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Mulock Property Master Plan Phase 1 Reporting – Public Engagement Summary and Design Themes Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2020-36

Department(s): All Departments

Author(s): Peter Noehammer, Commissioner, Development & Infrastructure Services

Meeting Date: May 25, 2020

Recommendations

1. That the staff report entitled Mulock Property Master Plan Phase 1 Reporting – Public Engagement Summary and Design Themes dated May 25, 2020 be received, along with the Mulock Property Master Plan Phase 1A – Technical Memo Draft prepared by PLANT Architect Inc. dated May 15, 2020, the Mulock Property Master Plan Engagement Summary Report – Phase 1B prepared by PROCESS dated May 15, 2020, and their respective appendices; and,
2. That Staff and the Consultants be directed to proceed with Phase 2 of the Mulock Property Master Plan to prepare three (3) design options based on combinations of the five (5) design principles described herein; and,
3. That the Mulock Property no longer be considered as a potential location for a full-size outdoor ice rink; and
4. That Jim Bond Park be included in the design options for the Mulock Property; and,
5. That the proposed re-use for the house consider a range of options as described herein to allow the design of the property to move forward; and,
6. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the Mulock Property Master Plan Phase 1 reports prepared by the consultant team lead by PLANT Architect Inc. These

reports have been prepared as Phase 1A – Technical Memo Draft , and Phase 1B Engagement Summary Report. Each report also includes an associated appendix which includes more detailed information and documentation.

At this juncture of the Master Plan development, the intention is to provide Council with a summary of the work to date with respect to Phase 1, and to receive feedback and direction on guiding principles to develop design options as part of Phase 2.

Background

In 2018, the Town of Newmarket purchased approximately 4.6-hectares of land originally known as the Mulock Farm, located at the northwest corner of Yonge Street and Mulock Drive. Through a master plan process, the Town’s intention is to establish an iconic, signature park space that also celebrates the historic significance of the property. With the assistance of the PLANT Architect team as consultants, and the desire to consult with a broad range of stakeholders, three issues were identified by the Town for specific direction prior to moving forward into detailed master plan concept designs:

- The possible inclusion of Jim Bond Park to the subject site area
- The potential for a skating facility that also functions as an outdoor event space
- The adaptive re-use options for the heritage residence

There were a number of elements based on early consultations, that also required some direction or confirmation prior to moving forward, and include:

- The possible inclusion of a skate path
- Parking size and location

The Consultation Program (Phase 1B) explored the design objectives for the site including the specific examination of the above issues, through an intense consultation with the public, staff, Council and internal and external stakeholders – over 3000 people — over fall 2019 and winter 2020. Public consultations had already concluded prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Discussion

In order to fully investigate the tasks in Phase 1A, the team engaged in investigative stages of understanding of the site, and the testing of programme, use ideas/concepts and design principles with the public and stakeholders.

The Technical Memo (Phase 1A) includes a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities, goals, objectives and high-level design principles for the park and house development. These respond to the natural and cultural assets and

features, and potential and contemporary values for the site, laying the ground work for the design for the park for Phase 2 master plan options.

The site was looked at within larger context policies and conditions including planning, ecology, transportation, recreation and culture. The building and site were documented from a heritage point of view, and put in context of indigenous history in the area. The site was reviewed with respect to archaeology, landscape conditions, tree health, spatial conditions, civil conditions, potential car access, topography and geothermal potential.

Opportunities were noted, and a summary of constraints was mapped to understand the restrictions on the site:

Summary of Site Constraints

- Proximity of residential properties
- Jim Bond Park is the major storm overflow for the Summerhill neighbourhood
- Below grade services
- The designated landscape buffer to the North up to the Hydro Corridor is not currently owned by the Town
- Wetland/low point at the southeast corner where there is a desired area for a pedestrian entrance, and therefore will need to be bridged
- Except at the current driveway there is a 1–1.5 m topographic difference between the sidewalk and the site necessitating stairs/ramps/bridges, and between the road and the house (2.5-6m) restricting easy direct access for a drop off
- New car access allowable only from Mulock Drive in a narrow band far from Yonge and Doubletree Lane
- No parking is permitted on Yonge Street or Mulock Drive
- Significant highly valued tree cover restricts the ability to build paths/infrastructure and building elements
- The entire site is considered high potential for Archaeological significance requiring further stage 2 assessments
- Heritage features – Although the house has been designated, the original designation did not include the heritage defining features in the landscape. Key elements that define the heritage character of the site include:
 - The placement of the house set well back from Yonge Street and Mulock Drive (which speaks to the former size of the entire property)
 - Driveway curving from Yonge Street, up through a stand of purposefully planted black walnut trees

- Landscape features related to the successive generations of Mulock occupation, including the formal “front lawn” facing Yonge Street, the stands of black walnut trees, and the remnants of the Dunington-Grubb designed garden feature, which includes a fountain and semi-circular planting beds/pathway.

