

Section I – Items for the Action of the Regional Watershed Alliance

TO: Chair and Members of the Regional Watershed Alliance
Wednesday, March 03, 2021 Meeting

FROM: Alex Taranu, Senior Advisor, Design, Environment and Development Engineering, City of Brampton; Victoria Kramkowski, Government and Community Relations Specialist, Peel-York Watersheds, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

RE: BRAMPTON RIVERWALK URBAN DESIGN MASTER PLAN UPDATE

KEY ISSUE

To inform and engage the Regional Watershed Alliance regarding the status and development of the Brampton Riverwalk Area Urban Design Master Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS the Brampton Riverwalk Urban Design Master Plan is being developed by the City of Brampton with input of the TRCA and stakeholders including the Regional Watershed Alliance;

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the Regional Watershed Alliance receive the City of Brampton staff report and presentation on the Riverwalk Urban Design Master Plan;

AND FURTHER THAT City of Brampton staff continue to engage the Regional Watershed Alliance through completion of the Plan and during implementation of the Plan.

BACKGROUND

Riverwalk Overview

The Riverwalk is an important initiative in Downtown Brampton - a city building initiative that integrates flood protection and infrastructure with open space/public realm and placemaking, downtown revitalization and re-development, environmental protection and enhancement, climate change mitigation and adaptation. Its ultimate goal is to remove a significant portion of the Downtown from the threat of flood, transforming a liability into a sustainable asset and attraction. The Riverwalk is a complex program integrating a number of projects, was characterized as a game-changer project for the City, has been continuously supported by City Council since its initiation, and has been designated a current Term of Council Priority.

Initiated in 2011 as a partnership between the City of Brampton and Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), the Riverwalk initiative, which will be located along the Downtown Brampton portion of Etobicoke Creek, has initially focused on updating the Special Policy Area (SPA) in place since the 1980s. An SPA update was approved by the Province in 2014, and recommended that long-term solutions to reducing flood risk be pursued. A number of feasibility studies were initiated to evaluate potential flood protection and mitigation solutions as well as the related urban design opportunities.

The Vision for the area, approved by Council in June 2014, has the moniker “The City Faces the River, the City Discovers the River” and includes a number of key principles including “Green”,

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“protect”, “discover”, and “diversity” driving resilience, sustainability and healthy development concepts, including environmental remediation and enhancement as well as identifying the Riverwalk area as a demonstration project and “game changer” in the city. For illustrations of the Vision and the initial concepts please check the Riverwalk program web site including the advocacy video, renderings and the Virtual Reality (VR) experience (www.brampton.ca/riverwalk).

These concepts were further advanced through the City of Brampton 2040 Vision, endorsed by Brampton Council in 2018, which focused on “green” and “eco-design” as overarching concepts and identified the Riverwalk as a priority for revitalizing the Downtown. With the Council adoption of the Eco Park strategy in February 2020 the Riverwalk became a key Eco Space demonstration project. For more information about the Eco Park Strategy see the Grow Green strategy document:

(https://www.brampton.ca/EN/residents/GrowGreen/Documents/Brampton_Eco_Park_Strategy_FINAL.pdf)

A Downtown Brampton Flood Protection Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) was initiated in 2018, led by TRCA in partnership with the City of Brampton, and included multiple points of engagement and consultation with the public. The Environmental Study Report was completed in the Summer of 2020 and the EA was approved on September 3rd, 2020.

In conjunction with the EA, an Urban Design Master Plan (UDMP) study was initiated in 2019 to study the entire Etobicoke Creek valley through Downtown Brampton. A Report to RWA was submitted and presented in March 2020 highlighting the scope and status of the project.

The following provides an update on the UDMP and its progress.

URBAN DESIGN (OPEN SPACE) MASTER PLAN (UDMP) - CURRENT CONDITION

The UDMP, which is being led by the City, commenced in 2019 and is intended to complement the EA flood protection works by creating outward and around it, with the goal to produce an overall master plan for the area’s open space with design concepts for the main open spaces/parks, including preliminary programming, and to integrate resilience and sustainability concepts.

