
TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: WATERFRONT ACCESS AND BEACHES - SUMMARY OF COVID IMPACTS AND ADDRESSING GROWTH - RELATED IMPACTS

WARD: ALL, SPECIFICALLY 1, 2, 8 AND 10

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACTS: K. BRADLEY, BA, MLA, MANAGER OF PARKS PLANNING, EXT. 4825
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SUBMITTED BY: M. BANFIELD, RPP, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
D. FRIARY, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: A. MILLER, RPP, GENERAL MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That Wilkins Beach be de-listed as a formal public beach.
2. That staff in the Operations Department with assistance from the Development Services Department, work with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority to design, permit and implement ecological restoration plans for those lake and creek shorelines as illustrated in Appendix "A" to Staff Report DEV008-21 prior to the end of 2021.
3. That the areas identified as shoreline and creek area at Wilkins Park as illustrated in Appendix "B" to Staff Report DEV008-21, be temporarily closed to the public for 2021 for restoration work.
4. That staff in the Operations Department install 'No Admittance' signs for the areas temporarily closed to the public, as per Parks Use By-law 2019-059, as amended.
5. That staff in the Operations and Development Services Departments, with assistance from Access Barrie, develop and implement a proactive and inclusive communications strategy in 2021 for the specified environmentally protected area.
6. That staff in Access Barrie be directed to:
 - a) Remove any specific reference to Wilkins Beach from the list of City beaches and all corporate communications channels, social media, mapping, and other materials; and
 - b) That communication material refer instead only to Wilkins Park and the Hewitt's Creek Valley in all future corporate communications materials.
7. That staff in the Development Services and Operations Departments work with Tourism Barrie and other organizations known to list public beaches to remove any specific reference to Wilkins Beach.

8. That staff in the Operations Department continue to provide a level of service for the specified shoreline area that is consistent with service levels provided in other City-owned environmentally protected lands, specifically noting that the level of service is lower than the level provided at the other formal waterfront beach areas.
9. That staff in the Development Services Department explore City initiated amendments to Zoning By-law 2009-141 to review the benefits of establishing a new Natural Shoreline zone and consider tailoring the permitted uses and activities for the specified areas to be consistent with the waterfront activity centres hierarchy identified in the Waterfront and Marina Strategic Plan (2015) and any updates thereto.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

10. On July 13, 2020, City Council adopted motion 20-A-074 regarding a presentation concerning a waterfront operation update where Council approved temporary measures to assist in controlling and mitigating the impacts of the significant increase in the City's waterfront use due to the changes in people's outdoor activities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and provincial and local health regulations and restrictions.
11. The above noted motion extended resident-only parking restrictions in several residential areas within 500 metres of the popular beaches, parks, and waterfront areas, along with increases to parking rates and parking fines.
12. On August 10th, 2020, Staff Report DEV026-20 was received by General Committee and Council motion 20-G-120 was approved giving the following direction to staff:

"WATERFRONT ACCESS AND BEACHES - SUMMARY OF COVID IMPACTS AND LOOKING FORWARD TO ADDRESSING GROWTH- RELATED IMPACTS"

1. That staff in the Operations and Development Services Departments investigate the process of and the implications of closing the beach at Wilkins Park due to ongoing environmental damage in this area that is zoned Environmental Protection and report back to General Committee by March 2021.
 2. That staff in the Operations Department, in conjunction with staff in the Legislative and Court Services Department, investigate the implications of and the required by-law changes for making permanent restrictions on the use of personal BBQs, tents and other associated equipment on City beaches, and report back to General Committee by March 2021.
 3. That staff in the Development Services Department investigate the feasibility of and the cost to update the Waterfront Strategic Plan (2015) to address emerging trends and the impact of growth on the safe and appropriate access to City beaches, public spaces and parks along the public waterfront and report back to General Committee."
13. The purpose of this Staff Report is to respond to the first item in the above-mentioned motion 20-G-120 approved on August 10th, 2020.
 14. This Report should be read in conjunction with Staff Report LCS004-21 dated March 29, 2021, as it addresses the second item of motion 20-G-120.

