



Report

TO: Conservation Advisory Board

FROM: Lisa Burnside, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

RECOMMENDED & PREPARED BY: Matthew Hall, Director, Capital Projects & Strategic Services

MEETING DATE: February 8, 2024

RE: Artaban Rd. & Lower Lions Club Rd. –
Parking Lot Enhancement Project Proposals

THAT the Conservation Advisory Board recommend to the Board of Directors:

THAT Staff be directed to complete detailed design for the Artaban Rd. Parking Lot Expansion project, as well as the Lower Lion's Club Rd. Parking Lot Addition project; and formally submit Development Permit Applications for both projects to the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

In October 2019, a report titled "HCA Conservation Area – Visitor Management & Vehicle Parking Review" was presented to the Conservation Advisory Board, to address increasing visitor and parking pressures and identify priority actions to balance both preservation of our natural areas while also providing a positive visitor experience.

All seven recommendations were endorsed by CAB and ultimately approved by the Board of Directors.

The purpose of this report is to recap and provide an update on the seven recommendations and seek direction to complete the detailed design for the Artaban road expansion project as well as the Lower Lions Club road parking lot addition project.

STAFF COMMENT

The seven approved recommendations from the October 2019 staff report are as follows:

Recommendation #1 – HCA staff implement immediate parking enhancement opportunities at Artaban Road, Tiffany Falls, Devil’s Punchbowl, Tew Falls and Westfield Heritage Village to optimize number of parking spaces, traffic flow and signage;

Recommendation #2- HCA staff undertake steps to consider expansion of the Artaban road parking lot through a Niagara Escarpment development permit;

Recommendation #3 – HCA staff undertake steps to establish an interim parking lot and trail connection to the Dofasco Trail for the Devil’s Punchbowl at the Saltfleet Conservation Area;

Recommendation #4 – HCA staff further examine and explore additional options for safe visitor access to Tiffany Falls;

Recommendation #5 – HCA staff work with various agencies and partners such as City of Hamilton, Tourism Hamilton, Hamilton/Burlington Trails Council etc. to encourage transportation alternatives;

Recommendation #6 – HCA develop a marketing campaign and website enhancements to increase turnover and shorter term stays at areas with limited parking and encourage visitation to less frequented areas and when there is capacity;

Recommendation #7 – HCA staff ensure that the approved 10-year Masterplan Strategy incorporates detailed review of parking at all areas through the Master planning process.

Since this time HCA staff have been working to implement the recommendations listed. Updates to these are provided below:

Recommendation #1:

- Artaban Rd lot – Modest alignment enhancements to existing gravelled and grass parking areas completed. Addition of two hardwired barcode capable Pay & Display machines added to expedite payment process for visitors.
- Tiffany Falls lot – Lot reconfiguration undertaken in conjunction with City of Hamilton’s Wilson St improvement project, which added bike lanes and an electronic crosswalk for safer pedestrian access. Addition of two hardwired barcode capable Pay & Display machines added to expedite payment process for visitors.
- Devil’s Punchbowl Lot - Modest enhancements to existing gravelled and grass parking areas completed. Road shoulder barriers completed with City of Hamilton

to address excessive on street parking issues. New autogate system installed to facilitate improved visitor access.

- Tew Falls lot - Modest enhancements to existing gravelled and grass parking areas completed. New gatehouse and autogate system installed to facilitate improved visitor access.
- Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area – New parking area added along Kirkwall Rd. substantially improving site capacity. New gatehouse and autogate system installed to facilitate improved visitor access.

Recommendation #2:

- HCA staff hired a third-party ecological planning firm to conduct work to complete an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) report, which would be required by the Niagara Escarpment Commission to permit development within the Artaban Rd lot area. The results of this report are discussed below under Staff Comment.

Recommendation #3:

- HCA staff completed a temporary trail connection and modest lot improvements on the Saltfleet Conservation Area property, in order to allow it to be officially opened for public use. Following this, the site was closed during construction of the wetlands. With the completion of the wetland project a formal trail connection now exists and is fully open to public users. Further parking enhancements are currently under review by HCA staff.

Recommendation #4:

- HCA staff hired a third-party ecological planning firm to conduct work to complete an EIS report, which would be required by the Niagara Escarpment Commission to permit development within the Lower Lions Club Rd property owned by the HCA. The results of this report are discussed below under Staff Comment.

