

Ottawa Park Summit Report



A Summary of the Inaugural Ottawa Park Summit held on
April 22, 2017

At a Glance...

Goal:	To gather residents of Ottawa to inspire discussion and collaboration on the City's parks.
Participants:	125
Organizations Represented:	78
Survey Respondents:	54
World Cafe Initiatives Profiled:	9
Working Groups:	8
Common Concerns discussed:	Accessibility, maintenance of parks and difficulty navigating city by-laws involving parks

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1. Executive Summary

On Earth Day, April 22 2017, Ecology Ottawa and Park People hosted the inaugural Ottawa Park Summit. The first of its kind, the Summit brought together residents from across Ottawa to brainstorm the ideas, needs and challenges associated with local parks and to build networks for future collaboration. Keynote presentations, profiles of exciting park initiatives and breakout discussions were some of the highlights for attendees at this event.

In this report, we collate and detail the exciting outcomes of the Ottawa Park Summit. It will supply those who attended with a re-telling of the events and an analysis on the qualitative and quantitative data that were collected over the course of the day, and is a valuable asset for those who would be interested in participating in a second Ottawa Park Summit in the future.

During the working group sessions, participants had the opportunity to bring their own experience with parks into collaborative discussions. There was a pattern of similar answers to each of the three questions posed to the groups, as well as some answers that were striking for their uniqueness. Many participants were most concerned about accessibility and inclusivity, and felt they needed increased transparency from the City of Ottawa on how changes to parks are agreed upon and implemented. All expressed a desire for ongoing collaborative work.

At a glance, the survey distributed to participants prior to the Ottawa Park Summit produced some clear answers to some of the questions about how people feel about parks, notably their concern for issues surrounding accessibility, upkeep and maintenance, and their creative desires for new park projects.

Finally, we have prepared a Park Summit directory of all the organizations who were represented at this event, including the steering committee and the initiatives presented as World Café Stations. Attendees can use this document for creating networks of collaboration with fellow park lovers.



*Opening remarks from Graham Saul of Ecology Ottawa.
Photo Credit: Robb Barnes*

2. Introduction

The Ottawa Park Summit was a joint effort from Ecology Ottawa and Park People. Park People are a Toronto-based independent charity that build strong communities by animating and improving their parks. The organization reached out to Ecology Ottawa with the intent of creating a network of communities within Ottawa who mutually care about the city's many parks. Ecology Ottawa has been active for years in the environmental community of Ottawa and has the connections and constituency to bring together those who would work together to improve their parks. The idea is that when communities get involved, parks get better.

A steering committee was formed in winter 2016-2017 to create a vision for the event, comprised of key members of organizations already working to create environmentally sustainable communities in Ottawa: Graham Saul, Executive Director of Ecology Ottawa, Paul Johanis of the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital, Jordan Bouchard of Just Food, Dave Harvey and Natalie Brown from Park People, Jessie Granger from EnviroCentre, Gretchen Fitzgerald from Sierra Club Canada Foundation, Sheila Perry from Federation of Citizen's Associations, and Diane Urquhart from the Social Planning Council of Ottawa.

The Ottawa Park Summit would not have been possible without the generous help of the organizations that sponsored the event. We would like to thank the community associations of Riverview Park, Westboro, Hintonburg, New Edinburgh and Centretown for their generous donations as well as Green Rebel, Ottawa Organics, Beau's Brewery and Clocktower Brew Pub for the refreshments enjoyed during the break and reception.

We would like to give a special thank you to Algonquin Traditional Teacher Albert Dumont for opening the ceremony and reminding us that the Ottawa Park Summit takes place on unceded Algonquin territory. Thanks are also extended to councillor Jeff Leiper for saying a few words on why parks are important to him and his riding, and to Ottawa as a whole.



Participants learn about an exciting park initiative during the World Cafe segment. Photo Credit: Andres Pena

3. Attendance

The Ottawa Park Summit was attended by 125 participants representing 78 organizations. These include community organizations, sustainable food networks, community gardens, charitable organizations, environmental non-profit organizations, faith groups and many other groups advocating specific park related initiatives. A complete list of the groups represented at the Ottawa Park Summit can be found in Appendix A. Not all attendees were representing an organization; many were concerned citizens looking to engage with their community about local parks.

