
**CITY OF KELOWNA
MEMORANDUM**

Date: April 6, 2005
File No.: 6480-40
To: City Manager
From: Planning and Corporate Services
Subject: POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC WASHROOMS WITHIN THE DOWNTOWN URBAN CENTRE

Report Prepared by Patrick McCormick

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Council endorse the recommendations outlined in the Planning and Corporate Services Report of April 6, 2005 for the provision of public washrooms within the Downtown Urban Centre;

AND THAT staff implement the recommendations as set out in the report over the next 2 years.

BACKGROUND

The direction to complete a study into the provision of public washrooms was initially outlined in the *Kelowna Downtown Plan* where it was identified as a component of a streetscape design initiative. However, because of the scope of the streetscape design study¹, investigation into the provision of public washrooms was felt by staff to warrant a separate study.

An investigation into issues surrounding the provision of public washrooms was recommended by the Downtown Plan Committee² as an initiative to be completed by staff in 2004. In August of 2004, INTEGRA Community Planning Services was hired to undertake a study for the provision of public washrooms within the Downtown Urban Centre.

The study area (see map, Attachment 1) is the core of the City Centre, one of four Urban Centres identified in Kelowna's Official Community Plan. The study area encompasses Kelowna's central business district (Downtown), its Cultural District, and the public waterfront (Waterfront District). The area is the focus of many community events, is the home of the community's major institutions, and attracts significant numbers of tourists.

The provision of public washrooms within the study area is considered critical to creating an inviting and pedestrian-friendly Downtown. To date, a number of public washrooms are available. However, it has generally been recognized by Downtown stakeholders that there is a

¹ A concept for Downtown streetscape improvements has been completed and is expected to come before Council later in 2005.

² The Downtown Plan Committee is a sub-committee of the Urban Centres Implementation Committee.

lack of conveniently-located public washrooms to serve the needs of visitors to the study area. Further, it is felt that aspects of some of these facilities discourage use by the general public.

The goal of the strategy is to provide public washrooms that:

- 1) provide a reasonable level of convenience including hours of operation that meet the public's needs
- 2) are safe to use and are perceived to be safe to use;
- 3) are easy to keep clean and sanitary;
- 4) are easily identifiable and aesthetically pleasing;
- 5) meet the needs of users across a wide range of physical abilities;
- 6) are cost-efficient to build and maintain; and
- 7) are vandalism-proof.

DISCUSSION

The terms of reference for the study stipulated that the following tasks be completed:

- 1) an inventory and assessment of existing facilities

The Consultant was asked to identify all existing washrooms currently available for public use within the study area. This inventory included an assessment of those facilities in terms of the number of lavatories, number of water closets, ability to be used by persons with physical disabilities, hours of availability, etc.

- 2) issues identification

Issues identification was done through consultation with stakeholders (see Consultant's report, Appendix 2, pg. 35 for the list of stakeholders). This portion of the assignment identified general issues but also exposed specific issues related to use of existing facilities within the study area.

- 3) an assessment of the need for future facilities

An understanding of the scope of the need for facilities over the next five years is critical to the proposed project. To this end, a rough projection of visitors to the area was completed to establish a benchmark for the provision of future facilities.

- 4) research of precedent in other municipalities

Six other municipalities were contacted regarding their approach to the provision of public washrooms with the intention of gleaning insight into similar issues and approaches.

- 5) recommendations

The consultant prepared a set of recommendations as a result of the above investigation and analyses.

The report by INTEGRA Community Planning is included as Attachment 2 of this report.

Staff Discussion

Staff reviewed the consultant's report. As a result of that discussion, it was agreed that the consultant's report should be received as background to a set of policy and implementation recommendations as set out below. These recommendations are separated into those for immediate implementation and those for implementation in the medium- to long-term or on an as-need basis. It is therefore recommended that the City of Kelowna:

For Immediate Implementation

1. Provide information on locations and hours of operation of facilities currently available for public use within the study area, through wayfinding signage, pertinent building signage, and other media aimed at visitors and/or provided in conjunction with public events.

