

Oct. 23, 2024

Good evening Mayor Nuttall, Council Members and staff.

I am here this evening on behalf of the Southshore Nature Park Task Force, a collection of individuals who are concerned about the future of Allandale Station Park. This collective was assembled shortly after Marshall Green and Bill Scott released their report "The Southshore, Barrie Sports and a Revitalized Downtown", and is made up of representatives from First Nations, various environmental groups, scientists, an ecologist and planners. Mr. Green and Mr. Scott are resource advisors to the Task Force.

The Task Force acknowledges and is very pleased that Council accepted the recommendations in the aforementioned report to build a multi-use sports field at another location. However, an amendment that was put forth on Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> has raised some concerns. It reads in part:

4. That Development Services staff prepare a design concept to locate a passive park east of the Allandale Train Station (\*Allandale Station Park) to include a **minimum** of 2 acres of grass cut area, to allow for overflow parking for historical events that will occur on the property and accessible walkways through the naturalized area and report back to General Committee with the concept and costing.

The Task Force prefers that this area be kept natural and not mowed other than for pedestrian traffic. The City's Waterfront Strategic Plan 2023 deems this area for "eco-education", "naturalization" and "restoring the meadow to a dedicated oak savanna". Mowing reduces the usable land for such purposes. Society has learned that because something was always done, does not mean it was always the right thing to do. A Task Force member, an ecologist, pointed out that the soil in the tree root zones can be compacted by vehicles and machinery, especially if the soil is wet or saturated. Mowing this area also affects resident and migrating ground nesting birds and many birds' food source.

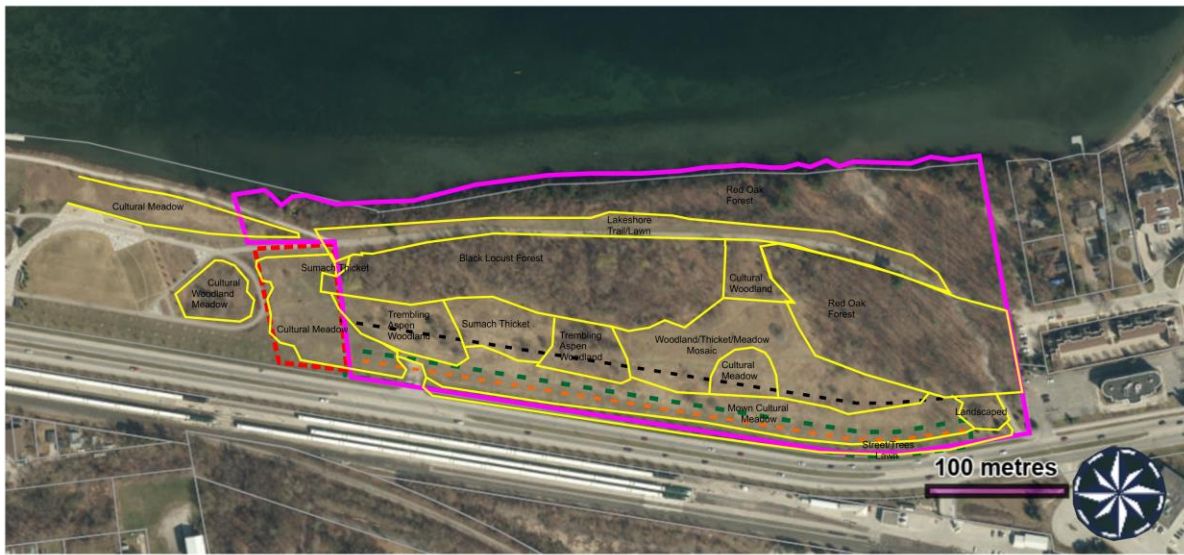
Recognizing Council has accepted the recommendations of the report, the Task Force in a show of good faith would agree to some mowing for overflow parking, but not to the extent of the amendment of a minimum 2 acres. Bill Scott and myself measured Allandale Station Park. The current mowed area along Lakeshore is a strip of 11m x 230m, or 36ft x 755ft, .610 of an acre. For last year's Kempenfest, the area mowed was approximately 1.5 acres with a significant space between 2 rows of vehicles. It also cut an additional 18m into the Cultural Meadow. A MINIMUM 2 acre cut would require a cut 36m x 230m, or 118ft into all of Allandale Station Park, removing vegetation including the Sumacs and the Trembling Aspen Woodland. Included is Mr. Scott's map, along with photos including last year's Kempenfest.

In summary, the Task Force prefers that the area be left as is, with shuttle services, increased transit and permit signs covered over along Lakeshore to encourage on street parking for events. In lieu of that, we would ask that the **maximum** mowing cut stay at the current mowed area of 11m or .610 of an acre for parking and pedestrian traffic. Also submitted is a Discussion Paper that the Task Force has been working on since August, and our vision of a naturalized yet vibrant Allandale Station Park. We, along with volunteers and Community groups, are here ready and willing to help develop this vital piece of Barrie's Waterfront for residents and visitors alike. We are confident that City staff, with their own expertise will undertake this project with many of the recommendations we made and come back with great options. We also look forward to a comprehensive public feedback process on the design and implementation of this. Thank you for listening.

Arnie Ivsins, Respectfully, submitted on behalf of the Southshore Nature Park Task Force



## Proposed Nature Park with Play and Reserved Areas



- Outline of Proposed Nature Park (About 20 Acres)
- - - - - Outline of Possible Play Area (About 1.1 Acres)
- - - - - Extent of Current Mowing (11 metres deep)
- - - - - Extent of One-Acre Reserved Strip along Lakeshore (18 metres deep)
- - - - - Extent of Two-Acre Reserved Strip along Lakeshore (36 metres deep)
- Outline of Ecological Land Classifications



**South Shore  
Nature Park  
Task Force**  
October 20, 2024

# **(Draft) Discussion Paper**

For Allandale Station Park

# 1. Introduction

As a Task Force of volunteers, we welcome you to a conversation about the future of Allandale Station Park, a gateway to Barrie's Waterfront Heritage Trail. With minor changes, the Park could become a unique Nature Park, a place of education, conservation, recreation and local economic development. It could also offer opportunities for reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

We thank City Council for your support of the Marshall Green report and look forward to working collaboratively with City Council and staff. The (Draft) DISCUSSION PAPER has two parts.

