

Facts at a Glance: Introduction to Landscape Development in the Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway Corridor

During the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) study, the community was consulted on what they wanted to see included in the Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway's (the Parkway) green space. The community selected a Carolinian Canada theme with a focus on Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savannah. The Carolinian life zone is Canada's most diverse and most threatened ecosystem. The international importance of the Parkway together with its urban location and unique ecological context call for strong design principles. The following *Facts at a Glance* provide an overview of landscape development in the Parkway corridor.

Design Principles

The Landscape Plan for the Parkway is based on five key design principles: unified, green, connection, integration, and gateway.

- Unified: The open spaces associated with the Parkway are considered as a unified whole. These spaces are planned to function in an integrated manner and to present a unified aesthetic and visual environment for both drivers and community users.
- Green: The vision for the Parkway is to create a green corridor that supports new viable, natural communities and links existing natural areas.
- Connection: The tunnels provide an opportunity to create connections between communities on either side of the Parkway and along its length.
- Integration: The Parkway travels through three municipalities – Tecumseh, LaSalle and Windsor, Ontario. The Parkway open spaces should integrate with the urban design, parks and recreation plans for these three municipalities as well as local and regional natural heritage systems.
- Gateway: The Parkway is designed as a gateway to Canada, Ontario and Windsor-Essex.

Green Space

The new Highway 401 and Highway 3 are set within the Parkway's restored open space lands made up of more than 300 acres (120 hectares) of green space with landscaped areas, ecological protection and restoration areas, and 20 kilometres of multi-use trails.

- The green space will:
 - o demonstrate ecological integrity
 - o celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of the region
 - o promote stewardship and a sense of nature
 - o re-establish physical and cultural community connections
 - o provide a sustainable network of natural landscapes, trails and amenity areas.

Plant Materials

A variety of native plant materials will be incorporated in the green space serving to protect and expand adjacent natural areas through the reinstatement of Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savannah.

- Native Carolinian trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers that are characteristic of the Windsor-Essex Region along with hardy, native species suited to local soil/moisture regimes will be used throughout the Parkway.
- All prairies and grassland areas will be seeded with a suitable mix of native species.
- The need for screening and the need for visual interest were considered in the development of planting plans.
- Salt-tolerant and drought-resistant species will be used where possible.
- As part of the Landscape Plan the approximate quantities of plant materials includes:
 - o 24,000 native trees and plants
 - o 35,000 shrubs
 - o 39,450 ground cover grasses
 - o 13 different varieties of species within the seed mix.

Tallgrass Prairie

A Tallgrass Prairie cannot be created in a day.

- It takes time for the trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grass to develop and grow and may take up to twenty years to see maturity.
- Typical of public parks and residential landscapes, trees and shrubs in the Parkway lands will be installed as nursery size plants and will mature over time.
- It is known that prairie plants germinate quite slowly and have a very deep root system to help ensure their longevity.

Gateways

There are three locations that have been identified as Gateways within the Parkway. These gateway areas will reflect the natural and cultural history of the area, the transportation link between Canada and the United States, and the strategic location and international importance of the corridor.

- Three central themes have informed the design of the Gateways.
 - o Place of Arrival - The Parkway must exhibit a sense of arrival to Canada. It needs to be bold and commanding, and give a heightened sense of place to those arriving, and departing from Canada.
 - o Place of Settlement - It is important for the Parkway landscapes to stress that this important piece of infrastructure is part of an existing community which has a robust history. This project is not to compete with this history but to reinforce it, celebrate it, and evolve it.
 - o Place of Flow - In addition to a place of natural and cultural significance it is also vital to understand the importance of the Parkway to the flow of people and trade in North America. The landscape should acknowledge the importance of flow as a mechanism of this newly created piece of infrastructure.
- Similar to the roadside landscapes, plantings for the Gateways will consist of deciduous trees, coniferous trees, deciduous shrubs, coniferous shrubs and seed mixes containing grasses and forbs.
- The gateway landscapes serve as location for incorporating small scale public art and cultural heritage elements.

Screening Landscapes

Screening landscapes have many roles in the Landscape Plan including both acoustic attenuation and visual screening and are context sensitive. They also enhance the trail and driving experience and support the ecological restoration efforts on the adjacent lands.

- The screening landscapes are designed with seasonal interest and complement other urban design features through colour and form.
- They comprise native plant materials, compatible with the Carolinian palette of vegetation species, with emphasis on visually pleasing, tall, and robust native species.
- Plantings for the screening landscape will consist of deciduous trees, coniferous trees, deciduous shrubs and seed mixes containing grasses and forbs.

Roadside Landscapes

The roadside landscapes are experienced by people travelling the Parkway by car and reflect highway design and Ministry of Transportation specifications.

- The roadway landscapes will make a contribution to the overall ecology of the corridor to the extent possible by using native Carolinian species, selected to be tolerant of urban conditions such as drought, salt and heat.
- The grasslands are augmented with woody shrubs and trees in the interchanges and locations where roadside grading is 3:1 or less.
- Plantings for the roadside landscape will consist of deciduous trees, coniferous trees, deciduous shrubs, coniferous shrubs, and seed mixes containing grasses and forbs.

Stormwater Management Landscapes

Stormwater management landscapes manage and treat stormwater run-off. Although there will be a need for some maintenance, these landscapes are generally rich in habitat and make significant contributions to wildlife.

- In selected locations the trail system promotes a safe interface with the stormwater landscape by providing overlooks and rest areas allowing users to obtain the benefits of a recreational trail in close proximity to a varied aquatic habitat.
- Plantings in the stormwater management landscapes will include deciduous trees, deciduous shrubs, native groundcover plugs, aquatic plant plugs, and seed mixes containing grasses and forbs.

Ecological Landscapes

Through the ecological landscape, a like-for-like approach is being taken to replace rare vegetation impacted by the project.

- There are seven target vegetation typologies (vegetation groups) that comprise the ecological landscape:
 - o Tallgrass Prairie
 - o Tallgrass Oak Savannah
 - o Oak Tallgrass Woodland
 - o Oak Hickory Tallgrass Woodland
 - o Oak Hickory Forest
 - o Pin Oak Swamp
 - o Riparian Corridors.

Invasive Species

Invasive species management practices will be part of the ongoing maintenance of the newly created Parkway green space including newly restored habitats and dedicated species at risk areas.

- While management strategies will be prescribed on a site-by-site basis, the following practices may be used to accomplish effective management:
 - o targeted application of herbicides
 - o the use of weed torches
 - o mechanical removal
 - o prescribed burns.

If you have any concerns regarding the Parkway, please contact or visit the Public Liaison Office at 1-877-937-5929, 2187 Huron Church Road Suite 340, or hgp-plo@wemg.ca.

Please visit www.hgparkway.ca to learn more about the Parkway. Updates are posted on Twitter (www.twitter.com/hgparkway) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/hgparkway) and photos and videos are posted on Flickr (www.flickr.com/hgparkway) and YouTube (www.youtube.com/hgparkway).