The first priority is to better utilize the public washrooms that are currently available (see Attachment 2, pg. 8 for locations). A review of those sites indicates that there seems to be a reasonable number of facilities that meet the basic criteria of being conveniently-located, well-maintained, and safe to use. The concern is that the locations and times of operation are not known to people unfamiliar with the study area.

The most effective remedy would be to provide a higher level of knowledge regarding facility locations, hours of operation, and the extent of services, i.e., provision of change tables, fixtures for wheelchair users, etc. This communication would take the form of information on the signs being provided in conjunction with the Downtown Wayfinding program³. It might also take the form of posting the hours on the buildings within which the facilities are found. It could also be posted in any pertinent publications/brochures such as the Downtown Kelowna Association information guide.

To provide information on locations and hours of operation will not be sufficient to make the facilities truly convenient to use. This is because some washrooms are located within buildings that serve other functions and the route to the washrooms is not always clearly identifiable to the uninitiated. Therefore, to make facilities truly convenient, signage will be necessary on the outside of some buildings, as well as within buildings, to indicate the route to the washrooms.

Map 2 in the Consultant's report identifies all existing facilities that are available for public use. Many of these are owned and maintained by the City of Kelowna. Principally these are the washrooms at City Hall, and the washrooms along the waterfront.

The others facilities are owned and maintained by stakeholders to the study area. The latter are principally non-profit agencies engaged in the provision of cultural services with the exception of the Chamber of Commerce.

It is not anticipated that all the public washrooms within the study area need to be part of an identification/directional signage program. Staff suggest that the following locations be included:

- A. City Hall, lower level
- B. Rotary Centre for the Arts, main floor

³ Previously endorsed by Council and currently being implemented.

- C. The Okanagan Military Museum
- D. The Chapman Parkade
- E. The Chamber of Commerce
- F. Cold Sands Beach
- G. Hot Sands Beach
- H. Tugboat Bay

These locations were chosen by staff because they meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Strategic placement

The Consultant's report recommends that public washrooms be available every 250 to 300 metres. This distance translates to about a walking distance of about 4 minutes and 10 seconds in duration between facilities, based on numbers used by the City's Transportation Division⁴, or a time of 2 minutes and 5 seconds from the mid-point of any two public washrooms.

Staff felt this number was reasonable as it would probably suit the needs of a broad cross-section of users. However, staff felt the distance the person with average mobility can cover in 3 minutes is more realistic and a worthy criteria by which to evaluate current public washroom locations. Staff therefore established a 3-minute walking threshold. This threshold was converted to an equivalent walking distance and plotted on a map of the study area (see Attachment 3).

However, calculations showed that it takes about 50% more time to get from point A to point B when one must follow a gridded street system (as opposed to following a path that is the shortest distance between two points), as well as wait for traffic lights. A second distance was therefore calculated that allowed for this longer time needed to get from point A to point B.

These distances, expressed as a series of circles with radii that represented the distance that a person could walk in three minutes, were plotted on a map of the study area. Because the threshold areas for the facilities along the waterfront don't involve gridded streets or the need to cross a street, a larger radii was used.

The resulting evaluation as shown in Attachment 3 shows that areas of Downtown do not fall within the plotted circles. Anyone located outside these circles would therefore need more than three minutes to get to a washroom. The mapping exercise also illustrates that the most poorly-served portions of the study area is from Lawrence Avenue to Bernard Avenue and from Ellis Street to Richter Street⁵. Other sub-areas less-well served than the rest of the study area generally include the Sails Plaza and the waterfront promenade adjacent to the Grand Okanagan Lakefront Resort.

⁴ The average able-bodied person, based on research, moves at about 1.2 metres per second.

⁵ The north-east corner of the Richter Street and Bernard Avenue intersection is the furthest point that an individual could be from a public washroom. The distance to the nearest washroom at the Chamber of Commerce is approximately 530 meters from this point. Based on 1.2 metres per second, and not allowing for wait times to cross any street, this distance could be covered in just over 7 and a half minutes.

This evaluation allowed staff to determine to what degree the study area is currently served by public washrooms. The identification of these thresholds, in the opinion of staff, confirms the notion that despite gaps, the area is reasonably well-served, with the exceptions noted above, and that the issue is principally a lack of awareness of locations and hours of operation.

