



Corporation of the Township of Brock

Staff Report to the Mayor and Members of Council

From: Robin Prentice, MCIP, RPP

Position: Director of Development Services

Title / Subject: Waterfront Area and Open Space Plan – Final Report

Date of Report: February 9, 2024

Date of Meeting: February 26, 2024

Report No: 2024-DS-003

1.0 Issue / Origin

The purpose of this report is to present the final Waterfront Area and Open Space Plan (Waterfront Plan) to Council.

2.0 Background

In December 2022, The Planning Partnership was retained to prepare a Waterfront Plan that provides a long-term vision for the waterfront on Lake Simcoe and the open space lands that connect Downtown Beaverton to the harbour on Lake Simcoe to capitalize on the many attributes of the community and its geographic location.

The Waterfront Plan project was based on a four-phase work program:

1. Review Background Information
2. Overarching Vision and Design Concepts for Key Areas
3. Design Guidelines, Costs and Phasing
4. Recommended Plan

As part of Phase 1, the project team reviewed the background information and analyzed the existing conditions, identified opportunities and challenges for change and conducted agency and public consultation.

As part of Phase 2, a public workshop was held on April 20, 2023. Approximately 80 residents participated in the workshop. They were invited to join a table group where designers from The Planning Partnership worked to create various concept options through discussion with residents and based on a number of variables for key components. Three concept options were then made available in June, along with an interactive online survey to help the team understand the preferred components and elements of each option.

The online survey was administrated through the Metroquest platform and hosted on the project web page. The survey was conducted from June 22, 2023 to July 14, 2023. In total, 448 people answered the survey, which was promoted by the Township through the newspaper, social media posts, emails and other communication tools.

[Staff Report 2023-DS-015](#) was received by Committee of the Whole Council on September 11, 2023 and provided a status update on the Waterfront Plan process to date and included 2 summary reports of what was head in Phase 1 and 2 of the project.

Based on the input received on the three concept options through the interactive survey, the project team compiled the preferred elements and prepared an emerging preferred concept plan. A public workshop was held on November 28, 2023 to present the emerging preferred concept and illustrations on key components and gather public feedback. Approximately 70 people participated in the workshop. The emerging preferred plan was also presented to Council on December 5, 2023 and posted on the project page for public review and comment.

3.0 Analysis

The preferred plan and Waterfront Area and Open Space Plan report (see Attachment 1) bring together the components and features from all three concept options and presents a sound framework for guiding detailed design of over 40 components.

The preferred plan was prepared considering the results of the online survey and other inputs from Township staff, the consultant team and other agency and public input. The plan is described according to five focus areas: the Harbour, fairgrounds, railway parcels, Mill Gateway Park and downtown Beaverton.

The Harbour

The Harbour will continue to be the destination for residents and visitors to enjoy the waterfront year-round. The intent is to enhance the visual appeal through greening and built form guidelines and to improve public space at the water's edge. This area will continue to provide access for ice fishing. The boat launch remains in its current location with trailer parking accommodated in the fairgrounds parking lot.

The preferred plan maintains the boat houses on leased land and recommends rezoning the area to allow commercial/retail uses on the ground floor to allow for bait shops, canoe or kayak rental, coffee shops, ice cream stores, etc. This would create a new attraction for residents and visitors and provide an economic development initiative. Ongoing discussions will be required with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority.

Fairgrounds

The fairgrounds bring a balance of space for active and passive recreation, events, and walking. A children and youth focused activity zone is proposed in the central area. The opportunity for active sports is maintained with the two baseball diamonds and potential introduction of play courts depending on future use of the existing horse ring area or potential relocation of this ring. New washrooms and shelters can be designed as jewels in the landscape providing amenities for all park users.

Railway Parcels

The parcels on either side of the railway provide green spaces along Simcoe Street and a node when travelling between Downtown Beaverton and the Harbour.

The existing cleared area on the west parcel is an ideal location to provide parking within a short walk of the Harbour. Parking could be accommodated while maintaining a landscape buffer to the adjacent residence and the vegetated slope to the river. Selective clearing along the slope could open up views to the Beaver River.

The parcel on the east side of the railway is owned by the Beaverton and District Conservation Club and is the location of community gardens. The gardens could be expanded to provide a focus for urban agriculture as a way to grow more food promoting the well-being of residents.

Mill Gateway Park

Mill Gateway Park offers a range of recreation facilities geared to youth and children. The concept plan maintains these facilities, with some adjustments, and illustrates a number of new elements to enhance the function of the park.

A 'riverwalk' capitalizes on the existing trail located along the river and turns it into a feature of the area. The existing skateboard facility and basketball court are proposed to be maintained in this area, with recommended upgrades to the existing playground. Terraced seating is proposed to be built into the slope of the landscape, with terraces connecting the historical buildings in this area. A potential bandshell/pavilion located at the bottom of the terraced slope could be a focal point, and a place to stage events and small performances in the park.

Downtown Beaverton

Direction is provided to guide the long-term redevelopment of certain areas within the downtown, when and if private owners choose to consider redevelopment with buildings and uses that front onto the street. The concept plan includes possibilities for infill development and enhanced streetscaping and pedestrian amenities within the downtown core. The riverwalk component is also proposed to extend into the downtown to provide public access to the river edge through collaboration with private landowners in this area.

