

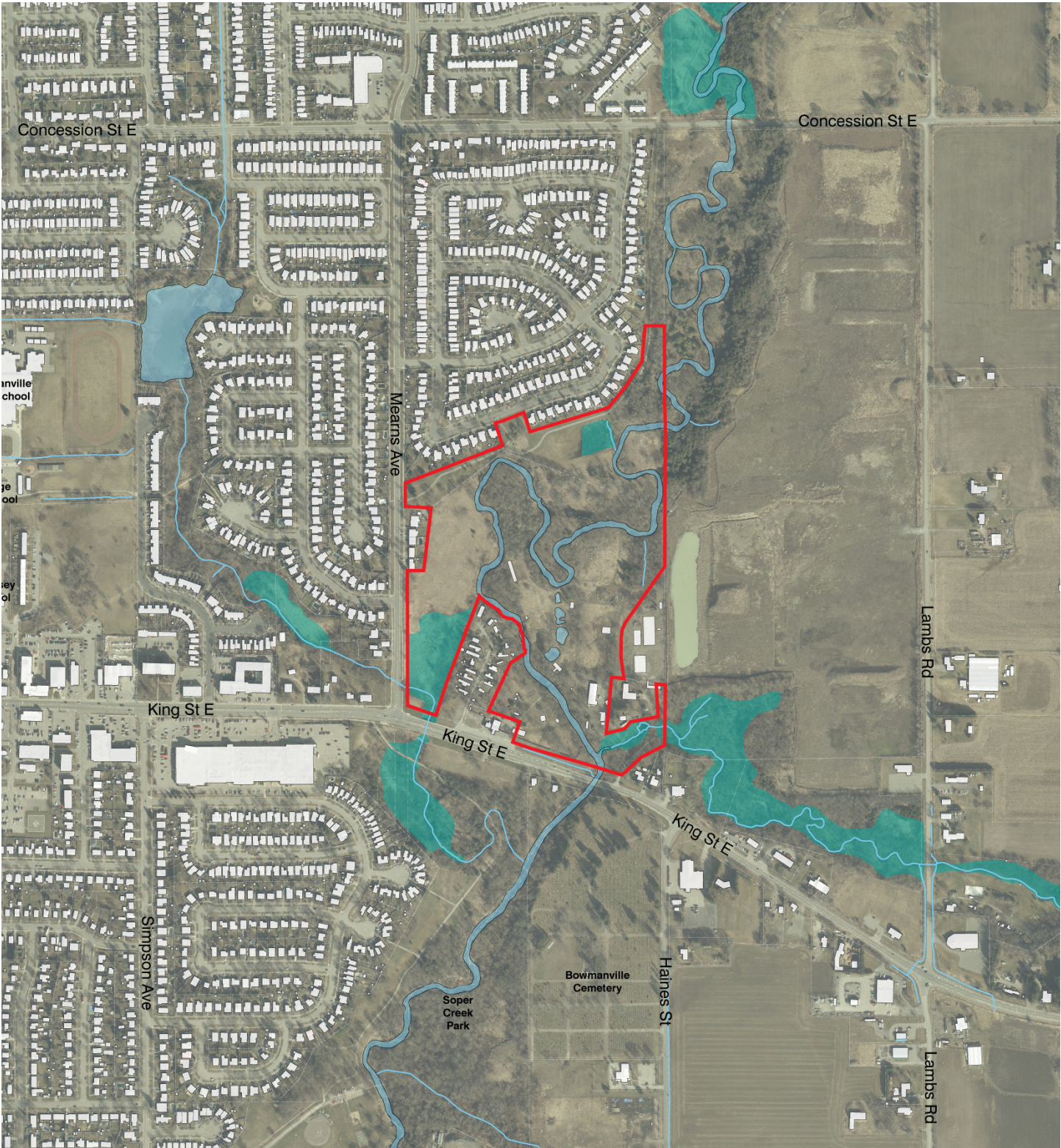
Bowmanville Park Concept

February, 2023

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Map of the Bowmanville Zoo Lands



