

THE TAYLOR MASSEY PROJECT

Celebrating and Protecting Taylor Massey Creek

Protecting Warden Woods



Recommendations to the City of Toronto, the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority, and community organizations operating near the Park

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Context and Acknowledgements

In June of 2005, concerned about invasive species, poor management practices on lots abutting the park, the impact of air pollution and climate change, and the potentially negative consequences of a massive re-development of lands immediately adjacent to Warden Woods, the Taylor Massey Project initiated a Warden Woods Ecological Inventory.

The purposes of the Ecological Inventory were:

- To acquire a greater appreciation of the vitality of and challenges facing Warden Woods; and,
- To offer information collected to the City and other agencies while encouraging them to surpass our volunteer efforts with the full application of their professional resources.

Through the summer and fall of 2005, volunteers collected academic research on and conducted field inventories within Warden Woods, noting major ecological zones on a topological drawing provided by the City.

In October, as the field visits continued, the Taylor Massey Project (TMP) made a presentation to the City's Transportation and Planning Committee on the proposed re-development along Warden Avenue, immediately east of the park. The submission, available on the TMP's website, expressed concerns that there was little base-line information on the ecological health of Warden Woods Park and no study of the potential impact of the local re-development upon the park.

Guided by comments from then-Councillor Gerry Altobello, the Committee accepted the TMP's suggested actions and directed Parks, Forestry and Recreation to undertake an ecological assessment of and to begin developing a long-term plan to protect Warden Woods.

In 2006, Parks, Forestry and Recreation hired a consultant, James Kamstra, to perform the requested ecological assessment of the park. The City asked the TMP for any information we had compiled to that time, and we provided the City with a hand-drawn version of the Main Ecological Zones in Warden Woods, as contained in Appendix B. Immediately thereafter, we suspended work on the Warden Woods Ecological Inventory in the expectation that the City's study would be more thorough than the one we had initiated with volunteers.

This expectation was not misplaced, as the City's *Ecological Baseline Study of Warden Woods Park, Toronto*, referred to in this document as the Kamstra study, provides both an excellent inventory of the historic and ecological dimensions of Warden Woods and highlights the challenges it faces.

The excellence of the Kamstra study has, in turn, allowed this report to focus on solutions, offering three over-arching recommendations, three key sub-recommendations, and 16 additional suggestions to protect Warden Woods for future generations.

The Taylor Massey Project is pleased, therefore, to extend our thanks to Parks, Forestry and Recreation for their actions in developing a thorough ecological inventory of Warden Woods, and to offer this report and its recommendations for the consideration of the City, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and community organizations operating near the park.

In particular, we look forward to discussing the creation of the Friends of Warden Woods, as originally suggested in the Kamstra study and for which we suggest a series of objectives in the final recommendation on page 6, with our community partners.

Before providing our recommendations, the TMP thanks the following people for their significant contributions to this report:

- **Jessica Chow**, for her leadership on the project and especially on the field visits;
- **Margaret Pak**, for gathering information on the history and geology of Warden Woods;
- **Christine Greenlaw**, for leading birding events and compiling the bird list in Appendix A;
- **Rebecca Ma**, for the digitized version of the Main Ecological Zones in Warden Woods, contained in Appendix B, as well as for posting project updates to the website;
- **Former Councillor Gerry Altobello**, for suggesting that the City support the TMP's request for professional resources from Parks, Forestry and Recreation;
- **James Kamstra**, for the *Ecological Baseline Study of Warden Woods Park, Toronto*; and,
- **Beth McEwen**, of Parks, Forestry, and Recreation, for providing the base topological drawing used by the TMP on field visits, for permission to reproduce Figure 1 from the Kamstra study in Appendix C, and for allowing us to incorporate a few of the polygons from that figure into the TMP drawing in Appendix B.

