

Looking Ahead: A Visioning and Strategic Planning Study for the Future of Brendale Square in Huntsville, Ontario

Executive Summary

The Town of Huntsville has partnered with students in the Ryerson University Master of Planning program to provide a vision and strategic plan for Brendale Square (the Site). A vision is needed because the Site is underutilized: many stores are vacant; the large expanse of surface parking is marked by potholes; and the Site is constrained by regular floods and potential soil contamination. Both the Provincial Policy Statement (2014) and the Town of Huntsville Official Plan (2006) promote intensification at this Site.

A Vision for Brendale Square

The regeneration and intensification of Brendale Square builds on a strong connection to the Muskoka River and downtown Main Street. The Square is a vibrant and sustainable community hub in the heart of Huntsville.

Brendale Square, Town of Huntsville

Brendale Square is in a central part of the Town of Huntsville, and is approximately 3.9 hectares in size. It is a short walk from the Muskoka River and the downtown shopping area (the Business Improvement Area outlined in purple and the Community Improvement Plan Area shaded in purple in Figure 1 below).

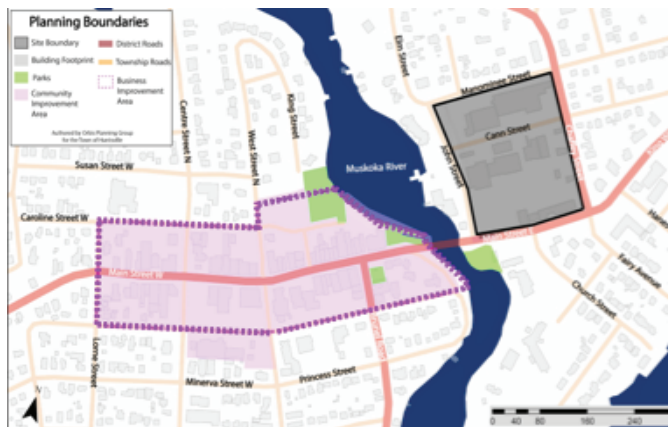


Figure 1: Map of Downtown Huntsville and the Site

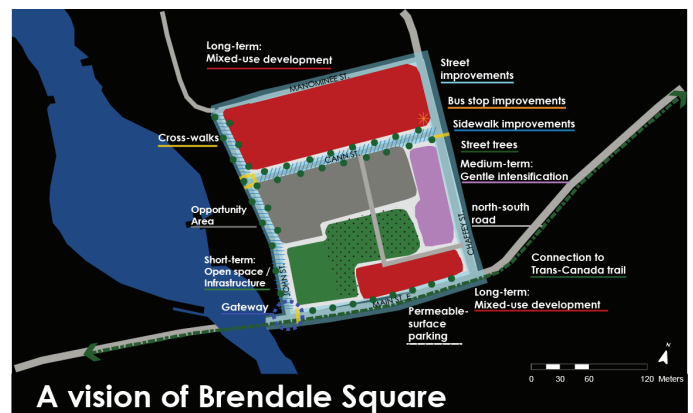
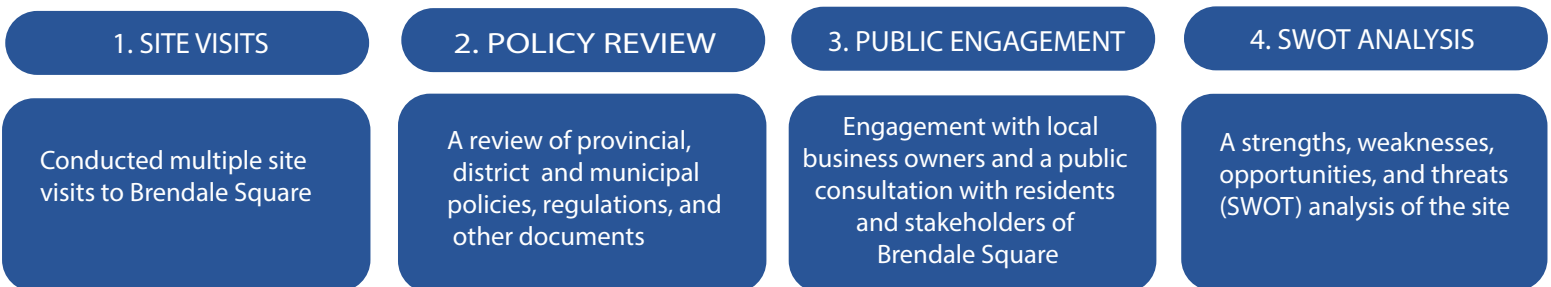


Figure 2: The Concept Plan for Brendale Square

The Conceptualization Process



Four Themes

Four themes related to the concept plan in Figure 2, showcase the vision for the site: Public Realm, Built Form, Land Use and Connections. See Figures 3 to 6 below.