Objectives

The UDMP is an open space master plan and:

- assists and complements the EA to assess urban design and landscape impacts of engineering solutions, identify opportunities, and propose landscape treatments for flood mitigation solutions and their integration within the broader planning and design concepts
- studies the broader valley area, with a focus on: open space and public realm including programming, events, education; integration of sustainable mobility, in particular active transportation; environmental and ecological enhancement, resilience, sustainability and healthy development; improvements in the area’s character and identity; its attraction to the city’s diverse population and for visitors.
- will provide urban design and landscape concepts and guidelines including for the upcoming Flood Protection Detailed Design, preliminary programming, as well as a framework for resilience, sustainability and healthy development to be further detailed and developed.

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- will also include concepts for parks, trails, and public realm development facilitating advancement for the Riverwalk implementation and its contribution to Downtown revitalization.

The study is also looking at best examples and innovative case studies, in order to learn from the most advanced and innovative approaches that are striving to integrate resilient infrastructure, placemaking, sustainable mobility, revitalization and economic development.

Study Scope

The Open Space Plan is focused on the Etobicoke Creek valley between Vodden Street and Clarence Street (see Attachment 1 for the study area) and has the following major areas of focus:

- Creating a landmark Eco Park Space that will be a pilot/demonstration project for resilience and sustainability;
- Opportunities for environmental enhancements, parks development, programming (including for environmental education), character and identity, public art, and celebration of local history, including that of Indigenous communities;
- Opportunities to make the entire area more resilient, sustainable, healthy, and accessible, as well as an economic development attraction and trigger for revitalization/redevelopment; and
- Developing a Resilience, Sustainability, and Healthy Development Framework that looks in more detail at opportunities for:
 - environmental enhancements (vegetation, ecology, water, air)
 - resilience (climate change mitigation), sustainable development (e.g. low impact development, storm water management, energy),
 - opportunities for healthy development (walkability, healthy living, social/mental health)

Using this Framework, a comprehensive Resilience, Sustainability and Healthy Development Plan will be developed consequently for the area including key indicators and performance monitoring in conjunction with the broader City initiative to further develop the Sustainability Indicators.

Progress Update

Based on a thorough analysis of the existing conditions including, a SWOT and Constraints and Opportunities analysis in the Fall of 2019, the project team updated the 2014 Vision for the area and developed Design Principles. These were presented to a number of City Committees (Brampton Environmental Advisory Committee/BEAC, Brampton Heritage Board/BHB), to a Community Liaison Team including representatives from the City's most relevant community groups in September of 2020 and to the public at a virtual Public Information Session (PIS) on October 1st, 2020, followed by a survey.

This consultation provided valuable input into subsequent work on the development of the programming and design directions. To access the materials presented at the PIS and the survey please see the Riverwalk program web site and the "Have Your Say" engagement page (<https://www.brampton.ca/EN/Business/planning-development/projects-studies/riverwalk/Pages/Have-Your-Say.aspx>).

The team developed preliminary design concepts in consultation with key stakeholders including TRCA and Region of Peel and a Technical Team with focus on a few main areas: programming, transportation, environment, resilience/sustainability, public health; placemaking, character and identity. The design directions and preliminary concepts will be presented to the Technical

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Advisory Team, the Community Liaison Team and the public at sessions to be organized in March 2021 for comments to be incorporated in the final concepts and report expected in Q2/2021.

The design approaches are based on the Vision update and principles presented in the Fall of 2020 and include:

- The Eco Park Space concept as a main driver for the design of the area based on environmental and ecological protection and enhancement, focus on resilience (both adaptation and mitigation), sustainable and green development principles (including low impact, green infrastructure development) as well as healthy development (active living for all ages, walkability and accessibility).
- Programming for a variety of uses and for a wide variety of users including active sports, healthy living/active transportation, city wide events, entertainment, environmental education, tourism attraction with broad community involvement.
- Recognizing the important role of the area in promoting sustainable mobility including the proximity of the Downtown mobility hub, the expanding regional transit/GO service, the high order transit network (upcoming Queen street BRT in particular) and also the most important active transportation network in the City with the Etobicoke Creek Trail as its main spine.
- Emphasizing the opportunities for strengthening Downtown character identity, place-making and attractions based on the area's history and heritage, providing cultural development opportunities, creation and installation of public art, wayfinding and signage.
- The design concepts development process is also taking into consideration social issues, and will rely strongly on inclusiveness with strong public realm accessible to the City's diverse population, with accessibility for all ages and groups at its core, to be further developed at the Downtown scale.

