



NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION  
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

# Sir George-Étienne Cartier Park Plan Public Consultation Report

February 2023

Canada

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## Project description

The National Capital Commission (NCC) has completed half of the three-year planning process for the Sir George-Étienne Cartier Park (the park). The park is a 13-km stretch of federal lands along the south shore of the Ottawa River. The area is made up of 600 hectares of land, comprising the parkway, trails, and a mix of public and private recreational space. The area extends in the west from Rideau Hall at Princess Avenue to the east in the Greenbelt at St. Joseph Boulevard.

Planning for the riverfront park is consistent with the NCC's planning priorities, specifically those of enhancing the shoreline, placemaking and animating the Capital. The area is regarded as a signature feature of the Capital and is located alongside the Ottawa River, a designated heritage river and historically significant landmark. As steward of federal lands in the National Capital Region, the NCC is responsible for protecting and preserving the Sir George-Étienne Cartier Park for all users.

The NCC has recently completed the second round of public consultation, to complement the work completed during the first round of consultation that took place in winter 2021. The first round of consultation focused on presenting the vision and guiding principles for the park.

In this round of consultation, we did the following:

- shared preliminary concepts and goals for the park plan with members of the general public, public advisory committee (PAC) and stakeholder groups;
- provided further details on opportunities for amenities and proposed activities; and
- gathered feedback and comments related to concerns about, and aspirations for the park.

Our goal is to meaningfully involve members of the public throughout the planning process, allowing them to play a significant role in shaping the plan framework in order to best meet their needs and aspirations for the area.

The planning process will take approximately three years total to complete and includes five project phases and four public consultations. We are halfway through the process, with projected dates for the future engagements to take place in fall 2023 and spring 2024.

Additional information about the project, including planning objectives, process and timeline, can be found on the NCC's website via the link provided [here](#).

# Engagement dashboard

## Online public engagement

**Total views**



**3,092**

**Topic connections**



**726**

**Completed surveys**



**472**

**Map comments**



**153**

**Email correspondence**



**88**

## Community open house

**Total participants**



**84**

**Completed surveys**



**26**

**Craft paper comments**



**104**

**Map comments**



**43**

## Stakeholder engagement

**Total participants**



**22**

**Number of organizations represented**



**20**

## Engagement process

The consultation generated more than 4,500 total engagements from 800 participants from December 2022 to February 2023. The online consultation included an online webpage and resource folder to share information with the public, as well as a survey and an interactive map to receive feedback on the proposed activities and amenities. The full list of survey questions and corresponding charts are included in Appendix A.

The online format was complemented by a community open house, where participants could offer feedback on the preliminary concepts. Participants were invited to attend the in-person session and speak to the project team, complete a paper survey, write feedback on a long sheet of “craft” paper or post comments on a map of the study area.

Similar to the previous consultation phase, the PAC and stakeholders met with the NCC to share feedback on the project. A meeting with the PAC was held in person to identify opportunities, issues, and aspirations for future enjoyment of the park. This meeting featured a presentation on the park plan’s preliminary concepts. Thereafter, the project team met with technical stakeholders. This meeting followed the same format as that of the PAC members.

Stakeholders were identified as being directly impacted by the project and included groups such as National Research Council Canada, the Canada Aviation and Space Museum and representatives from various divisions at the City of Ottawa, among others. The full list is provided below.

- Canada Aviation and Space Museum
- Canada Lands Company
- City of Ottawa
  - Parks and Facilities
  - Transportation Policy and Networks
  - Natural Systems and Rural Affairs
  - Public Realm and Urban Design Group
  - Infrastructure
  - Asset Management
- Montfort Hospital
- National Research Council of Canada
- Rideau Valley Conservation Authority
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), National Headquarters Asset Management
- Rockcliffe Flying Club

The list of PAC member organizations can also be found below.

- Ski Heritage East
- Rockcliffe Yacht Club
- Greenspace Alliance for Canada’s Capital
- Ottawa Riverkeeper
- Ottawa New Edinburgh Club (ONEC)
- Rockcliffe Park Residents’ Association
- New Edinburgh Community Alliance
- Société franco-ontarienne du patrimoine et de l’histoire d’Orléans (SFOPHO)
- Manor Park Community Association
- Rothwell Heights Property Owners Association

The public consultation was promoted through a paid digital advertising campaign. Printed posters advertising public engagement activities were placed in key high-traffic areas in Ottawa utilizing a targeted outreach approach for diverse populations. An email invitation to participate in the public consultation was sent to the NCC’s public engagement newsletter subscriber list. A similar invitation was also sent to a targeted list of stakeholders.

