



2000/2001 Annual Report

Facilitating ongoing public input and assistance in the stewardship of High Park for present and future generations of park users

High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee, Box 108, 95 Lavinia Ave., Toronto, ON M6S 3H9 Volunteer Hotline: (416) 392-1748

The Year in Review

This year, we strengthened our **communication and operating systems** through the following initiatives:

- a new computerized accounting system set up by John Hardie
- a mailing list database system set up by Sharon Lovett
- HPCAC and VSP information on the City of Toronto website arranged by Rigma Lee of Works & Emergency Services:
<http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/involved/vsp/vsp.htm>
- a HPCAC brochure prepared by Karen Yukich

We are continuing to follow up on our application to the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency for **charitable status**.

We considered and approved two new **ornamental projects** in the Park: the Garden of Hope sponsored by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, Ontario Chapter, to be installed at the site of the current sunken gardens overlooking the Hillside Gardens; and a labyrinth to be painted on the concrete circle picnic area north of the Grenadier Café.

The new Hillside Gardens **washroom** and skate changeroom was constructed and is expected to be opening soon.

The **swimming pool renovations** are being carried out in 2001.

New **fencing** was installed along the wood-chip path that is part of the off-leash dog-walking area, to protect the adjacent natural areas.

1947-97 Bloor St. W.

In January 2001 the Ontario Municipal Board granted Context Development large height and density variances for a proposed condominium immediately adjacent to the northwest corner of High Park. This decision effectively rezoned the property without the environmental review processes that would otherwise accompany a rezoning application.

The site is contaminated from its former use by two gas stations, and it is just metres from High Park's ANSI designated wetlands and the water course which feeds Grenadier Pond. To address these concerns, the HPCAC has requested environmental assessments from all three levels of government.

We still advocate the viable option of acquiring this property for High Park, by means of one or more levels of government funding, as the best method of protection.

High Park Dog Community

A working group with Klara Latif from the High Park K-9 committee and representatives from Animal Services and Parks

& Recreation was formed to deal with Dogs Off Leash. The objective is to ensure that all users of High Park have an enjoyable visit and the dog walkers/owners abide by the Toronto by-laws and code of conduct. We are in the process of updating the Off Leash Pamphlet and signage will be installed throughout the Park indicating Off Leash/On Leash areas. An initial education period is to be followed by more active enforcement, including fines.

Transportation Subcommittee

Getting around High Park by walking, jogging, cycling, driving or taking the "trackless train" can all impact on High Park's unique natural, recreational and historic features. Transportation to and through High Park can be a very sensitive issue. As those who live near the Park know, any changes in traffic patterns affect nearby neighbourhoods.

This past year, the Transportation subcommittee affirmed its commitment to promote environmentally benign methods of transportation through the Park and to limit commuter and car traffic.

We also reviewed draft plans by the City to re-configure the road system, particularly in family recreation/zoo area in the south-east part of the Park. We expressed our general support for the principle of narrowing existing roads, such as Centre Road, which would make the Park safer and more pedestrian-friendly. Enhancing parking in the existing parking lots, as a means to limit flow-through traffic, was also reviewed.

The Colborne Lodge Drive "southbound only" pilot project was a success. A City survey of over 33,000 nearby residents demonstrated there is majority support to make the pilot project permanent. It is anticipated that 2001 will see the construction of a dedicated bicycle lane and other alterations on Colborne Lodge Drive to complete the project.

Other motor traffic speed has been dealt with through the use of some traffic-calming devices, although we are hopeful for more measures in 2001.

Through the use of fences, Park Watch volunteers, Park staff and signage, cyclists continued to be advised that bikes can only be used on paved roads in the Park.

Issues outside the Park's boundaries also occupied our agenda. A proposal to allow parking on west side of Parkside Drive on Saturdays, Sundays and Statutory Holidays, as a way to relieve traffic congestion in the Park around the Adventure Playground area, was supported by the entire HPCAC. An added benefit of allowing parking on Parkside Drive would be natural traffic calming for both nearby residents and users of the Park.

Going forward in 2001, one of the issues we will face is any increase in traffic due to proposed monument, memorial gardens and labyrinth projects. Also, we will need to assess any impact on High Park from the introduction of parking fees at the parking lots on the Lakeshore.

Much work still needs to be done on transportation issues in the Park, particularly on limiting car traffic and promoting environmentally sound methods of transportation. Our subcommittee has as many viewpoints as members. We seek people who wish to share their energy and insights to creatively address the Park's current and future transportation issues.