Support from the City of Ottawa is imperative for tangible park action, which underscores the importance of the attendance of three city councilors: Jeff Leiper, David Chernushenko and Mathieu Fleury. Also in attendance was Kevin Wherry, manager at Recreation Planning & Facility Development, who gave a presentation on the behind-the-scenes planning of parks management for the City of Ottawa.



*Park People founder and ED delivering keynote presentation.
Photo credit: Jennifer Auld, TD Bank Group*

4. The Summit

The day began at 1:00 p.m. with a welcome and opening remarks from Graham Saul of Ecology Ottawa. Graham then introduced Albert Dumont to say a few words on the importance of maintaining a physical and spiritual connection with the nature that surrounds us, and the benefit of treating our park lands with dignity and respect.

Dave Harvey of Park People gave the first keynote presentation of the day, presenting countless examples of inspiring park developments from around the world. He explained the vision of Park People and described the work they do bringing communities together in Toronto to coordinate participation in parks.

Participants were then invited to view exciting park initiatives happening right here in Ottawa. Dubbed the World Café stations, initiatives ranging from community bake ovens to a 35 km pathway dedicated to Canadian poets were showcased with visual materials and a short presentation from some of the members behind the initiatives. The stations sparked many excited discussions and became an excellent opportunity for building a network of shared ideas and ongoing collaboration. We thank all of the station operators who took the time to set-up and present during the World Café segment. A full list of the World Café stations, their descriptions and their contact information can be found in Appendix A.

After a short break for refreshments, Paul Johanis of the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital took the stage to give a short review of the survey results. This helped direct some of the conversation during the working group sessions later in the day, though a full analysis was only completed after the summit and can be found further on in Survey Results.

Kevin Wherry, Manager of Recreation Planning & Facility Development for the City of Ottawa, gave a fascinating presentation on how the City makes decisions related to park planning, maintenance and expansion. He described the classification of park space based on size, use and location, and explained some of the common bureaucratic hurdles involved in making significant changes to parks. The executive director of Just Food, Moe Garahan, followed this with an explanation of potential next steps and opportunities for networking that her organization has found successful.

Participants were then asked to split into working groups for collaboration and discussion. The working groups were structured as brainstorming sessions on the needs, challenges and next steps for communities and their involvement with local parks. The outcomes from these sessions were collected and collated into the Working Groups section.

5. Working Group Summary

The Working Groups consisted of 8 tables with around 12 participants each. Each table was presented with the same 3 questions that were discussed over the course of 40 minutes, and sheets of paper to record their collaborative responses to the questions. What follows are the questions and a summary of the answers provided to them.

Question 1 - What are some of the key concerns, challenges or questions you have about Ottawa's parks?

Accessibility and inclusivity seemed to be the foremost concern of the working groups. Groups expressed interest in making parks a more comfortable place for everyone, and how to best balance the different uses and needs. The bureaucratic process was viewed as an obstacle to the improvement of parks, either due to issues with the process itself or difficulties understanding how to best navigate it. Some viewed the bureaucracy as a restriction to innovation and creativity. Groups were also very intent on improving the ecological landscape of parks, wanting to see an increase of diverse, but native, vegetation in a wilder greenspace.

Unique ideas brought forth within this section of the working groups included creating movement-oriented spaces for adults, potentially an installation with varying sensory experiences. Additionally, the possibility of having youth park monitors was discussed to ensure the safety and encourage free play for children in the park. As a way to encourage a variety of uses for parks, boat lockers were suggested to enable kayakers, paddle boarders and the like (where applicable).

Question 2 - What specific kinds of financial, educational, or administrative support would help you address the challenges or answer the questions that you identified above?

When asked to identify support that the groups thought would be necessary to overcome the challenges from the previous question, two main areas were recognized. First, it was agreed that those planning and implementing changes and improvements would require support in navigating the process. This could be by simplifying the political avenues to make changes, working with city staff and/or city councillors to navigate the bureaucracy, or amalgamating the information required into a website or how-to guide specific to Ottawa. Second, the facilitation of community involvement was identified as a necessity. It was proposed that individuals should have a platform to voice concerns and ideas so as to account for the interests and needs of all involved. Related to this, information concerning consultation meetings, community involvement opportunities, and park plans should be widely accessible.

