

## **LAYCOCK PARK WETLAND RESTORATION PROJECT REPORT OF PUBLIC INPUT – OPEN HOUSES, MAY 2007**

Two public open houses were held in May 2007 to obtain public input on the proposed concept plan for the re-establishment of wetlands along Nose Creek in Laycock Park. A total of approximately 60 members of the public attended the two open houses held at the Thorncliffe Greenview Community Centre on Friday, May 11, 2007 and the Huntington Hills Community Centre on Tuesday, May 15, 2007. The open houses were held from 4 PM to 8 PM each day, with presentations given at 5 PM and at 7 PM. People had an opportunity to ask questions or make comments after the presentations and were encouraged to submit written input on comment sheets provided. Written comments were submitted by 18 people. The following is a summary of the verbal and written input received at or after the two open houses.

### **VERBAL COMMENTS/QUESTIONS FOLLOWING THE PRESENTATIONS**

The following is a summary of questions and comments raised after the presentations at the two open houses. In cases where the same question/comment was raised by more than one person, the number of times it was raised is reflected in brackets after the comment.

C = Comment; Q = Questions; A = Answer

Q When will the work be finished? (raised twice)

A It will take several years to complete. The work may be split into phases, with the meander in the south end of the park being done first. The length of time depends somewhat on the availability of compensation funds.

Q What about doing similar projects in other areas?

A This is under study now – we are working to identify compensation sites throughout the City.

Q How will you measure success?

A Monitoring of the creek and adjacent areas should show an increase in diversity. (e.g., We would hope to see an increase in aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal species). We will need to demonstrate to Council and Alberta Environment that there is no net loss of wetland through this re-introduction process. Local residents can help in this monitoring by reporting their observations.

Q Will there be any changes to the off-leash areas in the park? Will dogs still be allowed in the Creek? (raised twice)

A Most of the park is currently zoned off-leash (with the exception of the ball diamonds, the playground and picnic shelter - where dogs are not allowed; and the Regional pathway where dogs must be on-leash). There is no plan to change the off-leash designation. As the work to establish native vegetation in the wetland areas takes place it will be necessary to protect these areas, so some temporary fencing may take place at that time. There has been some suggestion that a hardened area be provided to permit access to the creek for dogs. It should be mentioned that the current water quality in the creek is poor, and owners should

really consider whether they want their pets exposed to it. Information about the water quality will be included as part of the educational signage, allowing pet owners to make informed decisions about water access.

Q Will there still be an outfall above the bridge.

A Yes, most likely.

C Large rocks were recently placed around the pillars of the bridge. They may have been put there to protect the bridge, but they resulted in a lot of erosion of the creek bank. It will be important to consider water flow characteristics in planning any mechanical reinforcement of the creek.

Q What about the impacts on current native wildlife (e.g., resident foxes, beaver, porcupine) during project construction? (2 comments)

A There will be a lot of disruptive earth moving during construction. The plan would be to do a sweep of the area before construction begins to identify fox dens and nests and discourage the animals from locating there in the spring, so they are not disrupted when work begins.

Q What is the plan for beaver management?

A We would try to take a preventative approach like wrapping trees to protect them from damage. It may be a difficult issue to control if the beaver population is high.

C It would be a good idea to locate pathways where they are less likely to get flooded when the water in the Creek rises (which happens quite dramatically during flooding and storm events) (2 comments). Currently, paths adjacent to Nose Creek at underpasses are frequently un-useable because of silt and slim build up during and after flooding. The City takes a long time to get them cleaned up.

A Proximity to the water will be kept in mind when relocating the pathway through the park. However, people do like the pathways close to water, and it is expected that they will get flooded from time to time. If it is taking a long time for clean-up, members of the public can call 311 to reinforce the need for action in a specific location.

Q There is a lot of garbage in and around the Creek. Who is responsible for the clean-up?

