



CITY OF HAMILTON
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Environmental Services Division

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| TO: | Chair and Members Public Works Committee |
| COMMITTEE DATE: | November 14, 2016 |
| SUBJECT/REPORT NO: | Mountain Brow Vista Study and Management Plan (PW16104) (Wards 6, 7 and 8) (Outstanding Business List) |
| WARD(S) AFFECTED: | Wards 6, 7 and 8 |
| PREPARED BY: | Marcia Monaghan (905) 546-2424 Extension 2566 |
| SUBMITTED BY: | Craig Murdoch, B. Sc. Director, Environmental Services Division |
| SIGNATURE: | |

RECOMMENDATION

In order to provide a Scenic Vista Management Plan for long-term management of vistas along the Mountain Brow in Wards 6, 7 and 8 staff is requesting approval of the following recommendations:

- (a) That the selective removal and pruning of existing vegetation at seventeen (17) locations be approved to create new vista locations as identified in Appendix "A" to Report PW16104;
- (b) That the selective removal and pruning of existing vegetation at twenty-nine (29) locations be approved to remove visual obstructions at existing vista locations as identified in Appendix "A" to Report PW16104;
- (c) That the capital cost of \$113,000 be funded in 2017 with \$51,000 coming from the Ward 6 Capital Reserve, \$39,500 from the Ward 7 Capital Reserve, and \$22,500 from the Ward 8 Capital Reserve, and that this funding be referred to the 2017 Capital Budget process;
- (d) That the annual operating costs of \$15,000 for maintenance of the new and existing vistas commence in 2018 and be referred to the 2017 Capital Budget process and;
- (e) That the Mountain Brow Vista Study and Management Plan be removed from the Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff was directed through a motion at Public Works Committee on September 21, 2015 and approved at Council on September 23, 2015 to undertake a Scenic Vista

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

Management Plan to provide a long-term strategy for management of vistas along the mountain brow in Wards 6, 7, and 8.

Dillon Consulting Limited (Dillon) was retained to develop an overall strategy for the selection and maintenance of vista locations on public lands along the mountain brow. This report presents the results from the work undertaken by Dillon calling for the establishment of 17 new vista locations, selective clearing at 29 existing vista locations, and continuation of 41 vista locations where no work is currently required.

The open space along the escarpment brow is unique in its ability to provide scenic views leading to Niagara, Lake Ontario, the lower City of Hamilton, and Dundas Valley. Locations have been chosen based on criteria that strengthen the natural environment interface along the escarpment, address the natural heritage of the area, and promote safe access to views from the escarpment mountain brow lands. Recommended locations are shown in Appendix "A" attached to Report PW16104.

To address vista suggestions contained in the Dillon report, capital funds in the amount of \$113,000 are being recommended for 2017 and annual operating funds of \$15,000 are being recommended to commence in 2018. The capital and operating requirements will both be identified through the 2017 capital budget process.

The study area falls within the Niagara Escarpment Plan area which is regulated by the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC). Recommendations of the Scenic Vista Management Plan do not conflict with restrictions imposed by the NEC as work associated with the recommendations in this report are not defined as development.

Alternatives for Consideration - Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial:

The recommendations within this report have both capital and operating impacts.

Capital costs are associated with work required to selectively remove and prune plant material in order to create vistas at 17 new locations and to open-up views at 29 existing locations where there are obscured views.

It is recommended that total capital costs of \$113,000 be funded using the same model used to fund the work undertaken by Dillon, which resulted in the recommendations being presented in this report. This funding model is 45% from the Ward 6 Capital Reserve, 35% from the Ward 7 Capital Reserve, and 20% from the Ward 8 Capital Reserve. The resulting cost share amounts are \$51,000 from the 2017 Ward 6 Capital Reserve, \$39,500 from the 2017 Ward 7 Capital Reserve, and \$22,500 from the 2017 Ward 8 Capital Reserve.

Annual operating costs of \$15,000 are required for on-going maintenance to protect the vistas at the noted 46 locations from encroaching vegetation. Operating impacts from this capital project would commence in 2018.

In addition to the above noted 46 locations that have cost implications there are 41 existing vista locations with no cost implications resulting from recommendations of this report. No work will be required here as they exhibit natural scenic views that, due to existing natural features, will remain open scenic views.

Staffing:

There are no staffing implications from this report

Legal:

There are no legal implications from this report.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Mountain Brow lands of Wards 6, 7 and 8 overlook the City of Hamilton from the top of the Niagara Escarpment, which is often referred to as “The Mountain” by residents of Hamilton. This vantage provides sweeping scenic views across the City with the potential for additional and enhanced views.