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15. The third motion item is a multi-pronged approach that involves an update to the Waterfront Strategic Plan and addressing the impacts the growth of the City's population has on our parks, open spaces, and waterfronts. A capital project was approved in the 2021 budget and the selection of a consultant is underway. Further updates to Council will form part of this project work plan anticipated to begin later this year. The Waterfront Strategic Plan update will include additional community consultation.
 16. The most common issues around park and beach use in the summer of 2020 focused on a few areas:
 - a) Overcrowding and parking impacts on the surrounding neighbourhoods due to overcrowding.
 - b) Impacts on the environment because of overcrowding and inappropriate use of adjacent areas.
 - c) Sentiments about not welcoming visitors to the City's beaches when people were asked to not travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - d) Concern about dogs off leashes and in the beach areas.
 - e) Overall lack of awareness and respect of the rules and unpleasant behaviour (related to trash and washroom matters).
 - f) Ability that City staff had to enforce the rules actively and respectfully.
 17. The City responded as quickly as possible to making regulatory changes to address problems as they arose and several City departments and divisions were involved in establishing, implementing, and enforcing initiatives.
 18. Staff's intention is to learn from the waterfront experience in 2020 to prepare the City for a successful summer season. Managing the summer activities of 2021 will involve several City departments and divisions.
 19. By-law provisions related to BBQ, tents and dogs for summer of 2021 are outlined in companion Staff Report LCS004-21.
 20. Parking within proximity to popular beach, park and natural areas has been addressed by the Waterfront Spillover Policy approved by Council on October 26, 2020 as part of the overall Parking Strategy. This Policy provides that there is resident only permit parking within 500 metres walking distance from a waterfront access point. The Policy also provides that delegated authority is given to the Executive Director of Access Barrie to work with the Ward Councillors to allow nimble responses to any waterfront spillover parking matters that may be identified as parking restrictions are realized in proximity to the City's parks and waterfront access areas. Staff in the Transit and Parking Strategy Department are continuing to explore other parking and transportation demand models for use in the summer of 2021.
 21. The shoreline at Wilkins Park contains a smaller beach along Kempenfelt Bay located at the south-east end of Barrie's waterfront. It contains the terminus of Hewitt's Creek, a designated cold-water fishery, which empties into Kempenfelt Bay. It is located within the Regulated Limit of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Area and is zoned Environmental Protection (Appendix "C" to Staff Report DEV008-21)
 22. The increasing use of the beach in Wilkins Park, which occurred especially during the summer of 2020, has affected the environmental integrity of the area.

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23. As stated in Staff Report DEV026-20, there have been concerns raised that wading and fishing in the creek is impacting the habitat of the coldwater fishery and that excessive human use has led to the deterioration of the vegetation in the beach and the immediate forested area. This Report also notes that while there have been regeneration efforts previously taken by the City, the continued overuse of the shoreline area of Wilkins Park reverses these efforts.
24. Moreover, there is concern that as Barrie's population continues to grow (the City is forecasted to nearly double its population by 2050), the environmental degradation of Wilkins shoreline will only intensify.
25. Throughout the summer of 2020, Infrastructure and Growth Management senior staff met with Wilkins Park area residents and the Ward Councillors to discuss their concerns related to increased visitation, the overall use of the lands at the mouth of Hewitt's Creek, and the resultant damage.
26. COVID-19 Impacts
- Beach use across the City in the summer of 2020 was unlike any other in recent history due to restrictions placed on other events and activities due to COVID-19.
- a) Approximately 75-100 people were observed at Wilkins Park and the small surrounding area during at least one period (as noted in Staff Report DEV026-20); while physical distancing protocols suggest a capacity of less than 50 people.
 - b) There were also some complaints registered that beach patrons had been using nearby wooded areas as washrooms, which was more prevalent in beach areas without washroom facilities, such as Wilkins Park.
 - c) Complaints were also received regarding an increase in parking within residential neighbourhoods adjacent to the waterfront.
27. On October 26, 2020, City Council adopted motion 20-G-168 regarding the parking strategy, which included the approval of the Waterfront Spillover Policy as discussed in paragraph 20 of Staff Report DEV008-21 that has defined Waterfront Access Points where "Permit Only Parking" will be permitted within 500 metres walking distance of parks. This will be enforced between June 15th to September 8th from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
28. To address Council motion 20-G-120, a consultant was retained by the City to conduct a review of the City's waterfront park beach policy options and the actions undertaken by the City of Barrie in the summer of 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The intention was to use the information in the report to ensure the City of Barrie was doing all it can to protect its residents, visitors, and natural areas.
29. A jurisdictional scan of City of Barrie policies and regulations, along with a review of the processes for Parks Canada and Ontario Parks, 11 municipalities in Ontario and Canada (Toronto, Greater Sudbury, Kingston, Ottawa, Guelph, Coburg, Collingwood, Lambton Shores, Halifax, Montreal, and Vancouver), one international example (Government of Barbados) and two industry associations (Parks and Recreation Ontario, and the Lifesaving Society) took place in late 2020.
30. Following this research, City staff were able to determine that the courses of action taken in the City of Barrie in the summer of 2020 matched, or in some cases, exceeded the work of other jurisdictions. This validated the approach and allowed staff to continue to prepare for the summer of 2021, as well as plan for future improvements as part of the update to the Waterfront and Marina Strategic Plan (2015) and to be poised to address future and emerging trends of a growing population.