The **SUMMARY REPORT** includes:

- City of Barrie Land Acknowledgement (p.2)
- S.1 Appreciations (p. 2)
- S.2 The South Shore Nature Park Task Force (p. 2-3)
- S.3 A Vision for the Forest and Meadow (p. 3-4)
- S.4 Volunteer contributions (p.4-5)
- S.4 Items for Discussion (p. 5-6)
- S.5 *"Proposed Conceptual Site Plan for the Nature Park"* (p. 6)  
*"Proposed Nature Park with Play and Reserved Areas"* (p.7)

The **BACKGROUND REPORT** includes:

- B.1 What residents love about the Park (p. 8-9)
- B.2 Bayside Barrie (2023) The Waterfront Strategic Plan Update ("*WSP*") and Allandale Station Park ("*ASP*") (p.10-12)
- B.3 Official Plan, Zoning and Other Protection Measures (p. 12)
- B.4 Planning the "*Forest*" and "*Meadow*" (p.12-14)
- B.5 Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savanna (14-17)
- B.6 Tourism in Barrie (17-18)
- B.7 What is a "*Nature Park*"? (18-21)

## APPENDIX

- Pollinate Barrie: "*Annotated Resources for Establishing a Tallgrass Prairie/Oak Savanna*" (p.21)
- South Shore Nature Park Task Force members (p. 21)

Cover Photo Credit: Brian Miller, Friends of Allandale Station Park

# Summary Report

## City of Barrie Land Acknowledgement

*The City of Barrie acknowledges the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg people, which include the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Pottawatomi Nations collectively known as the Three Fires Confederacy. We also acknowledge the Wendat Nation (Huron) who occupied these lands prior to the middle of the 17th century.*

*We are dedicated to honouring Indigenous history and culture and recognize the enduring presence of Indigenous peoples on this land. We are committed to moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation and respect with all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit People.*

## S.1 Appreciations

We extend our thanks to:

- **Mayor Alex Nuttall and City Council** for listening to residents about Allandale Station Park and for inviting community consultation;
- **Marshall Green and Bill Scott** for their outstanding contributions to the “Southshore, Barrie Sports and a Revitalized Downtown Report” (*The Marshall Green Report*); and,
- **Barrie residents**, who have given their unflagging energy, time and skills over the last decade and longer to keep Allandale Station Park as a natural place on Barrie’s waterfront.

## S.2 South Shore Nature Park Task Force

The South Shore Nature Park Task Force is a team of volunteers, who belong to environmental and community associations, including Indigenous representatives. The team brings together expertise in Indigenous history and culture, ecology, education, horticulture, strategic planning, land use planning, biological inventories, geology, science, sociology, history, marketing and other areas. Members are listed on page 21 of the (Draft) Discussion Paper.

The purpose of the Task Force is to provide information and encourage discussion that leads to protecting and enhancing Allandale Station Park to become a “*Nature Park*,” the only park of its kind in the City. Please see pages 18-21 for a description of the term “*Nature Park*”.

### S.3 A vision for the forest and meadow

We are recommending that the forest area, about two thirds of the 8.1-hectare (20 acre) site with its majestic stands of Red Oak trees, remain in the current, natural, forest state.

The meadow, the remaining third, offers potential for improvements, while maintaining the meadow-like appearance. Invasive plants have reduced the possible diversity of native species in the meadow. Native plants are vital for our wellbeing. For example, native wildflowers attract native honeybees which, in turn, pollinate much of the food we eat.

We are suggesting restoration of the meadow to the ecologically diverse, rare Tallgrass Prairie / Oak Savanna ecosystems that existed in pre-Settler times. The restoration could become an area of natural and scientific interest, and worthy of increased environmental protection measures.



**Oak Woodlands and Oak Savanna in the background with Prairie Tallgrass in the foreground**

*Photo by Larry Lamb in “Restoring Tallgrass Oak Woodlands in Southern Ontario” by Tallgrass Ontario.*

The Nature Park's rare ecosystems and other educational gardens, such as a Pollinator Garden, could inspire Park users to consider ecologically valuable changes to their own front and back yards. An Indigenous garden might also serve as an act of reconciliation and a learning opportunity. We see these changes in the meadow as a “win-win” that offer Nature Park users more to experience, in addition to the sheer enjoyment of the setting.

With their smart phones, users could also have fun and exercise, while utilizing interactive technology with Bluetooth to learn about the Nature Park's features. Indigenous history, including the crucial “*Dish With One Spoon*” peace treaty could be presented. Visitors might also utilize the gamification “*game playing*” platform through Tourism Barrie to discover, identify and learn about the Nature Park's flora and fauna.

From the perspective of tourism and local economic development, the Nature Park would increase the number of tourist attractions on the City's waterfront, along with Centennial Park, the Spirit Catcher and the Flying Monkeys Craft Brewery.

Our vision for the Nature Park conforms to the City's *Waterfront Strategic Plan Update (2023)*.

## S.4 Volunteer contributions

Volunteers have, and will contribute to fundraising, planning, and programming for the Park.

Past efforts include:

- “*Southshore Naturalization Parkland Management Report*” 2019, submitted by Al McNair;
- Design of two concept plans, the “*Proposed Nature Park with Play and Reserved Areas*” by Bill Scott and the “*Proposed Conceptual Site Plan for the Nature Park*” by Ashley Hammell;
- Pollinate Barrie: “*Annotated Resources for Establishing a Tallgrass Prairie/Oak Savanna*” in the Appendix (p. 21);
- “*Some Planning Comments on the Proposed Multi Purpose Sports Field, June 17, 2024*” by Gary Bell, professional land use planner;
- Bird and plant inventories underway by Geri Poisson, professional ecologist, and Phyllis Tremblay, naturalist, in <https://inaturalist.ca/projects/allandale-station-park-biological-inventory>; and,
- Numerous photos by City residents, submitted to Friends of Allandale Station Park Facebook page, some of which are included in this Discussion Paper.

In addition, existing community groups are well-situated to provide educational, recreational and environmental programming in partnership with the City. They can provide planning assistance to ensure an intentional, strategic, and well-executed re-diversification of the park with species historically native to our ecoregion. As well, volunteers can offer:

- Assistance with applications for funding grants, such as the recently announced Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority program for creating prairies and savannas;
- Fundraising initiatives, including service club involvement;
- Talks about Indigenous growing and harvesting of native edible and culturally ceremonial native plants, such as prairie sage and sweetgrass, an important act of reconciliation;
- Guided or digital tours related to the Indigenous history of the area;
- Preparation of the online, outdoor education program;
- Birdwatching tours following the migratory birds that use the site (*in support of our Bird City designation*);
- Sightseeing tours for our native Butterfly, bee and plant species (*in support of our Bee City designation*);
- Native Seed-sharing programs and pollinator/restoration gardening workshops;
- Citizen Science initiatives on urban diversity, such as Monarch Butterfly Waystations and David Suzuki Foundation Butterfly ways; and,
- Potential volunteer-led and expert-led tours within Tourism Barrie's Ambassador Program.

