

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Friday, October 22, 2021 Meeting

FROM: John MacKenzie, Chief Executive Officer

RE: **HUMBER BAY RECREATION PLAN – CITY OF TORONTO**

KEY ISSUE

To provide an update on the Humber Bay Recreation Plan and discuss potential opportunities for TRCA to assist the City and stakeholders with advancing components of the Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT this report be received for information purposes;

AND FURTHER THAT staff continue to work with the City and stakeholders related to this initiative.

BACKGROUND

Western Beaches Breakwall condition

Humber Bay, also known as the western beaches on Lake Ontario has been a popular destination for residents of Toronto and those visiting the City of Toronto to appreciate greenspace and park amenities, water sports, the Martin Goodman Trail, beach access, significant views and vistas, and opportunities to visit Ontario Place and the CNE grounds as well as the beautiful Humber Marshes.

There is an existing breakwall that extends the entire length of the western beaches that was built by the Federal government approximately 100 years ago, as part of a Toronto Waterfront Plan. It stretches 4,400 m from Ontario Place to the Humber River and was originally engineered to last 60 years. The protected area between the shoreline and the existing breakwater is used by recreational enthusiasts for dragon boating, rowing, canoeing, kayaking, seasonal mooring of boats, youth sailboat and rowing training and other water sports such as paddle boarding. Gaps in the breakwall provide access to Lake Ontario and the sheltered embayment of the western beaches

Due to the age of the breakwall, the current structural condition is poor and continues to deteriorate. The City of Toronto continues to make minor repairs to the breakwall and conduct repairs in response to critical situations. The breakwall is at a point in its lifecycle where the on-going costs of maintenance, and risk profile of structural failure, will continue to increase. In 2017, an engineering assessment found that the existing breakwall was in danger of collapse in several locations and the general condition was a serious concern.

In the early 1990s, a portion of the breakwall was collapsing into the lake opposite Marilyn Bell Park and was repaired by the City of Toronto. Ultimately, this part of the wall became part of the new Western Beaches Watercourse Facility. In 2006, a large portion of the breakwall fell into Lake Ontario opposite the Boulevard Club, and was again replaced. In spring 2011, the cap on the deflector arm at the gap near Ontario Place fell into Lake Ontario and remains in the lake. Should the breakwall collapse altogether, aquatic facility users and land-based recreationists will be negatively impacted to the extent of eliminating most of these activities. In addition,

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substantial financial and economic benefits to Toronto and the Province from local activities, and national and international events will be impacted.

Western Beaches Flat Water Course

The City of Toronto was selected as the host city for the 2006 International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) World Club Crew Championships, conditional upon the construction of a new venue at the Western Beaches by June 1, 2006. Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation (TWRC) retained a consultant team to prepare a Feasibility Study to determine whether the conditions of the IDBF could be met. This Feasibility Study was positive and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), acting on behalf of TWRC, engaged consultants to conduct the environmental assessment and approvals process, and to prepare detailed designs for the watercourse. By the end of June 2005, the approval process was completed and detailed designs for a 600 m by 135 m watercourse parallel to the shoreline at Marilyn Bell Park were ready for tender. Construction of the dragon boat course (watercourse) was completed on time and on budget at a cost of \$23 million. The success of the IBDF Club Crew World Championships resulted in an estimated \$24.2 million of new economic activity. The event was the catalyst for the creation of the 600 metre Western Beaches Watercourse Facility. The watercourse was also part of the City of Toronto Council's vision for a revitalized waterfront.

Western Waterfront Master Plan

In 2009, the City approved a Master Plan for the Western Waterfront that would guide future decisions related to improvements to the public realm within the Western Waterfront over the next twenty years and beyond. The Master Plan provides an overall vision for improving parkland, beaches, break walls, trails, promenades, roads, bridges, servicing, and recreational facilities within the Western Waterfront. The Plan applies to the waterfront area between the Humber River and Exhibition Place and includes Sunnyside Beach and Marilyn Bell Park. Some components of the Plan have been implemented; others have been delayed due to lack of funding.

