

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chair and Members of the Community and Corporate Affairs Committee

FROM: Catherine McLeod, Cultural Development Coordinator

DATE: August 9, 2019

MEMORANDUM NO.: MEM-ADMIN-2019-0012

RE: Cultural Asset Tours – Status and Implementation Update

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Committee with a status and implementation update on the Cultural Asset Tours program, branded as ‘Tour the Hills’; a key recommendation of the Cultural Master Plan.

BACKGROUND:

The Cultural Asset Tours program is a new initiative involving a series of self-guided interpretive tours that showcase the Town's rich and diverse arts, culture, heritage and natural assets. These assets were identified during the development of the Cultural Master Plan and have been captured in the Town's GIS system. The Cultural Asset Tours program is a good example of the Town's commitment to cultural vibrancy and leadership.

The launch of the Cultural Asset Tours will not only showcase local cultural assets, but will also be leveraged to maximize tourism and economic development opportunities, as recommended by the Cultural Master Plan (2013) and the Cultural Master Plan Action Plan (2015). Work on developing the tours began in 2017 when the Friends of the Deveraux House, the Town and the Cultural Roundtable collaborated to secure two summer students to research, and collect data on tour routes.

To continue to advance this key cultural project, funding for Phase 1 was included in the 2018 Capital Budget. Phase 1 focused on reviewing and updating the underlying GIS data to ensure its accuracy and proper formatting to align with the Town's GIS tools. In the 2019 Capital Budget, Council approved funding for Phase 2, focused on assessing the feasibility of the most effective and efficient way to launch the tours. This includes the research, assessment and installation of infrastructure components required to

launch the tours (e.g. mobile mapping software vs tablets vs digital kiosks vs static signage).

Parts of Phases 1 and 2 have been undertaken simultaneously. The launch of four pilot tours now will assist in identifying the preferred way that the public would like to experience and be informed of the Tours, prior to full program roll-out.

COMMENTS:

1. Tours Program (“Tour the Hills”)

Four pilot tours will be launched as part of Culture Days 2019, on September 27. These tours will showcase local cultural, heritage, tourism and natural assets of Glen Williams and Acton. Branded as “Tour the Hills”, the program offers a series of preset self-guided tours featuring the Town’s most prominent arts and cultural assets. In addition to set tours, the intent is to develop different annual ‘signature tours’ available for a limited time or offered in rotation in order to offer a variety of new content. The program will include walking, cycling and driving tours.

2. Partnerships, Networks and Opportunities

In 2018, the Cultural Development Coordinator was invited to be a part of the “Arts, Culture and Tourism Working Group of the Experience Planning Committee of the Credit Valley Trail”, along with the Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator. This Committee is advancing a complimentary project of developing trail to town tours along the optimal route of the future Credit Valley Trail to engage hikers in a range of cultural experiences in communities located along the trail. This provided an opportunity to leverage the Cultural Asset Tour program and present the pilot tours to a wider audience.

The Working Group decided to explore three potential pilot tours along existing trails that will form part of the overall Credit Valley Trail, including the Credit Valley Footpath in Halton Hills. This section of trail is maintained by the Bruce Trail Conservancy. Permission has been granted by the Bruce Trail Conservancy to develop the project.

In 2019, the national theme of the Culture Days’ event is “Creativity, the Arts, and Well-being”. This is an excellent fit with the Cultural Asset Tours and provides an additional opportunity to link and leverage the Tours with new audiences. In addition, Doors Open in Halton Hills will offer walking tours of historical downtown Acton during Culture Days. This provides an additional opportunity to develop a self-guided version of the tours for future use.

Taking into account these various opportunities, Town staff is working in collaboration with Credit Valley Conservation to hold an opening event in Glen Williams on Friday September 27, 2019 called: “First Steps on the Path of the Credit Valley Trail”. This event will: (i) raise awareness of the Credit Valley Trail; (ii) kick-off Culture Days 2019; and (iii) launch the ‘Tour the Hills’ program. Four pilot tours will be launched during

Culture Days. This will be a valuable opportunity to showcase the Tours to hikers, walking enthusiasts and cultural aficionados.

3. 2019 – Four Pilot Tours Currently Under Development

The four pilot tours proposed for Glen Williams and Acton are:

In Glen Williams:

- Full-day hiking and culture tour
- Half-day hiking and culture tour
- Heritage Walking Tour of Glen Williams

In Acton:

- Downtown Acton Heritage Walking Tour

In preparation for the launch of these pilot tours, Town staff has undertaken the following:

- In collaboration with Corporate Communications, developing branding materials for the “Tour the Hills” program.
- Reviewing, validating and updating over 800 records contained in the Town’s Cultural Inventory.
- Confirmed trail information with Credit Valley Conservation, Regional Tourism Organization 3, and the Town’s Recreation and Parks staff.
- Walked the tour routes to identify any potential issues and to time the routes.
- Visited all heritage sites in the Cultural Inventory located in Glen Williams to evaluate their suitability for inclusion in the Tours.
- Mapped the Glen Williams tours, including the routes and their timing.

4. Next Steps:

Delivery of the “Tour the Hills” program will require several additional steps, including:

- Finalize the validate all of the data records.
- Proof and test the final tours.
- Inform property owners of the tour program and the inclusion of their property on a tour.
- Secure high quality photographs of the tour locations.
- Finalize the branding of “Tour the Hills” program.
- Design the Story Maps look for “Tour the Hills” and populate it with the tour data. ‘Story Maps’ is the software application that the Town will use to communicate the Tours to the public. The Town already has this software in place as part of its GIS suite of tools. Story Maps allows for the combination of maps with narrative text, images and multimedia content to create compelling and user-friendly web applications. Story Maps can be accessed in desktop and mobile versions.
- Develop a webpage on the Town’s website to promote the Tours.

- Develop a Communications Plan for the tours, in coordination with Corporate Communications.

Going forward, Tour the Hills will also be promoted by the Town's new Arts and Culture Working Group. The Terms of Reference for the Arts and Culture Working Group have been finalized, consistent with the Working Group's scope of work as outlined in report ADMIN-2019-0010, dated March 27, 2019. Due to other priorities, including the launch of the Public Art Banner project, the ongoing coordination and planning for Culture Days, and the development of the Cultural Asset Tour program, Working Group members will be recruited in the fall.

CONCLUSION:

"Tour the Hills", the Town's new and first-ever Cultural Asset tour program has advanced significantly. The Town intends to launch four pilot tours as part of Culture Days 2019. These tours will showcase local cultural, heritage, tourism and natural assets located in Glen Williams and Acton. Cultural Services will continue to work on verifying and updating the remainder of the Cultural Inventory database and developing additional tour routes for future release. This process will include engaging the public to ensure that the tours offered meet the needs and preferences of residents and tourists. Feedback from the four pilot tours will be used to develop future tours.

"Tour the Hills" will leverage the Town's rich arts, culture, heritage and natural assets for economic, cultural and tourism benefits. The program fulfills a key recommendation of the Cultural Master Plan and Cultural Master Plan Action Plan, and is an example of the Town's continued commitment to cultural vibrancy.

Reviewed and approved by,



Damian Szybalski, Director of Economic Development, Innovation & Culture



Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer