



Baselands Master Trails Plan

April 28, 2015

Fire Academy, 895 Eastern Avenue, Toronto

6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Public Meeting Comments/Question and Answer Summary

**These notes reflect the general nature of the discussions and have been grouped by subject matter for ease of understanding. Please refer to the "Baseland Trails Master Plan meeting presentation April 28, 2015" for the complete presentation as provided at the public meeting.*

Meeting Purpose

To present and get feedback on:

- The goals and principles to guide the Plan; and
- The conceptual design for trails.

Draft Goal

To design a trail system that respects the significant natural environment of the Baselands while providing a variety of nature-based experiences.

Draft Trail Design Principles are to develop a trail system that:

- Avoids significant biological and ecological resources;
- Minimizes impacts on hydrology;
- Enhances user experiences;
- Improves user safety;
- Improves accessibility and access to key points of interest;
- Minimizes user conflict;
- Minimizes the number of and proliferation of unauthorized trails.

Contextual Notes from the Project Team

- The project team consulted with the Tommy Thompson Park (TTP) User Group in 2014 and based on those discussions have prepared the concept plans for the proposed trails.

- The proposed Pedestrian and Nature Viewing trails will follow the same trail typology as the TTP trails, and the Martin Goodman Trail and the Multi-use Unwin Ave-TTP Staff Booth Link trail will follow the 2014 City of Toronto Multi-Use Trail Guidelines.
- A survey of the current informal trail system in summer 2014 showed over 7km of trails in the Baselands. Some of the trails parallel each other or lead to nowhere. In wet areas, trails often get quite wide as people try to avoid getting their feet wet.
- The proposed trails in the interior of the Baselands will be reduced from 7km to approximately 1.8km. The proposed perimeter trails of the Baselands total approximately 1.4km.
- The intent of the trail plan is to focus high impact activities (i.e. cycling, dog walking) on the perimeter trails and keep them away from the interior trails of the Baselands. Dogs will not be permitted within the Baselands, only on trails passing outside of the area (Martin Goodman Trail and the portion of multi-use trail adjacent to Outer Harbour Marina Road).

Baselands History Public Comments

- Since the Baselands were constructed, a number of proposals have been made with respect to potential uses, including heavy industrial and a golf driving range. We are pleased to be in the current happy situation where we are deciding how best to use the Baselands for nature-based experiences.

Trail Planning and Design: Public Comments Received, Questions & Answers

Overall

- Let the footprint of the trails be light and easy. Once constructed, trails are never downsized, so it's best to start small.
- Ensure that dogs are kept out of the area.
- The Baselands need to stay a bit wild.
- The trail system is more or less working right now.
- We like the confusing nature of the current unauthorized trail system.
- The concept to reduce the existing informal trail network is good and I recommend that you actively restore the trails that are being shut down so that they return to the natural environment more quickly rather than simply fencing them to prevent access,.
- Some of the trails shown look too urban.
- It is nice to walk on a soft, permeable surface rather than a hard surface.
- The primary user group of the Baselands is the nature (fauna and flora species),and you must serve their interests first and you must serve those users.

- Get rid of the giant rubble piles and rebar.
- It is heartening to see the trail designs.
- I like the natural quality of the trails you have presented. We need more spaces to learn about nature and I am looking for a place for adults and students to explore and experience nature and this will be a great spot to taken them – they will understand it is not a playground, but a wilderness. I would like to see a place somewhere off of or away from the trails where we could gather.

Martin Goodman Trail (perimeter trail)

- There may be pressure for the Martin Goodman Trail to be salted for year-round access and I am concerned about salt water runoff impacting vegetation communities.

Q: Is it possible to use bioswales to treat salt water runoff?

A: Bioswales at this site can be challenging because the water table can be so high. It is better to hold the water runoff and allow for evaporation. Note that Unwin Ave. is already salted and the presence of non-native invasive common reed (*Phragmites australis*) is a symptom of the salt.

Multi-use Unwin Ave-TTP Staff Booth Link trail (perimeter trail)

- The multi-use Unwin Ave-TTP Staff Booth Link trail is awesome! This makes it safe, will reduce user conflict and can be fenced to keep dogs out.
- I recommend a different surface treatment for the multi-use Unwin Ave-TTP Staff Booth trail where it starts at TTP so that users know they are entering the park where vehicles and dogs are not allowed.
- I am concerned about the Multi-use Unwin Ave-TTP Staff Booth Link trail and the ability for dogs and cyclists to access the Baselands. I recommend constructing the other trails first and then re-assessing the need for this trail.

Pedestrian Trail (interior trail)

- Separate the pedestrian trails from the multi-use trails with a buffer of trees.

Q: How are the edges of the pedestrian and nature trails to be managed?

A: The trails will be adaptively managed by vegetation mowing or trimming, as is the current practice in TTP. The TTP Nature Trails are currently mowed about once per year and the primary pedestrian trails have a larger base, so there is less vegetation encroachment.