### Dates and times

**Community Open House**  
February 15, 2023, 3 pm to 7:30 pm  
Richelieu-Vanier Community Centre, 300  
Des Pères-Blancs Avenue  
K1L 7L5

**Public Advisory Committee Meeting**  
December 5, 2022, 8 pm to 9:30 pm  
NCC Headquarters, 40 Elgin Street,  
K1P 1C7

**Online Public Consultation**  
January 24, 2023, to February 20, 2023  
Via PlaceSpeak

**Technical Advisory Committee Meeting**  
December 7, 2022, 11 am to 12:30 pm  
NCC Headquarters, 40 Elgin Street,  
K1P 1C7

## Engagement highlights: Sector A

Most comments on sector A focused on validating the proposed amenities and activities suggested for the area, the significance of the natural environment, opportunities for improving transportation connectivity, building on the existing infrastructure, and honouring the heritage of the park. Detailed comments are outlined below.

### Activities and amenities

#### What we heard

Public engagement participants maintained that the types of amenities and activities offered should not compromise the environmental health of the area.

- The most popular examples of recreational activities include cycling, walking, tennis, rowing, sailing, kayaking, swimming in summer and cross-country skiing and skating (216 mentions).
- Some asked that four-season activities be offered, creating a destination where residents and visitors can thrive and enjoy the summer and winter season.

While many were in favour of offering a variety of swimming options (65 mentions) whether in river swimming or a built-in swimming pool, others raised concerns over the safety and the cleanliness of the swimming areas.

The proposal for an entertainment facility was received with mixed reviews. Over 30% of commentors who mentioned these facilities were critical of the suggestion. Others looked more favourably upon recreational facilities in comparison. A few appreciated the idea of a cultural facilities if adequate programming was offered.

Survey respondents aged 55 and older were more likely to note that additional facilities were needed in the area such as washrooms and seating. They highlighted that these items could support older and younger users who need rest stops (28 mentions).

### Proposed changes

Several respondents were hesitant towards proposals for change, 14% of respondents mentioned that the study area should not be developed and, instead, the current conditions ought to be preserved. For those who were in favour of the proposed activities and amenities, they had asked the project team to consider making the following adjustments.

- Ensure that facilities structures are outdoor, and not indoor focused.
- Build facility spaces that offer multiple uses (e.g. residential, commercial, cultural).
- Identify opportunities for public storage of boats.

The comments raised about offering additional facilities or activities were often accompanied by requests for improved public access (45 mentions). Some noted that there is currently limited access to the river for boating activities (e.g. canoeing, paddle-boat, kayak and rowing or sailing activities).

### Environmental protections

#### What we heard

Many survey respondents stressed the importance of keeping the area as natural as possible (199 mentions). They reiterated that proposed changes must consider the environmental impacts and seek mitigation measures to minimize these impacts when possible.

- Some asked if the proposed activities would require tree cutting. If so, they recommended against them, noting that trees provide valuable shade to the wildlife who reside in the area (39 mentions).
- Moreover, they mentioned that any development must respect the biologically diverse ecosystems that offer crucial habitats for native plants and wildlife, specifically, for areas near the Ottawa River.

A few raised concerns over public access resulting in heightened risk of pollution in the area due to garbage.

### Proposed changes

Respondents suggested the plan be scaled down to support wildlife and promote the experience of “being in nature.” Many maintained that keeping the land as natural as possible enables users enjoy the space in an environmentally responsible way.

Some respondents recognized aspirations to animate the area; however, they requested the project team be mindful not to overdevelop (49 mentions).

A few suggestions were made asking for the inclusion of a reforestation plan to compensate for any trees which might be damaged or removed as part of the park development.

- Moreover, there should be efforts to plant native species and pollinator gardens, with signage for the public to learn about the local ecology.

## Transportation and connectivity

### What we heard

Many respondents note that public transportation into this area is insufficient, presenting a significant barrier for park visitors who do not have access to a car (61 mentions).

Many noted that improvements to cycling infrastructure should be made to encourage people to cycle to the site and while they are in the park (71 mentions).

- Many advocated for separated walking, cycling and skiing trails in an effort to avoid collisions and promote safety.

Participants had diverse views about allowing both car-based transportation and active transportation. While several respondents disagreed with car use in the area, others were more favourable about car use for greater access to the site.

- They noted that access must be provided to people with disabilities and maintained that it is not equitable to assume active transportation is available to all citizens.

### Proposed changes

Improve pedestrian and cycling connectivity with other trail networks.

