



MIDTOWN RAVINES GROUP

A consortium of residents associations working for better ecological balance and improved park use in ravines in Midtown Toronto.

June 27, 2023

Deputy Mayor Jennifer McKelvie, Chair,
and Members,
Infrastructure and Environment Committee
City Council, City of Toronto

By email to: iec@toronto.ca

RE: Item 5.2 - Vale of Avoca/Yellow Creek Update and Next Steps

Councillor McKelvie, Members:

We are writing (1) to express our appreciation for the staff report setting out planned next steps towards the development of a Master Plan for the YellowCreek/Vale of Avoca Ravine, (2) to emphasize the need for erosion control beyond that required to protect Toronto Water infrastructure, (3) to express our concern for the need to speedily develop a plan for trail construction, stream remediation, and ecological remediation that will meet the increasing needs of the rapidly growing population in the Yonge Street and Davisville corridor, and (4) to re-emphasize the need for funding the capital projects that will be required to implement that plan.

We recognize the severe fiscal constraints within which the City is operating. We consequently anticipate the necessity for private fundraising to augment what the City can do within its resources. Providing the necessary capital plan — a vision for the ravine as well as a statement of the funding needs required for its implementation — is an essential prerequisite for raising private funds. The sooner that plan can be finalized, the sooner we can start fundraising to implement it.

1. The Heath Crescent stairs

Before turning to more general issues, we want to comment on a pressing need for repair. The stairs from Heath Crescent down into the ravine just south of Mt Pleasant Cemetery provide the main access for residents from north and east of the ravine. Together with the matching stairs up to Heath Street and Ferndale on the other side of the ravine, it provides a well-used pedestrian link into the ravine and the Cemetery.

As the letter to your committee from the Moore Park Residents Association emphasizes, the stairs were damaged ten years ago in 2013, with repairs delayed largely because of the need for stabilization of an unstable ravine slope. The detailed design of the stabilization work, coupled

with design of a replacement or repair of the damaged stairs, is to be undertaken in 2023-24, with work to implement the slope stabilization to be undertaken by the TRCA in 2024-25. However, implementation of the replacement/repair of the stairs is not currently scheduled before 2030-31. If the damaged stairs need to be removed in order to implement the necessary slope stabilization work, this could result in a six-year period (or longer) in which no access to the ravine is possible from Moore Park north of St Clair.

This length of time without access is unacceptable. Funding to make possible repair/replacement at the same time as the slope stabilization work must be found.

A similar state of disrepair exists for the steps down from the NW end of the St Clair bridge (Item E on the map attached to this letter). The northbound steps down from the bridge have been closed since 2020; the path from the bottom of the steps to where it joins the main path from the Cemetery to under the St Clair bridge is eroded to the point of unusability.

2. Followup to Yellow Creek GSMP-EA — Erosion control

As noted in the staff report, the final version of the Yellow Creek GSMP EA, to protect Toronto Water infrastructure at-risk of erosion from Yellow Creek in the Vale of Avoca, is anticipated to be completed in 2024.

We wish to emphasize the need for a more comprehensive erosion control plan. The key issue is that erosion is a much more pervasive issue than just the need to protect Toronto Water infrastructure. While we recognize that need is paramount, especially elsewhere in other ravines in the City which sanitary sewers are exposed to risk, the need for erosion control extends beyond this in Yellow Creek to protection of ravine slopes and paths.

There are two critical areas where erosion is serious and accelerating:

- 1) Area below houses on Inglewood
- 2) West side of pedestrian bridge below David Balfour Park

In both of these areas (see photos attached) washouts are progressively eroding roads and paths.

Thanks to global warming, consequent increases in extreme weather events, and the progressive paving-over of much of the 10.5-square-kilometer watershed of Yellow Creek, severe erosion events are increasing in number and in their impact. This is much more than just an infrastructure issue. The two areas identified above are only the most critical.

The erosion below Inglewood is going to become an emergency slope issue for the houses above it on Inglewood sometime in the relatively not-too-distant future. At a minimum, TRCA and the City should be undertaking work to demolish the relic of the nineteenth-century dam that deflects stormwater surges into the east slope of the ravine. Not to mention further work that will provide the necessary missing link between the existing trail/road south from the pedestrian bridge (and road up to Avoca) and the new trail/road that will be needed for equipment access below Heath Crescent.

We will urge that these issues be added to the agenda for the Yellow Creek Working Group that is to meet starting in early fall.

3. Planning for trail improvements

The staff report projects that work to determine if and where any work related to trails, access points, and bridges may be built in the future will be undertaken in 2024-25.

We are glad to see a commitment to development of a plan in 2025-27 with associated costing and timelines for proposed capital trail projects in the Vale of Avoca. We look forward to participating in this work through consultations in future meetings of the Yellow Creek Working Group.

Our primary concern with what is planned is with timing. We urge that this planning be expedited so that any fundraising that will be required from the private sector can begin as soon as possible. The necessary construction work will take years to accomplish, so let us work to get it begun.

