



Parks Committee

June 30, 2021

Mayor Jim Watson
City of Ottawa

Councillor Shawn Menard
Capital Ward

 
Dear Mayor Watson and Councillor Menard:

As we approach Canada Day 2021, an opportunity presents itself this summer in Capital Ward for the Algonquin people, our Inuit and Métis populations, the City of Ottawa, and the Glebe community to move forward together on a small but meaningful project towards two very significant goals for our country and the world: Reconciliation and remediating climate change.

Thanks to the great work of Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department staff (in particular, Planner/Project Manager Louise Cerveny), the city is almost ready to break ground on the planned parkette at the corner of Fifth and 635 O'Connor (next to Fire Station Number 12). The design, including the idea that this be a park centred on the needs of senior citizens, takes into account ideas articulated by the committee and the community at various opportunities over the years since 2013 when the park was first proposed by the Committee and members of the community. This project was initiated before the City committed to its City of Ottawa Reconciliation Action Plan, a 2018 decision under your leadership we salute, and address further below.

As you know, in 2014, you and the then-councillor for Capital Ward endorsed a GCA (Glebe Community Association) proposal to establish the new park, and its zoning was changed on August 24, 2015 to parkland. A capital assets budget of \$90,000 (now \$100,000) from Cash in Lieu of Parkland ward funds was announced in 2017. Councillor Menard has since directed additional funds towards the project, and the community is in the process of raising more funds through the City's Major and Minor Community Capital Grant programme. After a final public consultation meeting last week, the city and councillor's office has asked for comments from the community on its proposed design for the park by July 7:

On behalf of the Glebe Community Association's Parks Committee, I thank the Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department staff, and applaud you and Councillor Menard for all of your efforts to bring this project to this stage -- making this small initiative a reality in a downtown neighborhood where land for new parks and other greenspace is scarce.

We also applaud the City, under your leadership, for its commitment to helping Canada reach its collective goal of becoming Carbon Neutral by 2050, in part by applying a climate lens to asset management and capital projects. Given his strong stance on meeting the 2050 target, we know that Councillor Menard supports you in the city's continuing efforts in this regard.

Our recommendation as part of our feedback on the City's design plan for this parkette is twofold:

- Use this 2021 park design and build as a showcase of the city's commitment to reaching its 2050 carbon zero goals:
 - notwithstanding the limited budget for this relatively small project, set aside as much funding for the park as possible, including the Major and Minor Community Capital Grant programme funding that the community proposes to raise, in a 2050 Legacy Fund committed entirely to the design, maintenance, and plantlife of the park consistent with our aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2050. This move could be made in anticipation that soil remediation necessary to avoid, as much as possible, "capping" issues, and materials used for the park such as environmentally friendly cement/cement alternatives now and into the future, may result in larger than normal expenses and maintenance issues over time -- perhaps the price we ultimately must pay to meet our 2050 goals, even if it were, under different circumstances, at the expense of higher priced amenities such as the proposed pergola;
 - the committee, however, is in this case supportive of the pergola, and appreciative of Councillor Menard's addition of funds to cover this, among other costs. This amenity is consistent with meeting the need for added shade while the park's new and existing trees grow. Our support comes with a caveat which relates to a careful balance we think needs to be struck on this and other projects moving forward:
 - as we continue to design for such amenities in our municipal projects, we should at least consider their true costs to the environment, publicly incentivize best practices for companies stepping up in this regard, and incorporate these into our budgeting and tendering process. What better opportunity to attempt such an approach than with a small city parkette where costs may not be as prohibitive due to its smaller scale? For example:
 - the cement necessary to support such amenities structurally, needs to be priced vis-a-vis our 2050 goals:
 - for hard surfaces required, mandate as part of the tendering process the sourcing of alternatives to cement (or cement produced in a recognizably, more environmentally friendly process) - a meaningful production point in 2021 that could be highlighted with signage: more costly zero-carbon cement (cement certified as having been created using a clean, decarbonized, electrified approach, carbon capture, and/ or recycled carbon dioxide injected back into the cement, etc.; produced using cleanly generated and stored electricity in the manufacturing process; and/or recycled, repurposed cement; or cross-laminated wood);

- soil remediation to the point where "capping" using asphalt for paths rather than crushed stone paths firm enough for a wheelchair and levelled porous pavers as pads for other amenities, all diligently maintained, is no longer required. We acknowledge that a firm commitment to complete remediation of contaminated sites upon which parks are built (which would eliminate such "capping" concerns, allow for the use of more environmentally-friendly surface materials, and facilitate the addition of more, natural greening and clean organic material) needs to be balanced with the energy and landfill space required for removal (as opposed to capping the contaminated material below a certain point with geotextile).
- increased plant life and anticipated plantlife maintenance built into the design and costs (our recommendations in the past, some of which are incorporated in the final design, have included flowering trees - providing shade - low/dwarf flowering shrubs, raised planters for gardens and flowers, low raised flower beds, and conifers to provide bird habitat).
- Recognizing, as stated earlier, that this project has been moving forward since 2013 before the City committed to its City of Ottawa Reconciliation Action Plan, acknowledge now the people upon whose unceded, unsundered Algonquin Anishinaabe Territory this park is being built, and its purpose, by involving our First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners in the naming of the park, and, moving forward, in the spirit of environmental stewardship proposed above. For example, but by no means meant to preclude meaningful exploration of this idea fully in tandem with our First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners:
 - a naming idea that has found a consensus on our committee is that we acknowledge and celebrate our Seniors (for whom the park is particularly designed) and the unceded, unsundered Algonquin Anishinaabe Territory on which this future park is being designed, with a name that connects park visitors with the idea of the Grandfather Teaching of Respect, and in particular, that for our elders. This will of course require further exploration and expresses a community desire here in the Glebe that we partner with the Algonquin Anishinaabe people, and our Inuit and Métis populations, in a vision for the park. Kitizìg is a word in Algonquin, for example, that expresses the idea of elders in plural, but is only a preliminary thought that will require much more consultation. As another example, an Inuit word with a similar meaning could be coupled in addition. We hope that this is an idea in principle that might be explored this summer and fall through your offices and the City of Ottawa's Aboriginal Working Committee.

Finally, we recommend signage briefly highlighting, as a learning opportunity for park users, the park's name and modest 2021 aspirational design features in light of our 2050 and Reconciliation goals.

We see this small but meaningful project as a wonderful opportunity for the city's Aboriginal Working Committee, the Office of the Mayor, the Office of the Capital Ward Councillor, the Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department, and City staff tasked with implementing the Climate Change Master Plan to work together towards two of our city's most significant goals; a wonderful tribute we could make to, and legacy we could leave for, the Algonquin peoples on whose land we reside, our Inuit and Métis populations, our senior citizens, and our Earth.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angus McCabe', written in a cursive style.

Angus McCabe
Chair
GCA Parks Committee

cc:

Allison Fisher, Co-Chair, Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (and Co-Chair of the City of Ottawa Aboriginal Working Committee)

Mikki Adams, Co-Chair, Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (and Co-Chair of the City of Ottawa Aboriginal Working Committee)

Donna Gray, General Manager, Community and Social Services, City of Ottawa (and Co-Chair of the City of Ottawa Aboriginal Working Committee)

Dan Chenier, General Manager, Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department

Louise Cerveny, Planner/Project Manager, Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department

Laura Smith, President, Glebe Community Association