

Appendix A-8
Strategic Planning Memo

Memorandum

September 11, 2018

To: Tom Mahood, Jacobs
From: Lisa Prime, PRIME
CC: Mitch Jewson, Jacobs

Re: One River Planning Review

This memo is presented for discussion purposes. It outlines the overall policy context considered for the One River EA Thames River study area, from the City of London Official Plan and the Thames Valley Management Corridor Plan. It also includes more specific considerations for the two components of the study area for the One River Environmental Assessment (EA), River Management and the Forks.

Design considerations are included relative to the Forks Design Competition, to assess supporting connections to the downtown of London. This consideration relates to integration of the design competition options relative to supporting economic development, within the One River Study Area. This review included consideration of the four alternatives for the Forks design competition and is a strategic review of the use and urban form in the study area.

General Policy Context

The primary planning policy considerations include the City of London Official Plan and the Thames Valley Corridor Plan. The attached, Table 1, outlines some

of the key policy direction from these two documents. Some key excerpts that provide good context are included in this memo.

City of London Official Plan Vision includes the following objectives:

“to protect and enhance natural features and attributes that are significant to the maintenance of ecosystem health in the Thames River and Kettle Creek watersheds”; and,

“an expanded system of parklands, natural areas and trails along the valley and ravines of the Thames River and Kettle Creek watersheds will provide continuous corridors for recreation, wildlife habitat and refuge from urban life.”

Official Plan Policy 122 includes:

The City recognizes the Thames Valley Corridor as its most important natural, cultural, recreational and aesthetic resource. The City shall prepare a Thames River Valley Corridor Plan to optimize the multi-functional role of the river valley system in the City over the long-term future.

Thames Valley Corridor through London will continue to exemplify these attributes, supporting environmental and economic vitality, tourism, and local and regional recreation initiatives, linear open space network of trails and pathways connecting people and communities with an equitably distributed open space system of natural areas, parks, activity areas and facilities. The Transportation policies support the planning and development of pedestrian paths and bicycle routes that provide linkages to this network.

Specific Policy Relationship to the Forks

The policy framework supports the natural heritage, ecological environment as well as active uses. Urban design principles recognize the priority of connecting the urban centre and using a series of gateways as visual signals and to create a

sense of place. Urban design principles are addressed in the Official Plan include:

Urban design principles for development near the corridor include the protection of significant natural features and their integration with urban form and community design, tree preservation and planting, maintaining open views of natural features and landmarks, and the creation of gateways at strategic and prominent locations.

The Official Plan defines Gateways (11.1.xxi) as important elements in the creation of a sense of place and arrival and provides visual signals that both define and distinguish an area. Gateways occupy strategic and prominent locations and are primarily associated with major entrances to the City, districts or neighbourhoods. Gateways may be created through the placement of the buildings or structures themselves that frame or create the gateway or entrance.

EA Considerations

In considering the design options for the Forks, there are several elements that support criteria development for the EA:

- The general location of the Forks outlook provides a prominent central location for views and vistas in all directions for the river systems.
- Identifying access points in all directions supports the policy direction of the Official Plan and the Thames Valley Corridor Plan.
- The Forks park and outlook creates a feature location to support downtown local economic development and urban design connection opportunities for the central downtown.
- Connections and Gateways should drive to this focal area in the Forks.

In considering elements as part of the River Management System in general and to further support the investment in the Forks park, the following supports criteria development for the EA:

-
- The larger study area has a range of suburban neighbourhoods, including major recreational uses and university and school campuses. A large area around the study area is accessible to the downtown by walking and cycling. Further improving this network could increase the sense of place and experience for users, driving more residents to the downtown core by means other than driving.
 - Creating alternative modes of access also supports low carbon objectives for the City of London, creating opportunities for residents to get out of cars.
 - Ivey Park represents a major park space along the 40 km pathway system on the south side of the River. The naturalization and access to the river corridor has evolved over the years while it has maintained a linear park connecting structure.

This analysis focused on maximizing the linkages to the Forks and downtown and has to consider:

1. Review of the surrounding neighbourhoods and uses;
2. Protection of the natural environment;
3. Identification of existing pathways and road network throughout the study area;
4. Identification of informal trails and connections being used; and
5. Destinations and stopping points throughout the study area.

Two maps have been used to share conceptual connection opportunities based on policy direction and urban design principles. Map 1 addresses the immediate area of the downtown and connection to the prominent Forks Park location. Map 2 identifies urban design opportunities throughout the larger study area, where linkages and alternate access points can support attracting residents to the downtown core.

Map 1 Considerations

Map 1 identifies the three primary entrance points connecting the downtown and all directions in the study area to the Forks and downtown. Road and Trail

connections to the new park are located north off Dundas Street and King and Thames St to the south and by pedestrian bridge from the HMCS site.

The major intersections north and south of the Forks near the downtown represent clear urban design opportunities through gateway features, infrastructure and way finding.

The Dundas Street location represents a transit-oriented opportunity to bring people to this site. The south street intersections support cycling improvements and an area for urban design improvements to draw local and visitors to the downtown core and the Forks.

