

Executive Summary

Animating the Rideau Canal

December 2013

Why study the Rideau Canal?

The Rideau Canal has been an important part of Ottawa throughout its history, and has shaped and been shaped by the city. In its current state as a greenway corridor the Canal is used predominantly as a movement network for cars, cyclists, and pedestrians. Policies intended to protect the Canal have in many cases resulted in keeping it static. As a result, there is a lot of untapped potential for place-making on and adjacent to the Rideau Canal. This study outlines a proposed plan to animate the Rideau Canal between the Ottawa Locks and Hog's Back and transform the underutilized Corridor into a centrepiece of urban life in Ottawa.

Who and What Inform this Study?

Several sources of information contributed to the Animating the Rideau Canal project, including a site visit and consultation with the City of Ottawa, the National Capital Commission and Parks Canada. Additionally the existing conditions and policies governing the Canal were analysed and compared with 28 national and international precedents of waterways and interventions. These findings were then built upon in a design charette that was attended by various land use planning and urban design professionals. Lastly, six key stakeholders were identified and interviewed for a local perspective.

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open space and transportation corridor extending through the City• Proximity to existing neighbourhoods and downtown• Greenspace and passive recreational uses• High scenic and historic value• Popular winter destination during Winterlude Festival• Functioning waterway in the heart of the city	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adjacent neighbourhoods and universities do not address the Canal• Few crossings across the Canal• Physical barriers, poor user access and vehicular traffic• Few destinations and gathering areas• Limited number of uses, activities and amenities• Water acts primarily as a barrier vs. amenity
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lansdowne Park redevelopment and future Fifth Ave. pedestrian bridge• Preston St. Intensification at Dow's Lake• Future University LRT station• Build on existing temporary use pilot projects by NCC• Attract new users will enhance appreciation of Canal and heritage interpretation• Create strategic partnerships	Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multi-jurisdictional policies and management• Restrictive zoning and heritage designations• Limited utility and servicing connections

Vision and Goals

The Rideau Canal is a vibrant and integral element of the City of Ottawa that improves connections and balances past and future identities of the Nation's Capital.

Goal 1: Improve Connectivity across the Canal.

Goal 2: Integrate the Canal with surrounding neighbourhoods.

Goal 3: Create a journey and destination.

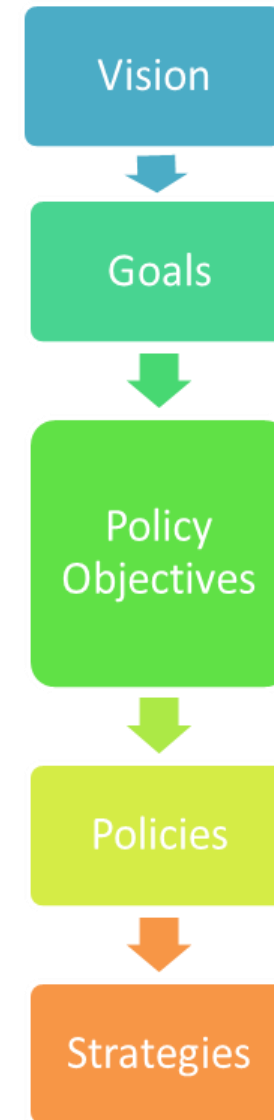
Goal 4: Respect the Canal's character and significant heritage.

Goal 5: Create Partnerships.

These goals stem from the vision for the Canal and will serve to focus the objectives, policies and strategies of this report as outlined in the diagram to the right. These goals will be accomplished through supporting policies as part of a comprehensive planning approach.