Natural Environment Subcommittee

Walking Tours

Throughout the year we conduct walking tours that explore the natural and human history of High Park. Last summer, due to declining attendance, we reduced our walk schedule to every second Sunday afternoon and offered walks on Tuesday evenings during the alternate weeks. The Sunday walks were still disappointing, with only a handful showing up on most days. Tuesday evenings, on the other hand, brought out an average participation of 18. Our fall program continued on every second Sunday afternoon until the end of November with a somewhat better response. The winter program, always popular, set a record with an average attendance of 32!

All in all, the 30 scheduled walking tours during the reporting period reached over 500 people, many of whom were new to the Park, and brought in substantial donations in support of this and other volunteer programs.

We would like to thank all those who gave their time leading, hosting, marketing and planning walks. We also thank the City for their support in producing walking tour flyers, and Colborne Lodge for a welcome drink and brief tour at the end of most walks.

This summer, we are offering an interesting program on alternate Tuesday evenings only. We will revert to alternate Sunday afternoons in the fall.

Volunteer Stewardship Program

The VSP's had an active and productive fifth year. Over 200 volunteers are now registered in the Program, and we've spent over 1,700 person hours on Park projects over the last year. Varied activities included collecting and cleaning seeds, planting and transplanting about 2,300 native plants, and cutting and pulling invasive exotics.

Our aim is to restore the natural areas of High Park to pre-settlement conditions, as well as to encourage use of and knowledge about native plants. This should increase self-sustainability, benefit wildlife and improve accessibility and the appearance of natural areas for Park users.

Plant sales, when not rained out, were successful, raising well over \$1,000 for the VSP's. Best sellers were the shade plants,

Columbine, Foam Flower and Tall Meadow Rue, as well as the vine Virgin's Bower, the tall Cup Plant and shrubby Elderberry.

Many plants, tree trunks and rocks have been placed in the Boulevard Beds. It is hoped this high profile site, so close to the Grenadier Café, will increase awareness and knowledge of native plants. Much weedy Buckthorn has been removed, some of it recycled into a rustic fence on Hawk Hill.

Adopt-a-Plot boundaries and activities have been mapped. Fourteen members are monitoring their plots, observing increasing numbers of Wild Lupines as different methods of production are tested.

Sue Clarke was appointed as Greenhouse Supervisor earlier this year, and we also have the continued support of Arthur Beauregard, Manager of Natural Environment and Horticulture, and the Greenhouse Staff, particularly our Native Plant Specialist, Jocie Bilodeau.

Rigmae Lee helped set up the HPCAC website, which includes photos, information and the current VSP newsletter/schedules. She also provided the VSP's with display materials for our plant sales. VSP's Carmen Goonewardene and Jean Vesik have contributed many photos.

Voracious appetites were observed this year among Loosestrife Beetles, Canker Worms and VSP's (who also provide delicious food and explore neighbourhood eateries).

Thanks go to Christopher Harris, who retired after serving as Co-Chair since the VSP's inception. Thanks also to all VSP's who contribute time, energy, enthusiasm, humour and sheer good nature to all our activities.

High Park Vegetation Management Plan

Parks & Recreation Division is continuing to implement an extensive long-range plan for restoring and managing the natural areas of High Park, with input from our Subcommittee and the VSP. A number of large non-native trees were removed with the permission of City Council. A prescribed burn of 14 hectares was carried out under near-ideal conditions on April 19, again resulting in native plants bursting forth rapidly. City staff and one volunteer participated in a Prescribed Burn Workshop last October to train for their roles in supporting this burn. High Park volunteers assisted in both the High Park burn and the first burn conducted at nearby Lambton Park prairie.

To support the management plan, Beth McEwen of Urban Forestry established a Restoration Crew to carry out work such as wicking the highly invasive Dog Strangling Vine. The Crew also set up specific restoration projects, some experimental, to be monitored over years to come.

Spring Creek Watershed

A treatment wetland has been constructed in the upper section of Lower Duck Pond to treat and purify a minor portion of Spring Creek before it enters the pond. We provided input to the selection of vegetation and urged the City to ensure that sufficient resources would be allocated to this aspect of the project. Ongoing monitoring is needed to measure the effectiveness of this facility.

Other possible improvements to the Spring Creek watershed, such as meanders in the creek, are being considered by Parks & Recreation Division.