Rehabilitate the informal, user-created trails in the woods bordering the river and connect to other trails to provide a multi-use, experience-supporting trail used for hiking, running, mountain biking, snowshoeing, skiing, and fat biking in winter.

- Follow the examples of trail management in Gatineau Park.

Consider implementing traffic and parking mitigation measures to better manage heavy traffic and lack of parking.

Support improved access and accessibility for diverse park users. The site should be inclusive for all users (i.e. all ages, lower incomes families, people who do not own or drive cars, people with limited mobility, safety concerns for women at night, etc.).

Develop an integrated public transit plan to reduce the dependency on cars and increase public access.

Discourage speeding along the riverside trail and consider enforcement measures for those who ignore the 20 km speed limits.

## Existing infrastructure

### What we heard

Over 5% of survey respondents mentioned the Ottawa New Edinburgh Club (ONEC), most often in a favourable context. In light of the proposal for additional facilities, respondents emphasized the importance of supporting ONEC, an existing community sports centre with 140 years of history in this area.

- Some of the highlighted activities offered through ONEC facilities include tennis, sailing, rowing and paddling. It was highlighted that ONEC offers activities suitable for all ages, including children, with its summer camp program.
- However, a few raised concerns over the promotion of private space, as that may limit access for those who cannot afford membership to the club.

Some identified the boathouse as a site where people could have access to the Ottawa River for sailing, paddling and rowing, as well as social events.

A few also identified existing sports facilities in the area that need support (e.g. Hillside soccer fields), rather than building new facilities.

### Proposed changes

- Incorporate existing ONEC facilities in the park plan.
- Optimize the boathouse for public use, and improve water access for all users, specifically as it relates to the new NCC River House.
- Leverage some of the existing parking lots along the parkway and create a node with a view of the river as you visit facilities.
- Continue to have dock space for smaller vessels for large sail boats.

## Cultural heritage

### What we heard

Some respondents noted that there are opportunities to highlight the history of First Nations communities. Some noted the appeal of an Indigenous cultural centre (19 mentions).

Some respondents recommended highlighting the area's unique cultural heritage and archeology. This could be completed by using signage, adding informative signs or plaques, or developing QR codes for a website or video people can scan.

Several Indigenous respondents requested dedicating a space for healing, reconciliation, youth programming, traditional knowledge exchanges, and convening for Indigenous organizations and governments.

### Proposed changes

Offer a place for Indigenous fire circles and gatherings. since there is a lack of Indigenous ceremonial spaces. When initiating Indigenous engagement, seek to obtain feedback from all Indigenous communities in the region.

A few hoped to see a greater strategic effort to connect urban Indigenous peoples to the waterfront.

Commit to stronger engagement with Algonquin communities and integration of decolonial planning and considerations towards diversity, equity and inclusion.

Restore the Indigenous portage at Portage Bay. Waymark the Portage Bay trail.

Work with the Chief Pinesi Portage project in partnership with Pikwàkanagàn, in the reconciliation effort to recognize that this park is on unceded Algonquin territory.

Improve access to the site for Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC), and lower-income communities.

- Consider what can be done to reconcile this in the physical design of this park.

## Feedback to responses

We met with the chief and council of the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn and with the chief and representatives of Kitigan Zibi. We look forward to continuing our discussions with them. With their input and support, we will learn more about the area's traditional and cultural history.

A cultural landscape study was completed as part of the background information for the plan. The study recommends that the plan acknowledge and consider the relationships between and among these landscapes, and identify opportunities to enhance them while planning for future infrastructure and other park development. These recommendations will be integrated into the plan.

## Engagement highlights: Sector B

Most comments on sector B focused on validating the proposed amenities and activities suggested for the area, as well as boating and water-based activities. Detailed comments are outlined below.

### Activities and amenities

#### What we heard

Many respondents requested more public facilities in this area, striking a balance between public and private spaces, and that the team should consider improving access to facilities in the area to the general public (151 mentions). The desire to offer a family-friendly environment to the public was highlighted by several respondents (31 mentions).

Some respondents requested more washrooms and additional benches, especially near the Blair Road boat launch (52 mentions).

Some noted that parking is insufficient and results in significant congestion during the summer period. A few respondents proposed that the team reconfigure existing parking lots rather than create new spaces.

There were mixed views about buildings that offer food and beverages to the public. Some were interested in how offering food and drink could result in greater public enjoyment, while others reiterated concerns about over-development.

A greater number of respondents were interested in the proposal for entertainment facilities in sector B (56 favourable mentions) when compared to sector A (39 favourable mentions).

### Proposed changes

Reconsider creating private spaces with public lands, as this takes place at the expense of open public access.