It is worth noting at this juncture that the boundaries of the ecological zones in the TMP drawing in Appendix B are generally consistent with the main vegetation communities in Figure 1 of the Kamstra study, reproduced in Appendix C. This is a significant accomplishment given the size of Warden Woods, the steepness of its slopes, and the limitations of volunteer time, and is due almost entirely to the thoroughness of the field visits led by Jessica Chow, to whom we offer special thanks.

In addition, as the topological map we used in the field was not available electronically, the digitized map that appears in Appendix B was created by Rebecca Ma, to whom we also offer a special thank-you.

Finally, the author thanks the members of the Board for their support on this project and for their comments on initial drafts of this report. The 2008 Board includes Chair Nancy Penny; Rebecca Ma and Christine Greenlaw, as named above; and Janet Klees, Frisco Ozorio, Susan Hanrahan, Grainne Ryder, Elizabeth Moyer, and Alan Burton.

Andrew McCammon

Introduction

A short way in from either of its two un-inviting main entrances, and in spite of the occasional rumblings of the subway that passes through a section of the park, Warden Woods somehow becomes quiet, picturesque, and a host to dynamic diversities of both trees and birds.

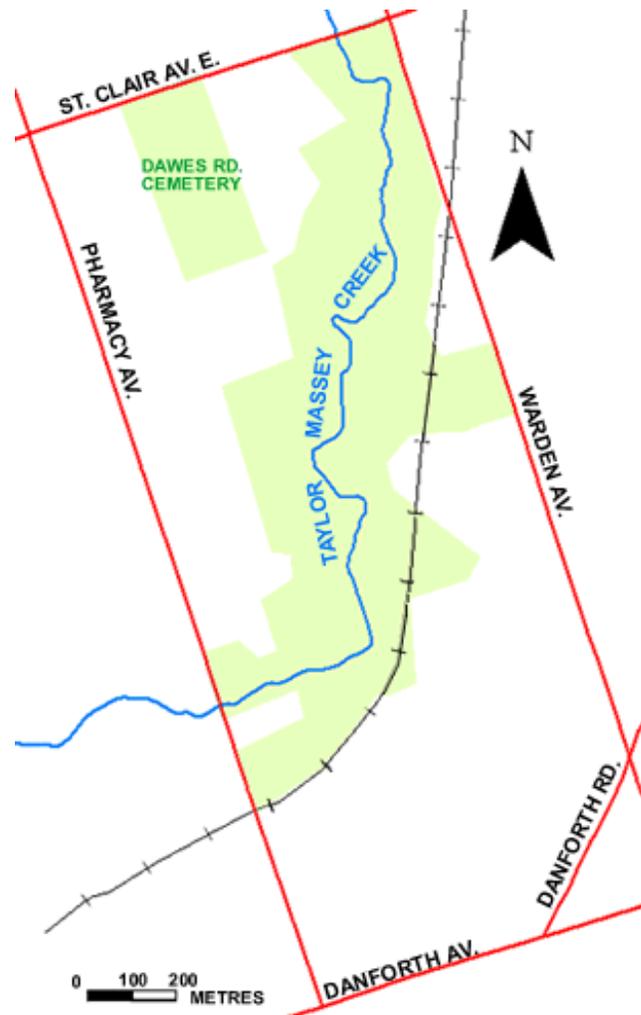
This diversity is due to several strengths:

- The abundance of water in both the creek and in ground-flow across the slopes of the ravine;
- Good soils that support a relatively large forest with many areas of mature trees, intact under-story growth, and at least seven significant plant species; and,
- A highly-varied population of visiting and nesting birds, due in no small measure to the absence of lights in the park.

Unfortunately, the long-term ecological integrity of Warden Woods is threatened by several modern realities. These include invasive species, poor lot management practices, increased regional air pollution, climate change, and local intensification that may result in both an increased demand for access to green-space as well as higher levels of local heat, noise, light, and air pollution.