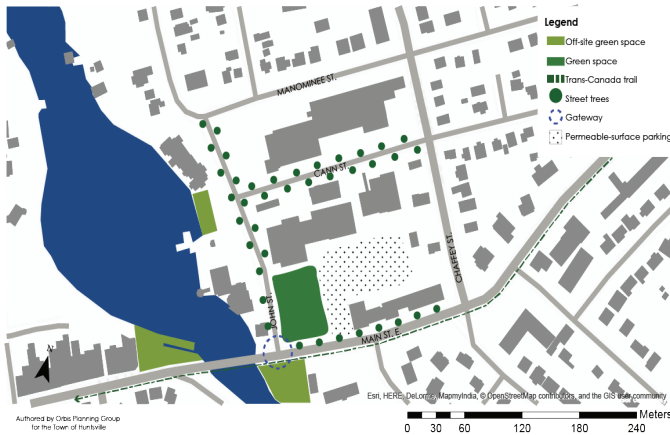


Figure 3: Public Realm



Figure 4: Built Form

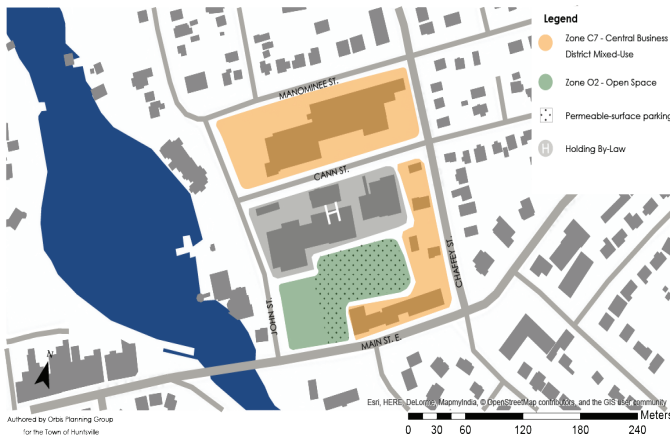


Figure 5: Land Use

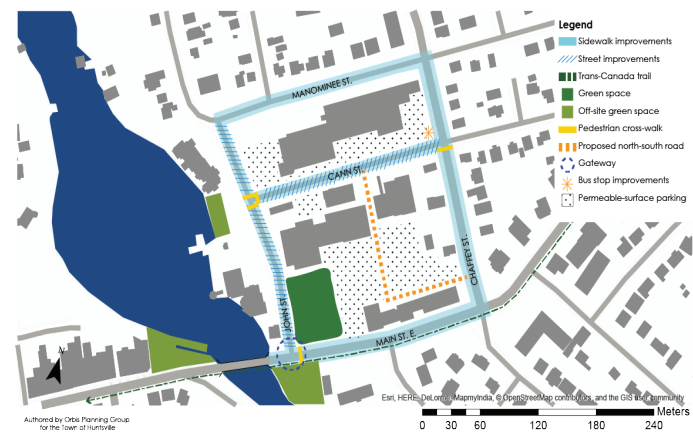


Figure 6: Connections

Public Realm

The proposed public realm plan includes:

- A public and flexible green open space at the southwest corner.
- Improvements to John Street, Main Street East and Cann Street to create an attractive and comfortable environment
- A gateway to Brendale Square and the Trans-Canada Trail at the intersection of John Street and Main Street East.

Built Form

The proposed built form plan includes high-rise; mid-rise and low-rise development as follows:

- High-rise: six storeys in the block south of Manominee Street and north of Cann Street.
- Mid-rise: four storeys on Main Street East and the northern part of the block between Cann Street and Main Street East.
- Low-rise: three storeys on Chaffey Street to the west.

Land Use

The proposed land use plan calls for changes to zoning across the Site by proposing:

- O2: Open Space zoning at the southwest corner of the Site.
- C7: Mixed-use zoning for the remainder of the Site.