Recommendation #5:

- HCA staff have actively participated in a variety of external agency and stakeholder groups related to public parking and visitor management for parks and conservation areas. Some of these groups have included the City Waterfall Working group, the Hamilton Burlington Trails Council and the Regional Tourism Office for the Hamilton area.

Recommendation #6:

- This is a program which is actively in progress through the HCA's marketing department. Promotional material encouraging visits to a variety of C.A.'s continues to be an important message being conveyed. The expanded trail system at Westfield is HCA's newest promotion to attract more visitors to this area.

Recommendation #7:

- HCA staff continue to progress with the implementation of the HCA's 10 Year Masterplan Strategy, incorporating parking reviews and considerations from internal HCA staff workshops, outside agency and stakeholder comments, as well as public feedback. Draft Master & Management Plans for the Saltfleet, Devil's Punchbowl, Dofasco Trail as well as the Vinemount & Winona Conservation Areas, are all currently under review by the Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry, the Niagara Escarpment Commission and by our neighbouring Indigenous partners.

The remainder of this report will focus on Recommendation #'s 2 & 4 and the steps HCA staff are looking to take in order to move these items forward.

Artaban Road Parking Lot

This parking lot receives significant visitation, particularly now that Lions Club road has been signed as No Parking with special enforcement area status. Outside of the major core HCA Conservation Areas, it has consistently ranked amongst the highest grossing pay-per-use lots within the HCA's operation. Its popularity is associated with visitation of Sherman Falls which is not owned by HCA but is located adjacent to HCA lands and associated trail system via the Bruce Trail. It is important to note that HCA has continued to work collaboratively with City bylaw enforcement to control and enforce No Parking regulations to address spillover parking on Lions Club Road, as much as reasonably possible.

The HCA's 2019 Visitor and Vehicle Management report recommended the following for this location:

- There is the potential to formally expand the parking lot at Artaban Road adjacent to the existing HCA parking lot. There is additional work to be completed to determine the feasibility of this proposal. This includes:
 - - i. Completion of an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to determine if it is acceptable according to HCA and City of Hamilton requirements to develop a parking lot on the lands as the majority of the area is designated as an Environmentally Significant Area. This work would take approximately 1-year to complete and would require the services of an outside consultant.
 - ii. The subject lands are located within the Niagara Escarpment Plan area, within the Protection Area designation and a Development Permit would be required for the development of a parking lot in this area. The above noted EIS would form part of this application.

As a result of this, HCA staff hired third party consulting firm, Aboud & Associates Inc. in Feb. 2021 to begin reviewing this area in detail for the potential of a formal parking area expansion project. This work was completed in March 2022. The following is a list of the recommendations made by the consultants, along with the HCA's intentions on how these will be addressed:

1. Revise the site plan during detailed design, to locate the potential parking expansion and formalization entirely within the Graminoid Meadow and avoid any removal of the existing Significant Woodland.

HCA – This has been achieved with the proposed conceptual design.

2. If tree removals are necessary, minimize tree loss through the completion of a Tree Preservation Plan including the installation of a silt and sediment control barrier consisting of a combination of silt fencing as well as orange construction fencing. This fencing barrier is to be installed at least 1m beyond the dripline of remaining trees wherever possible. Ensure that the location and details pertaining to the tree protection measures are accurately outlined and shown within the Tree Protection Plan and Detailed Site Plan.

HCA – A Tree Protection & Removals Plan will form part of the HCA's submission to the NEC after detailed design has been completed.

- a. Any trees proposed for removal should be inspected for bat maternity habitat by a qualified biologist.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

- b. Sediment control barrier to be inspected weekly during construction and following a storm event of 25mm of rainfall within 24 hours.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

3. Implement Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESC) per the Erosion & Sediment Control Guideline for Urban Construction (TRCA, 2019).

- a. Sediment control fencing to be installed as shown on a Detailed Site Plan. Installed sediment control fencing is to be inspected to ensure that it is in place and functioning as designed prior to any activities or construction.

- b. Install amphibian and reptile exclusion fencing surrounding the potential development limit prior to any site works occurring.

HCA – A Sediment Control & Exclusionary Fencing Plan will form part of the HCA's submission to the NEC after detailed design has been completed.