As a result of both its strengths and the challenges it faces, the Taylor Massey Project believes that Warden Woods is worthy of:

- **Designation as an Ecologically Significant Area and a change in name to the Warden Woods Natural Heritage Reserve;**
- **The development of a Management Plan for its ecological protection and enhancement; and,**
- **The positioning of the Warden Woods Natural Heritage Reserve as a vehicle to increase community involvement in the protection of the City's natural heritage and other environmental priorities, including the City's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan and the TRCA's Don River Watershed Plan, as well as through the creation of an organization to be called the Friends of Warden Woods.**



Warden Woods is one of the ecological jewels of Taylor Massey Creek, consisting for the most part of a well-treed flood-plain and steep valley slopes that shelter the creek as it flows from St Clair and Warden south to Pharmacy Avenue, north of the Danforth. Additional information on Warden Woods can be found on our website, at www.theTMP.org, under both the Reach Portal as well as under Self-guided Tours.

Recommendations to Protect Warden Woods

1. **The City should designate Warden Woods an Ecologically Significant Area and consider changing the name of the park to the Warden Woods Natural Heritage Reserve.**

The designation of Warden Woods as an Environmentally Significant Area - due to its mature forests and the presence of at least seven significant plant species - and the changing of its name to the Warden Woods Natural Heritage Reserve would acknowledge the significant natural features in the park, communicate its status to the community as being distinct from other local recreational areas, and provide a meaningful symbol of the City's long-term commitment to preserve and enhance the park. Steps toward these actions could include:

- 1.1 Posting a digital version of the Kamstra study to the City's website;
- 1.2 Briefing the Parks and Environment Committee of Council and local Councillor Adrian Heaps, as well as offering a briefing to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), on the Kamstra study and this report; and,
- 1.3 Holding a meeting with key stakeholders and/or a public meeting to discuss the designation of Warden Woods as an ESA and the possible change in name.

2. **Parks, Forestry and Recreation should be directed to develop a Management Plan, with other City departments, the TRCA, and the community, for the long-term protection and enhancement of Warden Woods.**

Issues to be addressed in the Management Plan could include:

Public Access and Terrestrial Habitat

- 2.1 Addressing the appropriateness and the safety of existing entrances to Warden Woods, without adding any new entrances;
- 2.2 Protecting the natural heritage of Warden Woods by:
 - Keeping the park free of pathway lights, as such lights would disrupt the nesting of birds and the habits of other species;
 - Prohibiting the construction of any additional trails, bridges, or facilities such as washrooms; and,
 - Banning any bicycle use off the existing paved path in the park;
- 2.3 A plan to regularly monitor the ecological health of forested areas and meadows, as recommended in the Kamstra study. This should include:
 - Plans for the early closure and restoration of the BMX area;
 - The identification of areas of invasive species and the development of plans for their removal and subsequent restoration with native plants; and,
 - The identification of existing trails through sensitive areas and ways to limit their future use or their closure and regeneration, as needed; and,
- 2.4 Developing rules with respect to dogs in the park;
- 2.5 Enhanced bylaw enforcement for poor management practices on lots abutting the park, supported by community engagement as outlined in Recommendation 3.3; and,
- 2.6 Directional signage informing users how to connect to Taylor Massey trails both upstream and downstream of Warden Woods;

Tributary Flow, Wetlands, Stream-bank Restoration, and Water Quality

- 2.7 An assessment of tributary flow and measures to ensure that storm-water from new development presents no further erosion to those tributaries, the park, or the creek;
- 2.8 A plan to assess, protect, and if possible enhance the eight existing small wetlands, as noted in Appendices B and C;
- 2.9 An inventory of other wet areas on valley slopes and a plan to ensure that terrestrial health is not diminished by reduced ground flow as a result of new development;
- 2.10 An inventory of stream-bank conditions and the development of a cooperative approach with the City's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan in order to ensure that any stream-bank rehabilitation or other work within the watercourse in Warden Woods is accomplished in ways that would present the least impact upon Taylor Massey Creek, its riparian zones, and the park, consistent with Recommendation 3.1; and,
- 2.11 A preliminary assessment of ways to remediate sanitary sewage flowing from south of the park to the concrete outfall just upstream of the former Works yard near the Pharmacy entrance. If necessary, the City should consider re-designing the Pharmacy entranceway, the public parking area, and the former Works yard to include a water treatment complex consisting of a sediment fore-bay and a habitat pond in this area;

Other Issues

- 2.12 An assessment of the historic significance and plans for the long-term retention of the existing bridge in the park; and,
- 2.13 Interpretive signage, providing an educational component for visitors to the park.