Question 3 - What are some of the follow-up actions that you intend to take coming out of the Park Summit? What would you like to see as an outcome of the Park Summit?

Moving forward, attendees of the Ottawa Park Summit were enthusiastic about staying connected in order to keep the dialogue and momentum going. A Facebook page was suggested as a way for everyone to organize meetings, share innovative ideas, discuss opportunities, and access important links. An important next step was to share the results and report of the Ottawa Park Summit with the Mayor, city councillors, and city departments. Individually, attendees took initiative and committed to actions such as strengthening their community alliances and groups around parks, researching opportunities to get more involved, and founding advisory groups.

Following the Ottawa Park Summit, the attendees are hoping to see Ottawa's parks shift towards being a network of safer, more ecological, more accessible and inclusive green spaces for a wide array of uses. Specifically, installing additional lighting and safety measures, increasing native biodiversity, protecting existing tree cover, and connecting communities were all identified as hopeful outcomes of the Ottawa Park Summit.

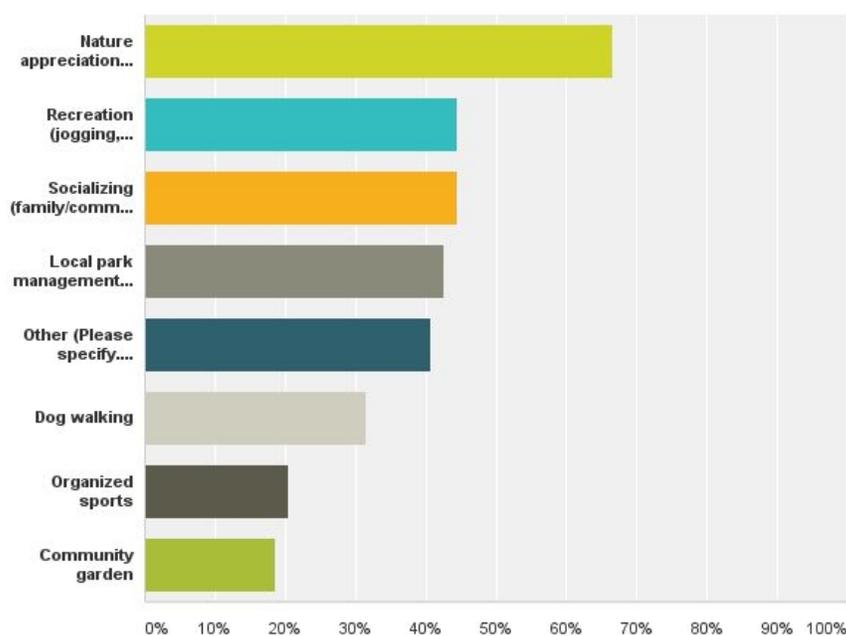
6. Survey Results

Ecology Ottawa emailed a survey to all those who RSVP'd to the Ottawa Park Summit in order to organize participants' goals of the Summit, areas of interest for discussion, and park concerns. Out of the 145 people the survey was delivered to, 54 responded. Each quantitative question was analyzed

using the statistical tools in SurveyMonkey, while qualitative written responses from the “Other” category were individually read and summarized. A complete and unabridged list of survey questions can be found in Appendix D. Questions 1 and 2 involved personal identification information, and questions 9 and 10 were individually written qualitative responses that we chose to summarize instead of include in full.