Offer multiple transportation connections to the park and recreational spaces.

Consider developing recreational spaces near restaurants to create a destination that would attract tourism and visitors.

## Boating and water activities

### What we heard

Some respondents felt that the Blair Road boat launch is a great area, but greater consideration should be placed on how to improve water access for users of all ages, specifically young children (79 mentions).

Moreover, a few respondents expressed interests over a kayak and canoe launch at Blair Road. Many noted opportunities for non-motorized boat rentals and docks.

- Concerns were frequently raised over limited or restricted water access for boating and other water-related activities and facilities (39 mentions). These activities include speeding by recreational motorized boats on the river. This was related to safety concerns in situations where paddlers and rowers are competing with motorized boats for space on the river.
- Some respondents raised concerns about the safety and noise of motorized boats, while a few maintained that motorized boat use should still be considered.
- A few highlighted that there was not much being offered to the non-boating public in node 1.

## Proposed changes

Ensure that the contributions of ONEC are emphasized alongside the Rockcliffe Yacht Club as a watersport facility in the area (25 mentions).

Since the Blair Road boat launch is already at capacity, offer more canoe and kayak launches along the river.

Segregate use of motorized boats with non-motorized boats in the river due to safety concerns.

Recognize that most water-based activities are often not inclusive; offer additional activities for the variety of individuals who will be using the space, including those who cannot afford a boat.

## Feedback to responses

Public facilities are proposed throughout the park. Some, like toilets and food and beverage outlets, are appropriate at nodes and others, like benches, are appropriate throughout the park.

One of the primary aims of the park plan is to improve public access to the shoreline. To that end, node design looks at ways to enhance the public experience. This includes a potential re-design of the lands surrounding the Rockcliffe Yacht Club. The plan considers a plaza so that people not on a boat can enjoy watching the boating activities and the beauty of the riverscape. It also proposes blending public and private facilities, and expanding the docking facilities for non-motorized boats and other water vessels. It is expected that this enhanced provision of docking facilities will result in safer water vessel access at the Rockcliffe Yacht Club node and at the Blair Road boat launch.

## Engagement highlights: Sector C

Most comments in sector C focused on validating the proposed amenities and activities suggested for the area, considerations towards the area's environmental and cultural significance, and improved transportation and connectivity. Detailed comments are outlined below.

### Activities and animation

#### What we heard

Currently, there is a lack of animation and activities in this sector, which does not attract the wider public. Create a focal point as a gateway into the park. Make the park a regular destination for families with children.

Many respondents mentioned their interest in cross-country skiing in this area. They suggested developing a space where people could rent ski equipment.

Overall, there was a deep appreciation for the activities and amenities proposed in this area. Over 79% of respondents felt that the proposed activities for this sector accurately captured their aspirations, as they did not have additional changes to recommend beyond those proposed by the project team. This figure is 14% higher than that of sector B and 18% higher than sentiments expressed about sector A.

Similar to the comments raised about the previous nodes, members of the public emphasized the importance of offering more public washrooms and seating for users.

A few comments were raised about insufficient parking in the area.

Most felt that this sector offered the greatest views of the Ottawa River from the parkway and hoped the project team could leverage this opportunity to improve these views and ensure

access for all visitors. Respondents emphasized the importance of encouraging public access to park amenities for all users during each season (125 mentions).

### Proposed changes

- Increase public access to activities and amenities for a variety of users.
- Take a creative and innovative approach to draw more people into the areas and encourage greater community activity.
- Offer winter maintenance and clearing of the area to support cross-country skiing and other winter activities.
- Explore other forms of transportation links to facilitate other types of winter activity uses (e.g. skiing, snowshoeing).

### Environmental and cultural significance

#### What we heard

Most respondents highlighted the NCC's responsibility to protect and minimize damage to the environment neighbouring the parkway (110 mentions).

24% of survey respondents felt favourably about the project team's approach in focusing on environmental preservation and educating the public on the environmental and cultural heritage importance of these areas.

Some identified opportunities to utilize signage to educate the wider public on the environmental and cultural significance of specific areas, such as Green's Creek.

- A few mentioned that signage may also be helpful in ensuring safe use of the areas, as there is a high presence of poison ivy and wild parsnip.
- Some felt that the current signage is outdated and suggested geo-tracking opportunities that could preserve nature,

modernize information sharing and improve accessibility by offering different formats to users (i.e. audio, visual and physical signs).

Many respondents were curious about the plans outlined for Lower Duck Island.

## Proposed changes

Revisit ideas for access to Lower Duck Island by the public so that it can serve as reserve for wildlife within the urban boundary.