3. The Warden Woods Natural Heritage Reserve should be positioned as a vehicle to increase community involvement in the protection of the City's natural heritage and other environmental priorities, including the City's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan and the TRCA's Don River Watershed Plan, as well as through the creation of an organization to be called the Friends of Warden Woods.

The positioning of the Warden Woods Natural Heritage Reserve with a higher profile than that currently enjoyed by the park could have significant community and environmental consciousness-building caché. The initiatives suggested below, for example, could assist current Community Council efforts to refurbish an un-deservedly poor reputation for Scarborough as well as increase local environmental awareness in an age of climate change, invasive species, and other green infrastructure challenges. These initiatives, *placed in bold to mark their importance as key sub-recommendations*, include:

3.1 Warden Woods should become a model area in which the City can establish a comprehensive watershed planning approach within the City's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan. This model can then be extended to the whole of the Taylor Massey sub-watershed and later to the whole of the Don watershed.

In 2006, the TMP and the Don Watershed Regeneration Council of the TRCA wrote the City recommending that Taylor Massey Creek become a pilot project within the City's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan. Both groups suggested that the City develop a comprehensive package of improvements within Taylor Massey Creek that might then be applied to the whole of the Don. As a preliminary step, TMP now suggests that Warden Woods could

serve as a model to develop a local, reach-based approach to Wet Weather Flow that could then be extended to the rest of the Taylor Massey sub-watershed and, subsequently, to the whole of the Don watershed;

3.2 Warden Woods should be identified as a Regeneration Concept Site in the forthcoming Don River Watershed Plan.

Currently under development within the TRCA, the new Don River Watershed Plan will identify “Regeneration Concept Sites” – sites including terrestrial, aquatic, and community elements. Given the local need to replace invasive with native species, stabilize eroding stream-banks, enhance small wetlands, and to engage the community in these efforts as well as in improved lot management practices, Warden Woods should be identified as a regeneration concept site in the Taylor Massey sub-watershed of the Don River; and

3.3 The Taylor Massey Project should seek to bring local community-based groups together to discuss the creation of an organization to be called the Friends of Warden Woods.

Originally suggested in the Kamstra study, the Taylor Massey Project is pleased to announce that it has broached the subject of the creation of the Friends of Warden Woods with area neighbourhood associations that are currently partners of the TMP. We intend to move to more detailed discussions, expand the discussions to include other local organizations, and engage the City as soon as possible following the publication of this report.

In seeking to facilitate the creation of the Friends of Warden Woods, the TMP recognizes that Warden Woods is a huge area, with connections to many neighbourhoods. Even as we lead the call for the designation of Warden Woods as an ESA and a Natural Heritage Reserve, the TMP understands that it cannot be the sole, long-term voice for the Woods, and that success in protecting and enhancing the Woods, and in dealing with other environmental issues, will lie with an engaged community. Toward that end, the TMP offers the following draft objectives for the Friends of Warden Woods:

- The encouragement of public input into the designation of Warden Woods as an ESA, the change of its name to the Warden Woods Natural Heritage Reserve, and the development of its Management Plan;
- The education of local property owners with respect to existing lot management practices with negative impacts upon Warden Woods, including;
 - Encroachment (the private use of public lands);
 - Erosion caused by rear-yard, downspout, and pool drainage, as well as yard waste thrown onto valley slopes, and;
 - Outdoor waste storage, particularly by the multi-unit buildings along the eastern edge of the park;
- Organizing walks, clean-ups, invasive species removals, and plantings; and,
- Championing other local environmental initiatives, such as energy conservation and increased plantings of native trees and shrubs on private property.

