

## Staff Report

---

**Report To:** Community Services Committee  
**Report From:** Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services  
**Meeting Date:** December 13, 2023  
**Report Code:** CS-23-130  
**Subject:** Harrison Park Master Plan – Summary of Public Feedback

---

### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-23-130 respecting Harrison Park Master Plan – Summary of Public Feedback, the Community Services Committee recommends that City Council direct staff to continue with the next steps as outlined in the report.

### Highlights:

- Updating the Harrison Park Master Plan is an important tool to ensure that parks' capital spending and operations are optimized and meeting the needs of the public;
- In 2023, the Committee approved an approach to updating the Harrison Park Master Plan utilizing in-house staff with some consulting support relating to the bird/waterfowl area
- This report summarizes the engagement. Over 965 responses to the survey were received through the city's online engagement platform.
- This information, together with the background and best practices and operating and capital considerations, will then be used to inform the draft master plan. The public feedback also identifies areas for where further study or research is required to inform decision-making.

## **Strategic Plan Alignment:**

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Service Excellence - KR1 - Further develop a culture of learning, development, well-being and embrace new approaches to service provision

## **Climate and Environmental Implications:**

This supports the objectives of the City's Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan by considering climate adaptation in the development of the City's strategies, plans, and policies.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

[Harrison Park Master Plan](#)

[Recreation Parks and Facilities Master Plan](#)

[Owen Sound Strategic Plan 2021-2023](#)

[City of Owen Sound Official Plan](#)

[CS-23-030 Harrison Park Master Plan](#) – Background and Project Approach

## **Background:**

In March of 2023, Committee received report CS-23-030 together with a visual presentation. The report provided a significant amount of background information respecting Harrison Park, including:

### Overview of Harrison Park

- Park location and history;
- Recreation, Parks, and Facilities Master Plan (2018);
- Park Sections, Existing Features and Park Amenities;
- Interpretive Plaques; and,
- Tree inventory.

### Information on the Use of the Park

- Use of the park, including special events;
- Rental data from the Pavilion, Community Hall and Bandshell and Events;
- Existing Operating Agreements and 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Leases;
- Campground; and,


- Unstructured use.

Update on the 2002 Master Plan and other completed initiatives

The report also provided an outline, approach and timeline relating to the update of the 2002 Harrison Park Master Plan.

The project has been branded and all communication includes the brand for ease of recognition.

The approach to the Master Plan includes 5 phases:

1. Define Purpose and Objective,
2. Identify Issues and Opportunities,
3. Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation Workshops, 
4. Action Planning and Recommendation Development, and;
5. Master Plan Framework and Implementation Plan.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation Workshops, and input received through that process. This information, together with the background, best practices and operating and capital considerations, will then be used to inform the draft master plan. The public feedback also identifies areas where further study or research is required to inform decision-making.

## **Analysis:**

As outlined in the March 2022 report, the approach to public engagement included 2 components:

- Use of a survey tool on Our City, the public engagement platform
- Stakeholder engagement workshops.

## ***Survey Input***

The Our City Platform was launched on August 14 and included background to the master plan project as well as a video with information included with the original staff report. The survey closed on September 14.

In addition to the survey, the Our City Platform included:

- an opportunity for the public to engage with staff to ask a particular question;
- A story section that allowed the public to share their stories about the park. 3 stories were shared, and these are included in Attachment 1;

- A map to help orient people to the various areas of the park;
- An Ideas area – this was not well used given the open-ended survey questions (only one response was received about playgrounds).

### ***Stakeholder Engagement Workshops***

Three engagement sessions were held in different locations at various times of day to encourage attendance by a broader audience.

The same presentation was shared at each session and there were 2 key questions:

- a. Identify 3 barriers to enjoying the park
- b. Identify 3 amenities to add to the park

Sessions were held at the community hall at Harrison Park on the following dates and times:

Thursday, August 24 – 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. (3 people attended)

Thursday, September 7 – 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Monday, September 11 – 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

(Note: Staff are working to obtain the data from the September sessions)

The input received is summarized in Attachment 2. The feedback aligns with the input around the survey question about what park service, amenity, or feature people would like to see added to the park.

### ***Survey Feedback (see Attachment 3)***

This project has achieved the highest level of engagement and feedback to date.

Attachment 3 illustrates a summary of survey feedback.

965 people responded to the survey.

The following highlights are noted concerning the survey:

- 90.7 % of respondents reported having reviewed the background presentation.

