

Wellesley council approves guiding principles for redevelopment or repurposing of old Wellesley arena and community centre

Guiding principles are based on community feedback and will inform two to three options

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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Wellesley council has approved a set of 10 guiding principles that will help the township's consultants move ahead with developing between two and three options for the future use of the property on which the old Village of Wellesley arena and community centre currently sit.

At its Oct. 14 committee of the whole meeting, councillors heard from GSP group president and senior planner Steve Wever, who presented the findings of recent public engagement around what residents would like to see the township do with the old arena and community centre now than that new Wellesley Recreation Complex is open and fully operational.

"The overall purpose of step 1 for this process is really to lay the foundation for coming up with some options in the next step," Wever said. "Before we get into starting to draw things on the map or identifying some potential layout options or repurposing of the site or buildings, we really wanted to get back to the basics of what are the principles, what are the overall words and phrases people use for creating a vision for guiding the future use of

the land."

According to Wever, the planning consultants from GSP group conducted an exhaustive consultation that included feedback from an online survey with 406 responses, two open houses with a total of 80 attendees, 78 online comments and consultations with more than 10 local stakeholder organizations. Those who attended the Wellesley Backyard BBQ in June were also consulted.

The majority of the respondents to the online survey and attendees at the open houses, Wever later told council, live within the Village of Wellesley and in the neighbourhood adjacent to the community centre and arena.

Based on the results of the public-engagement process, Wever told councillors the majority of those who provided feedback were strongly opposed to the township selling the land and buildings, and strongly in support of public, recreation or community uses for the site. Locals also indicated they'd like to see the arena and community centre preserved as festival and event space, and they'd like to see year-round, community-focused mixed uses at the site with space for amenities like a library, child-care centre and seniors'

or youth programming among others.

Additionally, those who provided feedback said they wanted to see any new or existing buildings on the site designed or repurposed with accessibility in mind, that parking and operations onsite support use of the adjacent parkland and baseball diamonds, and that the site be operated sustainably and efficiently from a financial perspective.

From that feedback, Wever presented the following guiding principles for the site's potential redevelopment, should council choose to move ahead:

- Public stewardship and recreation-led use: Keep the lands in public ownership and prioritize outdoor public, recreational and community uses; repurpose existing assets where feasible.
- Community-oriented, inclusive and safe: Design and program the site to reflect Wellesley's community spirit; ensure it is welcoming and comfortable for all ages and abilities.
- Universal accessibility by design: Integrate accessibility from the outset, including continuous barrier-free paths, accessible entries, seating, washrooms and parking so

all users can navigate and enjoy the site independently.

- Year-round activation and everyday use: Plan for four seasons and balance major events with daily, informal use. Provide durable surfaces, weather protection and amenities that support regular community activity.
- Distinct and complementary community amenities: Provide community and cultural amenities that add to, rather than duplicate, township recreation services centralized at the Wellesley Township Recreation Complex.
- Community-serving housing: Limit residential uses to small-scale, village-appropriate forms that address local needs and co-locate ground-floor community services where appropriate.
- Height, massing and village fit: Shape any new or retained buildings to reinforce Wellesley's small-scale character and to respect adjacent parks and neighbours through sensitive height, massing and transitions.
- Access, parking and operations for

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A photographer is coming. Dress up!

VINTAGE VIEWS

By Tim Mosher

Tavistock and District Historical Society

Photography was still a novel technology up to the introduction of mass-produced, handheld small cameras of the 1920s, so when the schoolmaster announced that a professional photographer was coming, it was a special and infrequent occasion where parents wanted their children to represent their families in their smartest attire. Dress-up group photos at schools were common; individual ID photos were unknown at the time.

When commercial photography became popular around 1860, a camera was a big, box-like apparatus that was always held atop a sturdy tripod. The camera could be partially disassembled to carry in a large case and the tripod folded to transport under arm. Cameras used in studios were sometimes considerably larger and designed to only be used where their heavy glass negatives could be handled, sometimes as large as 14 by 18

inches (36 by 46 centimetres).

The field camera that was used to take this picture had a glass negative that measured a very standard-at-the-time eight by 10 inches (20 by 26 centimetres). One side of the glass was coated with light-sensitive silver halide – yes, real silver; the other side was not coated. After the photographer focused the upside-down image while standing under a dark hood at the camera's back, he (usually male) inserted the negative, got everyone's attention and took the picture. The photographer could not look through the camera while the photo was taken, so he had to stand beside it, sometimes with a small toy bird on a finger to hold children's attention.

