

Riverwalk Area Urban Design Master Plan Meeting Summary

Public Information Session #2 March 17, 2021 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm Online via Webex Events

Overview

On Wednesday March 17, 2021, the City of Brampton hosted the second of two planned Public Information Sessions about the Riverwalk Area Urban Design Master Plan (UDMP). City staff, DTAH (the lead project consultant), and Regional Councillors Paul Vicente (Wards 1 and 5), Pat Fortini (Wards 7 and 8), Martin Medeiros (Wards 3 and 4), and Rowena Santos (Wards 1 and 5) attended the meeting.

Due to the advice from public health officials during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Public Information Session was held remotely via Webex Events. Participants joined and participated in the online event using a computer, tablet, smartphone app, and by telephone.

Approximately 70 members of the public joined the Public Information Session, including 45 who registered beforehand. The purpose of this second meeting was to present an update on the project and seek feedback on design concepts and recommendations for the draft UDMP.

Regional Councillors Vicente, Fortini, Medeiros, and Santos provided opening remarks and shared their excitement about opportunities to revitalize downtown Brampton and improve flood protection and natural spaces. Michael Heralall from the City of Brampton presented a brief overview of the Riverwalk program including the work completed leading into the UDMP. James Roche and Tanya Brown from DTAH presented the draft Master Plan update, draft concept development, and draft demonstration plans in the Riverwalk area. Following the presentations, Ian Malczewski, an independent third-party facilitator from Swerhun Inc., facilitated questions of clarification and a plenary discussion.

At the end of the meeting, Ian thanked participants for joining the Public Information Session and said that there are other opportunities to submit feedback, including an upcoming online survey; and that a draft meeting summary will be distributed to participants for review before being finalized. Alex Taranu, from the City of Brampton, shared closing remarks about the development and revitalization opportunities in the Riverwalk Area and the objectives of the Riverwalk project.

The Riverwalk UDMP Public Information Session #2 is part of a larger engagement effort that also includes online engagement and ongoing City-led engagement with stakeholder groups and residents. Visit the Riverwalk website for more information: www.brampton.ca/riverwalk

Swerhun Inc. prepared this Meeting Summary. The intent of this summary is to capture the range of perspectives shared at the meeting and e-mailed to the project team up to and including Thursday, March 25, 2021. This summary is not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript, does not assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives, and does not indicate an endorsement of any of these perspectives on the part of the City of Brampton. This summary was reviewed by participants before being finalized.

Link to the meeting presentation: <u>https://www.brampton.ca/EN/Business/planning-</u> development/projects-studies/riverwalk/Documents/PIS%202%20Presentation-FINAL-ACCESSIBLE.pdf

Attachments: Attachment A – list of project team members in attendance Attachment B – post-meeting e-mailed feedback

1. Key themes of feedback shared by participants

Participants were generally excited about the project and appreciated the City's efforts to revitalize and protect natural spaces. They asked questions, shared suggestions, and wanted to learn more about the project. The following key themes emerged from the feedback shared during the Public Information Session and after the meeting. These themes are meant to be read alongside the more detailed summary of feedback in the following sections.

- Strong support for the proposed approaches to enhancing sustainability and protecting nature. Many supported the team's efforts to improve sustainability and the natural environment. In particular, they liked the team's plans to protect the Riverwalk through controlling access to its natural areas.
- **Concerns about too much concrete.** A few shared concern about the potential loss of green space, saying the demonstration plans showed "too much concrete," particularly in Rosalea Park. They said they would prefer greener, more natural spaces and fewer built up areas.
- Interest in culture, identity, programming, and future engagement. There were a couple comments about Brampton's unique culture and identity, and a suggestion to name the area after a local businessman. There were also questions about the City's engagement with existing homeless population in the Riverwalk area and a suggestion to establish a future "friends of the Riverwalk" stewardship group.

2. Detailed summary of feedback

Questions and comments are summarized below by topic. Responses from the City and DTAH are indicated in *italics*, where provided.

Post-meeting feedback, including questions and comments e-mailed to the City's Riverwalk project team up to and including Thursday, March 25, 2021, is summarized in Section 3 (pg. 5).

