

PIONEER PARK

Bayfield, Ontario

MASTER PLAN

PRESENTED AUGUST 1, 2006

Revised and Approved August 2006, Revised and Approved August 2008

Revised and Approved August 2014 and 2016

Introduction:

The purpose of this Master Plan is to provide long-term guidance for the future development of Pioneer Park and the ongoing maintenance of the grounds and landscape. Any work in the park, including the undertaking of improvements, should conform to the principles and guidelines expressed in this Master Plan.

The Master Plan builds on the vision expressed in the original Constitution for Pioneer Park (Ontario Letters Patent, 12 May 1947).

"To promote the health and enjoyment of the Bayfield area through owning and managing a park or parks open to the public without charge, and to undertake other projects for the welfare of the community."

The Master Plan, once adopted by the Pioneer Park Association at its Annual General Meeting (AGM), will be reviewed annually by the Board of Directors and any amendments and updates proposed, will be subsequently put before the membership at the next AGM for approval.

The descriptive parts of the Master Plan are to be read in conjunction with information provided in the Appendix. Included in the Appendix is the Base Plan drawing of the park, the Tree Inventory and other details, schedules and drawings that are deemed necessary to fully illustrate and explain the Master Plan. These will be reviewed annually and any additions and changes will be made as needed.

Each year, a program of improvements and required maintenance for the park, which identifies current priorities, ongoing commitments to maintenance, new projects to be undertaken and budget costs associated with the work will be prepared and reviewed by the Board of Directors before the program of work is undertaken that year.

1. PARK LAYOUT;

Pioneer Park has a strong, well-structured plan based on its original layout, its orientation to the lake and its relationship to the village streets (See Appendix A). The different spaces or 'rooms' defined by the cedar hedges accommodate a range of activities (e.g. volleyball court), offer different experiences within the Park and frame significant views. The park has a balance of large open areas that can accommodate large events and gatherings and smaller, more intimate spaces that are conducive to quieter activities.

Guidelines:

- 1.1. Good visibility and access to the park should be maintained.

The park should be made to feel open, safe and inviting to the public.

- 1.2 Existing spaces, activities and views should be respected when any improvements to the park are proposed or new plantings are undertaken.

2. HEDGES;

The cedar hedges define the edges of the park and the different spaces or 'rooms' within the park. Openings in the hedges allow access to the park, movement between different spaces in the park and frame views into the park and to the lake. Some of the hedge has been recently pruned up from the bottom to open up views through the hedge.

Guidelines:

- 2.1 Maintain the health of the cedar hedge by regular feeding and pruning.
- 2.2 Maintain openings in the hedge by regularly pruning back the edges of cedars that have grown into the gaps in the hedge. Further 'lifting' of the hedge by pruning lower branches should not be carried out.

3. TREES AND SHRUBS;

According to the latest Tree Inventory (Appendix B), there are 34 trees and shrubs inside the park (not counting the cedar hedge or trees and shrubs on the bank slope). As well, there are 27 trees along the periphery of the park, within the three road allowances that border the park. Most of these are significant older specimens that give Pioneer Park its distinctive character as a mature, well-treed park. Although most of the species are native (e.g. sugar maple, American beech, black walnut, white pine), there are a number of interesting exotic species (e.g. ginkgo, European beech, Scot's pine, Japanese lilac) that give some variety to the park landscape.

Guidelines:

- 3.1 Maintain the health of the trees and shrubs by regular feeding and pruning. Where lower branches interfere with activities in the park, they should be pruned back. General pruning to remove dead wood and allow penetration of light and air important to the health of the landscape should be carried out regularly.
- 3.2 Younger trees and new plantings should be mulched over their root zone, to suppress weeds, add nutrients to the soil, lessen competition from turf grass, and retain moisture.
- 3.3 Grass mowing equipment should be kept away from all trees and shrubs, especially younger ones, to avoid damage to the trunk by power mowers and weed trimmers.
- 3.4 Opportunities for strategically infilling with young trees to replenish the aging stock of existing trees should be identified annually as part of the work program for the coming year. Locations should meet

other guidelines in the Master Plan concerning the park layout and activities in the park.

- 3.5 Co-ordinate with the Municipality of Bluewater the maintenance of trees within the road allowances adjacent to the park.

3. TURFGRASS;

All the area in the park above the bank, apart from the area covered by hedges, is maintained as lawn area. As the park hosts a considerable amount of use such as picnicking, sunset viewing, informal play, special events such as concerts, and steady pedestrian and bicycle traffic, the turfgrass in the park is important in supporting these activities.

