

# Muskoka Regional Centre

## Opportunities Assessment & Optimal Use Study

### Community Update

Volume 3, Issue 1

March 2014

#### Muskoka Regional Centre Opportunity Study: An Update

Infrastructure Ontario, an agency of the Province of Ontario responsible for managing the Muskoka Regional Centre, has retained the services of MHBC Planning to complete an Opportunities Assessment & Optimal Use Study of the Muskoka Regional Centre property in Gravenhurst. Members of the Consulting Team include: Kris Menzies, Partner with MHBC, Jamie Robinson, MHBC Associate (land use planning, site design and landscape architecture), Cole Engineering (engineering and transportation), Tarandus Associates (natural environment), Altus Group (economics), and Karen Wianeki, Planning Solutions Inc. (community engagement and meeting facilitation.)

The first Community Meeting was held on Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 – 12:00 noon and more than 100 residents attended. In keeping with direction from the community, a site visit was arranged for the morning of July 27<sup>th</sup> and many community members took advantage of the site visit to see the property first hand. Staff from Infrastructure Ontario were on hand to answer questions and to provide guided tours of the site.

Following the site visit, members of the Consulting Team convened a second meeting – a Community Design Workshop – to allow participants to share their ideas about the future use of the property. More than 60 residents attended the Design Workshop on Saturday, July 27<sup>th</sup>, and eight concept plans were developed.

#### *Thank You to All Who Continue to Support the Process*

Thank you to everyone who has attended the Community Meetings and supported the process. We had hoped to convene another community meeting in October but needed additional time to assess the input we received.

At this time, we are providing a status update on our work, as well indicating when the next Community Meeting will be held.

#### **Notice of the Next Community Meeting – April 26, 2014**

Members of the Consulting Team are continuing to examine the input we have received. The concept plans that emerged from the July Design Workshop as well as input from individuals who have taken the time to share their ideas are being refined into a set of options that will be presented to the Community in the Spring.

We considered hosting a Community Meeting in the winter but were concerned that a winter timeframe may not allow some members of the community who are not in Gravenhurst during the winter months to participate.

In keeping with our commitment to you, we have made the decision to wait until the Spring 2014 to convene the next Community Meeting. **The meeting will be held April 26, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. until noon at the Terry Fox Auditorium in the Centennial Centre.** We believe an April timeframe will allow members of the consulting team to complete their background work and to consider, in a fulsome way, the suggestions that have come forward. We also believe an April meeting will provide ample notice to all who may wish to attend.

In keeping with past practice, notices will appear on the Town's website, in local newspapers and an email blast will be sent to those on our master contact list.

#### *INSIDE THIS ISSUE*

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MUSKOKA REGIONAL CENTRE  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NEXT COMMUNITY MEETING

PLACE: TERRY FOX AUDITORIUM, CENTENNIAL CENTRE

DATE: APRIL 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2014

TIME: 10:00 – 12:00

**All information, studies and  
upcoming public meeting  
notices will be posted to the  
Town of Gravenhurst  
website:**

[www.gravenhurst.ca](http://www.gravenhurst.ca)

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***Come Work With Us...  
Share Your Ideas for the Muskoka  
Regional Centre.***

***When We Work Together Great  
Things Are Possible.***

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*Thank You To All Who Have  
Shared Their Ideas With Us!*

Input from community members is vital. As the consulting team indicated at the very first meeting, the Opportunity Study will focus on identifying a series of options for the future use of the Muskoka Regional Centre. **The study will not be completed by the Consulting Team in isolation...it will be developed in consultation with the community.**

To date, members of the consulting team have spoken personally with more than 50 individuals. In addition, surveys have been completed with interested high school students as well as interested community members. There are many different ideas about the future use of the Muskoka Regional Centre.

Couldn't Make the Second Meeting  
in July? We still want to hear from  
you!

If you have specific ideas about the future of the Muskoka Regional Centre site but you were not able to attend the Design Workshop on July 27<sup>th</sup>, please share your thoughts by completing our electronic survey...available at the following web address:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7HKS399>

We understand how important this property is to the Town and to the District, and we are looking forward to working with you as the Opportunity Study advances.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION...**

I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS...WHO CAN I  
CONTACT?

If you are looking for more information about the Muskoka Regional Centre Opportunities Study, we invite you to contact us. You can reach Renato Romanin at the Town of Gravenhurst (705) 687-2230 x 271 or the Consulting Team through Jamie Robinson at (705) 728-0045 x 222 or Karen Wianecki at (905) 428-6113 or by email at

[karen.wianecki@sympatico.ca](mailto:karen.wianecki@sympatico.ca).

## Potential Future Uses for the Muskoka Regional Centre

There is no shortage of ideas for the future use of the Muskoka Regional Centre. Many wonderful ideas have already come forward. Despite the very different ideas around potential future use of the property, there are a lot of similarities that emerged from the July Design Workshop, including the following:

- the need for a portion of the property to remain **accessible to the public**
- the **importance of the waterfront and water quality**
- the need to **protect on-site environmental features**
- the need to ensure that there is a **green building component** so closely in keeping with Muskoka's image
- there is a need to think about **integrating the future use** with the rest of Gravenhurst
- there is a need to consider a **walking trail** around the perimeter of the property or through the existing on-site wetland
- there is a need to think about the range of possibilities and what could be advanced that may **allow the suggestions of all** to move forward
- it is important to **keep economics in mind**. Revenue generation is important. Consider engaging funders.
- the need for **year round well paying jobs** is vital – something that offers a similar wage structure to replace the positions that were lost when the Centre closed is very important.

In addition to the Design Workshop, input has been provided to members of the consulting team in a variety of different ways. Individual interviews have been conducted with more than 50 community members. An electronic survey was developed for interested high school students and a survey remains open for others to continue to share their thoughts. We have received input from many individuals regarding the potential future use of the property. The following captures some of the ideas we have heard:

- **Open Space:** Park; Wildlife Centre; Natural Beach
- **Recreational:** Active cross country skiing trails; picnic area; marina; Ontario park campsite; camp for special needs or at risk youth; outdoor workout centre; paintball complex; agility centre; theatre complex; bowling alley; mini golf; water park.
- **Institutional:** Training facility; Business school; Comprehensive Art Academy/School (painting, drawing; film, editing suites, stage, audio, black box theatre, play and script writing, costume design, stage craft) with an apprenticeship component; Trade School; Educational Consortium (focusing on resort management, resource management; culinary arts); Institution of Higher Learning; Management Centre (like Banff); Muskoka Chautauqua; Medical facility (build on the historical connection to Dr. Bethune); Centre of Excellence for Water Management (water research); Government Use; International High School; Innovation Hub (in partnership with a University/College)
- **Residential:** Affordable public housing; Retirement home; High end cottages; Apartments
- **Commercial:** Knowledge/culture based business; Resort; Retail (boutiques, restaurants, coffee shops); Green Energy development; Potential Uses that Advance the 'Creative Economy'.
- **Industrial:** clean, green industry; high tech industry (e.g. MicroSoft, Blackberry research)

There were a number of other suggestions that have been shared. These include the following specifics:

- Emergency Services & Training
- International Focus
- Research Facility
- Muskoka Regional Seniors and Community Health Centre
- Centre of Excellence with wages comparable to those lost when the Centre closed
- Sustainable End Use
- Mixed Use Development (office, small school, hotel).
- Consider the potential use in terms of the surrounding area (is there an opportunity to look beyond the boundaries of the property?).
- Develop the core of the site but keep the perimeter natural.