## S.5 Items for discussion

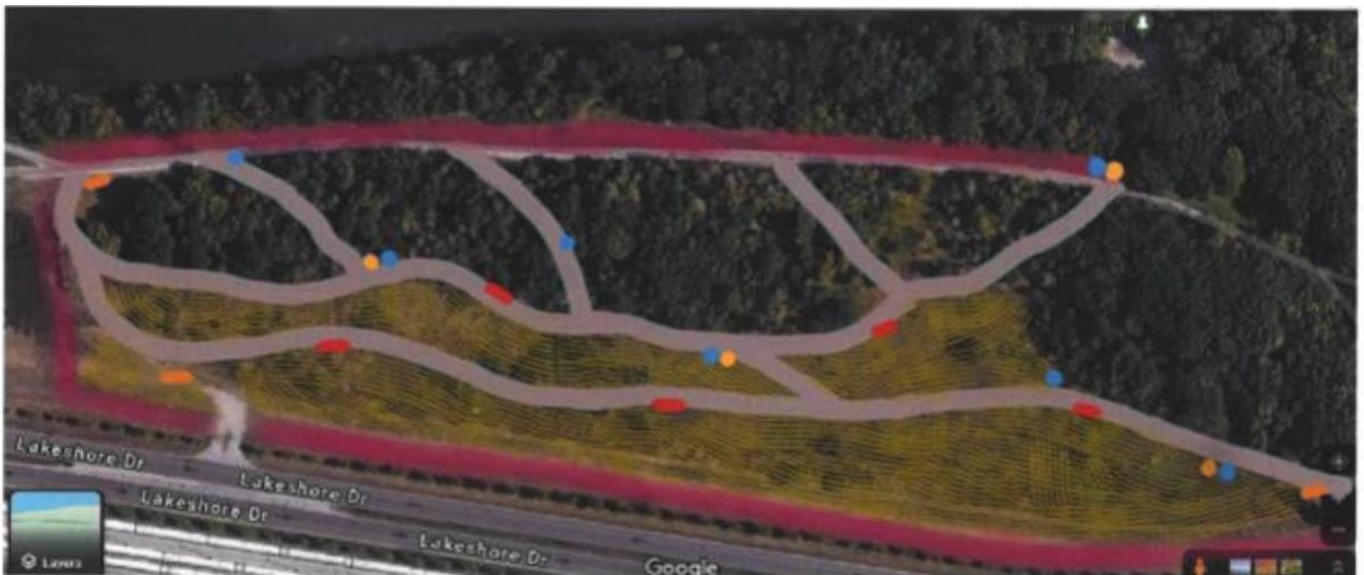
We offer the following items for discussion:

1. Recognize the value of the existing forest and proposed Tallgrass Prairie /Oak Savanna, as a unique Nature Park on the Waterfront Heritage Trail;
2. Increase environmental protection measures for the Park, such as zoning;
3. Revise Barrie's *Waterfront Strategic Plan Update 2023* to rank the Nature Park in the highest priority 2024-2028 category for implementation and, since the Park is not listed as a budget item, update the budget;
4. Change the park name. The *Waterfront Strategic Plan Update 2023* suggests that the possibility of an Indigenous name. In order for an Indigenous name to be gifted by an Elder, a protocol involving a traditional offering of tobacco would need to be followed.
5. Establish a monitoring program to ensure that Nature Park use does not degrade the features that we and wildlife enjoy;
6. Consider works of art by Indigenous artists for the Nature Park;








7. Consider an Indigenous garden and a Pollinator garden;
8. In addition to signage, consider Bluetooth interactive technology and gamification tools for educational purposes;
9. Install pathways in the meadow area that are accessible and composed of permeable materials that soak in run-off;
10. To enhance the natural appearance and identify the Nature Park as a unique part of the Waterfront Heritage Trail, consider benches that have the appearance of sawn logs;
11. The City's *Waterfront Strategic Plan Update 2023* also has suggestions for the park in Appendix C. (See page 11 of this Discussion Paper for Appendix C.)

## S.5 Proposed concept plans for the Nature Park

### Proposed Conceptual Site Plan for the Nature Park\*



Designed by Ashley Hammell

-  Accessible walking path
-  bench
-  educational station: ecology+conservation
-  educational station: First Nations history
-  Welcome signage
-  Tallgrass Prairie or Oak Savanna Native Planting
-  Mowable zone

\* Originally published in the *Marshall Green Report* (p. 13)

## Proposed Nature Park with Play and Reserved Areas



Since the Marshall Green report (p. 5) suggested, but did not recommend, a possible mowed, informal play area for the Park, we have shown a “*Possible Play Area*” on the above plan. Also shown on the plan are the mowing and reserved strips that are currently under consideration for the infrequent, overflow parking for special events on the waterfront.

We note that the City’s *Waterfront Strategic Plan 2023, Appendix C* did not envision overflow parking or a play area for Allandale Station Park . Instead, the Plan talks about “eco-education”, “naturalization” and “restoring the meadow to a dedicated oak savanna” ... the same subjects of this Discussion Paper (*Appendix C is on p.11 of this Paper*).

We question whether the proposed overflow parking and a play area are the highest and best use for this special, waterfront park. The proposals together dramatically reduce the usable land for the rare Tallgrass Prairie/Oak Savanna ecosystems. The parking would only be intermittent, whereas the uses proposed in the City’s *Waterfront Strategic Plan 2023* and this Discussion Paper would give Barrie it’s own new, year-round Nature Park, providing untold value for education, local economic development, recreation, and conservation.

# Background Report

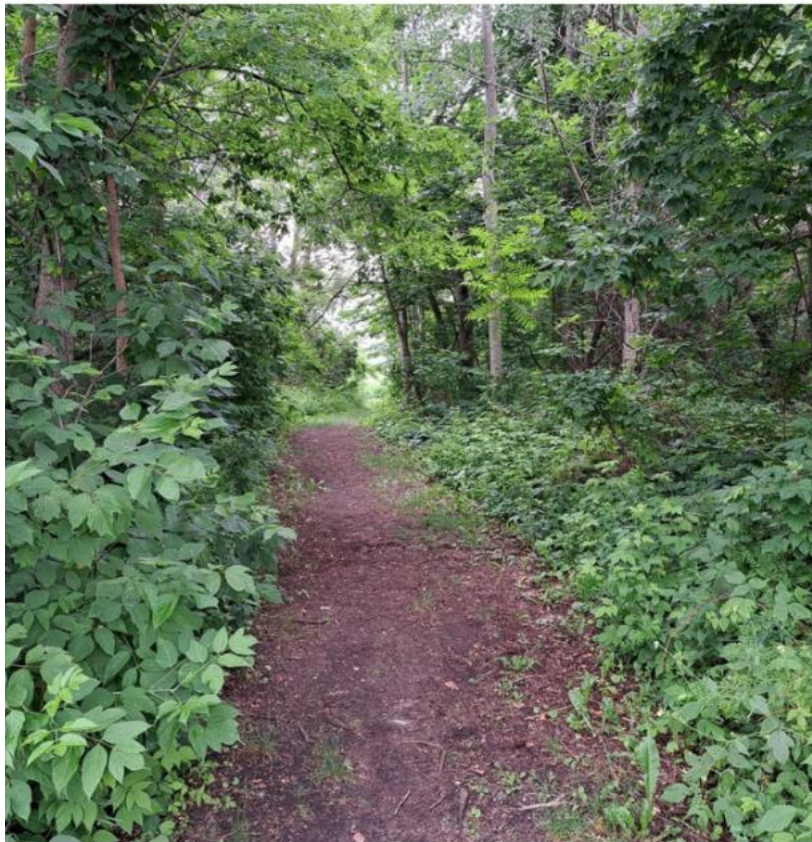
## B.1 What residents love about the Park.