4. ESC measures to be kept in place until construction is completed, and disturbed soils have been vegetated.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

5. The area of construction disturbance shall be kept to a minimum;

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

6. Control the access and movement of equipment and people;

- a. Implement appropriate protocols outlined in the Clean Equipment Protocol for Industry (Halloran et al., 2013);

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

7. Works and equipment storage are to be located as far as possible from the existing natural features as possible;

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

8. Accumulated sediment and debris to be removed before silt fence is removed.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

9. All disturbed areas to be re-vegetated or restored with site appropriate indigenous plants wherever opportunities exist.

HCA – A Landscaping & Restoration Plan will form part of the HCA's submission to the NEC after detailed design has been completed.

10. Install vegetated swales to detain surface runoff and re-direct it away from the currently eroding slope. Drainage from the swales is recommended to be directed to the roadside ditch north of the parking lot area on the east side of Artaban Road.

HCA – A Grading Plan will form part of the HCA's submission to the NEC after detailed design has been completed.

11. Time activities to avoid wildlife disturbance during critical life stages:

- a. Avoid removal of trees and vegetation during the generalized breeding bird nesting period from April 1 to August 31. If removal of vegetation is to occur during the general nesting period, a nest search should be completed by a skilled and experienced Biologist.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

- b. Close the parking area to public access during the adult salamander migration period (February – beginning of April). Monitor the parking area for salamander mortality during the juvenile migration period (August) to determine whether additional mitigation measures are necessary.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

- c. Due to the study area being within regulated habitat for Jefferson Salamander, MECP should be contacted regarding vegetation removal prior to any works occurring.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

- d. If any tree removals are required, MECP communication should also occur regarding bat maternity habitat.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

- 12. Choose designs and materials that will minimize impacts.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

- 13. Establish educational signage pertaining to proper trail use and encroachment into the surrounding natural features.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will work to enhance signage within the area post-construction.

Visitor parking lot turnover and capacity issues have persisted due to the lot's poor configuration, lack of automated gate systems and overall size. Further to this, during times of high visitation the parking area's current configuration does not allow sufficient space for EMS services, should an emergency situation arise. The proposed improvements to this lot would optimize traffic flow, modestly increase the number of parking spaces; as well as allowing fair public access while adding enhanced after-hours security measures with the addition of an automated gate system.

Drawings G01 & G02 in this report highlight the existing and proposed lot configurations for this area.

Tiffany Falls

Tiffany Falls is a highly visited conservation area that is serviced by a small parking lot. Similar to the Artaban Lot, it has consistently ranked amongst the highest grossing pay-per-use lots within the HCA's operation, outside of the major core HCA Conservation Areas. This lot is heavily constrained physically however and increasing the overall parking area's shape and size is not possible.

During the summer & fall of 2022 the HCA worked closely with the City of Hamilton to incorporate modest parking enhancements to the existing Tiffany Fall's parking lot and

it's surrounding area. Enhancements to the parking area included: paved entry and exit aprons, enhanced signage and line painting, enhanced safety measures such as guardrails and parking curbs, and an optimized parking layout which maximized the spaces available for vehicles.

This work was completed as part of the City's Wilson St. resurfacing project which also added: cycling lanes, lane protection measures, and an automated cross-walk to the Tiffany Fall's area for safe crossing for Bruce Trail and HCA visitors. It is important to note that HCA continues to work collaboratively with City bylaw enforcement to control and enforce no parking regulations with special area enforcement status to address spillover parking along Wilson Street.

The HCA's 2019 Visitor and Vehicle Management report recommended the following for this location:

1. (Review the) potential for the development of a new larger parking lot for this site on HCA lands adjacent to Tiffany Falls located north of Wilson Street with frontage on Lower Lions Club Road. There is additional work to be completed to determine the feasibility of this proposal. This includes:
 - i. Completion of an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to determine if it is acceptable according to HCA and City of Hamilton requirements to develop a parking lot on the lands as the majority of the area is designated as an Environmentally Significant Area. This work would take approximately 1-year to complete and would require the services of an outside consultant.
 - ii. The subject lands are located within the Niagara Escarpment Plan area, within the Protection Area designation and a Development Permit would be required for the development of a parking lot in this area. The above noted EIS would form part of this application.

