

Hespeler Village River Activation

Newsletter No. 2

March 2003

This is the second of three newsletters that will be produced for the River Activation Master Plan project. If you wish to be added to our newsletter mailing list, please email or phone Albert Frootman (contact information on the back page). Please indicate if you would like to receive a printed copy, or an e-mailed version. Public input is an important part of the process and we want you to be aware of the latest developments.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the project is to establish a Hespeler Village River Activation Master Plan for the City of Cambridge, which strategically uses the Speed River in the interest of fostering and improving social, environmental, and economic well-being. With the active participation of the community, the current phase of the project presents both a strategic foundation and preliminary options for the Hespeler Village River Activation Master Plan.

WHAT'S NEW?

On January 9th, 2003, a second public consultation meeting was held at the Beehive Community Hall at the Hespeler Memorial Arena, with more than forty residents participating. After brief introductions, Joe Farwell, Manager of Engineering and Conservation Services at the Grand River Conservation Authority, provided background information on dams and explained how the Speed River and Mill Pond function. Following this, Patrick Li, of EDA Collaborative Inc., presented two design concepts (Concept A and Concept B). These design concepts were prepared in consultation with the Hespeler Village River Activation Steering Committee, and incorporate the suggestions following the initial public meeting of September 18, 2002.

The two concepts were presented to generate feedback from the participants, which will lead to the development of a new, final concept.

The following is a summary of each of the concepts.

CONCEPT A

The overall theme of Concept A is the enhancement of the natural environment. This would involve selective dredging of the Mill Pond and creation of marsh wetlands to form islands for wildlife. The goals of this concept include improving the quality of the pond, strengthening green corridors and open spaces, improving views of the river, and improving trail connections.

A number of passive recreation elements are proposed, including a trail system to link existing trails, and new access points to the river and the pond. Residents may use these pathways for activities such as walking, jogging, cycling, and cross-country skiing. Active recreation elements include outdoor sports fields, indoor recreational facilities and/ or a skateboard park, and kayak/ canoe launches.

Residents would be able to explore the extensive natural area using a pedestrian boardwalk system that includes a loop around the Hespeler Mill Pond. A trail bridge crossing at the northern end of the channel would create an additional pedestrian linkage across the pond.

Proposed cultural facilities include event tents for large gatherings at social events and annual holidays, such as Canada Day.

Please see the contact information at the end of the newsletter to obtain an illustration of Concept A.

CONCEPT B

Concept B combines economic development with environmental enhancement. By promoting the re-use and conversion of existing industrial buildings, this concept shifts industrial land use to commercial and residential uses. With a long-term vision, this phasing would stimulate the local employment base and attract visitors to the Hespeler Village core area.

This mixed-use concept would also include public open spaces, with passive and active green spaces adjacent to the core and along the water's edge. Outdoor gathering areas provide space for large cultural events and festivals, providing local residents of all ages a venue to socialize and meet one another. To accommodate year-round, all-weather activities, sports fields, picnic areas, and boat launches may be mixed with enclosed recreational space, such as an indoor skateboard park.

Concept B also includes an extensive trail system/ boardwalk. The enhancement of green corridors would link the surrounding residential neighbourhoods to the core area.

Please see the contact information at the end of the newsletter to obtain an illustration of Concept B.

OVERVIEW OF COMMENTS FROM THE JANUARY 9TH PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

Strengths of Concept A include improved access to the Mill Pond and the expansion of parkland areas to include both active and passive recreation. Although the boardwalk and improved views of the Pond were viewed as strengths for the purposes of recreation and identity, there were concerns that the existing wetlands and wildlife habitats would be disturbed. Any paths that are constructed would need to be carefully located and developed to address ecological protection as well as human safety.

With Concept B, participants appreciated attempts to address the visual and economic revitalization of the downtown core. There was strong support for residential and commercial re-development, improving the appearance of the Guelph Avenue Bridge, maintenance and/or renovations of historical buildings, and other beautification initiatives such as interpretive signage and improved lighting. Residents also expressed an interest in public/pedestrian access to the Mill Pond.

While participants want to create facilities that people can enjoy, being sensitive to the ecological conditions of the site is clearly a priority. Many people noted that funding, maintenance, and continued consultation with community members are important to the success of the Master Plan.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The consulting team is in the process of developing a draft Master Plan concept that takes into account the input received from the public. This is being done with the guidance of the Hespeler Village River Activation Master Plan Steering Committee.

The public will have an opportunity to review and provide comments on the draft Master Plan concept at a public open house. This is scheduled for Thursday, April 3, 2003 at the Beehive Community Hall, Hespeler Memorial Arena, 640 Ellis Road West, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. We look forward to having you participate in the public open house. This is your opportunity to help us to "activate" the Speed River for the benefit of the Hespeler Village Core Area.

Who to contact for more information, or to provide comments:

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