

BERYL GAFFNEY PARK
2018 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SUBMISSION
From the Manotick Culture, Parks and Recreation Association (MCPRA)

Introduction

This submission is in response to the [Community Consultation](#) on the [Beryl Gaffney Master Plan](#), extended to January 31, 2019, from July 2018. The Association's comments are based on:

- Historical information pertaining to Beryl Gaffney Park
- Consultations with former Director of Park Planning and Development, City of Nepean (Bill Levesque) and Landscape Architect, Steve Sunderland, Principal with Corush Sunderland Wright (retired, but creator of the original park design in 1999.)
- Discussion with Beryl Gaffney personally
- Experiences as users of Beryl Gaffney Park
- Previous park feedback from Manotick and area residents (past MCPRA Surveys)

The submission includes the following sections:

1. Historical Background
2. Overview of Existing Conditions, Constraints, and Opportunities
3. Guiding Principles (per original 1999 Master Plan)
4. 2008 Report to Community and Protective Services Committee
5. July 2018 Open House
6. MCPRA Suggestions and Recommendations
7. Moving Forward

The [Manotick Culture, Parks and Recreation Association](#) is an incorporated, non-profit, volunteer-led community organization that leads and supports environmentally responsible culture, parks and recreation projects and services in Manotick.

We understand Beryl Gaffney Park is a 'city-wide' park, meeting the needs of the greater community, especially the populations in Riverside South, Barrhaven, Stonebridge, Heart's Desire, Manotick and beyond. The Association understands that the City is [consulting with the broader community](#), "to confirm that the approved Master Plan meets the needs of our community...[and share] any new ideas that would improve the plan..."

MCPRA also understands that there are limited funds available for park development and that the City is looking for feedback on prioritization of development in the park, given limited resources.

MCPRA applauds the City's commitment to the Beryl Gaffney Master Park Plan and appreciates the opportunity to provide input. In this context, our Association has identified where we concur with the approved 2008 Master Plan; suggested potential updates to the Plan; and recommended several immediate priorities.

1. Historical Background

The 1999 Beryl Gaffney Final Report (Robinson & Associates/ Corush Sunderland Wright) noted:

- Located in the southern edge of the (former) City of Nepean, along the shores of the Rideau River, Beryl Gaffney Park, formerly Rideau Bend Park, consists of 39 hectares (96 acres) of pasture and woodlands, stretching from the north bank of the Jock River to Barnsdale Road, between Prince of Wales Drive and the Rideau River, excepting two small housing areas off Lockview and Maplehill Way and several private dwellings.
- The Park was re-named Beryl Gaffney Park in 1998 in honour of Nepean resident Beryl Gaffney who not only worked in the Parks and Recreation Department for more than a decade but served on Nepean Council for 9 years, on Regional Council for 6, and as a federal Member of Parliament for two terms.
- Beryl Gaffney took an avid interest and strongly supported community-based, family-oriented initiatives, especially as they pertained to the healthy city concept, recreation services, and historical amenities.
- Land in this southern part of the City was acquired *over several decades*. The goal of establishing a southern destination point on the Rideau was recognized as early as 1974 with the City's acquisition of the Richardson property at the northwest corner of the Hwy 16 bridge.
- References indicate that the Jock River was used as a transportation corridor for timber from Richmond and Merrickville to the Bytown lumber mills and that one of the early settlements was "Jockvale" at the mouth of the Jock River. Settled in the 1840s the area boasted a post office, general store, blacksmith shop and cheese factory. Part of the existing Heart's Desire Park was originally willed to Nepean Township by Reverend Father Dawson, who also had a log church built in the area.

