

PETERBOROUGH REGION

# Residents concerned Bonnerworth Park study results won't be public during consultation period

City says technical studies will be made available when they are finalized.

Updated Aug. 13, 2024 at 12:23 p.m. | Aug. 12, 2024 [📌](#) [🔗](#)



John Gerelus, middle, from left, and his fellow supporters are concerned study results won't be public during the consultation period as they gather at Bonnerworth Park in Peterborough on Saturday. The new draft plan, which includes 14 pickleball courts, a renovated skate park, and the addition of a pump bike track, was released to the public on Thursday afternoon.

Clifford Skarstedt Metroland

By **Sebastian Johnston-Lindsay** Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

While Peterborough Mayor Jeff Leal touts the new draft of the \$4.4 million Bonnerworth redevelopment plan, calling it “a carbon sink” capable of extracting nearly 50 tonnes of carbon out of the air on a yearly basis, critics of the project are calling the city’s plan an exercise in green-washing, which allays none of their concerns.

The new draft plan, which include 14 pickleball courts, a renovated skate park, and the addition of a pump bike track, was released to the public on Thursday afternoon, and a press release notes that it has been “informed by various studies and factors such as noise studies, traffic flow, groundwater conditions, and stormwater management.”

But the results of those tests will not be made public in advance of a joint meeting of the Arenas, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (APRAC) and the city's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) to be held virtually on Tuesday, causing members of the community to question the extent to which the city is seeking informed input on the plan.

In an email to the Examiner, city director of strategic communications, Brendan Wedley, wrote that the technical studies will be made available when they are finalized, alongside the final plan for the project.

However, until then the current draft plan "is being informed by the work from the technical studies, consultation, and project budget," Wedley wrote, adding that the consultant will speak to how the studies are informing the project during Tuesday's meeting.

For resident Richard Scott, a professional planner, this decision on the part of the city impacts the ability of both the public and members of the advisory committees to provide informed opinions on the project while the city is working to solicit their input.

"There's a lot of green-washing," Scott said regarding the fact that the new draft plan includes a plan to plant 275 trees. "Everyone loves trees, but to put 275, trees on a site that the whole community is saying needs to be used for community sports and informal uses ... you won't be able to use the space."

For John Gerelus, a member of the Coalition to Save Bonnerworth Park, the lack of available information, coinciding with the new draft plan "changes nothing."

"Without the results of the technical studies, APRAC cannot make a decision on this plan, nor can the public make any informed comments on the plan," a statement from the coalition states.

Gerelus noted recent developments at council, which gave staff direction to form a budget anticipating a five per cent tax increase following a staff report suggesting maintaining status quo services would require a 10.28 per cent increase for 2025.

"There's no reason to destroy the park, and especially spend that amount of money when money is needed in other places," he said. "There's going to be a lot of hard decisions that need to be made to get to five per cent."

Similarly, resident D'Arcy Jenish noted that with the five per cent tax increase, service cuts will be inevitable and, yet, despite this, the city is "going ahead with this frivolity," which he sees as "just a vanity project for Jeff Leal."

"It's going to be his (Leal's) legacy," Jenish said. "This council can't solve any of the real problems that this city has ... these guys are just going to charge ahead, blithely ignoring public opinion," he continued.

The period for public comments on the draft project plan ends at midnight on Aug. 16. Visit the [city's community engagement hub](#) or call [705 742-0050](tel:705-742-0050) ext. 2226.



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