High Park, Restoring a Jewel of Toronto's Park System

This comprehensive booklet on Restoration Strategies for High Park was produced by the Parks & Recreation Division in January 2001, with input from our subcommittee and others. Funding was provided by the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation. The publication is aimed at teachers, educators, students and individuals who are interested in restoration of High Park. Free copies can be obtained by contacting the City of Toronto Access line at (416) 338-0338.

Interpretive Signage

New interpretive signs were installed around Grenadier Pond.

We have had preliminary discussions about extending the new signage to other areas of the Park, including the Oak Savannah and the Spring Creek Ravine, with possible funding from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation. Self-guided nature walk booklets are also being considered as part of this project.

Hillside Gardens

We provided Park staff with information on invasive and non-invasive ornamental plants to be considered when the proposed renovation of the Hillside Gardens is carried out.

Fall Cankerworms

The cankerworms that defoliated the Park's oak trees appear to have peaked in 2000. Their numbers are down sharply in spring 2001. This cyclical pattern is typical of the species. Hopefully, large populations will not build up for several more years.

Liaison with Other Groups

We participated in a Stewardship Forum in February which brought together many of the volunteer groups involved in land and river valley restoration throughout the City and offered opportunities for networking.

We continued to participate in the Humber Watershed Alliance, Tallgrass Ontario and other groups with related interests.

We strengthened our connections with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, which is involved in many of the Park's restoration projects.

High Park Nature Centre

Our programs focus on developing a commitment to responsible stewardship of the natural environment through personal experience with the unique features of High Park and an understanding of the Park's ecology, challenges and natural restoration efforts.

We were able to offer a greatly expanded program in 2000 at a new location dedicated to our use (the site of the former Parkside Lawn Bowling Club). Two staff positions were created for a 16-week period (vs. 6 weeks last year) and our programs ran for about 14 weeks, from early May to mid-August.

In May/June 2000 we launched a new planting program featuring a hands-on restoration experience with links to the elementary school curriculum. 36 school groups planted 2000 native grasses, sedges and wildflowers and learned about High Park's Oak Savannah and the restoration program.

Over 500 children participated in our activity-based nature education programs over the summer. Group bookings were popular but our general public program had low attendance.

Our 2001 program is well underway, with two new staff members and increased numbers of school bookings.

The High Park Nature Centre is operated with financial support from the Kiwanis Club of Casa Loma, the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, the HRDC Youth Employment Strategy and the City of Toronto, as well as contributions and/or in-kind support from the Toronto District School Board, Colborne Lodge and Parks & Recreation Division.

Safety & Recreation Subcommittee

Our purpose is to promote the diverse cultural and recreational activities that High Park offers in a manner compatible with the natural environment and character of the Park; to ensure personal safety needs of High Park users are met; and to promote safe use of the Park.

High Park Adventure

The High Park Adventure is a community-built playground on the east side of the Park. Our focus is to provide a safe and exciting play experience for children. With proper annual maintenance of the playground, children in our community will be using it many years from now.

On Saturday, May 26th, the second annual maintenance of the playground was completed. This included moving and raking wood chips, tightening loose screws, removing graffiti and applying a preservative.

Park Watch

Park Watch volunteers keep High Park a safe and friendly place by maintaining a visible, trustworthy and welcoming presence in High Park. We provide information and assistance to park users and promote responsible behaviour in the Park.

Park Watch volunteer-hours spent in the Park during the year exceeded 4,000, with over 6,315 contacts or incidents recorded. Park Watch Headquarters is now operating out of the Chess Club which is more centrally located at the north end of High Park, providing better access for both park users and our volunteers. This location will also allow us to recruit volunteers who are unable to walk trails but are interested in providing assistance by handing out pamphlets and giving directions.

Park Watch receives in-kind support from Bell Mobility.

Annual Events

Proceeds from the following events assist in the maintenance of the High Park Adventure and other programs in the Park:

- **4th Annual Pumpkin Float** (Sunday, Oct. 29/00) - Over 40 children carved pumpkins which were lit with candles and placed in the Duck Pond to float like sailboats set afire. The setting sun, the darkening park and shadowy trees all formed a glimmering background to a sea of jack-o-lanterns.
- **4th Annual Winter Fun Day** (Sunday, Jan. 21/01) - Over 200 children participated in games, horse and wagon rides, pony rides and roasting marshmallows over a bonfire.
- **4th Annual Spring Egg Hunt** (Sunday, April 8/01) - Over 200 children hunted for Easter eggs, had their faces painted, dyed eggs, participated in egg races and had their pictures taken with the Easter Bunny.