Previous Studies referenced in the 1999 Report, included:

- Jock River Landing Report 1988: Torrance and Wright Landscape Architects
- Project Planning Canada Ltd 1990: Opportunities and Constraints (River Bend Park)
- Public Use of Naturalized Parkland 1990: Corush, Laroque, Sunderland
- Planning and Land Use Appraisal Report 1991: Totten, Sims, Hubicki
- Sachs Forest, Guidelines for Development of Parkland and Housing Adjacent to Parkland 1995: Wheeler/Douglas Ltd Landscape Architects
- Long Island Rideau Bend Parklands Concept Plan 1996: Ecologistics

Since 1999, post-amalgamation, Manotick in partnership with other rural communities initiated the 2006 *Rural Pathways Plan*, looking at trails and connections in the rural area. In 2016 Manotick also adopted a new [Secondary Plan](#) that emphasized 'the importance of maintaining Manotick's natural areas and open spaces, while enhancing access to the Rideau River.'

2. Overview of Existing Conditions, Constraints, and Opportunities of Beryl Gaffney Park (as identified in the 1999 Master Plan)

- Beryl Gaffney Park is 39 hectares (96 acres) in size.
- Significantly, within a 1 mile radius of Beryl Gaffney Park, there are many hectares of open space including Hearts Desire Park (12.9 ha), Stonebridge Golf Course (72.8 ha), Memorial Gardens (29.9 ha), W.C. Levesque Park (9.7 ha) David Bartlett Park (14 ha), Upton Collins Park (3 ha), and Long Island Locks (18.4 ha), Jeffrey Armstrong Park (.275 ha), Claudette Cain Park (9.8 ha), Chapman Mills Conservation Area (9.3 ha).
- The Jock River enters the Rideau at the northerly end of the site and there is 1600 metres or almost a mile of shoreline along what is often called the back channel of the Rideau River.
- There is poor access to the water's edge but excellent views of the river and the dam.
- The soils are primarily Class 2 with a strong capacity to support vegetation.
- Coniferous trees including scotch, red and white pine, Norway and blue spruce, cedar, larch and fir can be found, and deciduous trees such as basswood, ash, maple, oak, black locust, birch, butternut, elm and beech are present.
- 90% of the land is flat and 10% is fairly steep topography.
- A wetland area, relatively calm water, riffles, agricultural meadows, mature vegetation in some areas, and the early succession reforestation, are attractive assets.
- Opportunity for trail connections along the Rideau and to greater open space network.
- Noise from Prince of Wales traffic is a problem.
- There are Impediments to circulation within the park, including existing housing developments.

3. Guiding Principles of the 1999 Concept Design for Beryl Gaffney Park

Based on the preceding work, the following conclusions evolved in preparation of the 1999 Beryl Gaffney Park Master Plan:

- Beryl Gaffney Park must be developed in context, not just as a stand-alone park, but in relation to the parks and open space in close proximity both within (former) Nepean (Heart's Desire Forest, Jock River Landing, the Jockvale Golf Community) and also the lands under other jurisdictions such as Long Island Park (now David Bartlett Park), Long Island Locks (Parks Canada) and (former) City of Gloucester parks (e.g. Walter Upton Collins/Claudette Cain Park).
- Trail Connections with other destination points will be important.
- Beryl Gaffney Park will be a complement and alternative to Andrew Haydon Park.
- Naturalization and Historic Cultural values should be emphasized.
- Waterfront is important, but access is limited, and the watercourse is not naturally amenable to swimming.
- Beryl Gaffney Park is the southern gateway to Nepean, but also, in many ways, to the Nation's Capital.

The foundation for the 1999 Concept Design, developed by Steve Sunderland, Landscape Architect, Principal with Corush, Sunderland, Wright, and nearby (Barrhaven) resident, included the following principles (based on *extensive* consultation of staff, experts and the community):

- *Affordable* – to build and for users
- *Sustainable* – to maintain
- *Rural/Natural* – hedgerows/ meadows, reforested areas
- *Family Focus* – all ages – adventure play areas, picnicking, multi-use paths
- *Simple Adventure* – adventure play areas, foot bridges, stone walkways, tall grasses
- *Access to the Rideau River*
- *Preservation of Green Space/ Open Space*, of the landscape, views to the river
- *Access to the site by foot, bicycle, car, boat*
- *A place of escape* from the neighbouring congestion, crowding, to be alone
- *A place of assembly of groups* in an outdoor setting
- *A place for 'unorganized' recreation*, spontaneous activities.

