

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conservation Halton has completed an exciting three-phased process to update the master plan for its flagship park, Kelso Conservation Area and Glen Eden. The 2002 Master Plan¹ for the Kelso Conservation Area and Glen Eden set foundational elements for the update of the [Kelso Conservation Area and Glen Eden Master Plan](#) (Kelso Master Plan), with the recognition that the visitation needs and population growth, programming, infrastructure challenges, best management practices, planning principles and land use directions have evolved in the last 15 years, as well as the economic drivers. This was also an opportune time to assess and update the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System (NEPOSS) management zoning to ensure sustainable management of the park.

Part 3 of the Niagara Escarpment Plan, 2017² (NEP) addresses the function of the NEPOSS and contains policies for the establishment and coordination of a system of publicly owned lands along the escarpment. The NEPOSS is a mechanism to establish a set of parks and recreational spaces along the escarpment that are publicly owned and coordinated. The preparation of a Master/Management Plan is a requirement of the NEP for all NEPOSS parks, to ensure long-term protection, development and management of the parks and open spaces.

Kelso Conservation Area is classified as ‘[Recreation](#)’ in the NEPOSS, recognizing its natural attributes that provide one of the best recreational environments along the escarpment, and plays an important role as a major attraction along the Niagara Escarpment providing unique summer and winter recreation opportunities. Commercial uses along the NEPOSS are identified as being most suited to ‘Nodal’ or ‘Recreation’ class parks, as approved in a NEPOSS Master Plan. This master plan was developed with collaborative engagement through Conservation Halton and Dillon Consulting with the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) and Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) staff to align the process and proposed concepts with the NEPOSS Planning Manual, 2012³ (NEPOSS Planning Manual) and policies within the NEP.

This document presents the final phase and report of the master planning process, however, its development was structured into three phases as noted and described below.

In [Phase 1 – Inventory & Analysis Report](#), technical investigations, background document review and market research were undertaken in order to comprehensively characterize the features at Kelso. The summary report also presented the economic, environmental and social site contexts to ensure long-term sustainability and identification of key programming areas. To support the existing programming at Kelso Conservation Area and Glen Eden, the following priority focus areas were brought forward through the Phase 2 master planning process: natural and cultural environment protection, site access and circulation,

¹ Conservation Halton. 2002. Master Plan for the Kelso Conservation Area.

² Niagara Escarpment Commission. 2017. Niagara Escarpment Plan. Retrieved from: <https://escarpment.org/home>.

³ Ministry of Natural Resources (& Forestry). 2012. Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space Planning Manual. Retrieved from: <http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/26005/316614.pdf>.

parking, facilities and infrastructure, and the Kelso Quarry. Extensive public and stakeholder engagement was undertaken in this phase to ensure alignment with visitor needs and applicable agency governance.

The [Phase 2 – Concept Development Plan](#) documented the master planning development for the Kelso Conservation Area, including: proposed updates to the 2002 Master Plan NEPOSS Management Zones with distinct comparison and analysis between relative zones; preliminary concepts that included the four priority components discussed above; a summary of the extensive community and stakeholder engagement; evaluation process for the proposed program suitability for each option; draft concepts; a preliminary assessment of environmental, social and economic impacts, and potential mitigation measures; economic feasibility analysis; and management direction. A focus on the active engagement and consultation with visitors, key stakeholders and agency partners was a key component in this phase. Conservation Halton established a new format for increased participation for public engagement through surveys, information sharing and social media, as well as extensive stakeholder collaboration.

In [Phase 3 – Master Plan](#), priorities and phasing of implementation were developed to serve as the principal guiding policy document for the planning, design, development, fiscal and resource management for Kelso Conservation Area and Glen Eden. Critical information from the comprehensive work completed in all three phases, including input from the NEC, MNRF and Halton Region, and the NEPOSS Planning Manual guided the framework and development of the final Kelso Conservation Area and Glen Eden Master Plan.

This master plan involves two distinct concepts; the North Kelso Concept and the Kelso Quarry Concept, which are closely aligned with key service targets, key conservation targets and key objectives identified in Conservation Halton's strategic plan, *Metamorphosis 2020*⁴. Together, these two concepts support the protection of important natural and cultural assets, enable the necessary upgrades to the facilities and associated infrastructure, envision sustainable growth and visitation needs, celebrate Kelso Conservation Area's unique natural environment on the Niagara Escarpment, and improve the visitor experience and long-term programming for healthy living. These improvements will materialize over a five to 25 year time horizon in three phases, each containing distinct actions as summarized below:

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE ONE:

Kelso North

- Enhancement of the gateway and access points to Kelso and the wayfinding signage to improve the overall arrival and navigation experience;
- Reorganization and rehabilitation of existing parking and entry into arrival area including entry plaza to bridge crossing, parking, arrival roads and circulation toward the Visitor Centre;
- Improvements to Adventure/Discovery area with upgrades to parking, new rental building with washrooms, and expanded programming;
- Development of the Recreation, Sport Rental & Arrival Centre buildings;

⁴ Conservation Halton. 2017. *Metamorphosis: Conservation Halton Strategic Plan 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://conservationhalton.ca/metamorphosis>.

- Development of the Day Use Operations Access to improve the access and safety for Kelso’s visitors and operations staff, including a maintenance area; and,
- Pursuance of the approvals for upgrades to the water and wastewater services through proper processes.

Kelso Quarry

- Formalization of the park entrance, access, gateway and wayfinding to the central building at the Kelso Quarry; and,
- Continued restoration of the meadows, woodlots and lake habitat to strengthen its natural heritage.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE TWO:

Kelso North

- Expansion of trails, lookouts and access;
- Enhancements to beach programming; and,
- Renovation of the East Lodge building.

Kelso Quarry

- Introduction of both passive and active programs to the park, including circuit trails and lookouts, natural play area, gathering spaces and a mountain biking trails.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE THREE:

Kelso North

- Investments made to improving the experience, safety and diversity of camping accommodations, with an additional washroom/shower facility;
- Development of support kiosk at the Kelso Lake Centre, including improvements to the boat launch, parking and new volleyball courts;
- Rehabilitation of the shoreline; and,
- Implementation of the Village Centre at North Kelso, celebrating the rich history and heritage on site, while introducing additional levels of service to the site.

Kelso Quarry

- Addition of park programs which include re-imagining the Central Building, its green spaces as well as parking lots;
- Access to the beach, boat rental facility, boat launch and the associated active sport area that form an activity cluster; and,
- Interpretive wetland and education of the site history.

Conservation Halton is also currently seeking approval, outside of this master plan, to permit urban services outside of the urban boundary, as identified in the Region of Halton Official Plan. An amendment to the NEP has been approved to allow servicing, following the 2015 Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review. Ongoing conversation with the NEC, MNR, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), and the Halton Region are underway to address the existing site servicing needs.

This master plan was finalized during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which has unknown impacts to market demand and economic feasibility of Kelso Conservation Area and Glen Eden’s visitors and Conservation Halton’s operations that may affect this master plan implementation.