas at the north end of the park that have resulted in concerns of safety. The area is known for cruising and prostitution, there is drug dealing and sometimes there are homeless encampments along this part of the Don River. Condoms and needles have been found in the wooded area, presenting a safety concern for children using the park, including children on field trips from the Montcrest School. Human waste and garbage from homeless encampments risk polluting the waterway.

The presence of these activities in this area of the park is likely due to the limited permeability of the sight and general under-use. Graffiti on numerous surfaces and some garbage build up in the wooded area give a signal that the area is not cared for. The wood lot and the fact that the valley is many meters below the surrounding neighbourhood make this area secluded and a sentiment that illicit activity can go unnoticed. Underuse in this district mean that there are few “eyes on the park”.

Physical characteristics play significant roles in perceptions of safety or lack thereof. Factors that contribute negatively to perceptions of safety include: poor lighting, confusing layout, physical and aural isolation, poor visibility, no access to help, concealed areas, poor maintenance, vandalism, and presence of “undesirables” (Source: Project for Public Spaces).

Case Study - Bryant Park, New York

Such challenges are not unique to Riverdale Park East; they are common in many urban parks across the world. One of the most powerful examples of a park that recovered from neglect and a high volume of crime is Bryant Park in New York.

This small urban park in mid-town Manhattan was cut off from the surrounding neighbourhood due to its raised topography, wooded area, surrounding iron fence and unwelcoming access points consisting of narrow, steep stair cases. The park had been a troubled spot since the early 1900s but crime reached epic proportions during the 1970s following severe cuts in New York City's parks budget. There were murders in the park during 1976 and 1977 and the park was at risk of closure.

The park was regenerated through a combination of re-design, special event programming, policing and private, community-led management. Today the park is heavily used, is in constant demand as a venue for special events and only controlled by private security, rather than police.

Opportunities:

Increasing “eyes on the park” through encouraging use is the most effective way of decreasing illegal activity. Safety in a park may be improved through:

- Increasing use by encouraging a diversity of users and uses
- Decreasing isolation
- Improving park layout
- Increasing visibility and improving sightlines
- Providing good access and circulation
- Increasing lighting
- Providing clear signage and information.



Increasing lighting is the most commonly requested physical intervention (Ibid.) but can be costly to administer and may not be desirable in natural areas. Providing welcoming, visible entrances that encourage people to enter into Riverdale Park East is an important place to start. Improving maintenance in the recreation area through increased maintenance — particularly the removal of graffiti and litter — is also important. Moreover, legibility of the recreation district in Riverdale Park East could be greatly improved through improved signage (currently signs are illegible due to graffiti) and through incorporating paving types that provide a clear hierarchy of pathways through this district.

In addition to design elements, active surveillance can police areas with illicit activity. This can be done through a community-led park watch, by police, or by park staff. Signage can provide information on who to call to report illegal activities and inform users that the park is being watched.

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Riverdale Park East Revitalisation Plan

Prepared By: Ryerson Graduate Students 2013

February 27, 2013



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Introduction



Purpose of the Plan

The City of Toronto and Evergreen Brickworks have identified Riverdale Park East as a strategic Parks Recreation asset within the Lower Don Greenway that has considerable potential for improvement.

The Lower Don Trail (or “Greenway”), is an integral component of the world’s largest ravine system and is rapidly gaining attention as one of Toronto’s most essential protected natural assets. Although there have been notable improvements over the years – such as the development of the Evergreen Brickworks and ecological restoration efforts - the Greenway remains severely lacking in access points and connections to neighbouring communities. As

the population of those who call the Lower Don watershed home grows, so does then need to optimize the existing recreational, cultural and ecological assets of the Greenway and parks along the trail. Revitalizing these existing parks and improving their connections with the Greenway and adjacent communities are essential in meeting the demands of an increasing population and maximizing the potential of the Lower Don Greenway.

The intent of this interim plan is to provide an on-site analysis of the existing outdoor conditions of Riverdale Park East in context of the Greenway and undertake secondary research to help prepare a strategic vision and guiding

principles moving forward. This interim plan will help inform the development of the final comprehensive revitalization plan for Riverdale Park East.

The final plan will assist the City of Toronto in understanding and prioritizing the short and long-term needs of the park for funding applications and park planning and management initiatives. Finally, this project will contribute one of several components in the future development of a Master Plan for the Lower Don Trail which will extend from Pottery Rd to Evergreen to the Waterfront. Our work builds upon previous planning exercises exhibited in the Riverdale Park East



Figure 1: the Lower Don Greenway

Study Approach & Process



Master Plan (2000) and the Design Charrette (2010). A discussion with local Councillor, Paula Fletcher (Ward 30), raised three areas of particular interest to the community:

- Connecting the park with the new Bridgepoint Health campus;
- Considering the potential of Broadview Ave as a promenade; and,
- Considering how to best use the historic lawn bowling Clubhouse.

We have taken what we felt were the best ideas from these documents and directions, and combined them with our own analysis gleaned through site visits, document analysis, and best practices to offer a reinvigorated revitalization strategy for the Park. Our work will consider and complement the concurrent master planning exercise focused on making the Lower Don Greenway a regional destination.

Study Process

This interim study was conducted over the course of six weeks. This process involved: conducting background analysis on the site context, policy framework and existing plans; developing an overall strategic vision and guiding principles as a lens through which to conduct our analysis; conducting a baseline conditions assessment through site visits, and finally, summarizing our findings in this report

and interim presentation. This took place over three phases:

Phase One

The first phase, “Understanding the current parks system and site context”, included the following steps:

- Held initial client meeting and site visit with Kim Stratham from the City of Toronto and Melissa Yu from Evergreen Brickworks
- Assembled and reviewed all relevant background policies, plans, and documents
- Reviewed history of Riverdale Park East
- Gathered information on the likely present and future audiences of Riverdale Park East including, research on demographics and trends relevant to the study area and with regard for future development in adjacent neighbourhoods and along the Greenway
- Assembled GIS, AutoCAD files and aerial maps of Riverdale Park East and the Greenway and created a hand-drawn base map based on GIS file

Phase Two

The main objective of the second phase, “Vision and principles and drafting the plan” was to understand the future needs of Riverdale Park East and the Greenway. This phase involved:

- Conducting site visits to gather baseline information, create a detailed inventory of the existing conditions of the Park and its linkages with the Greenway and adjacent neighbourhoods and document strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints (SWOC analysis)
- Developing a strategic vision and principles to help guide park improvement decisions for Riverdale and the Greenway
- Consulting earlier planning efforts related to Riverdale Park East (Riverdale Park East Master Plan, 2000; Riverdale Park East Charrette Report, 2010) and incorporating information gained through the Park Supervisor and ward councillor to gather information their visions and identify potential improvement ideas.
- Undertaking extensive mapping analysis to identify and describe current issues and opportunities that exist in Riverdale Park East and the Greenway

Phase Three

Finally, we consolidated the information gathered from both phases and summarized findings in the current report and interim presentation.

Background

Site Context

Riverdale Park East is located on the eastern side of the Don Valley, with Danforth Avenue approximately 10 minutes to the north, Gerrard St. approximately five minutes to the south and Broadview Avenue bordering the site on the east (Figure 4)

Immediately to the north is Montcrest School, an independent K-8 school. This school uses the forest on the north side of the park for some of its programming. To the east is Broadview Ave and a collection of well-maintained low-rise homes. The Don Valley Parkway borders the site to the west, beyond which is the Lower Don Greenway trail, which is connected to the park via a Footbridge. Bridgepoint Health – currently undergoing a major redevelopment – borders the site to the south.

The park, though separated by the Don Valley Parkway, is connected ecologically and functionally with the Don River watershed and the Lower Don Greenway recreational trail. Riverdale Park is a major recreational and ecological asset within this larger context.

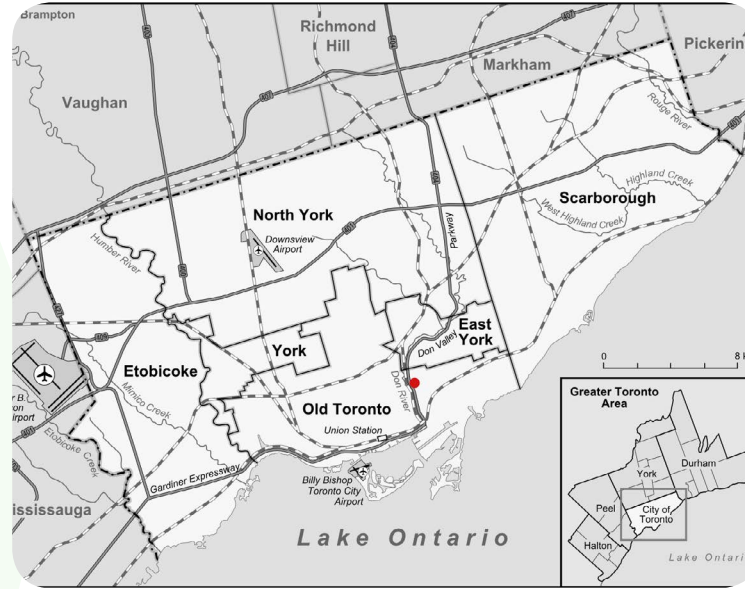


Figure 2: Riverdale Park East in the Context of the City of Toronto



Figure 3: Riverdale Park East in the Context of the Don River Watershed



Figure 4: Riverdale Park East in the Context of the Neighbourhood

Historical Context

1794

John Scadding

The first family to own the land in the Riverdale Park area was John and Melicent Scadding. John Scadding was one of the early settlers to Toronto and the estate manager and clerk for John Graves Simcoe, Governor of Upper Canada.



Figure 5: A painting of Scadding Cabin, by Elizabeth Simcoe, circa 1794

1856

A Park is Born

The City of Toronto buys 119 acres of land to establish a park and a 'jail farm'. The prisoners worked the land as part of the jail's reform program. Ten years later the jail was moved away from the parklands. The Riverdale Park was opened officially about 20 years later. (The Riverdale farm still exists today on the western slope of the park).

1860

Bridgepoint Health

The first building on the site in what is now Riverdale Park was a home built in 1860 for the "deserving poor" - women, children, the elderly or people with physical or mental disabilities (now the home of Bridgepoint Health)



Figure 6: Location of Bridgepoint Health – circa 1860

1884

Rail Transport

It has been a public park as such since 1884, though the westside first opened four years earlier. Originally, the Don River separated the park, however the addition of the railway tracks in 1892 separated the park into two halves.



Figure 7: 1912 Bridge over the Don River

1914-1918

WWI

Rumor has it that during World War One, military parades took place on the site. This is supported by the canon located at the top of the hill, closer to Bridgepoint.



Figure 8: WWI canon

1920's

Landfill

The eastern side of the park was also used as a landfill in the 1920s. A walk along Broadview Avenue shows the evidence of this in the form of green exhaust pipes to vent the methane gas from the former dump beneath the park.



Figure 9: Methane exhaust vents along Broadview Avenue

1958

Don Valley Parkway

The construction of the Don Valley Parkway in 1958 further separated the east and west sides of the park and reduced the park size to its current size of 42 hectares (104 acres).



Figure 10: Construction of the Don Valley Parkway Looking North at Riverdale Park East

1970's

Proposed Stadium

In the 1970s the park was the original site proposed for a new 40,000 seat stadium, a project that would eventually become SkyDome. The plan was eventually abandoned, in part due to the strong objections of local Alderman John Sewell.

1990

Slope Reforestation

The slope reforestation was the first restoration effort by the Task Force to Bring Back the Don. The area was planted with trees and shrubs in 1990 and has developed into woodland with mature ash and maple.



Figure 11: Slope Reforestation

2000

Riverdale Park East Master Plan

In 2000, the City of Toronto, developed a master plan for Riverdale Park East, in which a small wetland was proposed for the base of the north slope. Water collects at the base of the slope, flowing from both the steep slope to the north and the gentle slope from the sports field to the south.

Demographic Context - Don Valley Communities

The communities surrounding the Don Valley are diverse in their composition. The Lower Don Trail has the potential to serve as a public space that accommodates a wide range of needs and uses. Neighbourhoods directly adjacent to the trail are highlighted to provide context of the trail's position in relation to the broader city.

Don Valley Communities

Represented In Land Area (square size) and Population Density (square tint)

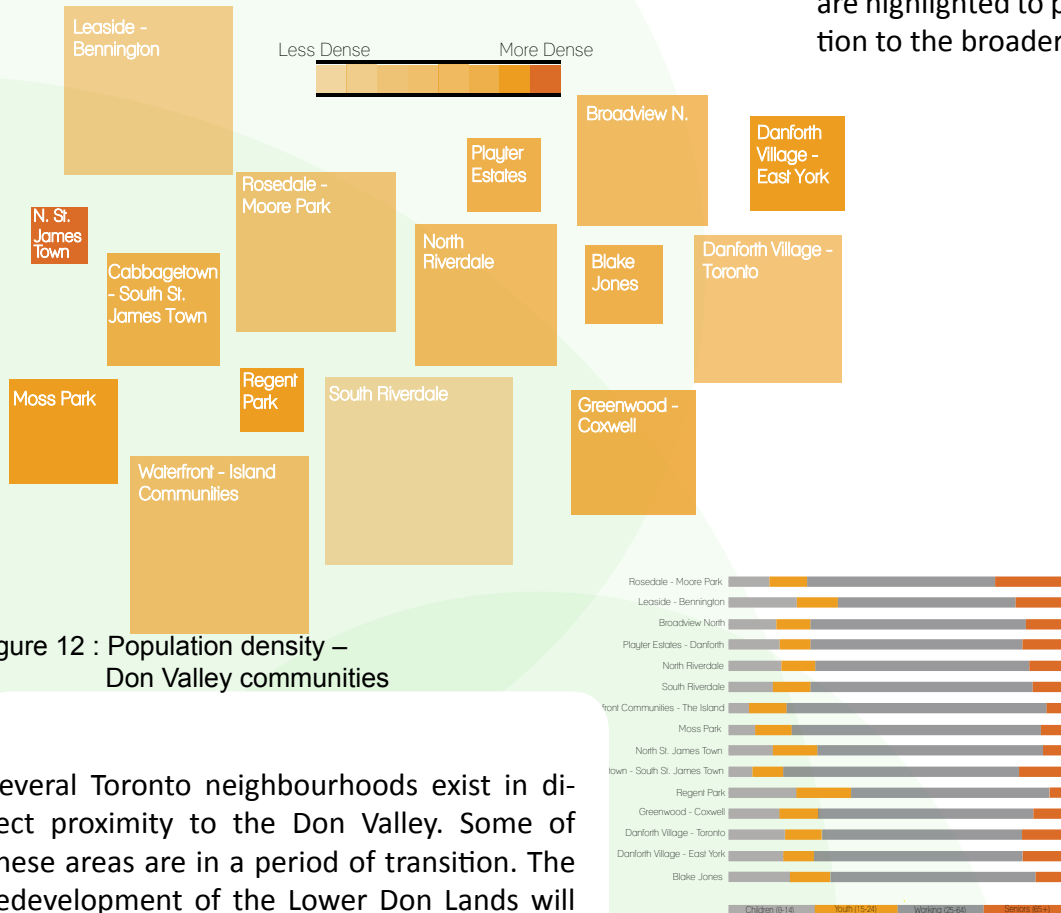


Figure 12 : Population density – Don Valley communities

Several Toronto neighbourhoods exist in direct proximity to the Don Valley. Some of these areas are in a period of transition. The redevelopment of the Lower Don Lands will vastly change the dynamics within the City's waterfront neighbourhoods and bring an influx of new residents to this area.

