

Don Narrows Workshop

DRAFT MEETING REPORT

Saturday, May 24, 2008

South Regent Park Recreation Centre

Introduction to the Workshop & this Report

On Saturday, May 24, 2008 Toronto and Region Conservation hosted an afternoon workshop and site walk to explore opportunities to naturalize the Don Narrows. The results of the workshop will be used to inform conceptual design development for the Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection (DMNP) Environmental Assessment. Over 30 people participated, including members of the Community Liaison Committee for the DMNP EA, the Task Force to Bring Back the Don, the Don Watershed Council, the City of Toronto, and other individuals and groups that care about the Don.

This draft meeting report was written by Nicole Swerhun, third party facilitator for the event. **Please forward any thoughts, comments or suggested edits to Michelle Vanderwel at mvanderwel@trca.on.ca or 416-661-6600 ext. 5280.**

Presentations delivered at the workshop included:

- Introduction to the DMNP EA, *Marc Rose, Gartner Lee*
- History of the Don Narrows, *Jennifer Bonnell*
- Existing Conditions & Constraints within the Don Narrows, *Ken Dion, TRCA*
- Recent activities of Task Force to Bring Back the Don in the Don Narrows, *John Wilson*
- Enhancement Opportunities to Consider for Naturalizing the Don Narrows, *Ken Dion, TRCA*

Copies of the presentations are available on request from the TRCA. If you would like to receive a copy, please contact Michelle Vanderwel (see phone number and email address above).

The workshop discussion asked participants to share their thoughts and offer their advice regarding opportunities for naturalizing the aquatic habitat conditions within the Don Narrows and immediately adjacent to the banks. Feedback is captured in Section I of this report, and includes suggestions that cover everything from in stream structures and riparian plantings to bank reconstruction or other ideas. Suggestions for improvements beyond the immediate channel and banks were also recorded but will be considered independently from the DMNP EA (included here as Section II).

In terms of next steps, TRCA will be reviewing the technical feasibility of the suggestions received from this workshop and also exploring other naturalization opportunities for the Don Narrows. Public follow-up will happen when the next Public Meeting is held as part of the DMNP EA.

There were 30 participants at the meeting. The Agenda is included as Appendix A.

SECTION I. Ideas and Advice on Opportunities to Naturalize the Don Narrows

This feedback focuses on opportunities for naturalization in the river itself and on the immediately adjacent river banks. It will be considered as part of the Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection (DMNP) EA.

1. **Adjust the trail (see notes on maps from Tables A, B, and inset graphic on Table D map)**
 - Use the real estate that the path sits on to create opportunities. This could be done, for example, by excavating the area. This creates more room for the river water to flow, and may allow for some infilling on the east side. The path could also be elevated along certain portions – which creates the room required for the river to meander. The path also doesn't have to be as linear. Consider meandering the trail so it's suspended over the river at some points.
 - Similar to the above point: "Take everything from river to rail out and re-build with what we want (e.g. wetland-like suspended/raised boardwalk) – increases capacity to move water and naturalization".
 - Move fence west a bit and create bike express route.
2. **Animal access/wildlife/aquatic corridor (see especially map from Table C)**
 - The east side of the Don Narrows is a no man's land – it could be a wildlife corridor.
 - Consider creating a way for animals to cross river from west to east, but discourage people. It could be some kind of bridge that would allow water to flow through. Another option could be to build a culvert under the DVP, rail, and Bayview to allow water to flow through, especially in area of Riverdale Park.
3. **Parks/green space/wetlands**
 - At Queen Street: enhance terrestrial habitat, east side; point bars; island – excavate to sheet pile and let water flow through (nesting for waterfowl).
 - No night lights – don't want to draw people into natural wildlife area.
 - Create more stewardship teams.
4. **Walls of the riverbank (see especially insets on map from Table B)**
 - Over the long term, use stones instead of replacing piling (even if piling hidden).
 - Between Eastern and North of Queen: cut down higher walls, protect behind to prevent scour; and have sheet pile along rail to protect rail and between rail and current river edge.
 - Use rocks and other materials, large woody material cabled in.
 - Put estuary hooks on either side.
5. **Overall approach**
 - Need to have combination of: trail expansion, change shoreline, bioengineering so different type of plant material can thrive, green wall along Eastern Corridor, floating ponds
 - Nature's doing good job, and encourage this to continue – embrace what nature is already trying to do. This includes keeping a "soft" approach. Put an emphasis on biodiversity. Let nature take its course.