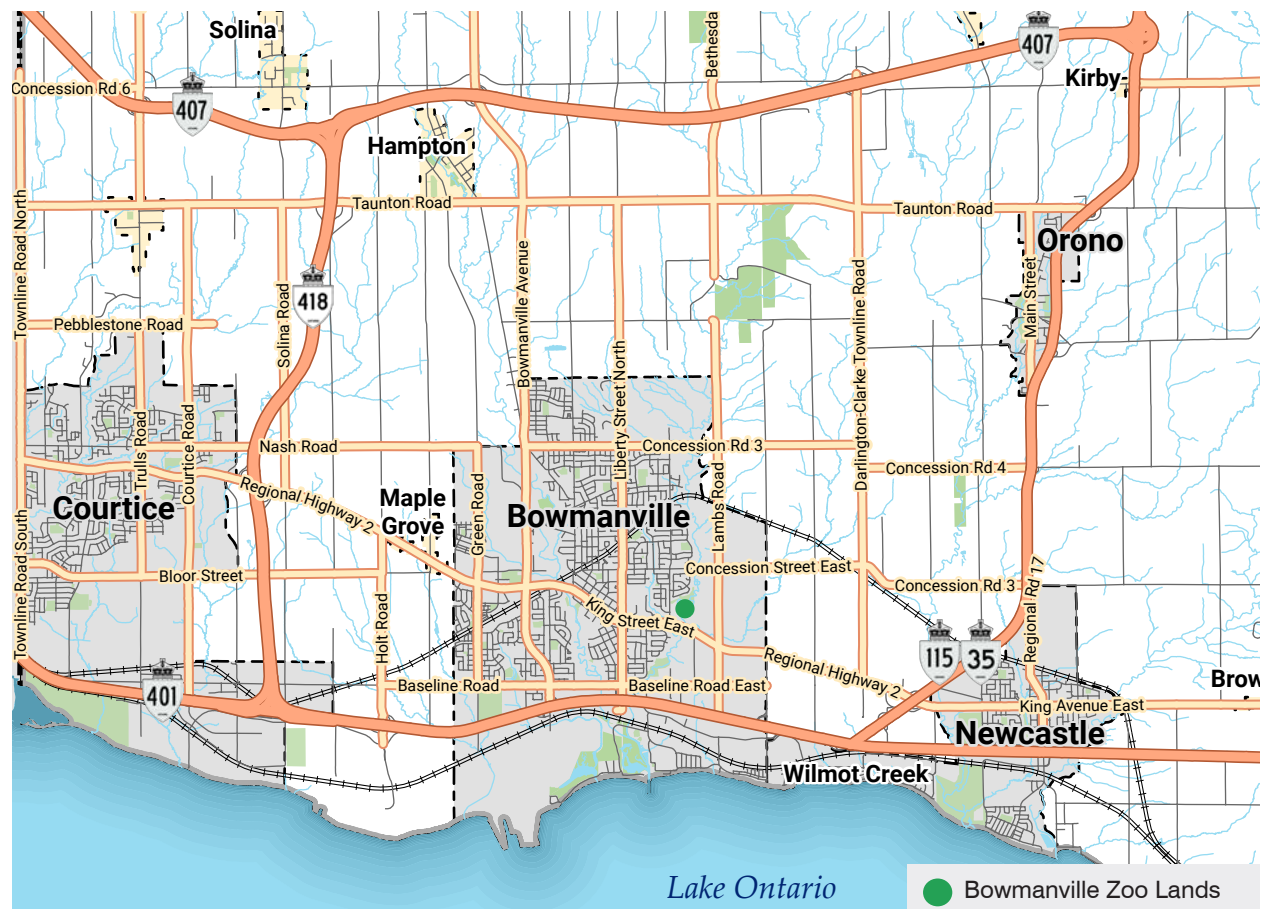
1 Introduction

There is a tremendous opportunity to reimagine some of the former Bowmanville Zoo lands as a public park. When the Zoo closed after nearly 100 years of private operation, the land was sold to a developer with 34 acres of the site donated to the Municipality of Clarington for a park. Clarington Council passed a resolution on December 31, 2021 directing staff of the Public Works Department to form a partnership with the Valleys 2000 organization to develop a plan for the Bowmanville Zoo lands. The concept plan will provide the basis for more detailed planning and design.

Valleys 2000 is a volunteer charity organization with a board of community leaders. Their mandate is to raise funds to help develop, enhance, promote and preserve trails, naturalize river banks, enhance fish and wildlife habitat and improve interpretive signage along the Bowmanville and Soper Creek Valleys.