Q3 How do you or the organization you represent mainly engage with parks? (Check all that apply)

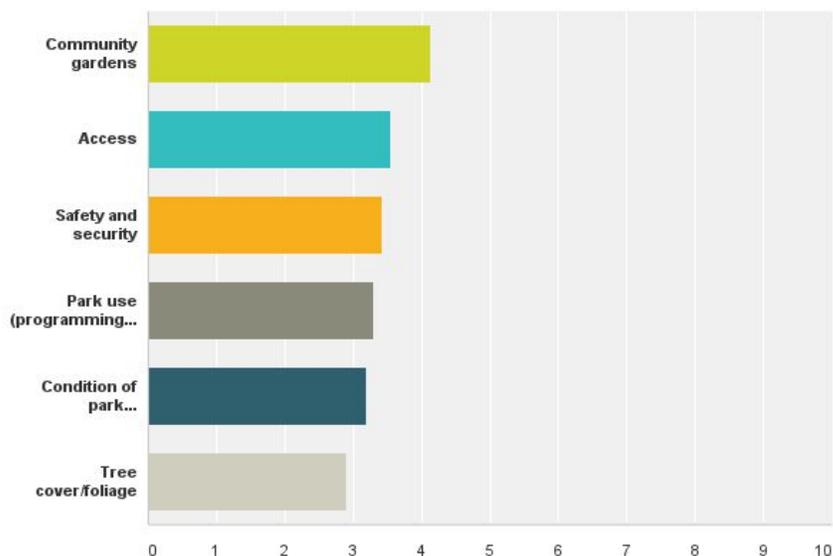
Answered: 54 Skipped: 1



As seen above, Ottawa Park Summit attendees mainly engage with parks for the purposes of nature appreciation and general relaxation. Recreation, socializing and park management are all nearly tied for second most common. A large amount of respondents to this question (22 out of 53) chose the “Other” category, the majority of which described engaging with parks through advocacy. The goals included preserving green spaces, ensuring safety, promoting the benefits of parks, increasing accessibility and inclusivity, and conservation.

Q4 What are the key concerns you would like discussed about your local park and/or park management at the Summit? Rate the importance of each from 1 (not important) to 6 (very important):

Answered: 53 Skipped: 2



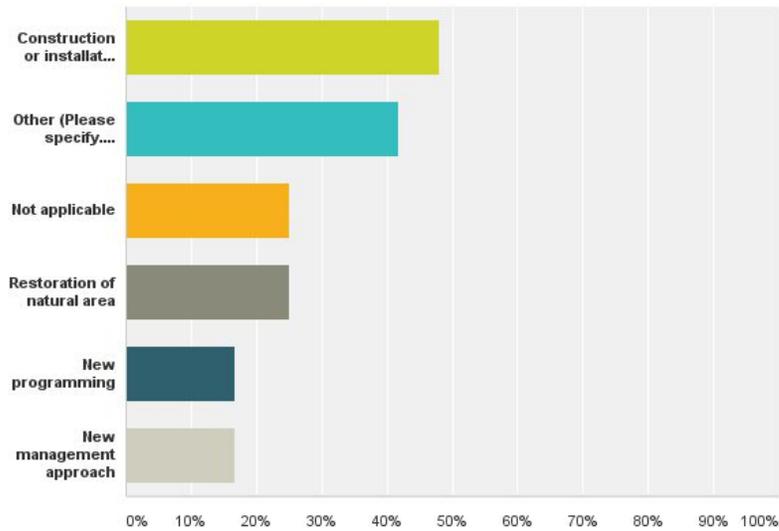
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Score
Community gardens	39.58% 19	10.42% 5	12.50% 6	12.50% 6	10.42% 5	14.58% 7	48	4.13
Access	10.00% 4	30.00% 12	15.00% 6	15.00% 6	10.00% 4	20.00% 8	40	3.55
Safety and security	9.30% 4	18.60% 8	25.58% 11	13.95% 6	16.28% 7	16.28% 7	43	3.42
Park use (programming, layout)	12.20% 5	12.20% 5	14.63% 6	24.39% 10	26.83% 11	9.76% 4	41	3.29
Condition of park (maintenance, litter)	15.00% 6	15.00% 6	17.50% 7	10.00% 4	12.50% 5	30.00% 12	40	3.20
Tree cover/foilage	10.87% 5	6.52% 3	13.04% 6	23.91% 11	23.91% 11	21.74% 10	46	2.91

Due to the format of this question, responses were analyzed by their weighted average or by the total distribution of responses. For example, although community gardens had very few ‘very important’ responses (and were the least common method of park engagement for the previous question), they were ranked as highest concern for discussion at the Summit overall based on their weighted average. The Condition of Park category received the highest number (12 out of 53 responses) of “very important” votes, but ranked second last when compared with the weighted average of other votes. Similarly, Tree Cover/Foliage was the least concerning discussion topic for the Summit based on its

weighted average, but received a total of 10 “very important” votes.