SECTION II. Ideas and Advice on Opportunities to Naturalize the Don Narrows

This feedback focuses on opportunities beyond the river banks and is therefore outside the scope of the DMNP EA. That being said, there are a number of groups (e.g. TRCA, City of Toronto, Task Force to Bring Back the Don and others) who are involved in ongoing improvement activities and for whom this feedback is very valuable.

1. **Transportation**

- Give Filmport a dedicated DVP exit and then close the Don Roadway.
- Establish balanced transportation system, more towards people and trains versus cars.

2. **Parks/green space/wetlands**

- Look at opportunities for little parkettes – at Labatt Street, other streets? City Planning could get involved in urban renewal. Use every little bit of green space at Queen.
- Add wetlands north of Riverdale pedestrian bridge.
- Create more stewardship teams.

3. **Walls of the riverbank (see especially insets on map from Table B)**

- Increasing the height of the wall beside the DVP is one option that has been previously considered (to avoid flooding the highway), but it would need to be built on a barge and one lane of the DVP would need to be closed for 3-4 months. At the time it was considered too costly.

4. **Opportunities on the bridges**

- Old Eastern Avenue bridge and Enbridge bridge are very low bridges. Look at ways to green the bridges as destinations (although may have to address access issues on the east side).
- Art on the bridge is good – attracts people.
- The roof of the Enbridge bridge could be greened with plantings.
- Beautification: people fall in love with it; it creates constituency for stewardship advocacy – do this through overlooks (**see especially map from Table A**), Eastern Bridge as rest and recreation spot.

5. **Opportunities on Private Property**

- Take private green property adjacent to buildings along valley and make public OR create “BIA-like” membership of private landowners and challenge businesses to improve
- Tree planting on private property is outside the scope of the EA, but there are areas to do it on the top of the banks (which improves bird migration and look) – for example, at the Oak Street apartments, Don Incinerator site

APPENDIX A. Agenda

DON NARROWS WORKSHOP

Saturday, May 25, 2008
South Regent Park Recreation Centre
1:00 – 4:30 pm

Workshop Purpose:

To identify opportunities for naturalization of the Don Narrows, as part of the Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection (DMNP) EA

Agenda:

1:00 **Welcome & Introductions**
pm *Adele Freeman, TRCA*

1:02 **Workshop Objectives & Agenda Review**
Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator

1:05 **Presentations**

- Introduction to the DMNP EA, *Marc Rose, Gartner Lee*
- History of the Don Narrows, *Jennifer Bonnell*
- Existing Conditions & Constraints, Enhancement Opportunities to Consider, *Ken Dion, TRCA*
- Recent activities of Task Force to Bring Back the Don in the Don Narrows, *John Wilson*