The Manotick Culture, Parks and Recreation Association supports these Guiding Principles and feels that they are not only relevant in 2018, they should continue to guide future development.

4. 2008 Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

In March 2008, the amalgamated City of Ottawa, through a report by Kevin Wherry, Senior Planner with the Parks and Recreation Department, submitted to the [Community and Protective Services Committee](#), proposed a Beryl Gaffney Park Master Plan Update, revised project budget, and Year-by-Year Development Forecast.

This 2008 report indicated: “In our review of the original plan, complete with the addition of RVCA and “as-built” park development to date, Parks and Recreation has proposed that no substantive change to the original plan is needed.....Therefore, Parks and Recreation plans to pursue limited park development within the original context with available funding and on those facilities that are of greatest public benefit. Primary focus will be to open up group picnic areas complete with shelters, trails and lighting over the 20 years.”

There appeared to be very little community consultation at this time, with a public open house in January 2008 drawing 20 people and no comment cards completed.

The updated Beryl Gaffney Master Plan included the following updates to the 1999 Master Plan:

- Location of the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority leased lands and buildings (existing conditions) shown on plan;
- Relocation of the Adventure Playground; and
- Replacement of a group picnic area (with shelter) with a softball diamond.

The 2008 Report also noted:

- “Therefore, Parks and Recreation plans to pursue limited park development within the original context with available funding and on those facilities that are of greatest public benefit. Primary focus will be to open up group picnic areas complete with shelters, trails and lighting over the 20 years.”
- Further to the above, the attached [Cashflow Forecast and Expenditure Priorities](#) document, indicated expenditures for signage, trails, pump-out building, group picnic shelter, well, and electrical service (2012), lookout, lighting, site furnishings, and small boat docks (2014-2018)
- “Approximately \$1million in City funds was set aside to initiate preliminary works and to ensure that some “seed money” was held. To date approximately \$680,000 in park development has progressed on trail system construction, limited public parking facilities, vault toilets, pedestrian bridges and signage.”
- “The agreement with RVCA permits either party to advance yearly funding at its discretion. The existing \$320,000 park development balance is intended to represent Ottawa’s contribution to the development for the first 10 years of the agreement.”

While these recommendations were put forward in the report, very little investment was subsequently made in Beryl Gaffney Park between 2008-2018 – certainly no group picnic shelter, lighting, site furnishings or small boat dock, as indicated.

5. July 2018 Open House

An Open House was held on July 5, 2018, *‘to confirm that the approved master plan still meets the needs of our community. Any new ideas that would improve upon the plan are welcome.’* A synopsis of the feedback from the meeting (as noted on the City’s website) included:

- Conserve and maintain the park as is
- More trees, remove dead trees
- Prevent additional soil erosion
- Additional parking
- Additional garbage removal
- Noise abatement

While the Manotick Culture, Parks and Recreation Association concurs with some of the above, it does not agree that the City should ‘conserve and maintain Beryl Gaffney Park as is’ if that means ‘disregard the Master Plan and do nothing.’

6. MCPRA Suggestions and Recommendations

Beryl Gaffney Park is a ‘citywide’ park, not a ‘backyard’ park

Historically, Beryl Gaffney Park was strategically assembled and envisioned as a ‘southern, city-wide’ gateway park for the former City of Nepean. This foundation should not be forgotten. Given

today's nearby population density – 46,500 in Barrhaven ward, 42,000 in Gloucester South Nepean ward, and ~10,000 in Manotick and area – Beryl Gaffney Park is a precious and unique sanctuary. However, Beryl Gaffney Park is a city-wide park, not a backyard park, and the site needs to reflect that mandate. While the needs of the surrounding neighbours should be considered, their personal demands should not take precedent over the original vision for the site.