Waterfront Landform Study

In 2012 the city approved the Waterfront Landform Study which explored the feasibility and the costs associated with carrying out an Environmental Assessment for the construction of landforms at Ashbridge's Bay and Humber Bay. The purpose of the Humber Bay Islands Landform would be to improve water quality at Sunnyside Beach and protect the shoreline from erosion. Construction of a landform also had the potential to provide an ancillary benefit as it presented an alternative disposal location for clean fill generated from City-wide capital construction projects resulting in disposal and off-site transportation cost savings. The report recommended that the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, in collaboration with Toronto Water, the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, and Waterfront Toronto, initiate an Environmental Assessment Study complying with the requisite Federal and Provincial Environmental Assessment requirements, to support the advancement of these landform.

The Ashbridge Bay Environmental Assessment was completed in 2015 with a focus on erosion and sediment control, while integrating previously approved facilities in the local study area. This project is now under construction with an anticipated completion by 2024. Prior to launching the Environmental Assessment for Humber Bay, in 2013 TRCA was asked by the City of Toronto to undertake a preliminary Scoping Study. The purpose of this study was to incorporate improvements in data availability and digital modeling technology to further refine the outcomes of the original Wet Weather Flow Master Plan (WWFMP) completed in 2003 for the Humber River and Humber Bay area. This scoping would then inform and focus the framework for a potential Individual Environmental Assessment (EA) for Humber Bay.

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Specifically, the Study assessed the requirement for and the feasibility of constructing a landform at the mouth of the Humber River that would improve bacteriological water quality and achieve Blue Flag beach certification at the Western Beaches.

Concepts with various length, form and orientation to the shoreline were modelled and evaluated based on constructability and cost. The study concluded that the marginal improvement, if any, in bacteriological water quality at the Western Beaches provided by the deflector arm concepts did not appear at this time to justify the capital costs and risks inherent with the construction of a landform structure at the mouth of the Humber River. Therefore, based on these results, it was determined by the City of Toronto that the Study would not proceed to the Individual EA phase. It should be noted that the Scoping Study only considered deflector arm concepts and did not include broader public use considerations or the potential to address the adjacent deteriorating breakwaters.

Extreme Lake Levels

In the spring of 2017, water levels in Lake Ontario reached levels higher than had been measured since record keeping began in 1918, and these levels were once again surpassed in 2019. The effect of this flooding was significant across TRCA's jurisdiction. The Toronto Waterfront includes many beaches and recreational infrastructure to the east and west of the downtown core, as well as marina and port-related infrastructure. As much of the Downtown Toronto waterfront is lake-fill, high lake levels result in poor drainage and sewer back-up onto roads and underpasses during times of wet weather. In 2019, portions of Lakeshore Blvd were frequently closed as the storm sewer system could not achieve positive drainage for rainfall. The overtopping of offshore erosion protection structures due to high-lake levels left many areas along the entire waterfront subject to erosion during times of high waves, including the Western Beaches. Impacts to the waterfront areas included significant trail erosion and damage to recreational infrastructure, as well as high water table impacts.

The 2019 event was the worst experienced thus far in terms of still-water level, duration of high level, and concurrent windstorms, causing significant wave action and lake seiche. It is important to understand that levels even a few cm higher would have triggered an entire new set of impacts with drastic consequences as outlined below. While TRCA continues to work with municipal partners towards the implementation of resilience measures in certain specific areas, it is important to recognize the significant risk prior to the implementation of such measures, and the significant and widespread risk that will continue to exist in other shoreline areas.

Ontario Place Redevelopment

The Ontario government has announced details of its plan to revitalize Ontario Place into a world-class destination. Three successful participants from the 2019 Call for Development process Therme Group, Live Nation and Écorécricé Group will help deliver an exciting, inclusive, and family friendly experience that will play a key role in the province's post-pandemic recovery, both as a tourism destination and as a display of Ontario's strong cultural identity. The government also outlined the next phase of consultations with stakeholders and community members.

