



Backgrounder – Queen Victoria Park Master Plan

Overview

The area known as Queen Victoria Park encompasses the series of pristine parks, natural attractions, iconic landmarks and restaurants along the Niagara Parkway from Oakes Garden Theatre to Kingsbridge Park. The world-famous centrepiece of these spectacular lands is the Canadian Horseshoe Falls. Niagara Parks has initiated a concept Master Plan project to guide the ongoing development, programming and management of these lands to enhance the guest experience, as well as Niagara Parks' competitive and reputational positioning.

Purpose

The purpose of this concept Master Plan is to develop a set of structured guidelines for the ongoing development, programming and management of Niagara Parks lands within the core tourism area of Queen Victoria Park. As well, it will serve as a blueprint to enhance Niagara Parks' competitive and reputational positioning and assist the Commission as it seeks to ensure its long-term success by:

- Preserving and showcasing Niagara Parks' rich heritage, culture and lifestyle;
- Leveraging and activating Niagara Parks' natural wonders and iconic experiences;
- Supporting the dynamic business environment within which Niagara Parks operates, with a focus on investment attraction, connection to local communities, job creation and economic well-being; and
- Taking experiences and services of Niagara Parks to the next level.

History

The first people arrived in Niagara almost 12,000 years ago, just in time to witness the birth of the Falls. Successions of early cultures left their mark, as settlements developed along the Niagara River corridor. There are several known archaeological sites along the river's edge that establish their continuous habitation dating back 8,000 years. As well, Indigenous peoples were drawn to the area by the excellent fishing and the high-quality flint at the mouth of the Niagara River.

Early European settlers also found the river to provide opportunities based on the power of the water at the site of what is now Queen Victoria Park, as early as 1789. Tourism travel to the Falls began in the 1820's and within 50 years, had increased to become the area's dominant industry. By 1840, the first railroad in Upper Canada had opened and horse-drawn carriages were routinely shuttling visitors throughout the parkland overlooking Niagara Falls. In 1893, The Niagara Falls Park and River Railway began operating, which carried Falls visitors to Table Rock House from the boat docks



at Queenston. In its first year of operation, this line carried 354,000 passengers from Queenston to Queen Victoria Park.

At the turn of the 20th century, the power of the water had also attracted a unique combination of brilliant engineers and powerful investors to develop hydro-electric power generation within Queen Victoria Park. Three historic provincially significant power plant properties: Ontario Power Generating Station, Canadian Niagara Power Generating Station and Toronto Power Generating Station (also a designated National Historic Site of Canada) remain today as industrial archaeological sites. At the end of the first 100 years, Niagara Parks had become one of the world's most popular destinations.

Today

The lands within Queen Victoria Park contain a high concentration of natural and historic features and attractions, including the Falls themselves, the historic power plant buildings, and visitor attractions such as Niagara Parks' Table Rock Centre, Journey Behind the Falls, the Floral Showhouse, Wildplay's MistRider Zipline to the Falls and Hornblower Niagara Cruises.

Bounded by iconic environmental features such as the steep Fallsview moraine and the Niagara River Great Gorge, Queen Victoria Park is also the host site of many largescale events each year, including both New Year's Eve and Canada Day celebrations, as well as numerous other cultural and community events.

Beyond Queen Victoria Park proper, the area includes other spectacular parks and natural sites such as Oakes Garden Theatre, which celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2017, as well as Dufferin Islands and Kingsbridge Park, all connected by the Niagara Parkway and popular Niagara River Recreation Trail.

Within Queen Victoria Park, Niagara Parks Culinary operates various quick serve options and two full-service restaurants, Elements on the Falls and Queen Victoria Place Restaurant. Both Elements on the Falls and Queen Victoria Place offer guests an incredible dining experience, complete with unforgettable views of the Falls and menus infused with the tastes of Niagara, including a wide selection of local craft beers and VQA wines. Niagara Parks Culinary strives to showcase the local ingredients available from food and beverage suppliers and purveyors within the Niagara region and across Ontario, at each of the five full-service restaurants across Niagara Parks.

Regarded for decades as an international gathering place for guests looking to experience the natural beauty that is Niagara Falls, the area of Queen Victoria Park continues to welcome a high



concentration of visitors, particularly during the warm summer months. The concept Master Plan project will examine ways to enhance the experience of all guests when visiting Queen Victoria Park, whether they are traveling by foot, bike or vehicle.

Future

The concept Master Plan is an opportunity to better understand how contemporary visitors connect with Niagara Parks, considering the development changes and challenges that have emerged since the 1990s. It will examine how visitors engage emotionally and physically throughout the various sites within Queen Victoria Park year-round. The concept Master Plan will integrate parks, green spaces and attractions by examining connectivity and movement throughout the study area (pedestrian linkages and WEGO), extending to the surroundings of the Queen Victoria Park study area (Clifton Hill and Murray Hill, Fallsview area, Niagara Falls GO Station).

The concept Master Plan will consider traffic and parking issues and make recommendations for a broader Transportation Plan, proposing appropriate strategies and their integration into the overall Master Plan. The Plan will establish opportunities to better accommodate pedestrian circulation by researching and considering existing patterns, congestion, safety and security and urban design character. As well, it will inform the protection, enhancement, programming, and service delivery of the natural and historic features across the entire area of Queen Victoria Park.