

LEAMY LAKE PARK SECTOR PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

Since it opened in 1961, Leamy Lake Park has been the object of many studies and discussions aimed at defining its planning and development options. In 1993, the National Capital Commission (NCC) partly approved the principal orientations for the Leamy Lake Park Sector Plan. In addition, having adopted an overall policy framework and a partnership-based strategy, the NCC joined forces with the City of Hull in an effort to complete the Plan. This would ensure that future planning and development would be balanced, efficient and respectful of the Park's unique features.

The Agence d'urbanisme Lavoie et Picotte was selected to produce the Leamy Lake Park Sector Plan with the help of the partners and in cooperation with local interest groups. Among its key objectives, the Plan aims to provide a long-term vision of the Park, to define the specific functions of each sector of the Park and its relation to adjacent sectors, and to provide action, management, investment, partnership and environmental monitoring plans.

Several public agencies, including the Communauté urbaine de l'Outaouais (CUO) and the Outaouais Tourist Association (OTA), have emphasized the importance of Leamy Lake Park from a regional perspective in their long-range plans. Indeed, the Park is a major green space conservation zone, and has all the necessary features to become a prime tourist recreation area. In addition, its vast ornithological and archaeological possibilities support the development orientations preferred by the main partners in this project. In its 1990 Official Plan, the City of Hull identifies the Leamy Lake sector as a major interest area. Finally, the Plan takes into account the NCC's national mandate as well as the policies of the 1988 Plan for Canada's Capital: A Federal Land Use Plan (revised in 1999).

Inventory and Analysis

Leamy Lake Park is bound to the north by the Gatineau River, to the south by Highway 5, to the east by the Ottawa River, and to the west by De la Carrière Boulevard and the Canadian Pacific Railway. The area covered by this Sector Plan is 174 hectares (430 acres), and the combination of Carrière Lake, the Leamy Lake outlet and tributary and the two adjacent rivers comprises a unique water system. The Gatineau River inlet has played key economic and social roles throughout the history of the region.

The dams and flood control structures built both upstream and downstream from the site have shaped the hydrography of the Park and adjacent area. Almost the entire area is located within the 20-year flood plain. However, thanks to the hydroelectric dams and water level control structures built by Hydro-Québec, water levels are controlled and much less subject to large variations. Water quality studies conducted on the water system have shown that connecting the Gatineau River to Leamy Lake and Carrière Lake would benefit the entire drainage system.

Flora and fauna inventories attest to the site's diversity. Although it cannot be described as an exceptional concentration of species, the site is home to a number of plant species classified as rare at the regional, provincial and even national level. Salamanders, as well as small mammals such as squirrels, beavers and muskrats, can be found on site. The area located to the northwest of Leamy Lake is a prime bird-watching

area, and is viewed as such by the local bird-watching community. Leamy Lake has an abundance of aquatic vegetation and spawning areas all along its shoreline.

In the past, the geographic location of Leamy Lake Park made it a preferred trading site and encampment area for the Native peoples of the greater Outaouais region. The Gatineau River delta is located at the meeting point of two major river systems that have been heavily used since the start of human activity in the area. During the prehistoric period, Aboriginal populations would occupy the site either for short layovers or for longer periods based on fishing or growing seasons. Later, during the colonization of the region, the site was used extensively by the forest industry for log runs. Today, following several archaeological excavation campaigns, the Leamy Lake Park site is recognized as the richest and largest archaeological site in the Outaouais, and one of the most important sites in Quebec.

Leamy Lake Park is located at the heart of the Hull-Gatineau-Ottawa metropolitan area. The urban area now surrounds the site and even encroaches upon it. Adjacent land uses include mixed-use, commercial-institutional and industrial areas. The land owned by the NCC has been designated as parkland and open space. The NCC owns most of the land located in Leamy Lake Park. Other landowners include the City of Hull, Casiloc Inc., the Ministère des transports du Québec, the CUO and private interests.

The management and maintenance of Leamy Lake Park fall under the jurisdiction of the NCC, which in turn delegates some responsibilities to private sector firms. In recent years, certain land management practices have been modified due to budget restrictions. The Park is equipped with a wide range of recreation facilities. With the exception of the Fournier Boulevard residential enclave, there are few buildings in the study area. The Park is covered by a network of recreational pathways that link it to the Capital's urban areas. There are two main access points, and a total of 646 parking spaces. Several lookouts along the recreational pathways offer attractive scenic views.

Leamy Lake Park is used mainly in summer, and the most popular activities include swimming and other water-based activities, cycling, walking, bird-watching, fishing, picnicking and simple relaxation. Although the Park is closed during the winter, cross-country skiers, walkers, snowshoers and ice-fishermen use the lake.

The potential and constraints analysis helped identify the Park's key features, which in turn served as building blocks for the preparation of development options.

