

Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan Report

Trent Central Student Association (TCSA)

January 3rd, 2020

INTRODUCTION

To best represent students' interest regarding the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan, the Trent Central Student Association (TCSA) gathered feedback to help determine student's opinions on this plan. A survey was distributed to students through the TCSA's social media channels, monthly newsletter, and website. Other groups and organizations on campus also shared the survey through their newsletters and social media channels, including the Seasoned Spoon and OPIRG. The survey was released on November 22nd and closed on December 22nd, with 209 recorded responses. This report includes these responses and concludes with our key findings and an appeal for 1) an extension on the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan, 2) for meaningful consultation, and 3) accommodations for concerns and priorities (such as, Indigenous teachings and lands, protection of the natural environment and wildlife, protection of community gardens and experimental farm)

1.0 In question 3 of the survey we asked, "To what extent do you agree with the following statements," which led to the following responses (R = the number of respondents):

#	Question	Agree	R	Somewhat agree	R	Neutral	R	Somewhat Disagree	R	Disagree	R	Total R
1	Trent University sought adequate student input in discussions regarding the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan.	15.23%	23	15.89%	24	26.49%	40	21.85%	33	20.53%	31	151
2	Information about the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan has been promoted sufficiently in	11.26%	17	15.89%	24	20.53%	31	27.15%	41	25.17%	38	151

	the Trent Community.												
3	I understand the purpose of the Trent Lands Plan.	19.87%	30	25.83%	39	16.56%	25	17.22%	26	20.53%	31	151	
4	I am clear about how the Trent Lands Plan will change Trent University while I am studying here.	11.92%	18	15.23%	23	15.23%	23	29.14%	44	28.48%	43	151	

As you can see in the chart above:

- 20.5% of respondents disagree that Trent University sought adequate student input in discussions regarding the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan
- 25.17% of respondents disagree that information about the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan has been promoted sufficiently in the Trent Community
- 20.5% of the respondents disagree that they understand the purpose of the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan
- 28.48% of respondents disagree that they are clear about how the Trent Lands Plan will change Trent University while they study here

2.0 In Question 5 we asked for feedback on several new features that are included in the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan. We asked the survey respondents to rate the projects according to how important they feel each feature is to the Trent University Community (1 not important - 7 very important) (R = the number of respondents):

#	Question	1	R	2	R	3	R	4	R	5	R	6	R	7	R	Total
1	Complete Community	11.70%	11	11.70%	11	19.15%	18	13.83%	13	21.28%	20	6.38%	6	15.96%	15	94
2	Cleantech Commons	16.67%	15	21.11%	19	12.22%	11	22.22%	20	14.44%	13	10.00%	9	3.33%	3	90
3	Relocation of the Experimental Farm	19.35%	18	24.73%	23	12.90%	12	13.98%	13	7.53%	7	10.75%	10	10.75%	10	93
4	Sustainable Village	2.11%	2	12.63%	12	11.58%	11	13.68%	13	23.16%	22	23.16%	22	13.68%	13	95
5	Senior's Village	28.42%	27	13.68%	13	23.16%	22	12.63%	12	9.47%	9	10.53%	10	2.11%	2	95

6	Traditional Teaching Lodge and Medicine Garden	6.19 %	6	4.12 %	4	4.12 %	4	9.28 %	9	12.37 %	12	21.65 %	21	42.27 %	42	97
7	Intensification of Core Campus	14.43 %	14	12.37 %	12	12.37 %	12	15.46 %	15	14.43 %	14	18.56 %	18	12.37 %	12	97

As you can see in the chart above:

- Of the features identified above, 42.3% of respondents rated the Traditional Teaching Lodge and Medicine Garden as the most important.
 - 16% - Complete Community
 - 13.7% - Sustainable Village
 - 12.4% - Intensification of Core Campus
 - 10.8% - Relocation of the Experimental Farm
 - 3.3% - Cleantech Commons
 - 2.1% - Seniors' Village

This data identifies that the priorities of students align with expanding Indigenous teaching space on campus, and not with relocating the Experimental Farm, expanding Cleantech Commons, or developing a Seniors' Village. A strong connection with the natural environment and wildlife, along with the existing vegetable and medicine gardens was emphasized in the feedback that was collected on the proposed projects (see question 6 below).