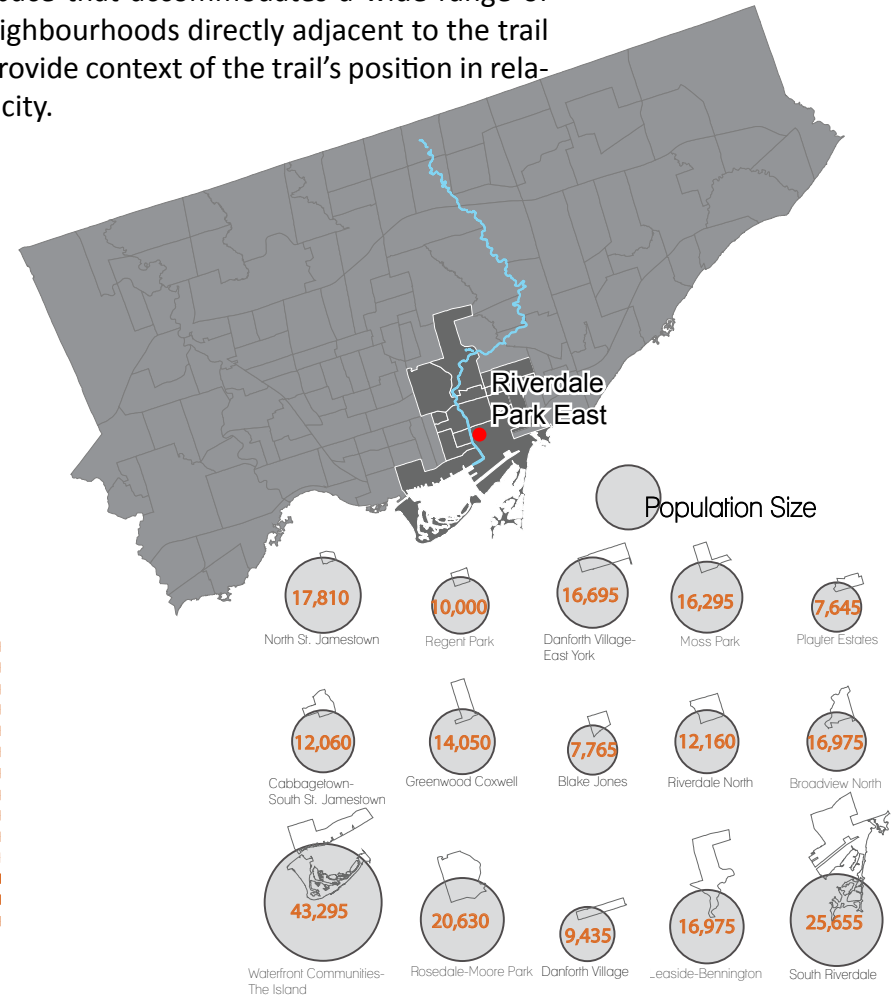


Figure 13: Age demographics – Don Valley communities

Figure 14: Population size – Don Valley communities

Demographic Context

Adjacent Neighbourhoods: Area Characteristics and Socio-Demographics

Cabbagetown

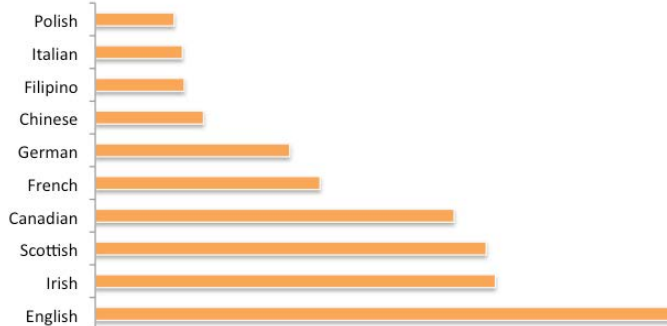
Neighbourhood Description

Located to the west of Riverdale Park East, Cabbagetown has a stock of preserved Victorian housing whereby much of the area is designated as Heritage Conservation District. The neighbourhood is home to Riverdale Farm, which is municipally operated and maintained by Toronto Parks and provides opportunities for volunteering in addition to hosting various neighbourhood events and community activities. Cabbagetown also contains Riverdale Park West and is connected to Riverdale Park East and the Lower Don Trail via a pedestrian footbridge.

Population



Ethnic Origin



Median Income



Regent Park

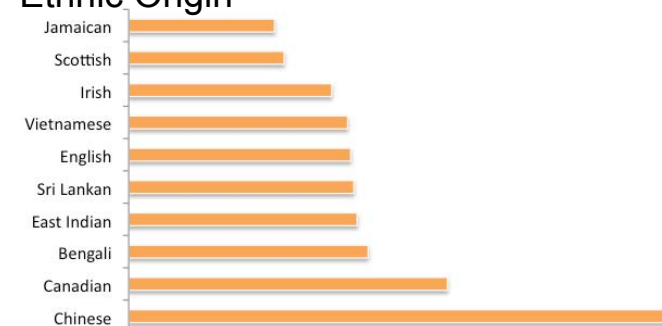
Neighbourhood Description

Previously a low-income residential neighbourhood consisting of social housing, the entire neighbourhood is currently undergoing a 15 year redevelopment as a public-private partnership between Daniels Corporation and Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC). The revitalization is bringing higher residential densities to the region and transforming it into a mixed-income and mixed-use community. New recreational and arts facilities are expected to draw residents from other neighbourhoods – especially for cultural and arts events. Some of the new facilities include the Aquatic Centre and the Regent Park Arts and Cultural Centre. The redevelopment and its close proximity to Riverdale Park – both West and East – is a potential opportunity for increasing art and community engagement between the neighbourhood and park.

Population



Ethnic Origin



Median Income



Riverdale (North)

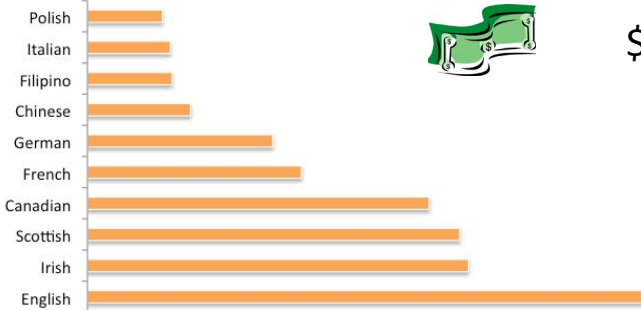
Neighbourhood Description

Located on the east side of the Don Valley Parkway, Riverdale North is one of Toronto's largest neighbourhoods. It is bounded by Danforth Avenue to the north, Gerrard Street to the south, Pape Avenue and the railway tracks to the east, and the Don Valley Parkway to the west. Riverdale North was primarily a small rural community until the development on Grand Trunk Trailway in the 1850s, and the bridge and the Prince Edward Viaduct in 1918 that connected the neighbourhood with City of Toronto and brought industry to the area. Riverdale North also includes ethnic enclaves such as the Danforth and Greektown, and between North and South Riverdale is East Chinatown. Riverdale North is also home to a number of historic buildings such as the Don Jail, and others near the intersection of Danforth and Broadview Avenue. Three streetcars serve the area at the intersection of Gerrard Street and Broadview Avenue, enabling easy transit access to the park from various neighbourhoods. The City of Toronto's Official Plan forecasts that the bulk of the Riverdale North neighbourhood will remain low-density residential, while Danforth Avenue and the majority of the eastern section of Gerrard Street are identified as mixed-use corridors (City of Toronto Official Plan Land Use Map 21, 2010).

Population



Ethnic Origin



Median Income



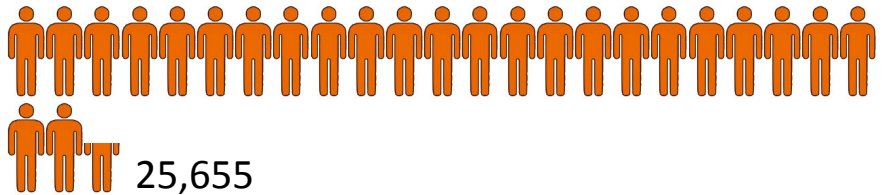
Riverdale (South)

Neighbourhood Description

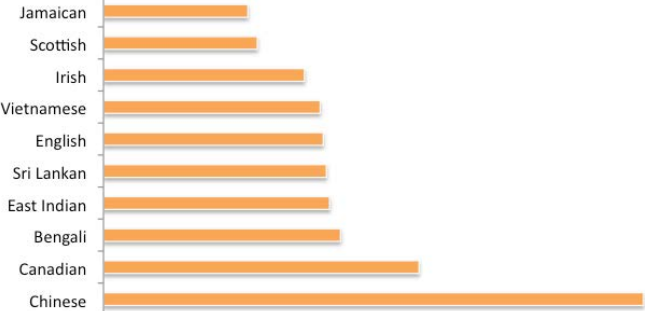
The Riverdale South neighbourhood consist of a number of smaller enclaves such as East Chinatown, Riverside (previously known as Queen-Broadview village), and parts of Leslieville.

According to the City of Toronto's Official Plan, Riverdale South is experiencing the highest amount of residential growth in the City. River City development is presently under construction with 5 buildings and 900 units. Further south are the Port Lands and West Donlands undergoing revitalization through Waterfront Toronto. Riverside is undergoing key condominium and loft development and witnessing a new boom for businesses, retail, restaurants and art galleries, particularly along Queen Street East. The area has become an attractive residential location for young professionals and artists who are seeking to live closer to downtown.

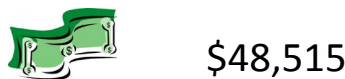
Population



Ethnic Origin



Median Income



Development Snapshot

Riverdale Park East and the Lower Don Greenway is under tremendous pressure due to the large amount of growth taking place in

the area. It is estimated that 70,000 new residents and jobs will be moving into the area in the near future, placing extra strain on the ar-

ea amenities and natural resources. Conversely, the added population can help local businesses and community efforts.



Bridgepoint Health

A leader in complex chronic disease management, care, and research, Bridgepoint Health includes 1,400 staff, physicians and volunteers as well as the hospital's in-patients. A comprehensive Community Master Plan was approved by the City of Toronto in 2006, which includes a new public park along Gerrard Street East and trail connections to the Lower Don Greenway and Riverdale Park East. Moreover, a new modern and innovative Bridgepoint Hospital will be fully completed by 2014 adjacent to Riverdale Park East and the Lower Don Greenway, and will offer new opportunities for collaborative programming and bring new users to the park. Moreover, Bridgepoint Health is currently completing the construction of a healing labyrinth overlooking Riverdale Park to provide a quiet space for meditation and gentle exercise.



Figure 22: Existing Bridgepoint Health



Figure 23: New Addition to Bridgepoint Health - View from Gerrard St.



Figure 24: New Addition to Bridgepoint Health - View from Riverdale Park East

Three key initiatives that Bridgepoint health have undertaken in its renovation efforts, will have implications on Riverdale Park East. Including:

- **Future connections**
- **Adding a mix of uses**
- **Future Park**

Future plans call for the demolition of the existing hospital building. This dramatic change will open up the site and re-integrate the local street grid directly adjacent to the south end of the park. This will provide greater access into and out of Riverdale Park East (figure 25).

Adding a mix of uses to the site has implications beyond the property lines of the hospital. The uses could attract a greater number of people which will have both positive and

negative implications. Positive implications include more “eyes on the park” which will enhance safety. Negative implications could include more garbage and abuse on existing park conditions (figure26).

Adding a park to the south end of the Bridgepoint Health Campus will create a green connection between Riverdale Park East and Gerrard Street (figure 27).



Figure 25: Bridgepoint Health Future Connections

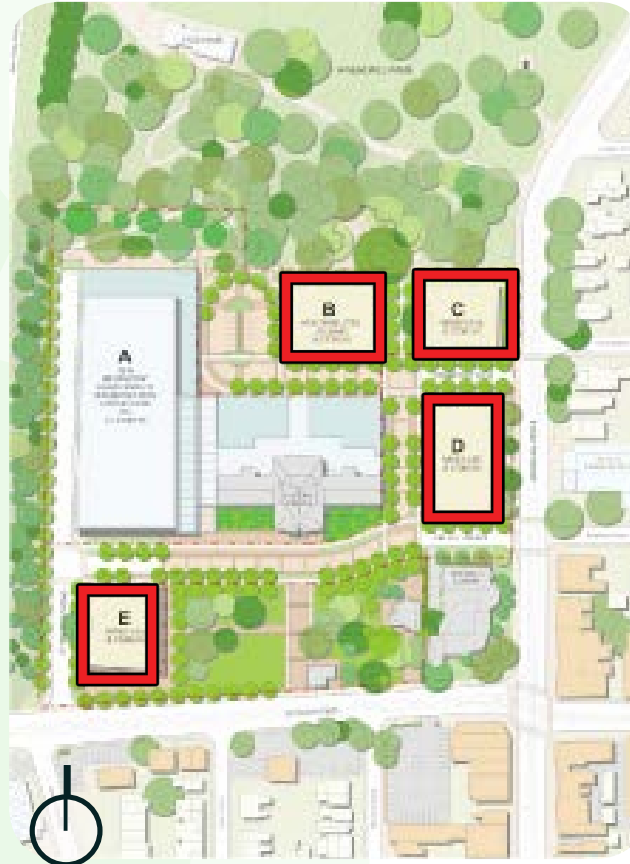


Figure 26: Bridgepoint Health Anticipated Mixed-Use



Figure 27: Bridgepoint Health Future Park

Policy Framework

Riverdale Park East is influenced by many layers of policy and plans. These layers include provincial, municipal, regional, and site-specific plans and legislation. The most relevant plans are listed below:

Provincial

The Provincial Policy Statement (2005) and the Planning Act (R.S.O. 1990) both emphasise the importance of parks, open space and recreational opportunities. The Planning Act also authorizes municipalities to collect land or cash-in-lieu from land development for the purpose of acquiring and developing parks.

Municipal

At the municipal level, the City of Toronto Official Plan (2010) – the City’s primary comprehensive strategic land use planning and visioning document – stresses the importance of parks and open space to the social and environmental vitality of the city. The Official Plan’s policies encourage the preservation, enhancement and expansion of the parks and open space system within the city. Riverdale Park East is designated Parks and Open Space in the Official Plan. In addition to municipal parks, the Official Plan recognises ravines, school yards, cemeteries, privately owned publically accessible space, plazas,

community gardens, etc. as integral and important components of Toronto’s parks and open space system.

