



MIDTOWN RAVINES GROUP

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

May 24, 2022

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

By email to: iec@toronto.ca

RE: Item IE30.9 - Ravine Strategy Implementation Update

Councillor McKelvie, Members:

We are writing (1) to express our thanks for the progress that has been made on implementing the Ravine Strategy that Council adopted in January 2020, and (2) to emphasize the need for more and faster progress in that implementation. The number of people using Midtown ravines as recreation space exploded during Covid, and that expanded use continues.

We realize that Covid has necessarily impeded progress, both in community consultation and in a number of aspects of the intended Strategy implementation. In this connection, we would like to particularly thank Parks, Forestry, and Recreation (PFR) staff for the progress that has been made in implementing the pilot of the stewardship initiative promoted by Toronto Nature Stewards.

With respect to the work that needs to be done, we wish to focus on three aspects of the Ravine Strategy Implementation that are of particular importance in Midtown ravines:

- (1) further broadening of the citizen stewardship initiative,
- (2) the need to support and maintain more ravine plantings of native species, and
- (3) the need to accelerate capital investments in the Yellow Creek ravine.

Further broadening of the stewardship initiative

The pilot undertaken over the past year has underlined both the potential value of the citizen stewardship initiative and the need to expand it in several dimensions. We understand the need for staff oversight and urge the Committee—and through the Committee, City Council—to support an expansion of the stewardship initiative .

Up to this point, the scope of the citizen stewardship initiative has been circumscribed by concerns over the potential roles of these initiatives in Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs). We believe the pilot, along with the involvement by University of Toronto Forestry personnel, has demonstrated that citizen stewardship can be invaluable in extending what PFR staff is able to do on its own in ESAs as well as in other ravine areas. We urge the Committee to ask staff to report to the new Council in 2023 on how the stewardship initiative can be broadened.

Ravine plantings of invasive species

We applaud PFR initiatives such as the replacement of invasives by native species in the area at the bottom of Milkman's Road. We support the recommendations of the Toronto Nature Stewards that this be done more widely.

Capital investments in the Yellow Creek ravine

Our group was founded six years ago in part because of the rapid deterioration of the Yellow Creek ravine. In response to our concerns, a Working Group was established by City Council in January 2018 to participate in the development of plans for the major works required to restore the ravine infrastructure to a state of good repair, including the commissioning of a hydrogeomorphic study to guide the capital works required. The Ravine Strategy adopted by Council in 2020 identified the Yellow Creek ravine remediation as one of the initial priorities for capital investment in implementing the Strategy.

Since then, the hydrogeomorphic study has been undertaken and is nearing completion. We look forward through our participation in the Working Group to seeing the conclusions reached by the study. We trust that we can look forward to a rapid development of a Master Plan for the Yellow Creek ravine that will lead to capital investments in stream remediation and a trail network that will result in a safer and ecologically improved ravine park. With the intensification of Midtown Toronto adding tens of thousands of new residents to the area, along with the increased use resulting from Covid-inspired demand for outdoor recreation, the need for a revitalized Yellow Creek ravine has become even more of a priority than it was six years ago.

Nature does not wait for City planning. We attach some photos illustrating the rapidity with which the Yellow Creek ravine has deteriorated in the six years since our group was organized. We urge you to continue to support the capital investments that will be required to return the ravine—already a destination park in the 19th century—to a state of good repair and ecological integrity.

Yours truly,

John Bossons, Co-chair
52 Summerhill Gardens
Toronto, Canada M4T 1B4

Tim Ross, Co-chair
84 Douglas Drive
Toronto, Canada M4W 2B4

The Midtown Ravines Group is an incorporated non-profit organization formed by seven Residents Associations in Midtown Toronto. The member associations are the ABC Residents Association, the Bloor East Neighborhood Association, the Deer Park Residents Group, the Moore Park Residents Association, the North and South Rosedale Residents Associations, and the Summerhill Residents Association.
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... Just a few examples ...