

# **Protection, Sustainability and Maintenance of the Chapel Hill North Forest and its Trails**

## **Report of the Forest Valley Trails Working Group**

**Public Information Session for Chapel Hill North Residents**  
**Monday, November 5, 2018**

**Presented by Forest Valley Trails Working Group Members**  
**Susan Davies, John Dick, Chris Ratcliffe, David Trus**

Thanks also to former members:  
Pascal Laverdure (co-chair), André Landry (co-chair), Julie St-Jacques, Ghislain St-Jacques,  
Patrick Brazeau, Robert Hutchison

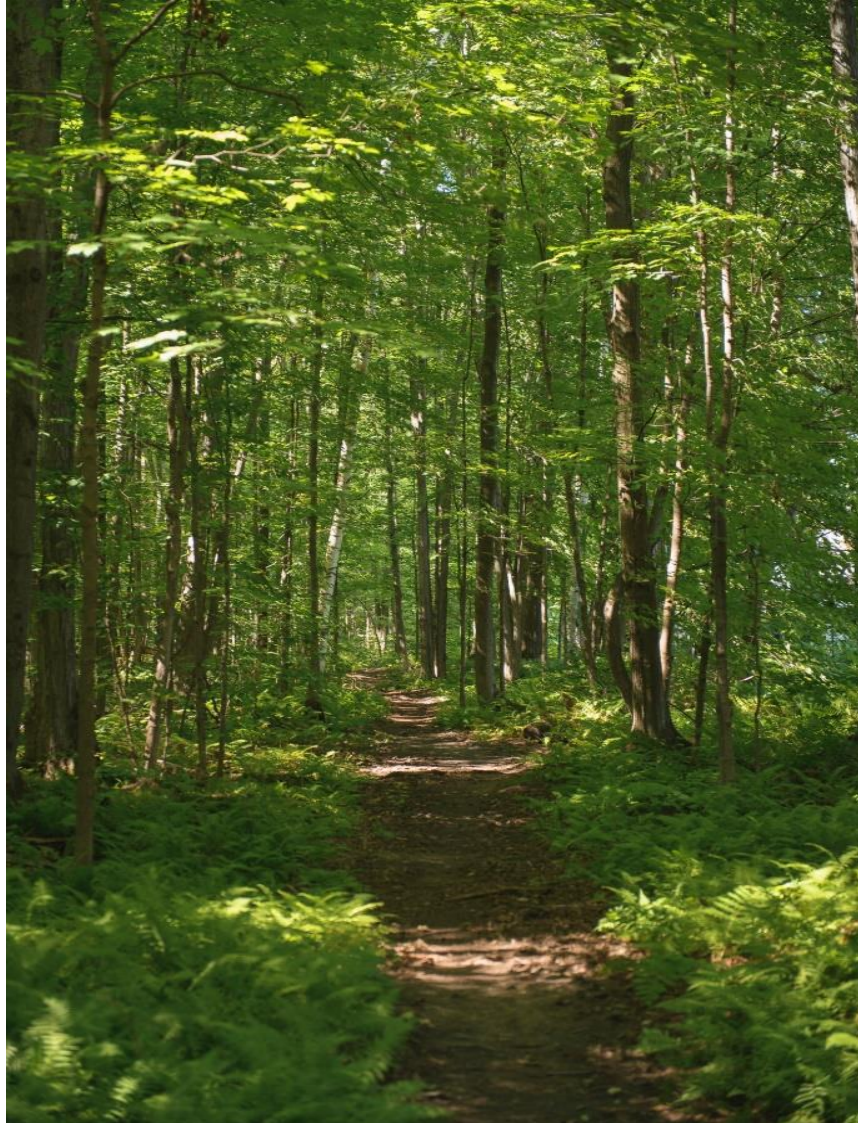
**FVTWG Report :** [www.chapel-hill-north-forest-trails.ca](http://www.chapel-hill-north-forest-trails.ca)  
**Comments and Feedback:** [chapelhillnorth.feedback@gmail.com](mailto:chapelhillnorth.feedback@gmail.com)  
**CHNCA Blogspot:** [www.chapelhillnorth.blogspot.ca](http://www.chapelhillnorth.blogspot.ca)

**FVTWG is an ad hoc Working Group of the Chapel Hill North Community Association**  
**Innes Ward 2, Orléans, Ontario**

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## What is the Chapel Hill North Forest ?

**A small area of old forest, which anyone can enjoy for its outstanding natural beauty and wildlife.**



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## What is the CHN Forest ?

Two adjoining areas of land to the western side of CHN, owned and managed by:

National Capital Commission (**NCC**): 169 acres, mainly flat, forested, meadow, 6.5 km of informal trails

City of Ottawa (**City**): 65 acres, ravines, steep slopes and escarpment, forested, 5 km of narrow informal trails

Voyageur Creek runs through the **NCC** and **City** areas.