Valleys 2000 gathered a group of diverse stakeholders together to share ideas on the possibilities for the site, at a “charrette” style design workshop. The feedback gathered at this workshop informed this high-level park concept for the Bowmanville Zoo lands.

Municipality of Clarington Context Map



The design workshop began with a brief presentation to set the context of the park and the variables to consider. Valleys 2000 opened the design workshop with a compelling message:



The Bowmanville Zoo was a private zoo that served our community for about 100 years. The zoo was much beloved by our community, and when it closed down a number of years ago, many people were angry and dismayed. Many of us have fond memories of the elephants walking through town, or of visiting the lions, or feeding the goats and sheep. Many of those beloved zoo animals lived their whole lives in our community and are buried on the property.

The proposed zoo park, which occupies much of the former zoo lands, is an opportunity to bring our community back together in that same space and to honour the legacy of the zoo itself.

How we do that is an open question.

Council, Valleys and the Municipality feel that we have an opportunity before us to build an amazing signature park for the community of Bowmanville. The existing lands already border trail systems to the north and south and integrating the zoo into the trail system makes a lot of sense. Beyond that purpose however, the zoo lands are something of a blank canvas onto which we can paint a spectacular new park.

Valleys believes that rather than simply choosing from a menu list of possible amenities for the space, we should start with a singular vision, tied to the history of the property, and look forward to a future in which people in the community have a park that is truly one of a kind, truly special, and truly reflects the feelings and sentiments of the community. In this 35 acre park we have an opportunity to celebrate the natural space, the historic space and the community space that was the Zoo - and to inspire and move people: literally and figuratively.

This will mean making some choices. It will mean casting a bold vision. And it will mean starting the planning process with a singular, thematic and inspiring vision for a park and then deciding what amenities make the most sense to fit that vision. After all, the great municipal parks (Central Park, the Highline, Brick Works, The Wandelpark, Stanley Park and others) all started with such a vision.

That's why we brought you together. In the room today we have representatives from the community, of every kind of expertise, every kind of perspective, and every kind of experience that can bring new insights and new ideas into the playing process. You are here because we need your thoughts, your vision, your ideas to bring the signature, part to life, and working together, Valleys believes we have the collective expertise in the room, and the talent in the room, to create a vision in a master plan that is unique, inspiring, and historic. And once we're done preparing that vision, Valleys will do what we have always done -- rally the community behind it, raise funds, and bring the dream to life.

2 Bowmanville Zoo Lands

The Zoo lands comprise 34 acres abutting King Street East and Mearns Avenue in Bowmanville. The lands are located north of the Bowmanville Cemetery and west of the newly developing residential area, Timber Trails. The map illustrates the relation of Timber Trails to the site and some of the development's planned park space adjacent to the lands and a stormwater management pond. A road adjacent to the park with houses only on the east side enables physical and visual access to the new park site through Timber Trails. The lands are connected to the Soper Creek Trail to the north and provides great opportunity to further develop and enhance the Soper Creek Trail system.

Timber Trails Development



Bowmanville Zoo Lands and Soper Creek Trail



History of the Bowmanville Zoo Lands

Bowmanville Zoo was once the oldest private zoo in North America. Established in 1919, it closed in 2016. Plans for the site's future include its redevelopment for parkland and natural purposes with its eventual inclusion in Clarington's Resilient Circle of Green surrounding Bowmanville's historic boundaries. The Circle incorporates the Bowmanville and Soper creeks, and is a multi-active transportation pathway for walkers, runners, hikers, cyclists and others using non-automotive modes of mobility.

The site once occupied by the Zoo, is on the banks of the Soper Creek. The Cream of Barley Mill (today's Visual Arts Centre of Clarington), is located farther south on the creek. At one time, both were part of James Morden's ambitious plan after World War I to develop a diverse visitor attraction featuring a campground, cabins, a zoo, a swimming pool, and other recreational opportunities. In pursuit of his vision, Morden hired Alfred Shrubb, to help manage and promote the Cream of Barley Camp. Shrubb was known as the world's greatest runner between 1903 and 1912. Shrubb's rivals before the war had included the renowned First Nations runner Tom Longboat against whom he competed in a celebrated series of both indoor and outdoor marathon-length encounters. During his association with the zoo, Shrubb would use the ponies housed in the front of the zoo, as partners in interval training. This type of training technique was first developed by Shrubb, and is recognized now as one of the more sophisticated techniques of developing high levels of fitness, although today, pony partner use is optional.

