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Sustainable Heritage Case Study

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Sustainability in a World Heritage Site

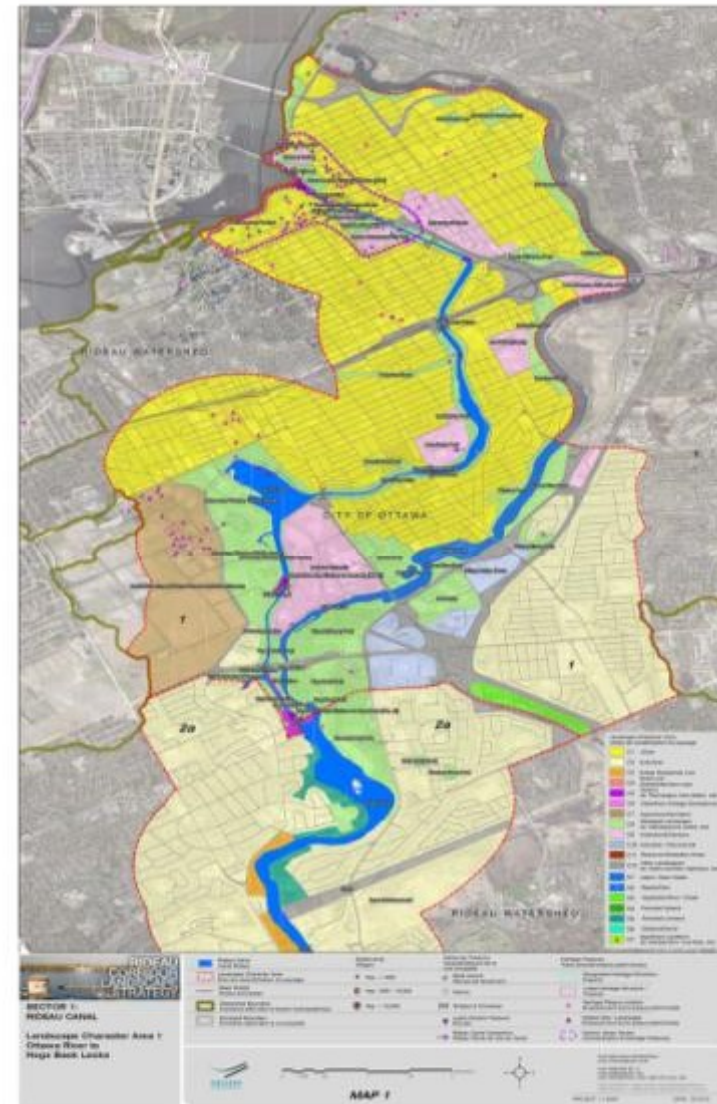
Sustainability challenges in Canada's World Heritage Site Rideau Canal

Retrieved from: <http://ncc-ccn.gc.ca/rideau-canal-skateway>

Rideau Canal Area Map



Map showing the nominated property. Retrieved from:
https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1221/multiple=1&unique_number=1475



Map of the Rideau Canal area from Hog's Back to the Ottawa River. Retrieved from:
<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/on/rideau/info/sacr-rcls>

Lessons

- ❑ The Rideau Canal waterway cannot be seen isolated from the rich cultural landscape corridor, urban, suburban and rural, that it is part of. In Ottawa, the Rideau Canal waterway and the surrounding urban areas form a harmonious setting that contributes significantly to the unique character of the area landscape. However, recent development projects such as the Ottawa Convention Centre and the Chateau Laurier proposed addition showed that it is this proximity to the urban core area of the city that represents the primary risk of negatively impacting the integrity and visual character of the heritage resource;
- ❑ In Ottawa, the Rideau Canal is used as a transportation corridor to move in and out of the urban centre through a network of motor vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians' infrastructure. On the other hand, in several locations along its pathway, the Canal constitutes a barrier between neighbourhoods, limiting the movement of pedestrians and cyclists. This, despite the Rideau Canal's potential to enhance connectivity along and across the Canal by balancing all modes of transportation, especially to respond to increasing walkability.
- ❑ In the same time, recent development pressures related to the construction of two pedestrian bridges over Rideau Canal (Corktown Footbridge and Flora Footbridge) have brought out a lot of stakeholders in the community. This important it is to strengthen and sustain the commitment of both local communities and communities of interest throughout the various phases of these projects ;

Lessons (Cont.)

