



# COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

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## COMMITTEE REPORT

**To:** Chair and Members of the Information, Heritage and Seniors Committee  
**From:** Jana Burns, Wellington Place Administrator  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 10, 2021  
**Subject:** **Wellington Place Mini-Master Plan**

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### **Wellington Place Mini-Master Plan**

The Wellington Place campus is an incredibly unique 206-acre property, exclusively owned by the County of Wellington. A Concept Plan was approved by Council in 2011 and was prepared in consultation with the communities of Wellington County. The guiding principles of the Concept Plan are as follows:

1. To respect and enhance the characteristics of a landmark property, providing space to service the needs of the larger community for years to come.
2. To ensure connectedness, creating an environment that is people-oriented, providing opportunities for gathering and social connectedness.
3. To support and encourage sustainable development, using sustainable design principles based on an integrated approach that considers social, environmental and economic factors.

Committee most recently provided direction to facilitate the next step of the design of Wellington Place, looking beyond the greenspace of the Commons, and incorporating the themes of the WCMA Action Plan. The themes identified in the Action Plan include the need for engagement space, creating a dynamic and inviting site, storage for future Museum collections, an Indigenous Medicine Garden, and ensuring effective flow within and around the building as well as climate resilience measures. The mini-master plan is now complete and includes 12 capital projects over a 5-year budget schedule.

Each of the proposed spaces within the plan are intentionally low maintenance, innovative and climate-friendly designed as well as completely accessible to the public. Together, the projects connect to form unique places for people to meet, learn, play, reflect and celebrate. The individual spaces are each naturalized to blend into our existing forests, trails, meadows and the Grand River. The paths that connect the spaces are landscaped, but also natural. The design is an exciting representation of the future and a respectful display of our past. Consideration has been given to ensure the individual spaces reflect the County's core values as the gatekeeper to the County's future and the personal wellbeing of its residents.

### **Museum East Side Exterior**

There is a need for more parking at the WCMA site. There are currently 152 spots in the parking lot, with five additional spots dedicated to the library and nine to accessible parking. Creating another small parking lot with 20 spots on the east side of the Museum would enable parking for the snow hill as well as create symmetry for the site. A walkway is proposed to provide the same symmetry and connection to the east gardens and main entrance. We are regular hosts to Terrace residents on golf cart tours and providing them additional paths and gardens would be of benefit.

### **Museum Entrance and Interior**

Great consideration has gone into reopening the original Poor House entrance as the main entrance. While it is the logical entrance, it also enables visitors an authentic experience, one they often expect

when they search for the building's entrance. The proposal includes renovating the current entrance to be inviting for accessible patrons. It also proposes renovations to two rooms on the lower level to create two offices and a printer and supplies room. Renovations to the first level include creating a reception area and adding natural light to the first floor. The second level proposes a universal washroom for the public.

### **Museum Attic**

Unknown to most is an extremely special space under the roof of the east side of the Museum. This unfinished attic is accessed through a small circular wooden staircase adjacent to the Conservator's office. It is large, empty and has one large window facing the snow hill. It is an eerie space, it is a gem and it is as close as one can get to what the original Poor House looked and smelled like. It would be fascinating to understand what can be done with this special room.

### **Barn Paddock**

The paddock is currently our largest space for large audiences, but lacks spaces for those with mobility problems. We would like to continue to host small music events, children's workshops, events on the lawn, and propose to pour a concrete pad next to the poultry house to enable a flat surface as an accessible space. The Aboyne Child Care Centre children regularly frequent our site, and especially appreciate this area of the property. There was consensus amongst staff that building a play structure of natural materials in this space was of high value. A playground that mimics a small barn with slides and has a replica of the original Poor House outhouse would keep with the theme of educating the public on our agricultural roots, especially as the outhouse was later renovated into a pig barn.

### **The Indigenous Medicine Garden**

Various segments of the community are served by the Wellington Place institutional campus, but a safe and accessible space for engagement is missing. The Indigenous Medicine Garden will include a multi-purpose pavilion for teachings, workshops and events, space for ceremony, orchards, native species and a Three Sisters Garden. The Medicine Garden will be Wellington County's first dedicated Indigenous space for ceremony and programming. It will provide inclusivity and vibrancy to the Wellington Place campus.

The Garden will act as a space for inspiration and engaging the public, including children, in its planning, planting, ongoing upkeep and connection to the land through storytelling and traditional Indigenous teachings. Our diverse populations will have a space for community and professional learning about land-based pedagogies, and our Indigenous community members will have a safe space for healing. It must be made clear that the design is only an initial rendering. The Indigenous Advisory Committee will guide the planning of the Garden in a collaborative and inclusive way. Indigenous communities, the public and Wellington Place campus members will be engaged. The pavilion will double as a stunning skating rink in the winter, with lights and water connection. The building would be a wood frame structure, encouraging social gatherings, markets and impromptu picnics.

