
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 5, 2001
File No.: 6800-20
To: City Manager
From: Planning and Development Services Department
Subject: Brent's Grist Mill Conservation and Feasibility Plan
Report prepared by: Greg Routley, Planner – Long Range

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council consider the endorsement of the Brent's Grist Mill Conservation and Feasibility Plan as submitted with the Planning and Development Services report dated December 5, 2001;

AND THAT Council direct staff to continue to work with the Central Okanagan Heritage Society on establishing a partnership between the Society and City towards the restoration and operation of the Brent's Grist Mill heritage buildings;

AND FURTHER THAT the Brent's Grist Mill relocation and site development costs (servicing, parking and foundations) be included for consideration in future City of Kelowna budget considerations.

BACKGROUND

Heritage Value of the Brent's Grist Mill Site

Established in 1872, the Brent's Grist Mill site is an important part of the pioneering history of Kelowna and of British Columbia. The historic site is made up of the Brent grist mill and house, a milk shed, log barn, and an historic cairn. The grist mill building itself is the oldest industrial building in Kelowna and is the oldest surviving grist mill building in British Columbia.

Frederick Brent ran a water-driven flour-mill at this location from 1872 to 1893. During this time, he attracted settlers and natives from all over the Okanagan Valley to have their wheat ground into flour. Those waiting for their wheat to be ground would often camp along side Pion Creek, which was renamed as Mill Creek in recognition of its important relationship with the grist mill.

The Kelowna Heritage Register identifies the Brent's Grist Mill buildings as having significant heritage value. Preservation of these unique and valuable heritage buildings would benefit both present and future generations by providing an opportunity for residents and visitors to witness and appreciate an important part of our past.

Rationale for preparing the Brent's Grist Mill Conservation and Feasibility Plan

The Brent's Grist Mill buildings are presently on their original site, clustered near the banks of Mill Creek about six miles from Okanagan Lake. In order to facilitate the development of this site and to preserve the integrity of the Brent's Grist Mill buildings, the owner of the property has informally agreed to donate the buildings to the City, or other heritage interests, for relocation to another property.

In June 1999, Council adopted a resolution to approve the concept of designating the City-owned property located at the northwest corner of Leckie Place and Dilworth Drive as a Heritage Park (the future land use of this property is identified in the Official Community Plan as Major Park / Open Space). Subject to appropriate funding sources being identified, Council also supported the concept of incorporating the Brent's Grist Mill buildings into the Heritage Park by relocating them from their existing location to the City-owned site.

In response to Council's resolution and with financial assistance from the B.C. Heritage Trust, the City of Kelowna commissioned Donald Luxton and Associates and TRUE Consulting Ltd. to prepare a Conservation and Feasibility Plan that addresses the relocation, restoration and long-term management of the Brent's Grist Mill buildings. After consulting with the public, City staff, the Community Heritage Commission and the Central Okanagan Heritage Society, Donald Luxton and Associates and TRUE Consulting Ltd. have submitted the attached Brent's Grist Mill Conservation and Feasibility Plan.

BRENT'S GRIST MILL CONSERVATION AND FEASIBILITY PLAN

The Brent's Grist Mill Conservation and Feasibility Plan concludes that it would be feasible, from an economic and heritage conservation perspective, to relocate the Brent's Grist Mill heritage buildings and to restore the buildings for use within the context of a Heritage Park.

Feasibility and costs associated with relocating and restoring Brent's Grist Mill buildings

The Brent's Grist Mill Conservation and Feasibility Plan includes a report from a structural engineering firm, Krah Engineering, which outlines what needs to be done in order to move the heritage buildings. The Plan also incorporates the findings of a report from a moving company, Interior Building Movers Ltd., which assesses the costs associated with relocating each building. In addition, the Plan estimates costs associated with restoring each building and with servicing, fencing and landscaping the site.

Development and programming of the proposed Brent's Grist Mill site

The Brent's Grist Mill Conservation and Feasibility Plan includes a concept plan that identifies the proposed location of the Brent's Grist Mill buildings, the location of a new building and parking area as well as the landscaping, buffering and site circulation concepts. To complement the concept plan, additional information has been provided outlining options related to programming the site and to site specific enhancements options.