Implementation

Phasing of the key components within the Waterfront Plan have been identified, with projects, such as a new washroom facility proposed at the harbour within the next 5 years to replace the existing facility. Longer term projects include a bandshell / pavilion in the Fairgrounds or Mill Gateway Park, along with the enhanced river walk in Mill Gateway Park and the downtown.

Some projects will depend on the discussions with Federal Small Craft Harbours with respect to the ownership and improvements to the north and south piers at the harbour.

Other components will depend on further discussions with user groups, external agencies and community organizations, including, but not limited to, the boat house owners, the Beaverton Lions Club, Beaverton Agricultural Society, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and Beaverton and District Conservation Club.

There are two categories of economic benefit that will accrue through the types of development envisaged in this Waterfront Plan. Direct economic benefits will accrue as a result of parking revenue. Indirect economic benefits will result from enhancement of the waterfront and open space areas that will attract additional visitors to the shops and restaurants downtown. New businesses will be attracted to Beaverton given the highly attractive waterfront and market of residents and visitors.

Next Steps

The Waterfront Plan is the result of hundreds of inputs to the plan over the last 14 months. Township staff worked with the consultant team through the project to ensure that the Plan sets a framework for decisions on the waterfront and open space areas over the short, medium and long term.

Should Council endorse the Waterfront Plan, the preferred plan can be used as input into the Township's annual budget and workplan to help guide projects within the Waterfront and open space area.

4.0 Related Policies / Procedures

Related staff reports: [2022-PCA-014](#) and [2023-DS-015](#).

The [Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan](#) was recently adopted by Council on December 18, 2023 and aligns with the Waterfront Plan. The Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan included a recommendation to implement the Waterfront Plan.

The Brock Township Official Plan articulates several important key principles that are related to the Waterfront Plan. These include the following:

- To provide a long-term strategic policy framework that will balance population and economic growth with the need to protect the natural environment, by guiding the decisions affecting the use of land;
- To encourage economic development in appropriate locations;
- To maintain a high quality of life and secure the health, safety, convenience and well-being of the present and future residents of the area; and
- To encourage development that is environmentally and economically sustainable.

The Brock Township Official Plan speaks to the importance of the Lake Simcoe waterfront, the downtowns and other unique locations and indicates that these areas will be developed to support tourism development and improve recreational and cultural opportunities. [Official Plan - s.2.2.6]. Related objectives in the Official Plan include the following:

- To ensure that development along the Lake Simcoe shoreline will protect and restore the shoreline;
- To pursue a program to increase the opportunities for public access to the waterfronts of Lake Simcoe, Talbot River and the Trent-Severn System;
- To support and promote the continued focus of commercial activity in the downtown cores of Beaverton, Cannington and Sunderland; and
- To develop a trail system within and between the settlement areas and the key natural features.

5.0 Financial / Budget Assessment

The approved 2022 capital budget included \$100,000 for the Waterfront Plan (i.e. Harbour Master Plan) funded from development changes and the capital reserve fund.

Implementation of the Waterfront Plan will be taken in account as part of the annual budget and workplan process. Upon Council endorsement, Township staff can also explore external funding opportunities as they become available to help implement specific components within the plan.

5.1 Asset Management

The Waterfront Plan provides a range of recommendations with respect to the Township's assets within the study area, including:

- maintenance of existing assets (i.e. baseball diamonds, playgrounds, trails, etc);
- upgrades or replacement of existing assets (i.e. playgrounds, washroom facilities, etc.);
- new assets (i.e. bandshell / pavilion, parking lots, trails, etc.).

6.0 Climate Change Impacts

Sustainability and climate change impacts have been taken into consideration as part of this process, including the Lake Simcoe shoreline with respect to water levels and flooding, as well as drainage and environmental enhancement opportunities.

7.0 Communications

A comprehensive public consultation program was undertaken as part of the Waterfront Plan process, with a series of workshops, open houses and meetings to obtain input, along with social media platforms as outlined below:

- 2 Waterfront Advisory Committee meetings;
- One-on-one meetings with members of the public and Council;
- Dedicated Waterfront Plan project page on the Let's Talk Brock website;
- Workshop #1 was held on March 8, 2023 and approximately 70 people attended;
- Design Workshop #2 was held on April 20, 2023 and approximately 80 people attended;
- Interactive Survey from June 22-July 14, 2023 and 448 people participated;
- Workshop #3 was held on November 28, 2023 and approximately 70 people attended;
- Presentation to Council on December 5, 2023.

Notices of the public meetings, workshops and interactive survey were provided and advertised through the newspaper (when it was provided), website, social media, and via email to interested parties and community groups.

The community was invited to participate and share their thoughts at each phase in the process.

8.0 Conclusion

This report provides an overview of the process to date and presents the final Waterfront Area and Open Space Plan report for Council's endorsement.

9.0 Recommendation

Be it resolved that staff report 2024-DS-003 regarding the Waterfront Area and Open Space Plan Final Report, be received; and

That Council endorse the Waterfront Area and Open Space Plan Report (Attachment 1); and

That implementation of the Waterfront Area and Open Space Plan be considered and incorporated into the annual workplan and budget process.