

Cabbagetown Speaks

Neighbours Working to Improve Riverdale Park West

Dear Friends;



City Response to Community Input Regarding Improvements to Riverdale Park West

On June 21, 2011, the Riverdale Park West Stewardship Team and the City of Toronto jointly presented to the Cabbagetown community the draft plans for improvements to Riverdale Park West.

City staff have reviewed and incorporated many of the suggestions made that evening and have made recommendations which they feel will enhance enjoyment of the Park.

Staff will continue to engage with our community as they implement any improvements to Riverdale Park West, under the guidance of this revitalization plan.

In This Issue We Attach:

- ◇ A letter from Mary Battaglia, Acting Manager Parks, Toronto & East York District
- ◇ The Riverdale Park West Landscape Revitalization Plan (December 2011)

Going Forward

This revitalization plan describes a future state of Riverdale Park West. It does not itemize the order in which changes will happen, nor does it assign specific costs to these changes at this stage.

It is a reference guide for City staff and our community that describes the scope of changes to the Park. Operationalizing these changes will require ongoing discussions as the funding sources for each phase of work may differ.

Work is already underway and some improvement have already been made. Congratulations to Randy Brown and Cabbagetown Arts & Crafts Sale members for their fundraising efforts that have catalyzed the beginning of improvements to our Park's paths.

Issue No. 9

Riverdale Park West Landscape Revitalization Plan

January 1, 2012

Riverdale Park West Stewardship Team

Aberdeen Avenue Residents Association
Cabbagetown & Regent Park Museum
Cabbagetown Arts and Crafts Sale
Cabbagetown Preservation Association
Cabbagetown South Residents Association
Councillor Pam McConnell's Office
Don Vale Cabbagetown Residents Association
Friends of Riverdale Farm
Old Cabbagetown B.I.A.
Office of the Public Realm, City of Toronto
Parks, Forestry & Recreation, City of Toronto
(Parks Operations, Forestry, Natural Environment, Parks Planning)
Riverdale Farm Community Advisory Council
Transportation, City of Toronto
(Cycling & Pedestrian Infrastructure)

For more information contact
RPW2011@rogers.com

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December 16, 2011

Riverdale Park West Community

Re: Riverdale Park West – Landscape Revitalization Plan

Our meeting of June 21, 2011 to discuss the Riverdale Park West (RPW) Revitalization Plan was well attended by the community and resulted in your submissions of a wide array of comments and suggestions.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to all for their interest and participation in working towards a Revitalization Plan that will guide future upgrades to RPW.

The majority of the comments received were positive and complimentary, while some concerns required further consideration.

We have carefully reviewed your suggestions and comments while taking into consideration the diversity of park usage by the community. Below are recommendations which we feel will be worthwhile and beneficial to the park's enhancement and user/visitor enjoyment.

Bicycles and the Don Valley Bike Trail

A number of ideas were shared regarding the bike trail from RPW to the Don Valley Bike Trail.

Removing Diamond #4 at the foot of the hills is not possible as the baseball diamond is heavily used during the spring and summer months.

We will continue to work with our Landscape Architect to chart a route that will work for the majority of park users based on the feedback received and input from Parks Staff. The information will be shared with you once a suitable route is determined.

Fencing along the Paddock

A new metal Omega fence, compliant with CAZA guidelines, is recommended for installation as it would be stronger, more esthetically pleasing and increase animal safety and security. The addition of a safe formal walkway adjacent to the paddock would also help to enhance the visitor experience.

Litter Pick Up

Litter pick up and receptacles were issues mentioned by a number of people who attended the June 21st meeting. Solid Waste Services, another division within the City of Toronto has responsibility for waste disposal and recycling pick up in parks. Your feedback will be shared with Solid Waste staff to address the concerns raised.

Winter Maintenance of the Lower Flats

Parks does not currently maintain the service road to the lower flats in winter. The possibility of plowing road will be further explored however is dependent upon budget and staff availability. Waste receptacles must remain at the top of the hill during winter months in order to be regularly serviced.

As part of any new design for stairs and/or pathways, Parks Staff will work with the architect to address winter maintenance concerns as well as user concerns with hazardous winter conditions.

We will continue to engage with the community as implementation of any improvements to the park under the guidance of this revitalization plan proceed.

If you require further information, please contact Mark Hawkins at 416-392-6828 or by email mhawkin@toronto.ca

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Battaglia". The signature is written in a cursive style with a light blue background behind the text.

