

Waterfront master plan revealed



Draft plan would create significant integration with Grand River

Published: Wed, 14 Apr 2010

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Brantford's waterfront master plan has hit on every angle when it comes to mapping out how the city can protect and feature the Grand River in the future.

The master plan covers all bases, including the environment, culture, heritage, parks, trails, access, development and integration.

Donna Hinde, the lead consultant from The Planning Partnership, said the Wednesday presentation of the draft at the Mohawk Park Pavilion was the first time the team assembled all the information.

"This is the final chance for input and revisions from staff and the public," Hinde said. "After today we will start to put together the final draft for circulation."

Sparked by the will of council to better facilitate the city's use of waterfront lands, the master plan will contain a list of guiding principles that the city will adopt.

"There are short, medium and long term recommendations," Hinde said.

Wednesday's presentations were also to establish whether those recommendations are areas of reforestation, repairing river edge buffers, changing the streetscape or a list of others.

“We already have an idea of what the priorities should be,” Hinde said. “But we are asking one more time, now that they can see the plan with everything in one place.”

Among the initiatives spelled out in the plan would be protecting and enhancing what ecologist Brad Bricker called “some of the provinces most unique natural heritage features in the city’s northwest.”

Bricker said along with establishing a continuous green corridor all along the river, the city should implement a 30-metre buffer to set any development back from natural features.

Archaeologist Ron Williamson said the northwest, as well as other areas, needs to be identified in consultation with First Nations, as Brantford hosts some very significant settlements.

“There was one site that revealed 50,000 artifacts dating back to 10,000 years ago,” Williamson said. “There are sites in Brantford where agriculture was first experimented with by First Nations people.”

Consultant Harold Madi spoke to the aspects of development near the river, noting that the city’s official plan and zoning of waterfront lands must be updated to be consistent with the master plan.

He said new development should be held to the highest possible standards for sustainability, urban design and architecture.

When it comes to actually implementing the plan, city Coun. Marguerite Ceschi-Smith hopes there is still the political will around the council table.

“I’m really excited. This is long overdue,” she said. “It reinforces many of the things people have been saying for a long time.”

While Coun. Greg Martin expressed concerns about the cost of significant land acquisition as part of the plan, Ceschi-Smith said people have to remember it’s a long term plan.