

“Important Community Notice”

Impact of the Niagara 2022 Summer Games in Our Neighbourhood

One of the sporting events for the upcoming Niagara Summer Games is mountain biking. Originally the course for this event was to be built on land adjacent to Brock University and parts of the University itself. Unfortunately, a recent decision changed the location for the course and the overall event to 12 Mile Creek woodland areas, near homes along Riverview Blvd., Lockhart and the surrounding area.

We are a group of residents working together to protect the ravine. We want to understand what happened to change the mountain bike course from the original location on Brock land and existing trails there to 12 Mile Creek, requiring major new trail development and construction. What lead organizers to believe they should put a high-profile public spectator event such as the Summer Games into a nearby community setting especially as there are plans to make the new facilities (including a Pump Track at the end of Lockhart Ave.) into permanent features. These new facilities will remain long after the Games are gone and will increase vehicle and foot traffic dramatically. We have already seen this along Lockhart Avenue, and it is changing the nature of our community.

We would like to share with you what we have learned and why you should be concerned:

Damage to a Fragile Natural Setting

Many new trails are being cut in this significant woodland area including the construction of bridges, man made obstacles, and rock piles through dense forest, valleys, creeks, wetlands and steep hills and ridges. During the Games this natural ecosystem will be visited by over 500 spectators and many elite cyclists will use these trails frequently, and it will attract many more mountain bike enthusiasts thereafter to this area. To the best of our knowledge there has not been a full environmental assessment of how this will impact the wildlife, plant life, waterways, tree canopy, migrating wildlife, and to what extent it will further the serious “slope erosion” in evidence along 12 Mile Creek. Without a proper environmental assessment being done, we are not in favour of building an extensive mountain bike racing course in this valuable, fragile ravine.

Negative Impacts to Our Community (Neighbourhood) and Resident Properties

We are now more convinced that this trail construction poses a very real threat to the overall environment and to properties along Riverview. We have started to align our concerns with other local conservation organizations and volunteer groups. Any downslope destabilization could result in the need for extensive repairs to individual lots and foundations of homes. It is our understanding that this has happened in lots along 12 Mile Creek in the north end of Riverview Blvd.

Significant Changes to our Community --- Short and Long Term

As the deadline approaches for the Games you will see larger groups of people building the trails and the noise will increase as construction is accelerated, more riders discover there are new trails, and it will attract more motorized vehicles and further increase the noise and damage to the 12 Mile Creek area and our community.

The way the mountain bike course was abruptly changed to 12 Mile Creek, the lack of a full environmental impact assessment, the lack of a comprehensive legacy plan, and other issues related to planning and hosting, all give reason for concern. It is also concerning that a residential area has now been selected as opposed to Brock University where logistics, parking, pump track, etc. would not have been issues. As a result, we are not supportive of the changes being made, nor convinced that such an overall change was necessary.

This is Not a Protest Against the Niagara Summer Games

Several of us are athletes and sporting enthusiasts and we support the Games as being good for Niagara overall. But we do not believe this is the right location for the mountain bike event to be held. And once the Games are over, it is our local community along 12 Mile Creek, and the Lockhart Street area that will be left to deal with the negative repercussions. We find this unacceptable and are requesting action now to ensure we can exert some influence.

Friends of 12 Mile Creek

We are organizing a community-based group called Friends of 12 Mile Creek that will soon have a website and social media platforms, and we are reaching out to other local and regional groups and organizations to establish partnerships and to drive collective action. Our exposure to what is occurring with planning for the Games in our neighbourhood has served as a catalyst to the importance of the 12 Mile Creek biodiversity and the importance of helping to preserve the cultural and environmental integrity of the area. It has also prompted us to get involved to ensure that the character and lifestyle of the area we live in today is not altered forever due to actions being taken for reasons we have yet to understand.

What Can You Do to Get Involved and Help?

There is strength in numbers, and we need a collective voice, if we are to be heard. Please explore the area to examine the extent of the trail development that has been done. We feel that the extreme biking path and construction will surprise you. Our website will be published and accessible shortly, and it will become a place for communication, sharing of information and a place for us to establish a much broader online community to work together. We plan to have a dedicated section on the website where you can sign up for regular updates.

In the interim we would encourage you to share your concerns about this with the following individuals:

Councillor Joe Kushner
Phone: 905.685.1817
Mobile Phone: 905.327.9638
Email: jkushner@stcatharines.ca

Doug Hamilton
Chair, 2022 Canada Games Host Society
Phone: 905.228.2103
dhamilton@2022canadagames.ca

Councillor Matt Harris
Phone: 905.329.6802
Email: mharris@stcatharines.ca

Mayor Walter Sendzik
Phone: 905.688.5601 ext. 1540
Email: mayor@stcatharines.ca

Questions: Contact Guy Graveline, Friends of 12 Mile Creek, at gravelineguy@gmail.com.