Feedback about the overall project and the previous Environmental Assessment

Participants shared feedback about the overall project and the previous Environmental Assessment, including:

• Why is the design for the bypass channel different than what is proposed in the Downtown Brampton Flood Protection (DBFP) Environmental Assessment (EA)? We have always been told during the EA process that a concrete structure is required here in order to deal with the flood capacity. It is very concerning to see the design deviate from what we were told was a fixed constraint in the EA process. Will having grass and tiered sides affect flooding at Church Street and Ken Whillans Drive? The messaging during the EA was for a concrete channel that meets width, depth and conveyance requirements. The EA does not preclude us from making adjustments to the channel if we can ensure that it meets the EA's hydraulic modelling. There is some flexibility for sustainability and urban design improvements. The tweaks shown in the UDMP do not conflict with the EA.

• Would a bigger bridge at Church Street be a better solution for flood prevention? No, we cannot isolate one area of the channel since changes made in one area have other impacts upstream and downstream.

Feedback about sustainability and nature

Participants shared feedback about approaches to sustainability and nature, including:

- Interest in seeing improved water quality in the creek and fish swimming upstream. People love to watch fish swim upstream in the Don and Humber Rivers; it would be great to see that kind of activity in the Riverwalk area, too. Will the grade change/mini waterfall in the creek by Church Street remain in the future so people can watch fish swim upstream? *No*, *the mini waterfall needs to be removed as part of lowering the channel by Church Street. This removal will allow fish to travel upstream through the Etobicoke Creek Bypass and increase the capacity for flood water. The UDMP is looking to create a more naturalized, rocky rapids approach in this areas that will be passable by fish. Improving water quality for wildlife passage is also a goal identified in the UDMP.*
- Support for controlling access and balancing protection of the environment with increasing use. These are exciting plans that demonstrate a lot of consideration of the environment. There are currently a wide range of people using the valley for different activities, like hiking, so how will you ensure protection of the environment? By providing controlled access, like boardwalks, in places around the Riverwalk, we aim to prevent trampling and compaction and to deter users from entering into the Channel or Creek. These types of controlled access should promote safety and reduce the current use of informal pathways, which can cause erosion.
- The UDMP should identify additional strategies to help protect the natural environment, such as adding educational signage about ecological services, displaying rules for Riverwalk users, and ensuring there are enough garbage bins. The City plans to promote education and awareness of ecological services with interpretative signage and interactive features that do not negatively impact the environment. We will also determine garbage bin locations to deter people from polluting the water.
- **Concern about "too much" concrete in draft recommendations.** Some of the more built up areas look excessive and out of place in what is currently a natural and beautiful space. Consider more natural, softer, and greener features, especially in Rosalea Park. *The City's goal is to avoid having a lot of pavement in the Riverwalk and in Rosalea Park. The current draft recommendations strive to replace existing concrete with greenery, but we appreciate that the graphics might not give that impression. The graphics shown are for demonstration purposes only: they are not detailed proposals. We will be exploring other sustainable materials later the detailed design phases.*

Feedback about programming

Participants shared feedback about approaches to programming, including:

- Engage local schools, daycares, seniors' centres, and libraries and form a "friends of the Riverwalk" group. There is a great opportunity to engage different groups in the Riverwalk area and use it as an opportunity to educate and raise awareness of the environment. The City should also encourage the creation of a "friends of the Riverwalk" group to help keep the space healthy, pull invasive species, and plant native species.
- **Concern about the proposed bandshell.** The proposed bandshell is very close to seniors housing. Noise from a bandshell would not be good for their health and wellbeing.

Feedback about character and identity

Participants shared feedback about approaches to character and identity, including:

- The Riverwalk should reflect Brampton's unique cultural scene and align with the City's Culture Master Plan. The Culture Master Plan's vision is to create an experimental cultural scene and design. Consider building on this vision in the Riverwalk and helping Brampton become a niche place where interesting experiences happen. Food trucks, busker spaces, and live music are some programming ideas that could help achieve this vision in the Riverwalk. Engage with the local cultural community to help with programming.
- Consider the San Antonio River Walk as a precedent for what we could achieve. The San Antonio River Walk is a great space that we have looked at. That said, their river has a very different hydrology than what's in Brampton. Etobicoke Creek is usually a trickle of water most of the time, and in the spring, it turns into raging torrents, making things like boat rides and water-side restaurants more difficult to do. We have pulled inspiration from San Antonio, but Brampton's Riverwalk has its own unique features.
- **Consider naming the Riverwalk area after Robert Nutbrown**, a businessman who conceived of the Riverwalk 18 years ago and brought people together to make it a reality.