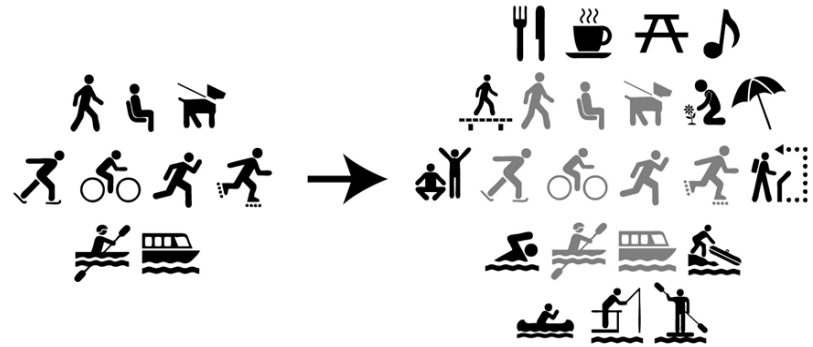
Comprehensive Approach

It is imperative that any planning or policy framework that addresses the Canal consider connectivity to and across the Canal, public space along the Canal, and the land uses surrounding the Canal. These elements must be examined comprehensively with consideration of past and future identities to develop policies and strategies that will guide future animation and partnerships that reflect the local and national importance of the Canal. The specific policy objectives for each of the three Corridor building blocks, including land use and built form, connectivity and public space, are outlined below.



Public Space

1. Increase the diversity of public spaces along the Rideau Canal Corridor.
2. Provide a variety of land and water based uses and activities along the Rideau Canal Corridor.
3. Ensure public spaces are comfortable and safe to support use at different times of the day and year.
4. Ensure public spaces have an authentic and unique identity that celebrates the canal’s rich historic character.
5. Enhance the edges of public spaces and provide clear transitions with surrounding neighbourhoods.

