

Subject: Vision for Civic Square

Recommendation:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2022-0203 Vision for Civic Square;

AND THAT Council support the vision of the Civic Square prepared by SHIFT Landscape Architecture Co. Inc.

Background:

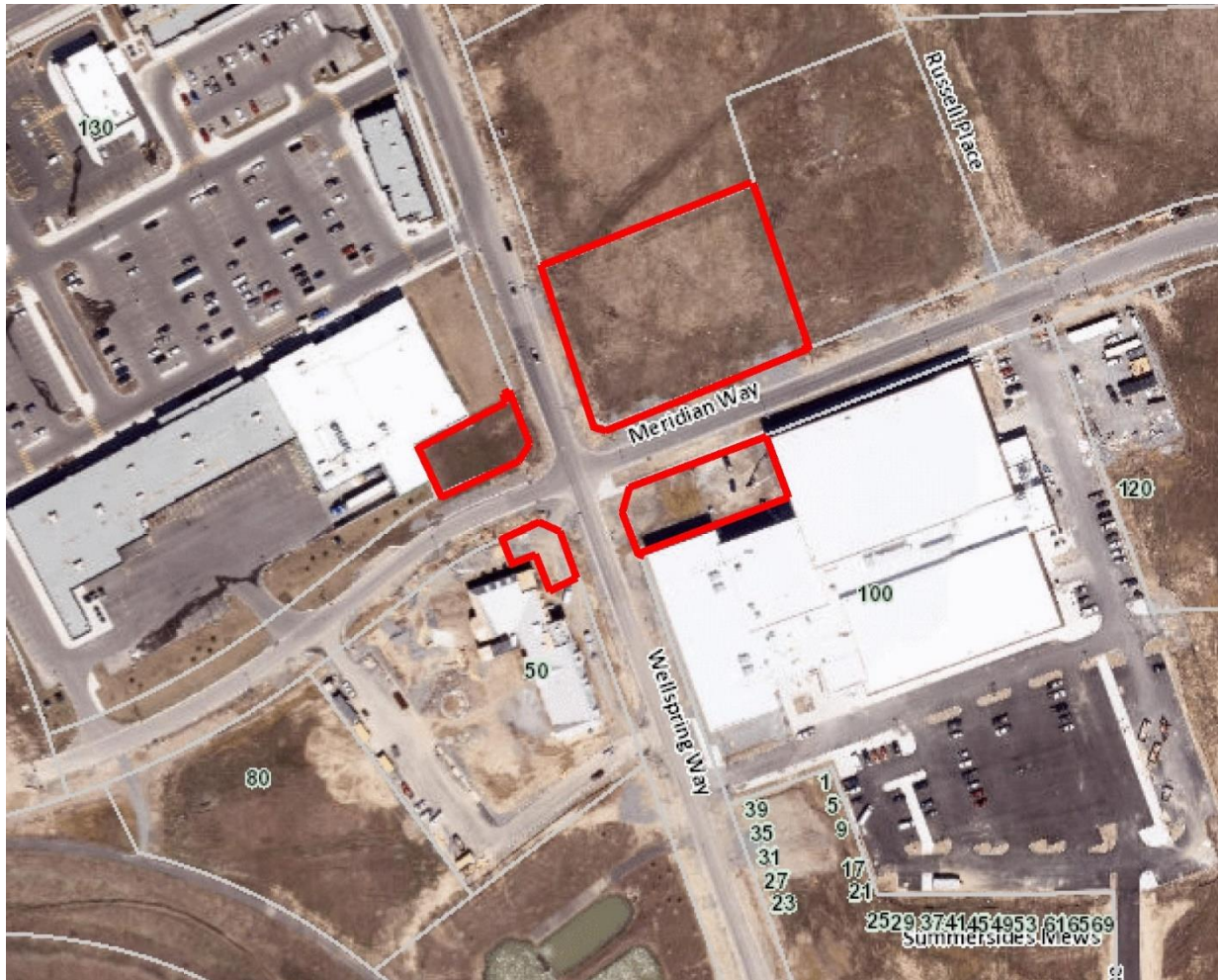
Council approved capital project PLN-02-21 being the Vision and Design for the Civic Square in East Fonthill as part of the 2021 Capital Budget. Terms of Reference for the project was released in September 2021 and the project was awarded to SHIFT Landscape Architecture Co. Inc. in late October 2021 and the work began on in this project in early 2022.

Analysis:

SHIFT Landscape Architecture Co. Inc. is an award winning landscape design firm that has undertaken landscape design for public spaces for a number of municipalities in Ontario.

The overall deliverables of the project involved the development of two preliminary concepts for public consultation, online public engagement, and the refinement of a preferred concept vision, including an illustrative plan and supporting graphics for Council review and endorsement. A high level cost estimate has been completed that can be used for budgeting purposes as well.

The East Fonthill Secondary Plan, the Site Master Plan for East Fonthill Mixed Use Centre and the Zoning By-law contemplate the development of a public gathering space at the four corners of Wellspring and Meridian Way with the northeast corner occupying the largest space. The aerial image below illustrates the area.



The Town owns the lands at the corners of Wellspring and Meridian Way. The design and development of the new public space as contemplated by the planning documents is also being driven by the growth in the East Fonthill Secondary Plan area. There is a need to build a vibrant and engaging public space that the entire Town can be proud of and be used for in a variety of ways in all seasons. It is anticipated that the proposed site will attract people of a variety of ages and diverse community members.

The proposed main civic space area totals approximately 4400m² in area with pockets of designed public space incorporated on the other three corners of the intersection. The implementation of a new civic space will establish the four-corner block of Meridian Way and Wellspring Way as a community hub. The addition of exterior public space would be complementary to the Meridian Community Centre across the street and the future Retirement Living neighbouring the site. It is important to note that the civic square will not replace Peace Park or the events that take place at Peace Park, rather it will become an additional venue for community events that are complementary to the MCC.

