



TOWN OF WHITBY REPORT

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

REPORT TO: Operations Committee	REPORT NO: CMS 8-08
DATE OF MEETING: 25 March 2008	FILE NO(S):
PREPARED BY: Community and Marketing Services	LOCATION: North Ward One
REPORT TITLE/SUBJECT: Cullen Central Park Master Plan, Phase 1 Summary	

1.0 **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Community and Marketing Services Report, CMS 8-08, regarding Cullen Central Park Master Plan Phase 1 Summary, be received as information.

2.0 **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Since the Cullen Central Park Master Plan update submitted to the Operations Committee on January 14th, 2008 the Steering Committee and consultants have developed overall Strategic Principles for the property and Key Considerations for the Tableland Areas and the Valleyland Areas. A public meeting was held on January 23, 2008 and a Steering Committee Meeting was held on February 13th to review the suggested principles and emerging ideas and opportunities for the property. Phase 1 of the study is now complete.

3.0 **ORIGIN:**

Cullen Central Park has been owned as a Town asset since April 2006. In November 2007 the Town hired consultants (Envision – The Hough Group, dmA Planning and Management Services and urbanMetrics Inc.) to undertake the Cullen Central Park Master Plan Study. The study will identify and assess potential uses for the property and will consist of the following four phases:

- Phase 1 - Background, Inventory and Analysis, and Strategic Principles
- Phase 2 - Identification of Potential Uses/Users
- Phase 3 - Assessment of Potential Uses
- Phase 4 - Final Recommendations

4.0 **BACKGROUND:**

The consultants have completed Phase 1 of the study, comprised of the following tasks:

- Conducted an inventory and analysis of local, regional and historical context, landscapes/character areas, environmental attributes, cultural heritage, buildings/facilities, servicing and circulation, current and past uses, and market research;
- Developed Preliminary Strategic Principles and Key Considerations for the Tableland and Valleyland areas to guide development and use of the property.
- Completed the Phase I Background Report (provided as an attachment).

Their consultation process to date has included the following activities:

- Petition received 'to maintain as public park in its entirety', (*11,000 signatures*)
- Web-based survey of use and preferences, also provided at the Phase 1 Public Meeting (*37 responses*);
- Key informant interviews with Town staff, members of Council and stakeholders of the park;
- 2 organized focus group sessions with representatives of the business community, service organizations, and environment, horticulture and heritage-based groups;
- Public Meeting held at the conclusion of Phase 1 (*more than 100 in attendance*);
- Survey on Draft Principles and Key Considerations, and opportunities for general comments (*20 responses*);
- Submissions of written comments, letters, and petitions, including some specific business opportunities.

5.0 **DISCUSSION/OPTIONS:**

Based on the Town of Whitby Community Strategic Plan (2002), the Culture, Parks Recreation and Open Space Master Plan (2006), and dialogue with staff and the community, twelve **Preliminary Strategic Principles** were suggested to guide development and use of Cullen Central Park.

1. Meet Corporate Strategic goals and CPROS Service Goals
2. Develop Cullen Central Park as a Town and Region-serving destination that includes both visitor and community uses
3. Integrate opportunities for economic development and tourism benefits
4. Protect / enhance the site's role as a key ecological link within the Lynde Creek watershed and other inter-connected environmental lands
5. Within the site, establish a 'gateway' to the larger Town-wide Central Park

6. Seek long-term and sustainable uses that protect the site's natural and cultural heritage values and assets
7. Seek opportunities for leisure and recreation activities for all ages and abilities, and ensure that all planning, development and programming of the site provides for accessibility solutions
8. Ensure compatibility with surrounding existing and planned uses, and seek opportunities to optimize the use of existing infrastructure
9. Promote and demonstrate environmental awareness and stewardship in all building/site development and management practices
10. Maintain reasonable ongoing costs for maintenance and operations
11. Create the potential for capital costs to be offset by sustained sources of revenue
12. Explore opportunities for partnerships & strategic alliances with Business and Community organizations, Government Agencies, and Educational Institutions.

Cullen Central Park has a site area of 85.5 acres, comprised of approximately 20 acres of Tableland and 65.5 acres of Valleyland. The Tableland portion of the site includes: the main building and large parking area, with access from Cochrane Street; several historic buildings (including the designated Lynde House); the former show gardens; and a large greenspace area with picnic pavilion that is currently used as an events area. The Steering Committee and consultants developed the following **Key Considerations** for the **Tableland** area:

1. Establish as the primary activity node for Cullen Central Park
2. Retain heritage buildings on site.
3. Maintain and manage buildings for long-term conservation and sustainability.
4. Consider proximity to Taunton Road, future Cochrane Street extension, and new West Whitby urban area in identifying new economic development and recreational opportunities
5. Develop / manage for uses that take advantage of the unique setting on the Lynde Creek valley, while respecting environmental and heritage attributes
6. Consider long-term site access and parking needs including transit, walking and cycling connections when developing the site
7. Ensure Park identity / gateway profile is represented along road frontages in all land-use scenarios

