

GRIMSBY BEACH: Walking Tours - Summary of Comments

On October 24 and November 14, 2020, the Town of Grimsby and MHBC Planning conducted a walking tour of the Grimsby Beach area in order to learn about the area from the community and to gain a better understanding of issues and opportunities facing the area.

Approximately 65 people participated in the walking tours. The following is a summary of the comments and concerns participants had regarding the Grimsby Beach study area. For some of these areas we have identified some “quick wins” or “quick actions” that can be directed to be undertaken immediately to address the issue.

Trees

What we heard:

- Trees were considered a defining characteristic of the Grimsby Beach study area
- A number of participants expressed that they wanted more trees to be planted in the area
- Area made up of old growth trees and new vegetation should include native species

Concerns:

- Residents expressed that they had concerns regarding tree maintenance, as there have been multiple occasions where trees have fallen on houses
- Participants also stated that trees are not maintained and that there are a number of dead trees and branches in parks
- Trees being removed along shoreline are contributing to erosion – trees could be planted to help erosion
- No tree replacement plan, guide or by-law in place

Ideas:

- Residents felt that there needs to be better communication between land owners, to ensure that the trees are regularly maintained and replanted in the event that they are removed
- Town should have tree planting replacement plan and/or tree by-law to ensure that dead trees are replaced by native species

Questions:

- Should residents along shoreline consult the Town before removing trees on their property?
- What type of trees should they be planting?

Study Considerations:

- Consider a Private Tree By-law
- Look into tree replacement program

Quick Wins:

- Post a list of native trees that residents can plant that will enhance the area

GRIMSBY BEACH: Walking Tours - Summary of Comments

Land Ownership

What we heard:

- The length of residence in Grimsby Beach of participants ranged between 1 to 40 years
- Participants expressed that they were drawn to the area due to the affordability, the cottage community feel of the area, proximity to the school and their familiarity with the area
- Homeowners also expressed that there was “pride” in their homes and that they were open to change but still wanted to maintain the feel of neighbourhood (e.g. height, facades, etc.)
- Not clear in many places who owns what land – distinction between what is public and private land and many have encroached into public lands and blocked areas for access
- In other cases, requests have been made to encroach on public lands to facilitate access or plant trees and requests have been denied

Concerns:

- Not clear in many places who owns what land – distinction between what is public and private land and many have encroached into public lands and blocked areas for access
- Residents said that there is no consistency in the lot patterns and they would like to see rules/regulations that regulate the land, especially for tent lots
- Lot patterns range from small to fairly large and residents expressed concern regarding residential intensification, where multiple properties are purchased to build large homes

Ideas:

- Better use of public land
- Clarify with a map who owns what
- Look into opportunity to have Tiny Homes due to the small lot sizes

Questions:

- What land is publically or privately owned in Grimsby Beach?

Study Considerations:

- Update land use schedule to include public lands

Quick Win:

- Prepare map layer illustrating public lands as part of the Background Report to post to study website

GRIMSBY BEACH: Walking Tours - Summary of Comments

Parks

What we heard:

- Bell Park and the beach park are jewels of the Beach
- Community gardens are a wonderful idea and people have tried to keep them going in the past but they have failed due to the lack of coordination
- There is a lack of green space in the area so the shore area and parks are viewed as “back yards” by residents – this is good and bad
- Many connections to the parks and the shoreline are cut off
- Parking lot in Bell park is too narrow

Concerns:

- The main concerns raised regarding beach park is access and safety - due to the lack of stairs, safe ramps and lighting
- Residents also expressed concern regarding the lack of public washrooms

Ideas:

- Plant more trees in parks and open space
- Add benches and repair and better maintain ramps/pathways
- Add an information booth at Bell Park that talks about history of homes, etc. and provides directions for visitors
- Residents would like to see a waterfront trail or path and trees and benches that are dedicated to individuals to make the area look more inviting

Questions:

- What will the Town do to improve the parks in Grimsby Beach?

