

**IE30.16 Infrastructure and Environment Committee consideration on May 25, 2022\_ Interim Report for the High Park Movement Strategy, submission Lenka Holubec**

May 25, 2022

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**RE: IE30.16 Infrastructure and Environment Committee consideration on May 25, 2022\_ Interim Report for the High Park Movement Strategy, submission Lenka Holubec**

Dear Chair Jennifer McKelvie , Vice Chair Councillor Pasternak and Councillors,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on Interim Report for the High Park Movement Strategy

***Interim Report for the High Park Movement Strategy:***

*“High Park is one of Toronto's largest public parks and one of the most significant natural sites within the city. High Park is also one of the most heavily visited and well connected parks in the City, serving as a local and regional destination. It is directly served by numerous subway and surface transit options, as well as active transportation routes.*

*The HPMS will explore a range of interventions for improving the travel network, which prioritize safety, accessibility and the park's ecological integrity. The inventory of interventions is being developed based on findings and feedback gathered through background analysis, technical study, and public and stakeholder consultation. Interventions that are being considered as part of the HPMS fall under three categories: controlled access, flow management and new infrastructure.”*

- **My Recommendation 1:**

**HPMS need to support protection of High Park for the long term and any changes to the travel network within the Study Area should result in lessening of user pressures as opposed to maximizing of use.**

The role of The High Park Movement Strategy is important as it may positively contribute to preserving of High Park's natural heritage by contributing to easing pressures on this significant ESA/ANSI/PSW protected natural area.

Present overuse and non compatible uses are undermining ecological function and natural features as noted in [High Park – Terrestrial Biological Inventory](#)

pg. 54 **5.2 Site Recommendations**

**“The recommendations address the objective of protecting regional biodiversity in the TRCA jurisdiction. In order to at least maintain, and preferably enhance, the current level of biodiversity at High Park, the overall integrity of the natural heritage system that includes this provincially-significant area must be protected.**

Therefore, at the landscape scale, in keeping with the TNHSS, connections to other natural habitat patches in the landscape need to be enhanced and maintained. **Furthermore, the recommendations highlight the issues that occur with increasing public use of the site. Managing public use, strategic placement of interpretive signage, allowing healthy dynamic natural processes to proceed, and controlling invasive species will all aid in addressing the negative matrix influences that are occurring on the park.**

The following recommendations address the above natural heritage concerns, with an emphasis upon bolstering the existing natural features on site. Thus, we recommend overall that:

- 1) existing habitats and features be protected and enhanced;
- 2) that public use be managed; and
- 3) that invasive species be controlled”

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-Intensification and infill development of the neighbourhoods around High Park is anticipated. It is a desirable location. **This could exacerbate the user pressures on this already heavily visited park, unless there is careful planning.**

**-Uncontrolled recreational activities present a risk to the quality of the habitat in High Park**

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**-High participation rates increase the negative effects on habitats and species**

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**-At the Study Area, visitor pressure is currently high and is expected to increase. Strategies for managing human-use are needed if ecological health is to be maintained, or enhanced**

#### ***Interim Report for the High Park Movement Strategy:***

##### *“4. Coordination with Parkside Drive review*

*In response to a member motion adopted by City Council (MM37.1), the Transportation Services Division has implemented changes to the Parkside Drive Corridor to manage vehicle speed and improve pedestrian mobility, and has initiated a study that will explore the long-term possibilities for reconfiguration of Parkside Drive to better serve all road users.”*

- **My Recommendation 2:**

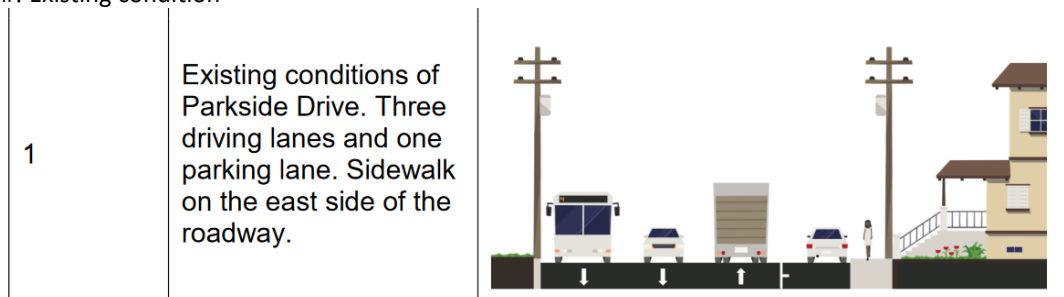
Connectivity within the High Park and across of surrounding landscape, such as Parkside Drive, Bloor St. West, Ellis Park Rd. is crucial for maintaining biodiversity, therefore the choice for Road Configuration Scenarios for Parkside Drive need to reflect this.