Feedback about transportation

Participants shared feedback about approaches to transportation, including:

- Consider building a bridge from Meadowlands Drive to Clarence Street and Beatty Avenue. This bridge would be useful for cyclists: Main Street is too narrow for a bike lane, and a bike lane on Main Street may compete for space. That area is outside the scope of this project's study area, but a big part of the concept is to strengthen and have more opportunities for connections throughout the Riverwalk. We are proposing a potential bridge just north of Clarence Street.
- Clarify that Council approved bus rapid transit on Queen Street and light rail transit on Main Street. The presenter may have misspoken during the presentation – the City should make sure project materials accurately reflect Council's decisions.

Feedback about process and implementation

Participants shared feedback about process and implementation, including:

- Are there any plans for community benefits included with the Federal investment for the Riverwalk? Not at the moment, but providing community benefits is one of our objectives. In our application for Federal funding, we identified the provision of community benefits and ensuring Indigenous people and others are benefiting from the project. In a later stage of the work, we will be able to provide more detail about community benefits.
- Concern about displacement of existing homeless population. Has the team engaged people experiencing homelessness or the agencies serving those populations in this process? Will implementation affect people experiencing homelessness in the area? *No, we have not directly engaged with homeless populations in this process, but we did engage with agencies serving those populations as part of the process, including the Region of Peel Public Health and other service agencies. While addressing broader challenges with homelessness in Brampton is beyond the scope of this project, we are aware there are people living in the Riverwalk and the recommendations have considered how to make spaces safe for all users.*
- Future infrastructure should be robust, resilient, and require minimal maintenance.
- Consider placing any future new major infrastructure away from the water's edge to protect the Creek.

3. Summary of post-meeting feedback

The Riverwalk project team received 7 e-mails after the Public Information Session up to and including Thursday, March 25, 2021. The following points summarizes the feedback, questions, and comments e-mailed to the project team in that time. The e-mails are also included at the end of this summary as Attachment B. The Riverwalk project team provided direct responses to the participants. Participants shared the following:

• Feedback about Rosalea Park:

- Rosalea Park is an invaluable public green space for the community, and especially for the low-income seniors living at Grace Court and 1 Maple Ave. COVID-19 has had a disproportionately negative impact on both low-income communities and seniors. Rosalea Park provides mental health benefits to local seniors. The design concepts shown at the meeting, including the proposed extension of Ken Whillans Drive, would result in most of Rosalea Park's greenspace being paved over.
- Consider a playground in Rosalea Park instead of a bandshell. A playground could bring multi-generational joy to the area. A bandshell and concerts in Rosalea Park could be disruptive to local seniors and the quiet neighbourhood.
- The City and its design should be experimental, unique, funky and think outside the box. Align the Riverwalk with the Culture Master Plan as part of the 2040 vision as best as possible. Look at examples of unique courtyards and markets; creative reuse of abandoned factories; interesting street art and streetscapes; mixed-use, integrated and funky

greenspaces; and unique designs. New industries come when arts and culture are supported with things like affordable studio space and rent.

• Consider providing an outdoor river swimming area in the Riverwalk.

Attachment A: List of project team members

In attendance:

City of Brampton:

Michael Heralall, Senior Manager Environment & Development Engineering – Public Works and Engineering

Alex Taranu, Senior Advisor Public Works and Engineering

Stavroula Kassaris, *Environmental Planner* Environment and Development Engineering, *Public Works and Engineering*

Jake Mete, Senior Manager Park Planning and Development – Park Maintenance and Forestry, Community Services

DTAH:

James Roche, Partner, Landscape Architect, Design Lead

Tanya Brown, Landscape Architect, Project Manager

Swerhun Inc. Facilitation Team:

Ian Malczewski, Lead Facilitator

Jacky Li, Facilitation Support

Attachment B – Post-meeting e-mailed feedback

The City of Brampton's Riverwalk project team received 7 e-mails after the meeting with feedback about the project up to and including Thursday, March 25, 2021 (captured in Part 1, below).