Nature Viewing Trails (interior trails)

- We like the meandering quality of the nature trails.
- I like the idea of boardwalks through the wet areas.

- I visit the Spit very often and am concerned that I am damaging sensitive vegetation during my walks in the Baselands; however I am very nervous of a giant boardwalk loop trail. I want to explore the Baselands but not damage them.

Q: Part of the beauty of the Baselands are the little trail off shoots that may lead nowhere. I would like to see small trail offshoots that lead off of the nature trail loops.

A: The proposed nature trails are conceptual and the alignment has not been confirmed. We are interested in hearing comments about trail off shoots from the nature viewing trails.

Trail Transitions

- On busy weekends there is a lot of vehicle, car and pedestrian traffic at the Leslie St. and Unwin Ave. intersection. It can be hazardous and I would like the plan to address this.
- I would like to know if you are planning for improvements to the TTP entrance because it is awful! When the yellow gate is closed it is hazardous for cyclists to access.
- I am concerned about conflicts with the Martin Goodman Trail and the Tommy Thompson Park parking lot and Tommy Thompson Park entrance.

A: We are looking at a larger plan for the TTP entrance, including a building with washrooms. We will be addressing some of the issues as part of the trail transition designs. We have just begun the design process, but moving forward the access will be more logical: the front gates will be closed when the park is open to the public, and cyclist and pedestrian access will be provided. Vehicles will access the parking lot via the new driveway off Unwin Ave. We will develop a strategy to mark and warn drivers and trail users at road-trail intersections. Techniques being considered include a different surface treatment on in the intersection using textures and colours as well as signage.

Dog Comments

- We are concerned about access to the Baselands by dogs. Please look very closely at the trail transitions to ensure they will be effective in keeping dog-walkers out.
- Prevent dogs from accessing the Baselands.
- No dogs is a great idea but hard to enforce.

A: We intend to design a trail plan with a focus on the transition areas that will restrict access by dogs.

Increased Public Use Comments

- The security and safety of trail users is important.
- I am concerned about unintended consequences of building trails, such as the need for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to have access. This area will need a wilderness approach to EMS.
- You cannot force or teach people to respect nature. More people coming to the area will ruin the Baselands, especially with increased litter.
- I am concerned about increased litter and garbage if the trail system is constructed.
- I am concerned that these trails will bring more people to the Baselands. I enjoy the solitude of the Baselands and would prefer if there were fewer people there.

A: We're designing the trails to improve the user experience while also protecting the sensitive areas, not with the specific intent of drawing more visitors. But we need to plan for the future and be mindful of the development of the adjacent Portlands area. The proposed trail plan is intended to keep people out of sensitive areas.

Ports Toronto Operations Comments

Q: When will Ports Toronto operations/lakefilling stop?

A: The Spit is its final size and shape. Ports Toronto is no longer accepting rubble materials and the focus has turned to the restoration of the Cell 2 confined disposal facility. Ports Toronto is a partner of the Cell 2 project, which requires approximately 300,000m³ of sandy type materials to cap the bottom of the cell and is expected to be completed in 2017. The Ports Toronto lease expires in 2018 and we may be in a situation where we can open TTP more often, however we are unsure if it will be open every day of the week. Further, should erosion of the shoreline occur additional lakefilling may be required.

Q: What is the plan for Cell 3?

A: Cell 3 still has an estimated 25-50 year capacity for dredged materials. Ports Toronto accesses Cell 3 via barge. The restoration plan for Cell 3 is a future project and planning has not yet started.

Other Comments

- Address the issues of homeless people living in the Baselands.

Q: Is there a plan to build an education centre next to the Baselands?

A: There are no plans to build an education centre at Tommy Thompson Park. The site itself is the main attraction and does not need another building to educate people. We currently have the infrastructure (Environmental Outdoor Classroom) in place at TTP to allow for educational opportunities. We would like to see a facility at

the TTP Entrance that provides washrooms and park information, however the first thing we need in place is a sustainable trail plan for the Baselands.

Q: I am interested in the hydrology of the Baselands. How well do you understand the hydrology?

A: We have completed topographic surveys and a number of geotechnical surveys on the Baselands. We understand that the wet areas are driven primarily by precipitation events as much of the site is impervious. There is not a great deal of water movement on the site; water evaporates rather than infiltrates or flows off the site.

Q: What kinds of birds live in the Baselands and how do the trails bother or help them?

A: We understand birds very well on the Baselands. Birders, especially new birders, as well as photographers, can have negative impacts on the diversity and productivity of birds depending on their behaviours. Unethical birding and photography where bird song playbacks are used, or birds, particularly owls, are chased via trails all around their roost area or nest are particularly problematic. The birding community does a good job of policing themselves and calling out unethical practices and events like the TTP Spring Bird Festival teaches people how to bird ethically. The proposed trail system will provide managers the ability to close a trail should a sensitive species be discovered nesting close to the trail. The Portlands area will continue to develop, so we need to plan for more people coming to the area so it can be protected.