Colborne Lodge Report

Joint Programming

Approximately 5,500 people enjoyed the various programs and events jointly offered by the High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee and Colborne Lodge. Some of the highlights were:

- Winter Fun Day and Spring Egg Fun
- The High Park Walking Tour series
- Earth Day in High Park and the High Park Harvest Festival

High Park Discovery Camp

Colborne Lodge introduced a week-long summer camp program for children ages 8 to 12 years. Based at the Lodge, the program focuses on the natural and historical wonders of the Park. The children visited various locations in the Park, participated in the program at the Nature Centre and learned about raptors with Don Barnett at Hawk Hill. Feedback from parents and children was positive.

Park Programming Group

Representatives from the Park's major programming groups, such as the Nature Centre, Children's Garden and Colborne Lodge, have been meeting to discuss ways to offer well-coordinated public programs and means of sharing resources.

For information about HPCAC volunteer activities and programs, please call:

HIGH PARK VOLUNTEER HOTLINE

(416) 392-1748

Treasurer's Report

Financial Statement June 1, 2000 to May 31, 2001

Walking Tours and General Programs

Opening Balance at June 1, 2000	\$1,182.82
Income from Walking Tour Donations	\$943.51
Expenses in Support of Volunteer Programs	<u>(\$641.34)</u>
Closing Balance at May 31, 2001	\$1,484.99

Volunteer Stewardship Program

Opening Balance at June 1, 2000	\$3,103.43
Income from Donations and Sales	\$2,894.70
Expenses	<u>(\$3,253.69)</u>
Closing Balance at May 31, 2001	\$2,744.44

Adventure Playground

Opening Balance at June 1, 2000	\$2,135.26
Income from Donations and Sales	\$1,972.82
Expenses	<u>(\$1,708.83)</u>
Closing Balance at May 31, 2001	\$2,399.25

Nature Centre

Opening Balance at June 1, 2000	\$6,050.00
Income from Donations and Fees	\$20,927.64
Expenses	<u>(\$21,475.73)</u>
Closing Balance at May 31, 2001	\$5,501.91

CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNTS

Opening Balance at June 1, 2000	\$12,471.51
Income	\$26,738.67
Expenses	<u>(\$27,079.59)</u>
Closing Balance at May 31, 2001	\$12,130.59

The High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee

The High Park Citizens' Advisory Committee is a volunteer group made up of a broad range of park users, including individuals and organized groups. The Advisory Committee provides public input on park policies, goals and objectives; helps facilitate volunteer involvement in park initiatives; and promotes public awareness and responsible stewardship of the Park. Meetings are open to the general public.

The HPCAC voting membership includes local ratepayer/residents associations, recreational stakeholders, long-term interest groups, business/park entrepreneurs and eleven members-at-large from the community.

Our meetings are open to the general public. Meetings are usually held at the Howard Park Tennis Club at 6.30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of September, November, January, March and May. The Annual General Meeting is usually held at the Grenadier Café and Tea House on the third Wednesday in June.

The executive members of the HPCAC for 2000/01 were:

- Robin Sorys and Don Barnett (co-chairs)
- Luther Dean (treasurer)
- Paul Rappell (secretary)

plus the chairs of the subcommittees and program groups.

The HPCAC is supported by three subcommittees:

- Safety & Recreation (Robin Sorys, chair);
- Transportation (Susan Flanagan, chair); and
- Natural Environment (Ron Allan & Karen Yukich, co-chairs).

In turn, these subcommittees sponsor a number of volunteer programs, including:

- Park Watch (Gloria Worth, chair)
- HP Adventure (Robin Sorys, chair);
- HP K-9 Committee (Klara Latif, chair);
- Volunteer Stewardship Program (Gillian Smith & Tony Jovan, co-chairs);
- Adopt-a Plot Program (Ron Luft, coordinator)
- Nature Centre (Karen Yukich, Karyn Morris and Kathleen Keefe, steering committee) and
- Walking Tours (Ron Allan and Johanne Christensen, co-chairs).

Archival information about the HPCAC and the natural restoration of High Park is maintained at the Runnymede Public Library.

The HPCAC operates in partnership with the Toronto Parks and Recreation Division and Colborne Lodge.

