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Subject: **Riverwalk Update and Urban Design Master Plan**

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Recommendations:

1. THAT the Report titled Riverwalk Update and Urban Design Master Plan be received;
2. THAT the Riverwalk Update and Urban Design Master Plan be endorsed by Council; and
3. THAT staff be directed to develop detailed implementation plans and design concepts, refine cost estimates and budgets, explore funding models and opportunities, and report back to Council.

Overview:

- In 2014, Council approved the Downtown Etobicoke Creek Revitalization Feasibility Study that included an urban design vision for the area.
- A subsequent, more detailed feasibility study was completed in 2018 that reiterated success of the urban vision was tied to the removal of flood risk in the Downtown area.
- An Economic Development Study was completed to support the case for investing in the Riverwalk, and concluded every dollar invested would result in a 700% return on investment over the long term.
- There are two primary components for realizing the Riverwalk vision – flood protection and the public realm.
- The Downtown Brampton Flood Protection Environmental Assessment (DBFP EA) was completed and approved in September 2020. The Downtown Brampton Flood Protection (DBFP) eliminates the flood risk in

Downtown Brampton by removing the Special Policy Area designation and provides the foundation for creation of a public realm outwards from and around the DBFP.

- **The Urban Design Master Plan (UDMP) for the Riverwalk area builds on the foundation laid by the DBFP and proposes a master plan for the open space development along the creek and creation of a public realm integrated with the flood protection infrastructure.**
- **The UDMP provides opportunities for:**
 - **environmental improvements**
 - **resilient, sustainable and healthy development**
 - **flexible programming of the public open space**
 - **integration of sustainable mobility (particularly active transportation)**
- **The UDMP was developed with extensive engagement and collaboration of major stakeholders and public.**
- **The UDMP highlights the extensive benefits of the Riverwalk and makes recommendations for the implementation of design concepts developed in the UDMP.**

Background:

In 2014, Council approved the Downtown Etobicoke Creek Revitalization Feasibility Study that included an urban design vision for the area. A subsequent, more detailed Feasibility Study was completed in 2018, which confirmed the need to address flood risk as the foundation for revitalizing the Downtown. As a result, the Downtown Brampton Flood Protection Environmental Assessment (DBFP EA) was initiated in 2018 in collaboration with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and was completed and approved in 2020. The DBFP EA proposed an engineering solution that would eliminate the flood risk within Downtown Brampton from extreme storm events. This would pave the way for development of an open space system and public realm adjacent to, around, and outwards from the flood protection works.

The business case for investing in the Riverwalk is supported by the conclusions of an Economic Development Study prepared by Urban Metrics that indicated every dollar invested in Riverwalk would bring a 700% return on investment over the long term.

The commencement of the DBFP EA in 2018 was the catalyst for development of the Urban Design Master Plan (UDMP) for the Riverwalk Area, focusing on the open space along the Etobicoke Creek to complement and build on the DBFP engineered works.

The UDMP goal was to update the vision and principles for the Downtown area, and to produce a master plan for the open space development along the creek and creation of a public realm that would be:

- integrated with the flood protection infrastructure
- provide opportunities for environmental improvements
- focus on resilient, sustainable and healthy development
- support flexible programming
- integrate sustainable mobility (active transportation in particular)

The UDMP was developed with extensive consultation with multiple stakeholders and the public, and was led by a study team consisting of City staff and the consulting firm DTAH.

Public Consultation and Engagement

The development of the UDMP commenced in July 2019 and focused on existing conditions, constraints and opportunities to start. The Vision for the area and associated principles were updated, and presented for discussion at a Public Information Session in October 2020. Based on the outcome of the public session and a supplementary survey, the study team worked with staff from other City departments, Toronto and Region Conservation Area (TRCA), the Region of Peel, and other main stakeholders to develop design concepts that also included Eco Park principles and which leveraged the identification of Riverwalk as a major eco-space and key demonstration project. Consultation with the community and public stakeholders occurred through the Community Liaison Team with presentations and discussions ahead the major milestones. In particular, the role of environmental improvements and the integration of resilience, sustainability and healthy development was expanded in the development of these design concepts.

The preliminary concepts and demonstration plans were presented to the public at the second Public Information Session in March 2021, followed by a survey to solicit public feedback and input. Presentations were also made to a number of stakeholders including Downtown Brampton BIA, TRCA's Regional Watershed Alliance, and the City's Age Friendly Committee and Environment Advisory Committee.

