

**Discovery Centre Opportunity Study (Preliminary Option):
Indigenous Community Feedback Summary, Summer 2023**

At the May 23, 2023, West Harbour Development Sub-Committee meeting, it was requested that additional consultation with the Indigenous community be undertaken with regard to the Discovery Centre Opportunity Study. The City’s Indigenous Relations Team (IRT) arranged for two sessions where staff from the Municipal Land Development Office (MLDO) and the Hamilton Public Library (HPL) presented information about the Discovery Centre Opportunity Study, outlined the Preliminary Concept for the future use of the building, answered questions and listened to feedback on the concept. The first meeting occurred August 12, 2023, with members of the Circle of Beads and the second on September 20, 2023, with members of the Indigenous Community Advisory Board (I-CAB).

The consultation questions consisted of the following:

1. What do you like about this concept?
2. Are there any concerns or considerations in further developing this concept?
3. If we proceed with the concept, do you have any suggestions for how best to engage with members of the Indigenous community? Who should be involved and what is their likely area of interest?

This document summarizes the themes of the feedback received during both meetings.

Interest in Developing the Preliminary Concept

- Feedback from the meetings indicated general interest in the Preliminary Option and general support for HPL moving forward with further work to develop the concept; however, it was also emphasized that clarifying aspects of governance is integral to the project in moving it forward. As part of proceeding, study governance needs to be defined early on to clarify involvement and role of the Indigenous community in decision-making about defining components of the multi-use space, and that defining the future operating governance model of the facility is integral to the vision.

Space Needs

- Dedicated space for use by the Indigenous communities in the Hamilton area is a challenge: there isn't enough of it and existing spaces are often not ideal for current and desired uses.
- There is a need for social and meeting space, cultural and ceremonial space, learning and storytelling space, artistic and creative spaces, indoor and outdoor space, and space for elders, youth, and everyone in between.
- There are significant differences in space needs across the Indigenous community, but there are also significant similarities. These overlapping needs could be well served by an integrated multi-use facility.

Facility Operation Governance

- Developing a clearly defined governance framework should be an immediate and central focus to the next phase of the project. This will involve ongoing consultation and trust building with the Indigenous community to avoid becoming a 'box-checking exercise.'
- What parts of the decision making are autonomous from HPL and the City and what parts are a shared decision process; a clear path to decision making authority and conflict resolution mechanisms needs to be developed in the next phase.
- Clear facility operation governance is needed to minimize cultural clashes and carve out exceptions to bureaucratic 'red tape' barriers that could impinge on use by the Indigenous community, especially for ceremonial or traditional practices.

Facilities and Exhibit Space

- Outdoor and indoor space at the Discovery Centre has tremendous potential for use by the Indigenous community. Emphasis on sustainability and Indigenous knowledge and design principles need to be central in any redevelopment and use plans.
- Emphasis on a safe and belonging space where Indigenous peoples can share their stories, histories and cultures. The first step in reconciliation is knowing and this vision was noted for its potential in learning and truth telling for Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike.

- Sufficient indoor and outdoor access to washroom facilities for the Indigenous community and the public, especially if it becomes a frequent event or ceremonial space. Sufficient public parking in close proximity and close transit access, especially for Indigenous Elders with mobility and accessibility concerns.

Communications, Consultation Strategy and Study Governance

- Expand upon the work of the Indigenous Relations Team. Build trust and demonstrate long-term commitment through action and engagement with Indigenous agencies, grassroots organizations and the wider urban Indigenous community;
- Retain a well-informed Indigenous consultant who can provide a pathway to engaging with traditional knowledge holders in the community – involve the City’s Indigenous Relations Team in this process;
- Be mindful of a diverse Indigenous community – demonstrate how the project is informed by local groups, needs, traditional knowledge, and design principles;
- Share how the project advances specific goals put forward by the Indigenous community in the local and national context, i.e., the Urban Indigenous Strategy and Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action;
- Think carefully about communications with the Indigenous community - share information about how the Indigenous community has been engaged to date and moving forward, and how feedback has been considered to date. Involve several Indigenous organizations in the process, as well as broader Indigenous community; and,
- Need to work on drawing relationship of the facility to the land – often times Indigenous facilities have a direct and clear relationship to the land that it rests on; however, there are opportunities to draw connections in other ways.