In 1998, a gravel parking lot in the park, accessed via Colina Street, was decommissioned and seeded over as a lawn area. This increased the area of the park dedicated to pedestrian use and kept unneeded vehicular traffic out of the park. The grass in this area, since it was installed over the gravel parking lot base, is not as healthy as in other parts of the park. This area is also the most heavily used part of the park.

Guidelines:

- 4.1 Maintain the health of the turfgrass by regular feeding, using environmentally sound, organic methods where possible.
- 4.2 Top dress with compost or soil where necessary to rejuvenate the turfgrass and to supplement the topsoil layer (e.g. lawn area over former parking lot).
- 4.3 Aerate the lawn areas periodically, especially in high traffic areas where the soil becomes compacted.

4. SPECIAL PLANTINGS;

The park landscape is based on a straightforward and easy to maintain design concept. The hedges, trees, shrubs and open lawn areas are the principal elements of the main part of the park above the bank. However, there have traditionally been two other elements of the park landscape: the

lilac garden along the Colina Street edge and lines of daffodils planted along the fence lines. Both of these have become neglected over the years and will need to be rejuvenated. The lilac garden has declined as a result of increased shade over the years from the adjacent walnut trees and cedar hedge. Additionally, lilacs are among the species that are adversely affected by toxins exuded from the roots of nearby black walnut trees.

Guidelines:

- 5.1 Any new special plantings proposed for the park should be restricted to low-maintenance type of plantings at the edges of the main park spaces that are in keeping with the overall character of Pioneer Park.
- 5.2 The existing lilac garden, as a traditional element of the park, should be restored, relocating it if necessary. Incorporate existing lilacs in the garden bed and adjacent lawn areas.
- 5.3 A program of planting daffodil bulbs along the fence lines at the edge of the park should be undertaken, incorporating and moving, if necessary, any existing bulbs.

5. MEMORIALS:

There is a commemorative plaque mounted on a large rock in the centre of the park, which acknowledges the vision and contribution of the original founders of Pioneer Park: Lucy Woods, Jessie Metcalfe and John Stewart.

Requests have been made over the years to install memorial trees and benches within the park and some have been placed. Since 2001, at the direction of the Board, there has been a moratorium on further memorial plantings and benches in the park. Recently, a Memorial Book was initiated to recognize donations made to the park, as it was felt that all requests to place a bench or tree in the park could not be met in a manner that is fair to all and the continued filling of requests would crowd the park with memorials which would not be in keeping with the intended character of the park as a public space.

Guidelines:

- 5.1 The plaque to the original founders will be the only memorial recognition in the park, which is in keeping with the character and traditions of Pioneer Park.
- 5.2 When specific requests are made for memorials in the form of trees and benches, donors will be asked to make donations to support general improvements to the park, including new plantings, and benches, with acknowledgement being recorded in the Memorial Book.

6. THE BANK:

The bank presents a special set of problems that are different from those in the rest of the park. The stability of the bank requires ongoing geotechnical and engineering assessment. Previous erosion control works, both at the beach and on the vegetated slope, have been successful in stabilizing most of the bank although a steep section remains in the north half of the bank. The slope here is very steep near the top and has the potential to erode farther and push back the edge of the bank into the park. Beyond some extensive engineering works, the only solution might be to let the slope achieve its natural angle of repose and accept the loss of some 'table land' above the steep slope.

As with all slope erosion projects, the key is to achieve a stable slope angle and maintain a diverse vegetative cover to knit the different layers of the soil profile together and draw moisture out of the soil. Large trees are important to provide deeper and more extensive root systems to help prevent erosion, but can also destabilize the bank when these trees and their root masses rock in the wind.

The dumping of branches, leaves and grass clippings on the bank at the end of Colina Street and Bayfield Terrace has occurred over the years. Despite the good intention of building up the bank, this practice does little to stabilize the slope. Instead, the underlying growth, which is rooted in the bank, whose roots knit the soil profile together, and draw moisture up out of the bank, is shaded out and dies. Water continues to flow underneath the unattractive pile of dead material, thus continuing the erosion of the bank.

It is important, as well, to divert excessive drainage, in the form of both surface and subsurface flow, away from the slope. A subsurface drainage trench was introduced some years ago along the top of the park to divert subsurface drainage away from the bank.

The removal of the parking lot in the park has helped to keep excess weight off the top of the bank, which has helped to reduce further slippage of the bank.