Q5 Are you aware of any specific current initiative at your local park or a park in which you are interested? What type of initiative is this? (Check all that apply)

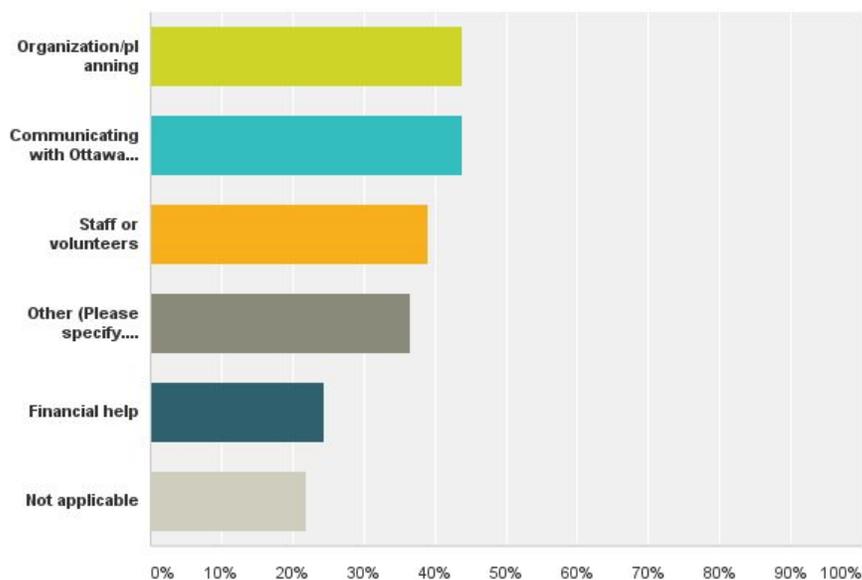
Answered: 48 Skipped: 7



Survey respondents who selected the “Other” category took this opportunity to expand upon a variety of exciting initiatives occurring at local parks. Notably, the installation of new ski trails through a series of parks, new community gardens, annual festivals, adult fitness equipment, and more accessible toilet facilities were listed. New facilities were the most common and/or the most known category of initiatives in local parks.

Q6 If yes, what kind of help do you need with these initiatives? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 41 Skipped: 14



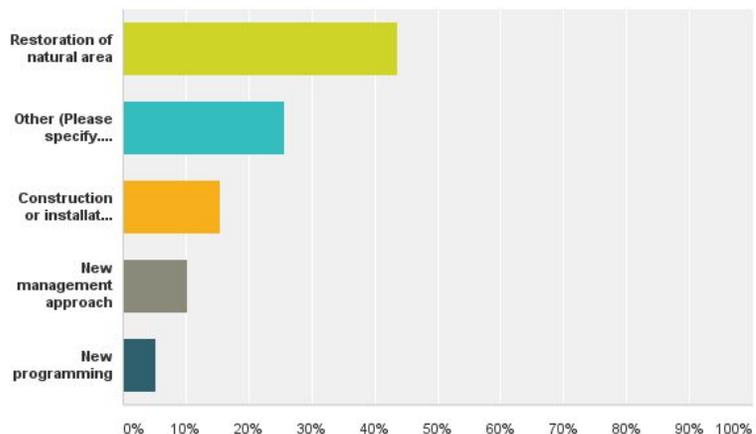
As identified and discussed within the working groups Organization and Communication with City Administration were the areas where Ottawa Park Summit attendees needed help to complete park initiatives. Interesting responses from “Other” included the need to educate the public about new initiatives to promote their benefits, and encourage better relationships between park uses.



*Participants brainstorm together during the Working Group sessions.
Photo Credit: Andres Pena*

Q7 If no, what type of initiative would you most like to see implemented?