Improvements in the connectivity over the pedestrian bridge south to the park network on the south side of the river would reinforce the active recreation and user experience to draw residents to the downtown. Increasing the network for a larger range of users to access the core increases opportunities for festivals and celebration to support the commercial area.

Map 2 Considerations

Map 2 identifies the overall connection points along the study area to the Springbank Dam. There are 7 primary connections that link from existing neighbourhoods and into existing parkway and trails.

In studying the different neighbourhoods on the north and south sides relative to the mapping for the Thames River Corridor Plan, the areas identified as existing Thames Valley Parkway and proposed Thames Valley Parkway, address the overall connectivity potential for active uses along the river corridor to the Forks and downtown.

River Management Areas

General gateway locations link downtown by different travel modes, identified on Map 1, consistent with the Thames River Corridor Plan.

1. The following areas in general are considered as places that could support connected places that as reinforced connections are made and provided as

active use spaces (such as linear events) within the river management area, would support economic development interests of the downtown. This includes opportunities to celebrate the downtown to improve the ability for people to access and linger with leisure uses, such as interesting shops, restaurants, events, arts and culture uses.

1. Near the HCMS building. This area connects existing park and urban community, bringing people into the downtown. Those already on the banks of the river in the vicinity from Story Book Park to the Children's Museum could walk to the downtown from the western suburbs.
2. The location of Stanley Street and Thames St on the north corner provides good pedestrian access to the Forks. This is a good area to limit cars and direct them to the Dundas entrance area.
3. Riverside Road bridge supports access from the north side of the river, which is underserved by connections.

Additional Northside Connections

The following additional opportunities and connections are identified on the north side of the river but must consider property and environmental impacts;

- Springbank pump house near Thames Valley Golf Course has an informal trail you can get to water but no trail to continue;
- Pedestrian bridge at Civic Gardens connecting from golf course is an opportunity for gateway supporting connection to downtown
- Wonderland Road is car access oriented as it is;
- Railway bridge on the north side of river has an existing trail that peters out across from waste water treatment centre. There is access to river but there is an industrial type use there. This represents an opportunity area.; and
- Wharnclyff Road maintains auto oriented access.

Criteria Considerations

Initial thoughts for additional criteria based on economic impact includes consideration of:

-
1. How the Thames Valley Corridor continues to exemplify key attributes, supporting environmental and economic vitality, tourism, and local and regional recreation initiatives by the number of opportunities and connections.
 2. Thames Valley Corridor as its most important natural, cultural, recreational and aesthetic resource
 3. Optimization of the multi-functional role of the river valley system in the City over the long term

Specific economic development related criteria could measure opportunity to:

- Support pedestrian and cycling connections to downtown;
- Support connections to and activation of adjacent retail, arts and cultural activities;
- Support celebration of views and vistas throughout study area; and
- Support recreational uses.

Other considerations:

- Density catchment area connected by multi-mode access to downtown core (bike and pedestrian trails)
- KM of complete bike and pedestrian connections to Forks and downtown core
- # of Access points and crossings within study area

Policy Review Table City of London One River EA	
Overall Policy Considerations	<p>Overarching documents that provide direction to the Thames Valley Corridor Plan and its implementation, including, but not limited to, the Provincial Policy Statement (2014), Ontario Climate Action Plan (2015) Conservation Authorities Act City of London Strategic Plan (2007), City of London Official Plan (2010), City of London Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update (2009), City of London Subwatershed Studies (1995), UTRCA Environmental Planning Policy Manual (2006) and City of London Zoning By-law (1994).</p> <p>The City of London and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority continue to update strategic plans and prepare new studies to address growth and development, and environmental issues. It will be important to monitor and respond to any strategic changes in policy direction that affect the implementation of the Thames Valley Corridor Plan over its term. To keep the Thames Valley Corridor Plan current, a major review, consistent and/or coincident with the City of London Official Plan review, should be undertaken every five (5) years.</p>
Official Plan Vision	<p>“protect and enhance natural features and attributes that are significant to the maintenance of ecosystem health in the Thames River and Kettle Creek watersheds”; and,</p> <p>“an expanded system of parklands, natural areas and trails along the valley and ravines of the Thames River and Kettle Creek watersheds will provide continuous corridors for recreation, wildlife habitat and refuge from urban life.”</p>
TVCP	<p>At a visionary level, it is hoped that the Thames Valley Corridor through London will continue to exemplify these attributes, supporting environmental and economic vitality, tourism, and local and regional recreation initiatives. Functionally, the Corridor is a complex system of sensitive ecological habitats, intensive public recreation areas, and developed urban lands connected by multi-purpose trails and scenic by-ways. The balancing of these often competing demands to ensure the long-term sustainability of the river and the maintenance of its sensitive and vulnerable natural features is challenging. Effective management of land development, human uses and the natural environment will be important in maintaining this sensitive balance.</p>
Official Plan Policy 122	<p>The preparation of a “Thames River Valley Corridor Plan (OP 2.9.3)” was identified as a key strategic environmental planning policy in 1996 and confirmed by the Ontario Municipal Board in 2000 by approving Official Plan Amendment #88 that contained the following policy directive:</p>

