MARATHON WATERFRONT MASTER PLAN

TOWN OF MARATHON, ONTARIO

July 8th, 2025

Town of Marathon | Hapa Collaborative

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01 Introduction

PROJECT PURPOSE

This master plan report outlines a comprehensive vision for the transformation of Marathon's waterfront and surrounding lands into a vibrant, resilient, and connected community landscape. Rooted in the town's unique history as an industrial hub centred around the pulp mill and Lake Superior, the plan seeks to honour and reinterpret this legacy while positioning the area for a dynamic and sustainable future.

The report presents a framework for reimagining the former industrial lands and underutilized waterfront as a network of open spaces, cultural destinations, and economic opportunities. Key components include the restoration of natural ecosystems such as regenerative forests and wetlands, the creation of year-round recreational amenities including trails, boardwalks, and a stormwater pond, and the development of new community anchors like a repurposed pumphouse museum, a waterfront marina, and a centrally located community centre. Special attention is given to spaces for all ages, such as a natural play area inspired by the town's industrial past, and a flexible open lawn for informal sports and events.

The plan also addresses the coexistence of ongoing industrial uses, ensuring that the industrial zone—linked to a deep water port—is effectively integrated through thoughtful screening and separation from adjacent public spaces. The renewed waterfront downtown and associated civic infrastructure are intended to re-establish the shoreline as a central gathering place and economic driver, reconnecting residents and visitors to the water and to each other.

In essence, this master plan report serves as a road map for Marathon's next chapter—one that weaves together community identity, ecological restoration, recreation, and economic revitalization into a unified, future-forward vision.



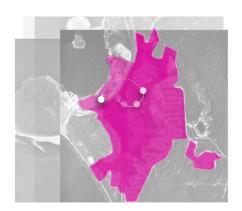
02 Vision and Objectives

The Vision: Return to Home

Situated on the shores of Lake Superior, the mill's operations and shipping infrastructure anchored the Town's industry and daily life to the water. For decades, the mill provided employment and shaped the physical and social landscape of Marathon, making the waterfront a hub of activity and identity for the community. Now, through a waterfront master plan, this legacy is being reimagined—the waterfront will once again become a vibrant hub of community life, reconnecting residents and visitors to the lake through public spaces, recreation, and cultural opportunities that honour the town's past while looking to its future.

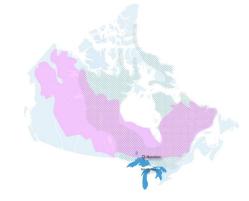
Bring the Town Back to the Water

As time has progressed, the town center has slowly grown away from the water. This project will aim to re-establish the waterfront as the hub for activity for the town. The Active Living center is the driving force in bringing the town center back to the water.



Amplify Natural Features

This site is uniquely located at the intersection of the Boreal Forest. the Canadian Shield, and the Great Lakes. This project aims to highlight these three iconic typologies.



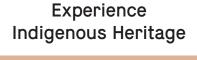
Reconnect with Surrounding Landscape

Site is located at the intersection of two trails. The Group of Seven and the Coastal Lagoon Trail. Reintegrate the site with the surrounding town, water and landscape by enhancing existing connections and providing new ones through placemaking and way-finding.



Articulate **Industrial Footprint**

Use the industrial history of the site as a guiding framework for the programmatic organization of the space. Re-introduce Industrial features, materials and landforms.



Explore the Indigenous history of the site, working together with Biigtigong First Nation in a partnership of trust and respect, striving to establish and maintain a harmonious working relationship. Place an emphasis on traditional materiality, practices and landbased education.



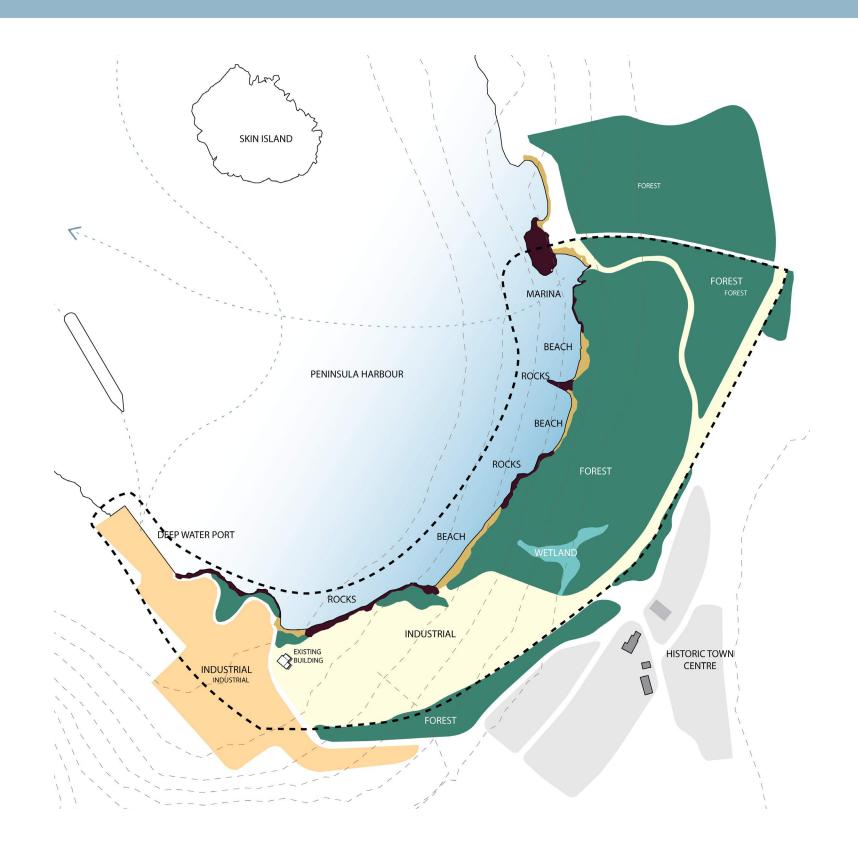


03 Site Context

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The current water front has three distinct conditions: forest, industrial, and waterfront. Rhythm is created along the front through the rock, beach, and forest frontages, with opportunities to break the area up into different zones. The industrial area is flat and open, making it ideal for future open space recreation. The forest zone is young and emerging, as the perfect opportunity to preserve the ecology and enhance the experience through low impact interventions and passive recreation.