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31. In addition to the research work, on November 24, 2020, Infrastructure and Growth Management staff undertook a consultation exercise about the Waterfront. The full consultation Report is attached as Appendix "D".
32. The consultation focused on connecting with members of the public who expressed concern over the use of the waterfront over the past summer, asking both about overcrowding and the environmental resiliency of the waterfront. Two virtual consultation sessions were held, and feedback was also obtained through a survey and a "Share Your Ideas" tool on buildingbarrie.ca. Specific Wilkins Park area residents whom senior staff met with during the summer of 2020 were invited to participate in the November 2020 consultations and the Ward Councillors also participated and shared the events with their constituents.
- a) The messaging was consistent about maintaining that the waterfront should be preserved as a natural and publicly accessible space, with restrictions on the use and activities taking place to decrease the crowds and reduce impacts on the natural environment. Several ideas were also shared for increasing the resiliency and environmental integrity of the waterfront, such as a more robust native tree and plant species program, rain gardens and natural-looking stormwater ponds.
 - b) Participants also discussed the possibility of exploring beach restrictions to visitors coming from outside the City.
33. The November 2020 public consultations indicated public support for further measures to limit public use to more passive activities and to add environmental enhancements and protection measures for the beaches and the waterfront.
34. The items raised in the public consultation exercises are being addressed as follows:
- a) *Parking:* Waterfront Spillover Parking policy established and poised to address parking matters in surrounding residential areas.
 - b) *Signage:* Was installed throughout the season last year but will be reviewed and proactively installed in the coming months. Inclusive signage in other languages and other technological options will be explored.
 - c) *Environmental Protection:* Staff are recommending shoreline restoration works to be completed in the summer of 2021 for Wilkins Park and limits on activities through the Park Use by-law should reduce length of stay and some environmental impacts.
 - d) *Enforcement:* Municipal Law Enforcement Officers will be hired in the summer of 2021 to respond to the anticipated demand. The Parks Ambassador program will be re-established in 2021.
 - e) *Unpleasant behaviour:* Limits on activities through the Park Use By-law should reduce length of stay and increased enforcement would seek to address this matter.

ANALYSIS

Policies and Guidelines Governing the Waterfront

35. As the motion was to explore closing Wilkins Beach, staff also investigated the environmental implications and risk of not taking any action to mitigate environmental degradation. Staff conducted a review of existing environmental policies governing the waterfront.

36. The protection and enhancement of the natural environment in the City, including the waterfront and beaches is engrained in several pieces of Provincial legislation and the City's by-laws and policies. As part of the review to determine the potential closure of the beach at Wilkins Park, staff conducted a review of these and determined the proposed rehabilitation work at Wilkins Park is consistent with several pieces of legislation.

International Initiatives

37. In October 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a special report stating that, given the current rate, global warming is likely to reach 1.5 degrees Celsius. The effects of climate change on bodies of water such as Lake Simcoe are wide-ranging and already starting to register; in addition to causing extreme weather events that can damage natural areas and shorelines, climate change affects water quality and quantity, and aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem structures and function.

Province of Ontario Policy Framework

38. The provincial legislative framework governing the designation of beaches includes a variety of statutes, such as the *Planning Act* (1990) and the *Municipal Act* (2001). The *Conservation Authorities Act* (1990), *Public Lands Act* (1990), *Great Lakes Protection Act* (2015), *Safe Streets Act* (1999) and *Aggregate Resources Act* (1990) have provisions related to beaches, some more applicable than others, however, none specify how a municipality is to identify a beach as private to reduce environmental impacts to the natural shoreline.
39. The protection of environmentally sensitive lands is stated as a priority in both *Ontario's Provincial Policy Statement* (PPS) (2020) (1.8.1 and 1.8.1.f, 2.1.2) and *A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (2019) (4.1).
40. As stated in the PPS, "planning authorities shall support ... preparing for the *impacts of a changing climate* through land use development patterns" (1.8.1) that "promote design and orientation which maximizes ... conservation" (1.8.1.f).
41. The PPS also specifically addresses the protection of natural features and areas in the long term and emphasizes that the "diversity and connectivity of natural features in an area, and the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of *natural heritage systems*, should be maintained, restored or, where possible, improved, recognizing linkages between and among *natural heritage features and areas, surface water features and ground water features*" (2.1.2).
42. The Growth Plan acknowledges that the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) "contains a broad array of important hydrologic and *natural heritage features and areas* ..." and states that "these valuable assets must be wisely protected and managed as part of planning for future growth"; the Plan also "recognizes and supports the role of municipal policy in providing leadership and innovation in developing a culture of conservation and addressing climate change" (4.1).
43. The *Planning Act* states that municipalities must provide for "the adequate provision and distribution of educational, health, social, cultural and recreational facilities" (s.2.i); recreational facilities include parks and beaches.

Lake Simcoe Protection Act and Plan

44. The *Lake Simcoe Protection Act* (2008) is intended to respond to some of the environmental degradation already occurring at Lake Simcoe, such as compromised water quality due to excessive nutrients (e.g., phosphorus), the proliferation of invasive species such as zebra mussels, and the loss and fragmentation of sensitive natural areas and habitat, such as shorelines.

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45. Staff can point to some of the environmental degradation already occurring at Lake Simcoe, such as the loss and fragmentation of sensitive natural areas and habitat, such as shorelines. Actions to protect the environmental integrity of the Wilkins Park shoreline are strongly in alignment with the Act, whose objectives include: Protecting, improving and restoring the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed (4.a); Improving the Lake Simcoe watershed's capacity to adapt to climate change (4.f); Improving conditions for environmentally sustainable recreational activities (4.h); and Promoting environmentally sustainability land and water uses, activities and development practices (4.i).
46. The Lake Simcoe Protection Plan (LSPP) is a policy and implementation document that guides efforts to protect and restore the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe watershed and identifies one of the near-term goals as: "improving the health of the ecosystem by protecting and rehabilitation important areas, such as shorelines and natural heritage."