Questions of Clarification

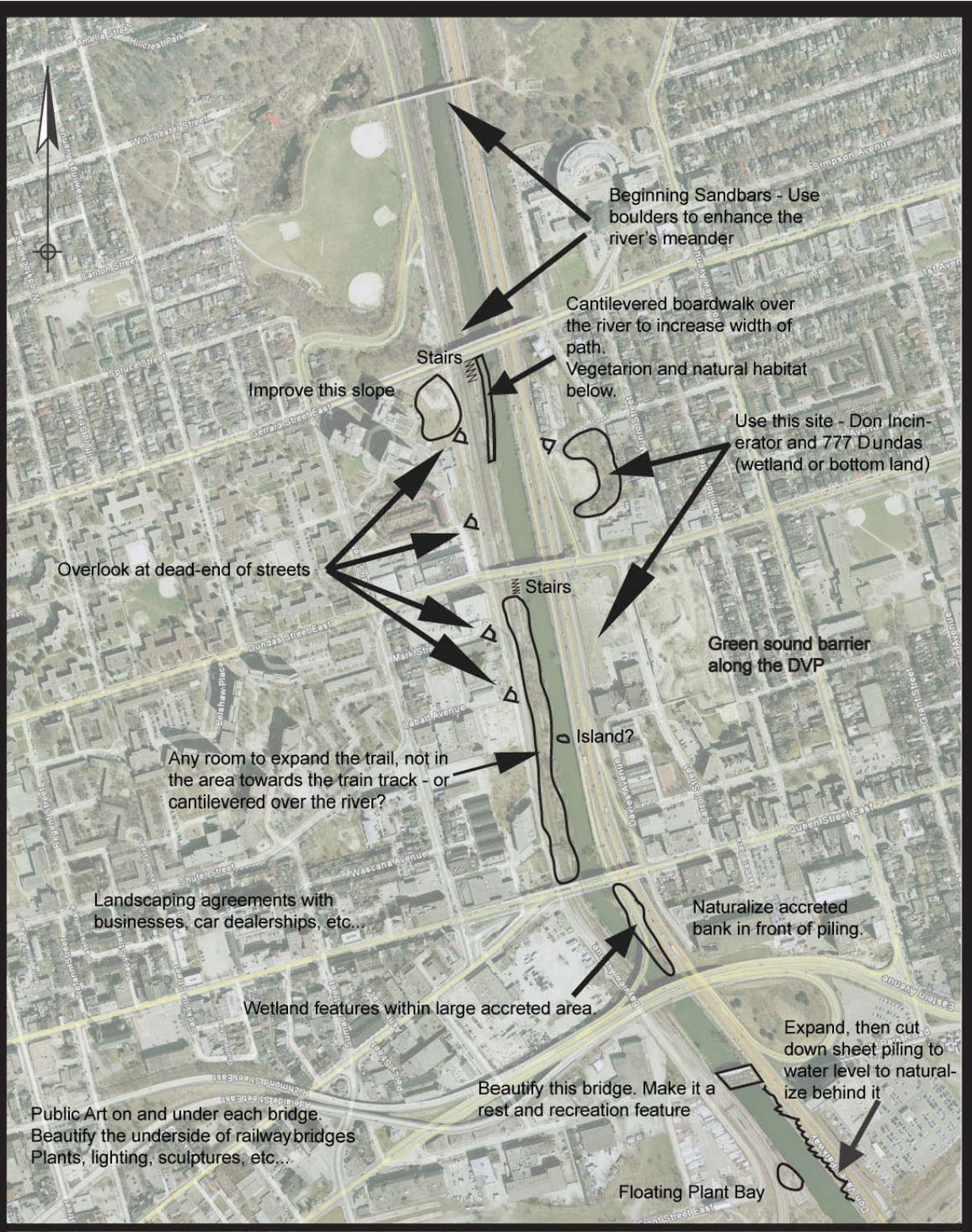
1:50 **Site Walk**
Half of group will walk to Riverdale Park Pedestrian Bridge, and continue downstream. Other half of group will be bussed to Don Landing and continue upstream.

- Travel to start Station 1 & Talk (1:50 – 2:20)
- Walk to Station 2 & Talk (2:20 – 2:45)
- Walk to Station 3 & Talk (2:45 – 3:10)
- Travel back to Recreation Centre (3:10 – 3:25)