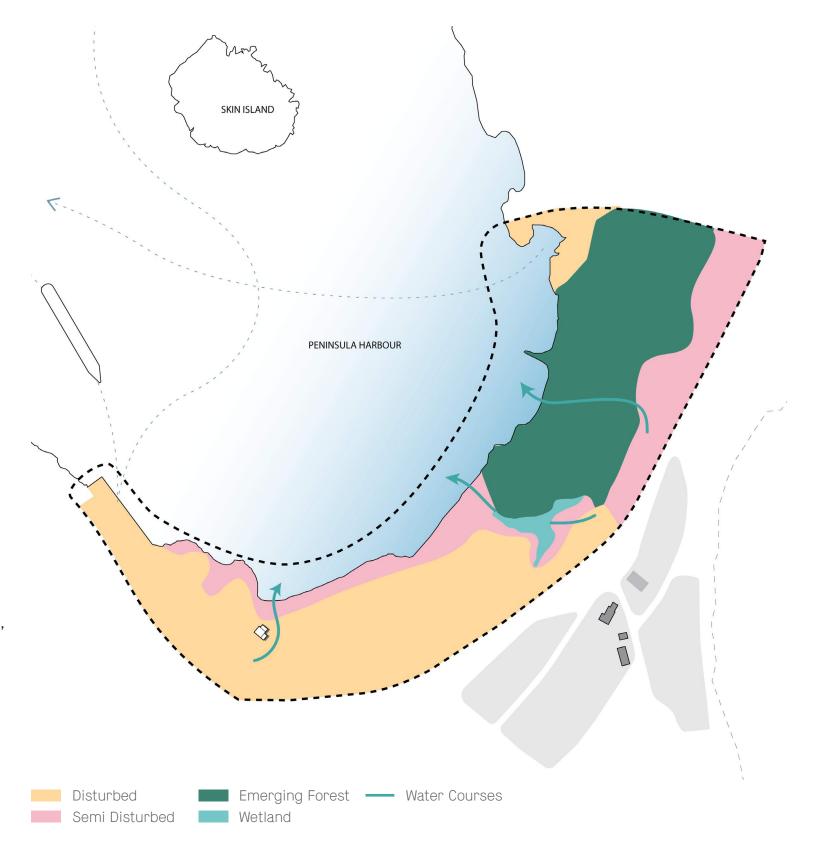
- Support the regeneration of emerging forest to create a rich ecological backdrop for both passive and active recreational trails, while enhancing habitat for local wildlife.
- **Repurpose low-lying, relatively flat industrial lands** for recreational use, making the most of their accessibility and development potential.
- Celebrate the site's natural rhythm by designing a dynamic waterfront trail experience that moves seamlessly between beach, rock, and forest along the Lake Superior shoreline.



ECOLOGY

The waterfront site can be categorized by the ecological typologies - disturbed, semi-disturbed, new growth forest, wetland, and waterways. The complex industrial history of the site has resulted in varied environmental zones to emerge.

- **Reconnect to water** there are water courses running throughout the site. By strategically shaping the land, these water courses can become both landscape features and a stormwater management solution.
- Let the emerging forest continue to grow this forest in it's first decade or so of growth. Provide a design that allows for continued growth and appreciation of this newly formed forest.
- Bring back the forest and shoreline restoring the disturbed and semi disturbed areas within the site with native plantings, beaches and rock outcrops.

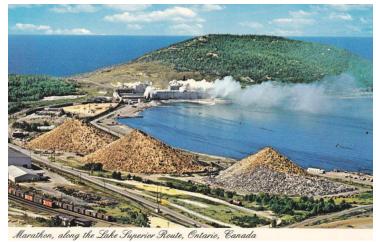


INDUSTRIAL FOOTPRINT

The industrial history of the waterfront site is crucial to understanding the physical factors of the landscape and acts as a natural inspiration to the development of the waterfront.



The Pumphouse is the only remaining industrial building.



The famous log pile pyramids were once visible from Highway 1



Boom and Jack ladder, 1983/84 - the piers for the jack ladder still remain in the bay