Yours truly,

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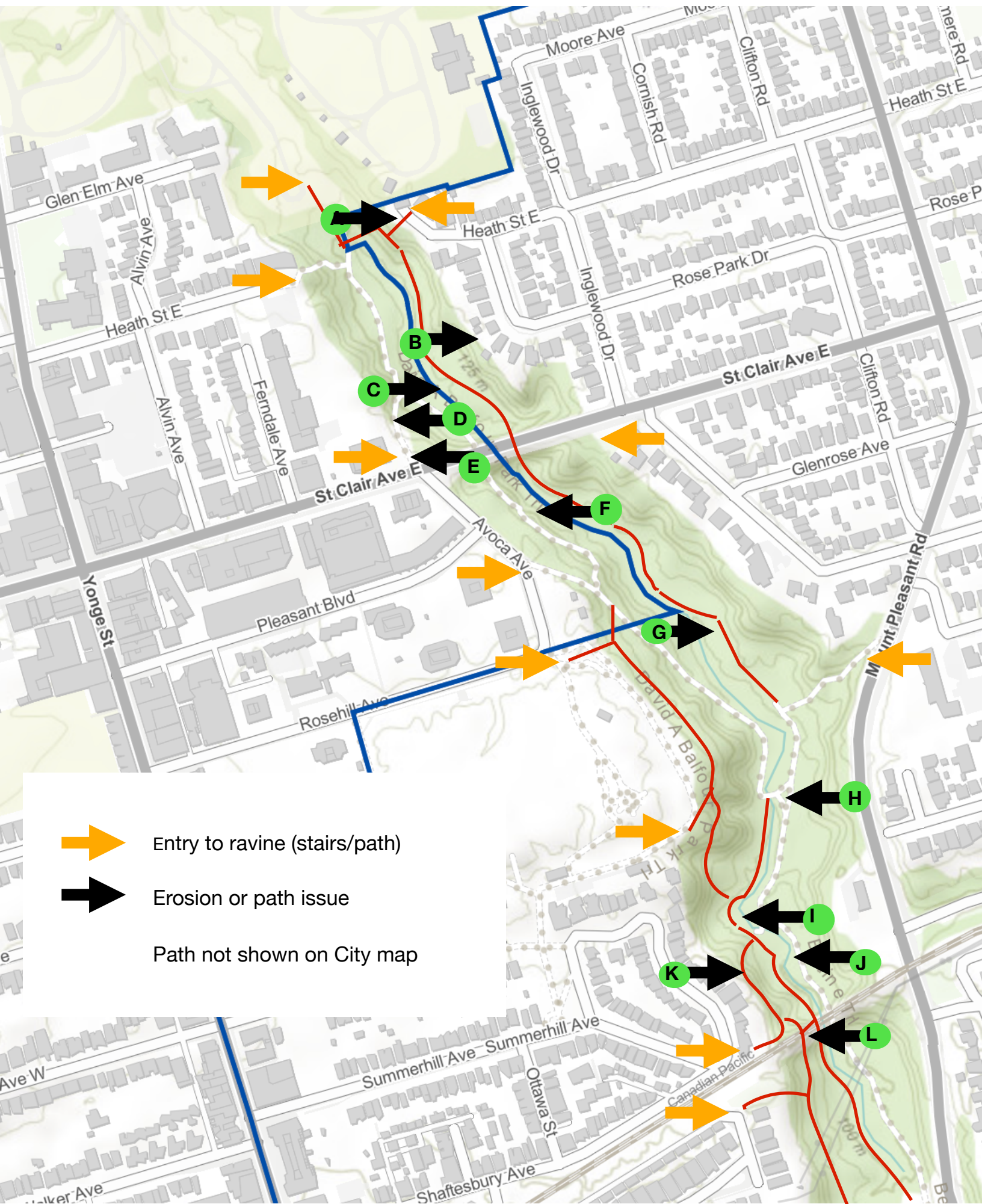
The Midtown Ravines Group is an incorporated non-profit organization formed by nine Residents Associations in Midtown Toronto. The member associations are the ABC Residents Association, the Avoca Vale Residents Association, the Bloor East Neighborhood Association, the Deer Park Residents Group, the Governors Bridge Residents Association, the Moore Park Residents Association, the North and South Rosedale Residents Associations, and the Summerhill Residents Association.



Erosion at west of pedestrian bridge below David Balfour Park (Issue H on map)



Erosion below Inglewood Avenue (Issue G on map)



Issues identified on map

- A. Heath Crescent stairs, gabion failures in stream
- B. Stream remediation (gabion failures)
- C. Major stream erosion
- D. Path to St Clair in severe state of disrepair
- E. Stairs down from St Clair bridge closed since 2020
- F. Severe slope erosion at TW storm sewer outfall
- G. Severe slope erosion and undercut below Inglewood
- H. Erosion on west side of pedestrian bridge
- I. Stream wall failure (TRCA repair in 2024)
- J. Stream reconstruction (TRCA repair in 2024)
- K. Path in poor condition
- L. Unsafe path

Other stream wall failures further south, between railway bridge and intake