Study Considerations:

- Clarify park uses and ensure facilities and washrooms can be added

Quick Wins:

- Move repair work into capital budget

GRIMSBY BEACH: Walking Tours - Summary of Comments

Tourism:

What we heard:

- Beach has always been a tourism area
- Recent influx of more tourists due to COVID-19
- Residents generally welcome tourism
- Traffic and crowds in summer can become overwhelming

Concerns:

- Tourism is a concern for residents
- Lack of resources – washrooms, parking, waste bins to accommodate visitors
- Insufficient information or support from the Town on cultural heritage
- Lack of proper wayfinding leads to trespassing

Ideas:

- Residents recommended that the Town look into hosting scheduled walking tours, having a QR code for tourists to scan for more information about sites, having a code of conduct for visitors and even having information available Town's website
- Other residents recommend setting up an information booth either on site or in the community centre where visitors can go to for more information about Grimsby Beach

Questions:

- What will the Town do to accommodate an influx in tourism at Grimsby Beach?

Study Considerations:

- Clarify policies on tourism

Quick Wins:

- Create a QR code that links tourists to website with information regarding Grimsby Beach

GRIMSBY BEACH: Walking Tours - Summary of Comments

Parking:

What we heard:

- Parking was stated to be an issue for both residents and visitors – it is not working well
- Residents share parking as needed which is a result of close social networks in the community

Concerns:

- Houses do not have enough room for parking, as for visitor parking, participants expressed that there is not enough public parking and there is a lack of signage directing visitors to the community centre parking area
- Participants also stated that tourists block off the dead end streets by parking along them

Ideas:

- Several ideas expressed to solve the parking problem which included looking into the opportunity of having a municipality owned communal parking lot for residents
- Introducing paid parking during tourist season
- Using the school parking lot for tourism during the summer – add to information for tourists
- Providing better signage to direct visitors
- Introduce a permit system for parking in the area

Questions:

- Does the Town plan on adding or improving parking for residents and/or tourists?

Study Considerations:

- Look at parking policies and implementing program options through the study
- Look into permit system for parking in Grimsby Beach
- Look for opportunities to create more parking for residents
- Look into opportunities to use existing parking lots for tourist parking during summer months (e.g. Grand Ave School parking lot)

GRIMSBY BEACH: Walking Tours - Summary of Comments

Scale and Height of New Homes:

What we heard:

- Design features some residents in the community expressed they are willing to accept include: steep roof pitches/common roof lines, cottage elements, size – smaller square footage, board and baton; less brick and vinyl siding
- Materiality of homes: open to siding, board and baton, but also afraid of restrictions or else it will make it harder to distinguish the older homes, and appreciate their heritage
- Large trees mask the height of taller homes
- New homes have been respectful of neighbourhood due to building materials used and architecture
- There are three distinct character areas (due to Lake Road cutting through): Lake lots, Beach and the south

Concerns:

- Residents on the tour expressed concern regarding the height and scale of new developments in Grimsby Beach
- This concern pertained to monster homes and 'new' improved façade styles that would overshadow the eclectic cottage style homes of the neighbourhood and the waterfront
- Other concerns include town houses that may be built on Mini Mall on Fair Ave which would take away from the character of the area

Ideas:

- Development should be treated differently in different zones within the area
- Design guidelines to provide flexible ideas

Questions:

- What are urban design guidelines and what can they do to benefit the neighbourhood?

Study Considerations:

- Define character of the areas and distinct areas
- Research policy options for how to address character through policies and regulations

Quick Wins:

- Provide residents with education regarding heritage and planning – what can it do and what can it not do (planning/heritage 101)

GRIMSBY BEACH: Walking Tours - Summary of Comments

Study Area Boundary:

What we heard:

- Residents suggested that the following sites be included in the study area:
 - The 'gate' area to the South
 - All of Betts Avenue (extend to include the Grimsby Urban Wildlife Care building)
 - The forest behind the school to prevent any development in that area
 - Former Dance hall site
 - Birchpark – The divide between the more historic part of Grimsby and the balance of ICBL
 - Both sides of Park Road

Concerns:

- Want to ensure that areas with trees and historical significance be part of the study
- Original historic areas should be included

Ideas:

- Update map

Questions:

- Why were areas excluded?

Study Considerations:

- Revise study boundary for research and background report
- Recognize ICBL will remain as the current boundary

Quick Wins:

- All areas noted will be part of the study - subject to budget considerations for additional work

GRIMSBY BEACH: Walking Tours - Summary of Comments

Shoreline and Erosion:

What we heard:

- Residents would like the shoreline area to be more inviting to both residents and visitors
- Current lack of accessibility and drop off points to water do not work
- Residents were concerned with erosion of properties and scheduling of work
- Would like more education regarding techniques to reduce shoreline erosion?