In the long run the two survivors of Morden's vision were the Zoo and the Cream of Barley Mill, with the latter being managed by Shrubb, who lived in Bowmanville for the rest of his life.

The Bowmanville Zoo remained a popular attraction not only locally but for tourists. As well, it prepared many animals for feature films. As examples, Bongo and Caesar, two African lions, starred in the 1996 movie *Ghost and Darkness*, featuring Val Kilmer and Michael Douglas. Additionally, a Bengal tiger named Jonas, had a role in the Oscar-winning 2012 movie, *Life of Pi*. Angus, a male African elephant, appeared as Jumbo in the A and E production of *The Life and Times of Phineas T. Barnum*, and surpassed the original Jumbo in both height and weight. Over the years the animals and their various keepers were also regular performers on numerous nature productions and children's television shows.

The Zoo's demise was an unfortunate consequence of changing societal views of privately owned captive exotic animals. In light of the extensive relationship between the zoo and its local citizenry, a large proportion of the land was donated to the Municipality for the creation of recreational green space, in order that the citizens of Clarington could continue to enjoy the property.

Photos of existing conditions in the Bowmanville Zoo Lands



3 Precedent: Don Valley Brick Works

The Planning Partnership worked with the City of Toronto and the Toronto Region Conservation Authority on the Don Valley Brick Works Park for over a decade. The 40 acre Brick Works Park is one of the City's most valued natural environment parks and an excellent precedent for the park on the former Bowmanville Zoo lands.

The park itself was developed as a demonstration of the ecology of the Don River Watershed and includes wetlands, ponds, meadows and woodlands for visitors to explore. In 2010, planning began to transform a collection of deteriorating heritage buildings into a global showcase for green design and public space. Evergreen Brick Works welcomes more than 500,000 visitors annually to experience its public markets, participate in conferences and events, enjoy outdoor learning and nature play, and explore public art in the heart of Toronto's ravine system. Evergreen Brick Works is a hub that connects citizens, business, academia and government.

The transformation of this former quarry site into a recreation amenity highlights the cooperation between government stakeholders and local citizens groups. The Brick Works Park is centred around an existing pond and wetland, and as such integrates stormwater management into the design and planning. This natural environment park is focussed on a series of constructed ponds where their natural ecologies serve as outdoor classrooms for visitors and a home to a wide variety of flora and fauna. The trails, lookouts and gathering areas provide the public with opportunities to engage with the natural environment while controlling access. The Brick Works Park has a significant volunteer base that assists with the management of the park that may be a precedent for the long management of the natural areas.

Built-heritage preservation, Don Valley Brick Works, Toronto



Stormwater management, Don Valley Brick Works, Toronto



Trails, Don Valley Brick Works, Toronto



4 Design Workshop

In advance of the design workshop, members of The Planning Partnership team, board members from Valleys 2000 and staff from the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority and municipality met to walk the site.

The design workshop was held on September 29, 2022, at the Chronicle Brewery event space in Bowmanville to co-create a concept plan for the former Bowmanville Zoo lands with a variety of members of the community representing various interests and perspectives.

Approximately **20** people joined the workshop including:

- 6 board members of Valleys 2000;
- 4 staff from the Municipality of Clarington from Planning and Development Services and Public Works;
- 2 staff from the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority;
- The former owner of the Bowmanville Zoo lands and the developer of the neighbouring Timber Trails community;
- Representatives from Ontario Power Generation and Toyota;
- A member of Clarington's Active Transportation Committee and a member of Clarington's Heritage Committee; and,
- A high school student.

The **20** participants were divided into two groups, each lead by a partner and landscape architect at The Planning Partnership. Following the presentation, each group discussed the variables, and the design lead illustrated a concept plan based on the discussion.

Local community groups shared ideas to envision what the former Bowmanville Zoo lands could become.



Valleys 2000 hosted a design workshop with the Municipality of Clarington and local stakeholders at Chronicle Brewery in Bowmanville on September 29, 2022.