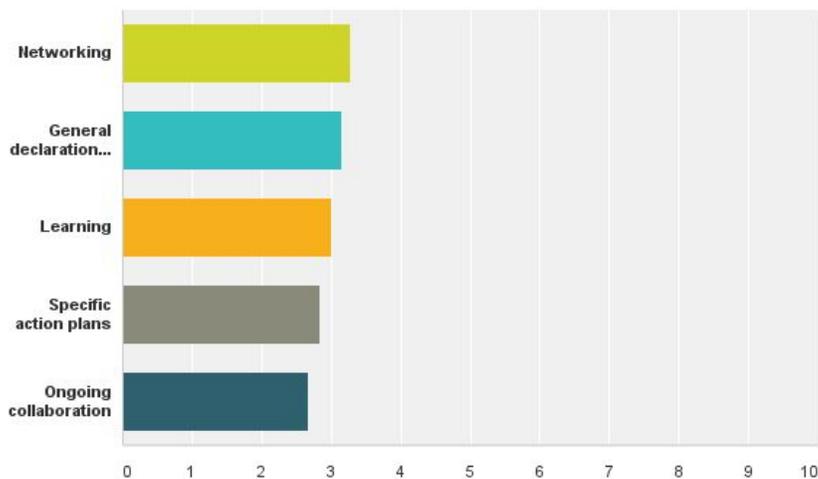
Answered: 39 Skipped: 16



The majority of respondents chose 'Restoration of Natural Area' as the type of initiative they would most like to see implemented, but many felt that the options for answers that were provided were too limited, and gave specific responses for the 'Other' category. One particularly detailed and specific response was "(1) Zoning to require minimum 3 metre setback of any construction from City park land. (Current requirement is apparently between zero and 0.3 m from city parkland); (2) A Park Master Plan with targets for green space per capita, and evidence based strategies for equitable distribution of and access to parks both active and passive; (3) Obligatory consultation with community for proposed changes to parks by the city and to their adjacent properties by developers; (4) Mandatory funding plan to maintain capital infrastructure in parks, and transparency about same; (5) City transparency about the allocation of the 'city-wide' portion of Cash In Lieu of Parkland funds." Additionally, the rest of the responses within the "Other" category focused on creative approaches to heighten citizen engagement with parks such as installing art and community gardens, improving maintenance, and ensuring accessibility.

Q8 What are you hoping to get out of the Summit and what, if any, outcomes would you like to see associated with the Summit? Rate the importance of each from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important):

Answered: 55 Skipped: 0



	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Score
Networking	27.27% 12	18.18% 8	20.45% 9	22.73% 10	11.36% 5	44	3.27
General declaration about parks	25.00% 12	22.92% 11	16.67% 8	12.50% 6	22.92% 11	48	3.15
Learning	13.95% 6	32.56% 14	16.28% 7	13.95% 6	23.26% 10	43	3.00
Specific action plans	18.18% 8	13.64% 6	22.73% 10	25.00% 11	20.45% 9	44	2.84
Ongoing collaboration	12.50% 6	12.50% 6	27.08% 13	25.00% 12	22.92% 11	48	2.67

‘General Declaration About Parks’ and ‘Ongoing Collaboration’ both received the most amount of “very important” votes with 11 each, but mixed responses lowered their overall ranking. ‘Networking’ proved to be the most important outcome for the survey respondents, though all of the potential outcomes were grouped similarly and it appears that respondents hoped all possible outcomes would be seen at the summit. We hope the Summit resulted in the desired outcomes for all, and continues to encourage ongoing collaboration, actions and learning about Ottawa parks.