Concerns:

- Concerns about the shoreline and erosion were mainly focused towards improving safety for people that visit the beach and making it an inviting place to visit
- Concerns with tree removal along the shoreline and the area from Temple Land from Betts Ave to 3rd street) that has been eroding at an alarming rate where properties are now encroaching on the waterfront and trees have now fallen into the water
- Residents also brought up concern regarding the dead end roads and whether it was better to leaving it natural versus adding armour stones that invite people down to the water
- Residents were also concerned about safety and accessibility to the beach
- This included the existing steps that lead to the beach which are a big concern due to injuries from slips and falls
- Residents also mentioned that the pier needed repair due to holes on floor

Ideas:

- Put sand back on the beach
- If possibility can the Town add a public lookout point which can be used by residents and tourists

Questions:

- How do trees effect erosion along the shoreline?
- Will the Town improve accessibility and safety along shoreline?

Study Considerations:

- Provide an assessment of shoreline erosion and identify erosion control methods
- Create list of native trees specific to the area that can be planted for erosion control

Quick Wins:

- Provide an update on the website of the Town's current program and timing – what work has been done and what streets remain

GRIMSBY BEACH: Walking Tours - Summary of Comments

Traffic:

What we heard:

- There is a lot of additional vehicle traffic with tourists
- There are concerns with speed limits, wayfinding and one way streets
- Narrow roads add to character of neighbourhood and do not allow for street parking

Concerns:

- Speed limits are a concern for the safety of children in the area
- As for wayfinding, residents stated that many tourists get lost and drive in the wrong direction along one way streets
- At certain stops there are blind corners (e.g. Victoria & Temple Lane, Fair & Grand Ave)
- In terms of pedestrian traffic, issues were noted about the need for cross walks on Lake Street which act as both a physical and psychological barrier to visitors
- Residents also stated that there are no sidewalks around the area

Ideas:

- Participants suggested that they would like to see mirrors at bends, lower speed limits or speed bumps to improve road safety
- Gravel roads should be paved or be a permeable material that does not scatter stone onto their front yards, especially during winter ploughing

Questions:

- What type of traffic calming measures will the Town use to improve traffic?

Study Considerations:

- Assess traffic information and all comments
- Inform updated policies

GRIMSBY BEACH: Walking Tours - Summary of Comments

Heritage:

What we heard:

- There is a significant history to the area and its development over time
- Residents stated they want the "cottage community" to remain intact, as it's what they consider to be the 'character', and see it as a 'social community
- Residents that said that they were "pro heritage" wanted to ensure that new developments are compatible with the area
- In terms of how the area is characterized, residents described it as having homes that are brightly painted with Victorian fenestration
- Residents also mentioned that the change in housing styles speak to the history of Grimsby beach and how it changed over time from being weathered to renewed
- Residents said porches add to character of neighbourhood

Concerns:

- Concerns that heritage designations will pigeon hole new development and make homes all look the same
- Residents also mentioned that the change in housing styles speaks to the history of Grimsby Beach and how it changed over time
- Loss of heritage would really impact the area
- Over development of lots or significant shift in styles would affect heritage character

Ideas:

- "Carnival and "Gingerbread" homes were not something to be replicated/mandated or noted as a guideline element
- Town should provide education regarding heritage act and design guidelines and policies so people understand

Questions:

- How will Heritage designations benefit the neighbourhood?
- What does a heritage designation include?
- What is the difference between design guidelines, character policies and heritage designations?

Study Considerations:

- Provide for clear policy directions on character and heritage
- Ensure work is communication so people understand all the aspects of different planning and heritage tools
- Create design guidelines/lists of building materials to ensure that new developments are compatible with the area
- Look into education programs for heritage and design guidelines for residents

GRIMSBY BEACH: Walking Tours - Summary of Comments

Other Topics:

What we heard:

- Participants did not feel that there was anything particularly 'characteristic' of lots/houses fronting onto small dead end roads and mentioned how the laneways did not provide access to the beach due to the large rocks

Concerns:

- Lighting was also an issue, as participants mentioned that the new LED lights shine into their bedrooms, and they would like to see a lighting study and potentially replace the LED lights with softer lights or historical lighting that fits the neighbourhood
- Other issues included trespassing, as the area is a popular photography spot

Ideas:

- Residents also showed interested in a new community centre, or find ways to promote Grimsby Beach Hall so children have a place they can play in during the winter