



City of
Peterborough

TO: Members of the Arenas, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

FROM: Brian Buchardt, Planner, Urban Design

MEETING DATE: February 26, 2013

SUBJECT: Report APRAC13-009
Presentation of Louis Street Urban Park Site Plan with UN Peacekeepers Public Art Monument Location

PURPOSE

A report to introduce a presentation by the Planner, Urban Design and the Cultural Planner on the Louis Street Urban Park site plan and the location of a UN Peacekeepers Public Art Monument, and to seek the Arenas, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee's (APRAC) endorsement of the plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Arenas, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee approve the recommendations outlined in Report APRAC13-009 dated February 26, 2013, of the Urban Design Planner and the Cultural Planner as follows:

- a) That the presentation by the Urban Design Planner and the Cultural Planner be received for information; and
- b) That the site plan for the first phase of development of the Urban Park at Louis Street be endorsed.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget or financial implications associated with the recommendations of Report APRAC13-009.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of August 27, 2012, Council sitting as Planning Committee approved the site at Louis Street for the development of the Downtown's Urban Park.

Originally conceived as a Downtown Public Square, Council was uncomfortable with the designation due to the current urban form around the site. Most squares around the world are characterized by buildings that define the space's edges. Although the Louis Street site currently lacks the built form around it to be typically thought of as a square, its development as an urban park at this time is anticipated to be a catalyst for development around it.

Over the years to come it is possible that the development and re-development of properties around it could begin to define the space in a manner that typically characterizes a public square. The site is bordered by vacant sites at its north and south ends, and the zoning of other properties around it would permit the development of more substantial buildings.

The development of a public square is one of the key strategies of the Central Area Master Plan. The Central Area Master Plan is a component of the Official Plan, a document that, in part, prescribes the location and nature of land development throughout the City.

The process toward arriving at a design for the Urban Park is nearing its completion. At the meeting where Council endorsed the location, staff was directed to consult with each of the property owners near the site and along its boundary. The talks with area property owners concluded this past fall. Consultation meetings this winter will wrap up with a final public meeting in early April where the design will be presented and further feedback solicited.

Subsequent to the final public meeting, the plan for the Urban Park's development will be presented at a Planning Committee meeting to seek Council's endorsement of the plan. Funding has been allocated in the 2013 Capital Budget for the preparation of construction drawings for the first phase of the Urban Park's development.

Highlights of the Plan

The plan involves the development of an Urban Park on the City owned Louis Street Municipal Parking Lot, consolidated with Louis Street, from Charlotte Street to the intersection of Louis Street and King Street. The driveway entrance into Rivulet Apartments (formerly the Post Office building) has to be maintained and is incorporated in the plan.

The plan is conceived together with the Charlotte Street Renewal Project – another strategy of the Central Area Master Plan. The idea is to create a seamless flow of treatments between Charlotte Street and the new Urban Park, creating an inviting space that is convenient for pedestrian travel.

Working together with the consultants for the project, a phased approach has been devised for the development of the space. The first phase proposes to incorporate all the main items arising from the consultation with area property owners, special interest groups and stakeholders.

Phase 1

The Phase 1 plan does not anticipate the development of any of the privately owned properties around the site, or the City's acquisition of any of the properties abutting it. The main features of the plan are as follows:

Space for the Downtown Farmer's Market

The Downtown Farmer's Market is a key component of the design program for the Urban Park. Since moving from Charlotte Street, between George Street and Water Street, it has gained in popularity and could easily grow beyond its present day limits imposed by the City.

It is very important that the Urban Park is designed to be convenient for their use. As a result, vehicles can continue to access the space in designated areas. As well, there are areas where merchant's canopies can be set up without vehicles. The hard surfacing of most of the park is a must for the operation of the Downtown Farmer's Market and to accommodate other large public gatherings. The Downtown Farmer's Market brings activity and contributes to the vitality of the area.

Summer Time Water Play and Winter Time Skating Rink Area

It has been identified that the programming and design of the Urban Park must be multi-functional. The large central space devoted to most of the Farmer's Market's booths is proposed to also function as a water play area in the warm weather season, and a skating rink in the winter. The area is given form by a large oval shaped ledge for sitting.

The idea to incorporate a water play feature and a skating rink is not new to the development of Urban Parks and Public Squares around the world. They are proven successful features, bringing year-round activity and a “people watching” aspect to the design.

The hard-surfaced open space area also provides flexibility for the programming of the Urban Park. This area could be used by people to view the performing arts stage, or at other times for example, play boxes could be quickly assembled and filled with sand for special children’s events.

