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A. Macpherson

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
FROM:	JOHN M. FLEMING MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER and JOHN BRAAM - MANAGING DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENTAL & ENGINEERING SERVICES AND CITY ENGINEER
SUBJECT:	“BACK TO THE RIVER” DESIGN COMPETITION WINNING SUBMISSION and NEXT STEPS MEETING ON DECEMBER 14, 2015

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner, and the Managing Director, Environmental & Engineering Services and City Engineer, the following actions **BE TAKEN** with regards to the *Back to the River* Design Competition:

- a) the Jury-selected winning design, “The Ribbon of the Thames” created by Civitas + Stantec, **BE ENDORSED** as the long-range Concept Plan for further enhancement of the Thames Valley Corridor between Oxford Street, Wharnccliffe Road and Adelaide Street South;
- b) the London Community Foundation and its funders and partners **BE THANKED** for their vision and leadership in initiating and executing the Back to the River initiative, and;
- c) staff **BE DIRECTED** to report back on the scope of the Inaugural Project at the Forks of the Thames, its potential implications for other City Projects in the area and the implementation process for the Inaugural Project.

IT BEING NOTED that the scope of the Inaugural Project and timing of implementation will be based on a future design process and subject to funding through the Strategic Investments portion of the Multi-Year Budget process, and that the City will continue to work with the London Community Foundation on opportunities to collaborate on the implementation of the Inaugural Project.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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- June 15, 2015 Report clarifying the project, process and outcomes, and seeking approval for funding to initiate the next phase of the design for the Inaugural Project, resulting from the Design Competition.
- June 1, 2015 Report outlining the intent, background, scope, funding and process for the London Community Foundation’s “Back to the River” Design Competition and seeking approval of additional funding for detailed design of the winning submission.
- April 7, 2015 Our Move Forward: London’s Downtown Plan. The Downtown Plan includes a strategic direction to “Reconnect with the Thames River” and a transformational project to implement “a 2015 design ideas competition for London’s central riverfront, hosted by the London Community Foundation [to] inform the development opportunities associated with this project”.
- March 10, 2015 Strategic Plan for the City of London, 2015 to 2019. The Strategic Plan included a strategy to “partner with the London Community Foundation on the Back to the River Project”.

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June 9, 2014 London Community Foundation’s presentation to the Investment and Economic Prosperity Committee regarding their proposed *Back to the River* Design Competition. Direction to staff was given to work with the LCF to initiate the design competition.

BACKGROUND

BACK TO THE RIVER

In June of 2014, the London Community Foundation (LCF) proposed a community led design competition for the City of London’s riverfront. The project would cover the lands in three directions from the Forks of the Thames River: (1) from the Forks to Oxford Street; (2) from the Forks to Wharncliffe Road; and (3) from the Forks to Adelaide Street. The project was given the name “Back to the River Design Competition”.

The high level objectives for the Back to the River Design Competition were identified as:

- Mobilize and engage the London community in a collaborative discussion about improving our riverfront;
- Create a riverfront design to improve London’s image, economy and environment by substantially improving our riverfront;
- Establish a design for the riverfront that is bold and visionary, inspiring the community to improve our river as the heart of our city and increase community pride in our river, and;
- Create a more beautiful, cleaner and attractive riverfront that will enhance our goals for downtown regeneration, residential development, labour force attraction and retention, tourism, and economic improvement.

At that time, Council endorsed the Design Competition, confirmed the City’s participation in the project and provided \$50,000 to support the Competition. The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority also agreed to participate as a partner in the project. Details on the Competition process are included in the next section.

In June 2015, staff and the LCF brought an update to Council on the Project. At that time, the 19 submissions to the Request for Qualifications had been short-listed to 5 teams to participate in the competition, scheduled to wrap up in October 2015. At that time, Council approved the hiring of the winning design team to lead the next step in the design process. Regarding the next steps in the process, Council provided the following resolutions:

- d) *The winning design from the Competition BE PRESENTED by the LCF to the Planning and Environment Committee by December 2015 for Council endorsement, prior to the City proceeding to any implementation of the design; and*
- e) *The approved scope of work and funding for construction of any components of the design BE CONSIDERED by Council through the multi-year budget process, prior to proceeding to any tender process to initiate construction.*

This report and recommendations relate to item d) above only, with direction to staff to take the next step to develop an appropriate scope of design work for Civitas + Stantec to begin the Inaugural Project. A further report will be submitted to Council early in the New Year outlining this information and also providing scope and funding options for the full design and construction of the Inaugural Project for consideration through the Strategic Priorities portion of the Multi-Year Budget process.