As a result of this, HCA staff hired third party consulting firm, Aboud & Associates Inc. in Feb. 2021 to begin reviewing this area in detail for the potential of a formal parking area addition project. This work was completed in March 2022. The following is a list of the recommendations made by the consultants, along with the HCA's intentions on how these will be addressed:

1. Locate the potential parking area within the western meadow community beneath the existing hydro corridor to minimize potential impacts to the Significant Woodland, avoid removal of Significant Wildlife Habitat for Rare and Special Concern species (Monarch) and maintain the candidate snake hibernacula.

HCA – This has been achieved with the proposed conceptual design, with some limitations due to requirements constructing within hydro corridors.

- a. Implement a variable buffer, if feasible based on detailed design, to provide an opportunity for restoration and enhancement of the southern portion of the western meadow.

HCA – This has been achieved with the proposed design, the HCA has no intention of building within a larger envelope than what is required to service the site.

- 2. Implement Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESC) per the Erosion & Sediment Control Guideline for Urban Construction (TRCA, 2019).
 - a. Sediment control fencing to be installed as shown on a Detailed Site Plan.
Installed sediment control fencing is to be inspected to ensure that it is in place and functioning as designed prior to any activities or construction.

HCA – A Sediment Control Fencing Plan will form part of the HCA's submission to the NEC after detailed design has been completed.

- 3. Minimize tree loss through the completion of a Tree Preservation Plan including the installation of a silt and sediment control barrier consisting of a combination of silt fencing as well as orange construction fencing. This fencing barrier is to be installed at least 10m beyond the dripline of remaining trees wherever possible. Ensure that the location and details pertaining to the tree protection measures are accurately outlined and shown within the Tree Protection Plan and Detailed Site Plan.

HCA – A Tree Protection & Removals Plan will form part of the HCA's submission to the NEC after detailed design has been completed.

- a. Any tree proposed for removal should be inspected for bat maternity habitat by a qualified biologist.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

- b. Sediment control barrier to be inspected weekly during construction and following a storm event of 25mm of rainfall within 24 hours.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

- 4. ESC measures to be kept in place until construction is completed, and disturbed soils have been vegetated.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

- 5. The area of construction disturbance shall be kept to a minimum;

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

6. Control the access and movement of equipment and people;
 - a. Implement appropriate protocols outlined in the Clean Equipment Protocol for Industry (Halloran et al., 2013);
 - b. Equipment is to be limited to a pre-determined construction allowance area and is not to encroach within the adjacent natural communities.

HCA – These are noted and HCA will comply.

7. Works and equipment storage are to be located as far as possible from the existing natural features as possible.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

8. Accumulated sediment and debris to be removed before silt fence is removed.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

9. All disturbed areas to be re-vegetated or restored with site appropriate indigenous plants wherever opportunities exist.

HCA – A Landscaping & Restoration Plan will form part of the HCA's submission to the NEC after detailed design has been completed.

10. Install vegetated swales to detain surface runoff and prevent the formation of eroded gullies. Drainage from the swales is recommended to outlet to the roadside ditch at Lower Lions Club Road.

HCA – A Grading Plan will form part of the HCA's submission to the NEC after detailed design has been completed.

11. If removal of the existing rock pile is proposed, complete studies to determine whether the feature provides significant wildlife habitat in the form of Reptile Hibernaculum.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply. Removal of the rock pile identified on site is not currently proposed.

12. Examine any trees proposed for removal for candidate bat maternity habitat characteristics.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

13. Time activities to avoid wildlife disturbance during critical life stages:

- a. Avoid removal of trees and vegetation during the generalized breeding bird nesting period from April 1 to August 31. If removal of vegetation is to occur during the general nesting period, a nest search should be completed by a skilled and experienced Biologist.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

14. Align required trail connection so tree removals target existing White Ash in poor or dead condition where feasible.

HCA – A Tree Protection & Removals Plan will form part of the HCA’s submission to the NEC after detailed design has been completed.

15. Choose designs and materials that will minimize impacts.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will comply.

16. Establish educational signage pertaining to proper trail use, encroachment into the surrounding natural features and the negative effects of feeding and/or approaching wildlife.

HCA – This is noted and HCA will work to enhance signage within the area post-construction.