Mary Battaglia
A/Manager, Parks
Toronto & East York District

- c. Mark Hawkins, General Supervisor
Netami Stuart, Landscape Architect
Carol Guy, Supervisor

Riverdale Park West

LANDSCAPE REVITALIZATION PLAN
DECEMBER 2011



City of Toronto
Parks, Forestry & Recreation

INTRODUCTION

This Landscape Revitalization Plan for Riverdale Park West:

- Compiles and synthesizes available information about current and upcoming City of Toronto projects that may affect Riverdale Park;
- Articulates community and stakeholder goals & priorities for park improvements in both graphical and written form;
- Provides a coordinating vision for minor operating improvements, capital budget requests, and planned capital spending, and acts as a reference for future projects in Riverdale Park West;
- Presents a series of immediate and longer-term physical improvements that will achieve the goals.

This document was produced in 2011 by the Landscape Architecture Unit of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division of the City of Toronto. For further information contact: Netami Stuart, Landscape Architect (nstuart@toronto.ca, 416-392-3390).

BACKGROUND & PROCESS

Decisions regarding parks and the public realm are made every day by the City of Toronto, and it is important that these decisions be made with the input and participation of community and internal stakeholders. This document is the product of consultations and partnerships with the following groups. In particular, the Riverdale Park West Stewardship Team conducted and compiled community surveys on the use of Riverdale Park; and Cabbagetown Art and Crafts initiated a fundraising campaign that has contributed to pathway renovation in the park.

STAKEHOLDERS

Aberdeen Avenue Residents Association

Cabbagetown Arts and Crafts Sale

Cabbagetown Preservation Association

Cabbagetown South Residents Association

Don Vale Cabbagetown Residents Association

Riverdale Farm Community Advisory Council

Friends of the Farm

Old Cabbagetown B.I.A.

Residents of Cabbagetown

City of Toronto

Councillor Pam McConnell

PF&R – Parks Operations, Forestry, Natural Environment, Parks Planning

Cycling & Pedestrian Infrastructure (Transportation)

Office of the Public Realm (Transportation)

DOCUMENTS/PLANS

Our Common Grounds

PF&R Capital Budget & State of Good Repair Inspection Reports

City of Toronto Bike Plan

SCOPE

This document is intended to represent the general location, form, scale and function of park improvements. It does not replace detailed construction plans for park improvements. The improvements shown in this plan were developed with available base information. Construction drawings for major improvements and changes to Riverdale Park West must be based on recent topographical surveys, tree inventory data, geotechnical information and utility/servicing diagrams.

This document does not include any plans for Riverdale Farm, except the expansion of the western paddock.

VISION & PRINCIPLES

The following are the principles guiding the development of this plan and which should be used in future planning for Riverdale Park West:

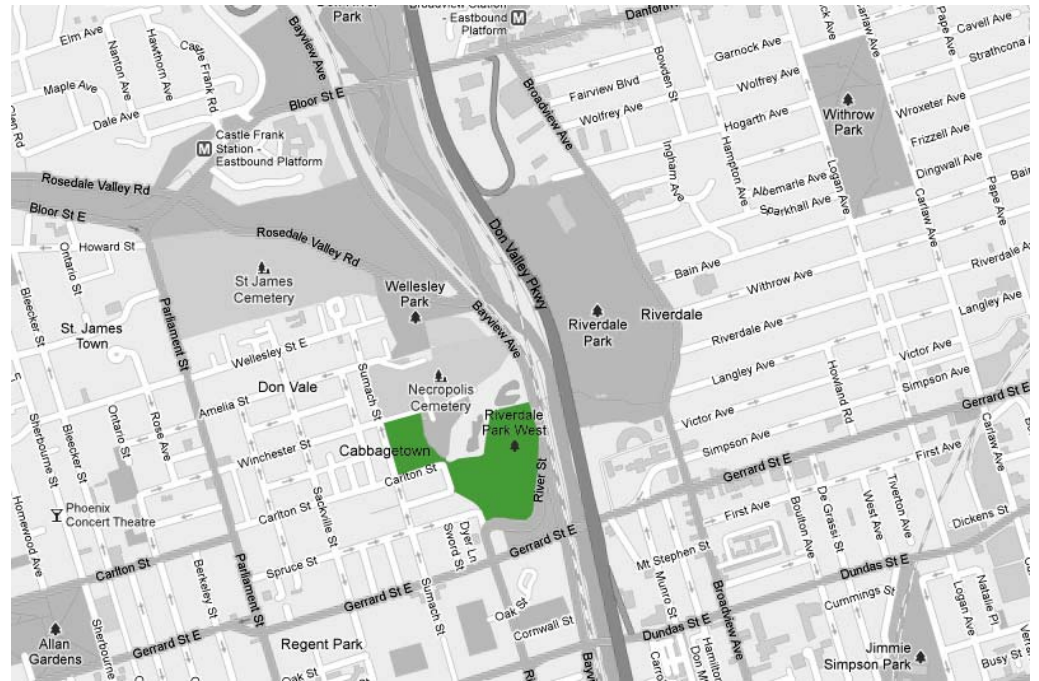
- Improvements to Riverdale Park West should be **respectful of the history of the park**; the form and materials of its heritage features; and the historic neighbourhood that surrounds it.
- Improvements to Riverdale Park West should be designed and constructed so that they can be **maintained** within the structure, systems and budget of the City of Toronto's Parks Operations Branch.