The project team also received 2 e-mails with additional feedback during the participant review period of the draft summary (captured in Part 2 on page ix).

The e-mails are copied below, with personally identifiable information removed. The Riverwalk project team provided direct responses to the participants.

Part 1 – Feedback shared with the team up to and including March 25, 2021

E-mail 1

During the riverwalk meeting, I wanted to ask if there was consideration for a swimming area in this project but they never got a chance to get to me because of time. Please add this question to the meeting that was held on March 17th at 6:30 am. I would like a response at your earliest convenience.

E-mail 2

I am opposed to the extension of Ken Whillans Drive. The extension will reduce the amount of green space in Rosalea Park. This reduction in green space will impact the Grace Court seniors and the seniors at 1 Maple Avenue. While recognizing that tonight's public Riverwalk consultation was only showing design concepts for Rosalea Park, the design shown would result in most of Rosalea Park being paved over and green space greatly reduced.

Grace Court is a 65-unit apartment building for low-income seniors overlooking Rosalea Pake.. Beside Grace Court at 1 Maple Avenue, is another 101-unit low-income senior apartment building.

Low-income seniors experienced vulnerability and marginalization before COVI19. COVID-19 has had a disproportionately negative impact on both low-income communities and seniors. COVID-19 has increased our awareness of how important mental health is for the overall wellness of seniors. Parks, like Rosalea, provide mental health benefits to our seniors.

A public green space, like Rosalea Park, is invaluable to our community. Parks serve residents culturally, as they inspire and provide recreational opportunities. Higher income levels can easily access green areas, but low-income seniors, like those at Grace Court, have limited access to public spaces. Rosalea Park is steps from Grace Court. I am concerned about the loss of green space within walking distance from Grace Court.

The city of Brampton website states: "The City is working to become a leader in age-friendliness by ensuring that the aging community has access to necessary services, is valued and able to

contribute to civic life, and has a suitable environment with strong supports in which they can remain healthy and age safely, with purpose and dignity."

In addition, the City is pursuing admission into the World Health Organization's (WHO) Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. The city is committed to advancing public and policy goals that align with the WHO's eight established focus areas that define an age-friendly community. One WHO focus area is outdoor spaces and public buildings that are pleasant, clean, secure and physically accessible.

The proposed extension of Ken Whillans will pave over existing green space in Rosalea Park. The reduction of green space is contrary to the City's stated desire to make outdoor spaces secure and detrimental to the City's desire to seek admission to the WHO's Network of Age-Friendly Cities.

I believe that the downtown community will be better served by more green space rather than by paving over existing green space.

E-mail 3

Great letter [referring to E-mail 2]

E-mail 4

I'm not sure if minutes of tonight's meeting are being done or a summary, but I hope a fact check can be included for a comment a resident made about Main LRT.

The person said Metrolinx wouldn't accept a "streetcar" on Main where they are referring to the surface option for mixed traffic/running for option S3 for Segment C. Actually, Metrolinx accepted mixed running for Segment B as part of the the 2014 TPAP for HMLRT which as you know was surface option.

Since the December 2018 Council meeting where Council voted 11-0 in favour of the Main Street corridor for LRT, there have been no public statements on what Metrolinx or the Minister will or will not accept.

The City's study process is continuing.

I do hope that if the minutes/summary mention tonight's LRT comment that this clarification can be included so resistants are not confused.

E-mail 5

I agree with the caller [at the meeting] completely. Putting a bandshell in Rosalea Park is a terrible idea. There is a Senior's residence right there and I live ... across from the park. Our building is mostly inhabited by seniors as well. This is a quiet neighbourhood. If you were to poll the people who LIVE in this neighbourhood as to whether they wanted a band shell and

concerts here, I guarantee you that you would get a resounding NO. And isn't the whole point of Riverwalk to enhance the quality of life of the people who live and use this area?!

I suggest that a playground is put in instead. Just as putting daycares in senior's care homes has been a huge success in trials in the United States and elsewhere, so a playground - a really nice one - in Rosalea park would bring multi-generational joy to the area and bring people with young families to a space where their children could play. We need the sound of children playing and laughing in our neighbourhood - not rock bands and concerts.