Attachment 2: Example Road Configuration Scenarios for Parkside Drive

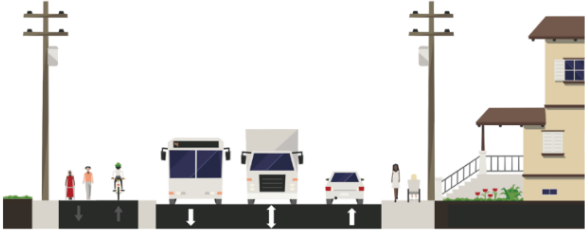
#### **#1- Existing condition and #4 choices seem to pose the least obstacles and provide safer passage for wildlife.**

What people consider safe or desirable may not be safe for wildlife. Generally, bike lanes, as noticeable along Bloor St. West on the north side of High Park present obstacle for wildlife crossing and may increase harm, mortality and result in lesser persistence of affected species.

#1 Existing condition



#4

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 4 | <p>Two driving lanes and a bidirectional centre driving lane to support peak-hour capacities. Sidewalk on the east side of the roadway. Multi-use trail on the west side of the roadway.</p> |  <p>The illustration shows a cross-section of a road. On the left is a multi-use trail with a person walking and a person on a bicycle. Next to it is a sidewalk with two people walking. The road has two main driving lanes with arrows pointing in opposite directions, separated by a bidirectional center lane. A bus and a car are in the left lane, while a truck and a car are in the right lane. On the far right is another sidewalk with a person walking, followed by a residential building with a staircase leading up to it. Utility poles are positioned along the road.</p> |
|---|--|--|

Yours sincerely,

Lenka Holubec

member [High Park Nature](#)

#### Background:

[High Park – Terrestrial Biological Inventory](#)

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“Sensitivity to patch isolation considers the overall response of fauna species to fragmentation and isolation of habitat patches from one another. **One underlying consideration is the physical ability, or the predisposition, of a species to move about within the landscape and how this ability is affected by the connectivity of habitat. A second is the potential impact that roads and other habitat breaks have on fauna species that need to be mobile.** Bird species generally score lower than herpetofauna for the latter consideration (although they do forage and move along connecting corridors). Most herpetofauna score very highly because their life cycles require them to move between different habitat types; their mobility exposes them to impacts, most often road-kill. At the population level, birds too will be affected if the need for adult birds to forage for food during the nestling and fledgling stage of the breeding season is not provided for. By maintaining and improving the connectivity of natural cover within the landscape (e.g. by reforestation of intervening lands) we are able to positively influence the populations of such species, improving their foraging and dispersal potential”

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“Most of the mobility restricted fauna species at the Study Area are relatively small-bodied animals; their life cycle requirements may be satisfied within the confines of High Park. **However, for coyote (*Canis latrans*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and other larger mammals, home ranges may not be contained within the Study Area boundaries, and young mammals also need to disperse from natal areas. As individuals move back and forth across the landscape, they have to contend with the roads surrounding and intersecting the site. In any such urban landscape the habitat within the natural spaces becomes more critical to regional biodiversity. If connectivity between such natural spaces can be maintained or improved the potential for persistence of these species will be enhanced.**”

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In the longer term, efforts could be made to improve habitat connectivity across High Park, and between High Park and other natural areas. The most obvious linkage is south to the Lake Ontario waterfront, where the transportation infrastructure presents a formidable barrier but also where sizeable patches of natural habitat remain both north and south of the barrier.”

#### High Park – Terrestrial Biological Inventory



Figure 15. Common snapping turtle, a Species at Risk, was observed in Grenadier Pond in 2018 (photo: TRCA, 2018).

Most of the mobility restricted fauna species at the Study Area are relatively small-bodied animals; their life cycle requirements may be satisfied within the confines of High Park. However, for coyote (*Canis latrans*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and other larger mammals, home ranges may not be contained within the Study Area boundaries, and young mammals also need to disperse from natal areas. As individuals move back and forth across the landscape, they have to contend with the roads surrounding and intersecting the site. In any such urban landscape the habitat within the natural spaces becomes more critical to regional biodiversity. If connectivity between such natural spaces can be maintained or improved the potential for persistence of these species will be enhanced.