Appendix A: Organizations Represented at the Ottawa Park Summit

Abiwin Housing Co-operative	Vanier Community Garden
Adopt Parks Ottawa Bayshore Park Community Garden & Oven	Just Food
Biodiversity Conservancy	Kanata Beaverbrook Community Association
Blackburn Community Association	Leslie Park Community Garden
Brewer Park Community Garden	Louder than Words Canada
Canada Foundation	Lowertown Community Association
Canadian Council on Food Sovereignty & Health	Lynwood Community Association
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Ottawa Valley Chapter	Manotick Village and Community Association
Carlington Dog Owners & Enthusiasts Association	National Capital Commission
Catalyst Mind	New Edinburgh Community Alliance
Cathcart Park Working Group	Ontario Environment Network
Central Park East	Ontario Invasive Plant Council
Centretown Citizens Community Association	Ontario Public Interest Research Group Carleton
Centretown Community Health Centre	Ottawa Eco-Talent Network
Champlain Park Community Association	Ottawa Neighbourhoods Social Capital Forum
Christy Old Ottawa South	Ottawa Rail Bridge
City Councillor Riley Brockington's Office	Peace and Environment Resource Centre
City of Ottawa	Poets Pathway
Convent Glen – Orleans Wood Community Association	Resurrection Lutheran Church Orleans
Crystal Beach Lakeview Community Association	Richmond Village Association
Dalhousie Community Association	Riverview Park Community Association
Dundonald Park Working Group	Sierra Club
Dunrobin Women's Institute	Social Planning Council of Ottawa
Earth Path	Stonebridge Community Association
Ecology Ottawa	Sustain Kanata North
Envirocentre	Sustain West Carleton
Faircrest Heights Park	Sustainable Eastern Ontario
Gardens Ottawa	Sustainable Living Ottawa East
George Brown Law	Synapcity
Glebe Annex Community Association	Tanglewood Park Community Garden
Glebe Community Association	Tanglewood-Hillsdale Community Association
Glebe Parks Committee	The Shefford Heritage Housing Co-operative
GottaGo! Campaign	The Volunteer Gardeners of Clare Park
Greenspace Alliance	Transition Ottawa
Hunt Club Park Community Association	Tree Fest Ottawa
	United Nations Association in Canada
	Vanier Community Services Centre
	Westboro Beach Community Association
	Westboro Community Association
	Winthrop Court Community House

Appendix B: Ottawa Park Summit Steering Committee

Ecology Ottawa
 Envirocentre
 Federation of Citizen's Associations
 Greenspace Alliance
 Just Food
 Park People
 Sierra Club Foundation
 Social Planning Council

Appendix C: World Café Stations

The following are descriptions of the stations presented during the World Cafés portion of the Ottawa Park Summit. We would like to thank all the representatives for coming and sharing their inspiring ideas with all of us.

Station 1 - Bayshore Park Community Garden and Oven (*Mete Pamir*)

Non-profit community-based organization open to all those who live in Bayshore, Accora Village and neighbouring areas. The purpose is to promote, create, and maintain gardening and bake oven activities in Bayshore Park while providing members with the nutritional benefits and joys of these activities.

E-mail: bayshorecommunityoven@gmail.com

Facebook: @bayshoregardenandoven

Phone: (613) 726-7597

Station 2 - Tree Fest Ottawa (*Margo Nelson*)

Tree Fest Ottawa connects people with trees, inspires dialogue and learning, and transforms how we see, engage with, and act in the world around us. They hope to inspire people to protect and preserve the city's trees and get involved with tree planting and other initiatives to expand our urban forest.

E-mail: treefestottawa@gmail.com

Facebook: @treefestottawa

Station 3 - 100In1Day Ottawa [Synapcity] (*Christine Earnshaw*)

What if hundreds of people united, each taking one small action to improve their city, all on the same day? That's the idea behind 100in1day, a global festival of citizen engagement happening on June 3rd in Ottawa for the first time. Synapcity showcases examples of the ways that citizens have activated parks to connect people, improve the health of our city, and share local knowledge and experience.

E-mail: christine@synapcity.ca

Facebook: @SynapCityOttawa

Station 4 - Dundonald Park Revitalization (*Lindsay Snow and Kristina Ropke*)*

The revitalization of Dundonald Park has not only changed the perception of the park but also the neighbourhood as a whole. This redevelopment and change will be profiled by exploring how principles of equity and inclusion have helped to make Dundonald Park a safe and welcoming green space for everyone.

E-mail: k7_tina@hotmail.com or lsnow@centretownchc.org

Station 5 - Children's Garden (*Sue McKee*)

At the corner of Main and Clegg in Old Ottawa East, its big purpose is to serve as a space to engage and educate the senses, the mind and the imagination in terms of our relationships with nature. It's even bigger purpose is to have fun in the process.