City of Barrie Official Plan

47. The City of Barrie Official Plan designates the land for Wilkins Park as Open Space and Environmental Protection.
48. Open Space is a designation intended to apply to "lands within the City intended to be used for passive or active recreational uses and shall include city parks with public community centres which are developed and maintained for the purposes of active recreational uses such as playing fields, ball diamonds, bicycle paths and those lands which are preserved in their natural state for the passive recreational use" (s.4.6.2.1). Permitted uses include "conservation and active and passive recreational purposes" (s.4.2.1) and lands along the waterfront within the Lakeshore, Southshore and Bayshore areas may incorporate "public and private recreational uses and ancillary uses, which include but are not restricted to public and private docking, public picnicking, trails and bikeways and ancillary commercial uses provided such uses clearly serve the major recreational function" (s.4.6.2.5).
49. Environmental Protection is a designation intended to apply to lands that contain "provincially or locally significant features or functions such as those areas containing ... rare species, important ecological functions, surface water features, valley and stream corridors and fish habitat; provincially significant wetlands, natural hazard lands and abandoned waste disposal sites" (s. 4.7.2.1). Such areas "are intended primarily for preservation and conservation in their natural states. Such uses as passive outdoor recreation, forestry and wildlife management may be permitted where appropriate" (s.4.7.2.2).

City of Barrie Zoning By-law 2009-141

50. The City's Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2009-141 zones the Wilkins Park shoreline area and stream corridor as Environmentally Protected Lands (EP). Many of the other City beaches are zoned Open Space (OS), which permits active uses as well as playing fields, courts, and structures. The OS zone is not as restrictive as the EP zone.
51. The EP zone permits the following uses: ecological management measures, environmental conservation, lookout points, naturalized buffer, natural restoration, and other similar uses where there are minimal impacts on the environmental features and functions.

City's Park Use By-law 2019-059

52. The City's Park Use By-law 2019-056 defines a beach as "an area of a public park whereby the landscaping or ground cover is made up of sand or other similar material in a defined area including but not limited to such areas that may be designed for the purpose of swimming". This definition does not reflect on the environmental integrity of a beach or its protection. (s.11.3.0.0.0).

Waterfront and Marina Strategic Plan

53. The City's provides a more specific vision for the waterfront with some direction provided for environmental protection as the Plan is guided by the following **eight principles**:
- a) Public
 - b) Green
 - c) Connected
 - d) Diverse
 - e) Attractive
 - f) Accessible
 - g) Clean
 - h) Well-Managed
54. To achieve these qualities, the waterfront's environmental integrity must be taken into consideration; thus, prioritizing and attending to the features that contribute to the Wilkins Park environmental sensitivity is in alignment with the Plan.
55. The Plan categorizes the Wilkins Beach area as a Tertiary Activity Centre, which typically includes limited park amenities related to passive activities (i.e. trail-walking) by smaller groups of users and visitors than the Secondary Activity and the Primary Activity Centres that includes Centennial Beach, Johnson's Beach, Minet's Point Park, and Tyndale Park. Tertiary Activity Centres are not intended to serve as primary gathering places along the City's waterfront and typically include limited park amenities related to passive activities (i.e. trail-walking) by smaller groups of users and visitors.
56. It should be noted that the Official Plan does not currently recognize the hierarchy of activity levels referenced in the Waterfront and Marina Strategic Plan. This policy option is being explored in the new Official Plan and in alignment with any updates to the Waterfront and Marina Strategic Plan.

Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2017)

57. The City of Barrie's commitment to climate change action is demonstrated through its Climate Change Adaptation Strategy as the document lists seven goals to guide the development of the City's actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Goal five is to "protect biodiversity and enhance ecosystem functions" (36). Prioritizing the integrity of Wilkins Park's ecology is in alignment with this goal.

Parking Strategy (2020)

58. Most recently, the City of Barrie's new Parking Strategy (also helps to direct use of waterfront beaches through a new Traffic By-law 2020-107 and Waterfront Spillover Parking Policy, which together, formalize many of the actions taken by the City in response to concerns experienced in the summer of 2020 (e.g., increase in non-resident waterfront parking rates, restrictions on non-resident on-street parking within 500 metres of various waterfront beaches and parks).

Legislation and Policy Review

59. As a result of staff's review, it has been determined there is a significant legislative and policy framework governing Barrie's waterfront that encourages environmentally restorative works for shoreline edges located in Environmental Protection lands.
60. Staff believe there is value in exploring a City-initiated zoning by-law amendment to review the benefits of establishing a new Natural Shoreline zone (or some similarly named zone).

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61. The proposed zone would tailor the permitted uses and activities for the specified areas to be consistent with the waterfront activity centres hierarchy identified in the Waterfront and Marina Strategic Plan (2015) and any updates thereto, along with input from the community and Council.