Performing Arts Stage, Washrooms and Storage

The plan includes a stage, which also seconds as a washroom facility and storage building. The stage could be used as a venue for music, theatrical and dance performances. The proposed venue at Louis Street is intended to be an urban experience where many different activities could be occurring at the same time, especially on those occasions when Charlotte Street is closed to vehicular traffic between Aylmer Street and George Street.

The Urban Park is an appropriate outdoor venue during the colder times of the year, as it is not as exposed to the elements. For example, it would be easy to imagine how a New Year’s Eve celebration could be accommodated there. The Urban Park is “where the action is”, will be well lit, and is protected by Downtown buildings and landscape in the design.

Washrooms are an essential component of the plan, as the space is designed and intended to be able to accommodate large gatherings of people. If a small building is needed for the stage and storage, it is most practical to locate the washrooms in the same building. The washrooms should be located behind the stage area to avoid conflicts when the stage is in use.

Public Art: The U.N. Peacekeepers Initiative

On September 21, 2012, the Urban Design Planner, the Arts, Culture and Heritage Manager and the Cultural Planner met with representatives from the Peterborough Branch of the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping to explore the possibility of creating a public art monument that commemorates the role of veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping activities.

The Urban Park plan is organized by a north-south axis, centred between the existing Shopper’s Drug-Mart property and the Rivulet apartment building. The area for the United Nations Peacekeeping public art monument is centred on this axis, as is the hard-surfaced open space area and stage.

The area for the public art display has been given great prominence on the plan. It is located adjacent to Charlotte Street where it will come into view as one enters this inner-City block. It will be a focal point of the Urban Park and the west portion of the block between Aylmer and George Streets.

The area allocated for the UN Peacekeepers monument is approximately 6 metres x 6 metres (20 feet x 20 feet). The identification of a location and footprint for the UN Peacekeepers monument enables the commencement of Public Art procedures in accordance with the City's Public Art Policy.

Parking

The first phase of the development of the Urban Park also includes surface parking at its south end, behind the stage area. The paving treatments and soft landscape is to be upgraded for this area of the site to be in keeping with the development's overall attractiveness. The parking area would be accessed from King Street.

The continued use of this area of the site for surface parking does not preclude its use for other purposes. For Downtown Farmer's Market merchants who prefer to sell their goods from vehicles, the area is well suited for them. It also provides good access to the stage area for the storage of materials and the delivery of stage props for performances.

The surface parking area is also an area reserved for future development. Proposals could be considered for the development of a Downtown Farmer's Market building or for the expansion or development of restaurants that want outdoor patios that open up into the space.

Pedestrian Travel

Pedestrian travel through the site is accommodated below the tree canopy along its east boundary adjacent to the Rivulet Apartments. The promenade also secondly serves as an emergency access route in the event there is a blockage at the King Street driveway. During events where there are large gatherings of people at the park, or the skating rink is in use, the promenade provides a way for people to travel through the area.

Landscape

A high standard of landscape design is proposed. To have immediate impact, the Urban Park should include the installation of large trees. Trees are proposed to soften the rear of the existing Shopper's Drug Mart building, and large trees to form a canopy are proposed along the east side of the park, providing an area for portable tables and chairs where people can gather individually or in groups.

A solid mat of groundcover is proposed in areas beneath the trees where there is not hard surface paving for pedestrian circulation and tables and chairs.

Future Development Phases

There has not been discussion in this report regarding potential future phases for the Urban Park's development other than mention that the plan is flexible enough to respond to the potential acquisition of abutting properties by the City, or to respond to proposals received for the re-development of private properties that surround it. In conjunction with the creation of the first phase plan for the Urban Park, the potential development of future phases has been explored in detail.

SUMMARY

A thorough consultation process has been implemented and will culminate with a final public meeting in early April. Arising from the consultations, the Urban Park has been designed to be attractive, to accommodate an assortment of activities, to be convenient for people to spend time at or travel through, and it is designed to be comfortable and safe.

Staff is entirely confident that the implementation of the plan will be successful, and as indicated to City Council, will be a catalyst for investment in this area of the Downtown Core. For these reasons, it has been recommended that the Arenas Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee endorse the plan for the first phase of the development of an Urban Park at Louis Street.

Submitted by,

Brian Buchardt,
Planner, Urban Design

Contact Name:

Brian Buchardt,
Phone: 705-742-7777 Ext. 1734
Toll Free: 1-855-738-3755
Fax: 705-742-5218
E-Mail: bbuchardt@peterborough.ca

Attachments:

Appendix A – Louis Street Urban Park Site Plan