IMPLEMENTATION / FUNDING POSSIBILITIES

It was understood that implementing the overall plan to improve London’s riverfront is a long-term endeavour. It is expected that improvements to the river will be implemented in a variety of stages, at different locations, and subject to the availability of funding over the coming decades. It is also expected that funding for such improvements will come from a variety of different sources over time, including the City, senior levels of government and private sector donors.

The London Community Foundation has been clear in its goal to help create an inspiring riverfront plan that can be used to prompt private sector donations. They have indicated that

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private interests – individuals and corporations – may be willing to contribute to components of a motivational plan that will establish a legacy for current and future generations. The London Community Foundation has already had success in this regard as private donors have contributed significantly to the design competition and have expressed ongoing interest.

As a partner and supporter of the Vision and goals of the project, the UTRCA has committed to assist with fund raising and grant applications for components of the winning plan.

Senior governments offer funding, from time to time, to municipalities for a variety of initiatives. Typically, these funding envelopes are offered to those communities that have “shovel ready” projects that meet their funding criteria. It is intended that the inaugural project concept at the Forks of the Thames will be refined so that it is much closer to shovel ready for both government grant applications and private sector donations.

DESIGN COMPETITION PROCESS

The process for the Back to the River Design Competition and selecting a successful proponent team involved two stages – RFQ and an RFP/Design Competition, with a key role for City Council in endorsing the winning design and determining a suitable scope, level of funding and timing for the inaugural project.

Recognizing the need for expertise in managing such a process, the London Community Foundation hired Urban Strategies Inc. to do so. Urban Strategies has managed, and participated in, many design competitions. They led the design of the RFQ and RFP/Design Competition processes and assisted with the public meetings, presentations and jury process.

Five design teams were short-listed for the Back to the River Competition and given very clear direction on the intent of the competition, goals of the three partners, all technical background relevant to the site and competition and the criteria on which they would be judged. Council’s established Plans for the Thames River Corridor, Downtown and SOHO Area were provided to all teams as context.

All five teams participated in a site tour and had the opportunity to ask technical questions of staff, seek clarification of any of the Competition rules and/or processes. The Teams had access to the extensive community consultation records to assist in the preparation of their London appropriate *Back to the River* Plans. The teams presented their Master Plans to the jury and the public on October 22nd, including the three levels of design: the big picture, two areas of focus and two inaugural projects – at the Forks of the Thames and adjacent to the Old Victoria Hospital site in SOHO.

On October 23rd the jury met to formally evaluate the design submissions. Each jury member had received all of the submissions in advance for detailed review. The Jury Chair ensured that all members participated and a thorough discussion of design and technical issues was supported, including contrary positions. Urban Strategies assisted this process and confirmed that there were no pecuniary interests among the jury members, submission criteria were rated by each member and the tally was accurate.

The City Planner and the Manager of Environmental & Parks Planning were available to the jury to provide answers to any questions of a technical nature.

WINNING DESIGN - RIBBON of the THAMES

The Jury has provided a formal report to the Competition Partners on their process and decision. The full report is attached as Appendix A. The key points are:

- “After deliberating and discussing each entry in detail, the Jury selected the proposal entitled ***Ribbon of the Thames***, submitted by lead proponents **Civitas + Stantec**, as the winner of the design competition. The Jury scored this proposal the highest against the five evaluation criteria established for the RFP phase of the Competition:

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1. **Innovative and Imaginative:** A creative overall design for the River that integrates its recreational and environmental potential at all three scales of inquiry, and enhances its natural beauty.
2. **Design Quality and Integration:** Design strength demonstrated in the details of proposed spaces, features, and inaugural projects.
3. **Practical:** Achievable, phaseable design proposals, aligned with approved plans and strategies, that build on existing initiatives and respect environmental, ownership, regulatory, and other constraints.
4. **Social and Environmental Benefits:** Design proposals that increase accessibility and activity, improve the environment, and offer opportunities for community and donor sponsorship.
5. **Downtown and Economic Regeneration:** Design proposals that assist with the revitalization of the surrounding city

- Civitas + Stantec’s winning proposal was praised by the Jury as building on improvement work already undertaken at the Forks, and for creating a strong sense of place on the banks of the Thames in the centre of London. Jurors highlighted the “sensitive” and “gentle” approach taken by the winning proponents, noting that many of their proposed design features, including the “The Ribbon Bridge” (a V-shaped look-out) and landscaped terraces providing easy access to the water’s edge, could be implemented quickly so as to maintain the tangible momentum of public support for the *Back to the River* initiative.