Summary and Next Steps

In summary, this report recommends:

- **That Warden Woods be designated an Environmentally Significant Area and that its name be changed to the Warden Woods Natural Heritage Reserve;**
- **That Parks, Forestry and Recreation be directed to develop a Management Plan for the ecological protection and enhancement of the Warden Woods Natural Heritage Reserve; and,**
- **That the Warden Woods Natural Heritage Reserve be positioned as a vehicle to increase community involvement in the protection of the City's natural heritage and other environmental priorities, including the City's Wet Weather Flow Master Plan and the TRCA's Don River Watershed Plan, as well as through the creation of an organization to be called the Friends of Warden Woods.**

For our part, the Taylor Massey Project will be pleased to meet with both City staff and the local Councillor to discuss any aspect of these recommendations, as well as to provide presentations to and participate in discussions on the future of Warden Woods with Scarborough Community Council, the TRCA, and our community partners

We also look forward to working with a broad coalition of local organizations and the City to create the Friends of Warden Woods.

About the Appendices

The bird list in Appendix A represents confirmed sightings during TMP walks lead by Christine Greenlaw between 2004 and 2007. As these public events occurred later in the morning than is optimal for birding, a longer list can be found in the Kamstra study.

Appendix B, the Main Ecological Zones in Warden Woods (TMP, 2008), is a digital version of the hand-drawn map prepared during TMP field visits. Readers will note that most of the boundaries of the ecological zones in this drawing are generally consistent with the main vegetation communities in Figure 1 of the Kamstra study, found in Appendix C. In addition, please note that the drawing in Appendix B includes several areas taken from the Kamstra drawing - eight for various wetlands and one for the Siberian Elms – in order to utilize that information rather than use our own, slightly-different locations for these features.

The drawing in Appendix C is a PDF of Figure 1 from the Kamstra study, *Ecological Baseline Study of Warden Woods Park, Toronto*, and is reproduced with the permission of the City of Toronto, which commissioned the study.

Appendix A: TMP Bird List, Warden Woods, 2004-2007

Herring Gull	Brown Thrasher
Ring-billed Gull	Gray Catbird
Canada Goose	European Starling
Mallard	Cedar Waxwing
American Kestrel	Bay-breasted Warbler
Red-tailed Hawk	Blackburnian Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Black-throated Green Warbler
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Back and White Warbler
Spotted Sandpiper	Canada Warbler
Mourning Dove	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Chimney Swift	Magnolia Warbler
Belted Kingfisher	Nashville Warbler
Downy Woodpecker	Ovenbird
Hairy Woodpecker	American Redstart
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Scarlet Tanager
Northern Flicker	Eastern Towhee
Eastern Phoebe	Song Sparrow
Red-eyed Vireo	Chipping Sparrow
Warbling Vireo	House Sparrow
Blue Jay	Field Sparrow
Tree Swallow	Dark-eyed Junco
Barn Swallow	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Black-capped Chickadee	Northern Cardinal
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Red-winged Blackbird
Brown Creeper	Common Grackle
House Wren	American Crow
Golden-crowned Kinglet	Brown-headed Cowbird
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Northern Oriole
Wood Thrush	House Finch
Veery	American Goldfinch
American Robin	

Appendix B: Main Ecological Zones in Warden Woods (TMP, 2008)