The Conservation and Feasibility Plan takes into consideration the proposed alignment of the future North End Connector roadway that would utilize a portion of the City-owned property on the north side of Mill Creek.

Locating the grist mill, house and dairy barn buildings on the north side of the creek would provide for the best site development configuration, as the natural, park-like setting would be most historically in keeping with the original setting of the Grist Mill buildings. The portion of the City-owned property located on the south side of Mill Creek would be more suitable for parking and other uses, including an interpretive center and/or other revenue generating uses.

The size and structural configuration of the heritage buildings would limit the ability to generate enough revenue to financially support the maintenance and management of the Heritage Park so a new building would need to be constructed to allow the project to be as self-supporting as possible. For security purposes, the Brent's house could be restored to accommodate an on-site resident caretaker.

Another major element of the Conservation and Feasibility Plan includes the proposal to connect the proposed Brent's Grist Mill site with the developing Mill Creek Linear Park and the proposed public trail within the rail corridor. In this regard, the Brent's Grist Mill site could provide interpretive, parking and staging areas that would complement these trail systems.

Partnership with the Central Okanagan Heritage Society

The Central Okanagan Heritage Society supports the objective of relocating and restoring the Brent's Grist Mill heritage buildings to the City-owned property and of being a major partner in this initiative. With Council's direction, City staff will continue to work with representatives of the COHS on establishing a partnership between the Society and the City towards the relocation, restoration and operation of the Brent's Grist Mill heritage buildings.

The City and the Society have already established a successful partnership in restoring and operating the heritage buildings in the Guisachan Heritage Park. Furthermore, the Society has achieved great success in restoring and operating the heritage buildings in the Benvoulin Heritage Park.

Financing the relocation and restoration of the Brent's Grist Mill buildings

The City of Kelowna has set aside funds in the 2001 budget to cover the costs associated with relocating the buildings. The costs associated with constructing new foundations for each building and with servicing the City-owned site are anticipated to be considered by Council during 2002 / 2003 budget deliberations. As for the costs associated with the restoration of the heritage buildings, it is anticipated that the Central Okanagan Heritage Society will raise funds and use volunteers, similar to what they have done with the Guisachan Heritage Park. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the COHS will also lease the property from the City as they do with the Guisachan Heritage Park.

Public review of the Brent's Grist Mill Conservation and Feasibility Plan

The general public was invited to view the Brent's Grist Mill Conservation and Feasibility Plan at the Kelowna Centennial Museum between 10:00 am and 5:00 pm from Tuesday, December 4 to Saturday, December 8. Invitations to view the Plan were issued in the Citizen Information sections of the Daily Courier issue of Monday, December 3 and the Capital News issue of Sunday, December 2. In addition, the City of Kelowna issued a Public Service Announcement on the City's webpage on Friday, November 30. Comments received from the public will be relayed when this report is presented to Council.

Community Heritage Commission

At the Community Heritage Commission Regular Meeting of December 4, 2001, members of the Commission discussed the Brent's Grist Mill Conservation and Feasibility Plan and passed a resolution in support of Council's endorsement of the Plan.

SUMMARY

As the Brent's Grist Mill buildings approach their 130th year of existence, it is important to recognize the historic role the buildings have played in meeting the needs of Kelowna citizens and redefine the buildings' role within our growing and changing City. This Plan is particularly important in light of the transportation initiatives (public trails within the rail corridor, North End Connector), park plans (Mill Creek Linear Park) and an impending major development proposal that would impact the existing site of the Brent's Grist Mill buildings. In partnership with the Central Okanagan Heritage Society, the City of Kelowna has an opportunity now to develop a major heritage park, within the context of an emerging linear park system.

Signe K. Bagh, MCIP
Long Range Planning Manager

Approved for inclusion

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R. L. Mattiussi, ACP, MCIP
Director of Planning & Development Services

GDR/
Attach.

c.c Director of Planning and Development Services
 Director of Parks and Leisure Services
 Central Okanagan Heritage Society