✓ Perceptions of Safety

The route from the building entrance to the washrooms in many instances provides a reasonable degree of surveillance by building staff. This is true of facilities A. to E⁶ above. The waterfront facilities are less well surveyed and this issue is discussed below (See Recommendations 6. and 7. below).

- ✓ Universal Access- the facilities identified allow access by individuals with a wide range of physical abilities⁷;
- ✓ Hours of operation that approximately coincide with the times that the area is most active.

Each of the facilities identified above have different hours of operation. The hours are as follows:

▪ Rotary Centre for the Arts:	8 AM to 11 PM	Daily
▪ Military Museum	9 AM to 4 PM	Tuesday through Saturday
▪ City Hall	8 AM to 4 PM	Monday through Friday
▪ Chapman Parkade	6 AM to 6 PM	Monday through Friday
▪ Chamber of Commerce	9 AM to 5 PM	Monday through Friday
	10 AM to 3 PM	Saturdays, Sundays, & holidays
▪ Tugboat Bay Pavilion	8 AM to 8 PM	Daily, April 1 to June 14; Sept. 3 to October 13
	8 AM to 10 PM	Daily, June 15 to September 3
▪ Cold Sands Beach	8 AM to 8 PM	Daily, April 1 to June 14; Sept. 3 to October 13.
	8 AM to 10 PM	Daily, June 15 to September 3
▪ Hot Sands Beach	8 AM to 8 PM	Daily, April 1 to June 14; Sept. 3 to October 13
	8 AM to 10 PM	Daily, June 15 to September 3

⁶ In the instance of the Chapman Parkade and the Chamber of Commerce, patrons must first get a key from a staff person.

⁷ the washrooms at Cold Sands Beach are not currently universally accessible but are expected to be upgraded with redevelopment as per the City Park Concept Plan.

The needs of patrons cannot be met at all times. The strategy is intended to provide a degree of service based on the times at which a minimum critical mass of people can be expected to populate the study area, or portions of the study area. Where washrooms are provided as part of a wider building operation serving a specific need, e.g., the Rotary Centre for the Arts, City Hall, etc., the hours at which washrooms are available is secondary to the other functions the building serves. The analysis assumes that there is no ability to extend building hours to meet the needs of the general public for public washroom service that doesn't also meet the needs of the building staff and its patrons or clients served.

Given that some of the above facilities might not choose to be part of an identification/directional signage program, it will be necessary for staff to approach each of the organizations that operate the identified facilities to solicit their participation. In the event that the identified stakeholders do not wish to participate, other stakeholders would need to be approached.

2. Enter into discussions with the identified stakeholders to determine appropriate locations for on-site directional signage to help visitors find washroom locations within the respective buildings and subsequently to provide funding and to prepare a work plan for the implementation of such signage in a timely manner.

Under the proposed terms, the City would fund the appropriate building signage. The extent and location of the signage for any particular building would be determined through discussions with representatives of the identified building owners and implemented in a timely manner.

3. Make changes to Zoning Bylaw 8000 to allow the City to offer a density bonus to any developer who provides public washrooms that meet criteria established by the City for universal public access. The appropriateness of these washrooms in any particular development would be determined by the City on an as-needed basis and as opportunities in conjunction with private development avail themselves.

The ability to enter into discussions with developers regarding provision of public washrooms could be an effective tool to provide better coverage of the study area. A covenant or some other such legal mechanism would be necessary to assure the long-term availability of any public washrooms provided in conjunction with development. This provision assumes that operation of any washrooms built by a developer would be maintained or administered by the City of Kelowna.

4. Provide universally-accessible portable toilets in designated public spaces until such time as the need to provide such facilities is no longer considered urgent and include enclosures to house these portable toilets that are aesthetically pleasing. Further, to address an urgent need, include provision of a universally-accessible portable toilet at a location in, or in the vicinity of Kerry Park, and in the vicinity of the 200 blocks of Lawrence and Leon Avenues, in the Parks Division budget for 2005.

A portable toilet is currently situated between Kasugai Gardens and the Kelowna Museum. This facility was provided to solve the problem of urination and defecation in Kasugai Gardens. According to staff, the provision of the toilet has effectively resolved the problem. This facility should be maintained until such time that it is either no longer needed, or until a permanent public washroom is provided at Queensway Transit Station, or in the vicinity of the Transit Station.