- Riverdale Park West is a historic gem among Toronto's public spaces. Improvements should maintain & enhance the **welcoming & public** atmosphere of the park.
- Improvements to Riverdale Park should be **beautiful & dignified**, to suit the character of the park.
- Improvements to Riverdale Park West should be **functional**, to satisfy the needs of park users and park operations.
- Improvements to Riverdale Park West shall be designed to be **accessible** to all, regardless of age or ability, to the greatest extent possible. All improvements shall adhere to applicable accessibility standards.

ISSUES & GOALS

Stakeholders identified the following priorities to be addressed in this plan :

- Control & direct circulation – Currently, pathways within Riverdale Park do little to separate pedestrians of all ages, commuting cyclists and dog walkers. Riverdale Park is a major cycling route since it contains the only pedestrian bridge over the the Don River between Queen Street and Eglinton Ave. Improvements in Riverdale Park West should provide cycling and pedestrian facilities that are safely graded, easy to navigate and that protect pedestrians from bicycle traffic.
- Improve safety – Much of Riverdale Park West, including the flats, the wooded ravine slope and the hilltop path are isolated from the residential Cabbagetown area. Good lighting, clear sight lines, and increased activity should be included in park improvements, to discourage illegal activities and increase comfort in all areas of the park.



Riverdale Park West Context Map

RIVERDALE PARK – OVERVIEW

Riverdale Park West is an historically significant park in central Toronto, within the Cabbagetown neighbourhood. It is situated to the west of the Don River, and connected to Riverdale Park East by a pedestrian bridge across Bayview Avenue, the Don River and the Don Valley Parkway. The Park is adjacent to, but separate from, the Riverdale Farm. The Necropolis Cemetery is directly north of the park.

Riverdale Park West includes two main parts: the formal park at the top of the slope and the recreational fields within the river valley. The slope between these two areas is partly a mown toboggan hill and partly a wooded slope. Both the mown and wooded parts of the slope exhibit well-used informal pathways, indicating that the two existing routes up and down the slope are insufficient for local multi-use traffic.

The formal portion of park has not been subject to significant renovation for many years. Prior to 2011, the most recent pathway repaving was done over a decade ago. Recent investment in the northeast softball diamond has made it a well-used permit facility.



Riverdale Park West Aerial View

Following is a list of the main existing amenities and facilities within Riverdale Park West:

FORMAL PARK FEATURES:

- Wading Pool
- Historic Gates at NW corner
- Asphalt & concrete pathways
- Community Bulletin Boards

HILLTOP PATH & WOODED SLOPE FEATURES:

- Asphalt path
- Informal paths
- Lighting

THE FLATS & MOWN SLOPE FEATURES:

- Senior Softball Diamonds with lighting (2)
- T-ball/Jr. Softball Diamonds unlit (2)
- Cricket Pitch
- Concrete staircase
- Toboggan Hill
- Asphalt Path
- Fieldhouse with Washrooms

THE RIVERDALE PARK WEST LANDSCAPE REVITALIZATION PLAN

In the following pages a conceptual plan and series of detailed plans and renderings show the potential improvements to Riverdale Park. The improvements include a re-organization of bicycle and pedestrian circulation within the flats and between the flats and the upper park. In this plan, a new asphalt path will provide cyclists with a safely-graded route to the pedestrian bridge while maintaining the toboggan slope runout area. The western softball field is moved eastward and the least-used softball diamond is removed.

The plan does not change the basic layout of the formal, upper portion of the park, rather it recommends subtle functional and aesthetic improvements to existing features. A materials palette is also suggested, so that where improvements are phased, they can be coordinated.

Pathways and major gateway and gathering nodes in the corners of the park, in the centre of the park and at the farm entrance are paved with clay bricks in order to accommodate the heavy pedestrian traffic. These improvements are designed to clarify circulation patterns, reduce conflicts between users (e.g. little children and cyclists) and to provide comfortable and accessible facilities in locations where use is heaviest (e.g. at the top of the hill).










