



DELEGATION TO COUNCIL REPRESENTING THE GUELPH HIKING TRAIL CLUB

DATE: FEB 28th 2023

AGENDA ITEM: 7.2 Operations Facilities Long Term Plan Update

Introduction

Mr. Mayor, Councilors, City and staff,

My name is John Fisher and I am the President of the Guelph Hiking Trail Club.

I delegated at the original staff presentation of the Operations Facility Consolidation Plan proposed site study in May of 2021.

The purpose of my delegation then was to caution council to be on alert for

- 1) Unintended consequences (I listed 5) and
- 2) To maximise the opportunities that that \$200 million project presented.

Specifically, we asked council to request staff to include a Trail Development and Open Space Implementation Plan as part of the original proposal which would elevate the current Third party trail classification to a Primary trail classification as defined by the Guelph Trails Master Plan (GTMP) and which would link the Operations campus employment hub to other parts of the GID and to the city trail network.

Regrettably that did not happen.

So we were pleased that after the study, staff has recommended, a scaled down version of the Operations site plan and made references to the GHTC third party trails and preservation of an already zoned park and buffer zones. The CHRIA study even has recommendations on how the city could maximise special features like the quarries to attract tourists and residents alike.

However, the Operations Facilities plan is still being treated as a discrete entity without consideration for any other site development improvement opportunities. From a trail funding perspective, we know constructing trails in new areas is most feasible when construction takes place prior to, or concurrently with the construction of other infrastructure and that alignment with other city infrastructure projects is the top consideration in making decisions about which trail projects to work on.

We would like the city to consider developing a parallel Trails and Parks project plan for the site in tandem with the proposed \$200 million Operations Facilities infrastructure project. The plan would maximise the Heritage ecosystem that exists adjacent to the Operations site which includes the McQuillan's Bridge, the O.R. quarries, the Trestle Bridge and the Toronto Suburban Railway bed.

Most of the citizens of Guelph are not going to appreciate the value, or be directly impacted by the \$200 million the city is planning to spend on the Operations Facilities development. Delivering a recreational trail and park system next to the development that they can use makes the whole project more relevant to them and can be revenue generating as a must visit Tourist Destination site.

The GTMP defers to the Guelph Innovation District (GID) Secondary plan to determine trail development on these lands. As the first GID development project, the city has an opportunity to set the example for other GID developments consistent with the award winning GID vision. GHTC would once again propose that council passes a motion to request staff make necessary changes to the Operations Facilities Proposal and staging plan to include a Trail Development and Open Space Plan and implementation which elevates the current Third party trail classification to a Primary trail classification as defined by the GTMP and which will link the Operations Facilities employment hub to other parts of the GID and to the city trail network.

Thank you.

John Fisher President Guelph Hiking Trail Club