The winning submission, *The Ribbon of the Thames* is attached as Appendix B and includes a full conceptual master plan for the lands from Oxford Street to Wharnclyffe Road and Adelaide Street. The concept envisions:

- numerous environmental and aesthetic enhancements along the river’s edge and in the parks and open space lands;
- improved pathway/community linkages along and over the river;
- improved access to the river for river-based activities and a new boat house and dock;
- river valley enhancements in Harris and Watson Parks, and;
- major park/civic improvements at two focus areas – Forks of the Thames and in SOHO.

INAUGURAL PROJECT

The Competition required the proponents to identify two inaugural projects that would best highlight the vision of their Plan and best reflect the goals of the Competition. The Inaugural Project at the Forks should be a project that would build excitement for our downtown waterfront and be a spectacular kick-off for the long-term *Back to the River* project. It should generate new interest in the growth and regeneration of Downtown and spark Londoner’s interest in coming “back to the river”. In keeping with this directive of the Competition, the Jury provided this recommendation in their report:

- The Jury further recommends that the Civitas + Stantec proposal be amended to ensure that The Ribbon Bridge is the first infrastructure project to be designed and built; the Jury believes that the dynamic elements of The Ribbon Bridge will generate excitement in the public, government, and potential donors.”

The Civitas + Stantec design for the Forks of the Thames is shown on pages 28 and 29 in Appendix B and includes many components that make up the full Focus Area design. The consultant has identified several components that could be included in the Inaugural Project scope and conform to the preliminary budget envelope identified through the design competition. The scope of the component pieces, timing of implementation and funding of the Inaugural Project shall be determined by Council, as there is some flexibility in how the project could be implemented.

The cost of the inclusion of The Ribbon Bridge (a \$2M est. item) into the Inaugural Project is beyond what was originally contemplated in the Design Competition’s preliminary budget envelope for the Inaugural Project of \$5M. As per the June 15, 2015 Council resolution (part e)), staff will examine the scope of the Inaugural Project and provide options for possible inclusion of the Ribbon Bridge for Council’s consideration through the Strategic Priorities portion of the Multi-Year Budget process. The options will be expressed in a modular way showing flexibility in

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how the inaugural project may be implemented. Staff will continue to explore opportunities to collaborate with the LCF on this portion of the project.

NEXT STEPS

Riverfront improvements and the Back to the River Design Competition have been identified within Council's strategic plan. However, Council still needs to consider the funding of this work relative to its other priorities through the Strategic Priorities portion of the Multi-Year Budget process. In doing so, Council will have the flexibility to establish the level of support that it wants to initially provide towards implementation through this term of Council.

Environmental and Engineering Services will report back prior to the 2016 budget deliberations with a design implementation plan for the Inaugural Project. This plan will outline a proposed schedule and provide high level cost estimates to undertake the required Environmental Assessment Master Plan for the area.

The London Community Foundation is committed to continuing work for the implementation of *The Ribbon of the Thames* and is exploring funding opportunities to support the Forks of the Thames Project and the SOHO Inaugural Project. Further information on their continued involvement will be provided by LCF in 2016.

This report was prepared with input from John Lucas, Tom Copeland; Scott Mathers and Pat Donnelly of Environmental and Engineering Services, Jim Yanchula of Planning Services and Kyle Murray and Alan Dunbar from Finance and Corporate Services, and from our partners in the project: the London Community Foundation, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and Urban Strategies Inc.

PREPARED BY:	
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RECOMMENDED BY:	RECOMMENDED BY:
JOHN M. FLEMING, MCIP, RPP MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER	JOHN BRAAM, P. ENG MANAGING DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENTAL & ENGINEERING SERVICES AND CITY ENGINEER

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APPENDIX A

Back to the River Design Competition: Jury Report

October 23, 2015

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Jury assembled to evaluate submissions to the *Back to the River* Design Competition. A winning proposal was selected by an eight-person Jury made up of experts in urban planning and design, landscape architecture, architecture, environmental conservation, and civic leadership. That proposal, submitted by the team of **Civitas + Stantec**, is recommended for endorsement by City Council, leading to their retention as design consultants for the first phase of implementing the City’s ambitions to improve the Thames River environment and its relationship to the surrounding city.

The Competition was jointly sponsored by the London Community Foundation, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, and the City of London. The Competition took place in two phases between May 6, 2015, when an open Request for Qualifications was issued (following which a short-list was selected by the Jury), and October 23, 2015, when the winning proposal was identified.