Across the site, public spaces will be enhanced and brought up to modern standards with new parks, promenades, trails, and beaches. Key heritage and recreational features of the site will be retained and integrated into the redevelopment, including the Cinesphere, the pod complex, the marina, Trillium Park, and the William G. Davis Trail. The province will also work with the Ontario Science Centre to explore opportunities to have science-related tourism and educational programming at the Cinesphere and pod complex.

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It is anticipated that the redevelopment of Ontario Place will require some lakefill to achieve the desired design elements such as the West Island beach. The redevelopment will also require compensation for lost habitat if lakefilling is contemplated. Depending on the timing of planned works, and subject to additional feasibility studies, there could be some potential synergies and cost savings if the lakefilling for Ontario Place and the western Beaches occurs at the same time.

Fill Deposition Opportunity

Several large City Building projects (i.e., Metrolinx – Ontario Line) are currently underway or will be advancing over the next 5 – 10 years. This will generate significant amounts of surplus fill. TRCA staff are currently working with Metrolinx and stakeholders to see if there are opportunities to source appropriate materials that could support elements of The Humber Bay For All Recreation Plan or other waterfront projects being advanced by TRCA and our partners.

RATIONALE

The Humber Bay Recreation Plan is a community derived concept plan to reinvigorate parkland and public space along the Humber Bay shoreline. The Humber Bay Recreation Plan seeks to reinvigorate the 2012 Waterfront Landform Study and other approved studies, plans, and reports. As the use of open green space increases with Toronto's growing population, the demand for well-designed park space and waterfront access grows with it. The Humber Bay Recreation Plan will create a Green Gateway to the City of Toronto, providing increased accessibility for residents and visitors alike. The addition of new greenspaces will assist in meeting the city's 40% canopy goal through the creation of new forest areas. Furthermore, the concept plan seeks to ease congestion and provide new opportunities for active and passive recreation. In addition, the Humber Bay Recreation Plan intends to create Blue Flag beaches by improving the bay's water quality while creating a new, resilient, functional, and beautiful landscape. Also, the rejuvenated parklands, beaches, and trails within the boundary of the concept plan will be easily accessible by public transit facilities.

The Humber Bay Recreation Plan will enhance accessibility along the shoreline by providing:

- restored and augmented beaches with greater accessibility;
- expanded recreation areas on newly created habitat islands;
- improved multi-use recreational trails; improvement of the Martin Goodman Trail; and
- aquatic recreational launching docks and rentals and additional restroom facilities.

The Plan will also enhance recreational boating opportunities by providing:

- new dock and mooring areas;
- small boat rental facilities;
- habitat islands and recreation areas connected to a new breakwater; and
- provision for international scale of sport regattas.

Implementation of the Humber Bay Recreation Plan would result in a tremendous benefit to residents of the City of Toronto and beyond. Many projects are now being advanced concurrently in the same geographic area which makes this a particularly good time to discuss synergies between projects and as well as potential cost savings that could also be achieved.

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

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

Strategy 3 – Rethink greenspace to maximize its value

Strategy 7 – Build partnerships and new business models

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DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

TRCA through our work with the City of Toronto will continue to share information with Humber Bay for All and waterfront stakeholders. This includes support to compile all existing plans, reports, and studies within the boundaries of the Humber Bay Recreation Plan to assist in understanding the existing conditions. TRCA staff will also be available to assist the City and stakeholders including Humber Bay for All in developing more detailed budgets and funding proposals to undertake the necessary feasibility studies including an Environmental Assessment(s) and public and stakeholder consultation.

Report prepared by: Nancy Gaffney, extension 5313

Emails: nancy.gaffney@trca.ca

For Information contact: Nancy Gaffney, extension 5313

Emails: nancy.gaffney@trca.ca

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Attachment 1: Humber Bay Map