

SAVE BONNERWORTH PARK COALITION REBUTTAL TO THE CITY’S MAY 31, 2024 “Statement on Bonnerworth and Knights of Columbus Parks”



The full City statement is found at:

https://www.connectptbo.ca/bonnerworth-park/news_feed/statement-on-bonnerworth-park-project

City of Peterborough Statements:	Interpretation, Analysis, and Rebuttal:
<p><i>The City states that “Pickleball is a well-established sport in Canada with a strong and growing presence in Peterborough. It is a low-cost sport that is being embraced by all ages and all socio-economic groups.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pickleball is not a low-cost sport. The racquet and shoes may not be expensive but the courts, lights, shade pavilions, parking, and noise mitigation measures (which are often ineffective) cost millions to install. • Soccer and cricket are examples of sports that are truly low cost. That is why they are played all over the world, are vastly more popular than pickleball, and are the sports of choice for many of those who are likely to make Peterborough their home in the future.
<p><i>The City states Bonnerworth Park is “already used for active outdoor recreation purposes” and that “Healthy, thriving cities have parks and recreation facilities that meet the changing needs of their residents”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City’s statement confirms the park’s appeal to a wide range of existing active outdoor recreation users. Yet its plan foresakes the wide variety of current park users in favour of only three user types. • The City is serving a select few to the exclusion of everyone else in a part of the city that is “well below target” for neighbourhood park space. It is in effect privatizing much of what is now a public park freely available to and usable by the entire community. • Who loses? Youth and women's baseball leagues; primary and secondary school students; tennis players; soccer players; neighborhood kids, seniors, and apartment dwellers; picnickers; kite fliers; dog walkers; and community members in general who value and use this rare urban open green space. • The City’s plan also renders the park unusable for any use whatsoever during the winter.

<p><i>The City states its Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facilities Study approved by Council in October 2023 “included engagement with residents...”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City only actively engaged most members of the active sporting community. • The City did not consult—or make any specific effort to consult—Bonnerworth-adjacent residents, including a large seniors’ population in Hunt Terraces and Marycrest immediately next to the park, those residing in Malcolm Court which is also next to the park, nor any of the many nearby homeowners. • Nor did the City consult with key park stakeholders such as the Peterborough Baseball Association, the Catholic School Board regarding its athletic programs, the Lawn Bowling Club, and the many users of the open space provided by the baseball diamond outfield areas for informal recreational use.
<p><i>The City states its intention to create “recreation hubs serving the broader community, not just the immediately adjacent neighbourhoods.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of both Bonnerworth and Knights of Columbus parks, the City plans to eliminate all multi-use open space available for a wide variety of unstructured play by a wide range of users—kids, students of school athletic programs, seniors—in favour of single-use areas. • Residents of “immediately-adjacent neighbourhoods” will find little—if anything—relevant to their informal recreational use. • In the case of Bonnerworth Park, “immediately-adjacent residents” will be exposed to pickleball noise whose intensity and duration are well-known to affect mental health and well-being. For them, the “hub” will transform a community asset into an unusable area and a nuisance. • By concentrating of recreational facilities (75% of the City’s pickleball courts will be located at Bonnerworth), the hub strategy undermines the City’s objective of providing equity in recreational facility provision. • By creating a tennis “desert” in central west Peterborough, the Bonnerworth redevelopment eliminates existing high-school tennis and baseball programs, forces people to drive to other distant facilities, and undermines the City’s climate and transportation master plan objectives that seek to reduce automobile use. Transit schedules of one-hour bus