Restoration and Naturalization Proposal

62. In light of the established policy framework, restoring and protecting the Wilkins Park shoreline is aligned with Provincial and City policies.
63. While staff in the Operations and Development Services Departments would need to collaborate with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority to design, permit and implement ecological restoration plans for the Wilkins Park area, staff have determined preliminary concepts about of what future work could entail and the benefits of such an exercise that includes:
- a) The hardening of the most vulnerable portions of the lake shoreline to mitigate past and future impacts of overuse by employing the techniques illustrated in Appendix "A" of Staff Report DEV008-21:
 - i) The hardening techniques proposed for the shoreline and creekbank include a granite boulder berm with cobble beach and native restoration plantings. These techniques are based on shoreline stabilization best practices and have been widely used in the Lake Simcoe watershed and other lake and shoreline environments in the province of Ontario.
 - ii) The boulders and granite cobbles selected for the shoreline restoration will maintain access to the water, but in a more controlled and natural method that will discourage users from extended stays and reduce the number of visitors seeking a typical beach experience.
 - b) Naturalization of the degraded riparian area of Hewitt's Creek, including the seeding and planting of native pollinators, shrubs, and trees along the creek.
 - i) A wood rail fence (temporary control barrier) in combination with the restoration plantings along the creek bank and the access to the groyne will prevent individuals from directly accessing those highly sensitive and degraded areas while maintaining access to the natural trails to allow users the opportunity to experience the natural environment.
64. Staff from the Development Services and Operations Departments met at Wilkins Park in early January 2021 with staff from the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) who are responsible for permit approvals to review the proposed environmental restoration works and the LSRCA staff were supportive of the proposed plans and offered further technical assistance. The City will need to apply for a permit from the LSRCA prior to any site work proceeding.
65. The Operations Department has completed comparable shoreline restoration work in consultation with the LSRCA in Minet's Point Park, The Gables (Appendix "A" to Staff Report DEV008-21), and upstream from this area on Hewitt's Creek.

Restoration Impacts on Public Use

66. A 2021 warm-season closure of the shoreline and immediately adjacent areas (including the small sand beach, creekbank at the headwaters of Hewitt's Creek and the groyne that extends into Kempenfelt Bay as shown on Appendix "B" Staff Report DEV008-21) is recommended to complete the restoration works.

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- a) The restoration planting and installation of the wood-post and rail fencing can be completed during the optimal planting period from mid-May through early June.
 - b) Shoreline construction works at Wilkins Park and Hewitt's Creek can be scheduled to occur between July 15th to October 1st, according to Ministry of Natural Resources guidelines.
 - c) The one-year seasonal closure would not prohibit individuals from using the trail system in the natural corridor except for periods of heavy equipment use where trail users would be temporarily re-routed.
 - d) After the shoreline restoration work is complete it will be naturalized and will not look like the current sandy beach environment that is contrary to the Environmental Protection designation in the Official Plan and the zoning in Zoning By-law 2009-141.
67. A proactive communications strategy is recommended to be prepared prior to the start of construction. The public communications strategy developed by Access Barrie for the 2018 one-year closure of the Sunnidale Park Dog Off-leash Recreation Area (DOLRA) is a successful template to be used for this project to provide advanced and on-going information related to the project benefits, timing, and public closure. The communications strategy should include:
- a) Installing "No Admittance" signs for the areas temporarily closed to the public. Inclusive signs including the printing of signs in other languages and / or using technologies, such as QR codes, to be more accessible to people who read more languages than English. It is recognized not everyone has a smart phone to access technological options so all signage options should be explored.
 - b) Removing any specific reference to Wilkins Beach from the list of City Beaches and all corporate communications channels, social media, mapping, and materials.
 - c) A visitor signage program highlighting the permitted activities in the area, the area's environmental sensitivity and the benefits of the Hewitt's Creek Valley and waterfront lands, as well as clear indication that the area is not a beach facility. As stated above, inclusive signage should be explored and implemented, where possible.
 - d) Encouraging passive uses of Wilkins Park by small groups (in alignment with the waterfront parks hierarchy guidelines set out in the Waterfront and Marina Strategic Plan).
68. Following the restoration works, reducing service levels from Parks Operations will create a more natural shoreline experience by:
- a) Ceasing to groom any remaining sand areas following the restoration works.
 - b) Not installing in the Hewitt's Creek Valley lands and adjacent to the shoreline any public amenities typical of a formal beach area, such as: swim buoys, picnic tables, portable washrooms, garbage cans and other public facilities.
69. The proposed environmental design, materiality and restoration works are consistent with the Environmentally Protection zoning and the site conditions and are intended to assist in controlling and directing public access and activities in the area in a manner that will prevent further environmental degradation. Those wanting a beach experience will not be drawn to Wilkins Park following the shoreline restoration work and the accompanying naturalized maintenance proposal.