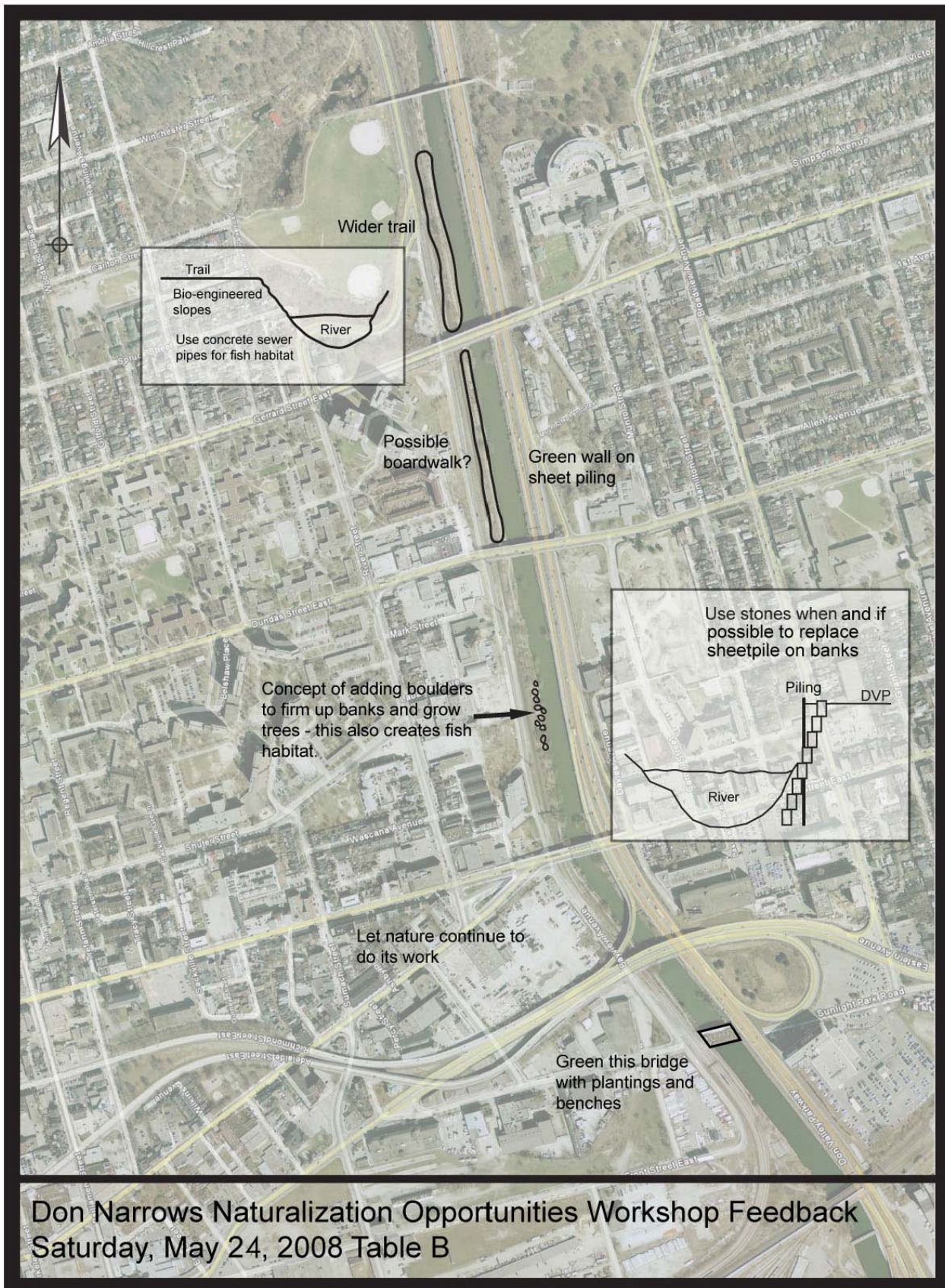
3:30 **Workshop Discussion of Naturalization Opportunities**