- ❑ The Rideau Canal provides a positive year-round asset for the City. In winter, the Rideau Canal Skateway is a popular recreation site that brings vibrant recreational activities to the Canal. In the summer, the waterway provides a scenic navigable channel for a variety of vessels. However, the image of the Canal remains tied closely to the operation of the locks for boats in the summer and to skating during the winter (Holthof, B., et al., 2013). This shows the need for a long term tourist strategy for the Canal that will provide recreational opportunities for both local residents and tourists throughout the year;
- ❑ “The Rideau Canal Corridor is a complex multi-jurisdictional landscape, with federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government, as well as Algonquin Traditional Territory in the Ottawa River Watershed” (Parks Canada, 2012). These various layers of conservation and management policy from different jurisdictions and agencies induce a broad range of interests that does not always align. A successful management of the resource requires a comprehensive approach, in which all stakeholders recognize each other’s strengths and work together with the spirit of collaboration.

Rideau Canal's Landscape Evolution



Photos showing the character of the Rideau Canal in the early 1900s and nowadays.

Retrieved from: <http://www.ottawahh.com/?cat=21>

Description

- ❑ “The Rideau Canal is a 202-km slackwater canal, consisting of navigable lakes and rivers and excavated channels, connecting Ottawa, the nation’s capital on the Ottawa River, and Kingston on Lake Ontario. The canal includes fifty locks at twenty-four lockstations, seventy-three dams, and 19 km of excavated channels.” (Parks Canada, 2005);
- ❑ The Canal was constructed as a transportation route to carry people and supplies to Upper Canada without using the St. Lawrence River, which would have been threatened by American forces in the event of conflict (Bytown Museum, 2013);
- ❑ In 1856, the Rideau Canal was transferred from British military control to the government of the Province of Upper Canada (Watson, 2012);
- ❑ By the end of the 19th century, Ottawa had changed from a lumber town to manufacturing city to a National Capital. In 1899, the Ottawa Improvement Commission (OIC) was established to improve the city. One important task was to beautify the banks of the Rideau Canal (National Capital Commission, 2013);
- ❑ In 1925, the Canal was designated a National Historic Site;
- ❑ The Ministry of Transportation transferred authority over the Rideau Canal to Parks Canada in 1972;
- ❑ The Rideau Waterway was designated as a Canadian Heritage River in February 2000 for its outstanding human heritage and recreational values;
- ❑ In 2007, the Rideau Canal was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its Outstanding Universal Values.

Stakeholders

- ☐ UNESCO
- ☐ Province of Ontario
- ☐ 8 Provincial ministries and 2 conservation authorities
- ☐ City of Ottawa + 12 other municipalities
- ☐ 3 Federal agencies (Parks Canada, National Capital Commission, Department of National Defence)
- ☐ Non for profit organizations (The Rideau Heritage Route Tourism Association, Friends of the Rideau)
- ☐ Local residents and Citizens groups
- ☐ First Nations Communities
- ☐ Private property owners and businesses

Timeline

- ❑ Early 1600's: At the time of European contact, the Ottawa River watershed was inhabited by Algonquin peoples.
- ❑ Until the late 1800's: The Rideau route saw continual use as an Indigenous travel way between Lake Ontario and the Ottawa River
- ❑ 1826 – 1832: Construction of Rideau Canal for military reasons ;
- ❑ 1854: Establishment of rail infrastructure and the Rideau Canal's edges became an important area for industrial development ;
- ❑ 1856: RC was transferred from British military control to the government of the Province of Upper Canada ;
- ❑ 1899: The Ottawa Improvement Commission (OIC) was established to improve the city ;
- ❑ 1950: Industry around the Canal was moved to external sites around the city ;
- ❑ Mid-1960s: Rail lines along the Canal were replaced by Colonel By Drive ;
- ❑ 1925: The Canal was designated a National Historic site of Canada ;
- ❑ Winter of 1970-71: Beginning of the Rideau Canal Skateway ;
- ❑ 1972: transfer of the Canal from the Department of Transport to Parks Canada ;
- ❑ 2000: Rideau Canal designated a Canadian Heritage River ;
- ❑ 2007: Rideau Canal designated World Heritage Site ;
- ❑ 2007-2008: Launch of the Rideau Corridor Landscape Strategy's process ;
- ❑ 2012 Release of the Rideau Corridor Landscape Character Assessment and Planning and Management Recommendations Report.

Natural/Cultural Heritage

- ❑ Rideau Canal is the only Ontario's WH site. It was designated in 2007 for its OUV:
 - *Criterion (i)*: The best preserved example of a slackwater canal in North America demonstrating the use of European slackwater technology ;
 - *Criterion (iv)*: A well preserved and significant example of a canal which was used for a military purpose linked to a significant stage in human history.
- ❑ RC area contains a number of places of heritage significance: The Chateau Laurier, the Senate of Canada building (Ottawa Union Station), Confederation Square (National War Memorial), Confederation Park (Gatherings and festivals), etc. ;
- ❑ The nominated property includes all the main elements of the original canal together with relevant later changes in the shape of watercourses, dams, bridges, fortifications, lock stations and related archaeological resources ;
- ❑ RC is protected as National Historic Site under the Historic Sites and Monuments Act;
- ❑ In winter, the frozen RC turns into the world's longest skateway, and hosts Ottawa's largest winter recreation: the Winterlude Festival ;
- ❑ Although designated WH Site within the Cultural Category, RC incorporates outstanding natural heritage values ;
- ❑ RC contribute significantly to the character of the core area landscape and is a reminder of Canada's Capital Region's water-based heritage.