Allandale Station Park is the only place along Barrie's Waterfront Heritage Trail that is NATURAL. Residents visit this natural oasis for relaxation, learning, discovery, solace, and inspiration. They love the diversity in these 20 acres of parkland which offer waterfront, forest, wildflower, wildlife and meadow experiences that change with each season. A resident shared that it is the only location in the City where her son can experience a forest in a wheelchair.

The Park is also a cherished destination for walkers, bikers, birdwatchers, photographers and artists. Here are just a few of the photos, posted on the Friends of the Allandale Station Park Facebook page, which demonstrate the passion residents feel about the Park.

Top Emily Adams · Jun 24 · 🌍

The head of the wildflower trail at the Allandale Station Park.



**Friends of Allandale Station Park**

Top Shaaron Hayman · Jun 25 · 🌐

And another. Please feel free to use on our campaign

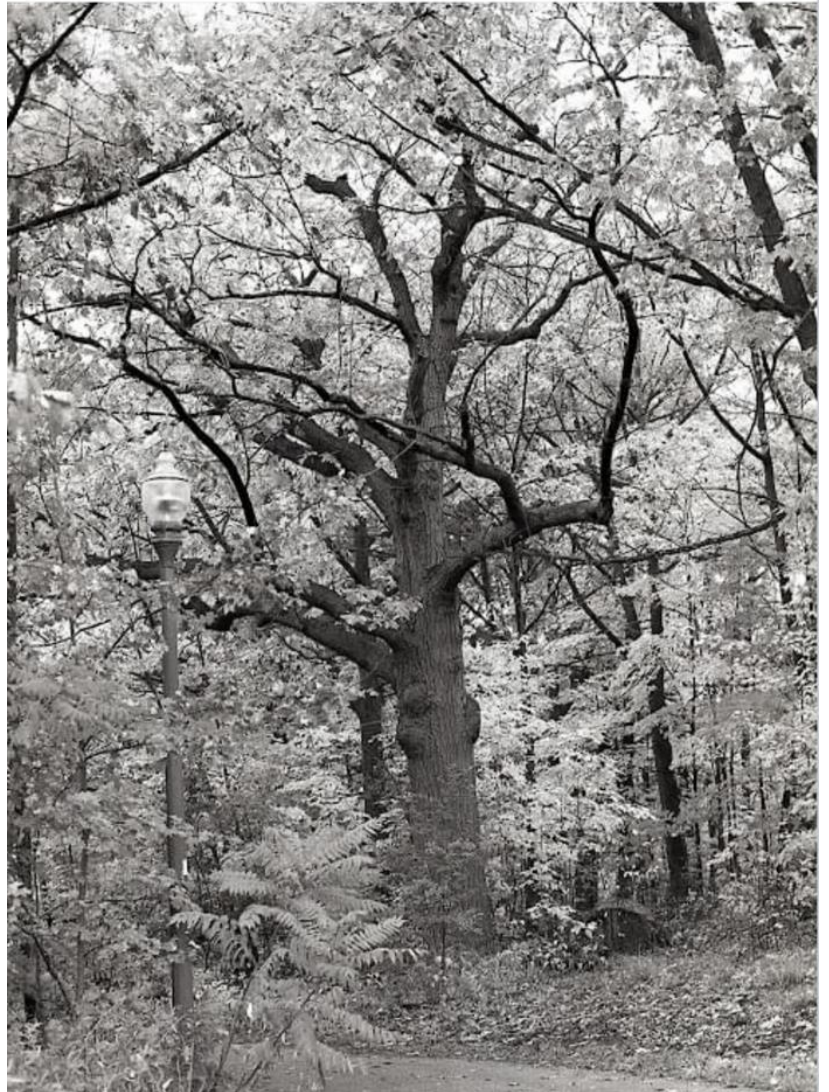


Top Shaaron Hayman · Jun 13 · 🌐

Painting I did last year of the stand of birches in Allandale station park. Resides in its new home in Pettawawa. I should mention I am past president of Barrie Art Club. This beautiful venue has been the site for more than one Plein air outi... See more



Top contributor Tim Moore · Jun 13 · 🌐



## B.2 Bayside Barrie (2023) *The Waterfront Strategic Plan Update (“WSP”)* and Allandale Station Park (“ASP”)

### B.2.1 *Waterfront Strategic Plan Update 2023: Goals and Objectives*

The WSP is based on three pillars that aim to provide “*inclusive*,” “*resilient*” and “*activated*” experiences for waterfront visitors. (page 30)

Among the top ten strategic priorities for the waterfront, especially related to the Allandale Station Park, are #6: *Promote climate adaptability and environmental protection*, #8: *Utilize the Waterfront to achieve larger economic and tourism development goals*, and #10: *Create Master Plans that recognize each park’s contribution to the waterfront*. (page 39 )

There are recommendations that support a natural and diverse plan for ASP. The WSP mentions Barrie’s City pollinator initiatives and insists that the meadow at ASP be maintained and enhanced, and that a diversity of native plant species be ensured. It advises that environmental education be increased for plant and wildlife identification and more support provided for enhanced shoreline habitats to support migratory birds. The City is to implement an Invasive Species Strategy and update the Naturalization Policy, for example. (pages 62-63).

### B.2.2 The WSP ranks Allandale Station Park as low priority with no capital budget.

Strangely enough, in spite of its large area, residents’ love for the Park and its key position as an gateway to the Waterfront Heritage Trail, the WSP ranked ASP as a “*Tertiary Activity Centre*” (*that generates lower level of activity*) along with other City parks, like Nelson Square, that isn’t directly on the shoreline (Appendix C, page 03).

The WSP also completely overlooked ASP when it came to its Implementation Strategy. ASP was not included in the Short Term (2024-2028), Medium Term (2029-2033) or Long Term (2034+) Capital Improvement Budgets. Nelson Square was allotted \$100,000 for a Master Plan and \$1,000,000 for its implementation in the Long Term, for example (pages 84-86).

The Task Force is suggesting that the WSP be amended to include ASP in the Short-Term Capital Budget and that a Master Plan be prepared, based on the Discussion Paper.

## B.2.3 WSP Analysis and Recommendations for Allandale Station Park

Here is the *Waterfront Strategic Plan Update 2023* Appendix C for Allandale Station Park:



### B.3.7 Allandale Station Park

#### Existing Conditions

Allandale Station Park is located east of Military Heritage Park and west of the South Shore. The City of Barrie's Waterfront Heritage Trail begins within Allandale Station Park. The park is 16.3 acres in size and half covered by mature trees. The other half of the park consists of an open lawn area that is maintained, but largely underutilized. The Trans Canada Trail, Waterfront Heritage Trail and a local footpath run primarily east-west through the park. Allandale Station Park includes a sloping beach which is the only point of access to the water at this park. A parking lot is located nearby, where White Oaks Road meets the end of the Waterfront Trail. The Waterfront Trail is a self-guided walking tour that will lead trail users along a historical path of Barrie. Elements of this tour may highlight geological, Indigenous, topographic, industrial, social and military aspects of Barrie's history.

