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Designs on greatness

Ottawa councillors push plan for international competition to revitalize Lansdowne Park

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The City of Ottawa is opening up the future of Lansdowne Park to the world.

Since the city discovered late last month that the lower level of the south-side stands at Frank Clair Stadium was crumbling, it has been scrambling to come up with a plan to revitalize the 18-hectare space.

Alta Vista Coun. Peter Hume and Capital Coun. Clive Doucet have decided the best way to give Lansdowne Park a chance for a facelift is to launch an international design competition.

"We need some really top-notch international minds to work on this," said Doucet. "We want to see how they can create a new space for a new century."

Doucet said the capital lacks any vision for the park, which has the potential to be as grand as Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens or the Sydney Opera House in Australia.

STAFF BLESSING

Hume said the pair's idea of a design competition already has city staff's blessing.

"What you get is everyone engaged in the process," said Hume, who along with Doucet will table the motion at the Sept. 25 planning and environment committee meeting.

The four-page motion also suggests hosting a competition is the most cost-effective and efficient way to kickstart the park's revitalization.

The motion likens the design competition to a similar process in Toronto 50 years ago, when that city invited international architects to submit ideas for a new City Hall and public square.

The result, Nathan Phillips Square, is a familiar part of the country's municipal landscape.

Toronto is now in the first stage of revitalizing the square and is again holding a competition for ideas.

Anyone thinking of entering the Lansdowne design contest will have to follow some strict guiding principles and must be creative.

GRAND ENTRANCE

The designer must preserve Frank Clair Stadium and the Civic Centre, improve and integrate the park's access to the Rideau Canal and create green spaces within the park.

The criteria also call for a grand entrance to the park and say the park must be able to host outdoor performances and festivals while maintaining its historical characteristics.

"The results of an international design competition should foster a renewed sense of civic pride among the residents of Ottawa for their park," says the motion.



Ottawa city councillors Clive Doucet and Peter Hume stand at Lansdowne Park yesterday. They want to hold a contest for designers to come up with a revitalization plan for the grounds. (Sean Kilpatrick/SUN)

Hume said the city has to act quickly because it can't afford to spend years deciding what to do with the park. Hume and Doucet hope a design is chosen by next September.

BLUEPRINT FOR A MAKEOVER

Proposals to revitalize Lansdowne Park must do the following:

- Preserve and enhance Lansdowne Park's unique characteristics as an important public space.
- Preserve and improve Frank Clair Stadium and the Civic Centre.
- Improve and integrate access to the Rideau Canal.
- Create open spaces inside the park that are green, sustainable and suitable for recreational use.
- Create opportunities for outdoor performances and festivals.
- Provide redevelopment opportunities that will reinvigorate the park while respecting its heritage qualities.
- Provide a promenade with a gateway into the park from Bank St.