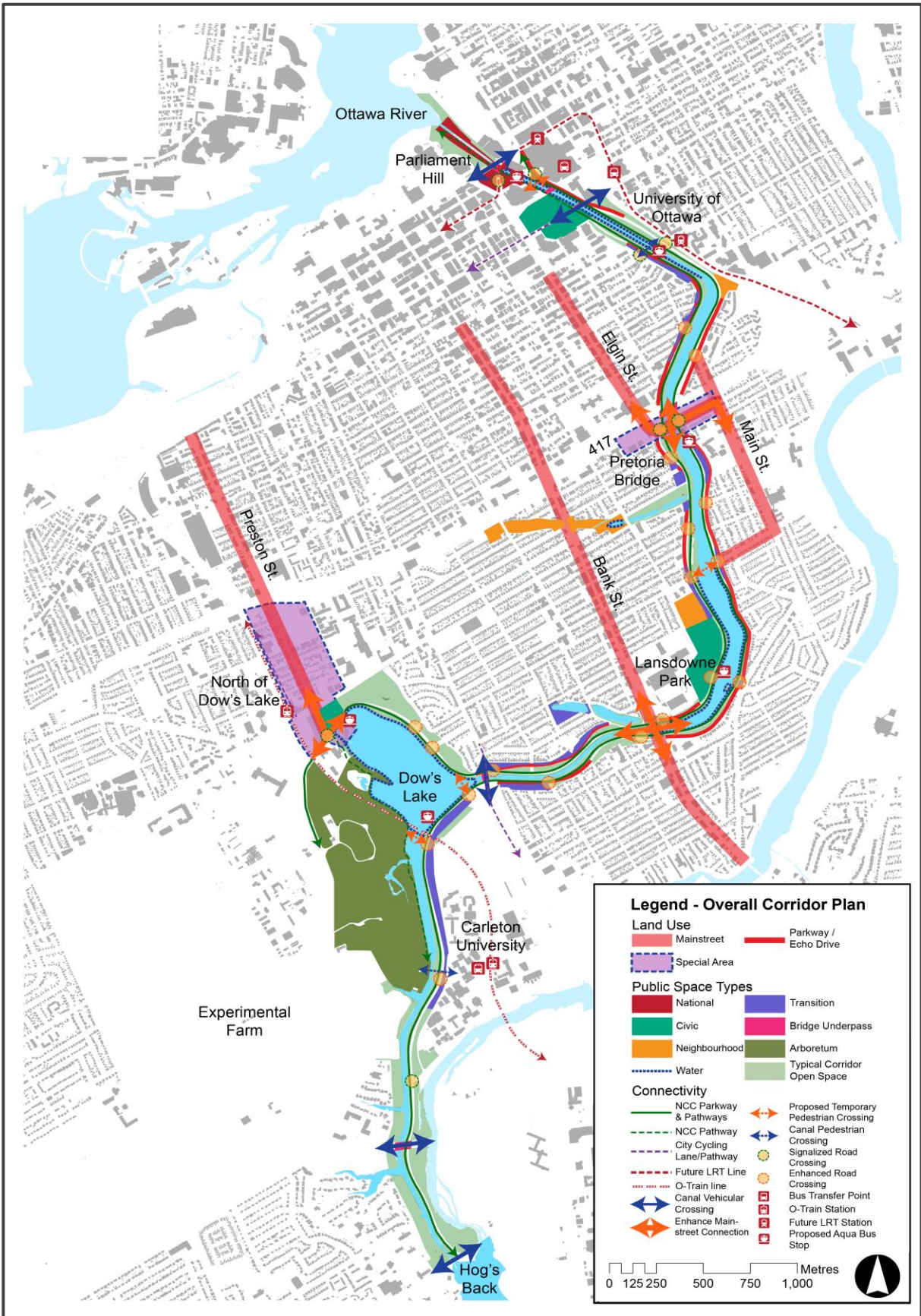


Connectivity

1. Enhance user access to the Rideau Canal waterway corridor.
2. Enhance movement networks on and adjacent to the Rideau Canal waterway corridor in a manner that balances all modes of transportation.
3. Enhance and develop new linkages both across the Rideau Canal waterway corridor and into adjacent neighbourhoods.
4. Enhance safety and comfort for all modes of transportation.
5. Enhance connectivity throughout Rideau Canal waterway corridor through partnerships.

Land Use + Built Form

1. Offer a variety of land uses that enhance areas surrounding the Canal.
2. Buildings adjacent to the Canal and parkways should be at a height that is appropriate to the neighbourhood character and context.
3. Create interesting and unique building designs that contribute to the visual integrity of the Canal.
4. Infill projects should be a tool to improve, rather than capitalize on the Canal’s value.
5. Promote temporary land uses at key activity points along the Rideau Canal.
6. Integrate traditional mainstreets to provide a wide range of land uses for the Canal Corridor.
7. Enhance streets parallel to parkways, with direct Canal frontage, to include uses and building forms similar to traditional mainstreets.
8. Ensure a cohesive relationship between the Lansdowne Park redevelopment, the Glebe and the Rideau Canal.



Overall Rideau Canal Corridor Plan

Implementation

Partnerships: Partnership will be utilized to facilitate coordination between key stakeholders.

Projects: Projects will be used to implement policies that may be controversial by framing interventions as temporary, low cost, low impact.

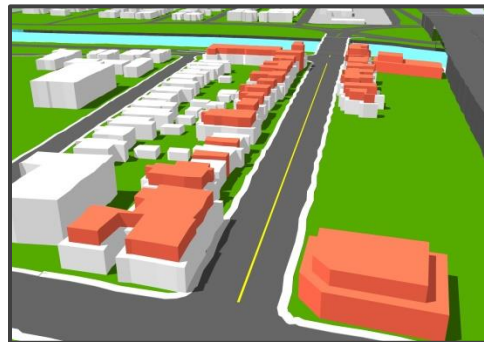
Policies: Public policy tools will be critical to defining the parameters and setting fundamental goals for each proposed policies.

Conclusion

Prioritize the Canal: There is an immediate need to make the Canal a priority within its neighbourhoods. This entails ensuring that policies of the City of Ottawa recognize and integrate the Canal as central feature and vibrant City asset.

Partnerships: Moving forward it is essential that all jurisdictions explore and capitalize on new opportunities for partnerships. Successful long-term animation of the Canal requires a comprehensive approach, in which all agencies and stakeholders recognize each other's strengths and work together with the spirit of collaboration.

Place-making: The Canal is currently a corridor for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists, but it can become a set of destinations for the greater community through new place-making initiatives and citizen-led tactical urbanism interventions.



Recommendations

Short-term: Small-scale interventions that can be achieved with minimal resources, marginal amendments to existing regulations, and in a short timeframe. These recommendations are focused on enhancing currently underutilized spaces along the Canal, including neighbourhood parks, national spaces, open spaces adjacent to the Canal, and the waterway.

Medium-term: Support interventions that upgrade existing infrastructure within and adjacent to the Rideau Canal Corridor. These recommendations focus on increasing accessibility to and along the Canal, enhancing under-utilized spaces under bridges, and installing new amenities, facilities, and programming within priority public spaces.

Long-term: Characterized by larger budgetary requirements, extended planning and construction phases, and need for amendments to existing policies and regulations. These recommendations are focused on the enhancement and development of buildings in neighbourhoods adjacent to the Canal. Additionally, building partnerships is the key to the implementation of this phase.