- Location: Lakeshore Drive
- Area: 16.3 Acres
- Key Features:
  - Beach
  - Adult Fitness Station

- Opportunities:
  - Revitalize and improve utilization of the open lawn area
  - Stabilize the sloped beach and increase safety

#### Recommendations

Allandale Station Park has the potential to contribute to eco-education and rewilding through further naturalization and environmental stewardship. A Park Plan should be developed for Allandale Station Park to ensure future design and environmental interventions are strategic and align with the waterfront vision. The following recommendations should be considered through the park design process. These recommendations require further feasibility analysis and are non-exhaustive—they should not limit further visioning as the design process continues.

- Undertake a Park Plan for Allandale Station Park.
- Introduce enhanced signage and delineation between Allandale Station Park and the adjacent Military Heritage Park and South Shore Park to ensure that a unique identity is created for the park.
- Integrate iconic native species landscaping with integrated public art and stormwater management functionality along the shoreline to provide the dual function of contributing to the an Arts Trail and climate adaptation.
- Revegetate, restore and stabilize the sloping beach against erosion and remove public shoreline access. Enhance as an elevated lookout point.
- Incorporate eco-education opportunities within Allandale Station Park in the form of plaques, art, interactive seasonal installations and native landscaping for habitat creation and rewilding.
- Install waterfront gateway signage at the east entrance with wayfinding.
- Consider restoring the meadow to a dedicated oak savanna by planting oak trees and providing environmental education on the ability of mature oak trees to support the greatest diversity of species and carbon sequestration capacity.
- Review the park names for Allandale Station Park and South Shore Park to explore alternate names, as previously discussed. Further consider the opportunity to consult with the Wendat-Huron Nation to request the gift of an Indigenous name for the Park to commemorate the presence and land use of the historic inhabitants.
- Consider creating a new destination experience through a high-quality, tactile outdoor wildlife sculpture trail at Station 1 of the Waterfront Heritage Trail, supported by interpretation.

In addition to walking tours and park signage, we are suggesting an on-line, outdoor education program for the Nature Park that could be used by visitors, families and school classes. The Bluetooth “gamification” (*adding game-like elements to encourage participation*) program would rely on phone apps that guide the identification of plant and wildlife discovered.

## B.3 Official Plan, Zoning and Other Protection Measures

The City’s new Official Plan designates Allandale Station Park as *Green Space* that allows both active uses such as sports fields, and passive recreational uses. Much of the forest and waterfront has an *Environmental Protection 2 Overlay*. The meadow has an *Environmental Protection 3 Overlay*. Both Overlays allow development, subject to appropriate environmental studies. Zoning By 2009-141 and the new Draft 3 Zoning By-law would also permit buildings and structures, associated with a wide variety of uses that are permitted in greenspace zones .

We suggest that the City consider keeping the Nature Park in its entirety as a natural area with NO DEVELOPMENT ALLOWED. Options for enhanced protection include changes to the Official Plan, Zoning By-law, and a municipal land conservation trust. We agree with Marshall Green’s concept of “*environmental zoning*” for the Park. We further suggest that the Nature Park, without the possible play area and any reserved strips, be placed in a special Zoning By-law zone, perhaps an exception zone. This special zone would *not “permit buildings, or any other uses, except environmental conservation, ecological management measures, environmental monitoring, naturalized buffers, natural restoration, nature trails, bicycle trails, cross country skiing, and the following accessory uses: information kiosks, interpretive signage, benches and lookout points.”*

## B.5 Planning the “Forest” and “Meadow”

### B.5.1 The Forest

The forest area in Allandale Station Park has developed in an organic fashion. As plants and animals have arrived in the Park, they have stayed, if they found conditions to their liking. The Park is blessed with features from this organic growth process, such as the majestic, native Red Oak trees and the shy fox family that has created a den in the Park.

Top contributor Greg Taylor · Jul 1 · 🌐

Happy Canada Day from Barrie's Foxes!

Please protect our home in this community.



The *City of Barrie – 2020 Forest Health Survey* by Lallelmand Inc./Bio Forest (p. 12-13) reported that in general the Allandale Station Park woodlot “is healthy with no obvious issues resulting in an overall forest health rating of 1”. Bindweed, however, was beginning to spread in the meadow that could be a problem for the proposed Tallgrass Prairie restoration. Bindweed is an invasive species and can *reduce “native grass area and threaten native plant communities by reducing biodiversity.”* The report recommended bindweed removal strategies.



Special points of interest can be discovered in the forest, such as this message in the middle of a forest trail.

Photo by Paul Joseph Ecker in Friends of Allandale Station Park, June 9

Over the years, park usage by residents has also impacted on the natural features. An example is the eroded shoreline access, as identified in the *Waterfront Strategic Plan Update 2023*.

We concur with the Update that the sloped shoreline access, shown here in this photo, should be addressed. However, we suggest that the recommendation to remove the access be reconsidered.

We are further suggesting monitoring occur to ensure that Nature Park use does not degrade the features that we and wildlife enjoy.

Top Lisa Keevill Edgar · Jun 25 · 🌐

Beautiful morning on the bay...here is a view of Allandale Station Park from my kayak!



### B.5.2 The Meadow

As noted above, invasive species have arrived in the meadow, suffocating the native landscapes that were filled with biodiversity and are the best food sources for wildlife. The City's *Waterfront Strategic Plan Update 2023* does not support invasive species and encourages naturalization.

Without management guidelines and implementation, the meadow in Allandale Station Park would disappear under regrowth. It is most vulnerable to change. We are suggesting another vision for the meadow, other than the scattered changes currently occurring.

We are proposing the following two changes for the meadow in the Nature Park: "*Tallgrass Prairie*" and "*Oak Savanna*," as suggested in the City's *Waterfront Strategic Plan Update 2023*. They can be looked at as individual options or together as a pair.

## B.6 Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savanna



**Figure 3: Tallgrass prairie in bloom. Photo Larry Lamb**

It is difficult to believe that Allandale Station Park, along with parts of southern Ontario were once prairie. "*Many accounts of early Ontario stress the heavily forested nature of the land and created the image of vast, unbroken forest. Yet the early French explorers and first settlers of southwestern Ontario also discovered extensive, open landscapes. They encountered the outlying remnants of oak savanna and tallgrass prairie which once dominated a large portion of midwestern North America along the eastern edge of the Great Plains*" (Ojibway Nature Centre Windsor, "*Tallgrass Prairie in Southern Ontario*").

There are only eight locations where the public can view Tallgrass Prairies in southern Ontario.