Moreover, portable toilets for public use should be provided to address the urgent problem of urination and defecation in public spaces in an area that centres on the 200 blocks of Lawrence

and Leon Avenues. Exact location of such facilities would need to be determined by staff in conjunction with the Downtown Plan Committee.

The problem of urination and defecation in public places is a serious health threat to the general public. Although portable toilets are not particularly aesthetically pleasing, this consideration is overridden by the public health concern.

Additionally, there is a demand for temporary facilities at or in the vicinity of Kerry Park. This provision is considered a high priority by the City of Kelowna Parks Division. To this end, funding should be provided in the 2005 budget to meet this need on a timely basis. Because of the potential for vandalism, staff recommend that the portable toilets be enclosed in a protective structure to be designed and installed by Civic Properties.

5. Work with the Four Pillars Coalition towards a pilot project to provide vandal-proof containers for disposal of hypodermic needles and return to Council with the particulars of the program including recommended location(s), duration of the program, and monitoring and feedback measures, prior to initiation of such a program.

The Consultant's report refers to a recent pilot project in Kamloops. The information gathered from that community indicated that the containers provided were used by the targeted user group.

The assumption behind a pilot program is that each needle deposited in the provided container is potentially one less needle left in a location where the general public is exposed to a health risk. It is therefore timely that a sharps container(s) be provided in one or more Downtown public washrooms.

The Four Pillars coalition is identified as the agency with the necessary mandate and resources to carry out a pilot project. If a pilot project is endorsed in principle, more research and investigation would be undertaken by staff to identify the most effective location(s) and duration of the program and would return to Council with particulars. Methods for monitoring and evaluating the program would also be included at that time.

6. Instruct all security personnel working within the study area, including the DKA Downtown Patrol personnel, City of Kelowna Bylaw Enforcement staff, and in particular the RCMP, to visit the public washrooms along the waterfront, when in the vicinity of such facilities. As these facilities are only open in the summer months, this service would be provided on a seasonal basis.

Security and perceptions of safety are issues with regard to use of the public washrooms along the Downtown waterfront. The RCMP currently patrol the Downtown waterfront on foot and on bicycle and staffing levels are expected to increase this year. An effective presence however, depends upon regular surveillance in and around the public washrooms along the waterfront. Other future public washrooms along the waterfront, or at the Queensway Transit Station could be included, at such time as these are completed.

7. Maintain levels of service for City-owned public washrooms in the study area and enhance maintenance and security around special events and long weekends.

If this recommendation is endorsed in principle, the Parks Division would include a request for funding in the final budget for 2005, regarding provision of a full-time staff member to help maintain and provide greater surveillance of public washrooms along the waterfront.

8. Provide a public washroom at Queensway Transit Station.

The direction to provide a facility to serve transit users has been established by Council and is re-iterated here to put it in the context of a public washroom strategy. It is expected that once such a facility is operational, the portable toilet located immediately east of Kasugai Gardens could be removed.

Medium-to Longer-term Initiatives

9. Provide public washrooms in conjunction with any development of Stuart Park, and/or Kerry Park, and/or the Seniors' Centre site, as well as at least one of the City-owned sites adjacent to the Downtown library.

The provision of additional public washrooms will be necessary to provide better coverage of the waterfront, particularly as the number of visitors to the area increases. Under this provision, the City would seek provision of public washrooms in conjunction with development of the above sites as opportunities avail themselves.

10. Provide welcoming, and aesthetically-pleasing washrooms as per the City Park concept plan.

This direction has already been set by the City Park Concept Plan approved by Council and is merely re-iterated here to place it within the context of a public washroom strategy. This direction would see construction of new washrooms at Hot Sands and Cold Sands Beaches.

11. Provide public washrooms in conjunction with future construction of any City-owned parkade in the eastern portion of the study area.

The area east of Ellis Street, south of Bernard Avenue, west of Richter Street and north of Harvey Avenue has been generally ear-marked as appropriate for a parkade to be operated by the City of Kelowna. As with the construction of the Chapman Parkade, public washrooms should be provided in this facility if and when constructed. When built, these washrooms should be universally accessible, as well as welcoming and visually-pleasing.