A The City is ultimately responsible for clean-up, although it is impossible for them to do it all, so they also encourage public help through clean-up days and Adopt-a-Park activities. If there is a particular problem, members of the public can report it through the 311 City phone line. Likewise, if garbage has been pulled out of the creek and requires a pick-up.

Q Will this park ultimately become like the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary with a requirement to stay on the paths, etc.

A No, Laycock Park is not in the same category as the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary (which was once a Federal Bird Sanctuary and is much more environmentally sensitive). It is also designated as a Special Protection Natural Area by The City of Calgary Parks, and as such has the highest level of protection. The objective in Laycock Park is to restore some of the native vegetation and wetlands and design it in such a way that these areas are protected, while allowing for more intensive

recreational activity in the other areas. Laycock Park would not get a Special protection status.

- Q Given the fact that there are many more outfalls further north on the creek, how will the actions being taken in this park affect the overall water quality in Nose Creek?
- A The positive impact of this project on the creek will be very small, but it is a good first step. A longer-term solution would be to do a much larger-scale retrofit of the drainage system into the Creek. This is being evaluated.
- Q Is there any collaboration with water management authorities further upstream? Are there official “stewards” such as Conservation Authorities?
- A The City of Calgary is involved with the Nose Creek Water Management Partnership, which includes representation from the rural municipalities and other groups concerned with the well-being of the watershed. It is hoped that more wetland restoration projects on Nose Creek will come out of the work being done by the Partnership. There are no Conservation Authorities in the Nose Creek watershed.
- Q Why does the pathway need to be moved?
- A It needs to have a minor re-alignment to allow room for the introduction of the meander in the Creek in the south part of the park. The regional pathway will still run in a north-south alignment through Laycock Park.
- C Would like to see a little lake like a snail included in the design, using water out of the creek. The excavated dirt could be used to make a hill, and trees planted close to the water would attract birds.
- C The industrial area is very unattractive – would suggest a buffer (trees/shrubs) along the SE edge of the park.
- Q Will there be an increase in the mosquito population? – it is already a problem.
- A This wetland design includes moving water. Standing and stagnant water (often present in people’s back yards) is more of a problem. The habitat improvement in Laycock Park through this proposal should encourage the presence of mosquito predators. A program of mosquito control would be introduced if it appears to be a particular problem in future.
- Q There is a foul smell around the creek. Could it be caused by the run-off from the airport (e.g., de-icing materials) going into the creek.
- A The airport is not allowed to discharge de-icing solutions into the creek – they have an apron to contain such materials, and it actually gets pumped to the sanitary system so that it can get treated.
- C Please retain the cinder pathway along the raised bench beside the industrial property in the SE corner of the park. It is a good informal path for walkers and dog walkers.
- C You need to coordinate work being done in the park by other branches of the City Parks (e.g., there were trees newly planted in the park last year; there is a new sign on the playground indicating it is up for lifecycle repairs).