The closest established prairie and savanna are in Toronto's High Park, although a prairie site in Holland Landing is being restored (See "*Restoring a rare ecosystem at Holland Landing Prairie Provincial Park*").

The largest, protected Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savannah is the Ojibway Prairie Complex in the southwest corner of the City of Windsor with 260 hectares (642 acres). The Complex boasts more than 4,000 species and over 160 rare plants, insects, reptiles, birds and mammals. The Park and

Nature Centre welcome about 100,000 visitors per year. The Complex is adjacent to Ontario Parks Ojibway Prairie Provincial Reserve with an additional 105 hectares (259 acres).



High Park, Toronto, in spring. Black oaks tower above an understorey of prairie grasses (Little bluestem, Big bluestem), aster species and other forbs. N Hewitt, April 29, 2017.

In southern Ontario, in addition to the Black Oak Savannas in High Park and the Windsor Prairie Complex, there is a Black Oak Savanna on the Alderville First Nation lands, south of Rice Lake which also has a plant nursery, as well as areas of Pinery and Rondeau Provincial Parks. South of Pinery, the Boy Scouts have restored an Oak Savanna in Camp Attawndaron, with the

Province investing \$52,000 to restore a portion of the “globally rare ecosystem”.

The next chart from “Restoring Tallgrass Oak Woodlands in Southern Ontario” outlines the characteristics of Tallgrass Prairies and Oak Savannas:

**Table 1. Similarities and differences between Tallgrass Prairie, Oak Savanna, Oak Woodland and Forest**

	Tallgrass Prairie	Oak Savanna	Oak Woodland	Forest
<b>Canopy Closure</b>	0 - 24%	25 - 35%	36 - 60%	> 60%
<b>Fire</b>	Frequent high intensity	Frequent low intensity or infrequent high intensity	Frequent, low intensity	Usually infrequent (forest-type specific)
<b>Layers</b>	- Ground	- Tree canopy - Ground	- Tree canopy - Shrub (patchy) - Ground	- Tree canopy - Tree sub-canopy - Shrub - Ground
<b>Dominant Species</b>	- Tall grasses such as Big Bluestem - Numerous wildflowers, such as Butterfly-weed	- Oaks with hickory, poplar, pine - Prairie grasses and wildflowers, such as sunflowers	- Oaks with hickory, poplar, pine - Savanna and open forest grasses, sedges and wildflowers	- Sugar Maple - American Beech - Ash Spring wildflowers, such as Trilliums



**Figure 1: Oak Woodland Prescribed Burn**  
**Photo: Larry Lamb**

The Indigenous peoples used fire to manage both Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savannas.

Here is an excerpt from the Ojibway Prairie Complex Windsor website about the reason for fire and their success with controlled fires:

*“Fire is critical to the natural ecology of prairie and oak savannah ecosystems. Prescribed burning mimics the fires of long ago and has proven to be an effective tool in the management of tallgrass prairie and oak savannah. These*

*habitats recover quickly from prescribed burns and fire helps to prevent the establishment of invasive woody vegetation. Fire removes the buildup of thatch and returns the stored-up nutrients back to the soil.*

*With earlier exposure to the sun, the perennial warm season grasses and wildflowers generally experience increased growth, flowering and seed production after a fire while the thick bark of mature oak trees assists in providing protection from the fire....*

*Busy streets, residential housing, horse racing track, stables, natural gas lines, an active railway line, a cellular tower and a major hydro transmission corridor have occurred or do occur within or adjacent Ojibway Prairie Complex. The burn program's success has been attributed to the level of cooperation between involved agencies, especially the Ministry of Natural Resources and the City of Windsor. Public education and research have always been an important aspect of the program. Prescribed burns are preceded by and followed up with an active education program targeting the public, park users and staff...*

*Prescribed burns are scheduled on an annual basis, usually in early spring before the spring emergence of most rare reptiles, and prior to bird nesting. The entire burning operation is being conducted by professional fire staff who are trained in fire behaviour and control...” (Ojibway Nature Centre Windsor, “Prescribed Burning in Ojibway Prairie Complex” [ojibway.ca](http://ojibway.ca)).*

In Toronto, a frequent High Park user and neighbour has also commented that the controlled fires are not a problem for her. The City posts warning signs in advance of the controlled burns. The resident noted that controlled fires are a better way to get rid of weeds, rather than toxic chemicals.

Pollinate Barrie suggests that goats could eat the grass, instead of fire. The group has also prepared a list of resources for establishing Tallgrass Prairies and Oak Savannas (see p. 21).

A casual observer wouldn't notice a substantial difference between the existing meadow in Allandale Station Park and an Oak Savanna.

Admin Brian Miller · Jun 1 · 🌐  
Looking within



Figure 4: Oak Savanna. Photo: Graham Buck

The City of Toronto has prepared a management manual for the Oak Savanna at High Park that could be adapted to other communities, such as Barrie.



## B.7 Tourism in Barrie

Tourism plays a vital role in Barrie's economy, with tourism spending having an impact of \$634 million and 582,500 tourist overnight stays in 2023, according to Kathleen Trainor of Tourism Barrie (*Marshall Green Report*, p. 39).

Trip Advisor says that Barrie's waterfront is the most popular destination according to tourists. The City's current top attractions are Centennial Park (467 mentions) on the west shore of Kempenfelt Bay, and the Spirit Catcher Sculpture (289 mentions) and the Flying Monkeys Craft Brewery (239 mentions) on the north shore.

Parks in the City are also tourist attractions. The Arboretum at Sunnisdale Park, for example, is the City's fourth highest, tourist destination with 164 mentions, according to Trip Advisor. The Bear Creek Eco Park received 7 mentions. Allandale Station Park had 2 mentions.

The Nature Park would offer a new tourist waterfront attraction on the south shore of the Bay. With its restored ecosystems, educational use of interactive technology and gamification, Indigenous features, as well as guided tours, the Nature Park could appeal to variety of tourists, including families, organized tours, birdwatchers, photographers and students.

## B.8 What is a “Nature Park”?



Allandale Station Park  
Photo by Cathy Colebatch

“Nature park” is a term more commonly used in Europe. European nature parks are not only places to enjoy nature. These parks are multi-purposed and deliberately planned for conservation, recreation, education and economic development.

Typically, European nature parks are larger than Barrie's proposed Nature Park. However, we believe that our Nature Park meets all the attributes, because of the diverse opportunities proposed in this Discussion Paper.