12. Give consideration to the provision of free-standing, coin-operated, self-cleaning public washroom facilities (illustrated on page 23 in Attachment 2), as part of any future streetscape improvements.

Free-standing, self-cleaning, coin-operated washrooms are available from companies that sell street furniture. These facilities are in operation in a number of cities in North America and Europe (see page 23, Attachment 2). The downside is the cost of the units. However, this cost could be mitigated by advertising revenues should the City choose, and the City might need a policy position on this approach, at such time as provision of free-standing washrooms appears to be a desirable approach to serving the public. The details and potential locations to supplement the locations identified above could be discussed as part of the detail design of any streetscape revitalization project⁸.

⁸ A concept plan for a streetscape design has been completed and is expected to be presented to Council in the spring of 2005.

13. Provide building design, fixtures, and finishes that maximize service and durability while giving consideration to aesthetics and the need to provide facilities that are welcoming and user-friendly, and which provide a strong sense of personal safety and otherwise meet the requirements of the City of Kelowna Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Guidelines.

The above recommendation speaks to the need to meet the goals of the strategy with due consideration for cost-effectiveness.

14. Where portable toilets are provided in conjunction with special events, ensure that an adequate number of those toilets serve the needs of wheelchair users.

SUMMARY

Recommendations regarding a strategy for the provision of public washrooms within the Downtown Urban centre are as follows:

That the City of Kelowna should:

1. Provide information on locations and hours of operation of facilities currently available for public use within the study area, through wayfinding signage, pertinent building signage, and other media aimed at visitors and/or provided in conjunction with public events.
2. Enter into discussions with the identified stakeholders to determine appropriate locations for on-site directional signage to help visitors find washroom locations within the respective buildings and subsequently to provide funding and to prepare a work plan for the implementation of such signage in a timely manner.
3. Make changes to Zoning Bylaw 8000 to allow the City to offer a density bonus to any developer who provides public washrooms that meet criteria established by the City for universal public access. The appropriateness of these washrooms in any particular development would be determined by the City on an as-need basis and as opportunities in conjunction with private development avail themselves.
4. Provide universally-accessible portable toilets in designated public spaces until such time as the need to provide such facilities is no longer considered urgent and include enclosures to house these portable toilets that are aesthetically pleasing. Further, to address an urgent need, include provision of a universally-accessible portable toilet at a location in, or in the vicinity of Kerry Park, and in the vicinity of the 200 blocks of Lawrence and Leon Avenues, in the Parks Division budget for 2005.
5. Work with the Four Pillars Coalition towards a pilot project to provide vandal-proof containers for disposal of hypodermic needles and return to Council with the particulars of the program including recommended location(s), duration of the program, and monitoring and feedback measures, prior to initiation of such a program.
6. Instruct all security personnel working within the study area, including the DKA Downtown Patrol personnel, City of Kelowna Bylaw Enforcement staff, and in particular the RCMP, to visit the public washrooms along the waterfront, when in the vicinity of such facilities. As these facilities are only open in the summer months, this service would be provided on a seasonal basis.

7. Maintain levels of service for City-owned public washrooms in the study area and enhance maintenance and security around special events and long weekends.
8. Provide a public washroom at Queensway Transit Station.
9. Provide public washrooms in conjunction with any development of Stuart Park, and/or Kerry Park, and/or the Seniors' Centre site, as well as at least one of the City-owned sites adjacent to the Downtown library.
10. Provide welcoming, and aesthetically-pleasing washrooms as per the City Park concept plan.
11. Provide public washrooms in conjunction with future construction of any City-owned parkade in the eastern portion of the study area.
12. Give consideration to the provision of free-standing, coin-operated, self-cleaning public washroom facilities, as part of any future streetscape improvements.
13. Provide building design, fixtures, and finishes that maximize service and durability while giving consideration to aesthetics and the need to provide facilities that are welcoming and user-friendly, and which provide a strong sense of personal safety and otherwise meet the requirements of the City of Kelowna Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Guidelines.
14. Where portable toilets are provided in conjunction with special events, ensure that an adequate number of those toilets serve the needs of wheelchair users.