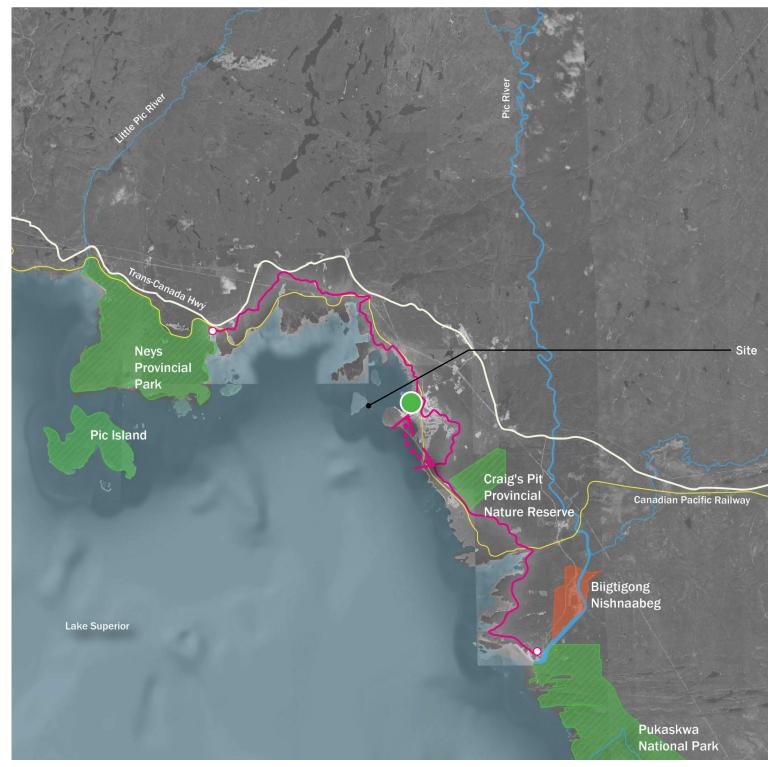


REGIONAL CONTEXT

Lake Superior is lined with many environmental recreation amenities characteristic to the boreal forest and Canadian Shield region. The Town of Marathon is central to the region, creating an opportunity for another waterfront stop as visitors travel between Pukaskwa National Park and Ney's Provincial Park along the Group of Seven Trail.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Improve trail connectivity by integrating the Group of Seven Lake Superior Trail through the site, enhancing access and user experience.
- **Establish a signature waterfront destination** that serves as a key point of interest for Group of Seven Trail users, Lake Superior boaters, and travelers along the Trans-Canada Highway.
- Celebrate and enhance the region's iconic landscape, drawing inspiration from the natural character that makes Neys and Pukaskwa National Parks beloved destinations.



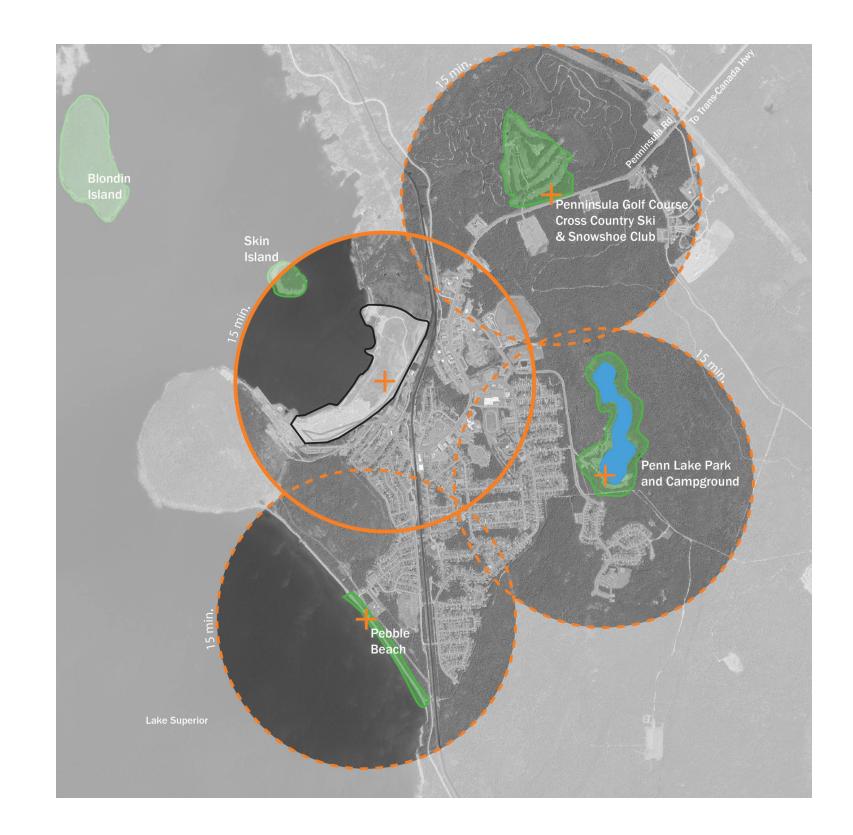
River:

Group of Seven Lake Superior Trail

LOCAL CONTEXT - RECREATION

The Town of Marathon is home to diverse outdoor recreation activities, a result of the surrounding rich natural landscape. The waterfront site is currently a gap in the recreation system, creating an opportunity to become a linking convergence point of the town's other activities.

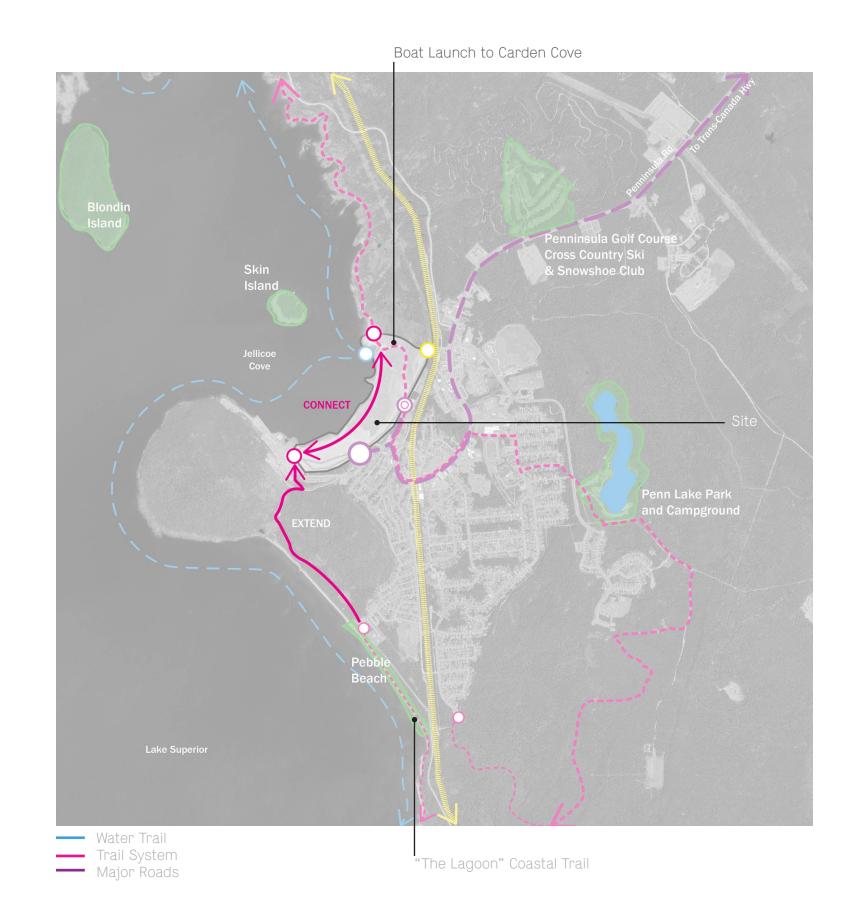
- **Establish a fourth major recreational destination** within the Town of Marathon to expand the town's network of community amenities.
- Address gaps in recreational access and programming by ensuring all residents have a quality amenity within a 15-minute walk, while offering programming that complements existing facilities and fills current service gaps.
- Strengthen connectivity between all recreational hubs to support active transportation, community cohesion, and year-round use.