What We Heard

*Natural classroom —
great for ecological
programming*

*Large meadow-like
lawn*

*Acknowledge the history
of the site*

*This is not a
sports park*

*Include municipal lands on
the south side of Highway 2
in the parks planning*

*Need multi-use
trails*

*Garden of
intelligence*

*Animal sculpture
garden*

*Circle of
green*

*Build as a surprise
— soccer field in
the centre*

*Need an
education
pavilion*

*Comment
gardens*

*Accessible
washrooms*

*This is a gift,
don't waste it*

*Soccer does not
have to be in this
unique space*

*Create
Connections*

*More opportunities
for seniors and
families*

*Need a pathway under
Highway 2*

*Need separated
dedicated cycling trails*

*Need public
art and space
for the arts
community*

*Encounters with
wildlife, flora, people,
play, art, history,
design, skating...*

*No sports fields,
it's only 34 acres*

*Bowmanville
zoological park*

*Connect to Soper
Creek Trail*

Lacrosse

Workshop concept, precedent images associated with park features.



5 Framework for the Design

The framework for the discussions was developed in collaboration with the Board members of Valleys 2000. The possibilities for the new park were considered by discussing options:

- Should the lands be a destination natural environment park or a community park with an environmental focus?
- Should the park include sports fields or have play facilities with an environmental focus?
- If there are sports fields, where should change rooms, washrooms and storage be provided? Should there only be a washroom or none at all?
- How much parking and where should it be located? Should visitors drive into the park or just into the entrance?
- Should the park include event or performance space and if so, where and how big?

Each group prepared a conceptual illustration that represented the discussion at the table. The two groups considered variables for the key park components as set out in the table below.

Following the group discussion, each group was invited to “pin up” their drawing and present the ideas. The large group discussion that followed each presentation enabled an understanding of the preferred elements of each concept. During discussions, ideas shared included:

- garden of intelligence... a place of encounters with wildlife, art, history, Indigenous history;
- naturalizing the landscape;
- educational programming with a natural outdoor classroom;
- connecting with the cultural past of the place;
- including a “frame of activity” with cultural performance, education nodes, recreation;
- an option to tuck a sports field in so it does not overwhelm the park and an option without a sports field; and,
- including a skating area or trail.

Park Design - Variables to Consider

Park Component	Group 1	Group 2
Landscape/Natural Features/Water Feature	Destination natural environment park	Community park with an environmental focus
Recreation facilities: soccer field, play field, play facilities	Environmental focus to play facilities, no large dedicated sports/play field, environmental education	Sports field, play facilities, event space
Amenities: pavilion, washrooms, storage building, performance space	Washroom close to entrance, no storage building	Storage pavilion, washroom, change room close to fields
Roads and parking	Parking at entrance only, could park across the road, pedestrian access only	Road and parking at the sports field
Trails (pedestrian and cycling)	Experiential trails through environmental features of the park	Trails will lead to facilities
Cultural Component	Small scale event/performance spaces; public art	Performance space; public art

[illegible]

Workshop Concept: Group 2



6 The Park Theme & Concept Plan

The overarching theme for the park commemorates the legacy of the Zoo and establishes a vision for a signature 21st century park for Bowmanville. This natural environment park will be an educational and cultural destination and a place of respite for residents and visitors.

The site will incorporate meadows that attract pollinators, woodlands that attract birds and other wildlife, wetlands for amphibians and reptiles and fish and the creek that winds through the park providing habitat for a wide range of flora and fauna. There will be space carved out of the natural environment for cultural gatherings and installations and walking and cycling trails will be integrated throughout the park. Cultural heritage features including the Iron Bridge that crosses the Soper Creek will be restored and integrated into the park design. The park will connect to the broader trail network extending south of King St E and north to surrounding neighbourhoods and be a part of the Bowmanville's Circle of Green.

Park Concept

The Planning Partnership developed the Park Concept using elements from each design concept generated at the workshop. The drawing illustrates a compilation of the best ideas for the site organized into the key components of:

- Community and Cultural Components
- Commemorative Forest
- Educational Elements
- Recreational Elements
- Natural Elements
- Trails
- Signage and Access

The concept plan provides a “point of departure” for continued conversation, engagement and consultation with the community, refinement of ideas, and development of detailed plans to guide the evolution of the former Bowmanville Zoo lands into the signature park envisioned by Valleys 2000 and the Municipality.

