

From the Desktop of Bonnie M. Durtnall

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I have just looked at the latest plan for the Ontario Reformatory. I do hope this is truly only an extremely basic preliminary. As it stands, it falls short of what Guelphites like myself expect and what many local groups want.

The language required to support the protection of both the natural environment and the heritage aspects of this property is, to put it bluntly, blatantly and abysmally weak. Why do the words chosen appear to support developers more than the landscape? I refer to such phrases as "permitted with consideration" and the very pathetic use of "seek" (used half a dozen times) and even the word "feasible." This is to say nothing of the words "improvements or required interventions." And how often does "[n]ew development... have consideration" for much of anything? Consideration is another word that appears multiple times (14).

Who defines these words and will reap the most rewards from them? The developers, of course. Not the landscape, the heritage aspects or Guelphites. In the blink of an eye, the natural and built landscapes – the walls and the ponds, could be demolished, relocated or altered.

As for "Non-contributing landscapes" which "include incongruous landscape features that detract or do not contribute to the cultural heritage value of the Ontario Reformatory HCD." I could argue that the construction of several townhouses or condos that only very few can afford are non-contributing landscapes in the most significant way.

I could continue but the failures within this document to provide a comprehensive plan that will not only work but is enforceable and shows the will to preserve and protect this particular property are many and worrisome. Surely, all involved can do better than this.

I am sure, it comes as no surprise that I support the ongoing efforts made by Yorklands Green Hub as well as Urban Park Guelph coupled with the firm and praise-worthy desire to create a National Urban Park on this site.