

December 9,

Good evening Mayor Jackson, Chair, Members of Council, staff and citizens of Burlington,

On behalf of the BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association, I thank you for this opportunity to briefly comment on the staff report regarding the approval of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Assets Master Plan (PR-57-09).

As the Plan if adopted is to support a strategic framework to guide planning and capital budgeting of parks, facilities and services for the next 20 years, much of which will take place on our city's open spaces and parklands, BurlingtonGreen believes it appropriate to offer comment on this very important topic with long term implications.

To begin, I would like to say that I was surprised not to see the City's environmental staff included on the Steering Committee guiding this strategic vision for the city. I do not see them or the SDC on the consult list either and have inquired with a few staff and it appears they were not consulted. My apologies if they were and I am incorrect with this estimation but if in fact they were not, I would ask why not? Burlington has a lot to be proud of when it comes to park and rec opportunities and the 20 year vision needs to work in tandem with supporting sustainable practices.

The design and use of this City's parklands is (or should be) directly linked to the city's guiding sustainability principles to ensure consistency with policy & practice.

We were pleased to see inclusion of "Parks, recreation and cultural services have the capacity to influence change in attitudes and heighten the public's awareness, appreciation and interaction with the environment" etc. We are "fuzzy" on how they will be integrated into the plan more specifically and if green space in general is intended to be captured in this plan or in another proposed report?

When the report states "It also confirms that Burlington is sufficiently served in terms of parkland supply overall, however recommends strategies for securing additional parklands in neighbourhoods that may be facing land use redevelopment and intensification." Does this mean that there is sufficiently city owned supply of parkland or does this reference include school board owned, RBG, Bronte Creek park etc?

Additionally, when it states "Work with the local school boards to increase accessibility to and the playability of school sports fields as a means to enhance both recreational and competitive levels as a strategy to enhance capacity as new park opportunities potential diminish due to build-out" seems to suggest otherwise." Is the position of staff then that this city's park & rec needs can be adequately met with current supply without these assets? Again, this clarity would be most helpful especially as future issues of at risk lands arise – do we need them or not?

Also, not sure if the steering committee efforts included review of other municipal park master plans to strive to import some of the best practices while customizing the one for Burlington? Was this done and if so I draw your attention to the plan prepared by the City of Ottawa a few years ago titled "Greenspace Master Plan – Strategies for Ottawa's Urban Greenspaces". It contains some excellent visionary thinking together with practical application based on established values and objectives the city has determined based on consultation with their citizens.

For example, they have inventoried AND mapped all the city's green spaces/parklands regardless of who owns them and ranked as "primary", and "Supporting" & "Contributing" to produce a more complete picture of the overall landscape. They looked at distribution, equity and accessibility to greenspace within communities. This is important when developing a long-term vision with proactive plans.

Complete mapping and inventory of Burlington's inventory of ALL green spaces together with a strategic plan to acquire any that are deemed beneficial in the support of the city's goals and objectives to create a sustainable future are a must...otherwise there may be missed opportunities or decisions made on a short term basis by future councils without this established framework.

Unless I missed it, the staff report did not provide a comprehensive plan for how parks will be designed in the future with sustainable practices including not only the environmental benefits but economic & social ones too. BurlingtonGreen supports a plan whereby a balance of conventional and naturalization design principles are employed. Creating more or enhancing current parks to be more multipurpose (where sport can meet nature for example), plantings with native species and naturalization zones extended to support wildlife linkages etc. There is documentation to support the long-term financial benefits of naturalization of park areas where appropriate vs conventional (manicured cut areas) – it can have significant savings and this should be conveyed in the report as well as part of the “master plan costs” charting that is included.

Mention of how our parklands can be considered to be valued environmental assets in offsetting Co2 absorption, reducing heat build-up, soil erosion, water quality advantages and more should all be part of the supporting documentation so that the 20 year vision captures not only sport and rec opportunities and benefits but also the less obvious, but hugely important benefits of parkland supply in Burlington.

I have made a copy of the Ottawa green space Master plan for your review.
http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/planning/master_plans/gmp/index_en.html

A look at their key index I suggest can be a valuable exercise when looking at and ultimately endorsing Burlington's master plan. Perhaps there is a plan to have a separate supporting document dedicated to greenspace to support this proposed parks master plan? If not, I would suggest that before you move forward to endorse this far reaching proposed master plan that you if it fully supports a sustainable framework for planning purposes? Afterall, when dealing with parks and open space, there is a limited opportunity to go back and change parkland supply needs. Hard pressed to find examples of where development was returned to its' former glory as nature or parkland or open space.

So....when looking at this proposed master plan for parks & rec.....
Does it identify what the objectives are for Burlington's greenspace and parklands?
Does it include a complete inventory of all city greenspace/parklands regardless of who owns them?
Does it provide a network of how our natural areas are or could be connected?
What does “adequate” parkland mean exactly? Does this include greenspace?
What about accessibility, quality, connected and sustainable greenspace?
What are the range of policies and securement tools to support Burlington's vision for parkland and greenspace supply?

Finally, Ottawa's 2020 plan highlights *“there is a shift towards larger parks that can accommodate a variety of recreational activities and a move away from the provision of a range of open space opportunities within communities. The former is a more economic approach to providing recreational opportunities but works against access and engagement at the local level”* Does the vision for Burlington's parkland future take this into account and plan based on sustainable principles?

The city has valuable staff expertise in the area of planning for a sustainable future based on environmental principles. Burlingtongreen suggests if not done so already, that Council encourage their inclusion in matters such as the very important guiding framework for the future of Burlington's parks, rec and cultural master plan.

Thank you for your attention.
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