Again, similar to the Artaban Lot, visitor parking turnover and capacity issues have persisted at Tiffany Falls due to the lot’s poor configuration, lack of automated gate systems and overall size. Further to this, during times of high visitation the parking area’s current configuration does not allow sufficient space for EMS services, should an emergency situation arise. Wilson St. protected bike lanes add a further element to this area bringing together vehicles, pedestrians and bikes in or along the parking area. The proposed additional parking lot along Lower Lion’s Club Rd. would act to support the existing Tiffany Falls lot to optimize traffic flow, increase the number of parking spaces available, and spread visitors apart further via a new trail connection to the new Wilson St. cross-walk feature; in addition to allowing fair public access while adding enhanced after-hours security measures with the addition of an automated gate system.

Drawings G03, G04 & G05 in this report highlight the existing and proposed lot configurations for this area.

STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGE

The initiative refers directly to the HCA Strategic Plan 2019 - 2024:

- **Strategic Priority Area – Organizational Excellence**
 - Initiatives - Support the capital development and major maintenance program to enhance our facilities and ensure they are safe, functional and current
- **Strategic Priority Area – Conservation Area Experience**
 - Initiatives – Develop visitor and parking management strategies to support conservation areas for sustainable recreation, education and tourism
 - Initiatives - Continue to expand installation of automatic gates across our conservation areas

AGENCY COMMENTS

This project's implementation will require continued collaboration with partner agencies such as the City of Hamilton and the Bruce Trail Conservancy. Development Permits for the work proposed will be required from the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) before commencement of work.

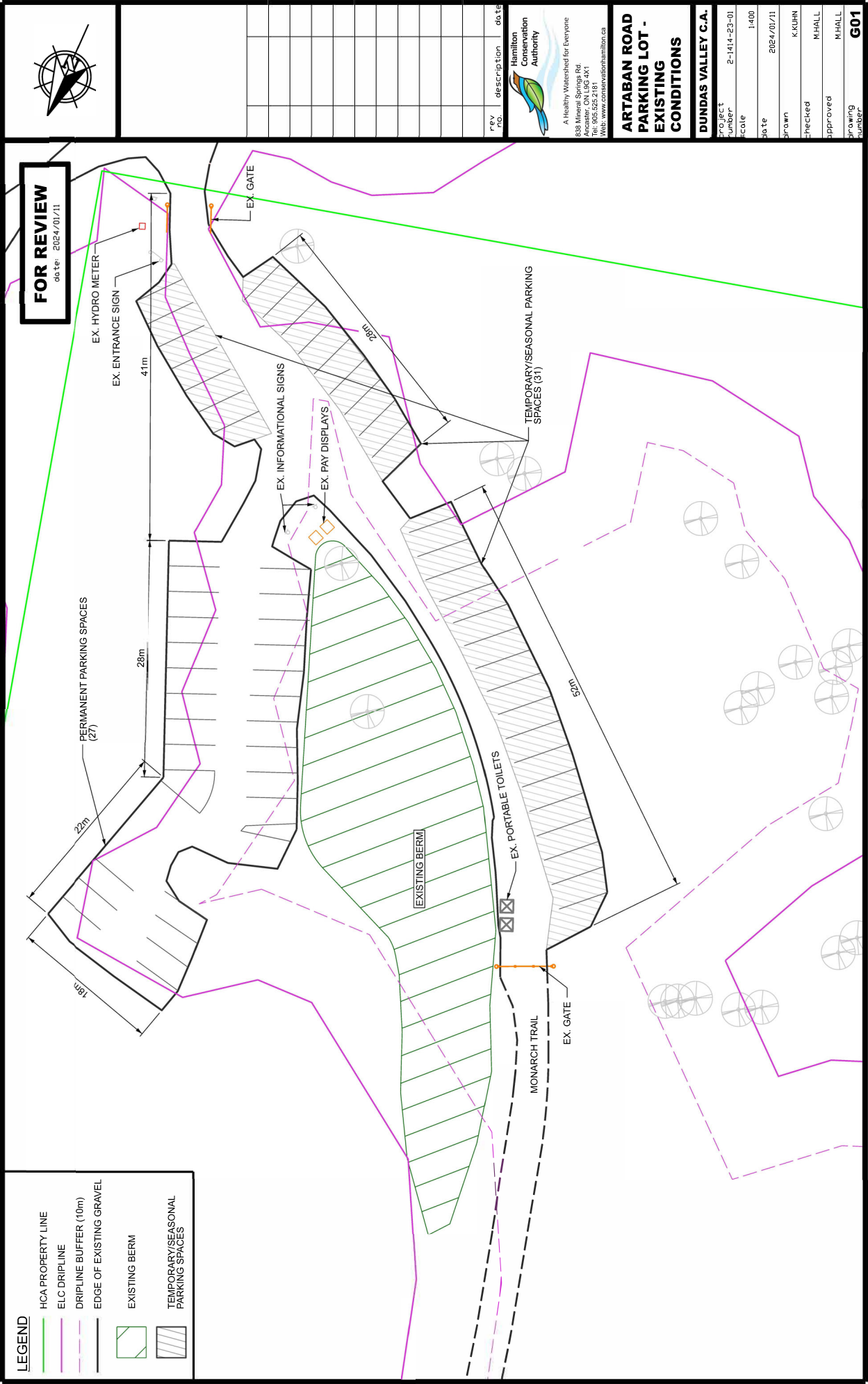
One important note: a public commenting period will be required during the NEC's development permit review process. During this period of time neighbouring landowners adjacent to the project locations will be circulated the details of the development permit application for their own comments and feedback. This process can sometimes lead to project proposal delays or outright dismissals by the NEC.