Please don't put a band shell in. Do a poll of people in the neighbourhood if this letter does not convince you.

E-mail 6

I had registered for last nights Riverwalk UDMP Public Information Session #2 but had difficulty accessing the Webinar.

I received multiple confirmation notices from VMClientCare and 'messenger' with various confirmations and links but no matter what I tried I could not get in either virtually or on the phone.

This was extremely disappointing.

Will a recording of the session be made available for viewing?

E-mail 7

Hello Team,

My name is [...] and I recently participated at a Brampton public engagement webinar for the riverwalk. As I am signed up for updates through culture Brampton, I was informed that it would be important to see how arts/culture/recreation could help to inform the process of the riverwalk neighbourhood in Brampton.

My feedback was to try to align with the culture master plan as part of the 2040 vision as best as possible — Aside from this I want you to keep a few things in mind and I wanted to highlight a few key themes from the culture master plan and my own experiences as a struggling artist from Toronto:

Brampton is really aiming to be a culture/arts Mecca, in a way that no other city has seemed to plan in Canada aside from Montreal. This is especially important because the greater Toronto area has become increasingly unaffordable with high property taxes and rents and has pushed artists and artisans out of the area to other cities like Hamilton, Montreal, smaller towns and abroad.

Although ambitious, you have to remember that cities world-wide are defined by their art, fashion, design and overall creative scene (I.e. Nashville, New York, Copenhagen, Berlin, Paris,

London, Montreal) and Brampton makes the most sense in really rectifying this same artistic energy that the GTA has lost because planners in Brampton realise how the arts has the power to bring in all other industries. While the city of Toronto seems like an obvious culture hotspot, this does not hold true anymore because of gentrification, high-rents, and unaffordable studio space/maker space/rehearsal space. Toronto has lost dozens of arts venues because of condos replacing them, so Brampton and riverwalk needs to think more 21st century and realise what is truly important to human beings: Social interaction and entertainment.

Brampton wants to have ---

1. Experimental cultural scene (artistic freedom, free-spirited, open-minded, edgy)

"While Toronto is home to more glossier and pricey cultural events, Brampton is home to the more experimental and edgy fare"

I have to nudge the design team to really do things that are outside of the box in order to achieve this. Experiment yourselves, do things that are funky, weird, radical, eclectic and unique. Carving out this experimental/alternative/avant-garde design framework for the riverwalk embeds culture and identity within the design fabric itself.

Unique Berlin courtyard:



Recontextualisation of abandoned factory in Berlin into creative space:



Unique Street art in London





3 photos highlighting integrated green space, creative space, eclectic and funky greenhouselike, open space, garden space in hip Shoreditch neighbourhood (right in the middle of bustling London, England)







Berlin Garden where people bring their own shoes and grow plants in them (these funky ideas add a cool factor to a city and bring the community together in a different way)



Eclectic mixed-use greenspace, arts/culture space, unique vendors, string lights etc.



Montreal's most artistic neighbourhood - "Mile End" - Abandoned building quirkiness



Quirky street art - Mile End – Montreal



Unique street scape - Mile End Montreal (Funky, different, experimental)





Vibrancy/Eclecticness of San Diego Riverwalk:



Former sidewalks labs Toronto experimental/unique design (Use of non-traditional materials other than glass)



-These were many photos for solely artistic inspiration. As designers yourselves, I know the ideas could really run wild on your end and we embrace that. Do not be conservative on this as Brampton needs this edgy or radically unique spirit. All of the photos have uniqueness and experimentation that is encouraged and contributed something special and a 'never seen before' ethos to a city. This creativity that pushes boundaries attracts many artists, residents and visitors to these neighbourhood worldwide. When we travel abroad we want to experience the locations in the city that have this uniqueness, where we can experience something(s) that we have never seen before. I encourage you guys to think about how every corner can be unique — whether it be by unique colourful, avant-garde lighting, public spaces, restautants, living spaces, with funky public art, unique cultural experiences and room for creative entrepreneurs to find success.

-In most cities all around the world, where culture and the arts is supported and where things like cheap studio space and rent is provided, many new industries come. Shoreditch in London used to be extremely unsafe and poverty-stricken until artists and musicians relocated due to the incentive of affordable creative space. It is now London's coolest neighbourhood and now boasts many more industries due to tourism and popularity — there is now a high tech district right next to it and this is proof that the arts transforms neighbourhoods.