Next, is a description of the “*nature park*” concept from the website of the German Ötscher-Tormäuer Nature Park (*in italics below*) together with our comments on Barrie's proposed new Nature Park. See [What is a nature park? - 9 things you should know about the Ötscher-Tormäuer Nature Park \(naturpark-oetscher.at\)](https://www.naturpark-oetscher.at/)

From the Ötscher-Tormäuer Nature Park website:

*“A nature park is a cultural landscape shaped by human activity. Careful and sustainable forms of land use and landscaping shape the appearance of that landscape and offer special incentives for recreational activities in nature.*

*A nature park is intended to promote local ways of land use and to pursue appropriate forms of nature conservation. The preservation and transfer of knowledge about nature and culture are as much part of the tasks of a nature park as the support of local and regional cycles and processes.*

*The idea of nature parks is based on four pillars that are intended to work alongside on an equal footing: Conservation, education, regional development, and recreation.”*

As suggested in this Discussion Paper, Barrie’s new Nature Park would offer varied forest landscapes and a careful, sustainable plan for Tallgrass Prairie/Oak Savanna ecosystems, based on the pre-Settler, Indigenous landscape. There would be accessible recreational trails. The educational program is diverse. The program is partly intended to inspire park users to incorporate aspects of sustainability in their own lives. The Nature Park would provide insights into Indigenous history, culture and art, as an opportunity for reconciliation. Tourism is vital to Barrie’s economy. We see the new Nature Park as augmenting the tourist resource base of the City and adding a unique attraction to Barrie’s waterfront, already the City’s prime tourist destination.

### **“Conservation:**

*The goal is to conserve the natural environment with all its diversity and beauty through sustainable use and to preserve the centuries-old cultural landscape through biodiversity projects, visitor guidance, contractual nature conservation (ÖPUL), conservation area maintenance and management, “gentle mobility,” natural history information and research projects.”*



**Ashley Hammell guides Barrie park tour  
In Allandale Station Park,  
Photo by Kelly Gingrich**

Visitors are already enjoying the park’s diversity and beauty. The Nature Park would further offer a centuries-old, now rare, cultural landscape that has not been seen in Barrie, since the arrival of settlers two hundred years ago. The proposed Tallgrass Prairie/Oak Savanna ecosystem project would also increase biodiversity with more native plants and potentially attract a variety of birds not seen locally now.

Gentle mobility through a network of accessible trails would offer visitors a range of views and opportunities for learning and research. We would encourage local schools to use the Nature Park’s on-line, outdoor education program.

### **“Recreation:**

*The goal is to offer attractive recreational facilities that are in harmony with the nature preserve and the landscape, such as hiking trails, places to rest and relax, playgrounds adapted to the natural environment and nature educators all with a family friendly atmosphere and accessible for everyone.”*

In the Discussion Paper, we have planned the features with accessibility and “family friendly” in mind. The trails of permeable, accessible materials would fit gently into the landscape without causing damage to the abutting natural environment. Benches could have the appearance of sawn logs as part of the Nature Park theme. Volunteer guides would offer family friendly outings to explore this new treasure at the gateway to the City’s Waterfront Heritage Trail.

### **“Education:**

*“The goal is to use interactive means to make learning about and experiencing nature, culture and their interrelationships more tangible in order to educate visitors on the importance of sustainable development. This is further achieved with the help of Nature Park schools and Nature Park kindergartens, themed trails, information points, centers and boards, guided Nature Park tours, information materials, seminars, courses, exhibitions, cultural landscape interrelations and corresponding educational offers, ongoing cooperation with research institutions, special offers for specific target groups, training and further education for Nature Park employees.”*

We are suggesting a vibrant, fun, educational component that includes both environmental sustainability, as well as Indigenous history and culture. We are proposing the interactive Bluetooth stations and potentially using the gamification program of Tourism Barrie. One of Bluetooth, educational stations would be devoted to Indigenous history. There could also be an Indigenous garden and Indigenous art. The other station would be environmentally focused.

In addition to the on-line opportunities, we see in-person, group led tours on a variety of topics related to the Nature Park.



**“Regional development:**

*The goal is to create impulses for regional development through the Nature Park in order to increase regional added value and ensure the quality of life through close cooperation between nature conservation, agriculture, tourism, trade and culture, socially and environmentally compatible tourism, Nature Park specialties according to defined criteria, jobs in the Nature Parks, Nature Park restaurants and marketing and information materials.”*

The new Nature Park would contribute to the Barrie’s tourism industry by providing a unique, new attraction on the south shore of Barrie’s waterfront. The Park would offer visitors opportunities for on-line engagement, as well as potential in-person guides through Tourism Barrie’s Ambassador Program. After a visit to the Park, tourists could enjoy the City’s many fine restaurants.

## Appendix

### Pollinate Barrie: “Annotated Resources for Establishing a Tallgrass Prairie/Oak Savanna”

[Resources for Establishing Tallgrass Prairie.pdf](#)

## South Shore Nature Park Task Force

Arnie Ivsins	Jeff Monague
Ashley Hammell	Kelly Patterson McGrath
Barbara Marshall	Peter Bursztyn
Dorothy McKeown	Phyllis Tremblay
Geri Poisson	Vanessa Kennedy

Marshall Green, author of ***The Southshore, Barrie Sports and a Revitalized Downtown*** and “Bill” William Scott, who assisted Marshall throughout his work, are resource advisors to the Task Force.

## Proposed Nature Park with Play and Reserved Areas



Since the Marshall Green report (p. 5) suggested, but did not recommend, a possible mowed, informal play area for the Park, we have shown a “*Possible Play Area*” on the above plan. Also shown on the plan are the mowing and reserved strips that are currently under consideration for the infrequent, overflow parking for special events on the waterfront.

We note that the City’s *Waterfront Strategic Plan 2023, Appendix C* did not envision overflow parking or a play area for Allandale Station Park . Instead, the Plan talks about “eco-education”, “naturalization” and “restoring the meadow to a dedicated oak savanna” ... the same subjects of this Discussion Paper (*Appendix C is on p.11 of this Paper*).

We question whether the proposed overflow parking and a play area are the highest and best use for this special, waterfront park. The proposals together dramatically reduce the usable land for the rare Tallgrass Prairie/Oak Savanna ecosystems. The parking would only be intermittent, whereas the uses proposed in the City’s *Waterfront Strategic Plan 2023* and this Discussion Paper would give Barrie it’s own new, year-round Nature Park, providing untold value for education, local economic development, recreation, and conservation.

**From:** Dorothy Mckeown [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, October 21, 2024 10:56 AM  
**To:** cityclerks <cityclerks@barrie.ca>  
**Subject:** Deputation for Oct 23rd, 2024 Council Meeting

Good evening Mayor Alex, Councillors and City Staff.

I am here on behalf of Nature Barrie, founded as the Brereton Field Naturalists Club in 1951. We have been working with Council and Staff as long as Barrie has been an Incorporated city (1959) working to safeguard and educate the public about Barrie's natural spaces and species, for its citizens, visitors, and the next generations. We endeavor to be good land stewards as our Williams Treaty First Nations partners, the Anishinaabek, assumed we would.

Nature Barrie is pleased that council has accepted the recommendation of the Marshall Green report to build a sports field elsewhere than the Allandale Station Park. But we have some concerns about the amendment put forth on October 4th, that the passive park in Allandale Station park must "...include a minimum of 2 acres of grass cut area, to allow for overflow parking for historical events that will occur on the property..."

