



Growing Food, Nature, Skills, Health and Community in Riverside Park

President's Report 2026

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Building a Community That Supports Us Throughout Our Lives

What makes a neighbourhood a community?

It is more than houses, streets and buildings. It is knowing that fresh food can be grown and shared close to home. It is young people finding opportunities to learn and work. It is older adults remaining active, connected and supported. It is knowing where to turn when we need health care—or simply a little help from someone nearby.

It is having trees, parks and natural spaces where people can walk, meet and breathe.

And, perhaps most importantly, it is neighbours knowing one another and having a meaningful voice in shaping the place they call home.

Several initiatives now coming together in Riverside Park point toward that larger opportunity.

The **Brookfield Community Hub (BCH)** can become more than a collection of individual programs. Together with the Riverside Park Community Association (RPCA), our schools, students, service organizations, governments and residents, it can help connect **food security, job-ready skills, health and aging, neighbour-to-neighbour support, zero waste, nature and responsible community growth.**



Ashley Shaw
Principal
Brookfield High School

Sometimes a large community idea begins with something very small.

For us, it began with lettuce.

1. From Seed to Table—and Skills for the Future



The Hydroponics
The Harvest

When Erin began harvesting our first hydroponic crop, pulling one beautiful head of lettuce after another from the growing system, the quantity was almost overwhelming.

We knew what the system was designed to produce. Seeing the harvest in front of us was entirely different.

And then, within about an hour, it was gone—picked up and heading into the community.

In just **28 days**, young lettuce plants had become fresh, crisp and succulent food ready to be enjoyed.

Our first hydroponic growing cycle demonstrated something tangible: fresh food can be produced locally, year-round, close to the people who will eat it.

With capacity for approximately **600 heads per growing cycle**, the farm also gives us an opportunity to explore something larger—a year-round model connecting food production, education, community distribution and potentially entrepreneurship.

Improvements to the farm automation, including separating pumping and lighting functions, have improved operational safety and created a better environment for learning.

But perhaps what we can grow **alongside the lettuce** is even more important.

Students can gain practical experience in environmental science, technology, engineering, automation, food production, nutrition, business and the arts. Student Council activities and other programs could provide opportunities to turn the farm into an applied **Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM)**

classroom.

Young people can participate in the entire cycle:

Seed → growing → technology → harvesting → food preparation → distribution → waste recovery → back to growing.

That is how a hydroponic farm becomes more than equipment.

It becomes a **living classroom and a pathway to job-ready skills.**

2. Health, Aging and Staying Connected to Community



Wendy Stewart
Executive Director

Building a stronger community also means thinking about what residents need as they move through different stages of life.

For many older adults, remaining healthy and independent isn't simply about having somewhere to live. It means having access to health care, transportation, companionship, recreation, help with everyday activities and—perhaps most importantly—continued connection with other people.

Riverside Park has an important community health resource in the **South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre (SEOCHC)**.

SEOCHC has welcomed **Wendy Stewart as its new Executive Director**, following the retirement of former Executive Director Kelli

Tonner.

Wendy has offered to participate in a Riverside Park community meeting to introduce herself, discuss SEOCHC's role and help residents better understand the health and community services available to them.

One particularly important development is that **SEOCHC's Primary Care Clinic is accepting applications from new patients.**

For residents who have struggled to find primary care, simply knowing that a local door may be opening is important.

Health care should therefore be part of our community-building conversation—not something considered separately from housing, transportation, recreation or aging.

A successful community should make it easier for people to **remain healthy, independent and connected to the neighbourhood they know.**

3. Neighbours Helping Neighbours—Tuktu and Non-Medical Support



Cindy Wei,
Tuktu
Business Development

Not every need, however, is medical.

Sometimes someone needs groceries picked up.

A ride somewhere.

Help with a computer or phone.

Some gardening or housekeeping.

A meal prepared.

Or simply someone to spend a little time with.

That is where **Tuktu Care** introduces another interesting community connection.

Cindy Wei is helping introduce Tuktu to Riverside Park as a neighbour-to-neighbour model connecting individuals and families with vetted local helpers for flexible, on-demand support.

Services can include companionship, housekeeping, meal preparation, shopping, gardening, pet care, technology assistance and transportation, along with other forms of non-medical support.

But there is another side to the idea that is particularly interesting for Riverside Park.

Tuktu is also looking for **retirees, older adults and younger adults who may want to become local providers**—people willing to share their time, experience and abilities while earning income through flexible work.

That creates a two-way community relationship.

Someone who needs help can find it.

Someone who has time and skills to offer can contribute them.

A retired neighbour who no longer wants a full-time job might still enjoy helping someone with gardening, driving or technology. A younger person could gain work experience while helping an older resident.

It is the simplest idea behind community:

people who need a hand connecting with neighbours willing to lend one.

