



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report To: Council

From: Andy Scott, Director, Strategic Initiatives & Business Development

Date: June 18, 2025

Report No: ES-015-25

Subject: Civic Precinct Update

Recommendation: THAT staff be directed to proceed with Phase 1 of the Downtown Civic Precinct as described in ES-015-25.

THAT staff be directed to prepare terms for an extension to the Temporary Patio Program as described in ES-015-25, for consideration in advance of the spring of 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Desire for a large public gathering space in the downtown core has shared by residents consistently for over 20 years.
- Since 2016 the idea of a new high quality public realm has been conceptualized and the desire to make progress was reinforced by council through the most current strategic planning cycle.
- In response to this direction, staff have made progress in securing parcels of land which are intended to be converted into municipal parking lots. This allows the existing parking lots between Mary Street and Main Street to be leveraged to facilitate the creation of a new Civic Precinct.
- Staff are recommending a phased development approach which will allow the municipality to respond to neighbouring private sector redevelopment.
- Phase one of the project would see staff engage designers to create a final design and commence construction of a new civic square.
- During the design and construction phases, it is recommended that a new seasonal patio program be introduced exclusively for businesses within the Downtown Milton Business Improvement Agency area. This will support businesses during the construction phase.

REPORT

Background

The concept of a downtown civic precinct was born out of consistent community feedback. A common thread is the demand for a social gathering space.

The Town's 2016 Downtown Study summarized these community desires through the creation of the following *Vision for the Downtown*:

Use a strong Civic presence as an anchor to build on while amplifying Downtown Milton's historic assets into a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented Downtown with a high-quality public realm. Harmoniously preserve the beloved character of the Downtown while intensifying in ideal locations, creating a sense of Place for all of Milton with a space to be enjoyed by the entire community.

The following five objectives ("Five Objectives") were set and endorsed by Council at that time:

- Civic Presence as an Anchor in the Downtown
- Build on the Existing Heritage
- Create a vibrant Public Realm - A destination for the entire community
- Have a pedestrian-friendly, interactive community space
- Placemaking for the entire community

Between 2016 and 2022 much has happened to refine this vision, however, the feedback from the community for a desire to have a civic public space in the Downtown core has remained consistent through public engagement for our Official Plan, Culture Plan and Economic Development Strategy to name just a few.

The Town's current Economic Development strategy explicitly recognizes the importance of placemaking as a key workforce attraction and retention driver. Especially for workers, business owners and entrepreneurs in our growing knowledge-based sectors. Investing in placemaking was determined to be an important priority.

Placemaking is the deliberate shaping of an environment to facilitate social interaction and improve a community's quality of life. According to the Project for Public Spaces, "placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community".

Council will recall in the 2022 Civic Precinct update (ES-005-22), that elementary components of the civic precinct project were re-evaluated given post-pandemic changes to market conditions.

Background

Those components were:

- Office/Commercial Space
- Town Hall Office Space needs
- Downtown Parking

At that time, Staff recommended that:

- The civic placemaking component of the project proceeded as planned,
- There is a reduced need for imminent Town Hall expansion with the introduction of a hybrid work model post-pandemic and flexibility in other Town-owned real estate which could be leveraged for town staff workspace if necessary,
- The need for the Town to construct office/commercial space which would be made available to private sector tenants is reducing given the progress made on mixed-use land developments such as the Milton Education Village, MTSA (now known as Uptown Milton) and Agerton.
- That parking should be a key consideration when planning for the introduction of a civic precinct.

In 2023, Council reaffirmed the importance of progressing the Civic Precinct in the downtown core by highlighting it as a project of immediate strategic importance.

Discussion

Since that time Staff have focused their efforts on considering alternate downtown parking options while also creating high-level design concepts which take into account the 2022 council direction.

Parking

Maintaining existing parking options in the downtown core as the civic precinct project progresses through a planned phased development continues to be a necessity. To meet this need, Staff has facilitated the purchase of two adjoining parcels of land which are intended to be converted into a future municipal parking lot. Staff are pursuing other parcels of land for the same purpose.

