

Greenway's problems need to be addressed



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Imagine a park stretching the full length of a scenic river that winds through a busy city.

A park with quiet forest trails and historic sites that take you back to the time of Louis Riel. A park with safe places for students to learn about the river and paddlers to launch their canoes. A park that attracts people and wildlife year-round. Now imagine that park in the southeast quadrant of Winnipeg stretching from the Red River to the floodway.

The dream of a linear park along the urban Seine River was first put on paper in 1980 when the City of Winnipeg adopted the Seine River Park Study. The plan presented a vision for the development of a linear regional park along the 26-kilometre length of the river. It envisioned passive nature areas plus sports facilities to meet the diverse recreational needs of Winnipeg's growing population. It was an ambitious plan and perhaps for that reason it was soon shelved.

It left one very important legacy — a mechanism to acquire land within the floodplain to accommodate the flow from a 100-year summer storm. Since 1980, all subdivisions and rezoning applications within the watershed have been subject to a Seine River Waterway Charge. This money is used to purchase flood-prone land along the river. However, the plan failed to initiate any concrete action to protect, conserve, or enhance the Seine River as a unique urban park. Twenty years later, a new plan was developed. The Seine River Greenway Study (2000) described a "less is more," approach



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Despite human pressures, the Seine River manages to maintain a sense of history, natural beauty, and resilience deserving of our community's care, nurturing, and pride.

that minimized capital outlay.

Where are we today? The river has been severely impacted by the introduction of roads, bridges, and drainage associated with development. Property has been acquired for parks only as opportunities arose. Little funding has been made available to develop the Greenway for wider community use. The result is a fragmented greenway. Developments restrict the movement of people and wildlife. Trails abruptly end and reappear farther down the bank. Visitors park in private lots because there are no public entry points.

The secondary plan for Precinct K will go to the Riel Community Committee at the end of June. This may be the last chance to redress these shortcomings. A public forum will be held at 7 p.m. on May 22 at St. Mary's Road United Church (613 St. Mary's Rd.) to discuss what is needed to recapture the dream.

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