LOCAL CONTEXT - CONNECTIVITY

The Town of Marathon is home to diverse outdoor recreation activities, a result of the surrounding rich natural landscape. The waterfront site is currently a gap in the recreation system, creating an opportunity to become a linking convergence point of the town's other activities.

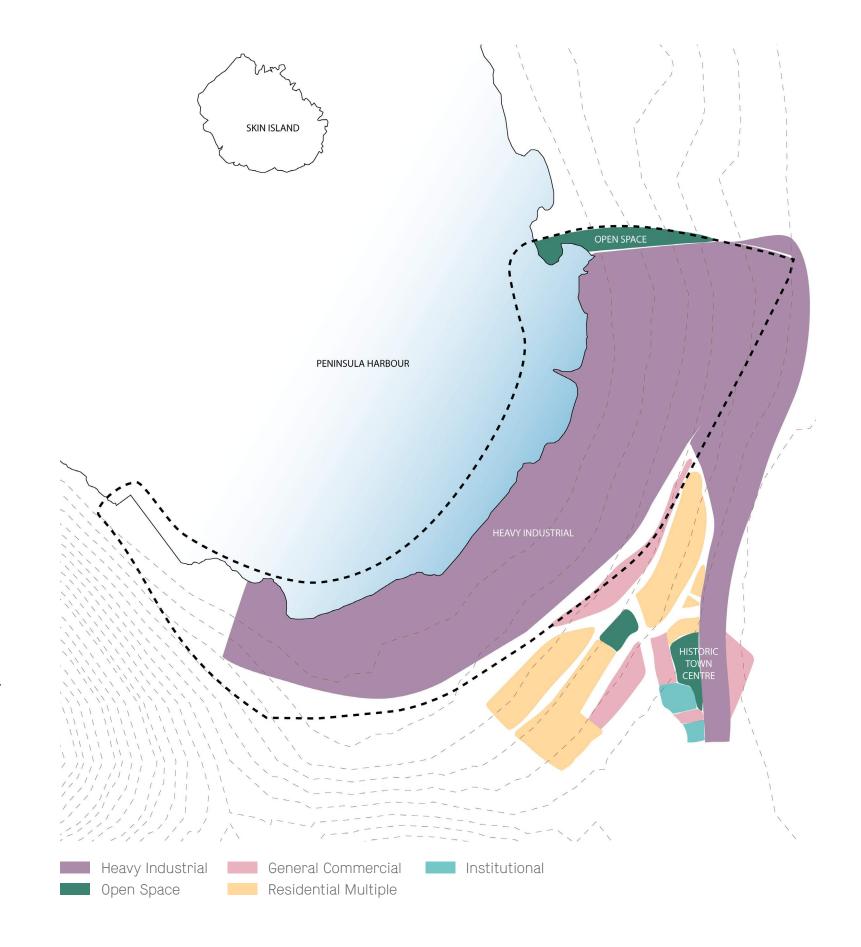
- **Extend the Lagoon Coast Trail** from Pebble Beach to establish a direct connection with the site, enhancing regional trail continuity.
- **Create a secondary Group of Seven trail link** by routing the Lagoon Coastal Trail through the site to connect with the Group of Seven Trail, offering users an alternate and engaging path.
- Design welcoming, accessible waterfront connections to encourage Lake Superior Water Trail users to pause and explore the Town of Marathon as part of their journey, supporting tourism and local economic activity.



EXISTING ZONING

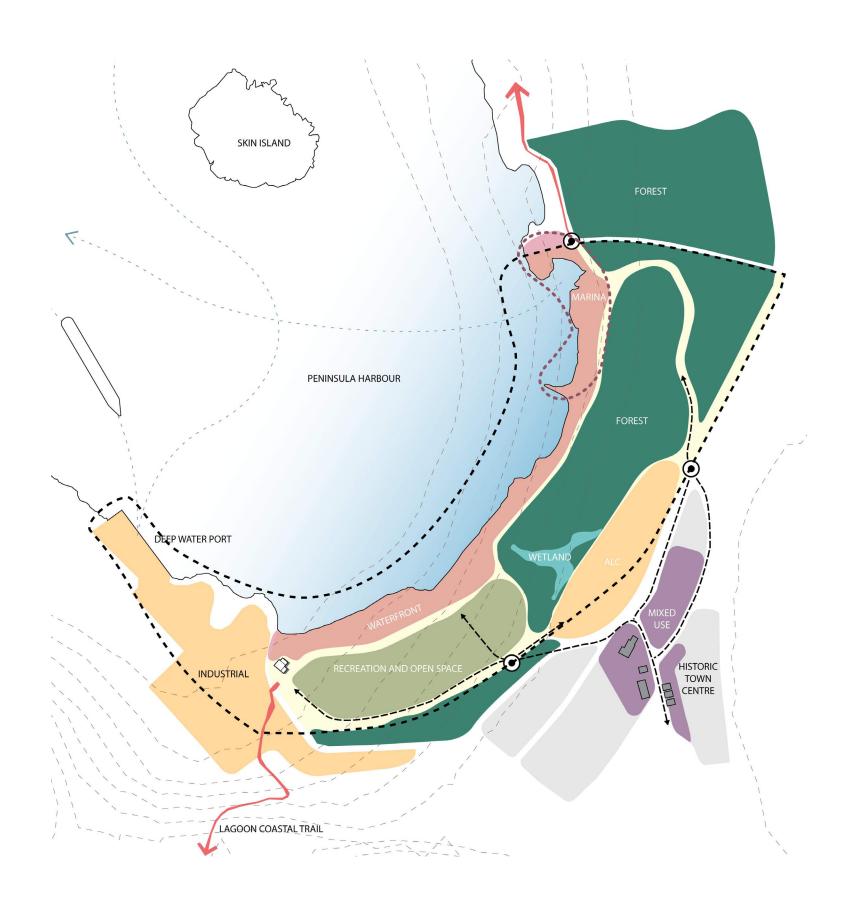
The existing zoning for the waterfront site is entirely heavy industrial. This is bordered by open space, general commercial, institutional, and residential zones.

