Dear Resident,

Re: Highland Woods and Earl Nichols Park Trail Improvements

This letter is meant to inform neighborhood residents of upcoming improvements to the trail system in Highland Woods and Earl Nichols Park. Many people in the community have expressed concern about the current conditions of the boardwalks and trails over the past few years. In the Fall of 2020, the City is planning to undertake improvements in three different areas surrounding Highland Woods. Below is a summary of the three planned improvements and on the last page is a map highlighting the approximate areas.

The City of London is inviting comments and suggestions from residents regarding the accessible design features of this recreational trail as required by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

A: Granular Trail Upgrades in North Portion of Highland Woods:

Over the past few years, many small trees and shrubs have grown in along the un-manicured granular trail connecting the south and north portions of Highland Woods (between Country Club Drive and Rossmore Court). A small maintenance corridor will be cleared along the edge of the existing trail and the granular surface will be reestablished to its original 1.8 m width. The improvements to this section of trail will enhance sight lines and accessibility, while preserving the adjacent naturalization that has occurred in recent years.

B: Trail and Boardwalk Upgrades in South Portion of Highland Woods:

The City will be improving the granular trail system and replacing or removing existing boardwalks throughout Highland Woods. Woodlands that are surrounded by houses and that have multiple access points require a carefully designed trail system that encourages residents to walk and enjoy nature in a sustainable way. This existing trail system will be re-designed to be fully accessible, as per AODA. It will continue to avoid the more sensitive areas of the woodland, will incorporate new culverts to ensure drainage patterns are not impacted, and will be re-aligned slightly in certain areas to minimize impacts on existing mature native trees.

C: New Trail Connection from Earl Nichols Park to Ferndale Ave

An informal dirt trail currently exists between Ferndale Avenue and Earl Nichols Park. However, it is not accessible and has very poor drainage. A new granular trail is planned along this corridor that will generally follow the location of the existing trail. A few trees will have to be selectively removed and/or trimmed to allow for construction access and to create a 1.8 m wide trail. A small boardwalk may be included in one location to minimize grading impacts, while maintaining existing drainage patterns.

Artist Rocks

On a recent site visit, many decorative/painted stones were found throughout the woodland and adjacent to the trail system. Some of these stones are very close to the existing trail/boardwalks and would conflict with construction activities. The City’s contractor will carefully collect and save these rocks so they are not damaged during construction activities and they will return them upon completion of the project. Alternatively, the local artists of these stones are welcome to temporarily remove or relocate them by early September if preferred.

New Tree and Shrub Plantings and Invasive Species Management:

Starting in 2020 and continuing into future years, the City will identify and manage invasive plant species found throughout Highland Woods. Invasive plant species, such as buckthorn, creates unhealthy competition for native trees and shrubs and has negative impacts on area wildlife such as birds and amphibians.
New native trees and shrubs will be planted in appropriate areas along the trail system in an effort to both increase species diversity and enhance the woodland's long term health. These plantings will most likely occur in areas where tree hazard mitigation and invasive species management has occurred.

**Bird and Wildlife Habitat:**

As part of this project, opportunities to create habitat features such as bird boxes, bat boxes, snake hibernacula, and/or brush structures will be considered and implemented where appropriate. The timing of the trail improvements has also been established to avoid impacts on wildlife, such as bird foraging/breeding and bird nesting activity.

Due to the scale and scope of management activities being planned, excellent opportunities may exist for area residents to help plant trees, manage invasive species, monitor and learn about woodland habitats. If this is something you, or your family are interested in, please feel free to contact the City.

If you have any questions regarding this project or if you need information in an alternate format, or require the assistance of a communication support, arrangements can be made, upon request, to Eric Conway at the City of London’s Parks Planning and Design Section.

Thank you,

Eric Conway, OALA CSLA
Landscape Architect
Parks Planning and Design
City of London

267 Dundas Street, 3rd Floor, London, ON N6A 1H2
519-661-CITY(2489) ext. 4288
elconway@london.ca

Cc. E. Peloza, Ward 12 Councillor
J. Bruin, Manager, Parks Planning and Design
Highland Woods Park Improvements

Area A - Repairing existing granular pathway, selective removals of vegetation growing over pathways.

Area B - Replacement and removals of existing boardwalks. Repainting granular pathways and select removals of hazard trees along pathways.

Area C - Creation of granular pathway from Earl Nichols Park to Ferndale Ave, removal of invasive trees and regrading to improve drainage.