Current Situation:

The Urban Design Master Plan, included as Appendix B, is a high-level document providing the framework for the development of the open space system and public

realm along Etobicoke Creek, the role and contribution of this important area to the Downtown revitalization, and integration of this area with future redevelopment plans. The UDMP has updated the 2014 Vision approved by Council, and reflecting the theme of the “City Faces the River, the City Rediscovered the River”, the UDMP proposes the following vision statement:

“Riverwalk will be a transformative opportunity to help revitalize Brampton’s downtown and make it healthy, sustainable and resilient.”

Based on this Vision statement, a series of principles were developed to guide the future design and development of the area in the categories of:

- Sustainability and Resilience
- Links and Connections
- Programming and Recreation, Integration & Intensification
- Character and Identity
- Protection, Preservation and Enhancement
- Discovery, Education and Interpretation
- Safety and Accessibility

Environment, Resilience, Sustainability, and Public Health

The principles noted above inform the main issues around Environment, Resilience, Sustainability, and Public Health. With the Etobicoke Creek valley and the natural heritage system as the major naturalized area of the Downtown, the issues of environmental and ecological improvements were important considerations for development of the Master Plan.

The UDMP has provisions for improvements, remediation, and integration of the natural systems into the ecology of the area. This includes increased tree coverage, development of naturalized landscapes within the flood protection infrastructure such as more natural treatments on the slopes of the larger concrete channel and within the low-flow area, and interpretation of the most valuable environmental features such as the riparian areas north of Church Street and the wetlands in Centennial Park.

The Riverwalk area also has very significant opportunities to address the key issue of climate change. While the adaptation to potential riverine floods is addressed through the flood protection measures as identified in the approved DBFPEA, the UDMP is building on the City’s current work and expanding and addressing other mitigation and adaption issues.

The proposed recommendations in the UDMP contribute to GHG emission reduction through sustainable mobility (transit and active transportation), progressive storm water management, heat island reduction, increased air and water quality, and nature friendly eco-design. Broader issues of sustainability including social sustainability through equity, diversity, and inclusiveness are also considered.

Building on the City's long-standing focus on healthy development by design, and in collaboration with the Region of Peel Public Health, the UDMP leverages the Riverwalk area's opportunities to improve **public health** through active living, broad accessibility, addressing social and mental health, access to nature and open space.

The UDMP also further details the implementation in this area of the Brampton Eco Park principles, and highlights the Riverwalk as a premier demonstration and pilot project for delivering Eco Spaces.

Sustainable mobility

The Downtown mobility hub, two nearby major transit station areas, the regionally important Etobicoke Creek Trail and the (Provincially-designated for sustainable growth and intensification) Urban Growth Centre are all within or easily accessible from the UDMP study area. As a result, the UDMP leverages this geospatial advantage and contains key provisions for sustainable mobility (transit and active transportation) and promotes safe, easy, comfortable access and movement for all.

The concept plans integrate with the current and future transit network including regional, rapid, and local transit. The improvement and expansion of the current cycling network, a significant increase of walkability and accessibility for all ages, provisions for complete, people friendly streets, trails and walkways, as well as provisions to integrate car and service access and sustainable parking with recommendations are included.

Programming

With over 86 hectares (212 acres) of open space in the UDMP area, there are ample opportunities for programming to address the Downtown and the City's diverse and growing population's needs. The UDMP is focused on early, master-plan-stage programming concepts for all ages, abilities, and interests in the context of an urban condition situated proximate and along a valuable natural heritage area. Provisions and recommendations are included for flexible, multi-program spaces and programs for all seasons in such areas as organized sports and active recreation, inclusive play spaces,

seasonal activities, horticulture, culture, heritage and arts, as well as nature-based activities, events and education.

Placemaking, character and identity

The UDMP sets out recommendations that aim to create people friendly and attractive places, to enhance the character and identity of Riverwalk, starting from its history and heritage and building on current and future opportunities. This includes interventions that enhance the existing character of the site, and that will also shape and redefine a new identity for Riverwalk within the context of Brampton's revitalized Downtown core. Provisions are also for a design-based approach to ensure high quality spaces and amenities and a design-excellence driven process.

Urban Design concept

The overall urban design concept builds on the existing conditions and the opportunities created by current projects and initiatives, and proposes a linear, landmark place integrating a succession of parks, spaces and amenities along the valley and the transportation backbone with a series of gateways, loops, views and vistas. The concept integrates a variety of natural and man-made forms and is defined by the valley space and future built form that will frame it thus forming Brampton's "Emerald Necklace", Downtown's "Central Park" and "High Line" – a prominent, representative, defining place incorporating aspects of those other iconic places. For more details and demonstration plans see Appendix 3.