4. Building Nature into Riverside Park as We Build Housing

<https://vimeo.com/720000743?fl=pl&fe=cm#t=56m30s>



Riverside Park is also entering a period of significant physical change.

Immediately adjacent to our community, federal lands and the future of Confederation Heights are becoming part of Canada's larger discussion about affordable housing and the use of public land.

Build Canada Homes has been established as the federal government's dedicated housing agency, bringing public land, development expertise and financial tools together around housing delivery.

The August 2026 integration letter confirms that Canada Lands Company's real-estate holdings and projects are becoming part of Build Canada Homes. Importantly for established communities such as Riverside Park, the development philosophy includes partnerships with municipalities, Indigenous communities, housing providers and residents, while balancing public objectives with community outcomes.

The scale is substantial: **24 active projects and more than 1,100 acres of land**, along with existing partnerships, agreements and planning processes, are moving forward within the BCH mandate.

For Riverside Park, however, the question cannot simply be:

How many homes can we build?

We should also be asking:

What kind of community are we building around those homes?

As Riverside Park and Confederation Heights accommodate more people, nature becomes more valuable—not less.

Trees, parks, natural corridors, community gardens, walking and cycling connections, places to grow food and spaces where neighbours can meet should be treated as essential community infrastructure.

The objective should be to **build nature into development—not build development onto the nature that already makes our community successful.**

Affordable housing, nature and community wellbeing do not have to compete.

Done well, they can strengthen one another.

5. Riverside Park as a Living Classroom for Zero Waste



Erica Shardlow
Trees and Greenspace
Coordinator



Dr. Cihan Erdal
SOCI/ANTH 2180,

This fall, we have an opportunity to bring many of these ideas together through education and direct community engagement.

RPCA is participating in a project involving **CAFES and Carleton University's SOCI/ANTH 2180: Foundations in Community Engagement**, coordinated through Erica Shardlow of CAFES and Carleton instructor Dr. Cihan Erdal.

The initiative brings **40–60 university students** together with Ottawa community associations to work on neighbourhood waste-reduction projects.

The students won't simply study Riverside Park from a classroom.

They will meet residents and community representatives, participate in a neighbourhood walking tour and help develop practical community-engagement projects. Those projects could include infographics, videos, social-media materials, webpages, community conversations and small events.

That makes **Riverside Park itself part of the classroom.**

And the hydroponic farm gives us a tangible place to begin.

What happens to a head of lettuce from seed to table?

How much waste does that journey produce?

Can packaging be eliminated?

Can unused food be recovered?

Can students help design a better system?

And can what we learn at the farm eventually help us think differently about waste throughout Riverside Park?

Previous participating community associations valued both the communication materials students produced and the fresh perspectives young people brought to community issues.

That makes this more than a university assignment.

It becomes another form of **intergenerational community building.**

6. Connecting Riverside Park with Our Elected Representatives

Community building also depends on connecting local ideas with the people making decisions at the municipal and federal levels.

Riverside Park sits in a particularly important position. Decisions involving housing, federal lands, Confederation Heights, greenspace, transportation, infrastructure, food security and community services cross different levels of government.

That makes sustained community engagement with our elected representatives especially important.



Yasir Naqvi
ECO MP
Member of Parliament
for Ottawa Centre

Yasir Naqvi, MP — Ottawa Centre

Ottawa Centre MP **Yasir Naqvi** is currently inviting residents to participate in the federal government's **2026 Pre-Budget Consultation**.

His message is fundamentally about community participation: Budget 2026 will respond to significant challenges and opportunities, and residents are being invited to identify what matters most to themselves, their families and their Ottawa Centre community.

That invitation creates an opportunity to connect Riverside Park's work with the larger federal conversation.

Our experience at the Brookfield Community Hub brings several national priorities together at the neighbourhood level: **food security, affordable housing, youth skills, community infrastructure, sustainability, aging, nature and the responsible use of public land**.

Rather than treating these as separate federal programs, Riverside Park can demonstrate what happens when they meet in one real community.

Most importantly, the federal consultation gives residents an opportunity to contribute their own ideas, concerns and priorities.

[Yasir Naqvi's 2026 Federal Pre-Budget Consultation](https://riversidepark.ca/yasir-naqvis-2026-federal-pre-budget-consultation)



Riley Brockington, City Councillor — River Ward



Riley Brockington –
City Councillor, River
Ward

At the municipal level, Riverside Park will continue to be represented by **Councillor Riley Brockington**.

On August 21, 2026—Nomination Day—the City Clerk declared Councillor Brockington elected by acclamation for the term ending in 2030 after no other registered candidates came forward by the deadline.

That continuity comes at an important time for Riverside Park.