- A We will try to minimize disturbance of plantings when the park work is done, but it may be unavoidable. Communication will be undertaken with the Operations side of the Department regarding the playground – they are aware of the wetland project and possibility that the playground needs to be relocated.
- C To encourage greater use of the park (e.g., school groups), the installation of a washroom would help.
- C Perhaps a small interpretive centre would be more useful than a picnic/cook shelter.
- C People are not picking up after their dogs. Relocating the garbage bins along the pathway would help.
- C In other parks (e.g., Griffith Woods), people are expected to pick up after their dogs and carry it themselves back to the bins at the parking lot.
- Q How does the scope of this wetland compare with the compensatory wetlands that are being lost elsewhere?
- A Through a complicated formula, the compensation ratio for losses of wetlands thus far has been 1:1 for a few highly disturbed sites. The City's goal, however is to replace more wetland than is lost. At this point we have not yet determined what the replacement ratio will be, but it will likely exceed 1:1 replacement.
- Q Will the dropping water table affect the long term viability of this wetland project?
- A The water table is dropping in rural areas, but is probably actually rising in built up areas, because of the amount of run off from paved surfaces. The water in the habitat wetland will be fed from stormwater. The ponds will need to be lined with clay to prevent the water seeping away into the ground.
- Q Is Laycock Park sprayed or pesticide-free?
- A Herbicide is used to control weeds (e.g., very aggressive smooth brome grass which effectively chocks out native species), but is restricted in the vicinity of the creek or the playground. Spot control is generally preferred. When the native plantings are introduced as part of this project, it will be very important to keep invasive weed species controlled in order to allow the natives a chance to get established.
- C The meander doesn't look natural. Can it be modelled on the shape of a historical meander in this area?
- A The meander has to be designed in a certain way because in this location it does not have room to move as it would naturally. We actually want it to overflow its banks in certain areas to feed the wetland (e.g., in the area SE of the meander). Containing erosion on some curves and allowing for the release of flood waters in another is all part of the design.
- C The observation platforms will need to be raised out of the floodplain. A platform on stilts (like a bird blind) would be good, so that children can observe and feel close to the water without disturbing things.

## SUMMARY OF WRITTEN COMMENTS

Written comments were received from 18 individuals. The following is a summary of those comments. The number in the column to the left reflects the number of people expressing the same view.

### GENERAL SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT PLAN

- 14 Support the proposed wetland restoration as presented
- Support both segments of the wetland restoration – hope that the park will be attractive and user-friendly when complete
  - Am excited about the concept, and hope my family will enjoy the park even more, once the restoration is done
  - Support all aspects of the plan because it makes the park more natural – will enhance the neighbourhood
  - Strongly support the restoration and creation of wetland habitat – the affect of urbanization on wildlife is disturbing (2 comments)
  - Saving wetlands is important to plants, animals and humans (2 comments)
  - Support the whole concept, particularly the idea of the ponds
  - Support wildlife enhancement to the area
  - Support any de-channelization of the creek
  - This is an important plan – the playground needs renewal, and wildlife needs to be better protected.
  - Support all (except the art aspect). Am happy with the plan as I live nearby
  - The need for water management and the secondary benefits (wildlife and recreation) will serve the community well
  - Go for it!

### ASPECTS OF CONCERN

- 3 Concerned about the potential increase in mosquitos (there are already lots)
- 2 Concerned that the funding for this positive project is dependent upon developers destroying current wetlands elsewhere. The creation of wetlands should be a priority, and The City and developers should provide funds regardless of whether current projects affect wetland areas. The compensation should be higher. It is better and cheaper to conserve than reconstruct.
- 2 There is not enough being done to protect wetlands. This plan doesn't go far enough in reclamation. Instead of "no net loss", the goal should be "maximum net gain" of wetlands – however, it is very good to see the change in developmental thinking.
- 1 My biggest concern (now and in the future) is the homeless people camping in the trees in the park
- 2 Concerned that money going into this project will be wasted because of vandalism – have seen kids down in the park cutting down trees and bushes using axes and

saws. Police don't have the time to respond. Need to find a way to prevent future vandalism.

- 2 Concerned about the quality of water in the creek – particularly with regard to dogs and their safety
- 2 Concerned that the off-leash area will be reduced (dog walkers are there all year, while baseball and tobogganing are only seasonal).
  - When the wetland is established, people will get mad if dogs chase the ducks and eat the eggs.
  - Limiting dog access in some of the new wetland areas should be acceptable
- 1 The stormwater outfall will create severe flooding – water level can rise up to 2 metres in a few minutes. This will continue to create erosion and widen the creek.
- 1 Concerned that the current wildlife (beavers, birds nesting, etc.,) will be so disturbed they will not return to the park when it is completed.
- 1 Doing the project on a piece-meal basis will jeopardize the effectiveness in the long-term
- 1 Parking on Blackthorn Rd. NE in summer is excessive