3.0 In Question 6 we asked the respondents to provide feedback on the projects that were described in Question 5, which was done through text entries. All the responses are included below, in the respondents' own words, to give the full context of their feedback and opinions:

“Please don't relocate the farm and vegetable gardens for an industrial park!”

“I think that the plan ultimately leads to more development of the Trent nature lands. I think the plan will definitely lead to loss of **habitat and biodiversity** and be detrimental to many species at risk which rely on the Trent lands for survival.”

“What do all these highlighted areas of the map actually entail? I don't know, for example, what the proposed "complete community" is. There seems to be a lack of transparency; the information is not readily accessible. In addition, the experimental farm should not be moved onto current **nature areas**, if avoidable. The university should be prioritizing sustainable agriculture initiatives as they are important to the campus community and for educational purposes. They should not be relocated for the sake of new development.”

“I heard that the new plan is building on top of the farm and relocating it. Is this true and if so then why couldn't the plan work around the farm? Also, I'm not sure I understand what type of building is happening.”

“Save the bees and the garden. How can Trent even propose these changes and still flout the "green school" persona?”

“More land for the indigenous learning/traditions/peoples”

“DON'T MOVE THE TRENT GARDENS. Do not build over the season spoon garden”

“Why was the last question phrased that way? To be clear, I rated the relocation of the garden as not important. I do not believe that the gardens should be removed from central campus.”

“These names are cushy and bougie sounding just to make us feel better about all the development and land intensification”

“putting a senior home on campus is a terrible idea and will prevent students from choosing trent”

“Please do not build a seniors community on a [Western Chorus Frog breeding site](#). There are not many places left for nature to thrive but there are many places that seniors can thrive in our community. Please choose to protect nature instead of destroying it. Also, the experimental farm is fine where it is, there is no need to move it. If it is moved even further, it will be less accessible to students. It is already far enough.”

“More indigenous involvement. More student awareness. Consideration of the [provincially significant wetland](#) the school is on.”

“This is unjust regarding Indigenous involvement and openly breaks wetland setback rules, as the [wetlands](#) on Trent Campus are provincially significant and require a 120m setback. They should not be built upon. Having more Indigenous collaboration and input on this project is absolutely necessary.”

“Ummmm, they should just leave the Experimental Gardens where they are!!!! I have been here three years, and this is the first time I have seen this or heard of this, and this is consultation, not consent bros. Why are we making a Seniors Village on UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, someone PLEASE explain this to Mel What do you mean by “sustainable”. Village? How is this development going to be ecologically friendly and impose the least amount of environmental damage? As a university that boasts their respectful relationship with Indigenous Peoples, the addition of “Traditional Teaching Lodge and Medicine Garden feels token and performative. This should be what the framework and plan is focused on. Also, as a “green” university, can we replace all these spread out parking lots that are eating up such a large majority of what could be [Mother Earth friendly green space](#) with a parking garage? This would also negate any need to encroach upon more land. I think this needs to take a massive step back. Before any of this continues, it would be nice if a consultation for CONSENT workshop and data was done to see how many Indigenous and non-Indigenous core staff of Trent and student agree and understand exactly what this means and entails. For someone who is first looking at this, it makes no sense and would be better disseminated either via video or in-person discussions. What do you mean by “Intensification of Core campus? Will these buildings be implementing “green” energy systems and will they be built according to changing environments, so as to lower Trent’s energy and environmental footprint?”

“Too much focused is placed on future development. [Leave these lands the way they are.](#)”

“This map is extremely difficult read and inaccessible for students and people with disabilities. I don't understand what is meant by Gateways or Sustainable Village. The plan uses fluffy words that sound nice but don't have a lot of meaning and sound disingenuous. The Trent Vegetable Gardens should not be relocated. It takes 10 years for sustainable farming practices to start building soil, and the TVG has JUST started to build up soil as they celebrate a decade planting in their current location. Moving the farms and gardens to build an industrial park goes against all the values that Trent is supposed to have. I think building a traditional teaching lodge and medicine garden in the wake of the destruction already started by the arena complex is a great plan. Listening to Elders and Knowledge Holders is always the way to go.”

