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Newboro Community Vision – Draft v2 **August 2021**

Background

In the spring of 2021, the Township of Rideau Lakes contracted Third Sector Consulting to engage the community in developing a Vision for Newboro. Similar visioning processes in Delta and Portland in the past couple of years have helped engage these communities and have created energy around community development.

The **Process for The Project** proposed the following:

- Independent facilitation and expertise to guide community engagement and summarize community input in a document which proposes an actionable vision for the Village of Newboro
- A thorough, detailed and inclusive conversation about what the community wants and needs going forward (June/July)
- Circulate this draft vision document for community feedback and itemize feedback and related thoughts/considerations in a separate document (August)
- Provide a final vision document to Council and the community and a secondary document outlining community feedback noting if, why and how feedback has been incorporated and/or considered. (September)

The Process So Far Between June 23 and July 16, 2021:

- Opportunities to participate in the visioning process were promoted via social media and through community networks
- Three 1.5-hour workshops were held via video conference (Zoom) Twenty-two people participated in these workshops
- An additional nineteen people provided input via a survey. The survey was available on -line or in paper format.

This Report:

- Documents the input gathered via workshops and surveys.¹
- Organizes data gathered into three sections: What people like about Newboro and what they consider are the community's assets; an emerging vision for Newboro - what people hope the community will look like and be like in 2030; and finally, how people will measure real progress in community development by 2030.

¹ Consultants' reports from each workshop and a survey report are available as separate documents

Third Sector has also prepared a second, supplementary report which provides an overview of relevant plans and planning reports which pertain to Newboro. This report also contains consultant observations and questions regarding potential community development issues and the relationship of planning documents to the emerging vision for Newboro.

1. Why Is Newboro a Great Place to Live, Work and Play?

Third Sector Consulting supports Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and its positive approach to engaging the gifts and energy of citizens in ongoing community development. As such, we encourage people to identify and build on strengths and assets of their community versus looking at visioning as a process of identifying gaps and problems that need to be fixed in order to make the community right.

Community Character and Activities / Municipal services and infrastructure

The number of comments and suggestions relating to community activity and municipal services by far exceeded feedback relating to the other themes. The quality of life in Newboro, its quaint/ rural character, friendly residents and (pre-Covid) range of community activities were cited by many respondents.

Several favorable comments were received about the quality of Township services (roads plowing, garbage collection, summer recreation for kids, volunteer firefighters, heritage preservation, village beautification, events at the community hall) and the leadership provided by local elected officials.

Lower housing prices with large village lots, great Internet service, affordable taxes, fair by-laws and the easy commute to Ottawa, Perth, Smith Falls and Kingston were emphasized.

Existing strengths and assets to be built upon:

- Community events - summer and winter opportunities are available (although less than in years past)
- Wonderful library in an historic building
- Proximity to eastern Ontario towns
- Great community hall, sports fields and other outdoor recreation opportunities
- Very friendly/ welcoming community, people make eye contact
- Strong sense of community/ volunteerism
- House sales have increased in recent years, changing demographics
- It's nice to have the Community Hall (meet neighbors/ host larger events)
- Coffee hour is a good place to get information
- Pickle ball courts- Pickleball attracts participants from outside the area
- It's a great place to raise a family
- Township Council is progressive and supports community initiatives
- People who live here want to be here
- Younger people are moving in

- High speed fiber internet, can work from home
- Robust arts community
- Wide main street

Business Development/Drummond Street

Kilborn's on the Rideau was identified by many respondents as vital to residents and visitors alike. However two key deficiencies were emphasized in many completed surveys: the need for additional dining and retail services (many of which have been available in the past) and concerns with the high number of shuttered properties along Drummond Street.

Some strengths to build on:

- Drummond Street has a good foundation with Kilborn's, the Stagecoach, the Sterling Lodge restaurant, Hidden Gardens, Jak's and the Newboro Soap Company. Visitor offerings like Poplars, Sterling Lodge, Pattinson's Paddles, Newboro House B&B and the Newboro Lock Station bring a regular stream of visitors.
- It would be great to see more small businesses. Would love to see a grocery store, a cafe and/or small shops.
- The significant presence of artists and crafts persons in the village (the Rideau Lakes Art Tour has a stop in Newboro)
- Medical/Health Centre

Waterfront / Parks Canada

There were a great number of comments received about current/ future waterfront opportunities in Newboro and about Rideau Lakes Township's relations with Parks Canada. Access to Newboro Lake and the Newboro Lock Station are viewed as a key factor in the Village's current and future opportunities.