- **Pursue strategic zoning** to supporter a broader mix of land uses while retaining a designated area for Heavy Industrial activity that leverages the Town's deep water port—a key economic asset.
- **Rezone the Historic Town Centre** to promote vibrant mixed-use development that complements and enhances the functionality of the adjacent proposed Active Living Centre.
- **Expand and enhance the Open Space zoning** to protect and celebrate the natural areas that are reestablishing on site, supporting biodiversity and contributing to community well-being.



PROGRAMMING ZONES

Building on the opportunities of the existing conditions, the site can be broken down into further programmatic areas. Relatively flat industrial areas can be used for open lawn space. Existing forest & wetland can be preserved for recreational and natural trail systems. Circulation will include creating a waterfront trail connection linking the Group of Seven trail system to the Lagoon Trail, provide vehicle access and parking near key amenities, as well as camping and boating access.



04 Concept Master Plan

THE CONCEPT

The Marathon Waterfront Master Plan reimagines the former industrial pulp mill site as a dynamic open space and recreation master plan that reconnects the community to its landscape. Once defined by its industrial use, the site is being reimagined as a resilient, multi-use public space that honours its history while supporting future needs. The master plan integrates naturalized areas, trails, gathering spaces, and recreational amenities, creating a vibrant destination for residents and visitors. By restoring ecological function and improving public access, the plan turns a legacy industrial landscape into a community asset rooted in health, culture, and connection to place.



Concept Master Plan

THE CONCEPT

The Master Plan for the site has been broken down into various zones based on program amenities & landscape features that define a certain character within each zone.

- 1 Everest Pier & Welcome Circle
- 2 Jellicoe Cove Marina & Pumphouse
- 3 The Clearing
- 4 The Wood Yard
- 5 The Emerging Forest
- 6 The Lookout
- 7 The Active Living Centre
- 8 Stevens Avenue: A Downtown Destination



EVEREST PIER & WELCOME CIRCLE

THE CONCEPT

The industrial zone is strategically located with direct connections to the deep water port, supporting economic activity and future development opportunities tied to marine access and logistics. Thoughtfully planned to coexist with adjacent public spaces, the industrial area is buffered and visually screened from the nearby open space recreation zone, ensuring a clear separation between active industry and community-oriented landscapes. This approach maintains the functionality and economic value of the industrial lands while preserving the integrity and experience of the recreational areas. With integrated infrastructure and careful site design, the zone reflects a balanced vision for productivity, environmental stewardship, and community well-being.

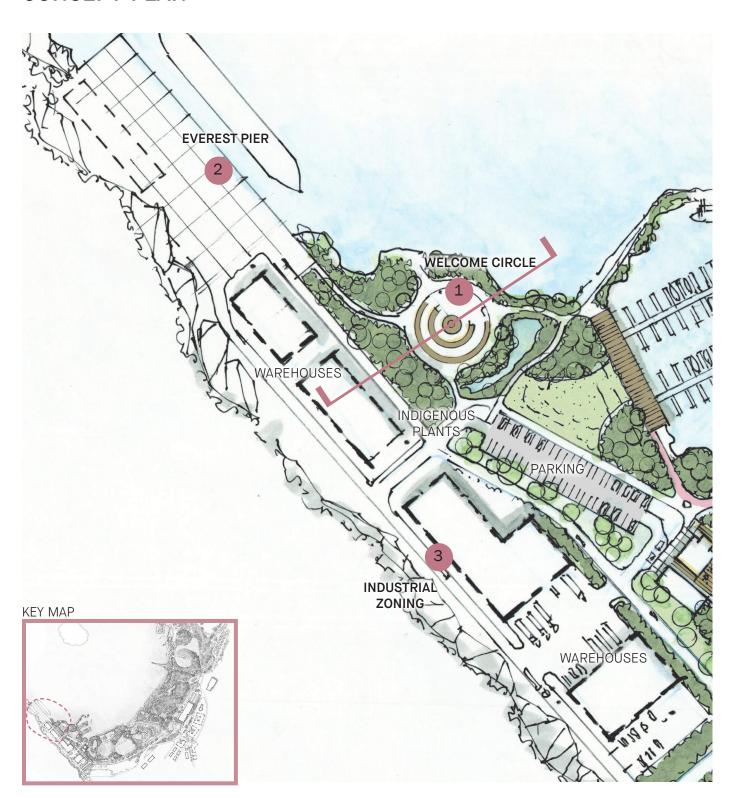
KEY FEATURES

- 1 Welcome Circle
 - Located on the foundation of a industrial facility, the welcome circle forms an amphitheatre space with room for small or large gatherings, and opportunities for Indigenous design elements and features. Based on the form and materials of the Pukaskwa Pit, the site Includes staging for tour operations, paths to the Marina and Pumphouse and framed views to the lake.
- 2 Everest Pier

Refurbished dock at the original moorage site for the D.C. Everest lake-freighter. Moorage takes advantage of the existing deep water port, accommodating activities, including industrial activities, tourist commercial cruise operations. Site uses include office/warehouse, dry storage, loading facilities and road access.