“I think due to Trent's reputation of being an environmental sustainable school and the responsibility that Trent has to be stewards of the land the projects listed involve as little destruction of natural lands as possible. I like how the new sustainable village is located close to campus and won't disturb any nature forests. I am concerned about the location of the Senior's village that will destroy that forested area. If Trent wishes to pursue a Senior's Village it should not infringe upon the forested land that we have a responsibility to care for, especially as a Senior's Village is not vital to student life. I do appreciate that these plans maintain the Lady Eaton Drumlin and Trent Wildlife Sanctuary which are [valuable nature areas](#) for students.”

“The experimental farm has taken years to build up the health of the soil and now the proposed changes will move it to an overused farm plot, far from the campus and needed infrastructure.”

“I'm not sure if I missed an email somewhere but I have little knowledge of these projects, their meaning or the impact they may have. Due to Covid I do not live around campus and have spent this term online in various locations. I don't feel I have the background of presence to make informed opinions, or decisions”

“The seniors village is poorly planned. They will be too isolated in the proposed location and should be integrated within the sustainable/complete village. The difference between the sustainable and complete villages is unclear... they sound functionally identical but are listed as separate. Is sustainability not related to the self-sufficiency described for the complete village? And if the complete village is not sustainable, why are we building one? Is Trent not the environmental leader it proclaims to be?”

“I do agree the relocation of the farm is needed but the proposed location will impact the surrounding prov. significant wetland and should be considered in a different location although policy doesn't force us to protect wetland from agriculture we have more than enough scientific knowledge to confirm it does negatively impact and this should be recognized by a university that prides themselves on [environmental stewardship](#)”

“Stop building on [protected land.](#)”

“I don't understand what any of these things are you need to give much more information”

“I do not believe that this plan will follow through”

“How will food access be prioritized in the plan? How will student accessibility be prioritized to access the farms? How will greenspace be preserved throughout and after construction?”

“The experimental farm is not necessarily something that can just be "relocated". Farms are ongoing and continuous, and need time to grow. The Trent farm is one that has put a lot of work into creating an ecologically sustainable growing space, and I think there needs to be A LOT of consultation with the farmers before it's "relocated".”

“The relocation of the experimental farm is most important to me, not because I want it to be relocated, but because I strongly believe it needs to stay where it is. Unless the Trent community is willing to support the costs of our more and provide some updated infrastructure.”

“I feel that [wetland buffers](#) should be 120 meters and that the concerns the community has is not being taken seriously.”

“It is vital in my opinion that [we protect the remaining natural infrastructure that we have on Trent campus](#). Relocating the gardens to clear the already [naturally diverse landscape](#) seems ridiculous to me as I’m closely connected to these environments! Wild turkeys, deer, a decades worth of composted soil all hand turned just going to be phased away and told to go somewhere new... because of this expansion, we will need to move, as there are some benefits to new spaces however there are also a multitude of consequences! I came to Trent because of limited size of student population and the environment surrounding the campus... not because of the pavement and roads”

“I do not understand what most of these terms refer to in regards to how it will affect Trent Students as a whole.”

“Please consider all of the nutrients and soil traits that have carefully been nurtured and grown in the current farms on campus. As well, the current east access to the farm with and without a car.”

“I found the rating system in the previous question to be not very clear in explaining my feelings on this. I think that the gardens, sustainability, and traditional teachings are of the utmost importance, with everything else about further development being secondary. I also think there needs to be a lot more engagement with the student body, especially those involved with the gardens and such, before the plan moves forward to actual development. The word needs to get out to more students, with people actually understanding the details.”