Newboro Lake is one of the best lakes on the Rideau chain and is steeped in the Rideau Canal's history (Newboro was historically the greatest challenge in building the Rideau Canal). The channel is beautiful to look at from the highway or the water and provides easy access to many other lakes. The importance of water-based activities (boat rentals, kayak/ canoeing, fishing) were emphasized by several respondents.

Some assets to build on:

- The new video on the isthmus (<https://youtu.be/1Rs4KbKql2M>)
- Accessibility to the Newboro Locks (less so in recent years) and the Rideau Canal

Lots of potential for more things to happen:

- Improving waterfront access and availability for people, swimmers and boaters

- Parking has always been problematic at the public dock
- Establishing a community waterfront park for swimming
- Greater emphasis on the history of the canal, the lock and waterfront docks
- Recreate the traditional focus of the village on the canal by working with Parks Canada to create an inviting parkland along the canal banks including pedestrian access to both banks of the canal.
- Keep the waterfront as clean and inviting as possible (focus on water quality and habitat).
- More seating and paths for pedestrians / cyclists at the water's edge

Heritage - Newboro Is a Historic Village

Participants indicated that Newboro's significant history and heritage are an important reason that it's a great place in which to live or visit. The history of the Rideau Canal and historical landmarks are strengths which can we built on.

- The remains of the Brockville Westport rail bed
- Great history, many heritage buildings (library)

Outdoor Activity and Green Space

Newboro is appealing for its walkability (paved and unpaved areas for walking) and the best pickle ball courts in Rideau Lakes. Fishing, bicycling routes, cross country skiing and walking on the canal and lake in winter all provide a sense of peace and closeness to nature.

Some strengths and assets:

- Parkland and green spaces
- Memorial Park
- The story board trail is great for kids
- Soccer pitch, baseball diamond and kids play structure
- Walking tours are informative
- Walking trail is great for kids and everyone

2. Vision 2030

Ideas put forward by participants were clustered into several themes. These themes were each given a headline (bold text). Headlines were consolidated as "Vision 2030", which is represented in the display which follows.

(Summary View) Vision 2030 – Newboro is an active, vibrant place to live, work and play

Newboro is a year-round destination with a unique identity.

It is a great place to live:

- **The population is growing and includes more young people/ families**
- **Housing is well kept and affordable**
- **The community is engaged**
- **It is child and family friendly**

The Rideau Canal Lock site at Newboro and Newboro's waterfront have become vital for villagers and tourists alike.

Business development and the revitalisation of Drummond Street are a high priority for residents and local businesses.

More services, activities and amenities are available.

Newboro's significant heritage and history are celebrated.

A greater variety of outdoor activity and green space is available.

Participants contributed many specific ideas about what Newboro might be like and look like in 2030. As noted, similar ideas have been clustered under themes. Whereas duplications have been eliminated, the following represents citizen input as directly as possible. A more detailed view of Newboro 2030 follows

(Detailed View) Vision 2030 – Newboro is an active, vibrant place to live, work and play

Newboro As a Year-Round Destination

- Newboro has a 12-month identity
- Promotion of Newboro (to visitors and new residents) has increased
- The winter carnival and similar anchor events establish Newboro as a destination
- More festivals/ arts events/ a farmers' market are held
- Christmas attractions draw visitors and appeal to residents
- Community activities have been expanded
- The Pickle ball tournament is a summer draw
- Newboro's unique character to attract visitors is distinct from Westport

A Great Place to Live

Larger/ younger population

- Cottages have been converted to year-round residences
- There is a good mix of demographics

Sustainable and Well-Kept, Affordable Housing Is Available

- A non-profit housing corporation provides affordable housing

- New homes have been built on vacant lots
- Previously boarded up homes have been renovated
- All the homes are well kept