	<p>headways during the day are not a viable option for anyone using Bonnerworth Park.</p>
<p><i>The City’s statement indicates Bonnerworth Park contains 8 pickleball courts.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This statement is incorrect; the park currently contains 6 pickleball courts (superimposed on 2 of the 4 existing tennis courts). • The City’s plan will expand the current part-time use pickleball facility by 250 percent into a full-time facility of 16 courts, the largest pickleball complex in a single location in Ontario (the next largest is 12 courts). • Only 3 pickleball facilities of this size are found in Canada. • Bonnerworth Park’s residential context renders it unsuitable for a 16-court pickleball facility capable of supporting 500-person tournaments with its associated noise, traffic, parking, and other disruption. • The City’s 2023 <i>Tennis and Pickleball Strategy</i> states the City has received complaints from pickleball noise at Bonnerworth Park, and that pickleball noise exposure at Hunt Terraces may be unmitigable because of the height of the building. • The City has forged ahead in the face of widespread evidence of harm to residents’ mental health from pickleball-caused noise intrusion. It is ignoring lessons from countless other municipalities across North America that have learned the hard way—through legal action—that pickleball complexes of any size in residential areas are inappropriate.
<p><i>The City states that “Both parks [Bonnerworth and Knights of Columbus] are in need of rejuvenation and investment” and that “Bonnerworth [is] already mostly covered by sport fields and facilities.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space (including the ball infield and outfield areas) currently represents approximately 88% of the Bonnerworth Park land area. • Hardened facilities—the current parking lot and skateboard facility—occupy just 12% of the park. • The City rehabilitated the 4 existing tennis courts just three years ago. • The City ignores the critically-important role the grassed outfield areas provide for a wide variety of informal recreational uses.

<p><i>The City states that the “tennis courts at Bonnerworth will be removed and new tennis courts will be built at Knights of Columbus Park” and that it is investing in the upgrade of three other ball diamonds to replace the 2 diamonds lost at Bonnerworth.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City could spend upwards of a half-million dollars to replace what are 4 perfectly good tennis courts at Bonnerworth, and yet more money to upgrade other ball diamonds. • All this expense to replace perfectly good facilities is unnecessary, fiscally irresponsible given the fiscal challenges the City faces, and environmentally wasteful. • The City declared a climate emergency in 2019. There is no evidence to suggest the City has undertaken—or plans to undertake—an analysis of the CO2 emissions generated by this project.
<p><i>The City’s statement describes the two baseball diamonds as “low-quality fields”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing could be further from the truth. The diamonds are perfectly suited for women, kids, and high-school baseball users who do not need the size required for men’s league baseball. These users love these fields and their convenient location, but the City did not consult many of the primary users of these fields. • The diamonds are in excellent condition and well-maintained. • The City inappropriately uses a comparison with regulation fields suitable for men’s baseball; it is missing the point. • By removing these fields and proposing to upgrade others in less convenient locations, it is wasting more money and inconveniencing existing users.
<p><i>The City also states the two Bonnerworth baseball diamonds are “underutilized”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, nothing could be further than the truth. The diamonds are heavily-used by for women’s, kids, and high-school baseball leagues, both for practices and games. • Moreover, the diamonds are used informally for pick-up practices by families and small groups. • Importantly, the outfield areas provide essential open space functions when they are not being used for baseball, for informal activities such as pick-up football and soccer (and high-school practice), frisbee and

	<p>ball tossing, dog running, kite flying, and other activities by those who are not part of any formal sports organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City has completely ignored the needs of these frequent users served by these outfield areas; they provide the “neighbourhood park” space for which the City itself says the adjacent Bonnerworth Planning Area is “well below target.” • Moreover, studies of usage—including that by students’ athletic programs—do not represent the park’s typical use because of COVID restrictions.
<p><i>The City will spend much more than the \$2.035 million it says is needed to build 16 pickleball courts.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council approved the \$2.035 million budget for 2024—an estimate with a purported precision within \$1,000 dollars--on the basis of no plan, no studies of noise mitigation, traffic and parking measures, soil conditions, and stormwater management requirements. There is no provision for any cost overrun. • The City states the budget accounts for noise mitigation when at the time it approved the budget it had no study and no information to inform this statement. • Similarly, the remaining \$2.4 budget allocation for 2025 has been based on no plan whatsoever. • This \$4.4 million expenditure is proposed at a time when the City faces funding shortfalls that hamper its ability to address crises in essential services—in affordable housing, drug addiction, and crumbling roads.
<p><i>The City’s timeline of consultation confirms the inadequacy of its consultation process before “Council provided specific direction on</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City’s extensive timeline of its consultation process merely confirms the selective nature of who it consulted, and when. • Important segments of the baseball community that are primary users of the Bonnerworth baseball diamonds were not consulted prior to Council’s October 2023 approval of a project that excludes them entirely from the future use of the park.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City actively sought out the engagement of the three user groups it wanted to include in the Bonnerworth Park redevelopment, but never actively sought out representation from the broad communities of informal park users. We know of not a single resident in the Bonnerworth Park area that received an e-mail of the • Nor did the City actively seek to actively consult—as it did with selective recreational groups—representatives of Marycrest, Hunt Terraces, Malcolm Court, and adjacent residential communities it knew would be affected by the proposal—most especially 16 pickleball courts—prior to approving the overall plan.
<p><i>The City description of the following omits important information:</i></p> <p><i>“August 2023 – Arenas, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee special meeting to review results from the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facilities Study, including the recommendations for the Bonnerworth and Knights of Columbus projects.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City contends this meeting as evidence that APRAC approved the proposed Bonnerworth development. • As quoted in the Peterborough Examiner on June 7, the former APRAC chair stated the committee was asked for “no input” on the plan. • In the June 20 Examiner, the current APRAC vice-chair wrote that “it’s unfair and misleading to say that APRAC supports this initiative” and referred to it as the “ongoing Bonnerworth fiasco.” • Because the City convened APRAC in a “special meeting,” the City did not advertise it, and so the public had no knowledge of a meeting that had it been regularly scheduled could have attended.
<p><i>The City’s description of the March-April 2024 consultation confirms bias in its consultation approach.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The surrounding community and many existing park users only learned of the City’s plans in the lead-up to the March 2024 engagement, confirming the City’s lack of consultation before Council’s October 2023 approval of the Bonnerworth Plan. • The City’s “splash page” for Bonnerworth did not provide clear and easily accessible information that its plan would eliminate the 2 baseball diamonds and 4 tennis courts. • As before, the City actively sought out and met ONLY with a narrow range of park user groups. It did not consult with the Catholic School