During Winter, RC turns into the world's longest Skateway



Source: National Capital Commission. Retrieved from: <http://ncc-ccn.gc.ca/rideau-canal-skateway>

Sustainability

Environmental Sustainability:

- ❑ The Rideau Canal, including its tributary lakes and rivers, is an important environmental resource that supports a tremendous variety of species of animals such as fish (ie. bass and pike), birds (i.e. loons, herons, blackbirds, ducks, marsh wrens, least bitterns), frogs, turtles and muskrats. Some of these are “species at risk” (i.e. least bitterns and stink pot turtles). (Parks Canada, (2019) Rideau Canal National Historic Site. Retrieved from: <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/on/rideau/info/vegetation>).
- ❑ Landscape Character Assessment and Planning and Management Recommendations Report, as part of the Rideau Corridor Landscape Strategy, propounded ten principles that provide guidance on how waterfront and shoreline development and redevelopment can respect, protect and enhance the Rideau Canal values :
 1. Understand and respect the local landscape character ;
 2. Conserve historic buildings and cultural heritage features ;
 3. Conserve, protect and enhance wetlands ;
 4. Maintain and retain natural shoreline ;
 5. Locate development back from the shoreline ;
 6. Work with the landscape, not against it ;
 7. Design buildings to complement the site ;
 8. Design residential docks and boathouses for low impact ;
 9. Protect water quality ;
 10. Prevent hazards and property damage.

Sustainability (Cont.)

Environmental Sustainability (Cont.):

- ❑ A set of Specific Approaches for the Ecological Landscape have been developed as part of the Rideau Corridor Landscape Strategy, including: water quality, invasive Species, tree Protection, and Further Ecological Stewardship
- ❑ However, despite all the ongoing efforts, the Rideau Canal is still facing many environmental pressures:
 - The recent discovery of toxins in the Rideau Canal is an alarming example of these environmental challenges. The toxic contaminants that are the legacy of manufacturing facilities that once peppered the canal's banks were discovered in November 2016 after repairs to the Canal ;
 - The close proximity of development to the Rideau Canal shorelines: recent development projects such as the Ottawa Convention Centre and the Chateau Laurier proposed addition showed that the threats on the visual setting and the character of the cultural landscape continue to be a matter of concern.

Sustainability (Cont.)

Social Sustainability:

- ❑ The Rideau Canal is a defining element of the National Capital with a unique identity and remarkable spirit. It is widely cherished by residents and millions of tourists who visit the capital year-round and is seen locally as a symbol of Canada's identity and provides a unique sense of place ;
- ❑ The Canal waterway provides a wide range of parks and continuous open spaces in an urban context. In winter, the Rideau Canal Skateway is a popular recreation site that brings vibrant liveliness to the Canal. In the summer, the waterway provides a scenic navigable channel for a variety of vessels ;
- ❑ In addition, the Canal that has historically been used for military and industrial purposes is nowadays a recreational waterway. All these Rideau Canal-based uses, activities and amenities contribute to community quality of life and enhance to social sustainability of the Rideau Canal.

Economic Sustainability:

- ❑ The Rideau Canal is a valuable tourism and recreational resource contributing substantially to the economy of the City of Ottawa and Eastern Ontario ;
- ❑ During winter, the frozen Canal turns into the world's longest skateway, and hosts Ottawa's largest celebration of Canadian culture and winter recreation: the Winterlude Festival. The recreational activity of Rideau Canal continues during the summer, offering sports, leisure and festivities ;

Sustainability (Cont.)

Economic Sustainability (Cont.):

- ❑ The Canal's status of prime tourist attraction has been reinforced by the World Heritage Designation ;
- ❑ Despite the Rideau Canal's undeniable role in the development of cultural tourism in the City of Ottawa, there are no specific policies for economic development/ Tourism objectives/ Strategies for the Rideau Canal.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- ❑ Through the implementation of concrete actions stemming from these planning and policy frameworks, the Rideau Canal is contributing to advance number of SDGs, including: SDG 3 SDG 11, SDG 14 and SDG 15.





Flora Footbridge, a new pedestrian and cyclist crossing over the Rideau Canal

Source: [Jith Paul](https://www.behance.net/gallery/82367045/Ottawas-Parks-andBike-PedestrianBridges). Retrieved from: <https://www.behance.net/gallery/82367045/Ottawas-Parks-andBike-PedestrianBridges>

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