A Bold Concept for the Bowmaville Zoo Lands



7 Park Design Elements

Community/Cultural Components

The community /cultural components are located near the centre of the park in an area that avoids the wooded buffer along the creek. A new access driveway is located off the proposed subdivision to the east providing access to parking for visitors. The concept plan illustrates the following components:



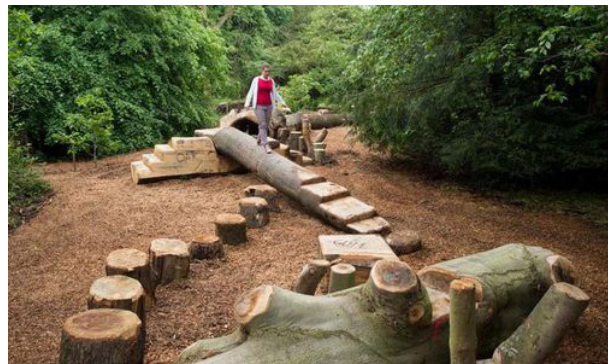
1. Performance, Art & Event Space – located west of the Soper Creek this component will provide a flexible venue for a range of cultural programming opportunities. Designed as a large open lawn it will be ideal for a movie night or a concert in the park.



2. Amphitheatre – nestled into the edge of the event space is an informal amphitheatre that creates a natural bowl with casual seating on slope or terraced edge and frames a small outdoor performance area.



3. Natural Playground – designed with all natural materials and elements this destination attraction is intended to connect children with nature in a naturalized park setting.



4. Picnic Area – intended for family and friend gatherings the area could include outdoor BBQ's, picnic tables and shelters.



5. Commemorative Forest - The Commemorative Forest is integrated with the successful Valleys 2000 commemorative tree program that serves to commemorate loved ones and to contribute to the ecology of the park. The program will be curated with native tree species and predetermined planting locations. There may also be the opportunity to expand the program to include commemorative benches or public art. The Commemorative Forest is located along the northwestern quadrant of the park, east of Mearns Ave.



Educational Elements

Educational elements are located near the south end of the park and accessed off King Street East. This area includes a nature centre, area for outdoor classrooms, an open lawn area for gathering, a community demonstration garden area for ecology and urban agriculture and a gateway feature to mark an entrance to the park. Educational components could be located in the existing historic zoo entrance building, which is not currently part of the proposed lands.



6. Visitor Centre – designed as an orientation, education and interpretation hub the centre will include programmed interior and exterior spaces for community use.



9. Gateway / Entrance - a park entry space designed to provide orientation for visitors. It will include a parking lot, waiting area, gathering area and shelter.



7. Outdoor Classrooms – for group orientation and gathering before and after park visits.



8. Community/Demonstration Garden – designed to educate gardening experts and novices on techniques to improve urban food production and to create productive habitats for pollinators, insects, birds and other wildlife.



Recreational Elements

A multi-use field is intended to be integrated with cultural elements and is comprised of an open lawn area that can be programmed for casual sports activities. It is not intended for leagues or competition but will provide casual recreation space for the surrounding neighbourhood. The zone can also be programmed for cultural events and gatherings. The network of trails throughout the park provides walking, jogging, cross country skiing and cycling opportunities for all ages.

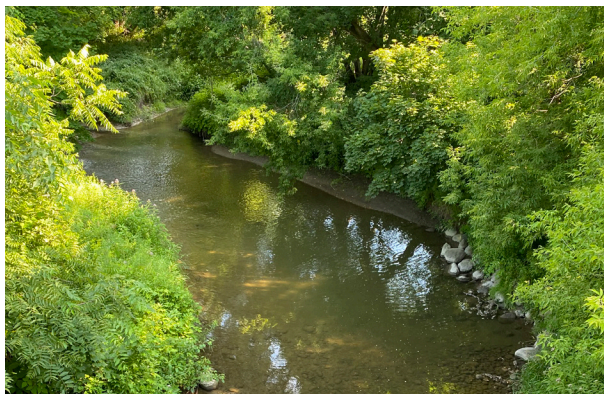


Natural Elements

The natural heritage features of the park will be protected and enhanced. They will provide for a range of educational opportunities focusing on the ecology of the region, its flora and fauna and the restorative processes that will be managed to ensure the park's long-term health and diversity. Amenities such as the network of trails, boardwalks, rest areas and interpretive wayfinding signage will provide controlled access to and through these natural areas, including:



