



FORMAL REPORT

To: Chair Stratthdee and Members of Strategic Priorities Committee

Prepared by: André Morin, Director of Corporate Services / Treasurer

Date of Meeting: 18 April 2023

Subject: **COR 32-2023 Flats Conceptual Designs for Public Engagement**

PURPOSE

To provide the Strategic Priorities Committee with an opportunity to review the “Flats” conceptual designs prior to beginning the public engagement process.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT COR 32-2023 Flats Conceptual Designs for Public Engagement report be received; and

THAT the Strategic Priorities Committee recommends to Council:

THAT Staff be directed to begin public consultation process as described within report COR 32-2023.

BACKGROUND

The Town’s strategic plan included a vision to reprofile Milt Dunnell Field, the Flats, to be not only an improved outdoor amenity for the community but also attract tourists to the Town. Through the pandemic, there has been a shift for interest for outdoor amenities and recreation – certainly the Town’s Yak Shack kayak program has been a good example of this.

As part of the 2022 Budget, Council approved upgrades to the Flats including creation of a master plan, upgrades to parking and washroom. This was contingent on grant funding which was also successful in 2022 with a FedDev grant awarded in the amount of \$250,000.

The Town launched an RFP for a landscape architect to complete the master plan, Northern Lights Landscape Architects were hired in the summer of 2022 to assist the Town with the master plan.

REPORT

While the project has been slow to progress, work has continued to be done to develop the project. Town staff have met with the main user groups to gather current and future needs. This information was provided to our consultant to prepare initial concept designs. These concept designs were reviewed by our internal working group. From there, Town staff shared the concepts with Upper Thames River Conservation Area (UTRCA) to receive comments, challenges, and opportunities. Town staff have received written comments from UTRCA staff, which led to some amendments to the concept drawings before beginning the public engagement. This step is important as the site is restricted, and the Town wants to ensure we can work within the guidelines as it designs the final master plan. The UTRCA staff have been very helpful in providing “staff” related comments on the current concepts. As we the final design is completed, Town staff will continue to consult with the UTRCA staff. Their staff report has been attached.

That work took time and was required prior to going public with the plans. The internal committee felt that the concepts needed to show a realistic vision of what could be achieved and ensure we can meet expectations. Staff want to ensure that the engagement process does not lead to unreachable goals/expectations from the public.

The lands are all within the flood plain and will be restricted to certain development. At this point, we are confident that the concept plans include amenities that are achievable (although some will be more challenging than others) and reflect the vision for the space.

Town staff and the consultant will present the concept designs with Council at our strategic priorities meeting, but here is some information in relation to the amenities included:

CONCEPT A

North Parking Lot

- Parking area used for general, lawn bowling and Farmer's Market
- Farmer's Market vendor location

Market Pavilion

- Sheltered multi-use space to be utilized by the Farmer's Market and other small gatherings
- Allow for vendor coverage in poor weather

Yak Shack/Dock

- Concrete pad for permanent location of the kayak loan program through the summer season
- Yak Shack located in close proximity to a fully accessible dock that includes a kayak launch for all users to enter and exit the water safely

Existing Lions Shelter

- Will remain in same location

Junior/Senior Playground

- Designed to suit all age levels
- Fits in with timeline for regular upgrade of current play structure

Shade Pavilion

- Creating shaded seating areas in proximity to both the playground structure and softball diamond
- Potential for covered picnic seating

Existing Lawn Bowling Clubhouse/Green

- Updates to current building to increase storage
- Potential upgrades to increase use of space for other groups/users
- Will remain in same location

Junior Softball Diamond

- Softball diamond suited for Junior aged players

Basketball Court/Vendor Truck Parking

- Multi-purpose area used for recreational basketball and refreshment vehicle parking during festival and events
- Truck access from south parking lot

Washroom

- Fully accessible washroom located at South end of park to service park attendees and downtown shoppers
- Better visibility from the road

