



North Grenville Waterfront Access Strategy

What We Heard

Phase 1 Engagement

Introduction

The Municipality of North Grenville (the Municipality) is creating a Waterfront Access Strategy (WAS) to enhance public use of and access to the Rideau River and Kemptville Creek. Dillon Consulting Limited (Dillon) has been retained by the Municipality to support the development of the WAS and lead the community and stakeholder engagement.

The WAS will help to develop a long-term vision for the waterfront that reflects the needs of the growing North Grenville community. It will also serve as an important tool to meet objectives identified in the North Grenville Tourism Strategy (2020), which included increasing water access for boats and kayaks, lengthening the waterfront trail network, and creating new recreational amenities in and around waterfront parks. The project will be aligned with existing strategic tourism priorities, as well as the detailed guidance from the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan (2020), which includes key components to be included in the WAS.

There are two phases to this project: Phase 1 – Listen and Learn, and Phase 2 – Draft Waterfront Access Strategy. Both phases involve public engagement with the community, municipal staff and Council, as well as key stakeholders and rights holders. Phase 1 engagement occurred in summer and fall of 2023, and Phase 2 engagement will occur in winter of 2024, along with a presentation to Council in spring 2024.

This document provides a summary of what we heard during Phase 1 engagement activities for the North Grenville WAS.

Engagement Activities in Phase 1 – Listen and Learn

In Phase 1, engagement activities included:

- Ten (10) key stakeholder informant interviews conducted by the Municipality;
- Indigenous community outreach and engagement conducted by the Municipality;
- Two (2) visioning workshops (virtual) with key stakeholders, conducted by Dillon on August 24, 2023; and
- One (1) community engagement bus tour and in-person workshop conducted by Dillon on August 29, 2023.

The engagement activities of Phase 1 are described briefly below.

Key Informant Interviews

The Municipality conducted 10 pre-engagement interviews with several stakeholders to inform them of the WAS, and to understand how they wanted to be engaged over the course of the project. These

interviews were conducted with individuals from the business sector, tourism industry, and community organizations.

Stakeholders who were unable to provide immediate comments during the pre-engagement interviews had the option to participate in either the virtual stakeholder meetings or in-person community workshop. Some members of the public also provided comments about the WAS via email.

Indigenous Advisory Circle Engagement

The Municipality led an engagement session with the Indigenous Advisory Circle on November 16th, 2023 at 4:30 PM. The engagement session was held in person, and it involved discussion on topic presented at the Stakeholder Engagement including: waterfront principles and top priorities, access improvements, new waterfront access opportunities and barriers.

Stakeholder Engagement

Two (2) stakeholder engagement sessions for the WAS took place on Thursday, August 24th, 2023. The two sessions were held from 1:00 to 3:00 PM and 5:30 to 7:30 PM, respectively, where stakeholders could attend either session to suit their schedule. A total 30 people attended the session from 1:00 to 3:00 PM, and 17 people attended the session from 5:30 to 7:30 PM.

The virtual engagement session format was the same for both meetings. It consisted of a presentation by Municipal staff and members of the consultant team, and feedback was encouraged throughout the session. The meeting was designed to provide a better understanding of the WAS scope and collect participant feedback on key goals and principles, areas for improvement, and what existing conditions are currently working well. Interactive opportunities for engagement consisted of using Mentimeter live polling, followed by a visioning exercise and workshop facilitated using Mural, a virtual whiteboard.

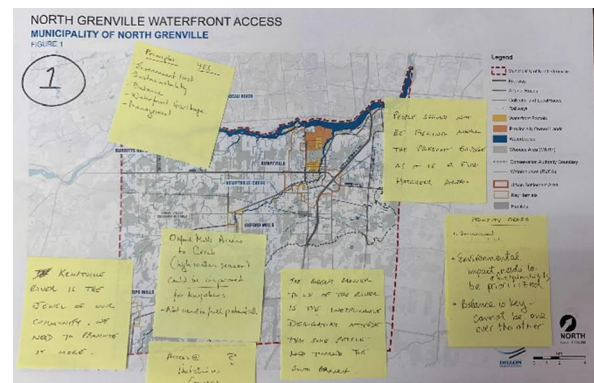


FIGURE 1: EXAMPLE OF THE VISIONING EXERCISE, WITH STICKY NOTES OF FEEDBACK PROVIDED

Participants were asked the following questions:

- “Do the waterfront principles align with your needs and use of the waterfront?”
- “Are there any access points missing?”
- “What access points are working well along the waterfront?”
- “What access points are not used to their full potential, and/or could be improved?”
- “What locations along the waterfront do you think need new access points?”
- “What is the potential new access type (e.g., view, launch, dock, trail, waterway navigations, etc.)?”
- “What do you see as the barriers to maximizing the potential of the waterfront?”

There were also question-and-answer periods, where attendees could ask members of the project team for additional information on the WAS context, scope, timelines, and preliminary analysis of access points.

Community Engagement

A Municipal staff-led bus tour of waterfront sites was held from 2:00 to 3:30 PM on Tuesday, August 29th, 2023, and was followed by an in-person workshop from 4:30 to 6:30 PM at the North Grenville Municipal Centre.

Bus Tour and In-Person Engagement Session

The bus tour hosted 21 participants, as a member of Municipal staff described the history and current condition of key sites included in the WAS. Participants were able to walk around several of the sites and encouraged to provide feedback on current utilization and access of sites, and provide ideas for future improvements or changes to inform the WAS. The tour included the Muldoon Road Boat launch, the entrance to Libby Island, Ferguson Forest Centre Anniversary Park, Riverview Lane, Pirate Cove Marina, the Municipality's Shepherd Close property, the Lannin Lane Boat launch, Rotary Park, the waterfront trail at Court Street, Curry Park, and a return to the Municipal Centre for refreshments.