Currently, the City does not have a long-term strategy for maintenance of existing vistas or for the creation of new vista locations that ensure the natural heritage is preserved and enhanced. Therefore, vegetation has become overgrown to the point of partial or complete obstruction of views in many parts of the City.

Due to interest from residents of Wards 6, 7 and 8 for the expansion and maintenance of vistas along the mountain brow, staff was directed through a motion at Public Works Committee and approved at Council on September 23, 2015 to develop a Scenic Vista Management Plan to provide a long-term strategy for management of vistas along the mountain brow. Capital funds in the amount of \$165,000 were cost shared among the respective Ward Capital Reserves in 2015 for public consultation and the development of the plan.

Public Works, Environmental Services Division staff retained Dillon Consulting Limited (Dillon) to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the public lands along the Escarpment brow, which included a natural heritage assessment, development of criteria for evaluation, and a public consultation process. Through this process, specific vista locations were identified in 3 categories, which are: New Vistas (17); Existing Vistas with Obscured Views (29), and Existing Vistas with Unobscured Views (41). The result being 87 vista locations along the mountain brow lands of Wards 6, 7 and 8. These locations are identified in Appendix A to report PW16104.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

There are no policy implications from this report.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Councillors for Wards 6, 7 and 8 have been involved throughout the project and are aware of, and in agreement with the recommendations within this report.

Three public stakeholder meetings were held through the Mountain Brow Vista Study to engage the community and provide project information. These meetings informed the public of governing policies and project principals, provided a visual analysis of existing and potential vista locations and detailed the criteria that were used for their evaluation. In addition to the meetings, an on-line survey was made available on the City's website to allow members of the public to provide feedback.

Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) staff was consulted to confirm that the analysis and approach taken by the Consultant were agreeable with NEC objectives.

Public Works- Landscape Architectural Services and Corporate Services staff was consulted during the study to ensure there is no conflict with initiatives recommended through their Recreational Trails Master Plan and to provide GIS data showing land use, topography, access points and ortho photography.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The recommendations in Report PW16104 are intended to address Council's direction to staff to undertake a Scenic Vista Management Plan to establish and provide for long-term management of vistas along the mountain brow in Wards 6, 7 and 8.

During Dillon's comprehensive assessment of the mountain brow lands, they worked with City staff in technical data gathering, public consultation, and agency consultation

The technical data gathering and assessment consisted of:

- review of applicable policies;
- assessment of the existing natural environment, in autumn and spring, to understand vegetation communities and natural heritage features;
- assessments of visual impacts from the top of the Escarpment looking over the lower City, and from the lower City looking up at the Escarpment;
- assessment of existing site conditions to understand natural heritage quality, slope conditions, cultural heritage features, and scenic view potential; and
- examination of GIS data and City Engine 3D modeling to enable visual consideration of all assessment aspects.

Findings from the technical data gathering and assessment were presented to, and discussed with the community at stakeholder workshop events, and the NEC at meetings with staff. An online survey was also available to the community to provide feedback.

Key objectives noted below were identified through these consultations.

- Protect the unique ecological and historic areas while undertaking sustainable forest management.
- Provide adequate opportunities for enjoying the scenic views afforded by the elevated brow of the Escarpment.

- Carefully select new vista locations to ensure that the open landscape character of the Niagara Escarpment is preserved.
- Provide safe public access to the Niagara Escarpment brow.

Results of the technical work and consultation undertaken by Dillon are suggestions for work to be undertaken in the short-term upon approved funding, and for on-going long-term management of vistas along the Mountain Brow.

Short-term

There are 2 recommendations for action in the short term. Both of which result in the capital impacts noted above in the financial section.

1. Undertake selective removal and pruning at 17 locations to create new vistas.
2. Undertake selective removal and pruning at 29 locations where pruning and shrub clearing is required to open views that are currently obscured.

It is recommended by Dillon that the width of each opening not exceed 3-5 meters, that the disturbed area be stabilized with native ground covers, and that for each tree removed a replacement tree be planted in the vicinity. Replacement trees shall be native species.

On-going, Long-term

There are 2 recommendations for on-going, long-term management of the mountain brow vistas. Only the second one results in the operating impacts noted above in the financial section.

1. Monitor 41 locations where there are existing views that require no work now, or in the future. It is anticipated that no work will be required at these locations because they exhibit natural scenic views that, due to existing natural features, will remain open scenic views.
2. Undertake on-going management of 46 Vistas which resulted from 17 being newly created, and 29 being cleared of obstructions, in order to maintain open views.

It is recommended by Dillon that the on-going maintenance focus on removal of invasive plant species, and replacement of these removals with native low-growing material.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Clean and Green

Hamilton is environmentally sustainable with a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces.

Community Engagement & Participation

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A - Recommended Vistas Maps Wards 6, 7, and 8