In the same September community update, Councillor Brockington addressed increased commuter traffic, neighbourhood infrastructure and flooding, park renewal, public greenspace and the NCC's appeal of Ottawa's new Comprehensive Zoning By-law.

Of particular significance to our community, he reaffirmed his position on the **McCarthy lands**, noting that his successful City Council motion changed their zoning from Development Reserve to a combination of greenspace, neighbourhood mixed-use, recreation and open-space facility zones.

The NCC is appealing that zoning. Councillor Brockington has stated that he disagrees with the NCC's position and intends to continue advocating for the protection of public greenspace.

These issues matter because the future of Riverside Park cannot be considered parcel by parcel.

Housing affects transportation.

Transportation affects access to services.

Density increases the importance of parks and trees.

An aging population increases the importance of health care and neighbourhood services.

Young people need education, employment opportunities and meaningful ways to participate.

And development around Confederation Heights and the McCarthy Corridor will influence Riverside Park for generations.

The opportunity for RPCA is therefore not simply to react to individual projects as they appear.

It is to help residents articulate **what a complete Riverside Park community should look like** and bring that vision consistently to our municipal and federal representatives.

[Councillor Riley Brockington's September River Ward Update.](#)



One Community—Many Connections

At first glance, hydroponic lettuce, primary health care, help for older adults, student education, affordable housing, greenspace, federal lands and zero waste may seem like completely different subjects.

They are not.

They are connected by one fundamental question:

What does Riverside Park need to remain a healthy, inclusive and connected community as it grows?

The answer will not come from any single organization or level of government.

It will come from connecting people.

Young adults learning job-ready skills.

Older adults sharing a lifetime of knowledge and remaining active in their community.

Residents finding health care when they need it.

Neighbours helping neighbours with everyday needs.

Students bringing new ideas.

Community organizations creating places for those connections to happen.

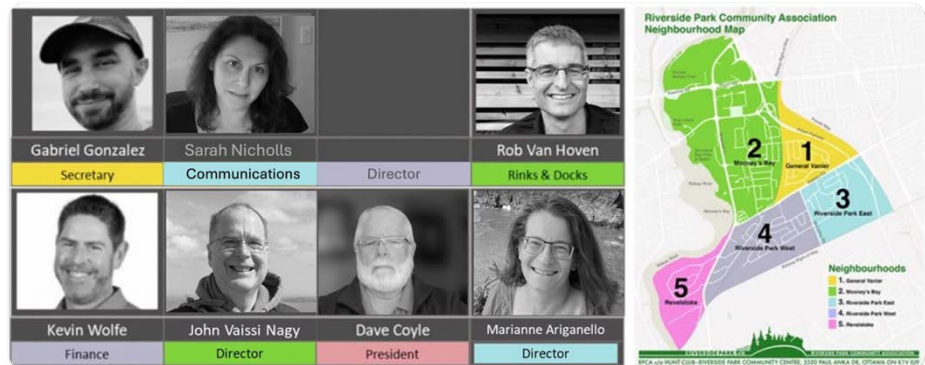
Governments building housing and infrastructure while protecting the natural systems that make neighbourhoods livable.

Elected representatives listening to the communities affected by those decisions.

And residents having a meaningful role in shaping all of it.

That is the larger opportunity for the Brookfield Community Hub and RPCA.

Grow food locally. Grow skills locally. Help people remain healthy and independent. Connect neighbours. Reduce waste. Build nature into our growing community. Engage our governments. And bring generations together rather than designing for them separately.





Our first hydroponic harvest showed how quickly an idea can become something real.

In just 28 days, we went from young plants to hundreds of heads of fresh lettuce.

We grew it.

We learned from it.

We harvested it.

And then the community took it from there.

Perhaps that is the best model for what comes next.

The Brookfield Community Hub can provide the place. Our community partners can bring knowledge and opportunities. Our elected representatives can help connect local priorities with municipal and national action. RPCA can help bring those pieces together.

But ultimately:

The community is what makes it grow.

What would you like to see growing in Riverside Park?



Riverside Park Meeting Agenda Plan

Growing Food, Nature, Skills, Health and Community in Riverside Park

7:00 to 8:30 Zoom Link on Website

Agenda, Minutes, Financials Draft Approvals

President's Report Highlights

Nominations for Annual Members Meeting

Annual Financial Audit Motion

Community Connections



Health, Aging and Staying Connected to Community

7:10 **Wendy Stewart**, new Executive Director
South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre
(SEOCHC)



Neighbours Helping Neighbours

7:20 **Cindy Wei**,
Tuktu
Business Development

Government Connections



Priorities and Pre-budget survey

7:30 **Yasir Naqvi**,
ECO MP Member of Parliament for
Ottawa Centre



The Opportunities 2030

8:00 **Riley Brockington**,
City Councillor
River Ward Affirmed for 2030 term

Open Mic and Adjournment

8:30