### **Amphitheatre**

The amphitheatre is a formal gathering space in the shape of a semi circle, strategically built into the sloped hill. It will provide seating constructed of grass and concrete, and have trees placed to intentionally provide shade for an approximate audience of 200 people. This space can serve as an open air theatre, school engagement, casual gatherings or concerts. The amphitheatre is integrated into the sloped area leading down to the storm water management pond and provides for beautiful views.

### **New Storage Building**

Staff have done a complete inventory of each room within the Museum, Archives and outbuildings, and are undertaking an organization exercise. However, as our collection of Wellington County historical artifacts grows, a new environmentally controlled storage space is required. Encompassing 3,000 square feet, the proposed new building will be located in the engagement area. The building will feature a lit exterior glass viewing area visible from the trail. With its location at the intersection of main trails, the building exterior will include a bike repair station and a water fill station for people and their pets.

### **Root Cellar**

Root Cellars are growing in popularity and relevance. The cellar can be utilized by the adjacent gardens and orchards for food storage. After speaking with our contacts in education, there is interest in using the root cellar for classes and using the commercial kitchen for teaching canning. The Poor House originally had a root cellar and this functional and interpretive display would demonstrate how the earth naturally cools, insulates and humidifies and its continued relevance into the future. Keeping with the theme of functional spaces that are low maintenance but incredibly beautiful, we would consider using the beautification space around the cellar for growing functional foods, incorporating interpretative displays.

### **The Commons**

As identified in the Wellington Place Concept Plan, the need for a large public commons area was expressed by the public. We envision a place for the community to eat their lunch, cool off from the sun, be inspired by nature while they gather or relax. The Commons is designated as an open green space, with several trail pathways that circle through a forested landscape, looping around a central natural water garden. Envisioned to be a naturalized water play park, it will feature gradual slopes with flowing water, natural landscape of various sized boulders, coniferous trees, native grasses and vegetation. Trees will screen this park from the adjacent roads and provide shaded areas.

### **Meadow**

We propose minimal intervention in this space south of County Road 18 by the Grand River, encouraging foraging of mushrooms, leeks, fiddleheads, etc. and developing nature and ecology programmes for the public. The trails receive great attention and we would propose only adding more experiences and perhaps interpretive plaques to go along with our theme of creating awareness and educational opportunities. As Indigenous partnerships are established through the development of the Medicine Garden, there may be the prospect of Indigenous use and teaching within the Meadow and river forest area.

Overall, the plan creates a campus with spaces that encourage healthy activities and has great potential for future programming opportunities. Each area is meant to be compelling, incorporating things to discover and intentionally being photogenic. Creative design advice was provided both by the County's Climate Change and Sustainability Manager and the County's Smart Cities Project Manager. Natural shading is incorporated into the congregation areas and water gardens are used to provide cooling. Where there is hardscaping, such as the pavilion concrete, low impact design elements are incorporated such that water drains and trees provide natural canopies. No trees will be removed anywhere, on the contrary, we would like to plant more trees across the entire property and have discussed this with our Green Legacy colleagues. Whether one is foraging for fiddleheads in the meadow by the Grand River, playing on the structure in the Museum paddock area, or skating in the pavilion, the size of the property allows for various activities to take place at the same time without being disruptive to any particular one.

This plan is being presented to Committee for endorsement only. Staff currently do not have a proposal for implementation of the overall plan until 2023. With Committee's endorsement, staff would develop a funding plan to implement the activities over five years beginning in 2023.

However, as Committee is aware, staff have incorporated projects into this plan that were previously identified by Council. The 2021 budget allocated \$411,000 to address the WCMA storage requirements. In the plan, the mezzanine expansion project to the existing WCMA storage building is estimated to cost \$245,000. Remaining funds could be utilized to construct the paddock play structure. Staff have also submitted a Federal funding request for \$250,000 in August 2021 for the Indigenous Medicine Garden, and would have a further \$250,000 in the WCMA Community Donations Reserve to contribute, should a portion of this project be identified as a priority for 2022.

**Recommendation:**

That the Wellington Place Mini-Master Plan be approved and forwarded to County Council; and

That the remaining funds in the existing WP and Artifact Storage Buildings project be used to complete the new mezzanine, humidification and freight lift as well as the natural playground and barn paddock structure and landscape; and

That the remaining projects identified in 2022 be included in the 2023 Budget and 10-Year Plan process; and

That staff be directed to develop a funding plan to implement the remaining activities over five years beginning in 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jana Burns', written in a cursive style.

Jana Burns  
Wellington Place Administrator