



What We Heard Summary #1

Westheights Park Natural Area Restoration and Management Plan

June 2024



Project Overview

The City of Kitchener is developing a plan for the **ecological management, restoration, and stewardship of the Westheights Park Natural Area**. This natural area is a key feature within the city that supports biodiversity and habitat for wildlife, while also contributing to the physical and mental wellbeing of the surrounding community.

The City, alongside Dillon Consulting and Dance Environmental, is facilitating workshops to engage the public in identifying opportunities for community involvement and input into the management and preservation of this ecologically significant space.

Westheights Park Natural Area Community Workshop #1



June 5, 2024



7:00 PM EST



Westheights Public School
429 Westheights Drive, Kitchener

The vision for the **Restoration and Management Plan** project is to involve residents as ecological stewards to foster community engagement and stewardship for the natural environment. It aims to educate and empower residents, encourage collective stewardship, ensure long-term sustainability, and strengthen connections between people and nature. **This approach helps create a sustainable and thriving natural area that benefits both the environment and the community.**

- Provide an update to the community on the natural environment assessment and findings to date
- Educate the community about the principles of ecological restoration and natural area management
- Gather input on the vision for the future of the area
- Develop actions the City and community can take to restore and manage the area

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6

124

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What We Heard: Vision for the Future

The key themes that emerged from the workshop on the vision for the future of area include:



Enhanced Accessibility

- Improve accessibility for all
- Install more benches for sitting
- Create places to sit and watch the pond



Plant Management

- Introduction of more wildflowers and native plant species
- Evergreens for winter birds
- Clear back reeds and reduce weeds around the pond
- Remove invasive species



Pond and Wildlife Management

- Maintain the pond's natural state
- Ensure the pond is healthy and consider making it deeper
- Protect turtles and their nesting beach
- Maintain a clean pond area supportive of all wildlife



Education and Enjoyment

- Install educational signs about types of trees and plants
- Ensure the area remains natural and enjoyable for walking and appreciating nature
- Encourage proper disposal of garbage through signage



Community Involvement

- Participate in planning meetings and arranging days for managing invasive species
- Foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among residents through collective efforts

What We Heard: Community SWOT

The key themes that emerged from the SWOT activity are summarized below. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The results will help determine priorities for the management and restoration of the area.

What is currently working well in the ecological aspects of the natural area.

- Existing pond health
- Community gathering place
- Trails are excellent connectors
- Peaceful
- Pleasant for walking
- Presence of wildlife

Strengths

Opportunities

Explore potential opportunities for improvement, restoration, or community involvement.

- Ongoing education on conditions
- Learning and community involvement opportunities for invasive species management
- Education about stewardship and maintaining area clean
- Education about types of plants and wildlife in the area



Identify the problem areas or potential areas of concern in the natural area.

- Pond is getting shallow
- Lack of immediate action regarding invasive species removal
- Waterfowl droppings making trails hard to use at times
- Presence of garbage at the bottom of the lake
- Lack of garbage bins

Weaknesses

Threats

Identify any potential threats to the ecological health and community enjoyment of the natural area.

- Pond seemingly turning into a bog
- Vandalism
- Garbage
- Doing too much to the pond
- Wildlife defecating around the pond

Find Out More!

View the project website for updates and explore ways to get involved!



[Westheights Park Natural Area Restoration](#)



[iNaturalist Westheights Park Natural Area](#)

Send comments to:



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