70. While shoreline restoration continues to be priority for Barrie's waterfront, the recommendations in this Report are specific to immediately addressing the shoreline issues in Wilkins Park. The future Waterfront Master Plan update will provide the opportunity to examine the broader waterfront sustainability issues.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT MATTERS

71. The following environmental and climate change impact matters have been considered in the development of the recommendation:
- a) Alignment with environmental matters as presented in the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and A Place to Growth: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019).
 - b) Alignment with the *Lake Simcoe Protection Act* (2008) and the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan (2009).
 - c) Alignment with the Environmental Protection land use designation, as stated in the City of Barrie's Official Plan (2010).
 - d) Alignment with the City of Barrie's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2017):
 - i) 3.2 - Increase natural/forested areas within sub watersheds with high surcharge and runoff;
 - ii) 5.7 - Promote the planting of native vegetation along lakes, creeks, and ravines to reduce erosion risk, maintenance needs, and enhance local biodiversity; and
 - iii) 7.8 - Continue with active tree planting, community partnerships, and naturalization programs as outlined in the Urban Forest Strategy.
 - e) The shoreline hardening and root mass restoration from the naturalized replanting program will increase the climate change resiliency of the area providing a higher level of protection from more frequent and intense storms, stormwater erosion, flooding damage and wave action.
 - f) The restoration works will increase the ecological function of the lands providing enhanced terrestrial and aquatic habitat for the local flora and fauna.

ALTERNATIVES

72. The following alternatives are available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1

General Committee could choose to implement greater environmental restoration and protection measures in Wilkins Park and to close off the shoreline to the public permanently.

Although this alternative is a possibility, the park and waterfront are a major gem and source of enjoyment for the public. The reopening of Wilkins Park in a more controlled manner, whereby more passive recreational use of the park by smaller groups is permitted, enables the public to continue to enjoy the space while further environmental damage is mitigated after significant shoreline restoration work is completed in the summer of 2021.

Alternative #2

General Committee could choose to keep a reference to Wilkins Park as a traditional beach and keep it open while also choosing not to take any action to reverse and mitigate environmental degradation.

This alternative is not recommended, as it is neither in alignment with Provincial policy (e.g., the *Lake Simcoe Protection Act*; the Provincial Policy Statement), nor with City of Barrie policy (the site's land use designation as an Environmental Protection area in the Official Plan; the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy). This alternative would lead to further degradation of the area, including its vegetation and coldwater fishery – especially as visitation is likely to increase, given Barrie's projected population growth.

FINANCIAL

73. Staff and funding resources (\$26,500) for the naturalizing the lake and creek shorelines would be allocated through the existing 2021 operating budgets, specifically:

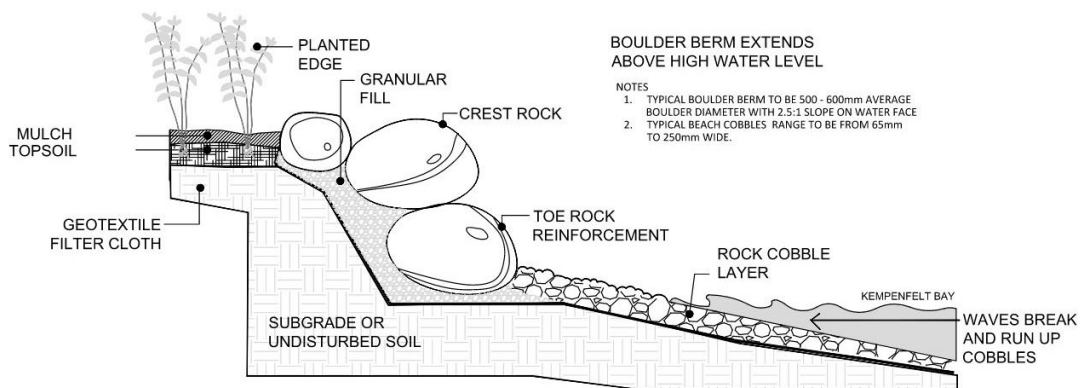
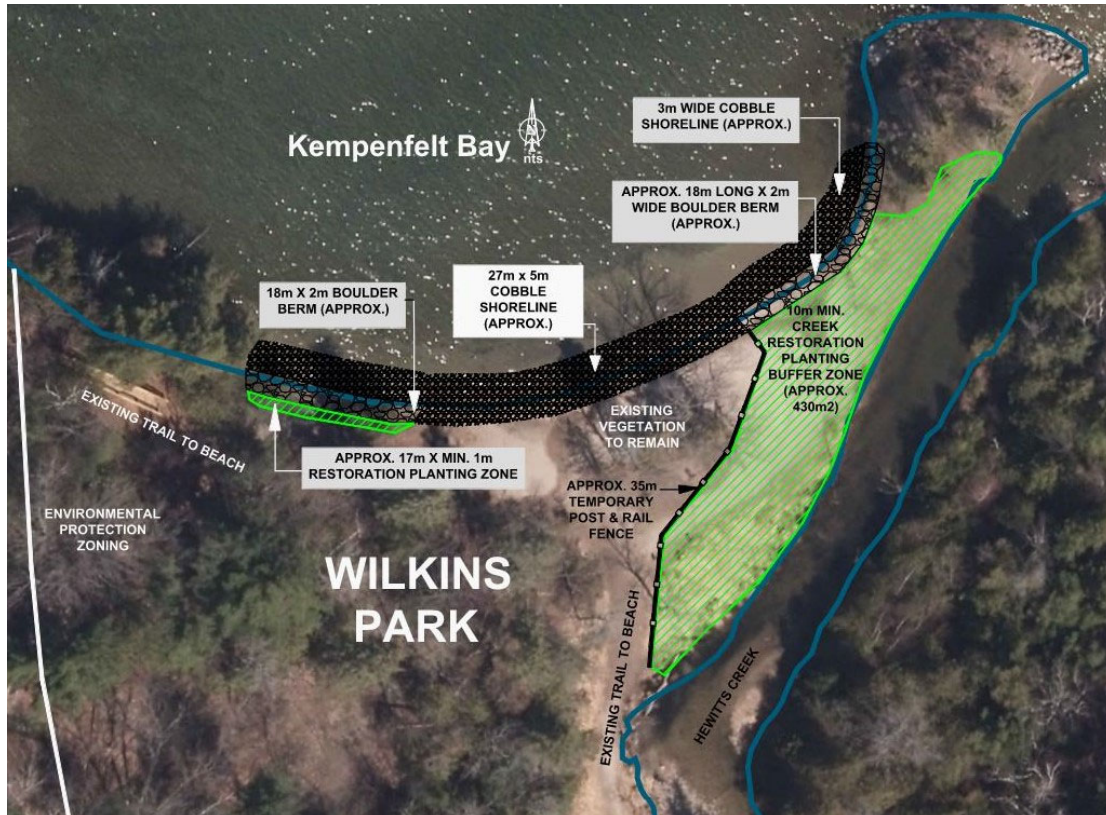
Shoreline Materials	1267-675600	\$9,500
Naturalization	1269-670800	\$6,000
Fencing	1267-560200	\$7,000
Salaries & Benefits	1267-400000 & 400100	\$3,500
Signage (inclusive)	1267-540900	\$500