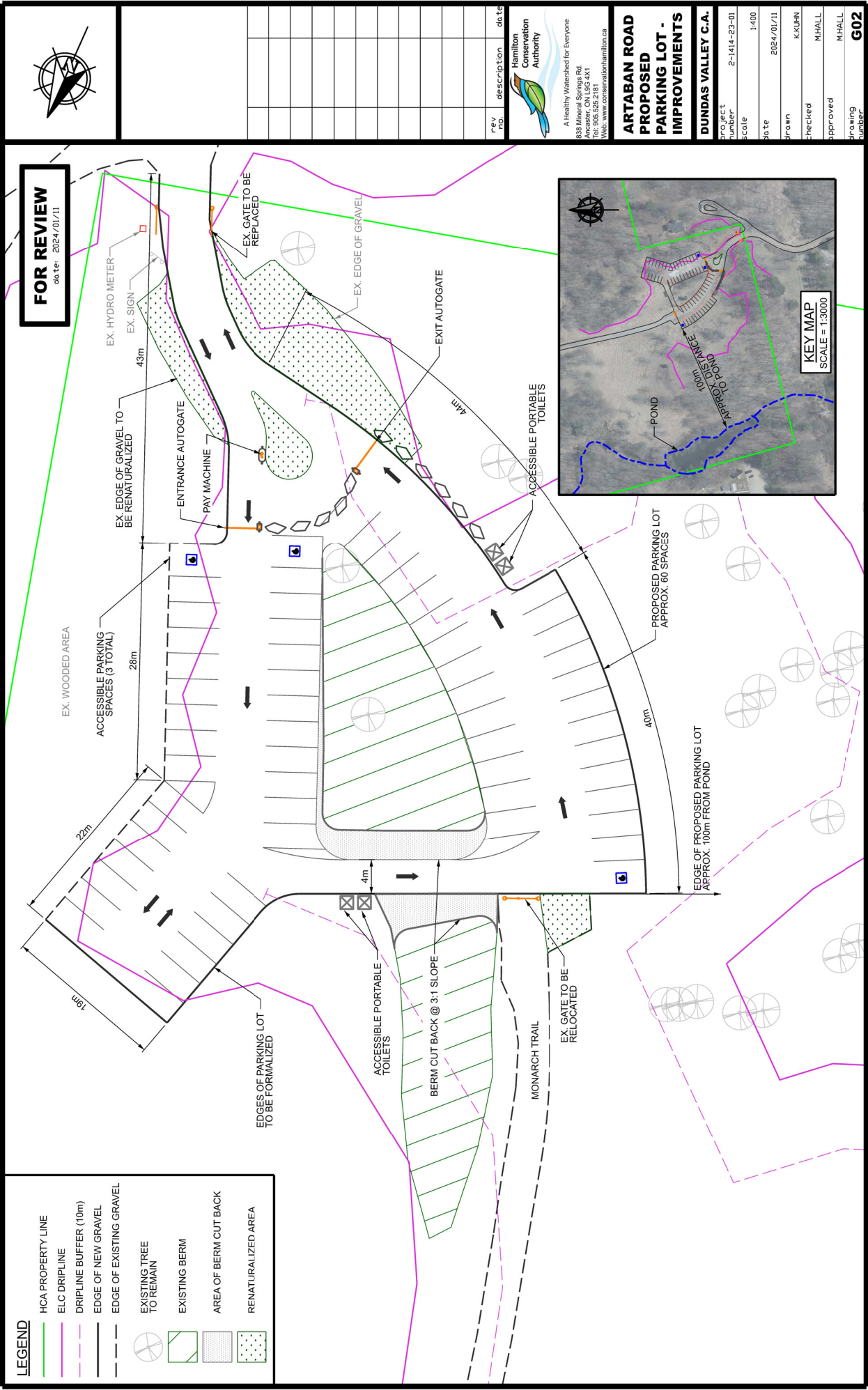
LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Appropriate monies for construction have been allocated for these parking enhancement projects within the HCA's 2024 Capital Projects budget.

