

## **Non-Motorized Watercraft Opportunities in Outer Harbour**

**Date:** September 17, 2021

**To:** Infrastructure and Environment Committee

**From:** General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

**Wards:** Ward 14 – Toronto Danforth

### **SUMMARY**

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This report responds to the May 25, 2021, Infrastructure and Environment Committee request for the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to look at options for non-motorized watercraft on the Outer Harbour shoreline, east of the current area being leased to clubs in the Outer Harbour Sailing Federation.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation has examined current and future opportunities for non-motorized watercraft in the Outer Harbour and surrounding area. Through discussions with staff and stakeholders including Waterfront Toronto and Waterfront Secretariat, staff have determined that new infrastructure and supports for non-motorized watercraft in the Outer Harbour should be limited to locations currently leased to third party operators, including existing boat clubs and rental locations, and any new opportunities should not disrupt naturalized areas, shoreline or tree canopy. This report highlights the existing opportunities, as well as plans that will provide supports for non-motorized watercraft in the near future.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. The Infrastructure and Environment Committee receive this report for information.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial impacts arising from this report.

Any impact for the future opportunities for non-motorized watercraft, if identified, will be incorporated as part of future year budget processes.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the Financial Impact section.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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At its meeting on May 25, 2021, the Infrastructure and Environment Committee requested the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to look at options for non-motorized watercraft on the Outer Harbour shoreline, east of the current area being leased to clubs in Outer Harbour Sailing Federation, as well as all other options, and to report to the September 14, 2021 Infrastructure and Environment Committee meeting, or an earlier meeting, if any authorizations are required.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE22.2>

At its meeting on March 23, 2021, the Infrastructure and Environment Committee requested the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation to: a) consolidate existing opportunities and host a meeting with all Councillors with Wards along the waterfront (Wards 3, 4, 10, 14, 19, 24 and 25) to review findings, seek their input into potential storage and rental opportunities for non-motorized watercraft; b) report back to the May 25, 2021 Infrastructure and Environment Committee meeting on short-term and long-term opportunities in the East, Central and West waterfront.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE20.10>

At its meeting on January 11, 2021, the Infrastructure and Environment Committee requested the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, in collaboration with other divisions and agencies such as the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Ports Toronto, to identify any potential new locations across the Toronto waterfront where storage for non-motorized crafts like canoes and kayaks and paddle boards could be accommodated and operationalized in the short-term, and to report back on their findings and recommendations at the March 23, 2021 meeting of Infrastructure and Environment Committee.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE19.13>

At its meeting on February 7, 2017, the Parks and Environment Committee adopted the Encouraging a Paddling and Fishing Friendly City report from the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation which outlines how Toronto can become a paddle friendly city and provides information on the locations and benefits of waterfront recreational nodes that have been selected by Parks, Forestry and Recreation in partnership with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.PE17.1>

## **COMMENTS**

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Toronto's Outer Harbour and its shoreline, which can be described as the body of water featuring Cherry Beach to the North and Tommy Thompson Park to the South, is a popular destination for recreational activities including sailing, swimming, fishing, birdwatching, hiking, and non-motorized paddle sports. These activities are supported

through a network of beaches, trails and naturalized areas, as well as a variety of recreational boating organizations including the Outer Harbour Sailing Federation which is comprised of several sailing clubs.

As directed by City Council, Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) has explored options for non-motorized watercraft on the Outer Harbour shoreline, specifically the shoreline east of the current area being leased to clubs in the Outer Harbour Sailing Federation. This section of shoreline, highlighted in Attachment 1, is an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) under the City of Toronto Official Plan that features native trees and shrubs, regionally rare shoreline species and plant communities which provide important wildlife habitat and helps mitigate shoreline erosion. Creating space for the installation of paddle-supportive infrastructure would require clearing a portion of naturalized areas. This disturbance would not be supported in an ESA that is protected by the Official Plan designation where development is not permitted and activities are limited to those that are compatible with the preservation of their natural features and ecological functions. This section of land also features recreational trails, including a portion of the Martin Goodman Trail, and intentionally mimics the shoreline features and characteristics of Tommy Thompson Park.

When determining suitable uses for shoreline and waterfront parkland, staff must consider and balance the goals and principles of existing strategies and action plans that seek to protect naturalized areas and provide accessible recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Through consultation with stakeholders including Waterfront Toronto and the Waterfront Secretariat, it is recommended that the shoreline area described in this report remain in its current natural state and that the location is not suitable for establishing new infrastructure dedicated to non-motorized watercraft. Staff have indicated that this area adequately serves a variety of recreational uses, including paddle sports, through existing organizations that occupy leased lands, seasonal rental providers, and publicly accessible access points that feature parking.

### **Newly Introduced Opportunities for Non-motorized Watercraft**

The Outer Harbour and nearby waterfront parks currently offer a number of supports for non-motorized watercraft activities including access and launch points, boat clubs that offer storage space, and rental providers that also offer storage, many of which have been newly introduced in 2021 including:

A request for proposals for paddle craft storage and rental opportunities, resulting in a stand-up paddle board rental and storage operator and 21 new storage spaces at Cherry Beach

A paddle-craft storage program offered to boat clubs, resulting in 30 new storage spaces at the Toronto Windsurfing Club in the Outer Harbour and over 150 spaces across the waterfront.

A Paddle Sports page on the City website to promote public awareness and provide details on access points, rental and storage locations across the waterfront.

## **Emerging Opportunities for Non-motorized Watercraft**

PFR will continue to build on the momentum created through the programs introduced in 2021 by expanding options and enhancing communications throughout 2022. The Division will explore opportunities for rental and storage across the waterfront and continue to support the development and growth of storage opportunities at boat club locations across the City's waterfront.

To help promote and communicate the breadth of opportunities for non-motorized watercraft, staff will develop a marketing campaign that showcases these services, reinforcing the City of Toronto as a paddle-friendly City. This marketing campaign will include targeted social media, on-site integrated signage and promotional materials, and digital promotion kits for councillors and community partners to share with residents.

## **Future Opportunities for Non-motorized Watercraft**

The 2020 Marine Use Strategy, undertaken by a partnership of Waterfront Toronto, Ports Toronto, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and the City, notes the growing interest in water-related recreation, including non-motorized watercraft. It is important that any plans for development of shoreline, or waterfront park amenities are done in consultation with these organizations and align with the strategic objectives for waterfront access, recreation and environmental protection. Additionally, the plans for Villiers Island development, which is projected to be completed in 2024, currently includes a canoe launch area to support recreational use of non-motorized watercraft in that area of the City.

## **CONTACT**

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Christina Iacovino  
Director, Client and Business Services  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation  
Tel: 416-392-8578  
[Christina.Iacovino@toronto.ca](mailto:Christina.Iacovino@toronto.ca)

## **SIGNATURE**

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Janie Romoff  
General Manager  
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1: Map of Outer Harbour