The Valleyland portion of the site includes: environmentally sensitive areas associated with the riverine system and woodlots of the Lynde Creek valley, along with trails, former display gardens, and built features/structures that are remnant of Cullen Gardens. The Steering Committee consultants developed the following **Key Considerations** for the **Valleyland** area:

1. Enhance the ecological and recreational connections with Heber Down Conservation Area and beyond
2. Manage for ecological sustainability of the Lynde Creek watershed
3. Manage for protection and enhancement of valued plant and wildlife habitat

4. Integrate opportunities for community / visitor use and enjoyment that are compatible with ecological objectives

The consultation process described in Section 4.0 has suggested a number of wide-ranging thoughts and ideas for the site. Generally, participants expressed strong support for protecting / enhancing the valleyland and maintaining its use for nature-based and trails related activities; and for conserving the heritage buildings and finding viable uses for them. As well, there were a number of comments in support of new community-based recreation amenities, such as a splash-pad, tennis, bocce, accessible playground, outdoor fitness equipment, and a designated area for dogs off-leash. These types of facilities were considered as supplemental to existing programs and activities such as the day camp and events area, which appear well-supported. Expansion of programs, particularly those that take advantage of the site's unique attributes, such as art or photography, was also frequently mentioned. As well there was considerable support expressed for restoring some form of show gardens whether they are horticultural displays or ecological demonstration areas, or a combination of both.

Although support for managing the lands and building assets in a fiscally responsible manner was indicated, concerns were also expressed about over-developing the tableland area of the site. Comments received to date suggest that new, large-scale commercial and residential development would not be supported. However support was expressed for commercial enterprises similar to the previous ones at Cullen Gardens including a restaurant, gift shops, artisans boutiques, and other arts/culturally based operations. This included bigger initiatives that might be revenue generators or tourism draws, such as an environmental education centre, a school of the arts, a culinary arts school, or a conference/banquet centre. The latter proposals were focused on the Main Building, with ancillary or supporting uses in the heritage buildings. As well there was general support for the potential inclusion of private leaseholders on the site to ensure that the buildings are maintained and utilized, provided that the uses were compatible with other objectives for the site.

Support was indicated for finding partnerships with institutions, corporations, and community organizations to offset capital and management costs. As well there was some support expressed for having entrance fees for select attractions such as show gardens oriented to visitors, providing that the valleyland and parkland areas remained free and open to the public. The full list of comments and ideas received to date is provided as an attachment to this report.

The draft Phase 1 Background Report containing findings from the inventory and analysis, the preliminary principles, and the results of the consultation is attached for review. It will also be posted online.

The consultants have begun Phases 2 and 3 of the study, involving identification of Potential Uses/Users and Assessment of Potential Uses.

6.0 COMMUNICATION ISSUES/PLAN:

Material from the January 23, 2008 Phase 1 Public meeting was posted online, including the consultants' slide presentation and the minutes. As mentioned above, the draft Phase 1 Background report will also be posted online. A Phase 2 and 3 public workshop will be held in late April. At this workshop, the consultants will provide the public and stakeholders with the opportunity to comment on and assess potential uses.

7.0 CONSIDERATIONS:

A. PUBLIC

The master plan process provides many opportunities for the public to participate. Invitations are sent out to interested stakeholders/participants a few weeks before a public meeting. Furthermore, ads are posted on the municipal website and placed in the local paper on the Wednesday and Sunday prior to the public meeting. There is also a use and preferences survey on the Town's website.

B. FINANCIAL

The total budget for the study is \$62,895.10, inclusive of GST. The study is nearing the end of Phase 1 and the consultants have billed the Town \$21,575.00 for their work.

C. IMPACT ON & INPUT FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS/SOURCES

N/A

D. CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This Master Plan study supports objectives 1, 2, 5 and 6 of the Whitby Community Strategic Plan.

This study also supports a number of strategic directions of the Culture, Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan:

Facilities and Strategic Direction 1
Parks and Open Space Strategic Directions 1 and 4
Organization Strategic Direction 2

8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This report summarizes the findings from Phase 1 of the Cullen Central Park Master Plan study. The consultants have completed their inventory and analysis of cultural

and natural heritage features and have developed strategic principles and key considerations for the tableland and valleyland areas. Ideas and comments about the site have been compiled and the consultants are beginning Phase 2 and 3 of the study, involving identification of Potential Uses/Users and Assessment of Potential Uses.

9.0 ATTACHMENTS

1. Comments and ideas received to date
2. Minutes of the January 23rd, 2008 Public Meeting
3. Phase I Background Report
4. Phase I Background Report Attachments

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