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## **Why is there a FVTWG ?**

- ▶ **Residents' general concerns: fallen and dead trees, unauthorized structures, invasive species, environmental damage, parking & traffic, dogs off leash, garbage**
- ▶ **Proposal to City and NCC by Ottawa Mountain Bike Association (OMBA) to build and maintain trails and structures**
- ▶ **Residents concerns voiced at meetings: May 2017 public information meeting and CHNCA meetings**
- ▶ **Residents' letters and calls to Innes Ward Councillor Jody Mitic's office**
- ▶ **Chapel Hill North public petition**



**Councillor Mitic suggested formation of a Working Group, June 2017 CHNCA AGM**

## What is the FVTWG Mandate?

- ▶ To help identify options for trail maintenance
- ▶ FVTWG found it necessary to interpret the mandate in light of:
  - ▶ Interests and concerns of the CHN community and users
  - ▶ Authorities and mandates of NCC and City as the landowners and primary stewards of the forest
  - ▶ Environmental Protection (EP) zoning and high-value designations of the forest

## What did the FVTWG explore?

- ▶ Who owns the CHN forest land?
- ▶ What kind of forest and trails is it?
- ▶ What guides land use and activities in the forest?
- ▶ How are decisions made?
- ▶ What are the environmental requirements?
- ▶ What do experts and City-NCC-RVCA staff say?
- ▶ What have CHN residents said?
- ▶ What are the visions going forward?
- ▶ What are best management practices for urban forest trails?
- ▶ What is relevant for Chapel Hill North?

## Urban Forests

- ▶ Values and benefits
- ▶ Management of urban forests in NCC Greenbelt, City and RVCA
- ▶ Some exemplary management plans for urban forests:
  - ▶ Federal:
    - ▶ Rouge National Urban Forest
    - ▶ NCC Gatineau Park, Stony Creek, Mer Bleue, Green's Creek
  - ▶ Provincial
    - ▶ Ontario's Bruce Trail
    - ▶ Conservation Areas in Ottawa
  - ▶ Municipal
    - ▶ Ottawa Urban Forest Management Plan
    - ▶ Toronto Environmental Trails Strategy and Urban Forest Management Plan

## Regulatory Authority over the CHN Forest and its Trails

- ▶ Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments have jurisdiction and shared strategies
- ▶ NCC and City of Ottawa landowners:
  - ▶ Authority and Mandate for approving all activities and forest and trail maintenance
  - ▶ Consider existing CHN trails as unofficial and unsanctioned
  - ▶ Recognize the forest's Environmental Protection zoning
- ▶ Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) regulates the Voyageur Creek and its watershed.



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**What was the FVTWG's process?**

- ▶ Reviewed the policies and regulations governing permitted activities
- ▶ Investigated best management practices of other urban forests
- ▶ Consulted with the NCC, City, RVCA, Greenspace Alliance and other Ontario urban forest officials
- ▶ Conducted a “Walkabout” of City-owned area to understand its current status and condition
- ▶ Reviewed CHN residents’ concerns and interests
- ▶ Determined the implications for the recreational and maintenance activities in the forest and on its trails

## The Seven Mutually Supporting Priorities

- ▶ The implications of these needs lead to seven areas requiring action on a priority basis
- ▶ Presentation of each Key Priority in the Report provides:
  - ▶ Current Situation - Summary of the factors giving rise to the Priority
  - ▶ Goal - Desired end-state (long term)
  - ▶ Objectives - First steps towards the Goal
  - ▶ Recommended Actions - to meet the Objectives

## Priority 1 - Environmental Protection

### Goal

Ongoing protection, sustainability and maintenance of the high-value natural forest bordering CHN for its contribution to environmental integrity, recreation, and well-being of CHN residents, present and future.

- ▶ Importance and benefits of protecting, sustaining and maintaining the CHN forest and its trails
- ▶ Environmentally-based planning, design, mitigation, remediation and other measures
- ▶ Opportunities for outreach, feedback and involvement of CHN residents to ensure interests and concerns are heard
- ▶ Involve CHN residents in initiatives to support the forest

## Priority 2 - Forest Trails

### Goal

Trails that protect, sustain and maintain the forest consistent with the CHN residents interests and concerns.