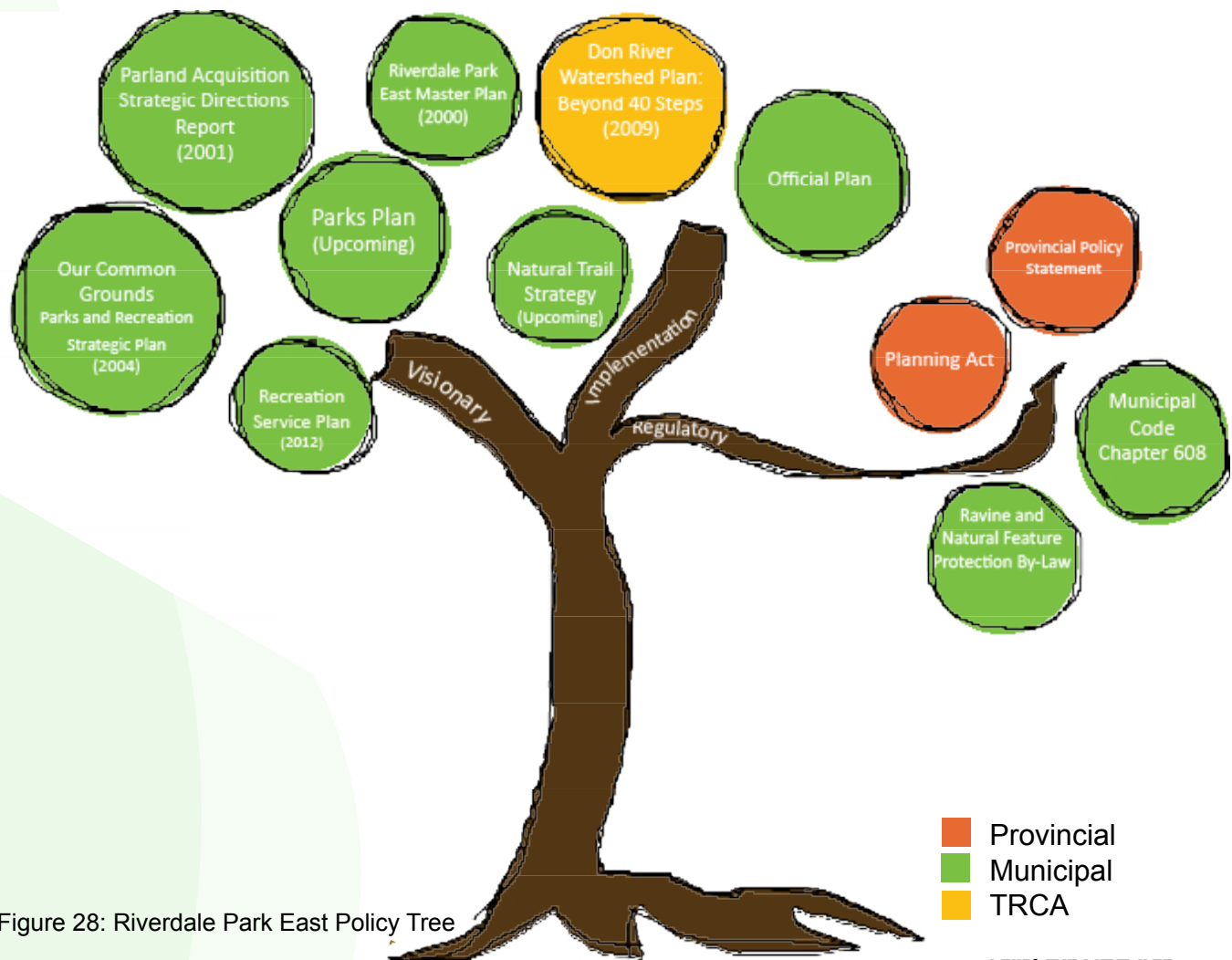


Figure 28: Riverdale Park East Policy Tree

Our Common Grounds (2004)

The City's Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, *Our Common Grounds*, was adopted by Council in 2004. This Plan envisioned Toronto as "City within a Park". This plan provides valuable historic context to the City's Parks and Recreation assets. *Our Common Grounds* makes 52 recommendations, including recommendations to enhance the maintenance and health of city trees; increase revenues to the parks and recreation system; create more opportunities for community education, outreach and engagement; increase the number of sports fields and opportunities for recreation along the waterfront; and create a Master Plan and a number of other plans. The plan recognizes that future population growth in the city will create more demand for parks and open space.

To meet future demands, the strategic plan recommends capitalizing on existing assets through enhanced programming and creating better access to the ravine system over costly parkland acquisition.



Figure 29: Soccer at Riverdale Park East

Recreation Service Plan (2012)

The Recreation Service Plan, adopted by Council in November 2012, will guide the delivery of the City's Parks, Forestry and Recreation services and programs over the next five years. The Plan commits to principles of improving the quality of services, enhancing capacity building, including partnerships, increasing participation in recreation, decreasing financial and physical barriers to inclusion, and improving community access to facilities.



Figure 30: Hockey at Riverdale Park East

Natural Trails Strategy (forthcoming)

The City is in the process of creating a Natural Trails Strategy.

Parks Plan (forthcoming)

The City is currently completing a city-wide parks master plan entitled, *Parks Plan*. This plan will be based on seven guiding principles: Parks and Trails as City Infrastructure; Equitable Access for All Residents; Nature in the City; Place Making; Supporting a Diversity of Uses; Community Engagement and Partnerships; and Environmental Goals and Practices. Our master plan for Riverdale Park East will be compatible with these seven principles.

Parks Plan Guiding Principles

1. Parks and Trails as City Infrastructure
2. Equitable Access for All Residents
3. Nature in the City
4. Place Making;
5. Supporting a Diversity of Uses;
6. Community Engagement and Partnerships
7. Environmental Goals and Practices



Figure 31: Biking along the Don Trail

Regional - Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)

(The Don River and trail is owned by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and managed by the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Division.

Don River Watershed Plan: Beyond 40 Steps (2009)

The TRCA's Don River Watershed Plan: Beyond 40 Steps (2009) is a 10-year Master Plan for the regeneration of the Don River watershed. It builds on and refreshes efforts set out in an earlier TRCA Strategic Plan, Forty Steps to a New Don (1994). The purpose of the master plan is to "inform and guide municipalities, provincial and federal governments, TRCA, non-government organizations and private landowners as they update their poli-

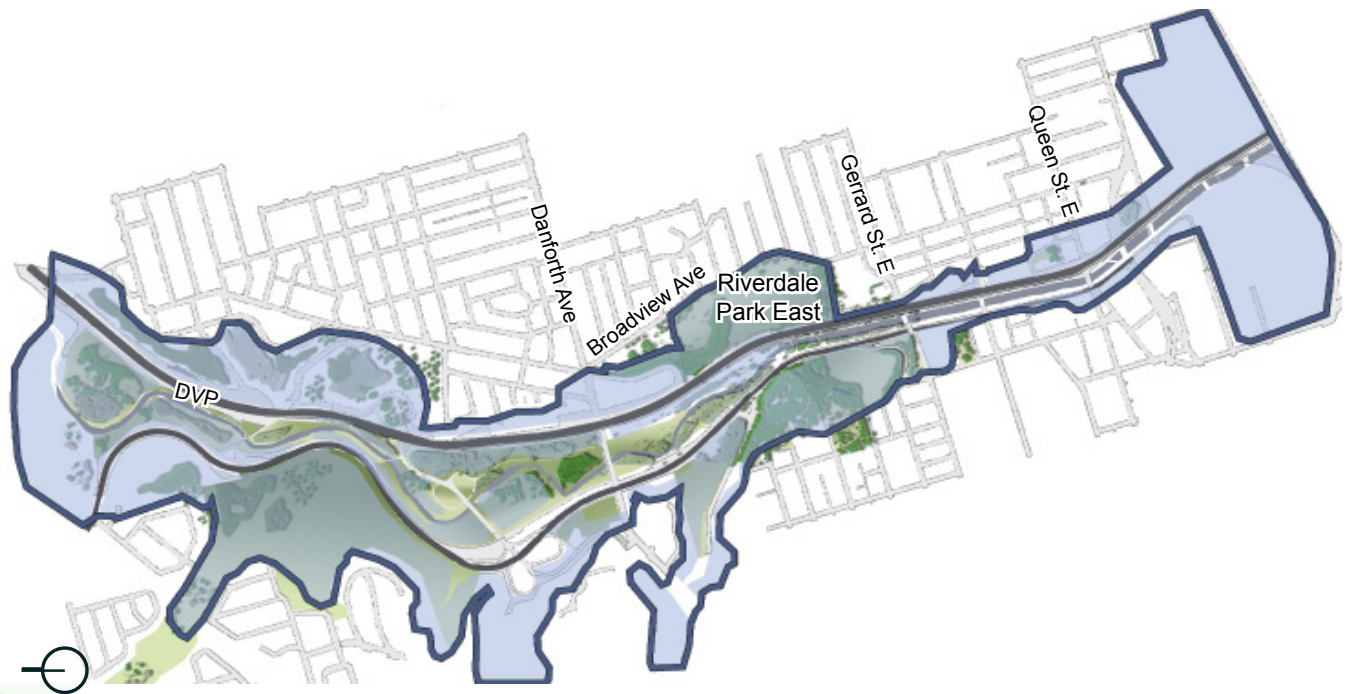


Figure 32: Lower Don Greenway – TRCA flood zones

About the TRCA

The TRCA was created in response to the aftermath of Hurricane Hazel in 1954. This hurricane had devastating effects in Toronto, including substantial infrastructure and property damage and many deaths (Environment Canada)

TRCA's jurisdiction includes: 3,467 square kilometres, 2,506 of which are land-based and 961 of which are water-based. The Don River is one of nine watersheds under the jurisdiction of the TRCA.

The TRCA includes six member municipalities, including: City of Toronto, Regional Municipality of Durham, Regional Municipality of Peel, Regional Municipality of York, Township of Adjala-Tosorontio and the Town of Mono.

Conservation authorities are "community-based watershed management agencies dedicated to conserving, restoring and managing Ontario's natural resources on a watershed basis" (Conservation Ontario). They are not-for-profit organizations with their own Board of Directors. Board members are frequently elected municipal officials.

Funding comes from a variety of sources, including (on average) self-generated revenue (42%), municipal levies (33%), provincial grants and special projects (23%) and a small portion (2%) from federal grants or contracts. Conservation Authorities have legal recognition through the Conservation Authority Act (1946). 90% of Ontario's population live in areas covered by a conservation authority.

cies and practices for environmental stewardship” (TRCA, 2009, p.5). The plan sets out a vision, three guiding principles, 26 objectives, areas presenting opportunities for strategic intervention and tools for implementation.

Design Charrette – Riverdale Park East Charrette Report (2010)

In September, 2010, a one day workshop was hosted by the Design Exchange as a visioning exercise for the park. Participants included external planning and design professionals, City staff and some residents. The Riverdale Park East Charrette Report offers a summary of key recommendations pertaining to the aesthetics of the park. The report spoke of creating a “visible gateway to the park” and “increas(ing) park exposure” in addition to creating a promenade along Broadview Avenue. The Riverdale Park East Charrette Report provides us a vision for the park from some members of the community.

Riverdale Park East Master Plan (2000)

The Riverdale Park East Master Plan, completed in 2000 by the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation, envisioned a long-term strategy for the park through improving pedestrian access and connectivity throughout the park and enhancing the park’s natural environment. Some aspects of this plan have been implemented since its creation while others have not.

Access and connectivity was a identified as

a challenge, considering the steep slopes on the east side of the park, slope instability, lack of connectivity between the park’s upper and lower plateau, and presence of only one formal route at the south end of the park linking the bottom land to Broadview Avenue. In its baselines conditions assessment, the plan found that the Discovery Walk trail and other informal trails needed upgrading, football/soccer fields were poorly defined and had drainage problems, and lighting was needed around sports fields. The plan documented that the park slopes were unstable and settling, due the site’s history as a landfill. Storm water management was noted as an issue due to water runoff from the upper level of park which was eroding the naturalized wood-

land on the north end of the park.

The Master Plan proposed measures to improve pedestrian connectivity throughout the park and address issues associated with the park’s topography. It offered direction to resolve the major ecological issues of the site caused by difficult topography, waste disposal past, and storm water erosion. With respect to access, it primarily focused on enhancing what was already there, such as the path system proposal which followed the established informal trail routes across the fields. The plan, however, did not address issues related to park users, programming, culture, financing and governance, which will be included in our upcoming revitalization strategy.

Recommendation	Completed	Not Completed	Unknown
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediating the naturalized area at the north end of park—new plantings and ongoing maintenance—and two additional planting areas on the east slope of park to assist with soil stabilization, reduce maintenance issues on the steep slope, improve the ecology and micro-climate of the park, and to visually frame very popular winter tobogganing 			X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the wet meadow naturalization area at the south end of park due to groundwater seepage and maintenance issues in this area 	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoring the east side slope (tobogganing area) with drought tolerant, non-woody meadow species which would require ongoing maintenance. 	X (in part)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installing tile drainage and new lighting for the sports fields 		X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paths and trails: building a diagonal asphalt trail to connect the upper plateau with the sport field area and the pedestrian bridge; relocating the Discovery Walk trail next to the running track and upgrading trail to a limestone chip surface; an alternate pedestrian path parallel to Broadview Ave in the southern section of the park; upgrading upper plateau trails with limestone screenings 		X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of a new entrance plaza along Broadview Av. to provide an entrance and link the two main plateaus 		X	

Figure 33: Status Summary of Riverdale Park East Master Plan (2000)

Policy Framework

Riverdale Park East is influenced by many layers of policy and plans. These layers include provincial, municipal, regional, and site-specific plans and legislation. The most relevant plans are listed below:

Provincial

The Provincial Policy Statement (2005) and the Planning Act (R.S.O. 1990) both emphasise the importance of parks, open space and recreational opportunities. The Planning Act also authorizes municipalities to collect land or cash-in-lieu from land development for the purpose of acquiring and developing parks.

Municipal

City of Toronto Official Plan (2010)

At the municipal level, the City of Toronto Official Plan (2010) – the City’s primary comprehensive strategic land use planning and visioning document – stresses the importance of parks and open space to the social and environmental vitality of the city. The Official Plan’s policies encourage the preservation, enhancement and expansion of the parks and open space system within the city. Riverdale Park East is designated Parks and Open Space in the Official Plan. In addition to municipal parks, the Official Plan recognises ravines, school yards, cemeteries, privately

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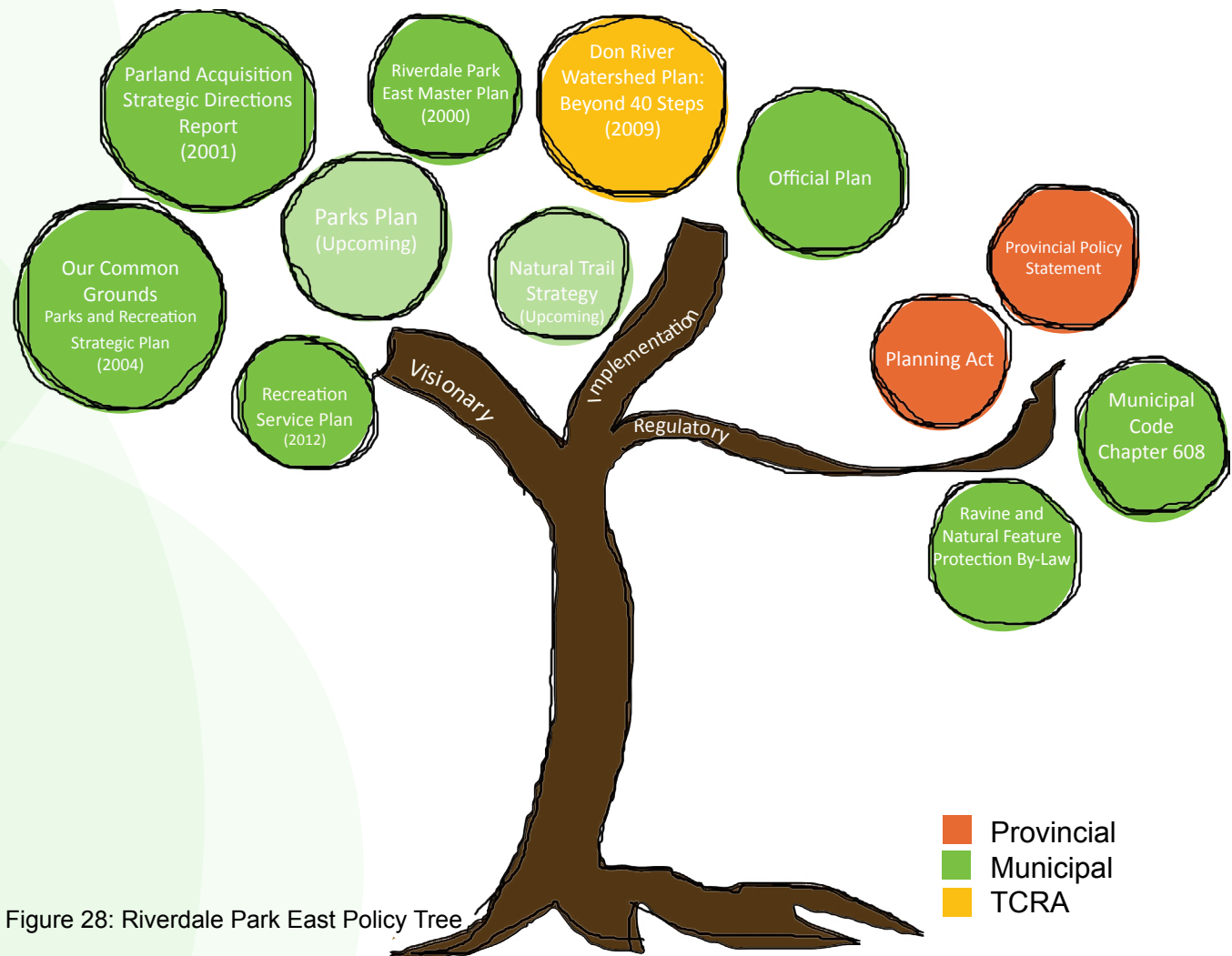


Figure 28: Riverdale Park East Policy Tree

Principle 3: Ecological Stewardship



Figure 36: Riverdale Park East Wetlands

Objectives:

- Conserve, restore, and expand natural space by promoting biodiversity, providing natural habitat and encourage use of the park by a variety of species (and especially by species at risk). Whenever possible, native and regenerative plantings should be used.
- Promote the natural heritage of the park through active education and learning opportunities, as well as the protection of existing vantage points, views, and sight lines.
- To respect natural space through minimal interactions of natural processes throughout all seasons, and to utilize natural water flows by encouraging the restoration of natural water treatment processes such as bioswales or constructed wetlands.