Planning and Environmental Objectives

Planning and environmental objectives were developed in order to guide the elaboration of development options for the Park. The development objectives are drawn from the site's key features and potential. They are designed to confirm Leamy Lake Park as a "Capital Park," encouraging the development of the site through its archaeological and recreational tourism potential and ensuring the long-term viability of the existing open space networks. The environmental objectives have been developed based on the natural environment and man-made features as well as an evaluation of the policies of the parties involved. They are drawn from a sustainable development approach, including the preservation, protection and enhancement of the natural environment, and are targeted at improving the quality of the entire water system.

Proposed Planning Options

Two planning options were developed for Leamy Lake Park. Each was based on the planning and environmental objectives, the potential and constraints, and the inventory of existing conditions. Both options — the moderate (extensive) and the intensive — were first submitted to review by a limited number of interested parties, including the two main partners in the project, representatives of citizens' groups, local interest groups and local experts. In addition, close to 100 area residents expressed their views and participated in the discussion during a public consultation meeting. Both options were also analysed on the basis of planning objectives and environmental considerations. The results of these consultations were submitted for review to the partners' advisory and executive committees.

Preferred Planning Option

The comments expressed and the briefs submitted confirmed that the majority of the people, groups and organizations consulted preferred the intensive option, which includes the proposal for limited and controlled pleasure boating. This was also the preferred option of the two main partners in the project, the NCC and the City of Hull. In addition, a carrying capacity study dealing specifically with the lakes zone showed that this area can support a certain number of major events, provided that the cumulative environmental impacts of these activities are monitored to show that the activities remain feasible, and that proper mitigation measures are implemented.

The Capital Park designation allows Leamy Lake Park to maintain and consolidate its two main vocations. It will continue to be a preservation-oriented ecological Park, aimed at enhancing the area's natural, historical and archaeological heritage, as well as playing a role in welcoming visitors to the Capital, providing recreational activities and communicating and interpreting the Capital to its visitors. Furthermore, from a regional perspective, the Park's recreational tourism potential will be achieved in cooperation with interested partners.

Planning Zones

Leamy Lake Park is divided into seven distinct planning zones to simplify management and facilitate presentation of the specific features of proposed interventions and activities:

- the east zone (1): a preservation area allowing low- to moderate-intensity activities;
- the north zone (2): a preservation area allowing low- to moderate-intensity activities;
- the lakes zone (3): a moderate- to high-intensity activity zone, location of tourist recreation facilities ;
- the ornithological zone (4): a preservation area allowing low-intensity activities ;
- the Brewery Creek zone (5): a preservation area allowing low-intensity activities ;
- the industrial zone (6): a high-intensity activity area allowing industrial activity and public services ;
- the Fournier sector (7): a mixed-use urban area which is predominantly residential. The vocation of this area remains unchanged.

Proposed activities are divided into three categories: low-, moderate- or high- intensity, according to their impact and the risk of disruption of the biophysical environment, and the nature and intensity of human activity. In addition, all Park activities are subject to an ongoing environmental impact analysis, including cumulative impact.

The Sector Plan proposes a list of activities and an action plan for each zone. The Plan also meets the planning objectives established early in the planning process. A summary analysis of the planning objectives and recommended activities and actions illustrates this relationship.

The activities and interventions proposed in the preferred planning concept were subjected to an impact analysis. Residual impact was determined following the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures.

Park Management

The management of the Park comes under the NCC's Parks Services & Land Management Branch. A detailed management plan will be prepared on the basis of the orientations included in the Sector Plan. This Plan should provide managers with the tools necessary for the proper development and management of Leamy Lake Park.

An environmental monitoring program will be established and will enable managers to assess the impact of new facilities and activities, and to implement suitable corrective measures when needed. Park managers will be required to deal with issues relating to the full range of activities and services proposed in the Sector Plan, including the beach, boating, major events, site security, parking, winter activities, building rental and leases, site maintenance and partnerships. The Sector Plan provides a series of measures to assist in the implementation of a management plan. These measures are consistent with the orientations of the Sector Plan.

The implementation of the Leamy Lake Park Sector Plan will require investments, which will either flow from partnership agreements between public- and private-sector organizations, or from individual projects undertaken by one or more of these organizations. The Sector Plan includes recommendations on the distribution of investments among partners for the entire range of activities proposed for each planning zone.

Project Update

Development

During the preparation of the Sector Plan, many projects were carried out, some through public and private partnerships. Other projects were submitted for public consultation, for environmental impact assessment or for review by interested parties. These projects were guided by the planning objectives contained in the Sector Plan as it was being prepared. Other projects are either at the planning stage or being carried out.

Conclusion

The Leamy Lake Park Sector Plan reconfirms the area's primary role as a Capital Park, and puts the Park's recreational tourism potential in a regional context. The Plan aims to safeguard and enhance the Park's natural resources and facilities, and make it accessible to area residents and visitors to the Capital alike. The Plan will allow the coexistence of the Park's three dominant vocations, namely, the preservation of the natural environment, recreational tourism and archaeology.