RIVERDALE PARK WEST

Landscape Revitalization Plan

December 2011



- ① Farm Entrance Node
- ② Central Node and Farm Viewing Area
- ③ Water & Informal Play Area
- ④ Carlton Street Node & Toboggan Launch
- ⑤ Park Entrance Nodes
- ⑥ Hilltop Path Refurbishment
- ⑦ Refurbished Fieldhouse & Staircase
- ⑧ Circulation Improvements in Flats and Paved Connection to Pedestrian Bridge
- ⑨ Relocated & Renovated T-Ball, Cricket Pitch & Pickup Soccer Fields
- ⑩ Bayview Avenue - Potential Future Cycling & Pedestrian Facilities

-  Special Paving
-  Concrete Pathway
-  Asphalt Pathway
-  New Lighting (exact locations to be determined)
-  Existing Park Bench
-  Proposed Park Bench
-  Existing Trees
-  Proposed Trees
-  Proposed Shrub Planting

NOTE:
 This plan represents the general location, scale and function of possible park improvements, based on stakeholder consultation in 2011.
 This drawing is a conceptual plan only and shall not be used for construction.
 The improvements shown in this plan were developed with limited base information. Further plans and drawings for major improvements and changes to Riverdale Park West shall be informed by:
 -further stakeholder consultations;
 -recent topographical surveys;
 -tree inventory data;
 -geotechnical information; and
 -servicing diagrams.
 This plan does not include any modifications to Riverdale Farm except the expansion of the west paddock.

MATERIALS & FORM

BENCHES



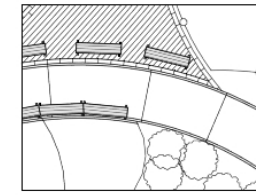
standard City park bench



custom curves



appropriate site placement

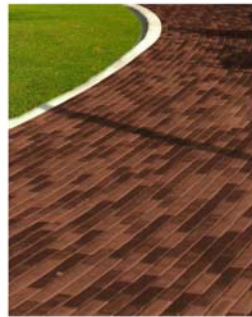
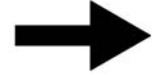


Riverdale Park Identity

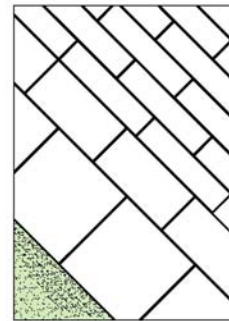
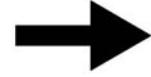
PAVING



Carlton Street historic clay brick paving



historically respectful real clay brick -can be used as accent or main pavement



running bond paving pattern allows donor recognition at edges

New furniture, features and construction materials used in improvements to Riverdale Park West must satisfy stringent requirements: they must be historically respectful while taking advantage of contemporary technologies and innovations. They must be robust and excellent quality for public use. They must be environmentally friendly, both in their operation and their sourcing. They must also establish a recognizable aesthetic or atmosphere that distinguishes Riverdale Park from other parks and situates it within the neighbourhood.

This materials palette for the Park will permit phased construction, repairs and minor capital improvements to contribute towards a unified Riverdale Park West.

FENCING



security/animal enclosure: 8' high black welded-wire fencing in public areas
-more transparent, strong & attractive than chainlink
-round post finials available for aesthetics