Principle 4: Movement



Figure 37: Don Valley Trail

Objectives:

- Identify new and enhance the current entry points into the park and the Lower Don Greenway
- Develop a park signage system
- Improve infrastructure, pathways and trails into, within, and through the park and in relation to the Lower Don Greenway and other surrounding areas to ensure a barrier free park
- Create a park spaces that are engaging and provide a comfortable park atmosphere- Provide shelter from weather conditions, and promote micro-climates

Principle 5: Uses



Figure 38: Hockey at Riverdale Park East

Objectives:

- Create space and reflective spots that allow for passive use
- Enhance opportunities for social gatherings and places that allow for leisure activities and games
- Transform recreational facilities and fields that enable dynamic and multi-purpose use throughout all seasons
- Strengthen community and city use by providing cultural and community programs

Principle 6: Community Engagement



Figure 39: Community Engagement

Objectives:

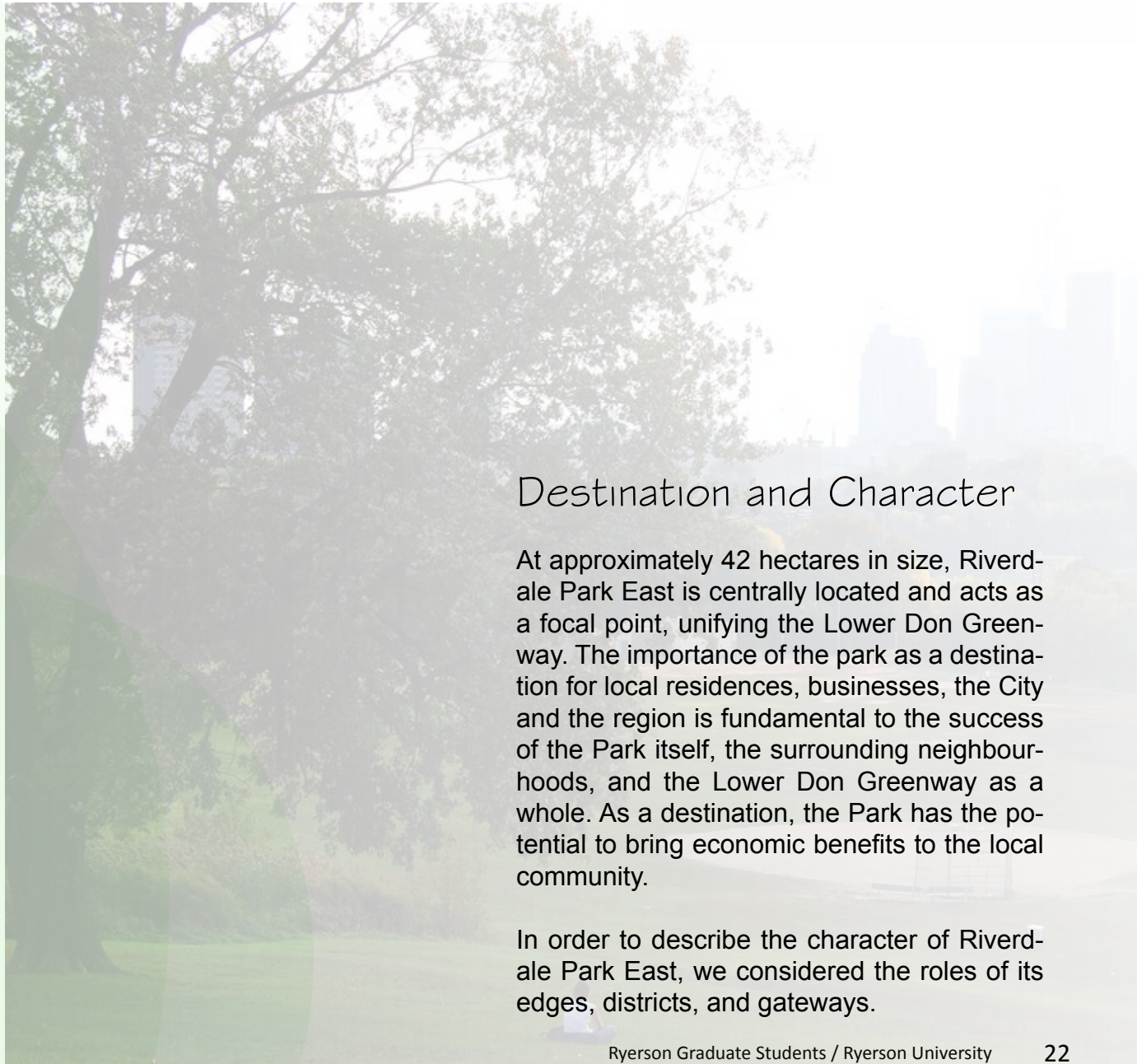
- Provide more opportunities for volunteering
- Increase transparency of the governance process of the park
- Encourage private sector partnerships
- Ensure that the park remains a public space

Existing Conditions



Aspects of the current uses facilities and conditions of Riverdale East Park are known by various users and stakeholders but, thus far, no comprehensive inventory exists. Thus, in an effort to provide such a consolidated list, we have summarized the major existing conditions. This section explores existing conditions under six major themes or headings, which are also in line with our Guiding Principles.

- 1) **Destination and Character**
- 2) **Heritage and Cultural Uses**
- 3) **Recreational Uses**
- 4) **Access & Linkages**
- 5) **Ecological Stewardship**
- 6) **Community Engagement**



Destination and Character

At approximately 42 hectares in size, Riverdale Park East is centrally located and acts as a focal point, unifying the Lower Don Greenway. The importance of the park as a destination for local residences, businesses, the City and the region is fundamental to the success of the Park itself, the surrounding neighbourhoods, and the Lower Don Greenway as a whole. As a destination, the Park has the potential to bring economic benefits to the local community.

In order to describe the character of Riverdale Park East, we considered the roles of its edges, districts, and gateways.

Destination

Fundamental in establishing Riverdale Park East as a destination requires an understanding of the parks significant activities and features, which attract visitors from the City and

region. Currently, the local neighbourhood of Riverdale (and to a lesser degree, the adjacent neighbourhoods) use the park for a surplus of activities. However, two major features

attractw visitors from outside the local neighbourhoods: the tobogganing hill and the stunning skyline views.

Tobogganning



Figure 40: Tobogganing on eastern slope

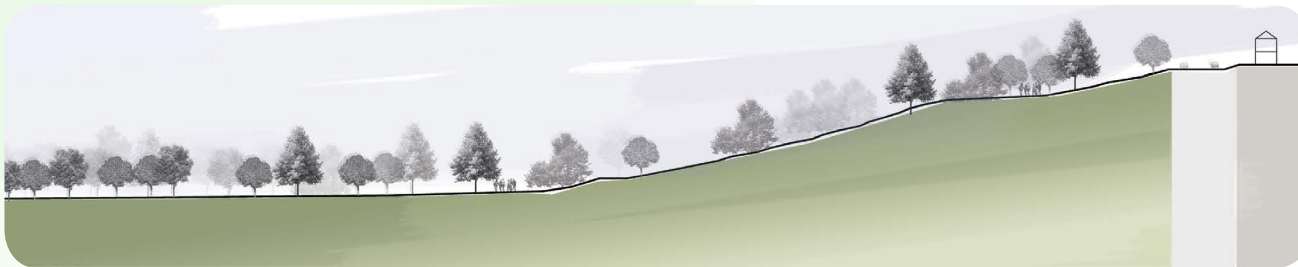


Figure 41: Section looking north at east slope and Bain Avenue



Figure 42: Section looking north at east slope and Riverdale Avenue

Strengths

- The slopes offers a relatively steep angle and clear path, free of obstructions
- Easily accessible by transit
- Popular winter time activity, making the park more usable during the winter season

Weaknesses

- No safe and accessible path back up the hill, making returning to the top a challenge for those without the stability to climb a slippery slope.

Challenges

- Soil stability presents engineering and cost challenges to any future structure

The Master Plan for East Riverdale Park (2000) identified soil stability issues on the western facing slope along Broadview Avenue, caused by the dumping of waste which took place up until 1962. Construction of any substantial structure presents engineering challenges and additional cost which must be factored into the design of a set of stairs or alternative method of access up the hill.

Skyline Views

Riverdale Park East's unobstructed views of the Toronto skyline has made this park one of the most popular lookout destinations in the city.

Strengths

- Unobstructed View
- The unobstructed skyline views of Toronto from the top slope of Riverdale Park East provide a uniqueness vantage point not found in the City. The parks western facing slope provides a natural seating arrangement for city onlookers to take in city lights. On any given warm summer night, people can seen simply relaxing under the stars and enjoying the city views.

Weaknesses

- Lack of seating, quality of seating
- Disruption from the noise and light produced by the Don Valley Parkway.

Challenges

- Any planting of trees along the upper portion of the slope could limit the range of views provided at that location. Any placement of trees should be considered with the view in mind.



Figure 43: Skyline views



Figure 44: View from Broadview Avenue at night



Figure 45: View from Broadview Avenue during the day

Character

Aesthetic features of any environment - urban, suburban or rural, aid in providing a 'sense of place' for residents and users of the space. A well kept and designed public realm offers economic advantage to businesses as well as land owners. It fosters a sense of community, assists in the development of community pride and ownership and aids in development of a park as a destination. The world's great parks all contain elements of high aesthetic quality whether their natural or man-made features. While it should be noted that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, order and variety are psychological appetites which most behaviourist agree are common to all beholders.

It should be noted that aesthetic considerations overlap with other themes presented in this report. Most themes provide opportunities for aesthetic improvement and therefore when reading this report, most recommendations outlined based on the thematic studies will have implications on the aesthetics of the park. For the purposes of this theme, SWOT analysis and recommendations will be carried out with the explicit focus on the following:

- Quality and type of materials
- Location and placement of features
- Condition of park features

The following SWOT Analysis will be conducted through the Lens of Kevin Lynch's path, edge, gateways, and district components adapted from his book the Image of the City (Lynch, 1960).

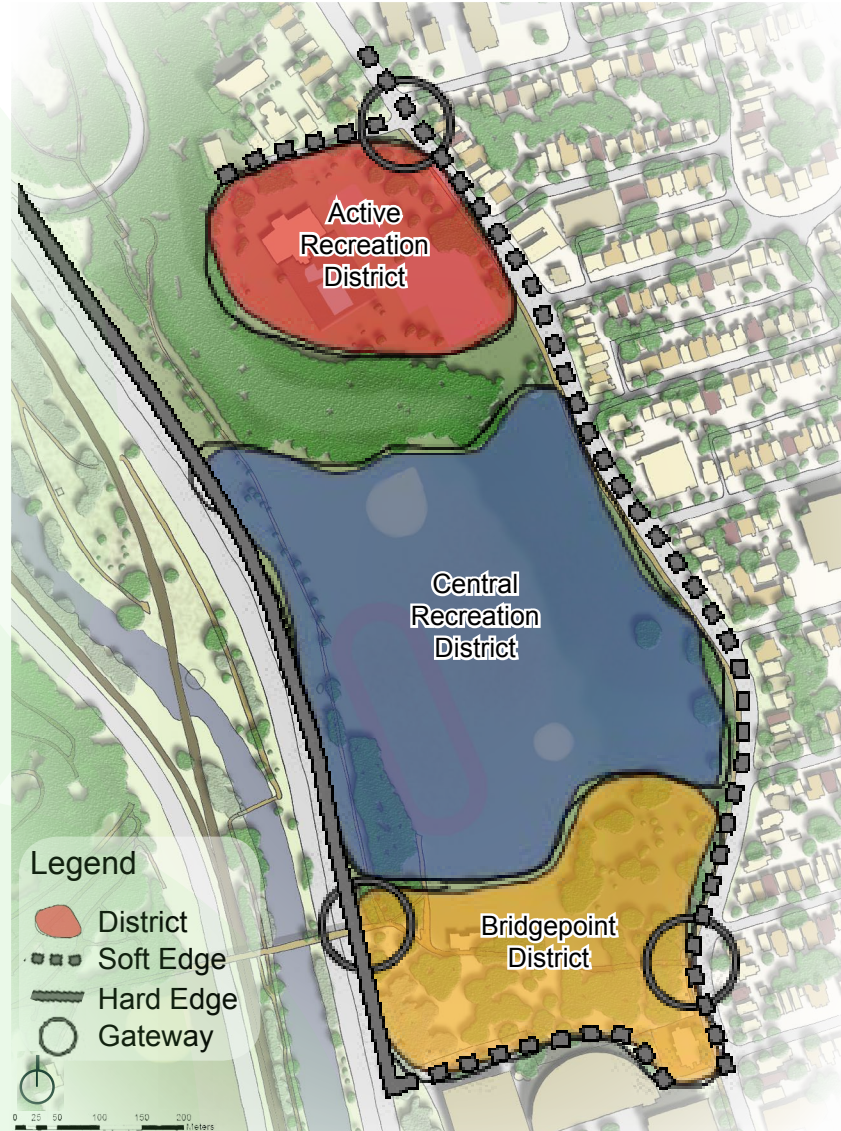


Figure 46: Edges, Gateways and Districts



Figure 47: Districts – Active Recreation District



Figure 48: Edge – Don Valley Parkway Edge



Figure 49: Gateway – Bridgepoint Health Gateway

Edges

Edges are linear features that can either provide boundaries with barriers and divisive elements, or can serve unifying or organizational purposes. The edge condition, created by the overlapping of the built and natural environments, offers a high variation of activities and exchanges. We identified four edges, including:

- Broadview Avenue and the urban structure on the east side of the street
- West fence and the Don Valley Parkway
- Montcrest Boulevard on the northern edge of the site
- Bridgepoint Health on the southern edge of the site



Figure 50: Edges

Western Edge

Strengths

- Improvements to this edge have left a scattering of trees and brush which helps soften the abrupt condition of the edge.