4:25 **Next Steps**

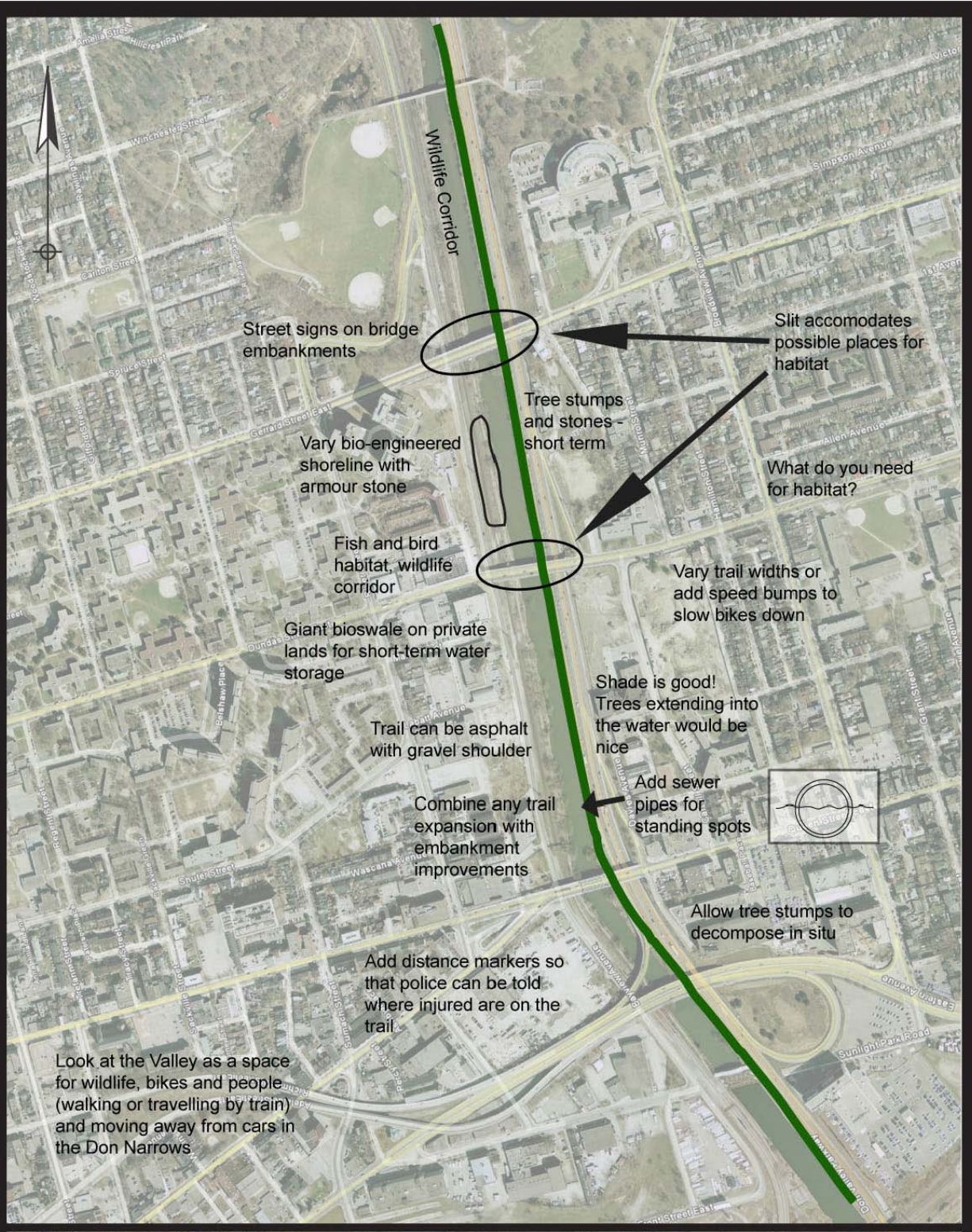
4:30 **Adjourn**



Don Narrows Naturalization Opportunities Workshop Feedback
 Saturday, May 24, 2008 Table A



Don Narrows Naturalization Opportunities Workshop Feedback
Saturday, May 24, 2008 Table B



Wildlife Corridor

Street signs on bridge embankments

Slit accomodates possible places for habitat

Tree stumps and stones - short term

Vary bio-engineered shoreline with armour stone

What do you need for habitat?