3 Industrial Zoning
Site uses includes complimentary programming to the Everest Pier deep water port, including office space, warehouse, dry storage, loading facilities and road access.

CONCEPT PLAN



ILLUSTRATIONS



PRECEDENT IMAGES



Gathering Circle Concept - Colwood, BC



Prince Arthur's Landing - Thunder Bay, ON





Canal Park - Duluth, MN



Great Lakes Cruises - Milwaukee, WI

JELLICOE COVE MARINA & PUMPHOUSE

THE CONCEPT

The historic pumphouse is being thoughtfully restored and reimagined as a vibrant community space—potentially housing a small museum or interpretive center that shares the stories of the town's industrial heritage and relationship to the waterfront. Adjacent to the pumphouse, a newly created stormwater pond will serve a dual purpose: supporting ecological function and offering opportunities for all-season recreation, such as skating in winter and boating in warmer months. Complementing these features, a new location for the marina will connect with this destination. Together, these elements weave past and present into a dynamic destination that celebrates history, fosters community, and invites year-round engagement with the landscape.

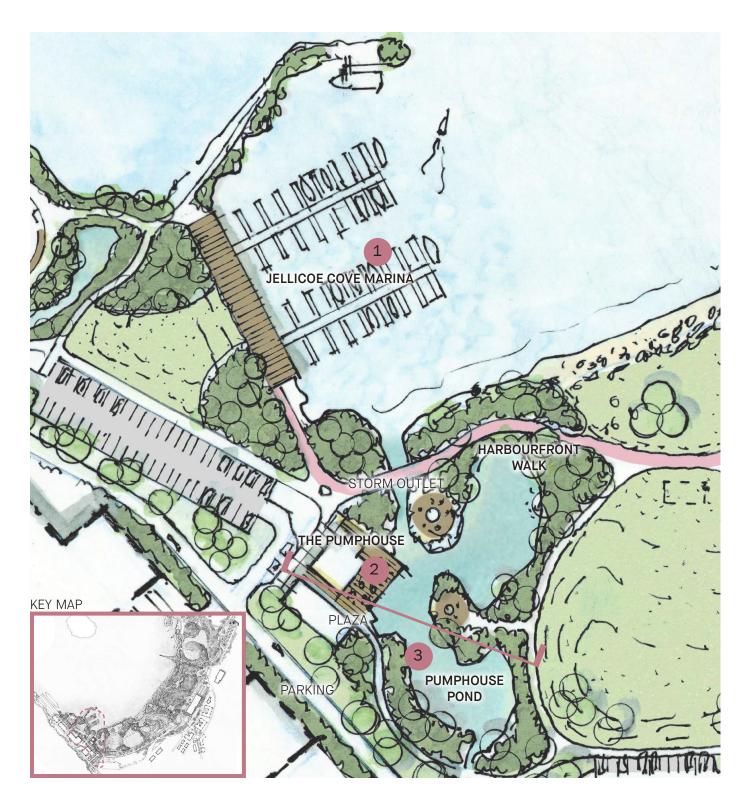
KEY FEATURES

- 1 Jellicoe Cove Marina
 - Small marina including new breakwater and lookout, docking slips for roughly 40 vessels, parking and storage facilities, and support services (metered electrical outlets, fueling, etc). Pathway and boardwalk connect the Marina to the Welcome Circle and Pumphouse.
- The Pumphouse

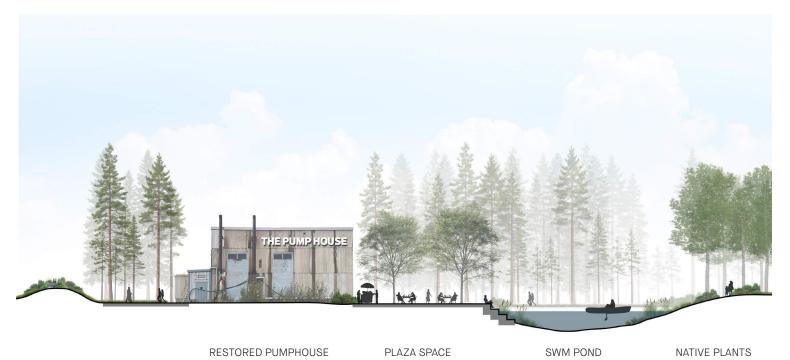
 Adaptive reuse of original pumphouse building, with restored industrial features integrated into refurbished public facility. New occupancy could include marina office, museum exhibits and archives office, parks support office or café/food service.
- Pumphouse Pond

 Newly daylighted water feature that captures water from existing spring on site, and integrates into Pumphouse frontage, and potential café deck and seating. Opportunities for Indigenous wetland planting, and recreational uses in summer (boats, viewing decks) and winter (skating).