Gary Stephen, Acting Manager,
Policy, Research & Strategic Planning

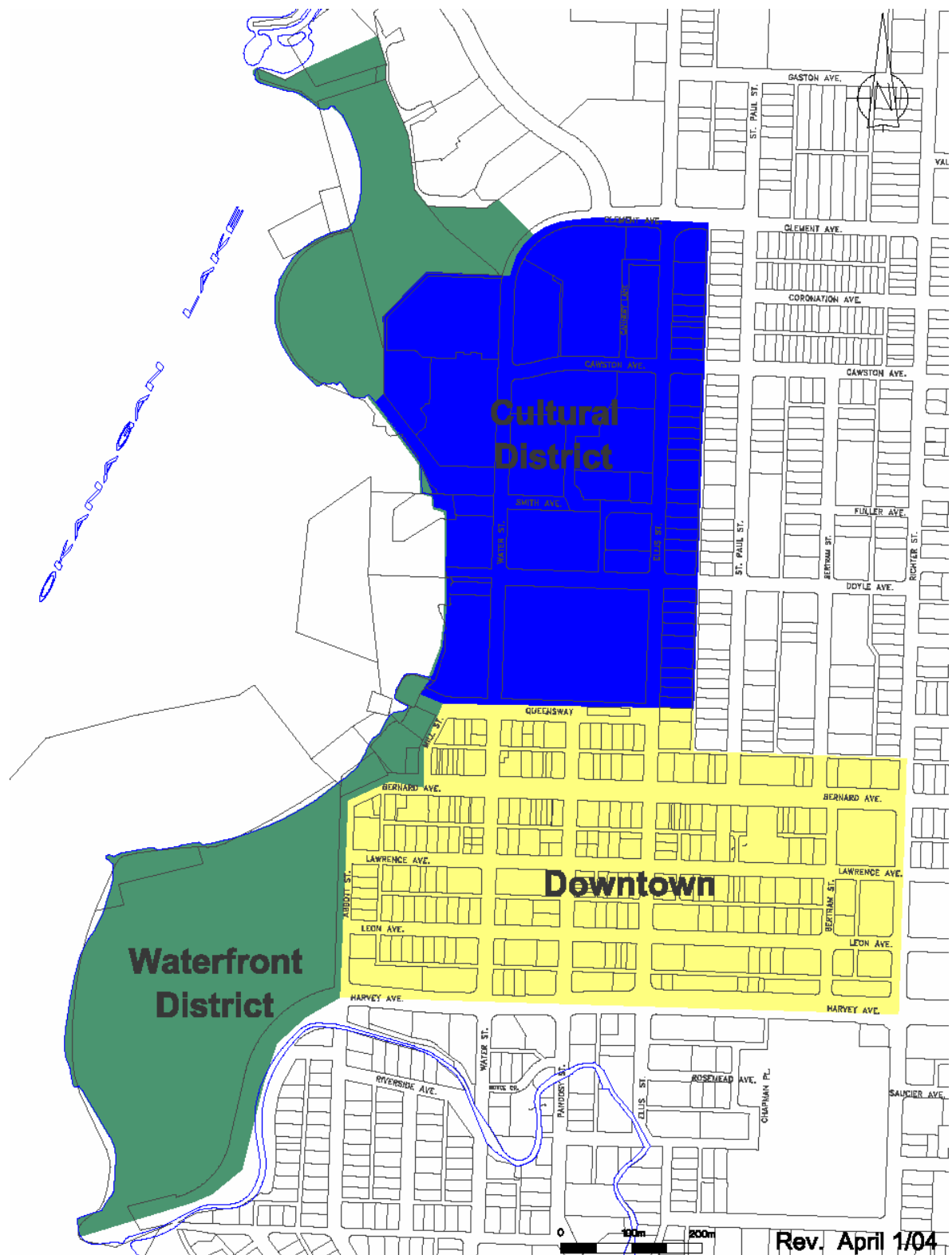
Approved for inclusion

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

Attachments

cc: Director, Financial Services
Manager, Civic Properties
Manager, Parks and Leisure Services
Manager, Community Development and Real Estate

ATTACHMENT 1: Map of Study Area



ATTACHMENT 2: Consultant's Report

ATTACHMENT 3: Walking Distance Study