	<p>“The City recognizes the Thames Valley Corridor as its most important natural, cultural, recreational and aesthetic resource. The City shall prepare a Thames River Valley Corridor Plan to optimize the multi-functional role of the river valley system in the City over the long term future.”</p>
<p>Official Plan Policy 123 TVCMP Objectives</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a continuous corridor with a minimum width and identify linkages to tributary subwatersheds. 2. Preserve and enhance natural heritage features including vegetation, wildlife habitat, water quality, improved erosion control (storm/sewage impacts). 3. Preserve and enhance cultural heritage through educational signage, building preservation and identification of historical significance. 4. Develop guidelines and policies to ensure development along the corridor is compatible with the goals and objectives of the Plan. 5. Preserve and enhance the aesthetic beauty of the corridor. 6. Determine what infrastructure is compatible for inclusion in the corridor (such as utilities and buildings). 7. Determine and map compatible recreation uses. Identify suitable points of access, pathway and trail systems, lookout points and linkages to communities and Thames Valley Parkway. 8. Engage citizens in plans for the corridor through education, sharing of information and consultation. Create signage and promote stewardship and riverside clean-ups. 9. Determine what measures are necessary to ensure safe use of the Thames Valley Corridor (such as safe trails and access points). 10. Determine appropriate policies, regulations and enforcement through integration with the Official Plan.
<p>Official Plan</p>	<p>The Official Plan embraces an ecosystem approach to planning with a mandate to maintain and enhance ecosystem health for the abiotic (physical elements such as soil, water, landform), the biotic (plants, wildlife and people) and the cultural (recreation, urban, transportation planning) aspects of the ecosystem. This level of ecosystem health will be supported by sustainable development forms and designs that are pedestrian-oriented, transit-supportive, accessible, safe, and that protect important ecological features and functions.</p>
<p>Urban Design</p>	<p>The City regards the valley lands of the Thames River and its tributaries as the primary open space resource, with the objective to provide a continuous, linear open space network of trails and pathways connecting people and communities with an equitably distributed open space system of natural areas, parks, activity areas and facilities. The Transportation policies support the planning and development of pedestrian paths and bicycle routes that provide linkages to this network.</p>

	<p>Urban design principles for development near the corridor include the protection of significant natural features and their integration with urban form and community design, tree preservation and planting, maintaining open views of natural features and landmarks, and the creation of gateways at strategic and prominent locations.</p> <p>The Official Plan defines Gateways (11.1.xxi) as important elements in the creation of a sense of place and arrival, and provides visual signals that both define and distinguish an area. Gateways occupy strategic and prominent locations, and are primarily associated with major entrances to the City, districts or neighbourhoods. Gateways may be created through the placement of the buildings or structures themselves that frame or create the gateway or entrance.</p> <p>Objectives for enhancing the contribution of the Natural Heritage System to the urban matrix include maintaining, restoring and improving the diversity and connectivity of natural features and the long-term ecological integrity of the system. The City will develop and implement management and naturalization programs for publicly owned lands; the City will encourage private landowners with these efforts through education, stewardship, and incentives; the City requires ecological buffers to be established adjacent to new development.</p>
<p>Heritage River</p>	<h2 data-bbox="565 1094 1333 1209">The Thames River: a Canadian Heritage River</h2> <p data-bbox="565 1255 1409 1371">The Thames Rivers was formally designated a Canadian Heritage River on August 14, 2000. The designation was announced by the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Sheila Copps and Ontario's Minister of Natural Resources, the Honourable John Snobelen.</p> <p data-bbox="565 1398 1393 1608">The Thames River designation was several years in the making. The effort began in 1996 when Dr. Douglas Bocking, retired Dean of Medicine at UWO and a Member of the Order of Canada, assembled a group of interested individuals and agencies who shared his vision of seeing the Thames and its tributaries designated a Canadian Heritage River. Since that first meeting, over 75 people have volunteered their time and expertise to this project.</p> <p data-bbox="565 1633 1414 1808">Canadian Heritage Rivers are recognized for their outstanding contributions to the country's cultural heritage, natural heritage, and recreational opportunities. For four years, the volunteers worked with the community to document and publicize the significant features of the Thames watershed. This information formed the basis of the river's nomination in 1999.</p> <p data-bbox="565 1833 1409 1896">Overall goal – to increase the appreciation, enjoyment and stewardship of the natural, cultural heritage and recreational opportunities of the</p>

	<p>Thames River and its watershed through community cooperation and involvement</p> <p>The Canadian heritage river system established in 1984 as a joint federal, provincial, territorial program. The objectives are to give national recognition to Canada's important rivers and to ensure their future management such that: the natural and human heritage that they represent is conserved and interpreted and the opportunities that they possess for recreation and heritage appreciation are realized by residents of and visitors to Canada</p>