Consider how improved access to ecologically sensitive spaces could prevent others from enjoying the space in the future, including the viewing of wildlife, which would have added stress placed on the lands because of the proposed modifications.

Make a clearer distinction in the plans between each node. In sector C, some respondents felt node 1 was better suited to focus on culture, while node 3 should centre its focus on ecosystem, habitats or connections to nature.

Clarify how Lower Duck Island is being animated in this node.

- Consider creating a space where the Island can be viewed from shore, without requiring access to the Island.
- Consider the fragility of the Island ecosystem when developing in the area.

## Transportation and connectivity

### What we heard

Many expressed their concerns over insufficient public access (196 mentions) to sites in the sector, such the lower pathway.

Many respondents mentioned the lack of sufficient infrastructure for active mobility use. The park provides space for active mobility. However, many noted that the current pathways

fail to provide adequate room for both cyclists and pedestrians (99 mentions).

Most felt that the cycling pathways on the parkway could be improved by paving and expanding pathways and trails for better cycling use.

- This approach could also make the park more accessible for children looking to cycle in the area, or for those who may move at a slower pace.

Some respondents desired better integrating with existing transportation links, such as the LRT/O-Train public transportation routes (20 mentions).

A few respondents raised concerns over heightened car traffic occurring due to increased animation and activity offered on the site, building upon existing challenges.

## Proposed changes

- Create segregated pathways to promote pedestrian safety amidst cyclist speeding.
- Improve cycling infrastructure by paving road shoulders for cyclists.
- Increase access to the lower pathway and better integrate existing pathways.
- Add trails for mountain biking in the forested area around Green's Creek.
- Increase access and connectivity to existing transportation routes such as the LRT.

## Feedback to responses

It is an objective to improve four-season use of the park. Connections to existing cross-country ski trails and proposed new trails are being examined. An example of this is a proposed connection over Green's Creek. Providing a trail and pedestrian bridge over Green's Creek is a priority within this sector, whether it be here or

further north, closer to the mouth of Green's Creek in node C3.

Supporting facilities like warming huts are being considered in node design.

We are proposing an enhancement of the existing lookout at Green's Creek to make the site more accessible and to enhance the experience of this beautiful location. We are also proposing more viewpoints from the river in sector C towards Lower Duck Island. This will allow people to view this amazing environmental area without negatively impacting it through physical intrusion.

We have completed a transportation study that looks at opportunities to introduce traffic-calming measures along the parkway and to provide safe pedestrian crossings. Opportunities to enhance the cycling infrastructure are also identified. The recommendations of the transportation study will be integrated into the plan's strategies and policies.

ongoing basis during and between formal rounds of public consultation.

## Next steps

Following this second round of consultation, the project team has begun work on the next steps to develop the plan, which focuses on the vision statement, the guiding concepts and goals of the park plan. Once these elements are developed, the team will draft policies and finalize sector plans.

The next round of public consultation (round 3) is expected to take place in fall 2023. This will be an opportunity for the public and stakeholders to provide their input on the policies and sector plans. The project team will continue to engage with stakeholders on an

# Appendix A — Online questionnaire

## Demographic data

As part of the analysis of survey responses, we have applied analytical frameworks, like Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus), to help us better understand how the park plan might impact diverse communities, as well as find solutions to address any differential impacts that may result from the planning of this project. Below, we have provided a breakdown of the demographic composition of our engagement participants.

### Age

- 1% age 18-24
- 9% age 25-34
- 16% age 35-44
- 20% age 45-54
- 23% age 55-64
- 17% age 65-74
- 5% age 75-84
- 9% Prefer not to say

### Gender

- 52% Identify as men
- 46% Identify as women

### Race/Ethnicity

- 8% Identify as visible minorities
- Most common races/ethnicities
- East Asian
  - Black
  - South Asian

### Indigenous Identity

- 2% Identify as an Indigenous person

### Disability

- 7% Identify as people with disabilities

Most common disabilities among respondents

- Mobility
- Pain-related
- Flexibility

## Appendix B: Consultation map

Respondents were asked to pin their comments on a map of the Sir George-Étienne Cartier Park and let the project team know which amenities and activities they would like to see in the space and propose changes to the existing infrastructure. There were a total of 153 comments placed on the online interactive map. Image 1 below provides a reference for where respondents concentrated their feedback.

Engagement participants also had the opportunity to post their comments in person on a map of the study area (image 2). There were 43 map comments posted during the community open house. All comments have been integrated in the report.

### Image 1: Placeit Map



# Appendix C: Open-house participation