Guiding Principles

Through the consultation, 5 priorities and guiding principles were distilled:

- A Destination – Ensure this site becomes a significant place to visit in Newmarket
- Rooted in History and Forward Looking – Share the multiple layers of history and evolution of the Town on the site including indigenous history
- Natural – Maintain and enhance the natural features of the landscape
- Connected – Connect the site with the neighbouring areas (Jim Bond Park, the hydro corridor) through pedestrian walkways, trails and cycling routes, to ensure it is integrated within the Town of Newmarket
- Inclusive and Accessible – Create an inclusive and accessible site for all residents and visitors

A Destination -

As a destination, the park should be distinguished from other offerings, and as a community landmark could include:

- Food
- Leisure spaces (including passive and active – breathing spaces, places to meditate, skating and walking trails)
- Culture/Art Hub including the possibility of permanent art, a strong art festival program that responds to the seasons (examples include garden festivals, winter stations, nature based sculpture parks, pavilion festival) and artist residencies
- Open/covered programmable space with destination programming
- A prime place for community gathering, public, open air events
- Strong ecology emphasis and many ways to appreciate nature
- Summer use to include a water feature, open unprogrammed space for picnics etc., season stretching food areas
- Winter use to include skating, fire pits, hiking, art-based events

Skating – Three skating path options are proposed ranging from 250-500m in length. All 3 paths are conceptually viable, but have different levels of impact, occupy different

areas of the site and will have different conflicts and opportunities with other desired uses of the site. All three paths could be explored in the Phase 2 master plan stage optional plans in combination with other site uses.

Rooted in History and Forward Looking -

Historically this was a place to enjoy leisure time. It is an oasis, a retreat, and has incredible historical significance. The site has the opportunity to recognize diverse histories in creative ways: Indigenous, Quaker, Rogers, Mulock, African Canadian, etc. Indigenous history can be embedded in many of the historical concepts and will require closer local engagement. Sir William Mulock and his family history have the capacity to bridge many of these histories to new uses. Sir William Mulock himself is known as:

- The social convener – community gathering, story telling, events
- The innovator – contemporary dialogue with histories in artworks, architecture and landscape types, think tank/artist residency, it should be a place for curiosity.
- The naturalist – arboretum, elaborate the watery aspects of the site (marsh and storm water), natural trails, pollinators, beekeeping
- The farmer – teaching gardens, community gardens, medicine gardens,
- The gardener – experimental gardens and spectacular peony displays, medicine gardens, botanical gardens

Natural –

Feedback from consultations stressed to keep the site as natural as possible and to allow for passive recreation in nature. The intimacy of the forest spaces were especially valued. The property was described by some as a green gem nestled into the residential context. Sir William Mulock known as a naturalist, gardener and farmer all provide possibilities for expanding this theme:

- Hardscape should be minimized and designed to protect tree roots
- Highlight and enhance rain, wet (rain collection) and wetland areas
- Artwork should be about nature or within nature
- The site should meet strong sustainability goals

Connected –

Although the site is valued for its oasis quality, there is a strong desire to connect it to the neighbourhood and making it as accessible as possible. This includes connecting it along Mulock Drive for pedestrians with ramps/stairs, and at the corner of Yonge Street where a major gateway is proposed.

Connecting it to the broader community means expanding transit options, providing access for drop-offs and considering parking options, access via the Hydro Corridor (if a

connection can be obtained), and connecting with Jim Bond Park. The Hydro Corridor could provide parking close to Yonge Street, or could provide a route for a manned shuttle or autonomous vehicle running from and using the Ray Twinney Recreation Centre excess parking to Yonge Street, and/or a pedestrian/bike trail connection to Yonge Street.

Jim Bond Park

It is recommend that Jim Bond Park re-join the site as it expands the park, and gives easy access to and from the neighbourhood. It was originally part of the social garden area when the property was much larger, and it consolidates parks management. In the current context of Covid-19, the need for expanded, less restricted park space will be critical to the future of all public spaces. The joining of the parks will need key design and policy considerations to ensure the joining has the most positive impacts including:

- Offer many options to get to the site to reduce parking pressure on the Summerhill neighborhood
- Add traffic deterrents on Jordanray Boulevard
- Minimize noise/privacy breaches conflicts with residents
- Consider how to transfer Jim Bond commemoration to a new location
- Ensure modest and intimate places, not just larger /communal ones
- The elevation difference is currently a divider, so consider how it could be a way to connect the sites

Parking

Parking has been explored in three areas on the site based on occupying existing open areas minimizing tree harm, hard surface, and new road works. A well-designed and effective pick-up/drop-off is proposed from Mulock Drive to minimize the number of cars on the site amidst programmed and natural spaces.

