

THE MUNICIPALITY OF LAMBTON SHORES

Report CAO 03-2022

Council Meeting Date: March 15, 2022

TO: Mayor Weber and Members of Council
FROM: Steve McAuley, Chief Administrative Officer
RE: Municipal Drive/Lions Park Redevelopment

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report CAO 03-2022 regarding the Municipal Drive/Lions Park Redevelopment be received; and

THAT staff be directed to implement the recommendations associated with the Municipal Drive/Lions Park Area contained in this report for the following projects:

- Existing Municipal Building
- New Public Works Depot
- Recreation Facilities

SUMMARY

This report presents a plan to consider the redevelopment of certain aspects of the property around Municipal Drive and the Lions Park.

BACKGROUND

The following strategic priority was identified by Council for the 2019-2022 term:

The Municipality will consider opportunities for the redevelopment of the Municipal Drive/Lions Park area of Grand Bend in order to improve operational access, public parking and recreational activities.

The area being discussed in this report is shown in Figure 1 attached. Various municipal buildings and recreational facilities are located on the property including the following:

- Financial Administration Building
- Public works building and compound
- Firehall
- Arts Centre
- Baseball Diamond
- Pavilion with Washrooms
- Basketball court
- Skateboard Park

In addition to the above, Lambton County owns property from which they operate an ambulance service. The area also includes a large Hydro One property housing a hydro sub-station and the Grand Bend Legion owns property from which Branch 498 operates.

This particular property mass in Grand Bend is extremely busy and the area in question has a multitude of uses and activities. In order to assess the opportunities available, as directed in Council's strategic priorities, staff are recommending that a number of concurrent projects need to be undertaken which are summarized below:

Existing Municipal Administration Building

With the construction underway of a new centralized administration building that will house all of Lambton Shores administration staff, the existing Municipal building that accommodates the finance department will become redundant. In order to determine the future of the building, staff are recommending the following steps be undertaken:

- Building assessment to determine the building's condition and its suitability for other community needs (if any):
- An appraisal of the building and property to determine the resale value should Council wish to declare the property surplus and sell the property.
- Assessment of the contents of the building and how to dispose of the contents if required
- Report back to Council

New Public Works Depot

As Council will recall, the Winegard Report recommended replacement of the existing public works depot and described the building as follows:

The Grand Bend depot is cramped, outdated, and poorly located. It is essentially primarily acting as a parks shed, although some recent repair work has made it fit for a headquarters for the summer bylaw staff. It is a poor use of a valuable property and should be abandoned. It has little space for large equipment turnaround and is reported to be too close to the main intersection.

The Winegard report also recommended that the depot should still be located in the Municipal Drive area based on the proximity to Main Street, the beach etc. It is supported by the fact that the Municipality currently owns land in this area. While staff are of the opinion that locating a new depot in this area is possible, we are not convinced that this is the appropriate area when all the other potential uses and its location relative to the Ontario Street intersection are considered. Staff would first like to investigate the possibility of moving the depot to an entirely new location. This would require the acquisition of property, which may prove difficult, in which case property along Municipal Drive may be required. In addition to a new public works depot, consideration should be given to co-locating the Grand Bend Firehall and potentially the Lambton County EMS building. In order to move this project forward, staff are recommending the following steps:

- Determine the spatial and functional needs of a new public works depot that would include the following options:
 - A stand alone public works depot
 - A public works depot and fire hall
- Contact Lambton County to determine if there is any interest in co-locating to a new location
- Consider property requirements and property availability
- Report back to Council

Recreation Facilities

The biggest land use in the Municipal Drive area is dedicated to recreational uses. These uses include the basketball/pickle ball courts, the baseball diamond and skate park. The existing baseball diamond is a substandard size and results in balls frequently being hit out of the park and impacting at least one private resident's house. Attempts to stop this through the installation of a mesh netting in the outfield have been ineffective. Funds to reline the existing basketball court to create a pickleball/basketball court have been included in the 2022 budget. Pickleball has grown in popularity and staff expect the demand for this type of court to only increase over the next number of years. Staff have also had conversations with the Grand Bend Optimist Club regarding the construction of an artificial outdoor skating rink.