CONCEPT PLAN



ILLUSTRATIONS



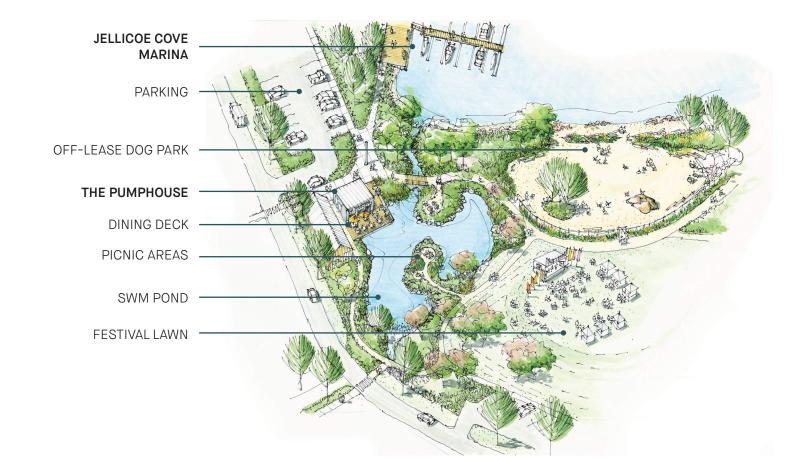
PRECEDENT IMAGES



Prince Arthur's Landing - Thunder Bay, ON



Dow's Lake Pavilion - Ottawa, ON





Lonsdale Quay - North Vancouver, BC



Colonel Samuel Smith Park - Toronto, ON

THE CLEARING

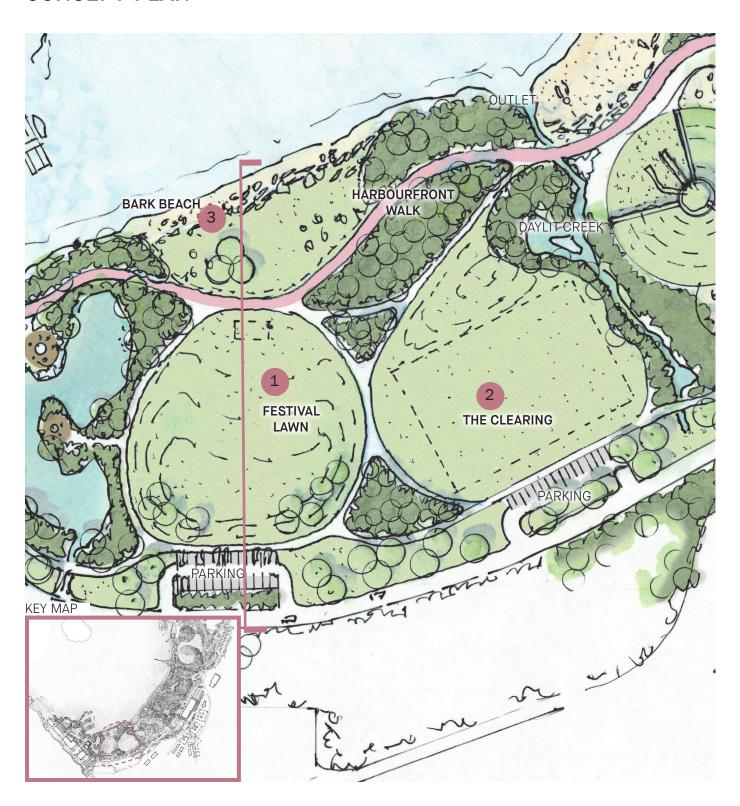
THE CONCEPT

The open lawn clearing is designed as a flexible, multi-purpose green space that invites both relaxation and active use. One side of the clearing features a gently bermed area, offering elevated seating and natural vantage points ideal for viewing performances, community events, or simply taking in the surrounding landscape. Opposite the berm, a flat, open lawn provides ample room for informal sporting activities, picnics, and casual gatherings. This balance of elevation and openness creates a welcoming environment for all ages, supporting a wide range of uses throughout the seasons and reinforcing the park's role as a shared space for community connection and outdoor enjoyment.

KEY FEATURES

- 1 Festival Lawn
 - Large multi-purpose lawn for municipal or regional events and activities. Sized to accommodate crowds up to 500-1000 people, the lawn slopes towards the water, buffering parking from view. Pathways and bridges connect the lawn to the Pumphouse and Hillside
- The Clearing
 Flat open lawn surrounded by forest. Sized to accommodate informal active recreation opportunities such as picnicking, soccer, frisbee, etc. as well as passive opportunities.
- Bark Beach
 A fenced in dog park with open access to the water offers the dogs a safe and fun off-leash space to swim and mingle with other dogs.

CONCEPT PLAN



ILLUSTRATIONS



PRECEDENT IMAGES



Off-Leash Dog park with Water Access



Flat Open Lawn for Informal Sports & Gathering



Sloped Lawn for Events & Sunset Viewing



Outdoor Fitness

THE WOOD YARD

THE CONCEPT

Inspired by the legacy of the industrial landscape, this natural play area creates a unique and engaging space for children and families. Using natural materials like timber, stone, and sand, the design reflects the textures and forms of the shoreline, while playful references to the site's industrial past—such as climbing structures inspired by mill equipment or log booms—spark imagination and storytelling. The play area encourages hands-on, open-ended exploration, blending physical activity with opportunities for creative and sensory play. Nestled within the broader landscape, it offers a meaningful connection to place, where history, nature, and community come together in an environment built for curiosity and joy.

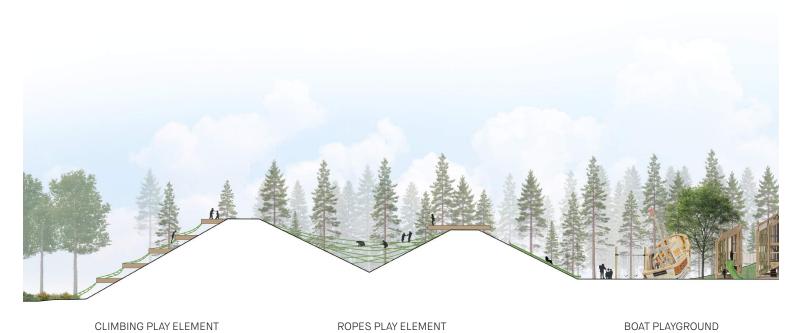
KEY FEATURES

- 1 The Woodyard Playground
 - Located on the original woodyard, the new Woodyard playground integrates industrial artifacts of the mill operations (wood logs and wood chips, concrete foundation walls, metal rail, piping etc.). Play features may include slides swings, zip lines, water play, and are integrated into new hills that mimic the iconic log piles of the site. Extensive use of wood for climbing structures and water play elements, and space for picnicking and small gatherings.
- Widened walkway that follows the original shoreline and maintenance road along the shore, the Harbourfront Walk extends the full length of the site and connects beyond to Pebble Beach and Carden Cove. Principle connection to the greater regional Group of Seven Trail that connects Neys and Pukaskwa parks.
- Beach front
 Revitalize and enhance existing beach front. Waterfront beach access in close proximity to the
 Woodyard Playground. Access may include boardwalks hugging the beach, and formalized locations for picnicking, and water access.