Discussion



Figure 1 - Location of new municipal parking lot

The parcel of land pictured (figure 1) fronts Millside Drive and is intended to be a new permanent municipal parking lot which will replace an equivalent portion of the parking lost on the temporary lots between Mary Street and Main Street as the civic precinct is developed.

This lot is strategically located to provide 15-minute walkability (figure 2) to Downtown, the Millpond and portions of our Uptown (MTSA) area.

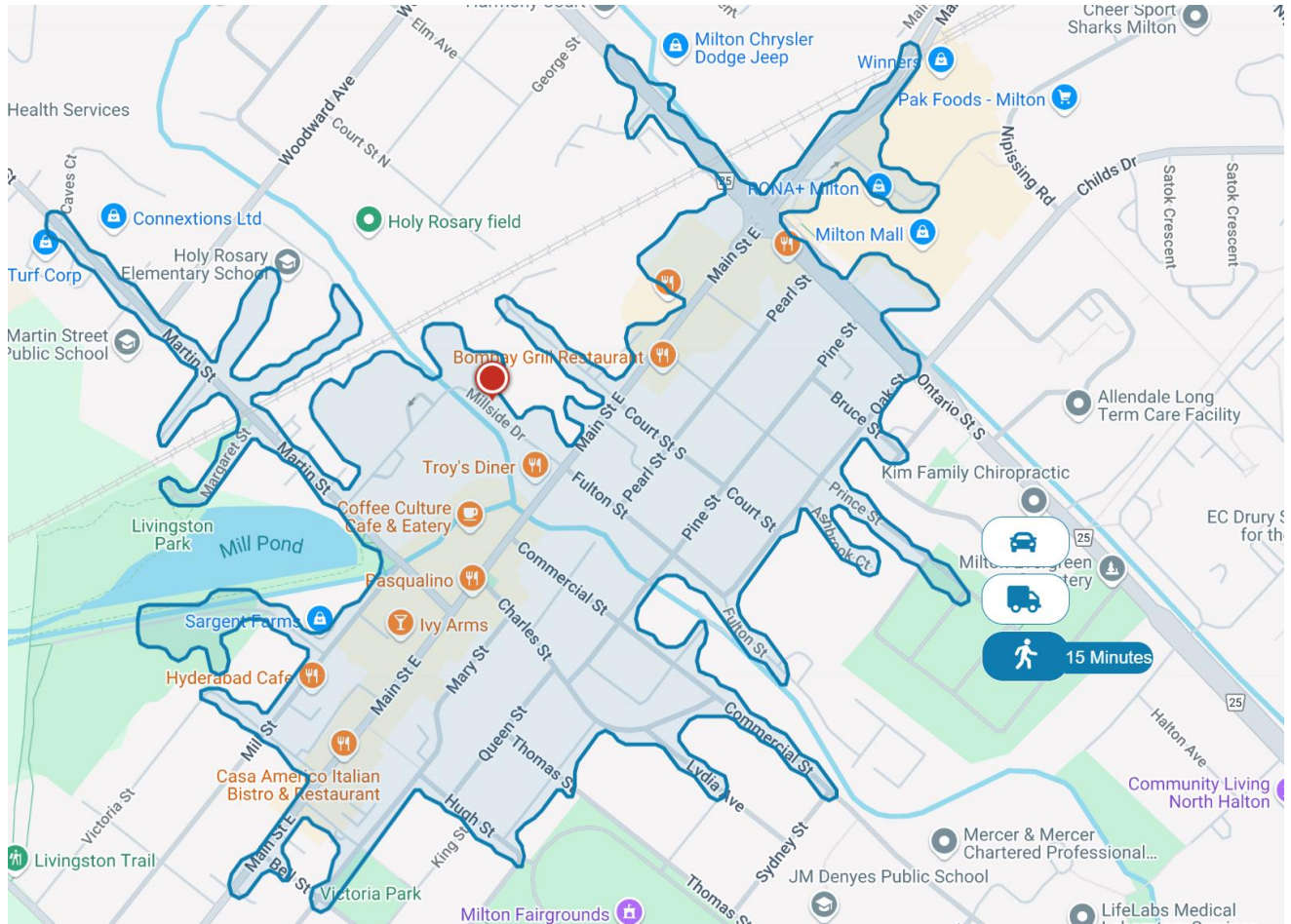


Figure 2 - 15-minute walkable distance from the new municipal parking lot

As will be outlined later in this report, the phased implementation of the civic precinct allows for incremental changes to parking availability to be a key future consideration. This approach allows for the civic precinct project to proceed, for the volume of downtown parking to remain, and for parking in the downtown core to remain free which is a significant municipal investment and benefit to the businesses located within the downtown core.