Implementation

All the design concepts and features envisioned are included in an extensive Implementation chapter in the UDMP, with recommendations to ensure that they are feasible and can be included in future capital projects. Policy support is proposed and the various items are divided in four major categories and phases:

- Phase 1 is directly related to the approved Downtown Brampton Flood Protection EA and the detailed design and construction of the flood protection works. UDMP functional and design elements that are required to be integrated into the design of the flood protection works will proceed as part of the construction of the flood protection. This includes such items as terracing of concrete channel slopes, realignment and redesign of Ken Whillans Drive, and creation of meadow landscape between the creek and the realigned Ken Whillans Drive.

- Phase 2 includes public space items mainly related to Rosalea Park and the Central Public School area. This phase is influenced by the Ken Whillans extension EA and other projects on the way in the area. Potential implementation is within next 6-8 years pending approvals and budget.
- Phase 3 includes mainly items related to the Northern Gateway/Duggan Park and Centennial Park and could be implemented over a longer term pending planning, design, approvals and budget.
- A series of smaller, more incremental items are also included to complement the Vision and the design concepts – they could happen in the interim as opportunities for planning, design and funding appear.

The financial considerations highlight the challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the concepts with recommendations for advocacy and partnerships.

Benefits

The Riverwalk as described in the UDMP will bring significant benefits to Downtown, the city and region:

- Improvements to the natural heritage system with access to nature for residents and visitors – more important than ever after the pandemic experience.
- Significant improvements in climate change resilience, sustainability and public health.
- An extensive open space system, Brampton’s “Emerald Necklace”, “Central Park” and “High Line” with ample opportunities for flexible and inclusive programming for the city’s diverse population.
- Landmark public spaces and features including the new Rosalea Park and plaza, the Central Public School/Rosalea Park North, the promenades along the “rediscovered river”, and the improved Etobicoke Creek trail and accessible walks.
- High quality spaces for a wide variety of events, for people of all ages, abilities, and interests based on integrated, eco space design for equity, diversity and inclusiveness.
- Heritage, culture, and arts opportunities based on the area’s history (including indigenous culture) mixed with new developments and amenities of contemporary design contributing to the redefinition of the Downtown character and identity.
- A significant contribution to Downtown revitalization through the creation of a major attraction for residents and visitors, and enhancing the image of Downtown Brampton, which can attract investments and businesses.
- Catalyzing surrounding developments, which unlocks economic benefits for Brampton and the region.

Corporate Implications:

- The 2019 Economic Development Return on Investment (ROI) Study indicated significant return on investment from the removal of flood risk and planning restrictions, and revitalization of the Downtown core. Based on an estimated cost of \$264.3-million estimated for the entire program, the return on investment would be 7:1 over the long term.
- Of the overall Riverwalk program estimate, \$107 million is for construction of flood protection as per the approved EA. The flood protection works have funding commitments from the Government of Canada and the City of Brampton. The remaining amount related to the UDMP is currently unfunded, and funding strategies and sources will be explored going forward.

There may be opportunities for funding and/or cost savings in conjunction with other major infrastructure projects (e.g. GO/CN, Region of Peel Water and Wastewater works, Ken Whillans Drive extension), and in partnerships with governmental, institutional, and private stakeholders.

Financial Implications:

The first phase of the UDMP implementation, consisting of those functional and design elements that are to be incorporated into the design and construction of the Downtown Brampton Flood Protection, are estimated to add 30-40% additional to the estimated \$107M cost of the flood protection works. The future inclusion of these components of the UDMP into the flood protection are fundamental to the Vision and principles, the success of the Riverwalk program, and realization of the anticipated benefits for the City, the Downtown Revitalization and the creation of a central iconic place and attraction.

Term of Council Priorities:

The Riverwalk Urban Design Master Plan contributes to the “Brampton is a City of Opportunities” Term of Council priorities specifically “Unlock Uptown and Downtown” to allow for the realization of urban transformation and unlock economic potential.

Conclusion:

The Urban Design Master Plan for Riverwalk, together with the Downtown Brampton Flood Protection, are the primary components of the Riverwalk. The implementation of

the Riverwalk will unlock and catalyse the revitalization of Downtown Brampton. When completed the Riverwalk Program will:

- Protect from flooding, increase resilience against climate change, and increase public safety.
- Revitalize Downtown Brampton and the surrounding area
- Trigger infrastructure renewal including investments in blue-green infrastructure
- Generate employment, and attract people and investments
- Build community, support diversity, bring people together
- Develop a central park system that incorporates eco-spaces
- Make a resilient, sustainable, healthy Downtown and City
- Support equity, diversity and culture, improve social life

Upon directed by Council, staff will proceed to the implementation of the UDMP provisions and initiate future studies, actions and initiatives.

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Attachments:

- Appendix 1: Presentation overview
- Appendix 2: Riverwalk Area Urban Design Master Plan
- Appendix 3: Design Demonstration Plan