The design approaches are also taking into account the lessons from the current pandemic where access to nature and open space, alternative transportation, and public amenities are central to health and well-being, recognizing how the Riverwalk area is envisioned to play a very important role for Downtown and the City at large in providing these services.

RATIONALE

TRCA Involvement in the Riverwalk UDMP

TRCA led the Downtown Brampton Flood Protection Environmental Assessment on behalf of the City of Brampton, and TRCA continues to play a supporting role in the realization of the Riverwalk UDMP. TRCA staff serve on the Riverwalk UDMP Technical Team, as well as take part in separate discussions with City staff on an as-needed basis in order to support and inform the design approaches that are part of the UDMP. In particular, TRCA staff have provided, and will continue to provide, input and guidance related to programming, outdoor education, low impact development, Indigenous engagement, restoration and ecological function, and trails and active transportation. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the Riverwalk UDMP, Government and Community Relations staff are playing a coordinating role for the involvement various TRCA staff and divisions in this process. TRCA staff will continue to work with City staff to look for additional opportunities to support the development and implementation of the Riverwalk UDMP and the flood protection solution identified in the Downtown Brampton Flood Protection Municipal Class EA.

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In order to support its partner municipality, TRCA also worked to advocate for funding for implementation of the flood protection solution for Downtown Brampton. In particular, TRCA has frequently communicated with the Federal government on the importance of implementing the Downtown Brampton Flood Protection Municipal Class EA for the purposes of protecting property, enabling development in an appropriate urban setting and setting the stage for the once-in-a-generation urban renewal opportunity that the Riverwalk UDMP provides. TRCA also provided support for the City of Brampton's successful Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund (DMAF) application which resulted in a major announcement for Downtown Brampton Flood Protection in November 2020.

Conclusions

When completed at the end of Q2/2021 the UDMP will produce urban design concepts and guidelines for five areas (Dugan Park, Central Public School Park, Rosalea Park, the re-constructed Etobicoke Creek bypass channel, and Centennial Park), and these designs will be incorporated into the detailed design for the flood protection works proposed in the EA.

The Riverwalk is an important, innovative initiative in Brampton and the surrounding region, which sets a new, integrative approach to resilience, sustainability, flood mitigation and open space design.

When complete, the Riverwalk will:

- Protect property and mitigate negative impacts from flooding;
- Develop a central park system and contribute to Brampton's Eco Park initiative;
- Make a more resilient, sustainable, and healthy Downtown and City;
- Build community, support diversity and bring people together;
- Support diversity and culture and improve social balance;
- Trigger infrastructure renewal and greening;
- Generate employment, attract people and investment;
- Revitalize Downtown Brampton and contribute to the city's sustainable development; and
- Stimulate new approaches, innovation, change.

Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategies set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strategy 3 – Rethink greenspace to maximize its value

Strategy 4 – Create complete communities that integrate nature and the built environment

Strategy 7 – Build partnerships and new business models

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Currently, TRCA staff is providing input and support to the UDMP through various divisions and through their roles in the project.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

Further details will be presented as the project will be finalized, at which point Brampton staff would like to engage more thoroughly with the Regional Watershed Alliance, likely in summer of 2021.

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Report prepared by: Alex Taranu, City of Brampton, 416-806-2517, and Victoria Kramkowski, extension 5707

Emails: Alex.Taranu@Brampton.ca; Victoria.Kramkowski@trca.ca

For Information contact: Alex Taranu, City of Brampton, 416-806-2517, and Victoria Kramkowski, extension 5707

Emails: Alex.Taranu@Brampton.ca; Victoria.Kramkowski@trca.ca

Date: February 24, 2021

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Attachment 1: Brampton Riverwalk Urban Design Master Plan Status - Study Area