This shows that the significant majority reviewed the background and presentation to support their knowledge before responding to the survey.

- 75% of people responding reported living in Owen Sound. 25% live in other places.
- The majority of the respondents noted having lived in the City for less than 10 years, with 182 responses (19%). The next responses showed that many respondents have lived in the City for over 20 years (269 responses, 28%).
- Of the 25% of respondents who lived outside the City, the largest percentage represented Georgian Bluffs residents (36%), followed by Meaford (15%) and Chatsworth (12.5%).
- The age of those completing the survey saw the highest percentage of respondents between 35 and 44 years, followed by 25-34 years (20%) and 45-54 years (16%). This survey has successfully engaged a younger demographic, supporting that this is a park used by families.
- 57% of respondents completed the survey for themselves and 43% for a family. Less than 1% represented a business or other group.
- The largest group of respondents visit the park one time per week (45%) followed by 38% indicating that they visit monthly.
- The seasonality of visits reports summer followed by fall, spring and then winter as most popular. The variation between seasons shows that while more people enjoy the park in the summer months, the other seasons have strong visitation.
- The top six reasons reported for visiting the park include trials, the Festival of Northern Lights, the birds, the Inn, watching fish migration, and playgrounds.
- There was strong support demonstrated for the heritage attributes of the Park, including the character of the trees and forest, the stone buildings, the stone walls, the gardens, and the fountain.
- There was significant support for the level of maintenance of many amenities, including:
  - Grounds and trails (noting both summer and winter),
  - Trees and forests,
  - Playgrounds,
  - Washrooms,
  - Basketball courts,
  - Outdoor rink,
  - Restaurant.
- The amenities identified as needing improved maintenance included:
  - The campground (although a large percent noted they neither agree nor disagree which may reflect Owen Sound residents who may not camp)

- The outdoor pool.
- The last question asked respondents if there was a service, amenity or feature they would like to see added in Harrison Park.

There were over 200 pages of feedback received from the survey respondents to this question.

Staff have reviewed this feedback and combined the responses into themes, noting the number of times the item or theme was noted.

Attachment 4 provides a summary of themes and inputs within those themes:

The top five themes include:

- Amenities: Buildings, Structures, Rental Cabins, Washrooms and Bird/Waterfowl area
    - Re-instating/improving waterfowl and bird area
    - Buildings – including noting the use of senior's building
  - Park Grounds
    - Improve the fountain area
    - More tables, chairs, benches
  - It is great the way it is!
  - Playgrounds
    - Desire for splash pad
    - Maintenance of current structures and replacement of outdated (campground)
  - Maintenance, Signage and Safety
    - Water fountain
    - Improved signage and wayfinding signage
- 68% of respondents support additional cabins for overnight rental similar to the cabin developed in the campground in 2023.

The current senior's building and laundry building were identified as future candidates for conversion for overnight stays.

- 82% of respondents support studying ways to repopulate the avian and waterfowl area.
- The question that had the most balanced public response related to the rink boards gifted to the City as part of Scotiabank Hockey Day in

Canada. 37.6% of respondents would like them partially installed (ends and not sides), 35.6% do not support installing and 26.8% support installing the boards permanently.

### **Next steps:**

The vacancy in the Manager of Parks and Open Space role has created a gap in the continuity of this project. We are approximately 6-8 weeks behind the original project schedule.

The next steps include action planning and the development of recommendations.

As demonstrated, the input on the birds and waterfowl highlighted the importance of engaging with an expert to assist in guiding and informing our recommendations and decision-making.

Once there are draft recommendations, these will be presented to the committee for feedback before finalizing the first draft.

### **Financial Implications:**

Financial impacts will be further discussed associated with draft master plan.

By undertaking the engagement and the master plan in house with City staff, there is a significant saving to the corporation. There is a small amount of funds to support the engagement of the avian expert.

### **Communication Strategy:**

An update to this report will be added to the Our City website with notice being sent to anyone who has signed up for project notices.

### **Consultation:**

Consultation has been done in accordance with the approach and methodology approved by Committee and Council in accordance with the original staff report [CS-23-030](#).

### **Attachments:**

1. Stories shared through the Engagement Platform
2. Input from in-person Engagement Sessions

3. Survey Results

4. Summary of Input regarding a Service, Feature or Amenity

**Recommended by:**

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

**Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services at [pcoulter@owensound.ca](mailto:pcoulter@owensound.ca) or 519 376 4440 x 1252.