

TERMS OF REFERENCE

BEST USE STUDY: DICKINSON SQUARE HISTORIC BUILDINGS FOLLOWING RVCA MOVE OFF THE SQUARE

November 30, 2005

Background:

Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) has owned, operated and stabilized/renovated five buildings in old Manotick for many years. These properties include Watson's Mill, the Dickinson House, the Carriage Shed, the Ayers Building and the Weavers House which collectively make up the charming heritage core known as Dickinson Square.

Since 1971, RVCA has developed the buildings for office space for its growing natural resource conservation staff. Throughout the years, RVCA participated with community partners to deliver various heritage programs including the renovation of the mill to operating status, heritage programming and staffing in the mill, and the community festival known as Dickinson Days. In addition, as part of its need for more office space, RVCA has renovated and upgraded the infrastructure of the other four buildings. RVCA is proud of its legacy of heritage achievements in Manotick over the past 35 years.

RVCA staff occupies the Dickinson House, the Ayers Building, the Carriage Shed and the Weavers House. Watson's Mill is an 1860 operating grist mill slightly modified for seasonal use with a gift shop. RVCA stabilized and renovated the Mill in the early 80s to bring it back to operating condition. Heritage tours and information was offered there throughout the 80s. Since 1997, community-based Watson's Mill Manotick Inc. (WMMI) has managed and operated the Mill under a Management Agreement with RVCA. WMMI has had remarkable success in applying for and receiving restoration/operating grants and public donations to keep the Mill in operating and public access condition. Dickinson Square in general and Watson's Mill in particular has become a village symbol. Watson's Mill is the only working industrial site of its kind within the City of Ottawa.

RVCA is in the process of moving off of Dickinson Square to larger and more appropriate office space in 2007.

Therefore, RVCA and other key stakeholders would like to do a best use study of the building in Dickinson Square recognizing that these buildings are assets of the RVCA and their desire to get value for these assets and also to determine the best future use of the buildings after RVCA moves off the Square.

Questions to be Answered by the Best Use Study:

Assuming that RVCA vacates the buildings in 2007;

1. How will the RVCA move affect the five buildings on the Square?
2. What could they be best used for (from highest to lowest priority)? What is the most compatible usage which would respect the heritage values and character of the Square, and the overall environment of Manotick (downtown and the river)?
3. Who should own the properties?
4. Who should manage the properties?
5. How important is it that they remain in public ownership?
6. How can the heritage character of Dickinson Square and the individual heritage buildings be safeguarded?
7. Can any be sold on the open market?
8. What is the best and fairest possible future outcome for the five buildings taking into account the interests of local neighbours, the Manotick business community, WMMI, RVCA, the City of Ottawa, Parks Canada and other stakeholders?

Study Parts:

The contractor would be responsible for undertaking and documenting the following key parts to the Study:

1. Site visit/familiarization.
2. Review of applicable studies and planning documents that are relevant to the study (e.g. City of Ottawa Official Plan and the Arts and Heritage Plan, Municipal heritage designations within the study area, Museum Sustainability Plan as it applies to Watson's Mill, CAUSE study for the Village of Manotick, Parks Canada planning studies and World Heritage designation proposal, etc.).
3. Interviews with stakeholders, for example, Watson's Mill Manotick Inc, RVCA, Rideau Township Historical Society, Community Association, immediate neighbours, City of Ottawa (appropriate departments and local Councillor), service clubs, Manotick BIA, Parks Canada, Heritage Ottawa and others that may be identified during the study.
4. Public Consultation process (including one public Open House and a well-advertised address where written and electronic submissions can be received and compiled – a form for written submissions will be developed).

5. Preparation of a draft report for review by the Steering Committee
6. Final Report with recommendations – 10 copies plus electronic copy in Microsoft Word format on a CD-ROM disk.
7. Presentation of the Final Report to the community.