	Taylor Massey Creek
	Wetlands
	Forested Area
	Disturbed

NOTE: Undesignated areas near the creek are either floodplain or anthropogenic

Siberian Elms

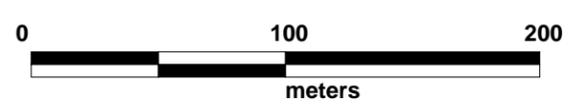
BMX Area

Cultural Thicket

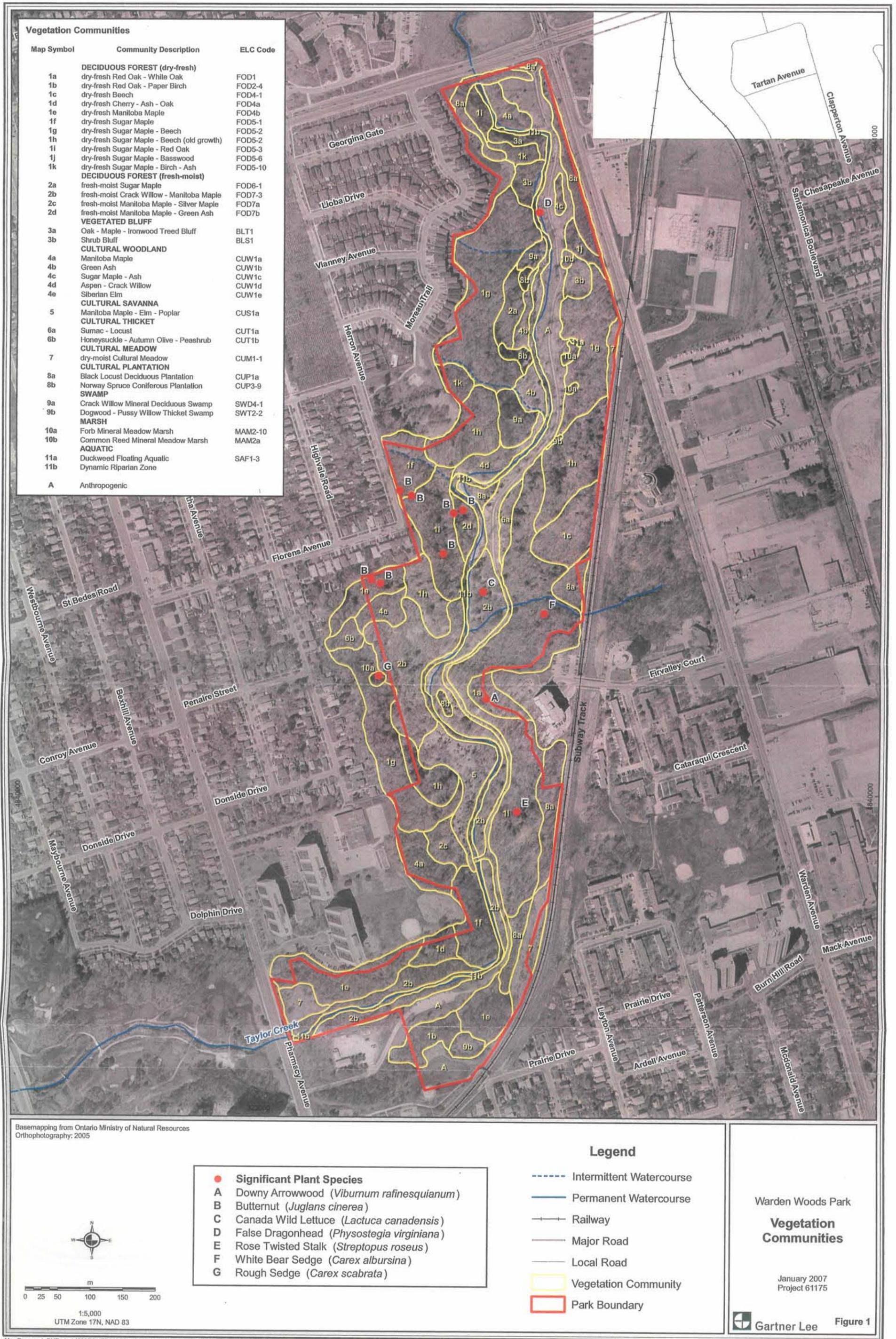
Fire Pit Area

Area in Regeneration

Cultural Thicket



Appendix C: Warden Woods Vegetation Communities, Courtesy of the City of Toronto



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