

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**March 28, 2019**



## **Downtown Master Plan in effect**

**Wasaga Beach** – The Downtown Master Plan remains in place.

But there is substantial misinformation circulating in the community regarding the plan.

Here is a factual look at the plan and its implications.

### **I heard that council scrapped the plan. Is this not the case?**

The Downtown Master Plan was approved by council on March 28, 2017. See the plan here: <http://bit.ly/2zh5EZI>

Council did not scrap the plan. The vast majority of the Downtown Master Plan remains in place. The supporting documents such as Official Plan Amendment No. 52, the Zoning Bylaw, and the Design Guidelines also remain in place.

### **So what is happening with the plan then?**

At the Feb. 28 Committee of the Whole meeting, committee met to discuss the downtown and beachfront and recommended some minor changes to Official Plan Amendment 52, which is the planning policy that implements the plan and applies to the downtown and beachfront.

### **What do you mean by minor changes?**

These changes pertained to introducing flexibility in the plan so that certain requirements were no longer mandatory; they are now optional. Examples of this include establishing civic uses on the Glenwood Drive Parking lot (pg. 35), development of a town square and community hub (Sections 5.1.1, 5.1.4, 5.1.5, 5.1.6) and development at Beach Area 2 (Section 5.3.6).

Council confirmed the development of a Festival Square at the Beachfront and gave direction to continue with the environmental assessment to determine the appropriate pattern for streets, sidewalks and pedestrian movements.

### **Why is committee making these changes?**

During the election campaign, the majority of committee members heard concerns about the plan, in particular the placement of the arena and library in the community hub. As well, after the election, committee heard the cost of acquiring the private

property necessary to implement the community hub, along with the province's cancellation of the community hub program, and suspension of associated funding. **(See below)**. They also heard that the public does not want to see development at Beach Area 2. As a result, council members want a plan that is not as prescriptive and provides council with options moving forward.

Council also believes that the private sector has an important role to play in the development of the downtown. Community Improvement incentives were introduced as part of the Official Plan Amendment No. 52 and council proposes to use these incentives to support private development of the lands in the downtown. Council believes this approach is a better way to proceed.

**So work continues in terms of seeing the Downtown Master Plan become a reality?**

Absolutely.

In fact, at the Feb. 28 Committee of the Whole meeting, committee approved proceeding with an Environmental Assessment on Main Street, Beach Drive, and the other streets in the beach area to determine the optimum configuration of the streets, sidewalks, and bike lanes, including the need for roundabouts.

**Great. But I heard the community hub is dead in the water. Is that true?**

As part of the Downtown Master Plan there was an area identified as the "community hub" (Section 5.1.6) and it was to contain public uses such as a twin pad arena, library, cultural centre, and other public uses.

This approach addressed a provincial initiative that was encouraging municipalities to develop community hubs to make it easier for the public to access a variety of uses in one location.

As part of the Downtown Plan, a number of community hub components were identified on private property. But on Jan. 8, 2019, committee was made aware of two factors related to the hub.

- 1) The new provincial government cancelled the community hubs program and advised that future funding for municipalities to help implement hubs is uncertain.
- 2) The appraised values of the property required for the community hub are estimated to be between \$7.9-million and \$15.8-million, depending on the land required. This is in addition to the monies paid by the previous council for 140 Main St.

Because of these factors, and the feedback members of council heard during the election, members of council decided to pause the community hub component of the plan and requested that staff consider other locations for the twin pad arena and library.

**So where is the review of locations at right now?**

At the March 7, 2019 Committee of the Whole meeting, council members short-listed sites for a new arena (7) and library (6).

Staff were directed to review sites on both lists in greater detail. A report will be forthcoming to committee in the near future on a process to reduce the number on the short lists even further to a number that can be examined closer.

**When can we start to see development activity in connection to the Downtown Master Plan?**

Staff will be convening a “Builders Forum” of the many developer/builders that have an interest in Wasaga Beach to discuss their ideas for the development of the beachfront.

The town will issue a new Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEOI) for the development of Beach Area 1 based on the input from the development community, the needs of the community, the provisions in the Downtown Master Plan and best practice.

The town will then issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to develop the various aspects of the beachfront based on the responses to the RFEOI. The RFP process is based on the town’s purchasing policy.

**And what are construction timelines for the library and arena?**

Right now, we are aiming to choose sites this year, as well as start the design process, so that we can be shovel-ready for 2020. These projects are a priority for this council.

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