

**HESPELER HERITAGE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT STUDY
FOCUS GROUP 3**

VILLAGE OF HESPELER

MARCH 13, 2024

FOCUS GROUP OVERVIEW

Welcome and thank you for your help!

Housekeeping Items:

- Consultant Team will take notes.
- Meeting will be recorded for internal note-taking purposes.
- Meeting is 90 minutes long. Any unanswered questions will be responded to by email, after the meeting.
- Future Meetings will be scheduled during the Plan Phase.



MARCH AGENDA

- Hespeler River Activation Master Plan (10 mins)
- Conservation Area / Pedestrian Bridge EA (10 mins)
- SW/SE Study Area (15 mins)
- Heritage Conservation Districts (30 mins)
 - Significance, uniqueness and history.
- Questions & Next Steps (10 mins)



HESPELER VILLAGE RIVER ACTIVATION MASTER PLAN, JULY 2003

- Master Plan centers around the Hespeler Mill Pond and the Speed River.
- Enhance the Hespeler Village Core Area's social, environmental, and economic aspects while protecting its existing attributes and introducing viable new elements.
- There were numerous committee meetings including a meeting with the Grand River Conservation Authority who agreed with the overall concept put forward but with the added note that efforts should also be made to improve the water quality in the Mill Pond.

The Master Plan incorporated well-received aspects from two explored concepts:

- **Strengthening the downtown core through intensified urban uses**
- **Providing public open space adjacent to the core for passive and active recreational uses**
- **Urban landscape improvements like vegetation along the street and bridge, lighting, banners, and murals**
- **Revitalization of existing buildings into mixed-use developments**
- **Creation of a wildlife sanctuary, wetland enhancement, and an interpretive boardwalk system**

2 CONCEPTS PRESENTED

Concept A: Enhancement of Natural Environment

- Selective dredging of the Mill Pond and creation of marsh wetlands with islands for wildlife
- Strengthening of green corridors, open spaces, and trail connections
- Improvement of views of the river
- Introduction of passive recreation elements such as a multi-use trail system
- Active recreation areas for outdoor sports, indoor facilities, and kayak / canoe launches
- A pedestrian boardwalk system around the Hespeler Mill Pond

Concept B: Economic Development + Environment

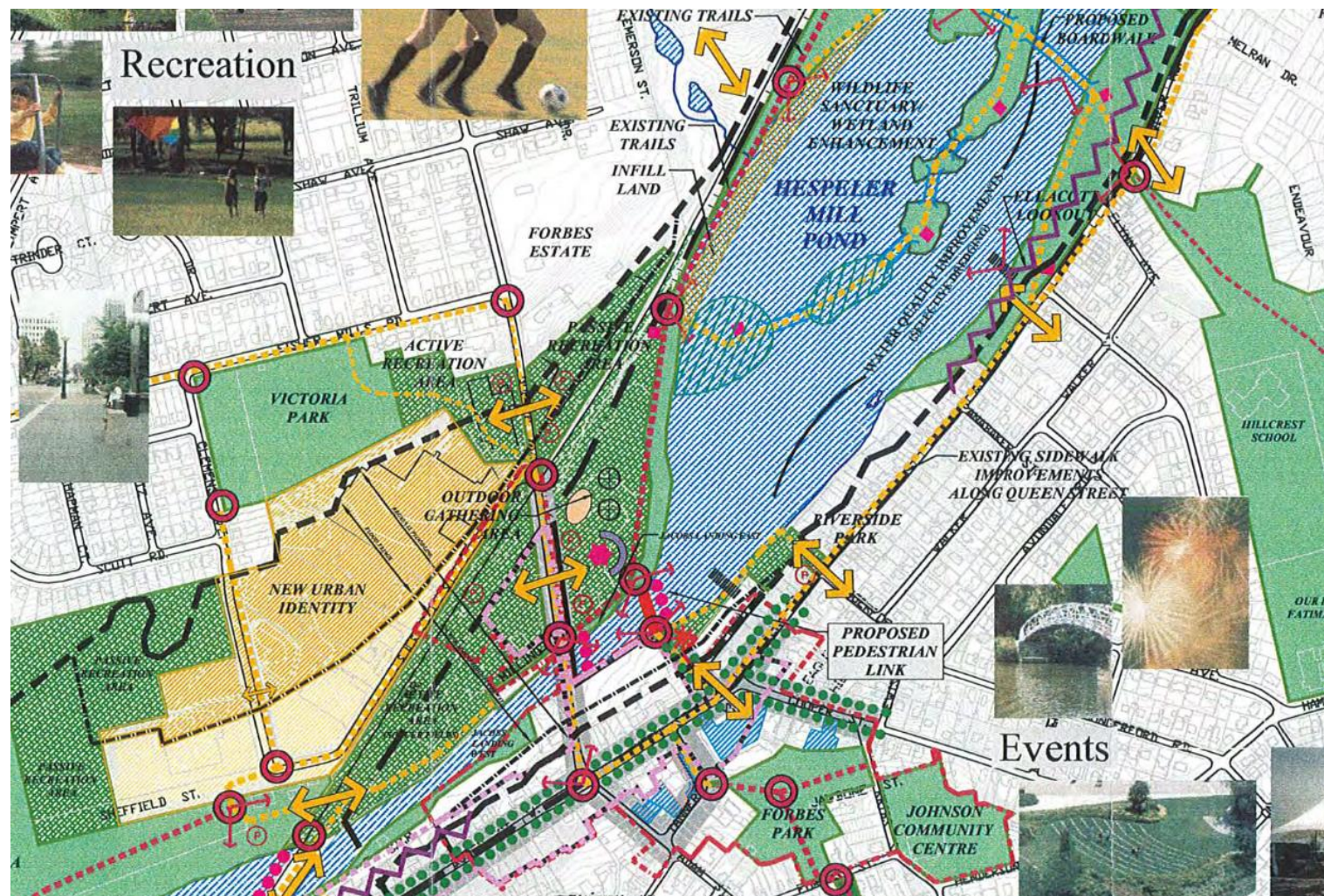
- Combining economic development with environmental enhancements, which included:
- Re-use and conversion of existing industrial buildings to commercial and residential uses to maintain an employment base and attract visitors
- Public open spaces for both passive and active uses, as well as outdoor gathering areas for events and festivals
- Incorporation of green spaces for sporting events, picnic areas, and boat launches, mixed with recreational activities such as an indoor skateboard park
- An extensive trail / boardwalk system to link residential neighbourhoods with the Core Area through enhanced green corridors