- ▶ Collaborative relationship with the NCC, City and RVCA
- ▶ Urge environmental assessment as basis for trail layout
- ▶ Engage the CHN community in planning and design
- ▶ Design a trail layout with damage mitigation, rehabilitation, restoration and minimal environmental impact, consistent with environmental and recreational legislation, policies, plans and reports and informed by other cities' urban forest guidelines and best practices.
- ▶ Monitor forest and trails - report problems or damage to NCC or City

## Priority 3 - Health Benefits and Family

### Goal

Maintain the natural state of the CHN forest and ensure its ongoing environmental integrity for the physical, mental and social well-being of residents and other users.

- ▶ Value and use of the urban forest and trails
  - ▶ Moderate temperatures, pollution control
  - ▶ Support active lifestyles and fitness for all ages
  - ▶ Scenic and peaceful - mental health benefits
  - ▶ Support passive activities, leisure and nature appreciation
- ▶ Limit disturbance of natural features so all can enjoy
- ▶ Support multi-user activities

## Priority 4 - Forest Entry and Exit Points, Parking and Traffic

### Goal

Quiet, safe and attractive local streets that improve the living and environmental conditions for local residents

- ▶ Residents have concerns about increased vehicle traffic and parking near forest entry points
- ▶ Find parking areas for users away from residential streets
- ▶ Identify traffic management measures
- ▶ Consult regularly with CHN residents on their views

## Priority 5 - Public Education and Awareness

### Goal

Promote the value of the CHN forest, its environmental requirements and appropriate usage and enable enjoyment by all.

- ▶ Clarify appropriate vs. inappropriate usage of the trails.
- ▶ Develop and promote protocols for all users which are reasonable and practical.
- ▶ Provide information about the forest in multiple ways to support interest and knowledge, maintenance options, and compatible use

## Priority 6 - Feedback and Consultation

### Goal

Provide CHN residents a voice and opportunity to participate in any planning and initiatives involving the Chapel Hill North forest.

- ▶ **Ensure:**
  - ▶ residents' interests and concerns are heard and incorporated
  - ▶ openness and transparency
  
- ▶ **Encourage:**
  - ▶ engagement of residents in the care of the forest + trails
  - ▶ resident participation in setting directions
  - ▶ regular consultation with the City, NCC and RVCA
  - ▶ monitoring the forest - report problems to City or NCC



## Priority 7 - Next Steps

### Goal

The protection, sustainability and maintenance of the natural environment of the Chapel Hill North forest for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations.

- ▶ Create an advisory working group to
  - ▶ implement the FVTWG Priorities
  - ▶ produce a Chapel Hill North forest management plan in collaboration with the NCC, City and RVCA
- ▶ Engage in outreach programs of governments

## Options and Activities

- ▶ **Option A** - Key Priorities with Community Engagement
- ▶ **Option B** - Public Awareness and Forest Access with Community Input
- ▶ **Option C** - Status Quo

Options must be consistent with government policies and plans for environmentally protected urban forests

## Option A - Key Priorities with Community Engagement

- ▶ Based on all seven mutually supporting Priorities
- ▶ Possible results
  - ▶ Active and collaborative landowner and community engagement
  - ▶ Forest and trail management plan
  - ▶ Consultation and feedback with residents
  - ▶ Forest and trail usage protocols
  - ▶ Enhanced CHNCA capacity through formation of a FVTWG follow-on group to implement the Report

## Option B - Public Awareness and Forest Access with Community Input

- ▶ Focused community involvement based on two Priorities:
  - ▶ Priority 4 - Forest Entry/Exit points, Parking and Traffic, and
  - ▶ Priority 5 - Public Education and Awareness
- ▶ Possible results
  - ▶ Public awareness of appropriate trail usage
  - ▶ Consultation and feedback
  - ▶ Identification of Forest entry and exit points

## Option C - Status Quo

- ▶ Individuals, groups of residents or other users can approach the NCC and City with their own concerns, interests or proposals concerning the Forest and its trails
- ▶ The NCC, City and RVCA will determine on any action to be taken
- ▶ Passive role for the CHN Community

## Trail Maintenance Considerations

- ▶ Trail rationalization
- ▶ Priority setting
- ▶ Engagement of residents
- ▶ Role of Residents
  - ▶ Reporting
  - ▶ Advisory
  - ▶ Clean-up and other maintenance

## Conclusions

- ▶ The CHN forest and trails are a tremendous asset, valued for many reasons
- ▶ Residents want the CHN forest sustained in good condition as an essential part of the community
- ▶ A healthy forest is the cornerstone of enjoyable trails
- ▶ CHN residents want to be part of the solution

**Protection - Sustainability - Maintenance**

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## Feedback and Comments

Please send your feedback to

**[chapelhillnorth.feedback@gmail.com](mailto:chapelhillnorth.feedback@gmail.com)**

**By November 30, 2018**

Please indicate your name and whether you are a  
Chapel Hill North resident or non-resident

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Thank You !

**Questions and Comments?**