Following the bus tour and refreshments, 26 individuals attended the workshop and were given a presentation by Municipal staff and Dillon, followed by a workshop exercise that encouraged participants to identify their concerns, ideas for solutions, and overall vision for the WAS.

During the engagement session, participants were engaged on the following topics:

- The purpose and vision for the WAS;
- The draft Design Principles for the WAS, specifically: Environment First; Sustainability and Flooding; Safe, Secure and Accessible; Economic and Tourism Growth; Finding a Balance; Celebrating Waterfront Heritage; Vibrancy; Design Excellence and Innovation; and Best Management Practices;
- Constraints for/barriers to riverine access and boat mix (bridges, shallow water, existing facilities, etc.); and
- Opportunities for riverine access and boat mix.

Participants were also engaged interactively through the use of live polling with Mentimeter, where the following themes were discussed:

- Waterfront Activities and Utilization;



FIGURE 2: BUS TOUR GUESTS DISCUSSING THE SITE AND TAKING PHOTOS AT FFC ANNIVERSARY PARK



FIGURE 3: BUS TOUR ATTENDEES, VISITING A WATER ACCESS POINT

- Waterfront Accessibility;
- Means of Reaching the Waterfront;
- Frequency of Waterfront Visits;
- Aspirations for activities along the Waterfront; and,
- Vision for the future of the Waterfront.

A summary of what we heard during Phase 1 engagement activities is presented in the following section.

Summary of What We Heard

The major themes listed below are those that were most frequently expressed across all engagement sessions and through submitted email comments. They include:

1. Need to prioritize environmental stewardship and sustainability.
 - prioritizing the long-term vision for North Grenville's waterfront around sustainable practices;
 - providing environmental protection, vitality, and climate resiliency (i.e. flooding);
 - advocating for no-emission boating types along the creek;
 - investing in shoreline protection and minimizing shoreline erosion impacts;
 - concern about water quality and clarity (algae, weeds, pollution/debris), and managing the impacts;
 - learning Indigenous perspectives and practices around waterfront health and longevity;
 - prioritizing environmental/habitat assessments;
 - leading and providing opportunities for environmental stewardship; and,
 - understanding the feasibility of tallgrass prairie and woodland restoration, where appropriate.
2. Need to improve waterfront access sites and supporting facilities.
 - exploring land ownership and opportunities for purchase/development;
 - identifying access points that are underutilized and/or could be improved;
 - interest in new launch sites and improvements to existing launch sites for motorized boats, and larger boat docks;
 - exploring costs and financial considerations for waterfront access improvements;
 - maintaining waterfront access for fire department's water filling needs and water rescue purposes;
 - feasibility of dredging in critical areas, where appropriate, to improve safety and navigability;
 - clarifying roles, responsibilities, and stewardship opportunities around water and shoreline maintenance;
 - improving access to the waterfront from the downtown;
 - navigating along creek limited by bridge heights and water depths; and,
 - providing parking for boat trailers.
3. Need to expand waterfront access opportunities for recreation and amenities, and placemaking.
 - providing facilities and services for electric boats;
 - improving existing and expanding the number of parks, trails, and shared spaces, including opportunities for passive recreational uses;
 - identifying suitable locations for ATV trails;

- providing full accessibility for people of all ages and abilities;
 - providing facilities to encourage paddle sports;
 - celebrating waterfront heritage and incorporating Indigenous culture into uses along the waterfront (i.e. historic portage, trail and canoe routes to commemorate Indigenous history);
 - cleaning waterway in the downtown, and identifying opportunities for integrated placemaking, including public art, boardwalks, gathering areas and seating;
 - identifying areas (e.g., beaches) that could be designated for beach and swimming; and,
 - identifying safe areas for fishing, including shoreline and ice fishing, and fishing as a food source.
4. Need to explore tourism and economic growth.
- Improving waterway navigation signage and wayfinding for tourism destinations in the downtown, drawing in more visitors with improved access;
 - identifying the types of tourists to attract to the waterfront;
 - encouraging all users, both residents and visitors alike, to use and visit the waterfront through advertising, branding, and attractive signage;
 - mapping historic, Indigenous cultural uses and highlighting them with informative signage;
 - municipal support and funding towards promoting tourism and facilitating economic development;
 - collaborating with local businesses of and attracting new businesses to the waterfront;
 - establishing connections between local accommodations (bed-and-breakfasts, hotels, motels, campgrounds, etc.) and the waterfront;
 - overnight municipal trailer parks that could be a tourism draw to parks along the waterfront;
 - identifying more scenic lookout spots along the waterfront; and,
 - growing tourism seems counterintuitive to sustainability and environment first principles.

Next Steps

As next steps in the North Grenville WAS project, feedback from this Phase of engagement alongside additional site analysis will help the project team to prepare the draft WAS and supporting waterfront access conceptual plan. The next Phase of engagement will focus on gathering feedback from the community, key stakeholders, and organizations through both an online survey and a community engagement session in winter 2024.

Please Keep in Touch

We encourage all interested citizens to follow the progress of the new Waterfront Access Strategy by visiting our website: www.northgrenville.ca/council-government/projects/mng-projects/waterfront-access-strategy. To stay in touch, please contact us at: Tourism@northgrenville.on.