Civic Precinct Phased Design Concept

Building off the original 2016 'Vision of the Downtown', the updated 2022 civic precinct guidance, and Council's vision of Milton out in 2051. Staff have created a conceptual plan which sees the civic precinct built out in phases, taking into consideration downtown parking availability, private sector development and market conditions.

Discussion

This conceptual plan leverages all parcels of land and properties between Town Hall and Main Street East (Figure 3).



Figure 3 - Civic Precinct Planning Area

Phase 1 - Present to 2031

Phase 1 would see the Town create a new public space (Figure 4) between the privately owned block of properties fronting onto Main Street East and Milton Town Hall. Integrating the forecourt of Town Hall and the Mary Street public right of way will create a large civic gathering space. This

Discussion

section of Mary Street would be enhanced as a shared or flexible street environment, which could be fully pedestrianized for special occasions while still accommodating essential traffic flow.



Figure 4 - Phase 1 design concept

This concept would retain a large amount of temporary parking and service access, while permitting private property owners to reorient the rear of their businesses to activate the edge of the new civic square with private patios, entries and outdoor trading.

The current zoning of the privately owned block of commercial buildings is '*Central Business District Core Commercial Zone*' (CBD-A) which permits the redevelopment of those properties up to a maximum of four stories with a range of retail, commercial, office and residential uses permitted. It is anticipated that the phasing of the civic precinct will create an opportunity for the private sector to incorporate the new public space into their planning. This has the potential to create a range of new retail and commercial opportunities in the downtown and add to the active nature of the precinct (figure 5). Permeability through the new development in the form of a direct walkway or breezeway to Main Street would be encouraged.

Discussion

Subject to private sector redevelopment proceeding, this would be an opportune time to complete an updated Precinct Feasibility Study and determine the economic market conditions that might influence Phase 2 decision-making.

Figure 5 – Complimentary private sector redevelopment



Phase 2 - 2031 to 2045

The retention of temporary parking is intentional in that it retains additional space for future incorporation into the precinct design. Once the private sector redevelopment of the existing commercial block is complete, the stage will be set for the creation of additional spaces within the precinct.

Staying true to the original 'vision of the downtown' and the Five Objectives that were previously endorsed by Council, up to three land parcels could be made available for development either by the municipality, through a range of public/private partnerships or outright sale to the private sector. The best way to proceed should be guided by an updated feasibility study and market demand analysis, which will determine the most advantageous model for the municipality to consider.

Discussion

These development blocks (Figure 6 - highlighted in purple) are intended to build on the increased commercial/retail opportunities created by the private sector redevelopment to open a range of additional spaces and further activate the precinct.



Figure 6 - Phase 2 Integration of future commercial/community/mixed-uses into the precinct

A smaller portion of parking could potentially be maintained with alternate downtown parking options located elsewhere. The precinct could become a pedestrianized hub of activity with a range of uses and activities across weekdays, weekends and holidays.

The opportunity for commercial space creation aligns with Milton's anticipated sectoral growth. The Professional, Scientific and Technical Services sector (PSTS) has grown locally by 68% since 2018, with further sectoral growth projected in the future. Growth is also anticipated across the Finance, Healthcare and Retail sectors.

Attraction and growth of businesses within these sectors would benefit from the increased availability of commercial space centred around an active public/gathering space.

Phase 3 - 2045 to 2051

Should downtown parking solutions be fully migrated elsewhere, the opportunity for the full pedestrianization of the precinct may become a reality. Spaces can be designed in such a way to be fully integrated for large community gatherings, but smaller-scale gatherings and activations may be possible at the same time through strategic green space design separation.



Figure 7 - Phase 3 Full pedestrianisation of the precinct

This would see each component of Milton's vision of the downtown realized. The creation of a vibrant public space, a location that takes advantage of its proximity to the civic presence of the town hall and other heritage properties, becomes an attractive placemaking destination for the community to gather and spend time for work and play.