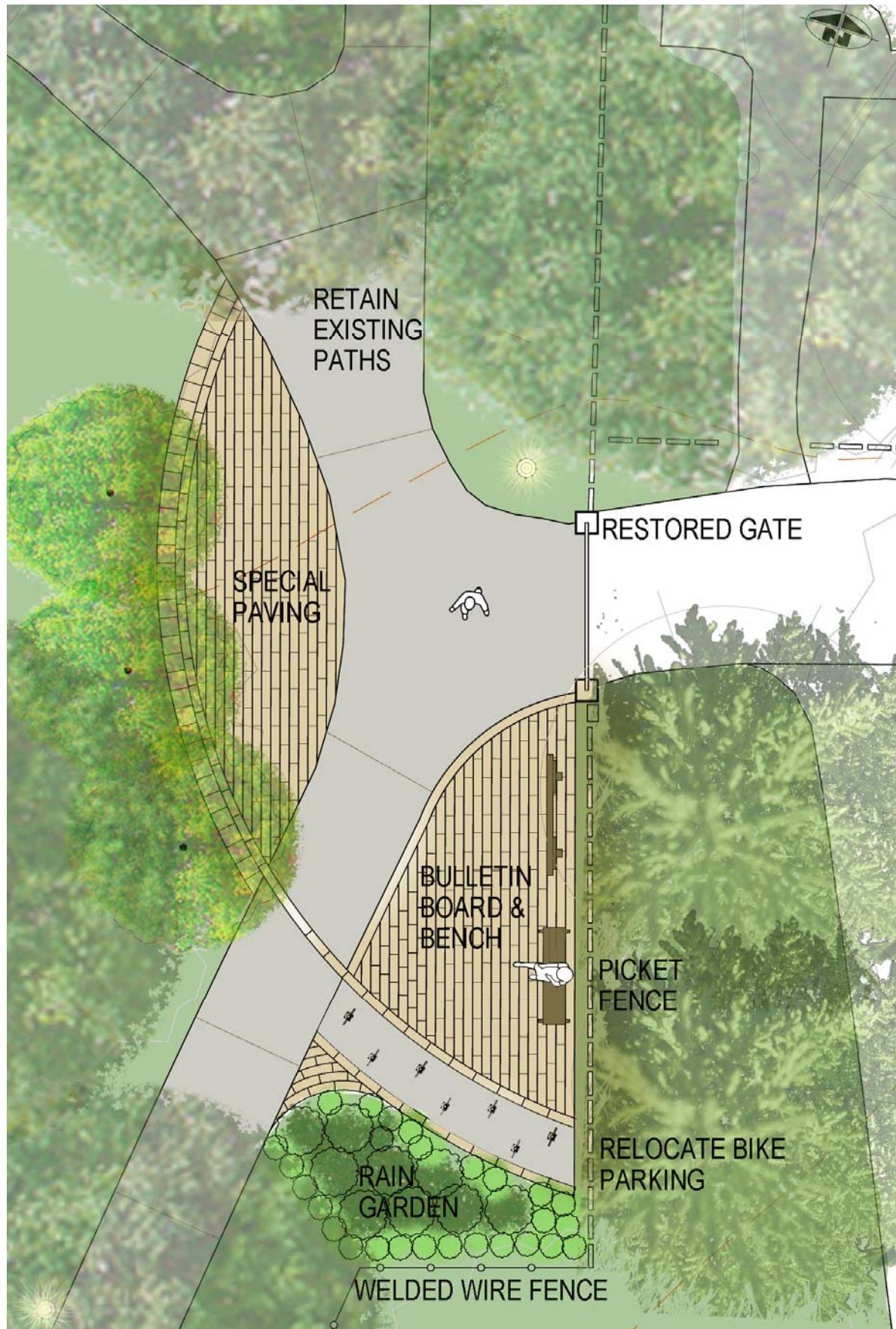
LIGHTING & BOLLARDS



bollards control vehicle access but permit pedestrian movement



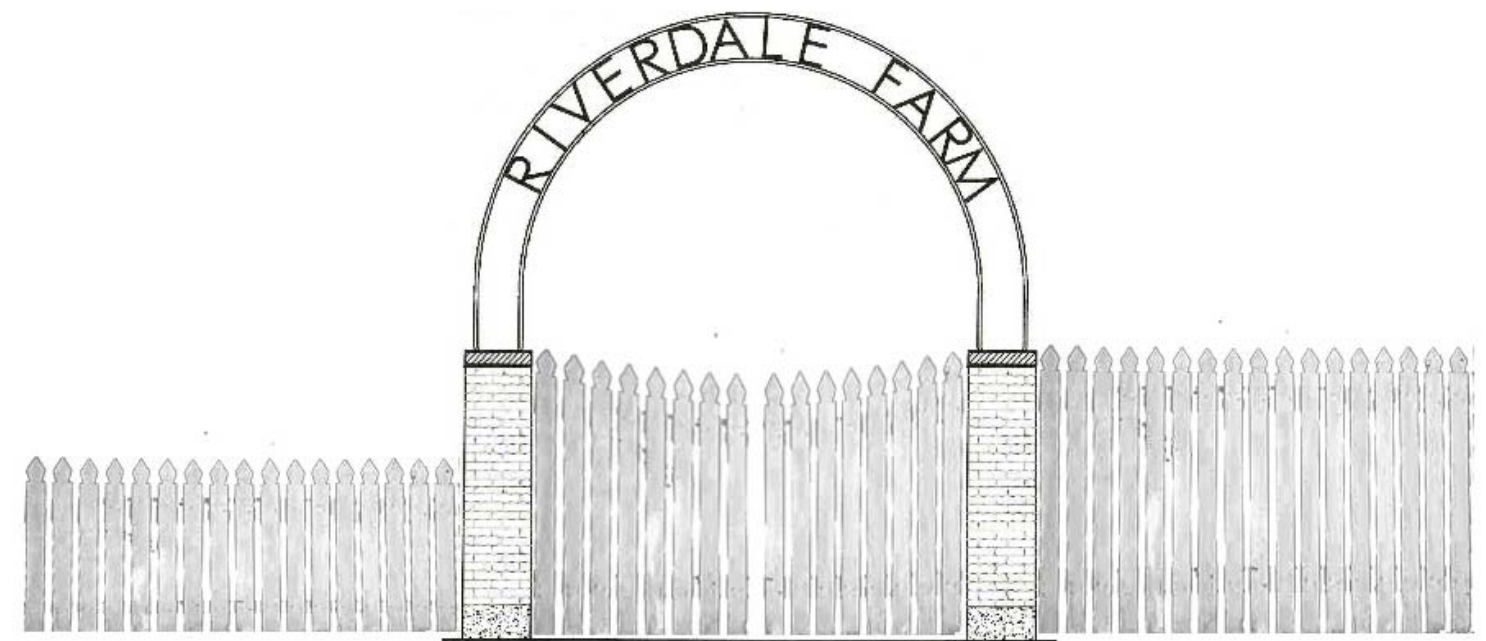
victorian - contemporary



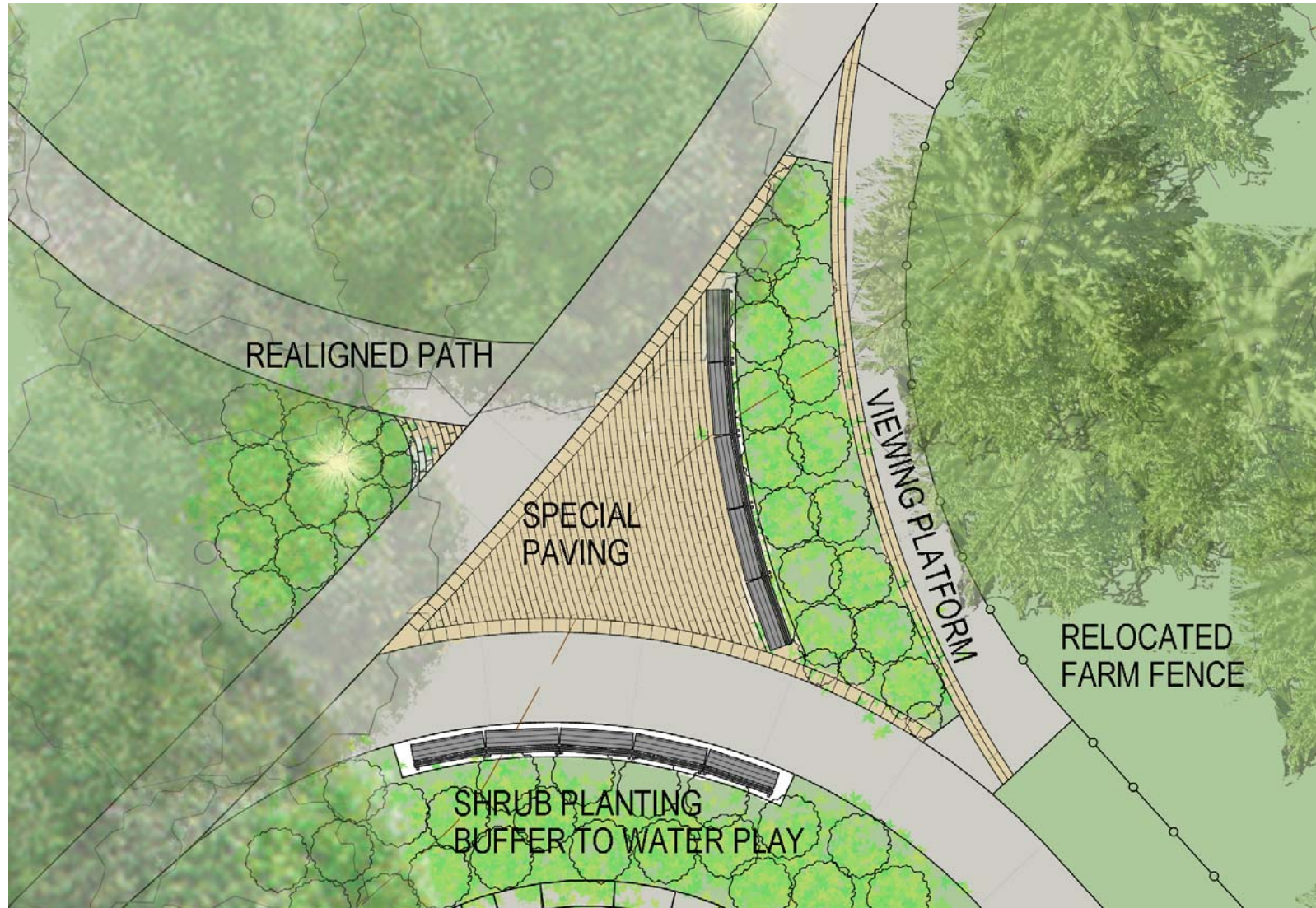
Farm Entrance Node

① FARM ENTRANCE

This node will create a functional and formal entrance to the farm that can accommodate the heavy pedestrian traffic that occurs in this area. Poor drainage will be accommodated by an ornamental planting bed that includes a gravel sump/bioswale at the south end of the node. This farm entrance node will also provide a transition point from the picket fence that currently surrounds part of the farm to the new animal enclosure welded wire fence.