LINKAGE TO 2014-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN

74. The recommendation included in this Staff Report supports the following goals identified in the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan:
- ☒ Build a greener Barrie while mitigating and adapting to climate change.
 - ☒ Grow responsibly.
75. Planting and naturalizing a large portion of the Hewitt's Creek and Kempenfelt Bay shoreline at Wilkins Park would promote a healthier, more sustainable shoreline community. After the closure to perform the restoration work in the summer of 2021, residents would still be able to access and use the area, though not as a traditional sand beach that has resulted in attracting large numbers of users.

APPENDIX "A"

Wilkins Park Proposed Shoreline Hardening and Restoration



SAMPLE BOULDER BERM AND ROCK COBBLE BEACH SECTION
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Boulder Berm installed in 2019 at The Gables - Before & After images



Existing Cobble Shoreline Examples in Ontario

Image Below: Cobble shoreline at Toronto's Bluffers Park on Lake Ontario (Source: <https://trca.ca/conservation/erosion-risk-management/restore/bluffers-park-major-maintenance/>)



Image below: Cobble beach and boulder berm on Lake Ontario shoreline at Chancery Lane Promenade, Oakville (Source: <https://www.oakville.ca/assets/general%20-%20environment/2016%20shoreline%20inventory%20draft.pdf>)



APPENDIX "B"

Proposed 2021 Area of Wilkins Park Shoreline Closure



Image below: Erosion on Wilkins Park shoreline after a severe storm event in 2020



Image below: Hewitt's Creek on east side of groyne showing well-used public access to shoreline (Source: Stephanie King at <https://www.alltrails.com/trail/canada/ontario/wilkins-beach/photos>)



City of Barrie Zoning By-law 2009-141 for Wilkins Park Shoreline



APPENDIX "D"

**Barrie's Waterfront for Tomorrow
Summary Report**

City of Barrie | November 2020 Public Consultation

Report completed: January 2020
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Introduction

To make Barrie's waterfront and beaches safer and to help mitigate overcrowding during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Barrie implemented a series of short-term solutions for the waterfront during the summer 2020 period. These included:

- Non-resident waterfront parking rate increase (\$10/hour with a daily maximum of \$50)
- Resident waterfront parking pass only in Dock Road and Gables parking lots, as well as in small sections of surrounding streets at Wilkins Park
- Additional education and awareness signage installed
- Increased patrols by municipal law enforcement officers and police, focused on education and compliance
- Park ambassadors in parks/along trails to educate and answer questions
- Prohibition of personal BBQs and tents
- Anchoring of picnic tables to prevent two or more being moved together

Following these changes, Infrastructure and Growth Management staff consulted with local residents in November 2020 to determine the effectiveness of those short-term solutions implemented during the summer and to plan for the waterfront into the future. Since COVID-19 has restricted many other recreational options for both residents and visitors, the resultant increase in the use of waterfront beaches and public spaces during summer 2020 has given the City a glimpse into what future use may look like as Barrie's population continues to grow.

As part of consultations, City of Barrie staff conducted a survey and solicited ideas through the buildingbarrie.ca website, and conducted two virtual consultation sessions via Zoom – an afternoon and an evening session, both held on November 24.

Recommendations were given for what the City might prioritize for the waterfront into the future (e.g., potentially as part of a new Waterfront Master Plan). During the consultation, staff also solicited feedback specifically on the City's approach to the waterfront during the summer 2020 period to determine what additional or revised short-term solutions could be implemented for summer 2021 as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

The following report summary provides a high-level summary of key feedback and considerations for the City of Barrie, both as the municipality considers waterfront use during summer 2021 and into the future more broadly.