South Parking Lot

- Parking area used for general, softball, basketball and boat launch

2-Way Road

- Access point to the Flats from Water St. North

Paved Walkway

- Follows along waters edge
- Connects to Riverview Walkway and the Grand Trunk Trail

CONCEPT B

North Parking Lot

- Parking area used for general, lawn bowling and Farmer's Market
- Farmer's Market vendor location

Market Pavilion

- Sheltered multi-use space to be utilized by the Farmer's Market and other small gatherings
- Allow for vendor coverage in poor weather

Yak Shack/Dock

- Concrete pad for permanent location of the Kayak Rental program through the summer season
- Yak Shack located in close proximity to a fully accessible dock that includes a kayak launch for all users to enter and exit the water safely

Existing Lions Shelter

- Will remain in same location

Existing Lawn Bowling Clubhouse/Green

- Updates to current building to increase storage
- Potential upgrades to increase use of space for other groups/users
- Will remain in same location

Event Garden

- Multi-purpose area that can be used as an event rental space and seating (armourstone seating) for performances using the bandshell

Bandshell

- To be used for performances during festivals and events at the Flats
- Similar concept to the bandshell located at Cadzow Park, but can host larger events

River Lookout

- Designed with views of Thames River and Little Falls in mind for those along the walking trail

Junior/Senior Playground

- Designed to suit all age levels
- Fits in with timeline for regular upgrade of current play structure

Shade Pavilion

- Creating shaded seating areas in proximity to the playground structure
- Potential for covered picnic seating

Village Green/Open Play

- Multi-purpose green space

Washroom

- Fully accessible washroom located at South end of park to service park attendees and downtown shoppers

South Parking Lot

- Parking area used for general, bistro area, open space and boat launch

Bistro Seating Area

- Patio area with seating for picnics

2-Way Road

- Access point to the Flats from Water St. North

Paved Walkway

- Follows along waters edge
- Connects to Riverview Walkway and the Grand Trunk Trail

Games Tables

- Spaced throughout park for public use

All concepts will include enhanced natural spaces and lighting.

It is important to remember that these are just **concepts** to give some direction for feedback on – the final plan may end up very similar or much different from these concepts. There will be an opportunity to provide comments on what other amenities might also be useful, required, and enjoyable within the park.

Council will have the opportunity to take in that information and finalize the master plan this summer. The public engagement plan is as follows:

Public Engagement: May 8 – May 31st

- Social media campaign
- Print ads
- Public survey
- User group engagement
- Farmers Market booth

Data will be compiled and reviewed by the internal working group to make recommendations for the final design. Draft final design is expected to be tabled with SPC and/or Council mid July.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The current approved budget is as follows.

COSTS	
Paving/Parking	\$120,000
Accessible Washroom	\$200,000
Contingency	\$30,000
Signage, fixtures, etc.	\$10,000
Consulting	\$27,500
TOTAL	\$387,500
FUNDING	
Reserve - General Capital	\$137,500
FedDev	\$250,000
TOTAL	\$387,500

The intent is once the final master plan is complete, Town staff will leverage that plan to continue to apply for funding to complete the project in phases over the next 5 years.

SUMMARY

The Town has worked with a consultant to draft 2 concept designs to bring forward to the public for engagement about wants and needs at Milt Dunnell Field (the Flats). Public engagement will begin in May, with a final design expected to be finalized by Council in July.

STRATEGIC PLAN

- This initiative is supported by the following priorities, outcomes, and tactics in the Plan.
 - Pillar #4: Culture and Recreation
 - A focused Park Strategy
 - Re-Profile Milt Dunnell Park

OTHERS CONSULTED

Internal Staff working group including Councillor Edney and staff from Corporate Services, Building & Planning, Public Works, and Community Services

UTRCA staff

Northern Lights Landscape Architects

ATTACHMENTS

Concept A

Concept B

UTRCA Staff comments

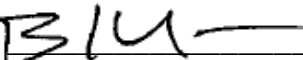
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