

Dear Councilor Grimes

Re: Colonel Sam Smith Park

At the last meeting of the Lakeshore Planning Council (held at LAMP on April 20th, 2006), local residents interested in Lakeshore development proposals expressed a firm and united opposition to the city's proposal to locate a large skateboard park in Colonel Sam Smith Park on the Etobicoke waterfront. No one objected to the placement of such a facility somewhere in our community. To the contrary, it is seen as a welcome and much-needed benefit to the neighbourhood and to the region. The proposed site is the problem.

Colonel Sam Smith Park is and was designed to be a naturalized setting with passive recreational use "dominant". This planning concept was clearly laid out in the 1997 Master Design and Implementation Plan for the Lakeshore grounds by the Etobicoke Council in 1997. As a result of that enlightened beginning, this unique park, in which the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority has provided local and area residents the rare commodity of open, natural space where wildlife encounters can be enjoyed, has been extremely successful and has become a priceless Lakeshore asset. The considerable time and money invested on the creation of this waterfront sanctuary has, in the opinion of the planning council, been well spent. We view the ecological restoration of this area's natural heritage as a central feature of the "revitalization of the Lakeshore". But, this treasure is now under threat because of a likely decision to locate a large, regional skateboard facility on site. The two objectives seem to be incompatible.

Views expressed at the meeting reiterated many of the well-known concerns already expressed by other parties opposed to the location of a skateboard facility at Sam Smith, especially those of Citizens Concerned about the Future of the Etobicoke Waterfront, whose stand on this issue we fully support. Areas of concern covered disturbance to surrounding wildlife caused by

loud music and the clattering of skateboard wheels, the incongruity of inserting an acre and a half of concrete and noisy activity into the tranquility of ever-diminishing green space, the probable escalation of vandalism already present in the park, lack of parking space, given the heavy use already by Humber College students and the apparent lack of both organized and passive supervision which carries a threat to safety in such a secluded area. We are certain that we represent the opinion of the average Sam Smith Park user who goes there primarily to seek relief from the hustle and bustle of the surrounding city.

We are also somewhat surprised by the seeming rush to implement this still contentious issue given that other sites appear to be more in harmony with this facility and that the money allocated by the City for this project in 2005 does not need to be spent until 2007 or possibly even later. There is still time and room for more reasoned discussion to find a solution that will satisfy everyone and provide the most suitable location without compromising the natural integrity of Sam Smith Park.

Considering the above, the Lakeshore Planning Council respectfully requests our representative at City Council to...

1. Defer the planned 2006 construction of the skateboard facility at Sam Smith until talks between the City, the Toronto District School Board and the Lion's Club regarding the allocation of land at the Gilbey site (Don Russel Park) are further along, given that Bruce Davis, TDSB's representative at the meeting, expressed the school board's willingness to accommodate the skateboard park at that location. (This site is being billed as the multi-use "recreational hub" of south Etobicoke; it offers TTC transportation, ample parking, some level of round-the-clock passive supervision, adequate noise buffering and immediate access to complementary facilities for skateboarders.. in short, a natural and obvious location.)

2. Further investigate Ourland Park as another suitable location given that it also has good TTC access, proximity to the highway, a community center, other complementary facilities, a reasonable buffer from residential areas, excellent visibility from the main road, eyes on the facility from staff and other park users and there is no apparent strong opposition from community groups.

3. Organize a public meeting so that there can be increased transparency to this process and improved communication between residents and their representatives.

Thank you

The Lakeshore Planning Council

C.c.

City of Toronto Parks and Recreation
Toronto Regional Conservation Authority
Mayor David Miller
Laurel Broten
Michael Ignatieff
Citizens Concerned about the Future of the Etobicoke Waterfront
Humber College
Lakeshore Yacht Club
Toronto District School Board
Police Services Board
Waterfront Artists
Good Neighbours
Etobicoke Guardian
Toronto Star
Globe and mail
Toronto Sun
Now