Fish and bird habitat, wildlife corridor

Vary trail widths or add speed bumps to slow bikes down

Giant bioswale on private lands for short-term water storage

Shade is good! Trees extending into the water would be nice

Trail can be asphalt with gravel shoulder

Add sewer pipes for standing spots

Combine any trail expansion with embankment improvements

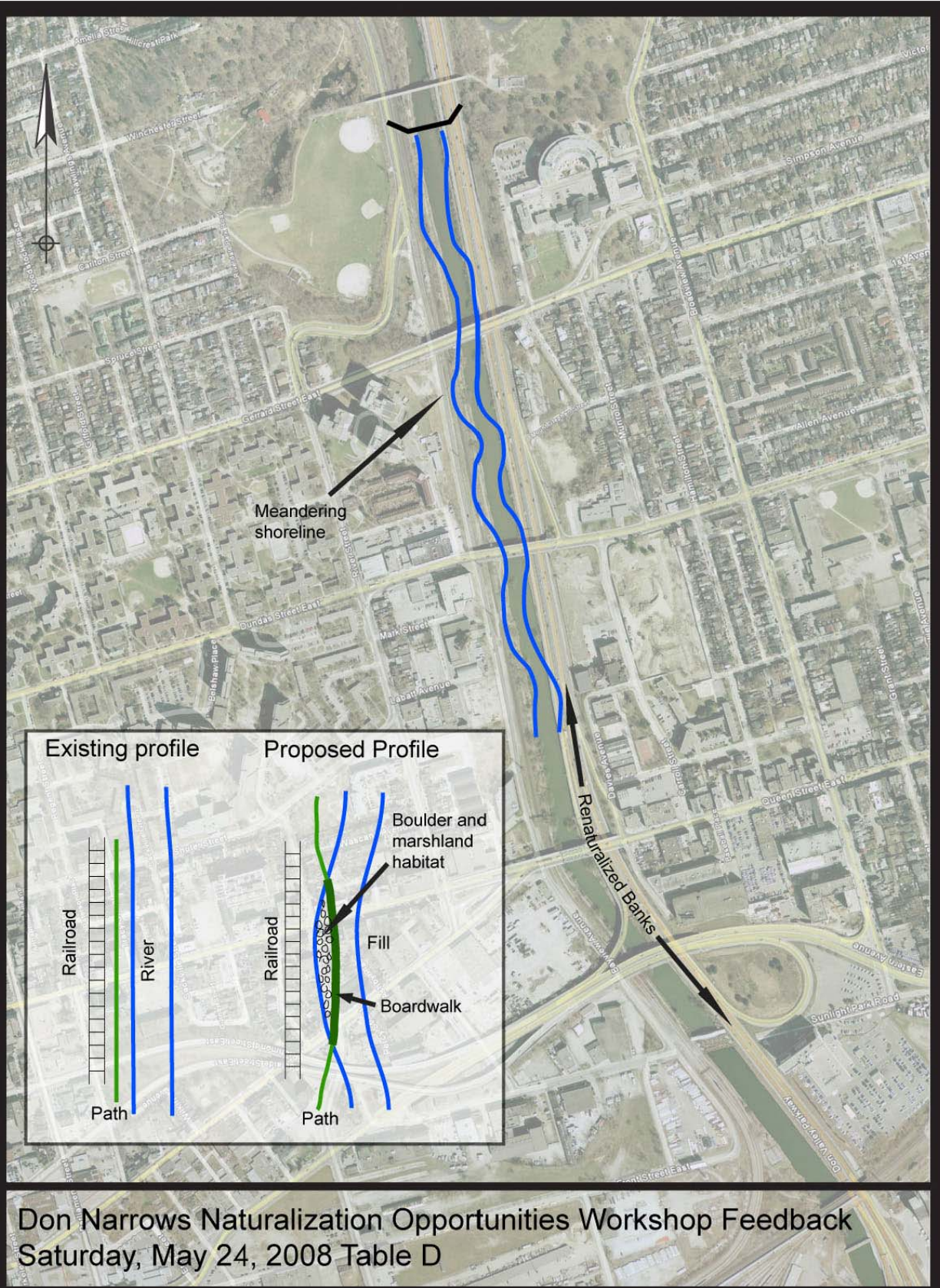


Allow tree stumps to decompose in situ

Add distance markers so that police can be told where injured are on the trail

Look at the Valley as a space for wildlife, bikes and people (walking or travelling by train) and moving away from cars in the Don Narrows

Don Narrows Naturalization Opportunities Workshop Feedback Saturday, May 24, 2008 Table C



Don Narrows Naturalization Opportunities Workshop Feedback
 Saturday, May 24, 2008 Table D