- reproduction farm gates with masonry to match gate at NW corner
- picket fencing may be reinforced for animal enclosure and integrated with welded-wire fencing



Central Node

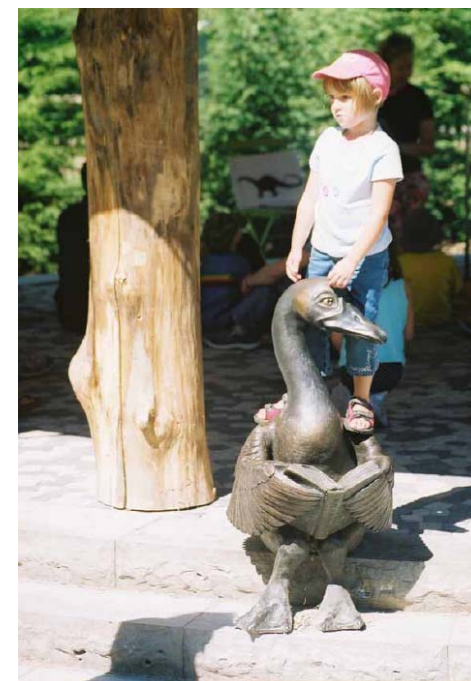
② CENTRAL NODE

The Central Node in Riverdale Park West fulfills several functions: it provides seating and a central meeting place; it acts as a chicane to slow down cyclists; it creates a paved viewing area near the relocated farm fence and it creates a separation from the children-focused area with benches and a low ornamental shrub bed.

③ WATER & INFORMAL PLAY AREA

Riverdale Park West currently contains a wading pool but no children's play structures. It is recommended that the area adjacent to the wading pool be maintained as an informal play and picnic area. A children's play structure is not recommended, however the existing tree canopy openings in this area would be an appropriate location for "playable art" or temporary sculptures as shown in the photos below.

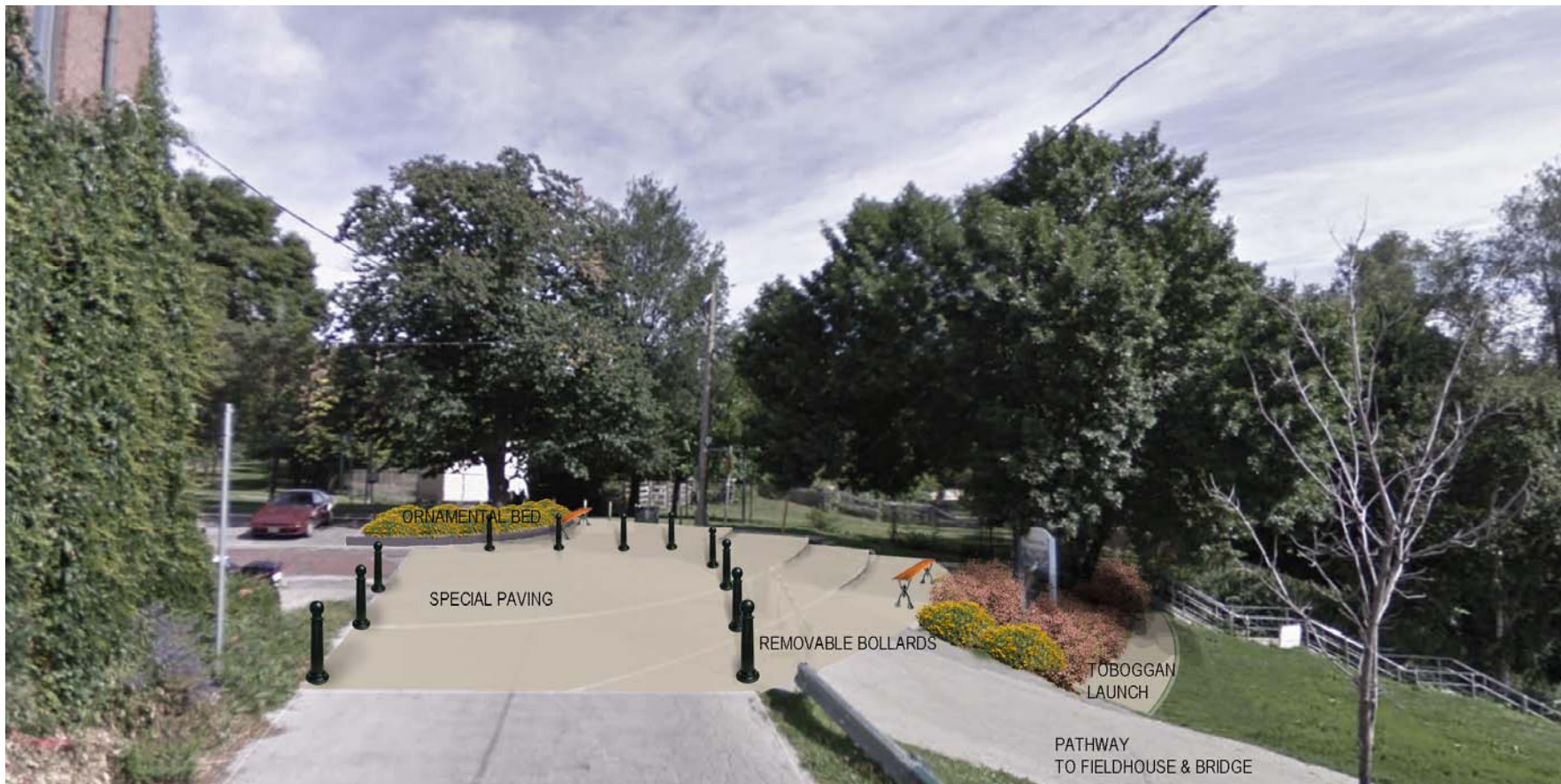
Renovations to the wading pool are planned before 2015. This is an opportunity to add a spray feature that extends the season and time of day that water play is available. It is recommended that the water play be buffered by natural stone and low-maintenance plantings from the central node, where cycling traffic is heavy.