### DESIGN SUGGESTIONS

- 3 Plans should include a washroom near the playground and/or ball diamonds (to reduce the incidence of park users relieving themselves on the vegetation).
- 1 Do not support the addition of a washroom in the park
- 2 Would like to see an area created for dogs to swim
- 1 Moving the playground further north is a good idea (if it does not interfere with the toboggan run)
- 1 Concerned about the proposed location of the playground – too close to the ball diamonds (concerned about proximity to foul language, drinking, small children being left unsupervised by ball players and older kids over-crowding the playground). Suggest the playground be located across from the pedestrian bridge just to the west of the intersection of the proposed relocated pathways.
- 1 The playground is best in its current location (near the informal play area and toboggan hill). The picnic shelter could be relocated just east of the playground (where it will be more out in the open)
- 1 A stairwell may be needed in the NW corner of the park
- 1 You will need to cut off human access in some areas to protect restoration (e.g., as in the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary or Prince's Island)

- 1 Would like to see indigenous vegetation though-out the park (not just riparian areas)
- 1 Suggest including an interpretive viewpoint from the west ridge of the park, as opposed to artificial viewing platforms down in the wetland
- 1 Consider a parking area near Golden Acres
- 1 Support the fact that the proposed wetland is suggested for the currently more under-utilized areas of the park
- 1 Support the relocation westward of the pathway in the south segment of the park
- 1 Pathways should be open for walkers and cyclists (providing more opportunity for wetland awareness)
- 1 Encourage using a portion of the park east of the rail line to showcase the work being done (i.e., a visual showcase of improved habitat with signage, but no public access)
- 1 Suggest the inclusion in the park of a spiral shaped water body, surrounded by paths and trees, and use excavated material to shape an adjacent hill (graphic included with comments)
- 1 You should create an area for beavers to live in
- 1 Is there an opportunity to provide water to the habitat section through backwater fill?

#### ART/EDUCATION

- 1 The art budget could be used to convey historic, natural history and other interpretive information
- 1 It is very important to provide education and information to the public
- 1 Do not support the “art” aspect, as it would be subject to vandalism, unless cleverly incorporated
- 1 Glad to see that 1% of the budget will be allotted to public art
- 1 Could there be space for graffiti artists to do their thing, so it isn’t on the sidewalks and bridges? Our 7 year old is quite concerned about this!
- 1 Students from nearby schools like C.N. Gunn and Thorncliffe Elementary could walk over for field trips

#### PLANNING PROCESS

The following is the response to the questions asked on the feedback form about the planning process and open house information

Questions:

- Did you understand the information provided? Yes – 17; No – 0  
Was the purpose of the open house and how your input will be used made clear?  
Yes – 17; No – 0

Comments:

- 2 Appreciated the clear and informative presentation
- 1 A “before” and “after” picture/drawing (at the same scale) would have made the proposed changes clearer.
- 1 This is a great project – we’ve enjoyed learning about it
- 1 The presentation slide showing the house floating down the creek is actually quite historically accurate (according to the archival photo on the interpretive signage near Split Rock in West Nose Creek, just such a thing happened circa 1908 in West Nose Creek)
- 1 The original stakeholders in the area were the Nose Creek farmers – the probable successor organization would be the Nose Creek Historical Society, who should be involved in the planning phase of this project

OTHER COMMENTS

- 1 The City should supply doggy bags in the park to encourage people to clean up after their pets
- 1 Our lifestyle (work, recreation, transport) must fit with the ecology – not the reverse.
- 1 Suggest developing a future wetland near the Zoo – perhaps as a complement to the proposed Science Centre.
- 1 Need to encourage service groups like Girl Guides and Boy Scouts to participate in periodic clean-ups along Nose Creek. Have an Adopt-a-Park program involving participation by groups and nearby businesses (such as Golden Acres, Forzani’s, etc.), including financial support
- 1 Should pave 6 St. NE access (through the industrial area) to the Laycock parking lot