Weaknesses

- The western edge created by the Don Valley Parkway isolates the park from the remainder of the Lower Don Greenway
- The noise and pollution caused by the traffic further dissuade park users from coming close to this space and acts as barriers for those who use the trail system of the Don and discourage those from entering or exiting Riverdale Park East.
- Only penetrable by the footbridge located at the southern end of the site

Montcrest Edge

Strengths

- Two access points
- Little vehicular traffic

Weaknesses

- The number of trees, shrubland and steep slope prevent mid-block connections and informal access points in and out of the park
- Play area is isolated from the street due to a lack of sight lines between play area and street. This is caused by the steep slope and heavy brush.
- Garbage build up in vegetation along edge
- No barrier-free access points along the edge

Challenges

- Steep slope creates engineering and financial constraints for building new means of access.

Bridgepoint Health Edge

Strength

- Buildings front onto park with no physical barriers
- Good tree cover with open space beneath
- Well-landscaped gardens beautify the area
- Lots of benches in this area provide adequate seating opportunities

Weakness

- Bridgepoint Health at the southern edge of the park acts as both a mental and physical barrier as a clear distinction between public and private space is palpable.
- Little direct access into and out of the hospital fronting the park

Challenges

- Security issues with unwanted park users.
- Future renovation plans to the hospital may threaten the existing conditions of the park.



Figure 51: Western Edge (Don Valley Parkway)

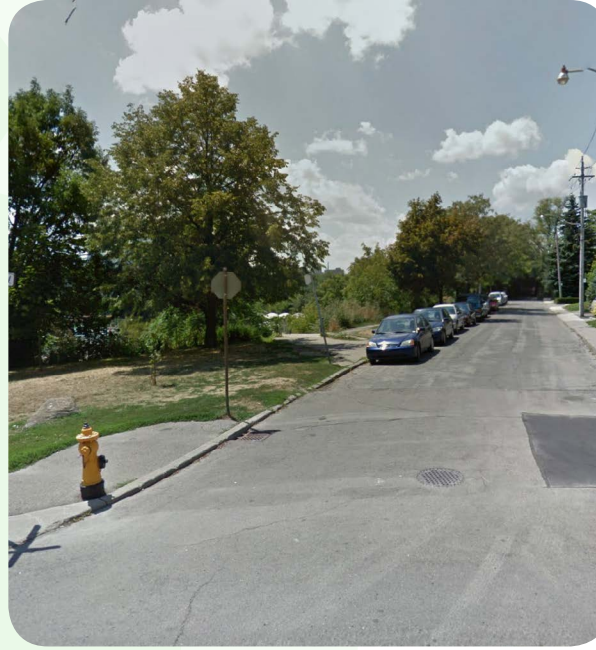


Figure 52: Montgomery Edge



Figure 53: Bridgepoint Health Edge

Broadview Ave Edge

Broadview Ave plays an integral part in the success of the Park. The street runs the entire north-south length of the park and connects the park with its immediate surroundings. Broadview further provides some of the greatest views of Downtown Toronto which immediately makes the street one of the most memorable streets in Toronto.

The 504 Streetcar runs along the street with stops at multiple locations connecting the area with the Broadview Subway Station and Downtown Toronto via King Street.

The street is four lanes wide, (14 metres) with a right-of-way of approximately 22 metres. On street parking is available during off-peak rush hours.

A mix of uses is located at the north and south ends of street with predominantly residential housing units directly adjacent to the park, with the exception of the Roosters Coffee Shop - a local hangout.

In the Riverdale Park East Charrette Report (2010), Creating an interesting and exciting boardwalk along Broadview Avenue to better link the park to the community and to increase park exposure was identified as a recommendation.



Figure 54: Broadview Avenue at Bain Avenue



Figure 55: Broadview Avenue at Riverdale Avenue

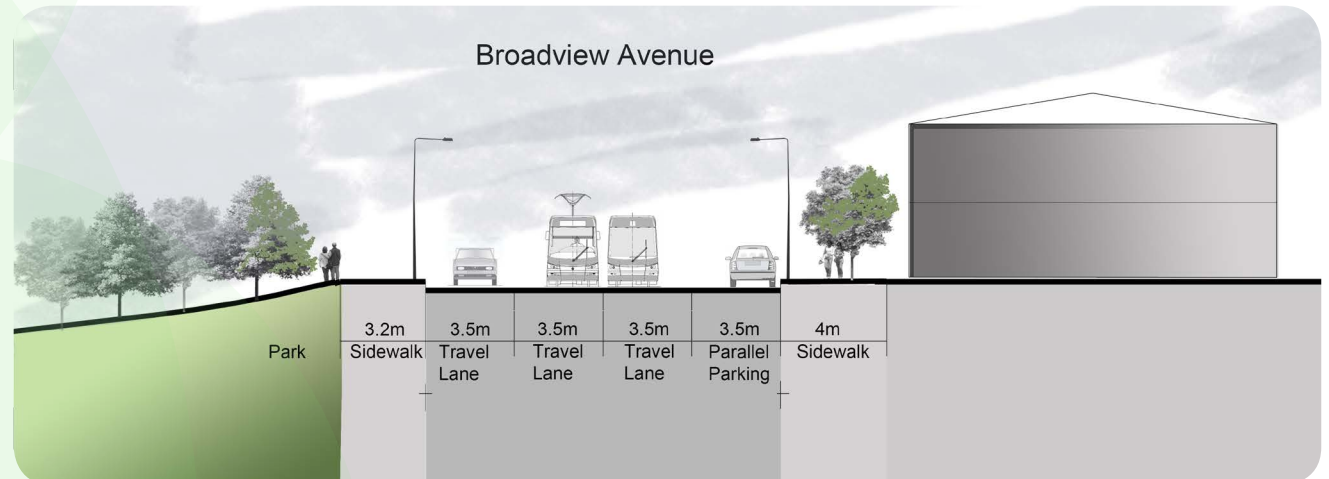


Figure 56: Typical Broadview Street section looking north

Strengths

- Continuous street wall running the entire eastern length of the park helping define the park from the neighbourhood to the east while providing a continuous element tying the north end of the site to the south.
- The edge allows for the pass through of east-west running streets.

Weaknesses

- The strong street wall created on the east side of Broadview Ave is poorly supported by the accompanying infrastructure, including sidewalks, street poles, overhead utility and streetcar wires and other infrastructure components. The sidewalk specifically adjacent to the park is narrow, in a poor state of repair and littered with garbage cans and street furniture placed at sporadic locations.
- As a result of the waste dumping that took place up until 1962, methane exhaust vents are required and line the eastern edge of the park providing unsightly poles (measuring approximately six inches in diameter and above seven feet in height) which protrude from the ground at various locations.

Challenges

- Providing streetscape improvement may pose challenges as working with the city departments may pose tactical problems in addition to the cost that such a project would contain. Concealing or creatively enhancing the methane exhaust vents may prove to be too costly or present accessibility issues for ongoing maintenance.

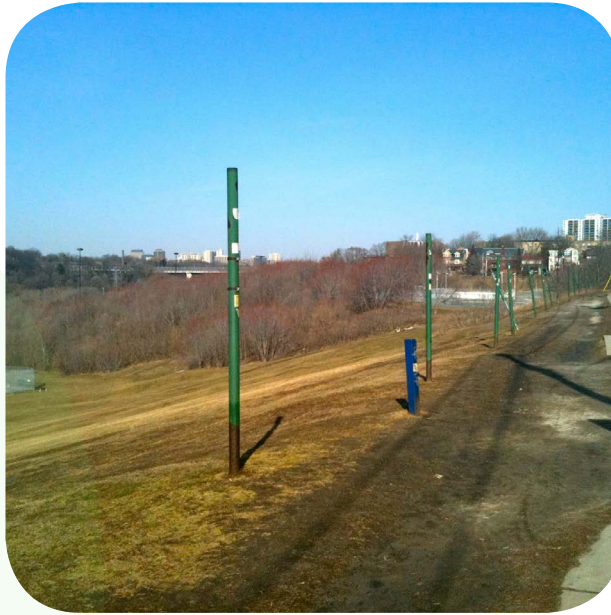


Figure 57: Methane exhaust vents



Figure 58: Utility poles/overhead wires (Broadview Ave)



Figure 59: TTC bus stop

Districts

Riverdale Park East contains three distinct districts – or areas – that each contain their own unique uses, but have no specific identifiable characteristics:

Active Recreation District: Is located on the upper portion of the Park on the north end of the site. It consists of tennis and basketball courts, a skating rink, an outdoor pool, a wading pool, and a children's playground.

Passive Recreation District: Is the largest area of the Park, and is located on the western half at the bottom of the slope. It consists of baseball diamonds, soccer fields, and a running track, which are all located on low-lying land that is susceptible to flooding. The eastern half consists of the slope (used as a toboggan hill in the winter), which gradually increases in elevation towards Broadview Avenue.

Bridgepoint District: Is located next to Bridgepoint Health and is home to more passive forms of recreation. The area consists of a number of large trees and some newly planted ones at sporadic locations along part of its slope. A few flower beds line the eastern edge facing Broadview Ave, which helps add an element of beauty to the space. This district is undergoing significant change as a result of the Bridgepoint Health redevelopment.

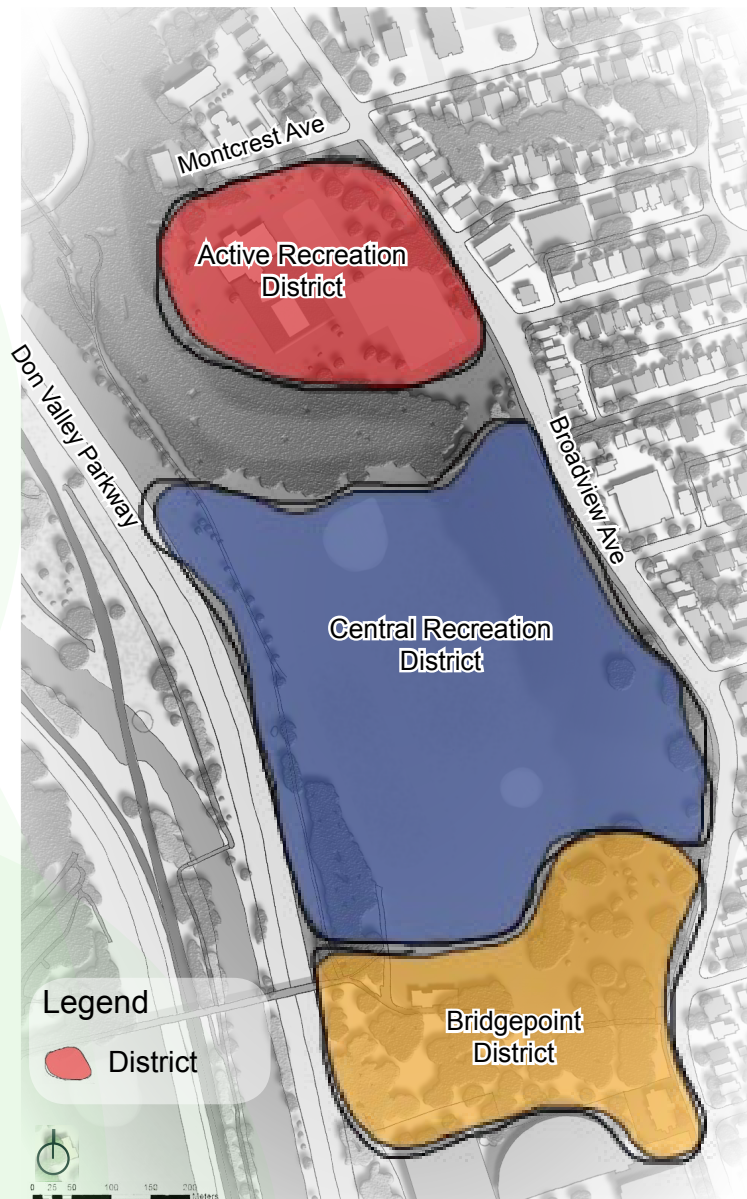


Figure 60: Districts

Active Recreation District

Strengths

- Active area, lots of people using the space
- Well lit

Weaknesses

- Lacks an identifiable centre
- No seating
- No signage / Wayfinding
- Lack of safe direct access to Recreation District
- Cramped and controlled due to the large amount of chain-linked fences quorndening off each specific use.
- Graffiti along the sides of the ice rink and swimming pool as well as benches, light standards, and children's play equipment.

Challenges

- The removal of chain-linked fences within the space presents safety concerns for spectators and passers-by. The re-organisation of the space presents financial challenges as the costs associated with relocating existing areas does not warrant the added use.

Recreation District

Strengths

- Space is well used during three of the four seasons
- Few obstructions

Weaknesses

- Recreational infrastructure in need of upgrade.
- Location of the sports fields creates conflict with neighbouring uses.
- Very few opportunities to sit, relax and enjoy the activities, as there are very few benches.
- Large open space. Lack of 'intimate' spaces
- Poor lighting

Challenges

- Upgrading space, while maintaining winter tobogganing opportunity
- Flat portions of the district are susceptible to flooding. Consultation with the TRCA is required. Some structures and uses may be prohibited.

Bridgepoint District

Strengths

- The district is bisected by the major east-west connection through the park connecting Broadview Avenue with the remainder of the Lower Don Greenway. The field house located at the bottom of the slope adjacent to the path is the location of a community mural. The mural adds an element of colour to the park and revitalises an otherwise bleak and barren wall.

Weaknesses

- The area has no distinct attributes other than a heritage building recently moved into the area however; any programming or use of that space does not yet exist.
- Poor lighting

All three districts each contain their own unique uses however; each area on its own lacks an identifiable characteristic. Further, there is no connection amongst the districts either through signage/wayfinding or a continuation of materials. All three districts share the same characteristic of looking 'worn' out and in need of repair.



Figure 60: Hockey rink –
Active Recreation District



Figure 61: Sports fields –
Central Recreation District



Figure 62: Park Bench – Bridgepoint District

Gateways

Gateways are important features of parks as they are the key entry and arrival points for visitors into the space. Gateways should provide a transition from one city form into another and should be marked by clear indications that you are entering a distinct area. While there are a number of existing entry points into Riverdale Park East, none of them are bold enough to be considered a gateway. Other than the main 'Riverdale Park East' sign along Broadview Avenue, each entry point currently lacks any clear indication that one is entering the Park itself or leaving it to enter the Lower Don Greenway recreational trail. The three main access points into Riverdale Park East that have potential to become gateway locations include:

- Bridgepoint Health Gateway
- Montcrest Gateway
- Footbridge Gateway

In the Riverdale Park East Charrette Report (2010), creating a visible gateway to the park, which will serve to welcome park users and engage the public was identified as the first recommendation among five.



Figure 63: Gateways

Bridgepoint Health Gateway

Strengths

- Heritage structure creates a destination
- Well manicured lawns and gardens of Bridgepoint Health
- Proximity to Parking
- Access via Broadview Avenue
- Paved entry into park

Weaknesses

- Poor visibility (lack of signage)
- Statue is tucked away from the street, hidden behind trees
- Lack of programming for heritage structure
- Poor lighting

Challenges

- Community opposition to heritage use
- Heritage by-law restrictions
- Sensitivity towards Bridgepoint Health

Montcrest Gateway

Strengths

- Good tree canopy
- Limited Traffic
- Proximity to on street parking

Weaknesses

- Poor visibility (lack of signage)
- Stairs are difficult to see and in poor state of repair
- No barrier free access

Challenges

- Slope of north and east edge poses engineering challenges

Footbridge Gateway

Strengths

- Major access point between East and West Riverdale Parks

Weaknesses

- The single gateway connecting Riverdale Park East with its cousin to the west is located where the foot bridge meets Riverdale Park East. Currently, there is no indication (signs, landmarks, plaques) that you are entering Riverdale Park
- Poor lighting

Challenges

- Flood potential



Figure 64: Bridgepoint Gateway



Figure 65: Montcrest Gateway



Figure 66: Footbridge Gateway

Heritage and Cultural Uses

Contemporary urban parks provide a multitude of functions for the city's residents: from enabling contact with nature and each other, to creating places for recreation, interaction and privacy, to providing residents with a role in the design of their community. Urban parks allow a sense of communal identity to be expressed (Matsuoka and Kaplan, 2008). Moreover, park spaces in cities not only provide engagement with natural processes but they also celebrate cultural diversity and conserve memories (Thompson, 2002). Indeed, the guiding principles of park planning in the City of Toronto acknowledge the need to celebrate natural heritage, local history, and cultural expression. Toronto recognizes the opportunities that parks and trails present to locals and visitors of Toronto, so it emphasizes the use of destination parks and select trails as features which could support tourism and calls for their effective promotion as attractive destinations (City of Toronto, 2010).