By the Numbers



Top Ten Overall Actions

The most common public feedback from the two virtual consultation sessions, the survey and the "Share your Ideas" tool has been distilled into the following key actions:

1. The waterfront should be maintained as a natural and accessible space that can be enjoyed through walking, cycling and other recreational activities.
2. The waterfront could benefit from better separation of pedestrian and cycling areas from vehicular areas – the increasing automobile traffic at the waterfront is a problem and potentially dangerous.
3. More parking options or incentives/alternatives that minimize vehicle traffic are needed, especially as the downtown undergoes intensification.
4. More signage and wayfinding could be used along biking and walking lanes, to indicate how to use the trail system and to guide boaters coming in from the water.
5. There is a need for more bylaw enforcement, whether related to boating or to rules for beaches and parks.
6. The waterfront could benefit from the provision of more restaurant, pub, cafe and food kiosk options.
7. A diversity of recreational facilities and features are needed to support year-round activities (e.g., more bathroom facilities that are also open in the winter, covered shelters for when it's raining, more benches, and better cycling and walking trails).
8. The waterfront could benefit from increased connectivity between waterfront parks and trails; between water and land for boaters, kayakers and canoers; and between the waterfront and the downtown.
9. The waterfront can be made both more enjoyable, environmental and resilient through natural elements – such as natural-looking stormwater ponds, a more robust native tree and plant program, rain gardens and community gardens, solar or wind power for building facilities, and even vertical farming.
10. The waterfront could be made more inclusive through greater wheelchair access pads and permanent ramp solutions, accessible playground and bike rental options, and by ensuring that all people from a diversity of backgrounds are welcomed.

Key Feedback for Summer 2021

During the public consultation sessions, residents selected what they found to be the **most effective short-term waterfront measures** implemented during summer 2020. By order of popularity, these are:

1. Prohibition of personal BBQs and tents
2. Anchoring picnic tables to prevent two or more from being moved together
3. Non-resident parking rate increase
4. Residents-only parking pass
5. Increased patrols by municipal law enforcement officers and police
6. Increased education and awareness signage
7. Park ambassadors tasked with education and awareness

Other suggestions given by residents for potential implementation in summer 2021:

1. Encourage visitors to use certain beaches, while residents use other beaches
2. Provide more socially distanced outdoor fitness classes
3. Create more pedestrianized areas along streets
4. Have one to two bylaw officers patrolling beaches at all times
5. Implement higher parking rates for non-residents
6. Better communication of waterfront rules and use – including an app that notifies residents when beaches are nearing capacity and when they are less busy
7. Use markers to designate socially distanced areas (e.g., ropes that portion off different sections of the beach, or walking paths that are designated as one-way)
8. Offer a pre-booking process for shelters and other spaces, and consider implementing a small fee for non-residents to use

Other Key Findings: Top Fives

Top five waterfront areas (based on use):

1. Centennial Park
2. Sam Cancilla Park + Heritage Park + Meridian Place/Memorial Square + Spirit Catcher Park + City of Barrie Marina
3. Allandale Station Park + Military Heritage Park + Tiffin Boat Launch + J.C. Morrison Shipwreck
4. Johnson's Beach Park + Barrie Yacht Club
5. Tyndale Park + Dock Road Park

Top five waterfront activities (most common uses):

1. Running and/or walking
2. Cycling
3. Relaxing
4. Boating
5. Swimming

Top five most wanted programs and features:

1. All-season programming (e.g., ice skating, fire pits)
2. More trails and better connectivity
3. More recreational features (e.g., benches, picnic tables, washrooms)
4. Food kiosks
5. Cleaner parks

Summary

During consultations, many Barrie residents voiced their appreciation for the waterfront overall, particularly as a natural space at the heart of downtown that encourages outdoor activities, such as walking and cycling.

Most residents consulted want to maintain the continued use of the waterfront as a peaceful outdoor recreational space and a number of recommendations were aligned with this: such as improvements to cycling paths, guided walking tours along trails and all-season programming. Several recommendations were also given for preserving the naturalness of the space, such as increasing the planting of trees and other native greenery, establishing community gardens and taking a more environmental approach to maintenance.

At the same time, the challenges facing the waterfront were discussed, particularly as related to the issue of overcrowding. Several residents feel that there are far too many automobiles driving or parked along/at the waterfront, and that this results in both parking and safety challenges. Other residents suggested that the increased use of the waterfront has resulted in greater amounts of litter. A number of residents also implied that the increase in visitors and tourists to the waterfront is a major contributor to these issues – they feel that visitors tend to take over the space and the beaches become too busy.

The impact of COVID-19 was also discussed, and some additional recommendations were given for encouraging compliance with social distancing rules during summer 2021, such as one-way walking paths. Generally, those residents consulted approved of the summer 2020 short-term solutions that were put into place for Barrie's waterfront, such as the increase in parking rates.

Ultimately though, from a long-term perspective, it was acknowledged that the solution to the increasing use of the waterfront isn't simply to discourage visitors, who also bring tourist dollars into the downtown and support local business. As one resident suggested, Barrie is a diverse city and becoming increasingly so, and the waterfront must reflect this by being a welcoming and inclusive space for all.