The members of the Jury were:

- **Joni Baechler**, former Mayor of London (Jury Chair)
- **Paul Bedford**, Fellow of the Canadian Institute of Planners; former Toronto Chief Planner
- **Dave Harvey**, Founder and Director of Park People
- **George Kapelos**, Associate Professor, Department of Architectural Science, Ryerson University
- **Alissa North**, Director of the Landscape Architecture Program, University of Toronto
- **Don Pearson**, General Manager of the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority
- **Barbara Wilks**, Principal and Founder of W Architecture (New York)
- **Carolyn Woodland**, Senior Director at the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Nineteen responses were received to the initial Request for Qualifications (RFQ), from which five teams were shortlisted by the Jury to participate in a second Request for Proposals (RFP) phase. Five proposals were then submitted, which the Jury was given three weeks to review in detail. The Jury, along with more than 300 members of the public, also attended the presentations given by each of the proponent teams in London on October 22, 2015.

The Jury’s deliberation on October 23, 2015 was attended by the eight Jurors, two staff from the City of London acting as observers and technical resources (John Fleming, Managing Director of Planning and City Planner; Andrew Macpherson, Manager of Environmental and Parks Planning), and two advisory staff from Urban Strategies Inc. (Joe Berridge, Professional Advisor; Kyle Miller, Planner). After deliberating and discussing each entry in detail, the Jury selected the proposal entitled ***Ribbon of the Thames***, submitted by lead proponents **Civitas + Stantec**, as the winner of the design competition. The Jury scored this proposal the highest against the five evaluation criteria established for the RFP phase of the Competition:

1. **Innovative and Imaginative:** A creative overall design for the River that integrates its recreational and environmental potential at all three scales of inquiry, and enhances its natural beauty.
2. **Design Quality and Integration:** Design strength demonstrated in the details of proposed spaces, features, and inaugural projects.
3. **Practical:** Achievable, phaseable design proposals, aligned with approved plans and strategies, that build on existing initiatives and respect environmental, ownership, regulatory, and other constraints.
4. **Social and Environmental Benefits:** Design proposals that increase accessibility and activity, improve the environment, and offer opportunities for community and donor sponsorship.
5. **Downtown and Economic Regeneration:** Design proposals that assist with the revitalization of the surrounding city

Civitas + Stantec’s winning proposal was praised by the Jury as building on improvement work already undertaken at the Forks, and for creating a strong sense of place on the banks of the Thames in the centre of London. Jurors highlighted the “sensitive” and “gentle” approach taken by the

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winning proponents, noting that many of their proposed design features, including the “The Ribbon Bridge” (a V-shaped look-out) and landscaped terraces providing easy access to the water’s edge, could be implemented quickly so as to maintain the tangible momentum of public support for the *Back to the River* initiative. The Jury noted that some of the proposal’s longer-term aspects, such as a potential location for a performing arts centre, although outside the terms of the competition, were a welcome acknowledgement of the City’s intention to develop a diversity of public uses at the Forks, at all times of day and in all seasons.

The Jury acknowledged the importance of creating a complete pedestrian loop at the Forks, as proposed by the winning team, that would creatively unite all three river banks without first requiring the removal or relocation of existing transportation infrastructure.

The winning team’s proposal for the SoHo neighbourhood includes an attractive pedestrian/bicycle bridge and path system and promotes the ecological rediscovery of a river oxbow.

In a strong consensus, based on the Jurors’ shared and diverse expertise, the Jury recommends that the Civitas + Stantec proposal be adopted as City Council’s vision for the Thames River in downtown London, and that the City of London enter into a contract with Civitas + Stantec for the detailed design work necessary to inaugurate this vision at the Forks. The Jury further recommends that the Civitas + Stantec proposal be amended to ensure that The Ribbon Bridge is the first infrastructure project to be designed and built; the Jury believes that the dynamic elements of The Ribbon Bridge will generate excitement in the public, government, and potential donors.

In summary, the Jury believes that Civitas + Stantec’s proposal will inspire Londoners with an imaginative and realistic vision for the future of their river, and will encourage a strong and productive civic conversation about the city’s natural heritage and the future of London’s downtown.

In addition to selecting a winning entry, the Jury highlighted elements from the other submissions that they felt merited recognition. In particular, the Jury was inspired by the illuminated “River Circle” aeration feature submitted by the Brook McIlroy/Patkau Architects team. The submission by Stoss Landscape Urbanism and Dillon Consulting Limited was recognized for its comprehensive vision for the competition study area and its integration of the Thames River with the broader city.

The Jury also acknowledged the comprehensive landscape infrastructure strategy proposed by Janet Rosenberg and Studio, and PWL Partnership’s intriguing vision of river gateways.

We congratulate Civitas + Stantec on their successful proposal, and we look forward to seeing it implemented in the future.

Sincerely,

Joni Baechler Jury Chair Back to the River Design Competition

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APPENDIX B