DRAFT MASTER PLAN CONCEPT

- Strengthening the downtown core through intensified urban uses;
- Providing public open space adjacent to the core, for passive and active use;
- Introduce urban aesthetic landscape improvements (lighting, vegetation, murals, etc.);
- Revitalize existing buildings to mixed-use developments;
- Wildlife sanctuary and wetland enhancement;
- Interpretive boardwalk system.

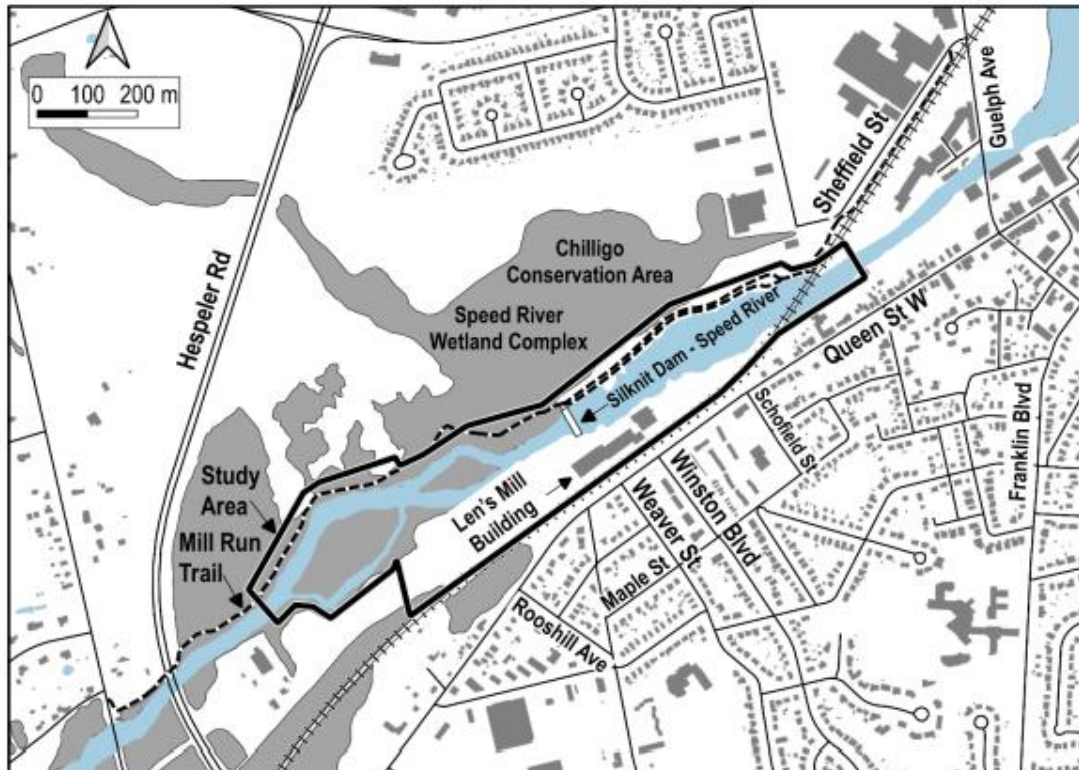
“NEW URBAN IDENTITY” IMPLEMENTATION

Transformation Goal
Expansion of Core Area
Eligibility for Financial Incentives
Re-Development and New Uses
Revitalization and Exploration



PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE OVER SPEED RIVER

Figure 1-1: Study Area



- The need for a new pedestrian bridge and proposed trail were identified in the City of Cambridge's Cycling Master Plan, completed in 2020. The bridge would link the existing Mill Run trail on the north side of the Speed River (south of Chilligo Conservation Area) and the new proposed trail on the south side of the Speed River along Queen Street W.) The new trail connection to the bridge is also a part of this study.
- Some identified goals were also to provide:
 - The bridge connection would connect to other future All Ages and Abilities facilities (Hespeler Trail, Winston Blvd etc.).
 - The bridge would also provide an alternate route into the Hespeler core (the other being from Guelph Avenue).

- ✓ **Technical Considerations**
- ✓ **Social and Economic Environment**
- ✓ **Cultural Environment**
- ✓ **Natural Environment**

- **The EA identified 17 potential and protected heritage properties in the Study Area. These included:**
 - Former textile mill building (National Historic Site and designated under the Ontario Heritage Act)
 - Speed River (Canadian Heritage River)
 - **Chilligo Conservation Area**
 - Mill Run Trail
 - Silknit Dam

Comments:

- The proposed route around the former Lens Mill building isn't going to work when it is developed into condos.

- Proximity of the Pedestrian Bridge to Hespeler Village (some feel it is too far West, and people will still resort to using the Railway Bridge).

- Increase the foot and bicycle traffic in Chilligo Conservation. This may in turn encourage the GRCA (Grand River Conservation Authority) to do some overdue maintenance on the trails therein.

- **Pedestrian Bridge:** The Hespeler Bridge EA has been completed, and the City is hoping to move into the Bridge design. That design Phase is scheduled, starting this year and will carry into next year.