4.0 In Question 8 we asked if the survey respondents had any other feedback or recommendations for Trent University to improve the design of the Trent Lands Plan. Their responses are in their own words below:

“I agree with the recommendations of the Indigenous leaders who were consulted for the plan. I think [no further development of the nature lands](#) should be allowed at the moment.”

“Include more student input, and put more consideration into the environmental and ecological impacts of development. Building of the CleanTech commons started even before news of this project reached the public.”

“I think there should be more awareness on the Trent Lands Plans to Trent students. I also think the plans itself need to be more specific and show how they think developing in this area would be beneficial to nature, sustainability and conservation - everything Trent stands for.”

“primary focus on indigenous rights and environmental safety/[conversation](#)”

“This is a plan that disrespects Indigenous sovereignty as well as the Indigenous students at Trent University. The consultation with Indigenous students was limited and biased. This land was gifted to Trent, and Trent is disrespecting the [natural habitat and wildlife](#) that occupies campus. Indigenous students do not support the Trent Lands Plan. It is disconcerting that Trent boasts a sustainability and decolonial stance while actively participating in the destruction of Indigenous Lands.”

“Don't move the season spoon garden. It is an irreplaceable resource for Trent students”

“I am extremely sad to hear you are moving Trent gardens and apiary. As a student that was a huge thing that drew me to pick Trent. How can you promote yourself as being eco conscious and are going to gentrify these areas. Extremely sad to hear. If this goes through I will no longer support Trent. As an alumni I would not be proud of my alma mater and would actively not recommend students to pick Trent because of how you are pushing these areas aside.”

“I also would like to say that the town hall meeting was conducted strangely. At some point someone made the choice to silence the participants and turn off our cameras and mics. Who made that decision and why?”

“More consultation with the Trent community is required and our voices must be heard. Make the right decision and [protect nature](#). We are an environmental school so we should be setting an example for others.”

“Not doing it.”

“More Indigenous collaboration, [protection of wetland area and species within wetlands](#), more student involvement, input and awareness.”

“Include more input from Indigenous peoples, elders, knowledge keepers, and students! Listen to environmentalists and wetland specialists. Include ALL feedback and planning. This land was donated by Curve Lake First Nation, do not forget that.”

“Where is the discussion about engaging in respectful, relations with Mother Earth. Trent is one of the most two faced and hypocritical institutions I've ever had the misfortune of associating with. Trent prides itself on being green and committed to reconciliation and engaging in respectful relationships with Indigenous Knowledges and Voices, while in actuality it concocts these closed “Trent Lands Plans” and then tells everybody they're doing it without making sure that this is in the best interest or wishes of the diverse population of Trent students and professors. This sounds like another way in which political agendas for more \$\$\$ overrode the cores and values that the Trent management built their image upon. Trent, your actions belie, and expose the inauthenticity and superficiality of your words. If we're talking about reconciliation, can you please reconcile your public platform with your fundamentally-incongruent development agendas, pleeeeee?”

“Keeping the farm assets in their current location and [preserving the Nature Areas for long term ecological restoration](#).”

“More [Indigenous led conservation](#), not just consultation. Create more of [a buffer](#) around cleantech commons and [sensitive environmental areas](#). Reduce its scale. Create legislation to prevent more of the land from being developed. Too much focus is placed on future development... [these lands should be protected.](#)”

“Provide multiple map layers with scales and measurable units on all diagrams so we can actually understand what they are saying and doing.”

“Yes, [invest in the Nature Areas](#)”

“[Preserving and enhancing green space should be a top priority](#). A big part of the environmental programming is outdoor laboratories -- these allow students to develop useful skills and not every university can provide that.”

“rethink the relocation area designated for the experimental farm”

“Stop building on [protected land](#)”

“Make it more eco friendly”

“There are many projects that I have no idea about such as the sustainable village and the seniors village. These are very interesting, yet after 6 years at Trent this is the first I am hearing of them.”

“[Don't build on wetlands](#). Build up, not out — many of the buildings could be retrofitted to accommodate some of the goals outlined in the plan. [Preserving greenspace for education and leisure](#) should be high priority for a school that prides itself on its environmentalism.