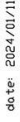
CONCLUSIONS

The changes proposed for both the Artaban Parking Lot area and the Tiffany Falls/Lower Lion's Club Rd area, follow through on the recommendations previously endorsed and approved in 2019 by the HCA's Conservation Advisory Board and the Board of Directors. HCA staff have reviewed the concepts proposed in great detail internally and are confident the resulting changes to both locations will yield favourable results from both a public access and area management perspective. HCA staff recommend moving forward with the completion of detailed design packages for both proposed parking improvement projects, along with a final review by the original consulting team Aboud & Associates Inc. to ensure all recommendations have been adequately addressed. A formal Development Permit submission to the NEC would follow in order to continue to move these initiatives forward.







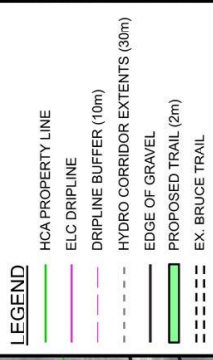


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DUNDAS VALLEY C.A.

Approved _____
M. HALL

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Bruce Trail CONSERVANCY

January 22, 2024

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to acknowledge the support of the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) for the Hamilton Conservation Authority's (HCA) proposal to create a formal parking area off of Lower Lion's Club Road and to make improvements to the existing HCA parking areas on Wilson Street and Artaban Rd.

The BTC is a leading Canadian environmental charity that responsibly connects people to nature and recreational opportunities by way of the iconic 900-km Bruce Trail. For over 60 years the BTC has been stewarding and preserving land within the Niagara Escarpment UNESCO World Biosphere, protecting its ecosystems and natural heritage for the benefit of all.

HCA has been an enthusiastic partner and supporter of the Bruce Trail since its inception and continues to work with the BTC to provide safe public access to the Niagara Escarpment. BTC and HCA staff meet regularly to discuss issues with hiker safety and how to best protect the ecological integrity of the lands where the HCA graciously hosts the Bruce Trail.

The proposed parking improvements will ensure that Bruce Trail hikers have appropriate places to access our trail system in a manner that aligns with our philosophy of 'controlled access' to southern Ontario's most impressive geological feature. The improvements will also be essential in ensuring the safety of trail users and that municipal parking restrictions are adhered to.

The Bruce Trail was, and continues to be, a core component of the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP). Throughout the NEP there are multiple references to ensuring public access to the Niagara Escarpment via the Bruce Trail, including clause 8 of section 2.2 "General Development Criteria", which states that "*Development permitted should be designed and located in such a manner as to provide for or protect access to the Niagara Escarpment, including the Bruce Trail corridor*". The BTC recognizes that the HCA proposal will do exactly this and help us fulfill our mandate to provide safe parking for all Bruce Trail users.

The BTC is also prepared to offer an in-kind contribution of staff and volunteer time to help facilitate the implementation of this proposal, as we believe that it will work towards improving our hiker experience while increasing safety for local residents and trail users alike.

Sincerely,

Michael McDonald
Chief Executive Officer