	<p>Board whose students use the baseball diamonds and tennis facilities, nor the Peterborough Baseball Association. Student baseball and tennis programs will now be eliminated from the park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City staff rejected a request for a small-group meeting of residents after the PeterboroughConnect site (which announced future sports group meetings) went live on the basis they did not consider nearby residents to be park stakeholders. Really? • Again, the City made no active effort to solicit the input of Marycrest, Hunt Terraces, Malcolm Court whose residents it knew would be affected by the proposal—most especially 16 pickleball courts—prior to approving the overall plan.
<p><i>The City states it has “heard” from residents and stakeholder groups.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is clear from the statement itself that the City may have “heard,” but there is no evidence to suggest it is “listening.” • The statement defends a flawed process and plan that penalizes many current park users and adjacent residents—in seniors’ apartments, low-income housing, and houses. • The City omits the results of the March 2024 public consultation—that most survey comments (169 pages) state a preference for leaving the park mostly as is. Nor does the statement mention the many complaints the City received over its lack of consultation with existing park users and area residents before Council’s October 23, 2023 approval.
<p><i>The City states it is “doing the detailed design work and the necessary studies, including noise and traffic studies, which will inform the final design. Noise attenuation – the need to manage potential noise impacts – is included as part of the project budget.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sequence is completely wrong. Why would studies that “inform the final design” be undertaken <i>after</i> a project and budget has been approved? The City has assigned a budget on the basis of no plan. • To suggest the budget accounts for noise attenuation measures when the City had no idea what would be required nor their cost is perplexing. • The statement provides no direction as to what the City will do if estimates exceed the approved budget.

Under “What’s Next,” the City references only “previous input from community consultation” but not the commitments it has made for additional consultation. Why?

- The schedule for the landscape architect undertaking the final design requires the preparation of “Construction Drawings for Tender Issue” in May-June, followed by the “Tendering Process” in July-August.
- Yet at the June 12 budget meeting, the Commissioner of Community Services stated he could not say when the “necessary studies” will be completed. But the commissioner stated that construction is still planned for this fall. The project is obviously behind schedule.
- The City’s commitment to post draft copies of the technical studies for traffic and parking; noise; stormwater management, and geotechnical considerations on PeterboroughConnect for public review add pressure on its schedule. Will this commitment hold?
- The terms of reference for the landscape architect undertaking the final design requires the plan be submitted to the Arenas, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (APRAC) and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). The City cancelled the May 28, 2024 (APRAC) meeting at the last minute. The AAC has not seen the plan.
- Will the City bypass these committees to meet its tight schedule, and will they lose any opportunity to review this controversial plan?
- WHY DOES THE CITY NOT INCLUDE THESE COMMITMENTS IN ITS MAY 31 STATEMENT?