The options show a range of 24-60 parking spots on the site.

All three parking areas should be explored in the Phase 2 master plan stage to test optional plans in combination with other site uses.

Inclusive and Accessible –

The uniquely interesting historical and natural aspects of the property, together with its cultural/art potential, position it well as a place that can foster the coming together of diverse communities, demographics, ages, and people with diverse interests. In the Phase 2 master plan these overlapping and intersecting interests will be explored further. Accessible food availability on site is also critical, and there are many options for providing this including in the house, out-buildings, temporary market, and food events.

Covered Community Hub

A covered flexible community hub that can accommodate events like markets, concerts and other programs, seasonal food offerings, or a small cafe was explored. Although there was not a consensus on whether there should be a permanent pavilion, there is a desire for a number of activities that would benefit from a covered open air space. Five locations were explored and two were rejected due to feedback from the stakeholders (too close to residents). The three proposed locations are conceived for at least 200 people plus a substantial additional area, and are located in the areas with least impact on the natural site:

- Along Yonge Street – a gateway pavilion with access from the sidewalk that transitions from the busy street to the big lawn, gives sense of enclosure, and brings activity to the street address.
- At the south – part of the framing of the great lawn with potential access from adjacent parking (Parking Option 3).
- At the west – at the centre of the social area with potential access from adjacent parking (Parking Option 3).

In general, these three sites were considered acceptable, with the Yonge Street option being preferred. Other sites may be considered in Phase 2 as long as they respect the privacy of the residential yards.

House Adaptive Re-use

The work to date is recommending a plan for resiliency. Having tested the building's capacity, the rooms are of sufficient size and proportion, and relationship with each other that no single use would significantly change the plan, assuming the intention is to maintain the integrity of the house, and if adequate kitchen facilities are provided. It would be advantageous when renovating the building for this to be done in the most adaptable way possible – allowing it to be many possible things now and in the future, recognizing that it may have many uses over its lifetime.

No matter what it becomes, it will need to be brought up to code for Assembly uses, provide accessibility, and air conditioning – all requiring substantial investments. In concert with the themes that have emerged (Destination, Nature, History, Art, Meditative, Innovation, Education), there is a need for it to have strong public interaction and connectivity to the park. The associated or perceived parking needs will also provide a gauge for judging potential partners, and for going out to seek partners. This means it could have interim uses that are both public and providing revenue, but does not preclude that changing in the long term. This future-proofs the building by treating it like a flexible pavilion. In Phase 2 of the Master plan, the 3 design options should indicate which mix of uses would be the most ideal in relation to the landscape options.

The approach assumes each of the public rooms in the house maintain their integrity and are classified as programmable space. Their particular programming would not change the proposed infrastructure for these public rooms (kitchen, washrooms, storage, etc.), allowing the house to have total flexibility. An Art Hub, Food Service/Event space and Innovation Centre/office uses are explored in plan configurations, and a list of operational possibilities, limitations and precedents were explored for each.

Three plan options outline accessibility concepts and internal zoning. Each option indicates location options for a new elevator that each minimizes heritage impact, in combination with modifications to the two entries, addition of ramps and a commercial kitchen. Two options add the elevator at the interior, and one as an addition in the courtyard. One option has a one storey kitchen addition.

The bar and liquor storage is retained for historical interest. This area of the basement could be used for bar purposes and would require significant restoration and care. The remainder of the basement is for washrooms serving the whole house (a single universal washroom is also provided on each floor), storage and additional kitchen space.

Conclusion

Through the Phase 1 Technical Memo and Engagement Summary reports prepared by the consultant team, it is appropriate to update Council on the findings, and to seek feedback on the interpretation of guiding principles that will form the basis of the upcoming Phase 2 work. Phase 2 will develop design options based on three themes, and incorporating elements to different degrees as identified in Phase 1 to move forward with.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

The Mulock Property Master Plan is an important part of Council's Strategic Priorities for the 2018-2022 term of Council.

Consultation

Extensive stakeholder engagement was held with the Council, staff, residents and the community representing diverse interests.

Human Resource Considerations

None at this time.

Budget Impact

The project is being completed through funding provided in the 2020 capital budget.

Attachments

Mulock Property Master Plan Phase 1A – Technical Memo Draft

Mulock Property Master Plan Phase 1A – Appendices

Mulock Property Master Plan Engagement Summary Report – Phase 1B

Mulock Property Master Plan Engagement Summary Report – Phase 1B Appendix

Approval

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