Engaged Community

- Community pride has increased
- Community surveys are conducted regularly

Child and Family Friendly

- More/better childcare is available
- More young families have moved to Newboro
- More activities for children/ families are available

The Rideau Canal Lock Site at Newboro And Newboro's Waterfront Have Become Vital For Villagers And Tourists Alike

- Expanded parkland has been established along the canal with docking facilities
- An expanded historical site has been set up by Parks Canada
- Parks Canada has improved waterfront opportunities through food services and a museum for Rideau Lakes
- Land-based activities at the locks have been expanded and more diverse water-based activities are available
- A partnership with Parks Canada has resulted in a lakeside park and public beach access
- Boaters are attracted to the downtown area
- There will be a swimming area for local residents- Newboro swimming beach and playground beside the creek mouth are restored
- Walking trails have been created from the locks to downtown and to the cemetery
- More extensive use is being made of the many canal side properties

Business Development/Revitalized Drummond Street

- Main street has been revitalized with no more vacant properties
- Grass boulevards that have been paved over have been re-established
- More jobs are available locally
- There is more diversity in local businesses/ retail (a grocery store, for sure)
- A small cultural centre has been created on Main Street
- The Loon and other commercial properties have reopened
- People are encouraged to look beyond the main street
- Water front restaurants and a boardwalk have been established

More Services, Activities and Amenities Are Available

- A bank machine, gas station, convenience store with LCBO outlet, café, ice cream shop are available
- Services are provided that bring people together
- A local service club attracts younger members

- Monthly breakfast/supper have been established
- Broadband and cell service have improved

Celebrating Our Heritage/History

- Signage at the Village entrance emphasizes Newboro's historical significance
- New branding/ marketing has been established for Newboro
- Accessibility of historic buildings has improved
- A heritage committee exists
- There is more community engagement with village history
- Residents and visitors are more aware of the Indigenous history of this area

Outdoor Activity and Green Space

- There is more diverse use of recreational areas
- A community garden exists in Memorial Park
- More places are available for winter activities like skating and cross-country skiing
- A bicycle/ walking trail connects Newboro with Westport and Elgin
- The old ball diamond has been converted into a dog park
- More trails and interpretive signage/ programming is in place
- Newboro is a more walkable community
- All roads are paved and have improved streetscaping
- An environmental sustainability plan for Newboro has been adopted (composting is included in the garbage/recycling pick up)

3. What Might Success Look Like? How will we know that we have made progress?

Productive Collaboration with Parks Canada

- Parks Canada is more open to community input and partners with the Municipality; there is expanded access to the locks
- Water access/ a public beach
- Parks Canada has done more with their property (the community has been the driving force)
- The old boathouse in the harbour has been restored

Activity Levels Increased

- New/ expanded special events are successful in attracting people/ sustainable
- Increased number of activities/ bookings at the community hall
- Community spaces are well used
- Increase in tourism/ greater number of land-based visitors
- Expanded community activities and special events

More Positive Image – Better Known

- More marketing of the village and its access to the waterway
- A community improvement plan is in place (restoration of old buildings)

- Maintain the character of the village
- Fewer boarded up buildings
- Welcoming signs
- Signage is in place directing folks to areas of interest and events
- Greater public awareness of Newboro (and fewer hidden attractions)

Heritage Recognition

- A greater emphasis is placed on the village's history
- Statues of historical figure

Sustainable Affordable Housing

- Affordable housing initiative has progressed (like Mill Bay Court in Portland)
- Sustainable affordable housing is available

Engaged Active Community

- Have a community driven future, encourage community groups to form
- More people building homes in/ near Newboro
- More citizens are engaged in community development/ community enhancement
- An increase in village population recognized environmental certification body
- Level of resident and visitor satisfaction is high
- Higher percentage of village population involved in community and tourist activities
- Population growth/ more young people
- Positive results from a quality-of-life survey (longitudinal study measuring change over time)
- Community Surveys are conducted regularly

Population and Economic Growth

- The number of residents and businesses have increased (new services are available)
- Revitalized Loon
- Vibrant/ diverse retail along highway 42 through Newboro to encourage visitors to stop
- Newboro is a more walkable community

Recognized as a "Sustainable Place to Live and Work"

- Newboro being a certified as a "Sustainable Place to Live and Work" by a nationally recognized entity
- An environmental sustainability plan for Newboro adopted (Composting included in the garbage/recycling pick up)

Newboro Community Vision Project 2021- Supplemental Report

This report supplements the Newboro Community Vision 2030 report and is intended to provide comments, issues and questions arising from background research conducted by the Consultants, the three community conversations hosted by the Consultants, as well as the results of the community survey.