We propose that this motion be changed to a "maximum 0.6 acres of grass cut area ", currently used for overflow parking, as measured and mapped by Arnie Ivsins and Bill Scott.

I enjoy attending the Air Show and Kempenfest myself, but even as a senior with arthritis, I walk or bike to the waterfront with my extended family, or take the shuttle buses with friends, assuming convenient parking is not likely to be available!!

It is not a good Climate Change Strategy to promote driving while mowing natural areas that cool, and oxygenate the area. I'm sure my bright young colleagues on the Active Transportation and Sustainability Advisory Committee would be happy to work with event and parks staff to come up with other strategies such as promoting use of Go Trains, Metrolinx and shuttle services that drop off attendees closer to activities than most parking spots! Perhaps provide more angled parking on side streets, more shuttle services from other parking lots, and more bike racks. All these solutions could also be used for new future events ( like maybe a Woofstock, and/or Witches Walk)!?

According to the City of Barrie, Parks, Horticulture and Forestry Operations Review of October 2nd, 2024 Natural Heritage Areas are the lowest cost per acre per year. Mowing is the Greatest cost per year. So the city would save money with less mowing.

As a city that promotes itself as Bird and Bee Friendly taking more natural areas away goes against the mandates of these designations.

I will now address the problems of mowing during those times for the birds and the bees or butterflies.

The air show takes place in mid June when most birds are nesting with eggs or chicks. Ground nesting birds such as Savanna Sparrows, and Eastern Meadowlarks, which are an Ontario Species at Risk have been observed in the grassland areas of the Allandale Station Park. As migratory birds, their nests are protected by International laws.

Kempenfest takes place in early August. This year we found our nestbox birds were still in second nestings in August, whose chicks had all died when there was a cold spell in June. The same can happen in a heat spell also for temperature reasons causing chick mortality, or a wet spell when insect food sources are scarce, causing starvation. (Nature Barrie monitors 130 nestboxes around Barrie).

Monarch butterflies are also an Ontario protected species at risk, and a North American icon, the only butterfly in the world that migrates. Its numbers keep declining drastically due to insecticide use, habitat loss, and the erratic weather like hurricanes that they encounter on migration. The migrating generation of Monarch butterflies is just in the egg or caterpillar stage when you want staff to cut them down on their milkweed host and food source plants, for the weekend of Kempenfest . So mowing kills them and any other animals caught in the mowers blades.

The grasslands you are asking to be mowed are food sources for many other species, of bird, butterfly, and other pollinators that need the stored energy reserves the plants provide to be able to survive migrations of 1,000's of kilometers or 6 months of Canadian winter, colder temperatures.

Besides Marshall Green and Bill Scott, there are many other very smart Barrie citizens willing to volunteer to work with staff and Council to keep the waterfront a wonderful place to visit, and help rather than hinder the species we share this planet with.

I am willing to work with city staff to find solutions, as part of the South Shore Nature Park Task Force, and as Nature Barrie's representative on the Active Transportation and Sustainability Advisory Committee.

But please change the minimum 2 acres grass cut area for parking to maximum 0.6 acres.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Nature Barrie,  
Dorothy McKeown

[REDACTED]

On Thu, Oct 17, 2024, 11:48 a.m. Dorothy Mckeown [REDACTED]  
wrote:

I would like to make a deputation at the City Council meeting Wednesday October 23rd, 2024 concerning Motion 24G-223 regarding the Waterfront Public consultation feedback.

I will be representing Nature Barrie (formerly Brereton Field Naturalists Club, founded in 1951).

When do you require my deputation information by?

Thanks and regards,



Good evening Mayor Nuttall, Members of Council

My name is Brian Miller

I live in Barrie, and

I'm here speaking on behalf of the Friends of Allandale Station Park.

Our group consists of citizens who reside throughout our city and neighbouring communities.

We care about maintaining Allandale Station Park as a naturalized area, and we have been opposed to the Multi-Purpose Field proposed at Allandale Station Park.

We are pleased that Barrie Council has identified a new vision and path forward in finding an alternative location for the Multi-Purpose Field, along with designing Allandale Station Park as a Passive Park with

accessible walkways through the naturalized area.

The recommendation of a Passive Park is consistent with what was identified several years ago; maintaining & enhancing this naturalized area, but leaving it relatively untouched to the naked eye, and providing education on nature. As Deputy Mayor Thomson stated, “allowing all residents to enjoy some of our naturalized areas of our waterfront while maintaining the beauty it is”.

The motion as it currently reads basically directs Staff to Design a Passive Park and to ensure the area has a minimum of two acres designated for overflow parking.

Our group has a concern with this minimum allotment of two (2) acres of cut grass area for overflow parking for historical events. We recognize that a passive play area has also been identified in the area, but we feel the minimum acreage for parking is excessive.

In the past, there has been little to no control with where & how vehicles park in this area. Temporary barricades have been knocked over and/or moved, with vehicles parking immediately adjacent to Military Heritage Park, these flimsy barricades are not satisfactory. During wet weather, the area becomes a field of mud caused by the excessive number of vehicles being allowed in the area. I recognize that I and others may not have raised these concerns in the past, but just because people haven't

complained, doesn't mean this practice should be allowed to continue.

As a City, we're trying to promote Active Transportation, and encourage the use of Public Transportation.

According to the City website, you can park 1,670 vehicles at the Paul Sadlon Centre which is only a short bus ride away. The Allandale Recreation Centre and the Barrie Curling Club have been used as alternative shuttle service parking locations. Council should be promoting parking off-site and taking shuttles as opposed to supporting this excessive allotment for parking.

In saying this, we encourage Council to reduce the minimum acreage currently identified in the motion for overflow parking.

Our group also requests a zoning change for Allandale Station Park; it is currently zoned as Open Space which permits the development of sports fields, and applicable accessories such as bleachers, clubhouse, and concession stands.

As explained in June by Councillor Nixon to a resident's concern regarding the perceived lack of public consultation on the proposed Multi-Purpose Field at Allandale Station Park, he indicated,

“There is no requirement for a public meeting or consultation providing that there are no zoning changes needed.”

In reviewing the current wording in the Official Plan and its mapping, along with the New Proposed Zoning Bylaw, both are very comprehensive and difficult documents to understand.

From what I have read, it appears that Allandale Station Park has been designated as Greenspace, which permits “Active Recreation”, & “Playing Fields”. Within Draft 3 of the Proposed Zoning Bylaw, Environmental Protection Area includes “Outdoor Recreation”, so one may assume this terminology could include a future sports field. This proposed zoning & what is permitted needs to be addressed and changed.

To remain consistent with Mayor Nuttall’s comment, “Deem it for Purpose”,

We recommend that Allandale Station Park be clearly rezoned to a restrictive level of Environmental Protected Area, or possibly even a Nature Conservancy Area to avoid any future controversy, and ensuring that Allandale Station Park remains a Passive

Naturalized Park that can be enjoyed by residents, visitors, and future generations.

Thank You