Sculpture-as-play, temporary installations, natural materials



Carlton Street and Riverdale Park Road – existing conditions looking north



Carlton Street terminus proposed configuration

④ CARLTON ST. NODE

The proposed entrance Node at the terminus of Carlton Street will serve to organize and direct cycling, pedestrian and car traffic, while reducing slope erosion. Cyclists wishing to cross the Don River will be directed onto a paved path that descends the slope at a comfortable grade. Shrubs should be used to discourage cyclists from directly descending the mown slope. Bollards will prevent motorized vehicles other than parks vehicles from entering the Flats. A raised ornamental planting bed at the edge of the Carlton St. parking will protect the root zone of a mature tree, will create a formal aesthetic entry feature and will prevent illegally parked vehicles from restricting traffic on Carlton St. and Riverdale Park Rd.

⑤ PARK ENTRANCE NODES

Special Riverdale Park West clay brick paving, coordinated park furniture and lighting will mark the entrances to Riverdale Park West. Entrance nodes, at the corners of the park, at the end of Geneva Street, on River Street, and potentially on Bayview Avenue, create meeting places and mark the edges of the park, creating a recognizable aesthetic for the park.



Hilltop Path, Wooded Slope & Fieldhouse

6 HILLTOP PATH

The pathway within the park at the top of the hill along Riverdale Park Rd. and River Street should retain its current alignment but should be resurfaced. Lighting and seating along the path should be improved. This well-used pathway will become a recognizable access to the park through the addition of entrance nodes at River and Geneva Streets.

The tree canopy at the top of the hill should be thinned and aggressive invasive trees should be removed to allow lighter shade during the day and to permit new native species to be planted and thrive.

7 WOODED SLOPE & FIELDHOUSE

A new, well-lit natural stone stairway leading from the hilltop path to the fieldhouse will permit safe and comfortable access along what is currently a well-used informal path. Vegetation should be cleared along the sides of the stairway to create an open atmosphere and clear sight lines down the hill. Detail design of the staircase should include a ravine slope stewardship and restoration strategy that will establish ecological targets for slope vegetation and will specify invasive plant management methods and target plant species.

Any future renovations of the fieldhouse should reduce opportunities for hidden activity around the perimeter, especially behind the retaining wall at the rear. Sightlines and safety should be priorities if the building is renovated. It is recommended that any future redesign/repurposing/restoration of the fieldhouse be done with the participation of an historical consultant.

8 9 10 FLATS & PLAYING FIELDS

PATHS & CIRCULATION

Currently, there are few paved pathways in the flats area, resulting in erosion and informal pathways cutting down the toboggan hill and through recreational fields. This plan proposes a series of well-paved, well-lit pathways in the flats clear of overgrown vegetation. Such paths would be easier to navigate and drier to walk on, thus reducing eroded shortcuts and worn paths significantly.

In order to provide cyclists with a safe and comfortably graded route to the pedestrian bridge, a new pathway connects the fieldhouse to a relocated and improved westernmost T-ball diamond and to the northwest Sr. Softball diamond. This path is far enough from the bottom of the toboggan hill to allow toboggans to stop before hitting the asphalt. It is also visible from the top of the hill, and offers a more comfortable grade to descend and ascend than the informal eroded path down the toboggan hill. This provides cyclists at the Carlton St. node the visual cue that a safe paved path exists to the bridge.

An asphalt pathway is shown at the bottom of the wooded slope behind the southern softball diamond, connecting the fieldhouse to Bayview Avenue.

RELOCATING FIELDS

The plan shows a potential pathway configuration that requires relocating one t-ball diamond and the cricket pitch. Consultation with permit holders and recreation staff indicated that the center-east field is rarely used due to poor drainage. On the plan, there is one less baseball diamond, allowing for more pickup soccer or other uses in this location. The proposed cricket pitch location allows a larger playout area than the current location, although neither is a regulation-size field.

BAYVIEW AVENUE STUDY

City of Toronto Transportation Division is currently conducting a study of Bayview Avenue that may result in the recommendation that pedestrian and cycling facilities be installed on the east side of Bayview Avenue. This plan shows how circulation within Riverdale Park West would benefit from such a facility and how connections could be made within the park that would connect to this facility.