The Manotick Culture, Parks and Recreation Association therefore supports the following design elements of the 1999/2008 Master Plan:

- Trails and Pathways (for cyclists and pedestrians)
- The Marsh Boardwalk and low water rock crossing
- The Group Picnic Areas
- The Amphitheatre
- The Adventure Playground (in the new location of the 2008 Plan)
- Outdoor Skating pond
- Self-propelled Channel Ferry (pending feasibility assessment)
- Canoe/Small Boat Rental & Docks – allowing people to enjoy the back channel
- Fishing areas
- Conservation of existing forested areas
- Parking/Washroom amenities

MCPRA concurs with the following 1999 observations/ decisions/ rationale:

- *Tobogganing* – “while there was an expressed interest in the availability of tobogganing....the consultants are recommending that this activity not be provided at this location. The land is very flat and not naturally ideal for tobogganing. A manufactured hill would appear incongruent with its surroundings. Pond skating, on the other hand, can be simply and aesthetically achieved by grading efforts and is thereby much more conducive to the park's landscape.”
- “Additional buffering was added in the vicinity of Lockview Road to insulate the existing housing from the activities of the Park. The consultants strongly recommend, however, that the Group Picnic use remain in this general location as well as the related parking. The view of the dam from this particular area is one of the most spectacular vistas in the entire park. To disallow City of Nepean [Ottawa] residents the pleasure and opportunity to leisurely enjoy this view would be most unfortunate and would compromise the public good for the private demands.”
- “Further, the consultants strongly support the *parking which is located just northwest of Lockview Road* and the group picnic area. If parking is not located within easy access of this picnic area, the homeowners will be constantly frustrated by park visitors who don't wish to transport their bags any distance, and, despite no parking by-laws and threat of fines, will park on the neighbourhood doorstep. The parking has been specifically and purposely located in proximity to the picnic area to mitigate this anticipated problem. Removing the parking will only exacerbate the issue further.”

MCPRA would also strongly suggest the following updates to the 2008 Master Plan:

- *Remove the softball diamond* – this component doesn't align with the Guiding Principles; further, spontaneous play, not organized play, is the priority.
- *Designate an 'off-leash' fenced, dog area* as soon as possible – the 1999 Master Plan did not address 'off-leash' dogs because, historically, the former Nepean required all dogs to be 'on leash' when in a park. The 2008 Master Plan does not speak to the issue of 'dogs in the park'. The current practice and park designation allows dogs to be off-leash throughout the entire park. This situation fosters conflict - between cyclists and dog-walkers; between families and dogs not under control; between picnic participants and hungry dogs etc. etc. At the suggestion of the original park designer, MCPRA recommends taking an area closest to Lockview and Rideau Valley Drive, for an exclusive, fenced, 'off-leash' purpose. In other areas of the park, all dogs would have to be on leash. There cannot be 135 acres (Beryl Gaffney Park and David Bartlett Park) given to off-leash dogs. This issue must be addressed immediately before it evolves and escalates and there is no opportunity for dialogue and resolution of the issue
- *Put in an additional bridge link* over the creek nearest Lockview (where there currently is a rock stepping stone connection) – to improve accessibility for aging walkers/ cyclists and those with strollers.
- *Develop an Integrated Park System Map* showing Beryl Gaffney Park in context with nearby parks, emphasizing the linkage to those areas; this map would serve to emphasize Beryl Gaffney Park as a city-wide park, a cornerstone and southern gateway park to the City, and part of an integrated park system.
- *Develop a safer contiguous connection* to the Chapman Mills Conservation Area (for cyclists), especially given the construction of the new Police Building adjacent to Carleton Lodge; this will require a safe means to cross the Jock River.
- *Pave the shoulders on Barnsdale Road*, between Barnsdale Bridge and Rideau Valley Drive, for the safety of cyclists.

7. Moving Forward

Manotick Culture, Parks and Recreation Association would like City staff, Committee, and Council to consider the following priorities for Beryl Gaffney Park:

The Park Needs Some TLC and Financial Investment

Beryl Gaffney Park has suffered from lack of attention and development. In fact, Beryl Gaffney herself has often quipped, 'I'll be in the park across the street (Memorial Gardens), before the City ever does a thing to develop my namesake park.....'