Riverdale Park East is an example of one such urban park. A prominent feature in the City of Toronto, it has a rich culture and a unique heritage. Recognizing this is essential to the Park's vitality and vibrancy, and provides a strong foundation for its future revitalization strategy.

It is important to realize that, like any other urban park, Riverdale Park East does not exist in isolation. Its central location within the City of Toronto means that many mature communities surround it, each with their own historic value and cultural facilities. Riverdale Park

East is also part of a larger network known as the Lower Don Greenway that contains remnants of industrial heritage such as the Evergreen Brick Works site and Todmorden Mills, which have been revitalized and repurposed for modern day cultural and community uses. The history and cultural programming currently happening in the vicinity of Riverdale Park East is as important to understand as what is happening in the Park itself:

Community, cultural, and leisure facilities along the Lower Don Greenway:

- Evergreen Brick Works
- Todmorden Mills
- Cabbagetown Regent Park Community Museum,
- Riverdale Farm

Nearby farmers markets:

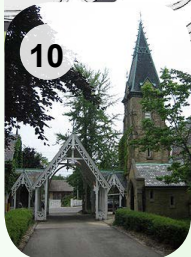
- Withrow Park Winter Farmers Market
- Riverdale Farmers Market
- Evergreen Brick Works Farmers Market

Community events:

- Taste of the Danforth Festival
- Movies in the Park
- Ovarian Cancer Walk
- Chinese Chamber of Commerce's Canada Day celebration
- The Councilor's Environmental Day



Figure 67: Heritage and cultural uses along the Lower Don Greenway



St. Matthew's Lawn Bowling Club

History: Designed by architect Robert McCallum and built by the City in 1906, the club house represents a classic example of Riverdale's early 20th century architecture. The club house's deep porch was designed to overlook the park setting and provide respite from the sun during lawn bowling activities (City of Toronto, 2013; 2013a; 2013b).

Original Site: South of the Old Don Jail near Gerrard Street East

Historical Designation: 2006

Relocated: In 2010, due to expansion of Bridgepoint Health

New Location: The upper, southwest plateau of Riverdale Park East, adjacent to Broadview Avenue

Specifications: Entire floor area of main floor and basement is 345 sq. metres or 3,714 sq. ft. (City of Toronto, 2013).

Current Uses:

Basement: will house the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation – a charitable public foundation dedicated to enhancing Toronto's parks

Main floor: vacant

Future Uses: TBD. New uses for the Clubhouse are proposed in this report. The current, more prominent location of the Clubhouse in Riverdale Park East presents potential for it to be a gateway and focal point of the Park. Its southern access off of Broadview Avenue, and its proximity to the sidewalk, cycling routes, and transit stops ensures its discernibility and accessibility. Additionally, the Clubhouse is situated on a flat, grass covered plateau that is the only southern area of the Park that is level with the street.

Monument to Sun Yat-sen

Location: The street-level plateau at the south-east corner of Riverdale Park East

History: The statue of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, a well-known revolutionary and the first president of the Republic of China, was erected in his honour to commemorate his stature as the "father of the nation". Dr. Sun Yat-sen visited Toronto about a hundred years ago, and gave a speech at Victoria Hall to raise funds for the revolution in China. In 1983, a National Open Sculpture competition was held to create a statue of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Joe Rosenthal was selected as the sculptor, and he completed the monument in 1985 (Toronto Public Library, 2010).

Use: The monument itself serves as the inspirational focus for Tai Chi practitioners who gather on the shaded, grassy area that surrounds it.

Considerations: The statue is difficult to identify due to the large trees that surround it. There is no paving or landscaping around or leading up to it, thus minimizing its impact on the Park. In the light of this, an opportunity exists to highlight the landmark while taking into consideration its existing recreational and cultural uses.

1906



Figure 68: Clubhouse – circa 1906

Today



Figure 69: St. Matthews Lawn Bowling Club



Figure 70: Monument to Sun Yat-sen

Strengths

- There are some cultural facilities and programming in the immediate vicinity of park
- Park is connected by the Lower Don Greenway to Brickworks and Todmorden Mills
- Local cultural events and facilities are already very popular with patrons from adjacent neighbourhoods
- The park is centrally located within the City of Toronto and the established neighbourhood of Riverdale and is easily accessible by public transit, making it a strong candidate for hosting cultural events

Weaknesses

- Lack of learning opportunities (signage, displays)
- Proximity to other cultural facilities is not apparent.
- Minimal cultural programming in the park; existing clubhouse is under used
- Lack of dedicated spaces where cultural programming and learning can occur
- Predominantly utilitarian nature of park use (recreation) not conducive to cultural engagement

Constraints

- Limited funding
- Limited size of the clubhouse
- Topography of the park limits the space for cultural programming and learning
- Large areas of the park are already dedicated to sports activities and natural habitat



Recreational Uses

Riverdale Park East is home to numerous facilities that give rise to a number of recreational uses. With an anticipated 70,000 new residents in the surrounding neighbourhoods in the near future , there will be an increased need for extra recreational and leisure public spaces in the area.

The development of Bridgepoint Health adjacent to the Park invites the possibility of renewed connections and partnerships to provide additional quiet places for passive leisure uses.

As was mentioned in the Riverdale Park East Design Charrette (2010), inclusivity to different users (elderly, children, and people of different incomes, abilities and cultural groups) should be a central principle of a public park. Other ideas that came from the charrette consist of: chess games tables, picnic areas, BBQ spots, creative play areas such as playgrounds and jungle gyms, fitness/wellness classes, greater variety of sports, and more contemplative and meditative areas to connect the park with Bridgepoint Health.

The Master Plan for the Park (2000) identified a number of challenges related to the sports fields related to drainage issues and a lack of lighting. These ongoing issues need to be addressed to revitalize and upgrade the open fields.



Figure 71: Recreational uses



Figure 72: Splash Pad



Figure 73: Soccer



Figure 74: Hockey



Figure 75: Baseball

EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Soccer Fields

- 3 soccer fields, one of which is in the centre of the track
- Field permits run from May until September; 7 nights a week, plus all-day bookings on the weekend
- In need of major renovation. Maintenance happens in spring and fall with sodding or overseeding, aerating, top dressing and fertilizing. However, more frequent aerating and fertilizing is needed (monthly or bimonthly)
- The location of the fields is prone to flooding and has drainage problems
- There are currently no funds allocated for any upgrades, but could use a capital upgrade

Baseball Diamond

- Two baseball diamonds
- Permits run from May until October
- Condition of the baseball diamonds varies from good to poor
- Ball diamond grooming takes place every day or every other day

Running Track

- Located on the flat land at the bottom of the hill
- Has a soccer field in the middle
- Mainly used by joggers and for training
- Has drainage issues and is prone to flooding

Outdoor Swimming Pool

- A wading pool with water slides

- Open in the summer

Children's Playground

- Small children's playground features some swings, slides, and a seesaw

Ice Rink/Dry Pad

- Open for drop-in ice skating from December until the end of February
- Functions as a dry pad for ball hockey (with permits) in the summer

Tennis Courts

- Seven courts
- Free, public access (no permits needed)
- Surface is made of rough asphalt

- Summer recreational programs and camps
- Film shoot permits
- Tai Chi

EXISTING RECREATIONAL USES

- Cross-country Skiing by Montcrest School through permits
- Cyclists along the Lower Don Greenway pass through the park
- Joggers pass through the park and sometimes use the tracks
- Summer movie nights in the hill
- Relaxation, resting and lunch by Bridgepoint staff and community on the south side of the park
- Dog owners using the off-leash area
- Tobogganing down the landmark hill
- Hikers use the naturalized trail
- Special events permits for Ovarian Cancer walk, Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Canada Day celebration, Councillor's Environmental Day.

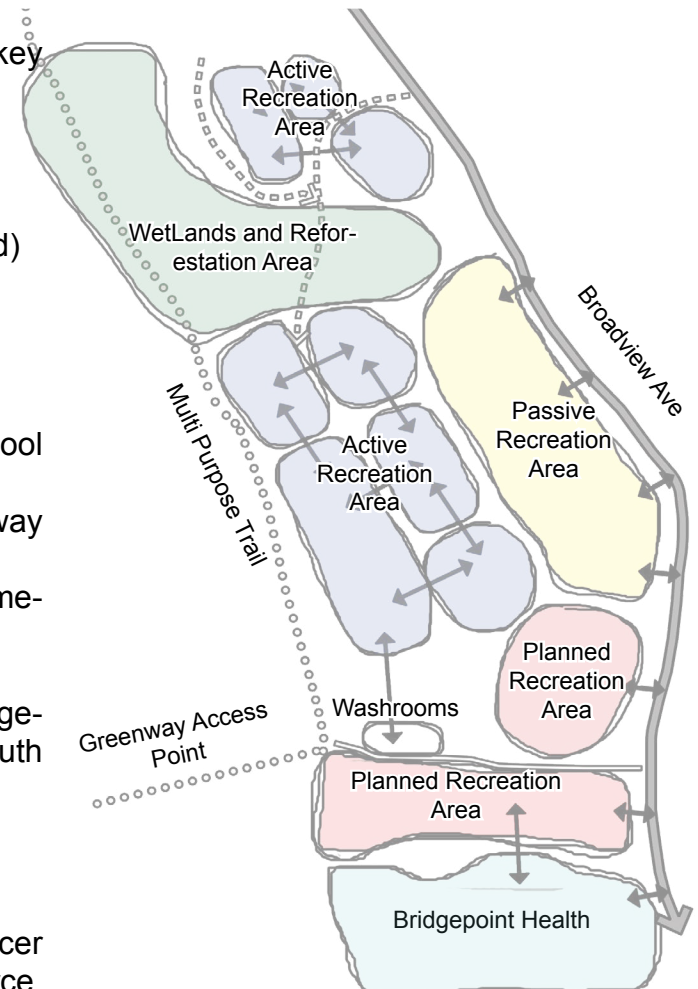


Figure 76: Bubble diagram indicating relationship between recreational uses

Strengths

- Large open space provides opportunities for various users, sports and games
- Facilities exist for both summer and winter active recreational uses

Weaknesses

- Fields are poorly defined
- Currently there is no lighting infrastructure for sports fields and baseball diamonds
- Baseball diamonds have minimal backstop fencing
- Poor drainage and high water tables make the sports fields difficult to use in the spring and after rainfall.
- Aside from open grass, there are limited spots and seating for picnicking and social gatherings
- Lack of protection from wind and limited shade protection and noise pollution from the DVP limits opportunities for relaxation and passive use

Challenges

- Cost of capital upgrades
- Steep slope and topography make it hard to build many playscapes
- Traffic noise from Broadview Avenue and DVP highway make it difficult to provide quiet relaxation spots
- The fields prone to flooding in spring and after heavy rains



Access & Linkages

Successful large urban parks are easily accessible and provide a connection to a greenway system, enabling users to explore a larger trail network to help expand their sense of open space (Steiner & Butler 2012).

The Lower Don Greenway Master Plan project indicates improving connectivity and movement along the Greenway as a primary objective. Mobility will be improved by: improving

existing trail access points and adding new ones on Danforth Ave; creating new gateways at key sites, specifically on the mouth of the Don River and Evergreen Brick Works; finally connect the east and west side of the Don Valley through building new bridges.

Riverdale Park East is relatively well connected and accessible. Importantly, an overpass bridge which crosses over the Don River, the

Don Valley Parkway, and the Bayview extension connects the park to the Lower Don Greenway. This connection provides linkages to other open spaces and parks, popular destinations, communities, and the Toronto Waterfront. However, individuals who require walking assistance would consider the footbridge inaccessible. Currently, the Park has two stair structures: at the corner of Montcrest Blvd and Broadview and further south



Figure 77: Access, trail and linkages in the Lower Don Greenway



Service Road and Broadview Ave Access



DVP and Richmond St Access



Riverdale East/Riverdale West Footbridge



Queen Street Access



on Broadview Ave near Tennis Crescent. The Montcrest Blvd stair access point is the most visible entrance into the park, as there is a signpost indicating the name of the park. The second stair access point is further set back into the park and is surrounded by mature tall trees. This stair structure is wooden and shows signs of deterioration. During the winter months, after a heavy snowfall due to poor maintenance, this stair structure is difficult to traverse. The steep slopes on the southern end of the Park provide open access to the park off Broadview Ave. A Discovery Walk

footbridge over the Don Valley Parkway on-ramp provides access from the northern end of the park. The stair structures, Discovery walk footbridge access points are not universally accessible. Individuals with walking aids, wheelchairs, strollers, and other general walking impediments would have a difficulty accessing the park from these points. Additionally, the steep slopes along Broadview Ave are would also be considered inaccessible by individuals who would need assistance. Multiple visible informal trails found along the slopes, through the wooded area, and along

the western fence of the park provide an indication of user linkages throughout the park. The lack of paved and structured trails and pathways in the park is also another point to the inaccessibility present at the park. There are approximately 4 paved pathways in the northern end of the Park acting as linkages between the recreational facilities in the upper level. Multiple visible informal trails found along the slopes, through the wooded area, and along the western fence of the park provide an indication of user linkages throughout the park.

Transit

There are eight streetcar stops along Broadview Ave that border the vicinity of the park. Broadview Station is approximately a 5 to 7 minute walk away from the park with efficient subway service connecting the east end of Toronto with the downtown core. Riverdale Park East is well-connected to the surrounding transit service which is a major asset as it is more accessible and thus potentially attracting a wider range of individuals from across the city and region.