“Please avoid developing undeveloped areas such as agricultural fields. Instead [we should grow the nature areas to improve landscape connectivity](#) and recreation opportunities.”

“No Cleantech Commons”

“[Cutting down trees is not okay.](#)”

“not really other than it should be more promoted, as a student i feel like i know nothing about it and i think it's pretty important students are more aware of it!”

“Development is not the way of the future. Remember all that this land is not just a resource but [is home to soo many living things who deserve your respect and consideration.](#)”

“The design should include [more natural spaces](#)”

“I wish to make sure that it is still student focused first. I do like how a new residence is being built to accommodate the needs of students. I do believe this plan meets that standard and just needs something more clear to explain that. The new residence should be a top priority in this plan due to the housing crisis in the city and I encourage them to make this the focus of the campaign moving forward.”

“Please try to sustain the experimental farms in their current placement. Farms are not something that can just easily be rebuilt and relocated.”

“More student involvement, more information readily available. Go back to what the school claims to be all about: [the environment and students getting out in nature.](#)”

CONCLUSION

In the feedback collected from the respondents of the survey it is evident that there is a gap in information that has been provided to students and a lack of understanding of the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan. This could be due to the lack of consultation with students prior to and during the development of these plans.

It was specifically stated by respondents of the survey that the Virtual Town Hall on November 18th was not conducted with proper consultation from attendees. The attendees were silenced and were not allowed to provide their input during the event.

Some respondents also commented that the plan is hard to read and understand and should be more clearly represented to students.

There is a large concern from respondents of the lack of consultation with Indigenous groups on the plan and development on Indigenous lands and treaty territories. Respondents highlight a strong commitment and respect for Indigenous teachings and Indigenous lands.

There is a lack of support for the Seniors' Village and the Cleantech Commons by respondents. Some respondents commented that there is not a need for a Seniors' Village and that this will deter future students from attending Trent University.

Some respondents also believe that there should be a much larger buffer around the Provincially Significant Wetland to reduce impacts from the industrial park - Cleantech Commons, and that the scale of this development should be reduced dramatically.

Respondents want to protect and expand the Nature Areas, preserve the natural campus and diverse wildlife that shares this space with us, and increased educational and recreational opportunities in these areas. Respondents want protocols to be created that will protect the Nature Areas from future development. There is concern about the development of the projects in Species at Risk habitat and Provincially Significant Wetlands. Notably, there are significant concerns about the integrity of Trent University and its reputation as an environmental leader. A reputation that is highly valued by the student body.

It is suggested numerous times that the movement of the Experimental Farms, Trent Apiary and Trent Vegetable Gardens should be reconsidered. Students value the farms and their location, and they do not want them to be moved. There should be more consultation with the agriculture affiliated groups on campus about the relocation of the farms. Recommendations for alternative plans have been put forward by students; one of them being a plan from the Grower's Group at Trent, which asked for an alternative site for the farms.

The TCSA and the Trent Graduate Students' Association (TGSA) sent a joint letter to the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan Committee, Julie Davis, Leo Groarke, the Secretariat for the Board of Directors and Craig Brunetti. In this letter we requested that the comment period for the Trent Lands and Nature Areas Plan be extended from January 4th to March 2021. Several other groups have asked for an extension of the comment period, including the Trent Vegetable Gardens, Sustainable Food Systems Society, Apiary Club, Trent Students for Responsible Development, Council of Canadians, Peterborough Pollinators, Peterborough Alliance for Climate Action, Peterborough Field Naturalists, Sustainable Trent, Arthur Newspaper, and Ontarians against Environmental Deregulation.

We received a letter in return from Julie Davis denying our request for an extension. Here we are appealing this decision. Instead, we believe that an extension is necessary and would allow more time for meaningful consultation and accommodation of student concerns and priorities as identified here.

Please contact me if you have any questions about the survey and the responses included in this report. I look forward to speaking with you about this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jocelyn Whalen', written over a horizontal line.

Jocelyn Whalen

Environment & Sustainability Commissioner (TCSA)