- **Hespeler Trail:** The City has run into some property constraint issues in regard to the trail that we are trying to sort out. Once the property constraints are resolved we would be looking to have the 60% design completed and then continuing in the process with a Public Consultation and final design submissions.



STUDY AREA

- Where is the strongest, most cohesive collection of heritage resources that tell Hespeler's important stories and that provide it with its contemporary, valued character?
- How do we define Cultural Heritage in Hespeler?
 - A concentration of heritage buildings, sites, structures;
 - A sense of visual coherence;
 - A distinctiveness which enables districts to be recognized and distinguishable from their surroundings or from neighbouring areas;
 - Topography;
 - Buildings & Architectural details;
 - Landmarks;
 - Landscapes, Public Open Spaces, Views;
 - Spatial Patterns, site arrangements, circulation networks;
 - **Committee Suggestions> How best to leverage these unique and significant heritage characteristics into an HCD?**

SIGNIFICANCE HIGHLIGHTS

- Well-preserved collection of street layouts, lotting patterns, buildings, streetscapes, views, and landscape features.
- The Speed River is a key natural feature that has fostered the growth of Hespeler, defined the settlement and industrial patterns, and remains integral in the quality of life in the Village.
- Hespeler's industrial history is evident in the architecture of former factories and mills. While some of these structures may have been repurposed or renovated over the years, many retain elements of their original design.
- The Dominion Woollens/Silkknit/Forbes textile building played a role in shaping the identity of Hespeler and was an integral part of the village's history and culture. Many residents can tie their heritage to the Mill. Although it has sustained considerable damage and change over time, it's undeniably profound in the history of Hespeler.
- Architecturally, Hespeler has a diverse collection of buildings (Institutional, residential, industrial), that represent various time frames in the history of the village.
- Hespeler has a strong sense of community spirit, and residents take pride in their village's history and heritage.

Committee Suggestions> This is just a start! How would you best describe what is significant?

NEXT STEPS...

- Completion of the HCD Study.
- Decision to continue to the HCD Plan Phase (late May-early June).

Please feel free to submit comments via Jeremy to the Consultant Team.

Thank you for your contributions and time!

