



Attachment 4 _GHTC _WELLINGTON PLAZA RIVER TRAIL :

A Proposal to add the Wellington Plaza River Trail to the Third Party Trail Agreements under consideration by council at the committee of the Whole Meeting on September 7th 2021

11.1 Third party trail agreements 2021-249

Background

The Wellington Plaza River Trail runs from the Covered Bridge to Wyndham St behind the commercial plaza on the corner of Wellington and Gordon St. The trail runs alongside the river and is owned by the city of Guelph except for a 50 metre section behind the buildings of the western commercial plaza.

Before the Covered Bridge was constructed in 1992 cycling or walking along this trail was an “oft used” route to connect with downtown. It still is used as an existing informal trail by some city residents. It is a natural connecting link and avoids the traffic around the corners of Gordon St and Wellington.

The Trail became increasingly neglected until the Guelph Hiking Trail Club recognized the importance of this connecting link and in 2019/2020 started to engage with private property owners and lessees to make improvements. GHTC also engaged with city staff , who included the area in their “buckthorn eradication” program and cut back some overhanging branches in the Covered Bridge parking lot that made accessing the trail easier.

This trail is included in the 2021 Guelph Trail Master Plan.

Under Chapter #6 Implementation, Table #11 Evaluation of priority projects. It is #14 Lawn Bowling Club to Wyndham Street interim measure. It is a phase C project “Mitigating issues that prevent further action”.

Recent developments

The city confirmed that designation when they advised GHTC that they did not have the capacity to take out the dead buckthorn along the trail as they had done to the east of Wyndham. A situation that contributes to the trail’s reputation of neglect and another reason to avoid.

At the same time GHTC partnered with the eastern plaza property owner and arranged to paint out all the offensive graffiti that covered the walls of the building facing the trail. That is completed.

Simultaneously GHTC engaged with Guelph Community Health Centre and they have agreed to co-chair with GHTC on engaging all stakeholders in making this a “Welcoming space and trail for All”. We are planning an on-site meeting to brainstorm ideas for improvements and implement them.

Proposal

The Guelph Hiking Trail Club is requesting that the Wellington Plaza River Trail be included as an Attachment to the Third Party trail agreements currently under consideration by council.

This existing informal trail would be added to the Section Proposed trail routes. This is the text that would be added

“Wellington Plaza River Trail (Covered Bridge to Wyndham St)(Attachment -4).

Conclusion

This trail is adjacent to one of the busiest recreational areas in the heart of downtown. It is visibly neglected and avoided by many of Guelph's citizens . People who do use it do not have the amenities that are provided to other citizens along other parks and trails in the city contributing to a circle of stigmatization that in partnership with CHC, GHTC hopes to impact. At the same time it is absolutely consistent with the 2021 GTMP and its "community led, city supported" approach to trail building and the Appendix to the GTMP report which details the city's and parks sensitivity to issues of inequity and the desire to take actions to reduce it.

Sincerely

John Fisher President Guelph Hiking Trail Club.