-Street art has to be everywhere. In all of the pictures shown, you can tell that the art depicted is non-traditional, away from the norm, a bit weird and funky and experimental. During the riverwalk meeting there was talk about engaging with the peel art gallery and integrating public art. If I am going to be honest, this idea is too normative for what Brampton is trying to become and I suggest you think more outside of the box about ideas for artists to be a part of the conversation. As an example, there is a graffiti wall in Shoreditch, London where literally anybody can come and do graffiti with the expectation that it could be replaced in months, weeks, days, hours or even minutes. It is this community-based, open-minded and edgy spirit that riverwalk needs to embrace.

As a few examples you could encourage people to make their own clay sculptures and grow plants in them for some of the green spaces in the riverwalk (with the notion that anybody could come and take them home) you could encourage local and international artists to make unique and funky installations or pop-up markets/events with communication between local business owners and neighbourhood BIAs etc.

You could encourage community fridges but instead of food it could be art (if you think more broadly then this it could be in multiple areas of the riverwalk where you could swap art in these wide-open spaces.

In an article by format.com that lists the best cities for artists, (https://www.format.com/magazine/resources/art/best-cities-for-artists)

it has Berlin as a top city because of it's experimental culture scene. In the reference photo you can see some avant-garde lighting and a unique surrounding. With the riverwalk, it is important

to have 'A feeling in the air', where this free-spirited can feel nurtured and accepted into this future-oriented and well rounded cultural fabric of a city. The plans for the riverwalk that I have seen just look really basic to me, more public art and more resources and opportunities for creatives is INCREMENTAL to bringing Brampton truly on the world's stage.

Cool alleyway highlighted in experimental art in Berlin



You could even potentially be more desirable than Toronto.

Cultural entrepreneurs need a neighbourhood where they can grow and not worry about money or paying bills when just establishing themselves. Riverwalk needs ample spaces for performers, makers and live music needs to be embedded in Brampton's DNA. Please consider many spaces for local artisan markets, outdoor markets where local-sourced food and clothing etc. is the focused and community-based events. Riverwalk needs to be deeply affordable to these people.

Part 2 - Additional feedback shared with the team during the participant-review period

E-mail 1

I forgot to add the possibility of skating on the river where it is possible similar to other cities such as Ottawa.

E-mail 2

I didn't get an opportunity to make any comments at the March town hall, we just ran out of time. For these virtual events, 1.5 hours is really not enough time for the presentation and all questions/ suggestions.

Firstly, I'm relieved that the design will be a tiered channel , not what was proposed by the TRCA which tripled the width of the concrete channel.

This project can't simply be the same old ideas, seen elsewhere. We need something bold and fresh that no one has done before. If we really want to attract investment and transform our Downtown Core, there has to be a WOW factor with this project.

Here are some suggestions for this project:

Community Gardens:

Create a community of small greenhouses (for rent) to pay homage to our Heritage "Flower City" and the Dale greenhouse history. The greenhouses could be arranged in a circular or square pattern and would compliment the community box gardens.



Bridges:

(Main St, Clarence, Queen St. Scott St. Church St) should all have a similar theme, something architectural that will identify the Riverwalk area all the way down to the Main St S bridge. Bridge decking can remain, just add or change the sidewalls to something new and fresh. Some examples below.





Centennial Park:

Get rid of the tennis courts and soccer fields and create a unique attraction/water feature. A suggestion would be to create a tower that residents and visitors could walk up and down to get exercise and enjoy the views of the parkland and city. Imagine if there was a water feature down the middle. Water could be pumped up and then cascade down the central core. This would create a dramatic sound of water and help cool visitors and provide moisture to plants adorning the structure.



Joyce Archdekin Cherry Tree Blossoms:

This should be expanded along the entire Etobicoke Creek green belt and Riverwalk areas. We could have the most spectacular Cherry tree blossom display in all of Canada! Create LED lighting to up light the cheery blossoms for a dramatic night time effect. For the tiered levels of the Riverwalk, plant tulip bulbs in the thousands for a dramatic spring show.



Tiered levels of flood channel – Plant thousands of tulips for a Spring show!