The consultants prepared two design concepts initially for the civic square and received public feedback and input on the two concepts. Based on the feedback and input received, the consultants refined the plan and used elements of what was preferred from both plans to develop the preferred concept. Both the initial concepts and the preferred concepts were reviewed by Town staff for feedback and input, particularly with Recreation, Culture and Wellness staff who will ultimately be responsible for programming this space.

The Director of Recreation, Culture and Wellness feels that the vision for the civic square is very good and has indicated that the space will be used during the summer months for children's camp programming, youth theatre and music, yoga in the park, outdoor movies, etc. and is excited about the possibility of being able to provide winter programming as well. The civic square will be used as both a formal and informal gathering spot. The following is the preferred vision for the civic square.



The design of the civic square establishes a pleasant entry experience at the southwest corner of the entrance to the site. Long expanses of planting run along the sidewalk along Wellspring and Meridian Way and a large welcoming plaza is situated at the intersection of Meridian Way and Wellspring Way. The plaza incorporates permeable paving to address sustainable design principles while enriching the aesthetic value. Wood-top seat walls frame the entry path to guide people into the civic space while also providing the option for people to sit, relax and interact with one another.

At the centre of the civic space is a lawn area for people to use freely and to accommodate formal gatherings and events. One half of the lawn is bermed to provide sloped seating. The portion of the berm descending toward the stage is a long gradual slope to provide room for crowds, and a shorter slope faces the water feature to provide a resting spot in view of the water feature. The berm is bordered by permeable pavers at its base to help collect stormwater runoff from the slope.

A raised stage with a pavilion roof extends onto the lawn area. The stage offers a space for performances and events within the civic square. The north side of the stage is enclosed by seat walls running along a rain garden, allowing the stage to be utilized in either direction depending on the size of the crowd and the type of performance.

A water feature sits within an area near the main circulation path with an interesting backdrop of a stacked stone wall. The water feature is intended to be a cooling feature by using fountain jets at-grade. This idea provides options for water play for children to engage with or adults to stroll through or sit near to enjoy the spray.

Several other gathering areas are proposed around the civic square. In a defined area near the main path is a harvest table that sits on aggregate and flagstone paving under a post and cable trellis. String lights or climbing vines can stretch along the trellis for added interest. The harvest table symbolizes the coming together of the community and is a place where people can meet for lunch or an area where children's camp can do crafts, for example. Steps away from the harvest table area is a gathering space centered around two gas fire features. The fire feature area is a main point of interest that supports evening use and use of the civic space into the colder months. A combination of seat walls and adirondack chairs wrap around the features to provide seating around the protected fires. Trees and plantings are an appropriate distance away while still sheltering the space from wind. The following images illustrate the functionality of these areas.



The design concept utilizes different materials and details around the civic square to bring in elements of local character and interest, and the use of low impact design elements such as permeable pavers, a rain garden, native plantings, etc. The use of stone is proposed in several forms, including a stone wall reveal emerging from the berm, a crushed aggregate path indicating the previous farm lane that crossed the site, stacked boulders, and various pavers, all to integrate different details around the site. The local character can also inspire the proposed planting, including the introduction of flowering trees, a designated Indigenous Garden, and planting within a natural landscape and the use of native species.

Financial Considerations:

In order to proceed with the development of this new civic square, it will require future budget approvals from Council. The next step in the project would be to prepare detailed construction design plans and tender package, this is estimated to be \$50,000 and staff recommend that this amount be included in the 2023 budget for consideration as part of the 2023 budget approval process and would only proceed if there is budget approval for this work.

Once detailed construction plans are prepared, the project would be considered to be 'shovel ready' and the Town would then be in a position to apply for grants to assist in offsetting the cost to construct this new civic square. The timing of construction of the civic square will be dependent on future budget approval by Council, the ability to obtain grant funding and phasing of the project.

The consultants have prepared a high level cost estimate for budgeting purposes and have estimated that the cost to complete the main part of the civic square is \$2,904,369 and the costs associated with completing the streetscape components to integrate the other 3 corners into the site is \$1,063,050. This high level cost estimate will be refined once the detailed design plans are complete, however at this time the cost estimate is suitable for establishing future budget estimates.

Alternatives Reviewed:

The alternative is for Council to not endorse this vision for a civic square. Should Council choose to not endorse the vision of the civic square, Council should provide direction to staff as to alternative options.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Build Strong Communities and Cultural Assets

The development of a civic square as a public gathering space is a significant place making initiative that will aid in building a strong community and become a public focal point for the Town. The intent is that the civic square will become a cultural

asset that is multi-functional and could be used for a variety of uses/functions year round. The area has been planned for a public gathering space through various approvals, including the East Fonthill Secondary Plan, the Site Master Plan for the East Fonthill Mixed Use Centre and the zoning of the lands which permits parks and urban squares, trails for cyclists and pedestrians, public art installations and small scale retail and commercial uses that serve the recreational function of the park/urban square.

Consultation:

The Director of Public Works and Director of Recreation, Culture and Wellness were consulted throughout the project process and provided technical feedback and input.

On-line community engagement was undertaken through the Town's Engaging Pelham webpage and public input was obtained on two design options. As well, models of the two design options were available for viewing and public feedback in the lobby of the Meridian Community Centre for a 3-week period in April 2022 and information and a questionnaire was made available to the community at the Home Show in April.

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

Pelham Civic Square Master Plan Report, August 2022 by SHIFT Landscape Co. Inc.

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