Connections

The proposed connections plan includes:

- John Street and Cann Street redesigned to a shared street.
- New north-south road that connects to Cann Street through the existing parking lot.
- A gateway near John Street and Main Street that is an entrance to the downtown and helps to create a sense of place.

Implementation Strategy

The following implementation plan for Brendale Square provides a blueprint for action. It outlines the primary action items that should be undertaken by the Town of Huntsville to achieve the vision and concepts presented, through a phasing plan.

Phase	Description	Project Lead	Key Partners	Funding	Timeline	Action Items
Short Term Priorities (1 – 2 years)						
1	Creation of new Community Improvement Plan for Brendale Square.	Town	Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing	The new grants and incentives that will be created include Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Grant Program. Environmental Study Grant to assist with the costs associated with undertaking environmental studies. Development charge exemptions to encourage redevelopment. Development and Building Fee Rebates. Tax Increment Equivalent Grants (TIEG) to provide incentives for redevelopment by exempting increases in property taxes.	1 – 2 years	Integrate a Brendale Square CIP project area into Section 12 of the Official Plan. Designation of a community improvement project area, by by-law, in accordance with Section 28(2) of the Planning Act. Consult with the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs.
1	Land Acquisition of parking lot parcels on the south-west corner of the site south of Cann Street.	Town	Property Owners	Federal: Canadian Infrastructure funds, Federal Gas Fund. Province: Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, tax exemptions (land transfer tax).	1 – 2 years	Buy parcels that are affected by flooding. The Town should decide whether to acquire the land through a purchase and sell contract or expropriation. Site-specific engineering report should be completed to determine the development requirements in a floodplain.
1	Brownfield Remediation for the Construction of Green Infrastructure South of Cann Street.	Town	Federal & provincial Governments.	Brownfield Remediation: Green Municipal Fund, Building Canada fund. Green Infrastructure: National Disaster Mitigation Fund, Infrastructure Ontario, Green Infrastructure Fund, Green Municipal Fund.	1 – 2 years	Undertake Studies (Environmental Assessments, contamination management, Ministry Record of Site Condition, geotechnical and traffic studies). Apply to Federal & Provincial government funding programs.
1	Passage of a Holding By-law south of Cann Street.	Town	N/A	N/A	1 – 2 years	Place Holding By-law on lands south of Cann Street to restrict further development in flood prone area until studies are completed.
1	Zoning By-law Amendment.	Town	N/A	N/A	1- 2 years	Amendment to permit open space zone in the south-west corner of the site and increase the maximum permitted height to 6 storeys (19.5 meters). Harmonize zoning to C7 - Central Business District Mixed-Use.
1,2,3	Ongoing Consultation with Property and Business Owners.	Town	Property and business owners	N/A	Ongoing	Create dialogue with owners and maintain this for the entire process.
Intermediate Term Priorities (3 – 5 years)						
2	Create Site-Specific Intensification Strategy and Begin Gentle Intensification.	Town	Private Developers	CIP incentives.	3 – 5 years	Intensification will be started on Main and Chaffey Streets.
2	Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program (BFTIP).	Town	Province	N/A	3 – 5 years	Application to Province.
2	Heritage Designation.	Town	Province	Provincial government, Heritage Committee (Council).	3 – 5 years	Property owners should be consulted. Report should be submitted to Council.
2	Road Improvements.	Town	N/A	Allocate funds in capital budget.	3 – 5 years	Make improvements to existing sidewalks and add new ones to allow for greater accessibility. Allocate funds in capital budget.
2	Site-wide Low Impact Development.	Town	N/A	CIP incentives.	3 – 5 years	Bioswale planters, rain gardens, and medians could be added. Also, permeable pavement is recommended to reduce flooding.
Long Term Priorities (5 – 10 years)						
3	Creation or Extension of Business Improvement Area (BIA).	Town	Property & Business Owners	N/A	5 - 10 years	Town will take on a leadership role in owner coordination.
3	Large-Scale Intensification.	Town	Private Developers	CIP incentives.	5 - 10 years	Intensification on Manominee Street.
3	Creation of New Road.	Town	Traffic Engineer	Allocate funds in Capital budget.	5 - 10 years	Undertake Traffic Study.
3	Development of Indigenous Consultation Strategy.	Town	Residents	N/A	5 - 10 years	Recognize the ownership of land; Develop an engagement and strategic consultation plan. Offer ongoing opportunities for indigenous populations to share knowledge, insights so that development respects any relationship to Brendale Square.