Next Steps

In 2022, through report ES-005-22 Council endorsed staff to proceed with retaining consulting services for next steps, including the design of an updated civic precinct concept for Downtown Milton.

With the Town securing land in the downtown to be converted into an alternate parking lot location. Staff are ready to proceed to the detailed design and initial construction of phase one of the three-phased precinct plan as outlined above. Staff intends to initiate a bid process in 2025 in order to start the design phase, including the collection of community input on design concepts.

Temporary Patio Program

Since 2020 the Town has operated a temporary seasonal patio program. This was initially intended to support businesses impacted by the emergency gathering measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since that time, the program has transitioned away from business recovery to one that supports quality of place and vibrancy.

Discussion

With the construction of the civic precinct planned, this new public space has the potential to create opportunities for privately operated patios and spaces that abut the precinct. While the current program is scheduled to conclude at the end of 2025, it is recommended that a version of this program be extended for a further five years in the downtown core to allow seasonal patios to operate during construction. This will also allow for a re-evaluation of the program once the civic precinct is operational, with private sector businesses and property owners having evaluated the ability to incorporate patios and outdoor spaces on their neighbouring property.

It is recommended that a newly launched program be scoped to those businesses that are located within the Downtown Milton Business Improvement Area (DMBIA) geography, and that we offer a streamlined multi-year permit for those businesses who wish to participate.

The current temporary patio program has been offered to businesses who wish to participate with no cost recovery for staff time, administrative processing fees or temporary loss of parking spaces. As we transition to the newly launched program, it is recommended that staff be directed to implement a new user fee to cover staffing, administrative and inspection costs linked to the issuance of a multi-year permit.

An environmental scan of other seasonal patio programs demonstrates the implementation of a range of fees:

Burlington

- Application fee: \$492.92
- \$40 per square meter of public land utilized

Oakville

- Application fee: Between \$208 and \$427, depending on patio type
- \$580 fee per parking space utilized
- \$56 for outdoor merchandising displays

Guelph

- Application fee: \$177
- Agreement fee: \$238
- Inspection fee: \$260
- \$10 per square meter per month

Hamilton

- Application fee: \$679.478
- \$40 per square meter of public land utilized

Discussion

Mississauga

- All fees have been temporarily exempted to Dec 31, 2025 via municipal bylaw

By taking a multi-year permitting approach, internal business processes can be made more efficient which in turn minimizes administrative staff time. These efficiencies can be translated into benefits to the applicants through reduced user fees relative to those applied by other municipalities.

If the recommendations contained herein are approved, staff will work on the creation of a new seasonal patio program in late 2025 for a launch in the spring of 2026. A proposed structure and user fee would be presented to Council for consideration at that time.

Financial Impact

The Civic Precinct project currently has an approved budget of \$7,810,847, which has been available the aforementioned land acquisitions and will be utilized to fund the detailed design, amongst other requirements. A further \$46,424,022 was identified within the ten-year forecast as part of the 2025 Budget for the Civic Precinct. This forecast was based on prior estimates with consideration of a potential town hall expansion and/or structured parking. Given the new concept, the phased approach, the expectation of private sector investments and partnerships, as well as the Town's ability to secure land elsewhere in the downtown to avoid the need for a multi-story parking solution, reductions to the future investment that is required from the Town are expected. Staff are evaluating the current budget forecast with updates expected as part of the 2026 Budget.

As part of the development of the terms for the extension of the temporary patio program, staff will evaluate the expected costs of the program and develop a potential user fee structure that Council can consider in order to support the program. As noted above, should the Town establish a multi-year approval framework for eligible properties, savings in the proposed user fee rates may be realized.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Scott
Senior Director, Strategic Initiatives

For questions, please contact: Andy Scott

Phone: Ext. 2103



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report #:
ES-015-25
Page 13 of 13

Attachments

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Approved by CAO
Andrew M. Siltala
Chief Administrative Officer

Recognition of Traditional Lands

The Town of Milton resides on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee people. The Town of Milton shares this land and the responsibility for the water, food and resources. We stand as allies with the First Nations as stewards of these lands.