It's time to invest and move forward. Building on this current Community Consultation on the 2008 Master Plan, set priorities and take action. With a consensus on 'how to move forward' and priorities established, the City, service clubs, and corporations can work collectively to fund and support various initiatives.

While maintenance such as garbage pick-up, is important, other tasks need to be balanced, recognizing the natural features of the site. Even Parks Canada (Banff National Park Trail shown in picture) doesn't clean up all its fallen trees.



Finally, as a priority, consider a hard surface for some trails to allow 4-season use. Currently during the shoulder seasons, some trails become quite muddy and difficult to navigate. As more people are attracted to the park, this will become more problematic. Full-year use should be encouraged and supported through appropriate maintenance.

Focus on Waterfront Access

While Ottawa is blessed with three major rivers, access to all three, is relatively limited, especially for those who cannot afford to own a home on any of the waterways.

Priority construction of the Marsh Boardwalk is a 'win/win' amenity for everyone. This addition would bring a unique experience to the site; allow access to the waterway and a whole new 'adventure' dimension to the park; and the boardwalk is not located in proximity to the current houses on Lockview or Maplehill Way. This project should be an immediate priority.

Explore the feasibility of the hand-cranked barge to Nicol's Island. Sometimes we need to get beyond 'liability' frets, and NIMBY cries, to just take in the view, the breadth and the quietness of this heritage waterway.

Focus on Family Fun and Adventure

The entire park is a place for families to explore and enjoy the natural environment – whether on the trail, on the marsh boardwalk, or in the back channel...such joy people can experience!

Building on this component, create an adventure play area that includes natural components where possible, is challenging, and simplistic. See the following as examples:

<https://www.jdirving.com/jd-irving-sustainability-nature-parks-irving-nature-park.aspx>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZoklq2ml0Q>

<https://www.bowood.org/bowood-house-gardens/kids-activities/adventure-playground/>

<https://www.longleat.co.uk/main-square/adventure-castle>

Given the extensive presence of wild parsnip in the Park and the growing concern regarding ticks and Lyme disease, create several of the group picnic areas, commencing with those closest to Rideau Valley Drive. Quality washrooms, picnic pavilions and waste facilities should be deployed. [The current washrooms do not reflect 'city-wide' park standards.]

Other

The following are other possibilities to be explored:

- Collaborate with the Field Naturalist Club of Ottawa to undertake a comprehensive flora and fauna baseline inventory of what currently exists in Beryl Gaffney Park.
- Collaborate more successfully with RVCA to build an on-site education program; explore additional funding opportunities (per their Agreement with the City); and engage in regularly monitoring the immediate waterways with volunteers.
- Host subsequent Beryl Gaffney Park meetings at Ben Franklin Place to reflect and reinforce the 'city-wide' park designation.
- Enhance the entranceway/trailhead on Rideau Valley Drive to reflect the citywide status of the Park. Use quality, unique, natural materials throughout - for future park benches, signage, furniture, etc.
- Within the park, consider a mix of multi-use and exclusive use pathways e.g. separating cyclists and pedestrians, to avoid user conflict.
- Enhance the linkages and connections to the larger trail system e.g. to the Greenbelt Pathway Network, the former Gloucester Network, and the north/south connections, including improved signage/mapping.
- Consider the creation of a 'Friends of Beryl Gaffney Park', similar to 'Friends of Petrie Island', a non-profit group that would work closely with City staff; be consulted on future development ensuring that change is aligned with the 1999 Guiding Principles and 2008 design elements; preserve the ecology of the Park; commence and strengthen the education about and programming in the park; and secure additional funding for the Park.

[MCPRA understands that there is currently a 'friends' group that has been created, but MCPRA is unclear as to their mandate, objectives, or whether their interests reflect that of a 'city-wide' park. MCPRA would prefer a model that results in a balanced board, including 'a city-wide application' process, and ultimately individuals with some park expertise, a broad vision for the park, and willingness to work to move on development of the park per the Master Plan.]