Guidelines:

- 7.1 Continue to monitor the bank for stability through annual inspections.
- 7.2 Opportunities for new plantings on the slope to further stabilize and vegetate the slopes should be identified annually as part of the work program for the coming year. A balanced approach using trees, shrubs, grasses, wildflowers and groundcovers native to this area should be employed. (e.g. willow, dogwood, sumac, wild rose)
- 7.3 Where necessary, co-ordinate work on the bank with the Conservation Authority to identify best practices for erosion control and appropriate species and techniques for planting.
- 7.4 Manage the existing trees on the bank by removing large trees (e.g. black walnut, locust, poplar) that can destabilize the bank through wind rocking and leaving emerging new growth to replace trees that are removed. If trees are removed, the root systems should be left in the ground, to anchor the soil.
- 7.5 Remove growth as required annually to maintain views of the lake, using approved pruning techniques that ensure the continued health and good appearance of the trees and shrubs.
- 7.6 The dumping of branches, leaves and grass clippings on the bank should be avoided. A co-ordinated approach to educating the village residents about the drawbacks of this practice should be undertaken with the Municipality of Bluewater to ensure the good appearance and stability of the slope at either end of the park.

- 7.7 The drainage trench within the park should be inspected periodically to confirm it is continuing to operate properly. Its location should be confirmed and noted on the park base plan to avoid conflict with any new work (e.g. tree planting).

8 STAIRS TO THE BEACH:

Pioneer Park provides a popular access point to the beach at the foot of the bank. There have been a number of pathways over the years, which have led down to the beach. Most recently, a set of stairs was installed in 1994, and was recently renovated in 2005 to repair damage resulting from slippage of the bank. A lookout platform was installed next to the steps, at the top of the bank, at the same time as the steps were built.

Guidelines:

- 8.1 The condition of the steps and lookout platform should be inspected regularly and repaired/replaced as needed. If issues arise assistance from a qualified professional should be sought. Include repairs into the annual work program as needed.
- 8.2 Manage the vegetation at the edge of the steps and lookout platform to maintain views and keep growth from encroaching.
- 8.3 As the stability of the steps depends on the bank into which they are anchored, inspection of the bank should include a detailed assessment of the slope around the footings for the steps to anticipate future problems before they arise.

9. PARK FURNITURE:

There are a number of styles of benches and picnic tables in the park. Some of these were originally placed in the park - other benches and picnic tables have been added over the years, some as memorial donations to the park, with plaques attached.

As there is not overall style or theme that is being followed or guidelines for their placement, a haphazard arrangement of park furniture has resulted, which is not in keeping with the character of Pioneer Park.

Guidelines:

- 9.1 The bench style should be standardized to the old style bench design as illustrated in Appendix C. Other benches in the park should be phased out and replaced where possible.
- 9.2 Benches should be located strategically in conjunction with shade and views and should respond to the activities and spaces in the park. Opportunities to locate new benches and phase out others should be identified each year and incorporated into the work program for the coming year.
- 9.3 Picnic tables should be standardized to a design that is sturdy, portable enough to be moved around the park and able to accommodate wheelchairs. The new design can be incrementally worked into the park to replace existing tables.
- 9.4 Cedar should be used instead of pressure-treated lumber in park furniture as it is a more environmentally responsible choice, is more stable and provides a smoother, less abrasive surface for the user.

10. FENCES AND GATES:

A low-maintenance cedar split rail fence borders the park on all sides, along the three road allowances and along the top of the bank facing the lake. The spacing of the posts is typically 10 ft. There are openings in the fence that coincide with gaps in the hedge in three places and allow entry into the park. There are two major entrances to the park at the end of Colina Street and Bayfield Terrace, where there are metal gates supported by stone pillars. The Colina Street gate is wide enough to allow vehicular access to the park, when it is needed.

Guidelines:

- 10.1 Monitor the fence and gates annually for necessary repairs. When the opportunity arises, the spacing of the fence posts should be

decreased to accommodate shorter rails than are presently being used. The shorter rails will be stronger and are more readily available.

11. SIGNAGE:

There are presently a number of signs in the park as well as the main Pioneer Park sign at the entrance from Tuyll Street. The signage has been replaced at various times during the life of the park, but there is no co-ordinated approach or theme to the signage.

Guidelines:

- 11.1 Signage should be co-ordinated to provide a consistent message and look in keeping with the character and overall objectives of the park. Signs should deliver the message required without being obtrusive.

12. BEACH: (revised August 2014 and approved at AGM)

The Pioneer Park Association owns the beach below the Park. The beach southern limit is Colina Street and extends to the south pier. There are two road allowances that intersect Pioneer Park Association beach, Bayfield Terrace and an unnamed street.

Guidelines:

- 12.0 The PPA beach shall be preserved as a natural setting.
- 12.1 No permanent structures may be erected on the PPA beach.
- 12.2 The PPA board may enter into an agreement to permit the Blue Flag Program, Eco-Label or other similar programs in effect from time to time, to govern water quality, environmental management, education and information, safety and services. A Pioneer Park Association member shall be a representative on the Blue Flag Beach Management Committee and shall represent all the interests of the Pioneer Park Association.