This is where the expression, "Watch the birdie," comes from. "Say cheese" came decades later when it was thought that pronouncing this word causes people to smile.

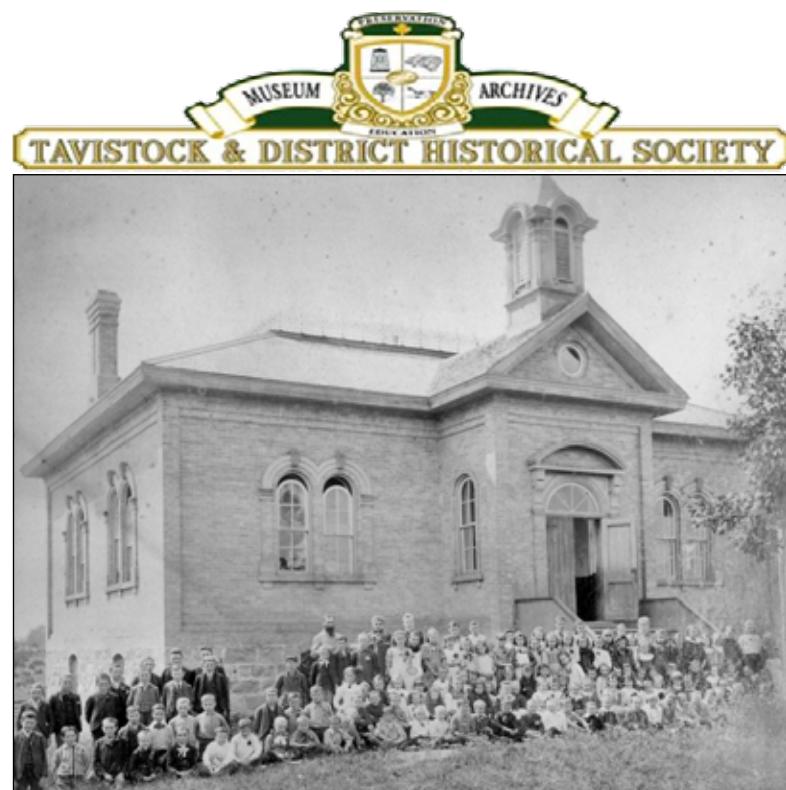
So, when the photographer arrived to take photos of the group assembled in front of the school, it was an unusual sight and clearly a special occasion. Note how some of the boys are wearing long ties, jackets and even vests. The girls would wear their prettiest dresses. There appears to be only three staff members in this picture, one of whom is very likely the prin-

cipal and 124 pupils. Lots of other photos of school groups show boys and girls not wearing shoes and much more casually dressed, likely because they were playing 'hooky' when the announcement was made to "Dress up. The photographer is coming tomorrow."

It's not recorded who the photographer was. There were about five itinerant photographers setting up shop for one or two days per week in Tavistock for about two decades, until John "Jack" Lemp arrived in 1905, built a photo studio and darkroom and shot and developed the vast majority of pictures in the Lemp Studio Collection, along with his pharmacy business. This picture clearly pre-dates Mr. Lemp.

Darkrooms, rolls of film and trays of liquid chemicals are now largely things of the past. One of the largest companies in the world, Kodak, based in Rochester, N.Y., dominated the western world's roll film (analogue) business for over a century, but is now a shadow of its former self. They didn't invest heavily in the new digital photo medium that's common today and were left in the dark.

The last history mystery: The Oct. 2 Vintage Views article question was "Why are there two colours of brick, as you can see between the first and second



(PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN; LEMP STUDIO COLLECTION #5049.)

"Watch the birdie" might have been shouted by the photographer to the group assembled for this warm-weather local school photo taken between 1879 and 1898.

floors of the main (Tavistock Public) school building, but a single colour in the two-storey, front entrance part?" Connie Hitzerth of Tavistock was the first reader to answer this correctly. It's because bricks of the same colour were no longer available when the second storey was constructed two decades later.

This week's history mystery: is open to readers up to and including age 14. What school is in this article? Send your answer to tim_mosher@hotmail.com by 9 a.m. Oct. 28. The first reader to forward the correct answer will have their name and community name or rural route number published in the next Vintage Views article two weeks from now.