With the competing uses that we see being required and requested for the Municipal Drive area, staff would like to investigate relocating some or all of these recreational amenities to Klondyke Park. The creation of a sports complex at this location would free up space in the Municipal Drive area for other opportunities. Klondyke park is owned by the municipality and currently has washrooms, a pavilion, playground, and several sports fields available. Additionally, the facility has some walking trails, community gardens and a memorial forest on site which has been developed in partnership with the Lakeshore Eco-Network and the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation. The facility is actively used by Grand Bend Soccer for a youth soccer program during the summer and is enjoyed through a variety of other passive uses.

Staff anticipate that the Klondyke Park area has the potential to become a multi-use outdoor sports complex that could include lit baseball diamonds and multi-purpose hard-surface courts in addition to the existing infrastructure. By co-locating these assets, the facility has the potential to grow sports tourism in the area through tournaments.

Currently none of the recreational facilities available in the Municipal Drive area could support any type of organized tournaments based on the lack of playing surfaces and parking. It is also apparent that if Council is serious about creating any reasonably sized public parking spaces, relocation of at least some of the recreational amenities will be required. In order to move this project forward, staff are recommending the following steps:

- Assessment of the current recreational uses in the Municipal Drive Area
- Conceptual plans for Klondyke Park redevelopment.
- Public input session/period
- Report back to Council

Community Centre

In 2019, Council endorsed the concept of the West Coast Wellness Hub as presented by the Grand Bend Area Community Health Centre. In addition to supporting the project, Council committed up to \$1,000,000 through the following resolution:

THAT Lambton Shores extend support to the West Shores Wellness Hub project in principle; and

THAT support be contingent on Provincial/Federal/Other funding; and

THAT Lambton Shores contribute up to 2/3 of the municipal portion not exceeding a total of \$1,000,000. over a 5 year period and that this amount be used solely for capital costs.

Carried

The proposed Hub was to be constructed in conjunction with an expansion of the Community Health Centre (CHC). The proposal included 14,360 ft³ allocated to the CHC and an additional 15,272 ft³ that was to be operated as a Community Hub. The Community Hub would include the following spaces:

- Gymnasium
- Walking Track
- Fitness Room
- Arts Room
- Community Partner space
- Courtyard

The facility would be operated by the CHC with revenues generated through rentals, memberships and Provincial funding.

The estimated cost of the entire project in 2019 was \$7,665,000 with \$3,500,000 being allocated to the Community Hub and \$4,165,000 being allocated to the CHC expansion.

Unfortunately, the project relied on other levels of government funding, which never materialized. As a result of this, the CHC has confirmed that there is still a need to expand the medical building to accommodate the service level required in the Grand Bend area, however the addition of community space would not be a priority.

This being the case, a group of local residents have formed a grassroots committee to pursue the creation of a new community center, located in the Municipal Drive Area. This is presumably to replace the HUB concept. While they recently had an informal meeting with the CAO and Director of Community Services to review their ideas, Council has not had the opportunity to hear or consider their request or ideas.

This committee will be requesting to present to Council in the near future, at which time Council will need to consider if and how it would like to move forward after considering their proposal. However, until some of the other projects in this report, particularly the Public Works Depot and the Recreation Facilities are advanced, any plans for a Community Centre would need to be conceptual in nature.

Staff will continue to liaison with this group for the purposes of understanding their proposal until such time as they are ready to make a presentation to Council.

Enbridge

In addition to the needs of the Municipality that are unique to the Municipal Drive area, Enbridge has approached staff with a request to install a new gas sub-station in an area beside the existing public works depot that will approximately 13m x 21m. A formal request from Enbridge is being prepared and will be presented to Council once staff has received

ALTERNATIVES TO CONSIDER

This report is meant to be a roadmap for moving forward on Council's strategic priority of "considering opportunities for redevelopment of the Municipal Drive\Lions Park area...". Council could consider other methods or ideas to move forward, or not move forward on certain projects at all.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Staff is recommending that Council direct staff to proceed with the recommended steps for the Municipal Administration Building, the Public Works Depot, and the Recreation Facilities. As each of these projects proceed, individual specific reports will address options, costs, next steps etc. and be presented to Council for approval and guidance.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

While there will certainly be some potentially large financial impacts associated with Council's final decisions made for the projects noted in this report, the financial impacts to undertaking the steps outlined for each project are relatively minor. Much of the work can be completed in-house with existing staff resources. Any outside services required for items such as appraisals, condition surveys etc. can be covered through existing 2022 budgets.

CONSULTATION

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Nick Verhoeven, Director of Public Works
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