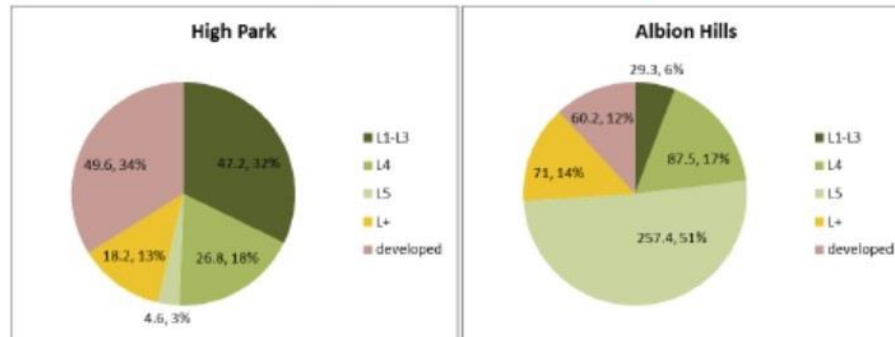
#### 4.5.2.5 Fauna Habitat Specialists

Fauna species that score highly under the *habitat dependence* criterion (TRCA 2017a) are considered habitat specialists. These species exhibit a combination of very specific habitat requirements that range from the microhabitat (e.g. decaying logs, aquatic vegetation) and requirements for particular moisture conditions, vegetation structure or spatial landscape structures, to preferences for certain vegetation community series and macro-habitat types. There were four fauna species of concern – all bird species – that are considered habitat specialists (Map 14). One of these species scores high for this criterion entirely due to their very specific



## High Park – Terrestrial Biological Inventory

High Park is outstanding for its high-ranking vegetation communities. These are most notably but not exclusively the oak woodland, savannah and prairie communities. Seventeen communities have a rank of L3 or higher. Furthermore, the L1 to L3 communities occupy 47.2 ha, almost half the total natural cover in the park and almost a third of the entire park (Figure 4; Map 10). By way of comparison, the high-quality Albion Hills Conservation Area on the Oak Ridges Moraine is almost three-and-a-half times the size of High Park but has only 29.3 ha of L1-L3 communities, 6% of the area of the conservation area.



**Figure 4.** Area (ha) and proportion (%) of High Park and Albion Hills occupied by communities of conservation concern, communities of lower conservation concern, and developed/manicured areas.

High Park has by far the largest area of remaining oak woodland, savannah and prairie communities in the TRCA jurisdiction. Other than High Park, they are scattered elsewhere in the Humber Plains (Lambton Park (TRCA 2016) and South Humber Park), with tiny patches in the southern part of Rouge National Urban Park and on the Oak Ridges Moraine in the East Duffins Headwaters (TRCA 2010). All of these communities are considered provincially-significant and globally-rare, with only about 3% of the original area remaining in Ontario (Farrell *et al.* 2004).

Five communities have a rank of L1: Dry Tallgrass Prairie (TPO1-1), Dry Black Oak Tallgrass Savannah (TPS1-1), Mixed Oak – Pine Tallgrass Savannah (TPS1-2A), Dry Black Oak – White Oak Tallgrass Woodland (TPW1-1), and Mixed Oak – Pine Tallgrass Woodland (TPW1-A). The open prairie is found in the centre of the park by Hawk Hill and has been undergoing restoration work since the 1990s. It is shown as manicured in Varga (1989). Plants there originate from a mix of seed bank and plantings. Hard fescue (*Festuca trachyphylla*) used to be predominant and is still present amid the prairie grasses. A smaller area of open prairie is a restoration project planted by High Park Nature Centre near the Forest School using locally-propagated plants. It is a teaching area.

The mixed oak – pine savannah and woodland communities cover 1.2 ha near the greenhouses, being about evenly divided between savannah and woodland. Interestingly, the coniferous component of the savannah part of the community is largely from old horticultural plantings of Scots and Austrian pines. It would be possible to replace these with native red and white pine. The native pines do occur in the more closed woodland community. This area has a concentration of both natural and planted species of conservation concern.