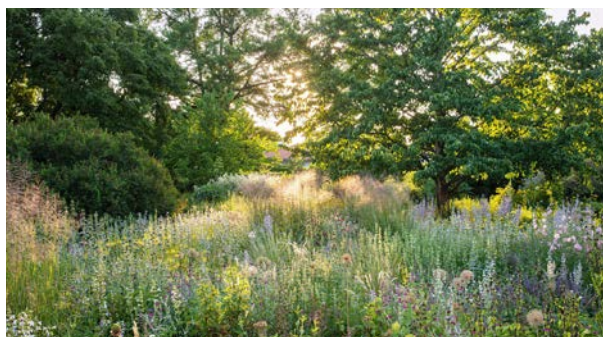
12. Soper Creek – protection and enhancement of the creek and its wooded valley slopes and buffers.



13. Ponds – enhancement of the existing ponds to create an enriched wetland habitat that contributes to the ecology of the park and provides educational opportunities for park visitors.



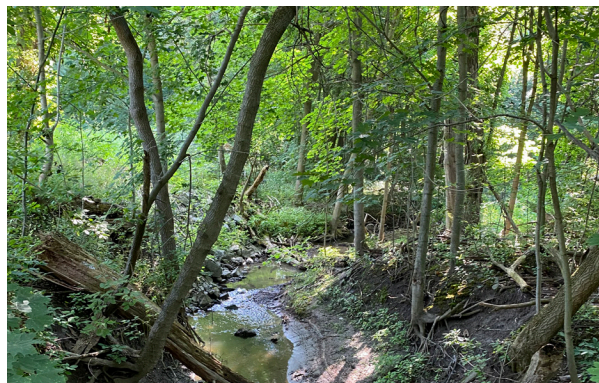
14. Wet Meadows – these areas are naturally wet and provide a rich natural habitat and an opportunity for visitors to see and learn about their role in the Southern Ontario landscape.



15. Dry Meadows – located in the eastern end of the park this diminishing Southern Ontario landscape is highly productive for pollinators and birds. The plan formalizes designated areas to protect and cultivate this habitat.



16. Woodlands – lining the edges of Soper Creek and extending north through the park the woodlands serve to protect the creek edges and provide habitat and protection for birds and other wildlife. They are also important experientially, creating visual screening between the park and the surrounding residential neighbourhoods and within the park between activity areas.



17. Trails – weaving throughout the park the trails begin at the points of entry and trailheads. They will vary in width and materiality based on their importance and anticipated use. They will connect to all of program spaces within the park and to the trail and road system outside the park including to a new connection under King St E at the Soper Creek Crossing.



★ **Interpretive Wayfinding Signage** – will be incorporated throughout the park, expanding the successful Valleys 2000 Connected Creeks program.



Cultural Areas

The cultural areas of the park include both the existing cultural heritage features and the proposed cultural programming, installations and events.

Art in the Meadow – includes both temporary and permanent art installations in a meadow of the park that highlight both cultural and natural processes and events.



Installations – curated art throughout the park that is accessible and appropriate for this unique setting.



Cultural Event Programming – encouraged and supported in specific areas of the park to ensure that the natural environment features are not compromised. Events will include concerts, outdoor theatre, art shows, markets etc.



Valleys 2000

Trails and Access

A variety of trails will be developed to provide access through the park. A new trail connection is proposed under King Street E in proximity to the Soper Creek bridge. The proposed network within the park will include both cycling and walking trails that will wind through the natural features of the park. Trail heads will be developed at the SW and NW corners of the park, at Orchard Park Drive, on Barley Mill Cr, from the proposed subdivision, and at the SE, NW and NE corners of the park.



8 Partnership, Support and Funding

Valleys 2000 is ecstatic to work with the Municipality of Clarington to support the development of an amazing signature park, bringing new public greenspace for the residents of Clarington to enjoy for generations to come. In this 34-acre greenspace, we have an opportunity to celebrate the natural space, the historic space, and the community space that was the Zoo. It will help us build an inclusive community with a commitment to the natural environment, while also driving the local economy, attracting visitors from outside the region.

A park of this scale would be developed in stages. Once a Master Plan and scope for the project has been developed, Valleys 2000 looks forward to working with the Municipality of Clarington to develop a budget and determine funding allocations. Recognizing the Municipality's competing priorities, Valleys 2000 will dedicate its resources to secure additional funding for the park through donations, corporate sponsorships, and exploring the possibilities for provincial and federal grants and funding.