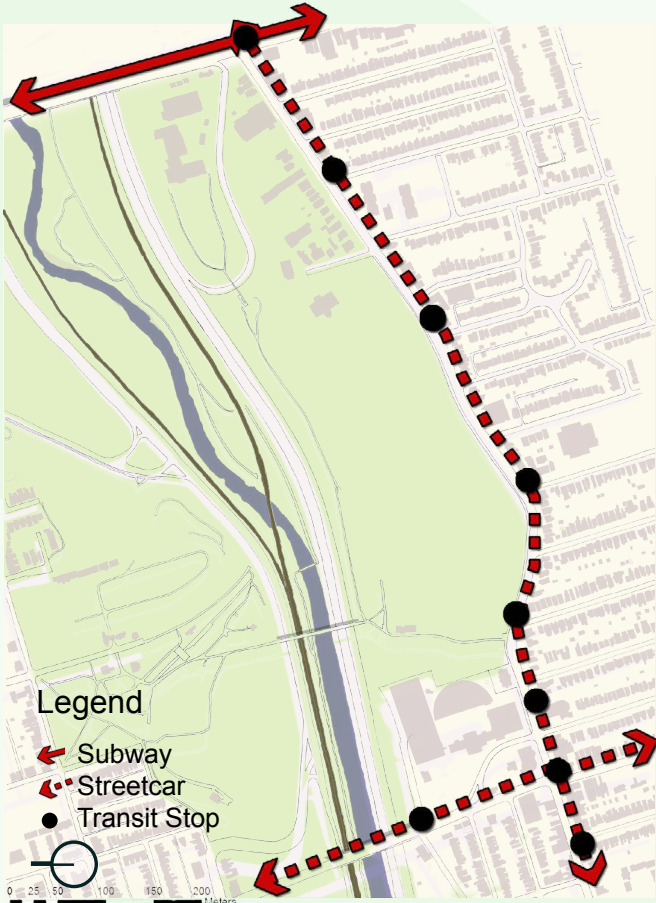


Figure 78: Transit Routes and Stops



Figure 79: Broadview Station



Figure 80: 504 King Streetcar



Figure 81: Traffic at Broadview and Danforth

Vehicle Movement

The map below illustrates vehicle traffic surrounding the park. The park is situated between a highway the Don Valley Parkway (DVP) and a major thoroughfare Broadview Avenue. Vehicle traffic along Broadview Ave can be partially attributed to providing access to Danforth Ave, as this street has the entrance to the DVP. To the south, the location of Bridgepoint Health along Gerrard St E also has heavy traffic. Currently, there is no parking offered in the park. Only service and emergency vehicles are permitted into the park, as such the traffic flow into the park is minimal



Figure 82: Vehicle Movement

Access and Movement Map

Pedestrian circulation is illustrated in the image below. As it can be seen, movement through the northern end of the park is constrained due to the large recreational facilities. Park users entering the park through the stair structure at the corner of Montcrest Blvd and Broadview are forced to walk around the facilities along a narrow pathway. In order to access the southern end of the park from the northern stair structures, individuals have the option of going through the forested area along an informal pathway or walk around the tennis facilities. The southern end of the park circulation is illustrated as free flowing and not constrained by activities. The open boundaries off of Broadview Ave provide multiple access points and a variety of circulation patterns. However, movement can be depicted differently in this section of the park when organized sports are taking place (Figure 83). Park users entering the park from the north end and wanting to access the overpass bridge, when activities are taking place would need to use the informal trail at the western end of the park by the DVP fence. Overall, due to the lack of structured pathways in the south and large recreational facilities in the north, pedestrian circulation is varied and dependent on the type of users in the park.

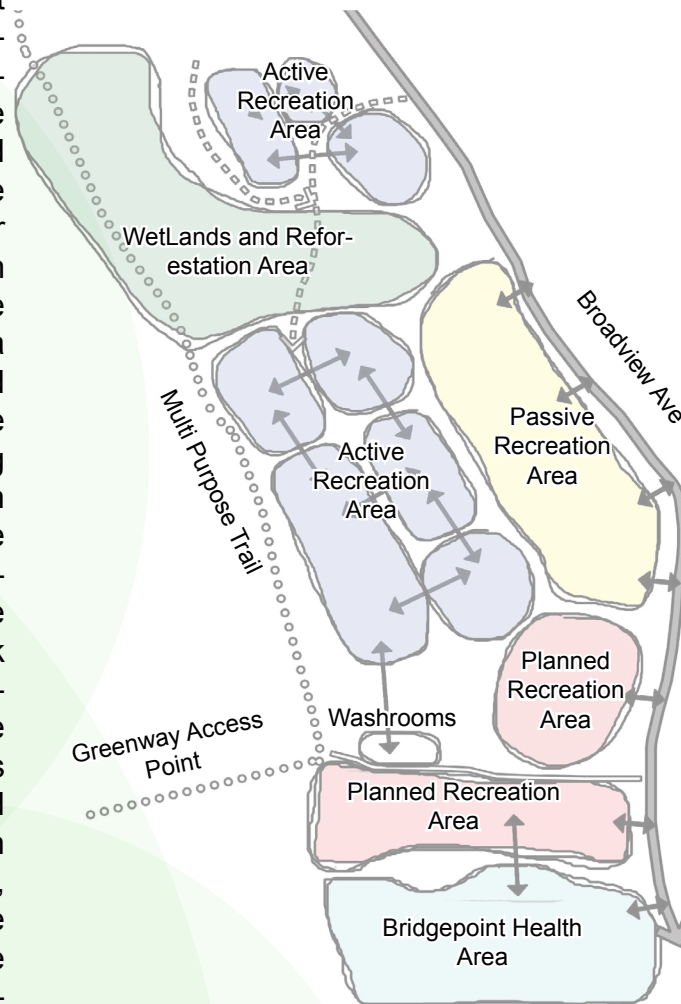


Figure 83: Bubble diagram indicating relationship between recreational uses



Figure 84: Access and Movement

Strengths

- The park is relatively well connected through transit and has multiple access points
- Overpass bridge connects the park to the neighbourhoods west of the Don Valley (Lower Don Greenway and Cabbagetown and Regent Park)

Weaknesses

- Key access points are inaccessible
- There is a lack of paved pathways within the park
- There is a lack of hierarchy between different pathways differentiating between major and minor
- Movement in south end of park is constrained due to the built recreational facilities
- Pathway, staircases and bridges are poorly maintained and show signs of deterioration

Challenges

- North to south access is sometimes inhibited by sports activities
- Providing structured access points in the southern end of the park due to steepness of slopes and previous history
- North end built recreational facilities are difficult to reorganize



Ecological Stewardship

Since the task force to ‘Bring Back the Don’ began, the ecological value of the Don River and its associated watershed has been increasingly realized. As more people in the GTA come to understand the ecological importance of the Lower Don Greenway, the more likely they will be to act as Ecological Stewards of the area – ensuring its protection, revitalization, and enhancement in the



- 1 Riverdale Farm Ponds
- 2 Riverdale Park East Wetland
- 3 Chester Springs Marsh
- 4 Evergreen Brick Works Quarry Garden
- 5 Binscarth Ravine Wetland and Meadow
- 6 Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve
- 7 Beechwood Wetland
- 8 Belt Line Pond and Meadow
- 9 Proposed Mouth of the Don River

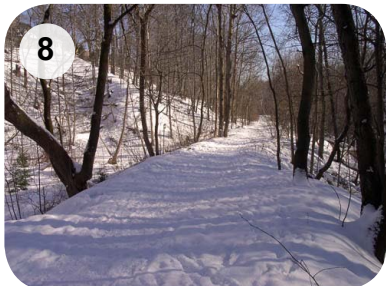


Figure 85: Ecological Stewardship

future. Within the Lower Don Greenway itself, lies Riverdale Park East – a Park whose ecological importance has experienced neglected but has also been the site of community stewardship initiatives. Riverdale Park East still holds many potential opportunities to be a regional, destination Park that emphasizes its ecological value within the greater context of the Lower Don Greenway.

In 1990, the Task Force to Bring Back the Don planted and reforested the northern, sloped end of Riverdale Park East, and today there is a mature woodland of Ash and Maple trees. Due to the sloped nature of this area, the base of the woodland exists as natural wetland, storing runoff water from both the woodland, and the field to the south. Since this area also exists within the floodplain of the Don River, it is important to note the role of the wetland in flood mitigation. Vegetation planted and used in Riverdale Park East should be native varieties that are flood-tolerant whenever possible in order to absorb and retain any excess water. The Riverdale Park East wetland is a single entity of wetlands that exist along the Lower Don Greenway, such as the Beechwood Wetland, Belt Line Pond, Binscarth Swamp, Chester Springs Marsh, Don Valley Brick Works, the Riverdale Farm Ponds, and at Todmorden Mills.



Figure 86: Wetland



Figure 87: Woodlot



Figure 88: Riverdale Park East wetland



Figure 89: Looking North at Reforestation area

Strengths:

- Many forested areas provide wind, shelter, and habitat and erosion control especially for the more sloped areas.
- Large amount of open space provides sight-lines for wildlife that may use the Park as a corridor to connect to the rest of the Lower Don Greenway
- Existing wetland at the base of the northern slope and forest effectively helps mitigate the amount of water pooling from rainfall and spring thaws. Other existing wetlands in the Lower Don, such as the Bin-scarth Swamp, the Beechwood Wetland, and Belt Line Pond, also help mitigate the effects of flooding
- The Lower Don Greenway is host to a lot of beautiful ravines and tree canopy, which play an important role to local air quality and pollution control. This area is an important element of the Don River Watershed, providing habitat, flood control, and other ecosystem services that are often undervalued or under realized.

Weaknesses:

- High pollution and contamination levels in the Don River reflect symptoms of centuries of disrespect
- The ecological value of the local wetlands is not very well known to the public, who may disregard the area as just an unkempt or useless swamp
- Poor signage and connections along the Lower Don recreation trail fail to educate public users about the ecological activities that occur in the Lower Donlands

Challenges:

- One of the biggest challenges to realize about Riverdale Park East within the Lower Don Greenway is that it is located along the floodplain of the Don River. In times of a great storm such as a hurricane that causes a great deal of flooding, the Park will need to have flood control measures in place to help mitigate the effects. Good planning and the incorporation of natural water management measures will help lessen the effects of a catastrophic flood of the area



Community Engagement

Increasing community engagement and encouraging partnerships is a strategic principle that has been recognized in the City of Toronto's parks strategic plan, Our Common Grounds (2004) and has been identified as a principle in the upcoming parks master plan (Parks Plan). Riverdale Park East is well loved and used by numerous constituencies. Currently, the City has classified the Park as a district park, however, it is both a neighbourhood park for adjacent residential communities, and a regional park for those seeking tobogganing and sports facilities; and is literally the backyard of Bridgepoint Health. Its location on the Don River has made the park a strategic interest of environmental advocacy groups, most notably, the Task Force to Bring Back the Don. In 2010, a Design Charrette led by the Design Exchange, engaged teams in a visioning exercise including 15 community members and landscape designers, architects, planners drawing from the private sector and the City. Evidently, there is significant community interest in the planning and revitalization of this park some of which is summarized as follows:

Current Community-Driven Projects: Community commitment to Riverdale Park East is visible in two stewardship projects. In 1990, volunteers planted native shrubs and trees on the slope at the north side of the park. This area has since developed into a mature maple-ash forest. This was the first restoration effort of the Task Force to Bring Back the Don (City of Toronto). In 2002, on the recommendation of the Riverdale Park East Master

Plan (2002), volunteers helped create a small marsh at the bottom of the forest by planting native shrubs, trees, rushes, sedges and flowers. This marsh assists the park by absorbing runoff from the slope and playing fields and provides valuable wetland habitat and species diversity. Volunteers continue to care for this site by weeding non-native species in the summertime as part of the Toronto Parks and Recreation's Community Stewardship program. This project receives funding from Umbra, a corporate sponsor of Bring Back the Don (City of Toronto, n.d.).

Task Force to Bring Back the Don:

Composed of 23 members, including 20 community members and three councillors, the Task Force to Bring Back the Don is a citizen-driven advisory body of City Council. The Task Force works with natural processes to revitalize the Don. It is committed to working with other agencies and groups with shared interests. The Task Force to Bring Back the Don initiated the wetland and forest project described above in 1990 and is now coordinated by the Community Stewardship Program.

Community Stewardship Program:

The Community Stewardship Program is coordinated by Toronto Parks and Recreation's Natural Environments and Community Programs section. Teams meet weekly from May-September for about two hours to care for their adopted sites. Volunteer team leaders train mentors and new volunteers about habitat stewardship. Additional workshops and planting events are organized for volunteers throughout the summer.

Other groups that use Riverdale Park East include: Lawn Bowling Club, Sports Leagues, Montcrest School, Bridgepoint Health

Strengths

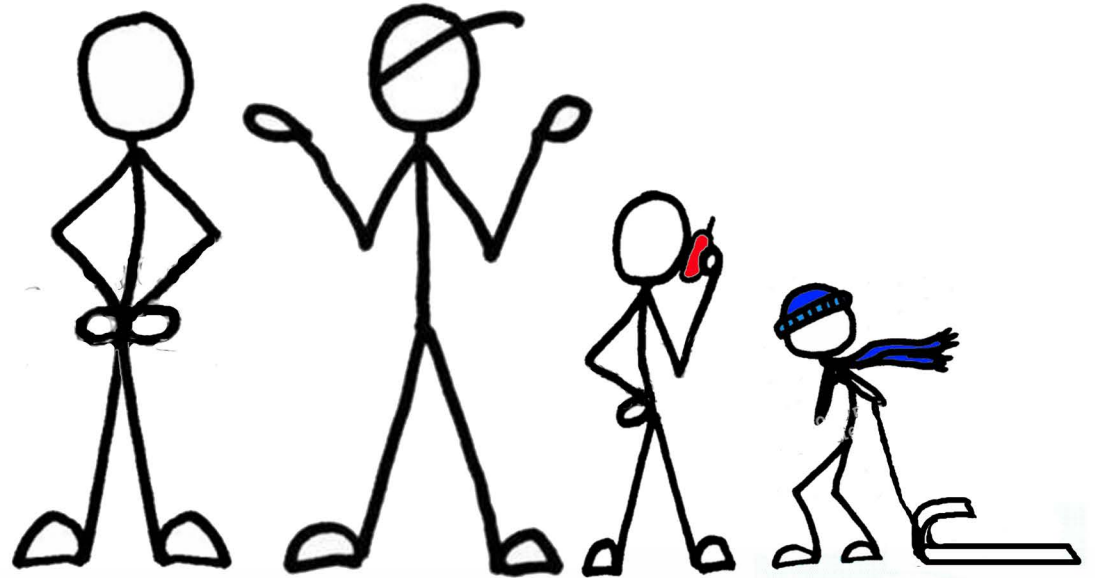
- The park is well-used by numerous groups
- A long history of natural stewardship in the park
- Community-led initiatives such as “movie in the park” and other community events demonstrate a precedent of community gathering in the park

Weaknesses

- No “Friends of” or other overarching parks community group that brings together stakeholder groups

Challenges

- The park has many different user groups but without overall coordination
- Disconnect between “Parks” and “Recreation” divisions within the city make access to information on the park somewhat difficult



Issues and Opportunities



Issues are conditions that have been identified as weaknesses, constraints, or other challenges (such as funding and ongoing financing options) that exist with Riverdale Park East and in relation to the Lower Don Greenway as a whole.

Opportunities are the areas of strengths that provide potentials for the revitalization of the Park as a destination within the context of the Lower Don Greenway.

The following chart organises and summarises the issues and opportunities we have identified at this point in our analysis.

Experiences: Culture and Recreational Uses

Item	Issues	Opportunities
Opportunities for celebrating culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Presently, there is no central cultural 'hub' along the Greenway between Evergreen Brick Works and the waterfront	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Riverdale Park East could provide more specialized programming for target populations, or some cultural facilities.Partnerships could be established to link the cultural activities of Riverdale Park East with what is happening in nearby facilities such as Riverdale Farm, Todmorden Mills and Evergreen Brick Works
Opportunities for celebrating culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">There is a severe lack of cultural activities occurring in the park due to lack of dedicated spaces for cultural programming and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The park's central location within the city and the thriving, established neighbourhood of Riverdale, offers great potential to manifest community engagement and learning through various cultural activities and programming, such as festivals or markets in the Park.