E-mail: Contact through website www.ottawachildrengarden.org

Station 6 - Monarch Butterfly Waystation (*Clare Grosskleg*)

Did you know that Monarch Butterflies have been added to an international list of species and sub-species that are at risk of disappearing entirely from the planet? Come and hear what one group is doing to help by working with the City to build a proposed Monarch Butterfly Waystation in their local park.

E-mail: clare@magma.ca

Station 7 - Friends of the Farm (*Judy Dodds*)

The FCEF is a charitable organization of committed volunteers and supportive members who care about the Farm in Ottawa. The goal is to preserve, protect, and enhance the Dominion Arboretum, the Ornamental Gardens and other public areas of the Farm, for the educational benefit and enjoyment of the public; and promote the Farm's historical significance.

E-mail: info@friendsofthefarm.ca

Facebook: [@FCEFOttawa](https://www.facebook.com/FCEFOttawa)

Phone: (613) 230-3276

Station 8 - Poet's Pathway (*Jane Moore*)

In the 1880's and 1890's, poets like Charles G.D. Roberts and Pauline Johnson wrote poetry with a distinctly Canadian voice. Follow 35 km of walking and biking trails that showcase their work, reading poems on volunteer-built plaques built along the way. In the future, they will add phone numbers you can call to hear the poems read aloud.

E-mail: info@poetspath.ca

Station 9 - Brewer Park Community Garden & Biodome *(Johanne Ranger)*

Provides a space where community members engage in growing organic produce for their community. There's also a community-built biodome in Brewer Park that extends the growing season year-round. Volunteers grow produce for donation to food banks, meal programs, and other food security programs.

E-mail: brewergarden@gmail.com

Facebook: [@BrewerParkCommunityGarden](https://www.facebook.com/BrewerParkCommunityGarden)

Appendix D: Pre-Summit Survey Questions

Question 1 - Contact information about yourself (Required).

Question 2 - Contact information about the organisation you are representing (Optional).

Question 3 - How do you or the organization you represent mainly engage with parks? (Check all that apply)

- Nature appreciation/relaxation
- Recreation (jogging, skating, swimming)
- Socializing (family/community gatherings)
- Local park management (adopt-a-park, maintenance, planning)
- Dog walking
- Organized sports
- Community garden
- Other (Please specify)

Question 4 - What are the key concerns you would like discussed about your local park and/or park management at the Summit? Rate the importance of each from 1 (not important) to 6 (very important).

- Community gardens
- Access
- Safety and security
- Park use (programming, layout)
- Condition of park (maintenance, litter)
- Tree cover/foliage

Question 5 - Are you aware of any specific current initiative at your local park or a park in which you are interested? What type of initiative is this? (Check all that apply)

- Construction or installation of a new facility
- Restoration of natural areas
- New programming
- New management approach
- Other (Please specify)
- Not applicable

Question 6 - If yes, what kind of help do you need with these initiatives? (Check all that apply)

- Organization/planning
- Communicating with Ottawa City administration
- Staff or volunteers
- Financial help
- Other (Please specify)
- Not Applicable

Question 7 - If no, what type of initiative would you most like to see implemented?

- Restoration of natural areas
- Construction or installation of new facility
- New management approach
- New Programming
- Other (Please specify)

Question 8 - What are you hoping to get out of the Summit and what, if any, outcomes would you like to see associated with the Summit? Rate the importance of each from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important):

- Networking
- General declaration about parks
- Learning
- Specific action plans
- Ongoing collaboration

Question 9 - What is your favourite park? What makes you love this park? (Word limit: 150)

Question 10 - Are you interested in profiling a specific park initiative during the Summit? If so, please give a brief description of the park initiative. We are looking for current, specific, and interesting things that are happening in parks. (Word limit: 150)

Appendix E: Ottawa Park Summit volunteers

And last but certainly not least, we would like to thank all of the volunteers who devoted hours, days (weeks!) of their valuable time to help organize & implement this event. It couldn't have been done without their dedication, enthusiasm, and creativity. Not to mention an emergency pizza meal or two.

Andrés Peña
Diana McCormick
Flore Latournerie
Izzy Eid-Holm
Jade Garland
Jessica Cloutier
Kevin Willis
Krycia Walczak
Laura Delorme
Leslie Orzel
Lisa Covino
Marissa Carroll
Richard Singhroy