1. Background reports and their relevance to the Newboro Vision for 2030

Among the priorities identified in the Township of Rideau Lakes Strategic Plan 2015 (and to be achieved by 2025), the following relate most directly to the Newboro Vision for 2030:

- The Township will seek to have in place viable villages and hamlets with an appropriate mix of core services (residents) and tourism services (visitors). Focus will be given to rehabilitation and public and private investments that support a strong future, building on the unique opportunities that each village and hamlet has to offer.
- Expanding the Township's business base, including tourism and farming, while retaining rural character, culture, and lifestyle. Job growth and local opportunities are a key focus.
- Establishing a thriving retirement community with services closer to home and transportation services available as needed.
- Supporting waterfront development in a balanced and environmentally sustainable way that enhances water quality while recognizing and supporting the important cultural and economic role of waterfront development. Innovative technologies, development practices, and economic models will be encouraged.

The Township of Rideau Lakes Economic Development Action Plan 2020 – 2022 identifies the top four priorities for economic development action in the next three years, of which three relate directly to the Newboro Vision 2030:

- Being Open For Business
- Focus on villages and hamlets
- Tourism

The Township of Rideau Lakes Cultural Heritage Strategic Plan 2020 is intended to encourage the long-term viability of the Township's heritage resources. Among the eight strategic opportunities identified in the plan, three relate most directly to Newboro Vision 2030:

- Promoting Community Heritage Partnerships (in Newboro this includes Parks Canada)
- Coordinate and Nurture Community Involvement
- Stimulate Cultural Heritage Tourism

The Township of Rideau Lakes Trail Strategy 2019 contains seven strategic opportunities, including the Cataraqui Trail (as the ‘backbone’ trail in Rideau Lakes) and Village Trails (including Newboro’s Memorial Park).

The Newboro Harbour Redevelopment Plan 2010 identified the need to address the state of the Township’s docks in Newboro. The plan also addressed better connecting the harbor to the commercial core of Newboro and other needs in Newboro related to the waterfront area.

The Draft Management Plan for the Rideau Canal (February 2020) prepared by Parks Canada does not address the Newboro Lock specifically, but it nonetheless contains a Vision (Section 4) which describes a number of key strategies that align the Newboro Vision for 2030:

- Visitation Is Diversified through More Opportunities for Authentic Canadian Experiences like Paddling, Camping, Cycling and Hiking
- Land-based Visitation to Lock Stations is Increased and Visitors are More Engaged with the Canal
- Relationships with Strategic Partners are Developed and Strengthened to Manage the Rideau Canal in a Collaborative Way
- Ecological and Cultural Aspects of the Rideau Canal Are presented to visitors and Integrated in Tourism

2. Implementation issues and opportunities

Enhancing the Rideau Canal Lock site at Newboro and Newboro’s waterfront will be most successful if the Township is able to strengthen its working relationship with Parks Canada. The Draft Management Plan for the Rideau Canal prepared by Parks Canada in 2020 presents a great opportunity to emphasize the alignment of strategic priorities between the Draft Management Plan and Newboro Vision 2030.

The elements in Newboro Vision 2030 relating to Newboro as a year-round destination and Newboro being a great place to live can be most effectively accomplished through the efforts of volunteers and community groups. This suggests that the Township should be pro-active in the recruitment, training and recognition of volunteers.

Perhaps the most significant obstacle to business development and a revitalized Drummond Street (as called for in Newboro Vision 2030) is the number of boarded up properties on Drummond street. Council and the business community should work in a coordinated manner to address this issue with relevant property owners.