Heritage Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage Lawn Bowling Clubhouse located onsite is disconnected from the park due to underutilization Community opposition and heritage by-law restrictions have prevented good programming and use of this space. The area is also very poorly lit at night, which deters use of the space after dark, and encourages illicit activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the cooler months, the heritage Clubhouse could be used for indoor programming, and some of the tennis courts could be used for other purposes. This structure provides potential to be a destination if more activities and programming are included there in the future. The structure offers potential to act as a welcome centre to the park due to its location in close proximity to the gardens and lawns of Bridgepoint Health, parking, and direct access from Broadview Avenue.
Statue of Sun Yat-sen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statue of Sun Yat-sen, an important landmark in the park, is hard to locate as it is tucked away from the street and is hidden behind trees. There is no paving or landscaping around or leading up to the statue thus minimising its impact on the park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better signage/wayfinding elements, more lighting, and greater landscaping around the statue would help to highlight this park feature.
Park Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park feels quite separated into distinct districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unifying the park through unique identities for each district could be created by using signage, paving materials, and plant species that uniquely represent each district.
Park Districts- North District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Majority of the parkland in the north district of the park is built-up for recreational use. This part of the park provides few safe pathways between activities and is fragmented from the rest of the park. High number of barriers, such as high fences, material of fences, and concrete walls make this space feel cramped and enclosed Pool wall has a lot of tags/graffiti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further open up the space through the removal of softening of chain-link fences by planting them with vegetation. Provide more options for seating Improve accessibility to the Passive Recreation District. Using the pool wall as a surface for a community art project Using the pool wall as a surface for a community art project
Children's Play Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient amount of children's playground space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand existing play structure and/or create an all ages playscape near Bridgepoint Health
South District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The south end of the park consists of open sports fields that are poorly defined 	

Water drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor drainage and high water tables at a low grade make the sports fields difficult to use in the early spring and after snowmelt and heavy rains. Improvements to this area may be inhibited by the fact that consultation with the TRCA is required before construction and upgrades and as such some structures and uses may be prohibited. 	
Passive recreation opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited space and seating available for picnicking and social gatherings 	
Effects of Don Valley Parkway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic noise, especially in the southern end of the park, is a significant problem due to proximity to the Don Valley Parkway. This is particularly a problem during the fall and winter months as the tree cover is sparse providing very little protection from the noise making it difficult to find quiet areas for relaxation and passive uses 	
Forested Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current conflicts between illicit behaviours by park users in forested area. Unauthorized off-leash dog walking frequently occurs in this area. 	
Gateways - Montcrest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant lack of identifiable gateways at the Montcrest and Broadview access points into Riverdale Park East poorly promotes and defines the park and its role in the larger community and City. 	
Gateways- Footbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Riverdale footbridge that crosses over the Don Valley Parkway, Bayview Extension, Don River and rail lines, lacks signs, landmarks and wayfinding tools that could otherwise inform users of the park's connection with the Greenway, Riverdale Park West and Riverdale Farm. During the winter months, the bridge is not maintained and individuals experience icy, snow conditions or heavy snow melt, making the surfaces unwalkable. 	

Access, Linkages and Destination

Item	Issues	Opportunities
Slopes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steep slopes on the eastern side of the park create a barrier separating the park the neighbouring communities and limit the types of uses that can occur in that area of the park. Slopes do not provide a safe and accessible path(s) for movement up the hill, making returning to the top a challenge for those without the stability to climb a slippery slope. This is especially relevant during winter months when tobogganing in the Park is a major activity. The instability of the soil – a result of its previous use as a landfill site – poses a significant cost and engineering constraint to interventions such as a set of stairs or alternative method of access up the hill (Master Plan for East Riverdale Park, 2000). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The slope provides opportunities, such as tobogganing and natural seating for visitors enjoying the view. The relatively steep angle of the slope and clear path make the downward ride the slope well-suited for tobogganing.
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking areas are split from recreational activities, creating an issue for access between different activity types in different districts of the Park itself. 	
Vista	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of quality seating along Broadview Ave, may hinder residents and park users from staying to admire the view for long periods of time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Riverdale Park East's unobstructed views of the downtown provides one of the most impressive and beautiful views of the City. The Park's western-facing slope provides a natural seating arrangement for visitors to sit and enjoy the views of downtown. Provide more traditional forms of seating on the upper portions of the hill along Broadview Ave for those without the physical ability to sit on the slope

Western Edge/ Don Valley Parkway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements to this edge have left a scattering of trees and brush which help soften the abrupt condition of the edge; however, the size of the Parkway and its constant sounds of traffic, quickly reminds users of their proximity to the parkway. Noise and pollution caused by the traffic can dissuade park users from moving between the recreational trail system of the Lower Don Greenway and Riverdale Park East. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Softening the edge adjacent to Riverdale Park East could limit the negative effects of the Don Valley Parkway. This could be achieved through the use of a number of suitable tree species that act as an all-season sound barrier, or through public art that complements the modernist design of the infrastructure.
Don Valley Parkway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise and light produced by the Don Valley Parkway can impede the experience both during the day and night alike. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting a greater number of trees along the western edge of the park adjacent to the parkway could limit noise levels and visual distractions. Placement of trees or other tall vegetation along the upper-portion of the slope could limit the range of views provided at that location, and so any plantings should take the views of the City
Promoting Riverdale Park East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Toronto does not currently promote city parks well and Riverdale Park East is no exception. At the time of writing, Google Maps incorrectly labels the park as "Riverdale Park West". There is currently no database or website where individuals can efficiently search information on upcoming park events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborating with other facilities along the Lower Don Greenway could help to bring deserved attention and new patrons to the park. Care must be taken to maintain the neighbourhood's character and existing users while also promoting its use by others
Broadview Avenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadview Avenue and the urban structures on the east side of the street: The southern end of Riverdale Park East along Broadview Ave currently has unsightly methane exhaust vents that protrude from the ground at various points. Concealing or creatively enhancing the methane exhaust vents may prove to be too costly or present accessibility issues for ongoing maintenance. The street wall created on the east side of Broadview Ave is poorly supported by the accompanying infrastructure, including sidewalks, street poles, overhead utilities, streetcar lines and other infrastructural components. The sidewalk adjacent to the park is narrow, in a poor state of repair, and littered with trash bins and street furniture placed at sporadic locations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities exist to enhance this edge through a number of streetscape improvements such as widening the sidewalk and upgrading street furniture and lighting. Such improvements would enhance this edge by creating a better-defined boundary and strengthen the continuity between the north and south ends of the park that already exists. Acknowledging and celebrating the existing methane exhaust pipes through signage or art instead of ignoring them could provide a creative learning opportunity while animating the eastern edge of the park. Placing historic photos or information signs along Broadview Avenue to highlight the buildings which make up Toronto's skyline. This would provide additional learning opportunities for locals and tourists alike, while also incorporating simple streetscape improvements along the Broadview Avenue corridor.

Northern Edge/ Montcrest Blvd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The steep slope along this edge of the Park creates engineering and financial constraints for the building of new access points. The number of trees and shrubs prevent mid-block connections and informal access points into and out of the park. Heavy vegetation and waste build-up causes a lack of transparency between the play area and street, and there are no barrier-free points to access the Park from this edge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengths of this edge include the fact that it has two access points and very little competing vehicle traffic, so there are some opportunities for landscaping and ensuring that access is barrier-free at the intersection of Montcrest Ave and Broadview Ave.
Southern Edge/ Bridgepoint Health Gateway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridgepoint Health currently acts as both a cognitive and physical barrier, as it delineates between public and private space. There is a lack of signage and visibility is poor at this gateway Direct access and strong connections into and out of the Bridgepoint campus currently not provided. Illicit park use behaviors along that edge may also pose additional security or health issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridgepoint Health is undergoing a major renovation. Improving connections to the Lower Don Greenway and Riverdale Park East are integral components of the Bridgepoint Master Plan. The buildings of Bridgepoint Health's new campus front onto Riverdale Park East with no physical barriers, which means there is open access to landscaped gardens with good cover and lots of seating.

Ecology

Issue	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park is located on a floodplain, creating difficult conditions for further park improvements. • Great storm has potential to cause a great deal of flooding, the Park will need to have flood control measures in place to help mitigate the effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good planning and the incorporation of natural water management measures will help lessen the effects of a catastrophic flood of the area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of Don River shows signs of disrespect and neglect with its pollution and contamination levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two decades of natural stewardship in Riverdale Park East demonstrates a high level of community interest and commitment to natural restoration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ecological value of the local wetlands are not very well known to the public, who may disregard the area as just unkempt or use-less swamps • Poor signage and connections along the Lower Don recreation trail fail to maximize opportunities to educate park users about the ecological activities that are going on around them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential exists to incorporate engaging signage within the park – especially at key gateways – to assist with providing interesting, easy-to-understand information about the ecological and cultural • Heritage of the Lower Don and the cultural and recreational opportunities along the Greenway. Public art may also be used.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of site as an old landfill site – which still releases methane gas – may be of ecological concern when it comes to subsurface soil and water quality. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the Lower Don Greenway itself, the state of the Don River still shows signs of over a century of disrespect and neglect with its pollution and contamination levels. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Park is located within the floodplain of the Lower Don Greenway itself, meaning that the area is at risk of flooding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high amount of precipitation and runoff experienced by the site could provide an opportunity to install more constructed wetlands or bioswales not only for flood mitigation, but also as a tool to bring old waterways to daylight and re-emphasize natural drainage and water treatment systems. This may be important considering that Riverdale Park East was constructed on top of an old landfill, which may have associated water quality considerations. Existing wetlands of the area (such as the Binscarth Swamp, the Beechwood Wetland, and Belt Line Pond) currently help mitigate the effects of flooding
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting and enhancing the natural areas of the Park will provide more natural habitats for local and migratory wildlife and encourage animals to use the Park as a connection within their greater corridor along the Lower Don Greenway.

Community Engagement

Issues	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Riverdale Park East has many different user and stakeholder groups, but overall coordination and collaborative efforts between them are lacking. There is no residents association in this portion of Riverdale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There has been some community interest expressed in starting a “Friends of” overarching parks community group that is common in other parks in Toronto.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disconnect between “Parks” and “Recreation” divisions within the City department makes revitalization strategies for Riverdale Park East somewhat of a challenge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bridgepoint Health is currently undergoing a major expansion. Opportunities may exist to collaborate with Bridgepoint Health on social and recreational programming, fundraising and promoting health and the healing. Spillover of activities between sites should be encouraged• Collaborating with other facilities and neighbourhoods along the Lower Don Greenway to work together on revitalization initiatives and use art to strengthen and promote Riverdale Park East as a major recreation and cultural destination.

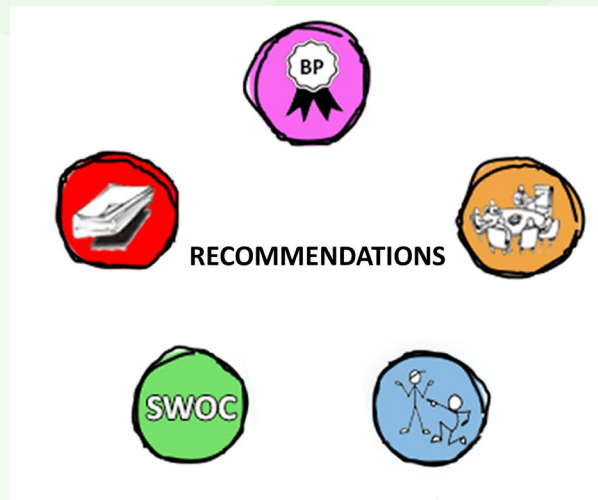
Summary and Next Steps



Riverdale Park East has tremendous potential as a destination park due to its location, significant size, beautiful vista and unique topography. This interim report provided background on the site context and planning and policy framework; identified our project purpose, study method and vision; and presented the issues and opportunities on the site identified through a SWOC analysis.

The next phase of the project will involve working with our clients to select, further investigate, and develop the opportunities identified through best-practices case studies and conduct research into the feasibility of these opportunities.

Based on our analysis, fieldwork and research, we have come up with a number of mix-use opportunities that can address many of the issues and problems we observed.



1. Adaptive Use of Heritage Clubhouse

This structure provides potential to be a destination if more activities and programming take place in the future. During the cooler months, the heritage Clubhouse offers the potential to be an important venue for indoor recreational or cultural programming. It could be a warming-up hut for tobogganers in the winter and a place to enjoy food. The structure and its location create the opportunity for it to become a welcome centre to the Park that provides information and material on the park's culture, heritage, and ecology. Its close proximity to the outdoor area of Bridgepoint Health, parking and direct access from Broadview Avenue make it an eye-catching and easy to access place for visitors and park users.

2. Connecting with Bridgepoint Health

The redevelopment of the Bridgepoint Health campus bordering the southern edge of the park presents a great opportunity to enhance partnerships with this growing neighbour and respond with complementary programming and park design – such as opportunities for passive leisure – along this section of the park.

The Bridgepoint Health Master Plan promotes integrating the new hospital and the historic Don Jail with the surrounding urban fabric,

neighbourhood, park and streets. The plan offers multiple pedestrian connections to Riverdale Park, a multi-purpose trail along the valley edge, and to animate the streets through a mix of uses.

The Charrette (2010) brought forward some interesting ideas for passive recreational use that can connect the park with Bridgepoint Health. These include contemplative and meditative areas, a labyrinth or maze, and more picnic spots. Other suggestions for passive recreation that may complement this area include chess tables, barbeque spots and a second playground. A naturalized, all-ages playscape offers potential to celebrate the ecological heritage of the valley.

3. Multipurpose Sports and Recreational Facilities

In considering Riverdale Park East's close connection with Riverdale Park West and the various users of the park, we are exploring the potential for renewed and dynamic uses of its facilities in the future. The limited use of outdoor tennis courts during the winter season invites possibilities of alternative recreation in some of the tennis courts. We are exploring activities such as ping-pong tables that can be conducive to a wide range of age groups and people with different abilities. Considering the combined assets of Riverdale Park West and

Summary and Next Steps



Riverdale Park East, parts of the flatlands could be transformed to meet demands for a variety of other sports, such as cricket, and provide open field space for pick-up games. The vast amount of area in the valley land and slope provide a natural environment for tournaments and other social events such as music festivals as has been started in the summertime 'Movie in the Park' initiative.

4. Augmenting Gateways and the Promenade

The Park's unobstructed views of the Toronto skyline has made this area one of the most popular look-out destinations in the city. The unobstructed skyline views of Toronto from the top slope of Riverdale Park East provide a unique vantage point not found elsewhere.

There exists an opportunity to transform Broadview Avenue into a welcoming promenade through minor streetscape improvements such as benches, rest spots and lighting. Such improvements would strengthen the edge by creating a more defined boundary and would provide improved continuity between the north and south ends of the park – and perhaps, beyond to Bloor and Gerrard Streets. A pleasant promenade walk and enhanced place-making can be further augmented by incorporating signage, such as placing historic photos or information signs along Broadview Avenue. These can highlight

the buildings, which make up Toronto's skyline and the cultural and ecological heritage of the Don Valley.

This strategy could pave the way for additional learning opportunities for locals and tourists like, enhance the park for a number of passive activities, and animate the park with public art. Finally, a promenade could help to establish more recognizable gateways at the North and South ends of the park. Three main gateways that, if enhanced, would improve the park's presence and access include:

- Bridgepoint Health/Clubhouse Gateway
- Montcrest Gateway
- Footbridge Gateway

5. Community Learning and Engagement

As we go forward in revitalizing the park into a central destination, it is important to ensure that the park is not just an isolated venue where sports and recreation happen, but also a community learning hub that celebrates and respects the ecological and cultural heritage of the Park and Lower Don. This type of community integration can mean learning by doing, initiating a 'classroom in the park' program, and continuing to foster volunteerism in which participants can get involved with park-clean up or weeding of invasive species. Potential exists to incorporate engaging signage within the park – especially at key gateways

– to provide interesting, easy-to-understand information about the ecological and cultural heritage of the Lower Don and vast opportunities along the Greenway. Increasing public knowledge of the benefits of public parks and the ravine system is also an important step towards building political support for parks funding.

Building strong community partnerships with Bridgepoint Health, local and surrounding stakeholders and the communities will ensure the park continuously flourishes and is a thriving place for culture, ecological stewardship and community integration.

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