CONCEPT PLAN



ILLUSTRATIONS



PRECEDENT IMAGES



Ship Play Structure



Waterfront Inspired Play





Industrial Inspired Sand Play

THE EMERGING FOREST

THE CONCEPT

Envisioned as an immersive natural landscape, The Emerging Forest is where regenerative forests, all-season trails, wetlands, and elevated boardwalks come together to create a rich ecological and recreational experience. The regenerative forests will restore native plant communities and enhance habitat for local wildlife, while acting as a living classroom for environmental stewardship. Wetland areas will support biodiversity, improve water quality, and offer moments of quiet reflection. A network of accessible trails and boardwalks will weave through the landscape, inviting year-round exploration, from hiking and biking in summer to snowshoeing and cross-country skiing in winter. Together, these elements form a resilient, multi-functional green space that reconnects people to nature while supporting long-term ecological health.

KEY FEATURES

1 The Forest

Large area of pioneer species retained as a juvenile forest, bisected with trails, boardwalks in wet areas, and rest stops seating. New understory planting with opportunities for Indigenous interpretive signage and features. Includes trail network for walking/running fitness loops in summer and cross-country skiing in winter.

2 The Hollow

Preservation and enhancement of the low-lying wetland and spring-fed stream that occupies the middle of the site. Minimal new additions may include additional planting, wood boardwalks and small bridges that span the stream. Opportunities for Indigenous interpretation elements that describe the regenerating forests and hydrology of the site.

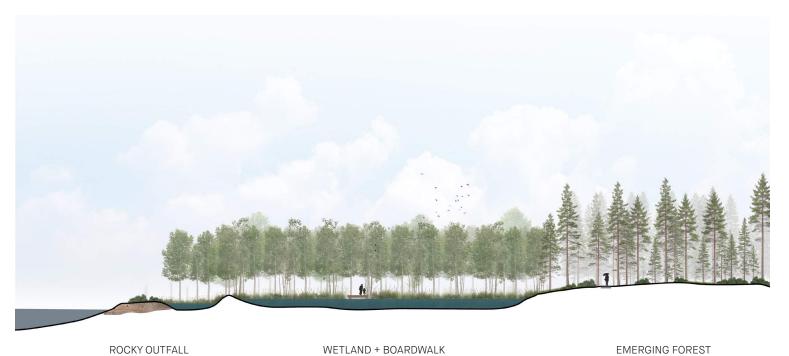
3 Harbourfront Walk

Widened walkway that follows the original shoreline and maintenance road along the shore, the Harbourfront Walk extends the full length of the site and connects beyond to Pebble Beach and Carden Cove. Principle connection to the greater regional Group of Seven Trail that connects Neys and Pukaskwa parks.

CONCEPT PLAN



ILLUSTRATIONS

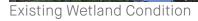




- 3m Wide Timber Boardwalk allows for immersive trails to flow over existing wetland with minimal environmental impact.
- Seating
- 3 Interpretive Signage

PRECEDENT IMAGES







Wetland Boardwalk



Forest Boardwalk



Cross-country Ski Trails

THE LOOKOUT

THE CONCEPT

The RV camping area, located on a scenic bluff, offers stunning views of Lake Superior and provides a tranquil retreat for visitors. A viewing mound inspired by the previous log piles on site will be added to offer panoramic sights of the waterfront and surrounding landscape.

The remaining piers of the historic jack ladder, will be repurposed and integrated into the site, preserving a connection to the area's industrial history. A potential warming hut will be added near the former marina, offering a cozy spot for visitors year-round, enhancing the recreational experience in all seasons.

These elements combine to celebrate the site's heritage while providing opportunities for relaxation and exploration.

KEY FEATURES

- 1 Peninsula Lookout
 - Seating, signage and parking overlooking Peninsula Harbour, including interpretive signage and framed views to the water and Skin Island beyond.
- 2 Jack Ladder Hill

Aligned with the original jack ladder, large hill with grand staircase climb to the top. Ceremonial fire pit at the top of the hill, with 360-degree views of the water and town. Adaptive reuse of jack-ladder towers, floating platform and a rope ferry using punt boats from the original boom operations.

3 Cummings Landing

Reconfigured boat launch and temporary moorage, with docking facility for small non-motorized boats (canoes and kayaks). Two-level clubhouse for canoe and kayak clubs, doubling as a warming hut in winter for cross-country ski club. Parking and temporary trailer storage.

4 RV Camping

RV parking and day-camping for 10-12 users, with minimal service provisions including power outlets and washrooms.

CONCEPT PLAN



ILLUSTRATIONS



FIRE PIT JACK LADDER HILL HARBOURFRONT WALK BLUFFS PENINSULA LOOKOUT BEACH

PRECEDENT IMAGES



St. Patrick's Island - Calgary, AB



Riverwalk - Calgary, AB



Skin Island Group of 7 Framing Opportunity



RV Camping with a View

THE ACTIVE LIVING CENTRE

THE CONCEPT

The only phase of the Master Plan currently in progress is the Active Living Centre. Designed to be welcoming, flexible, and inclusive, the center will offer spaces for recreation, learning, cultural events, and social connection for all ages. Programming includes a pool, ice skating facility, seniors room and bowling alley. Its central location ensures easy access by foot, bike, or automobile, supporting a vibrant downtown core. As a hub for programs, services, and community celebrations, the center will reflect the values, creativity, and spirit of the community it serves—fostering a sense of belonging and pride in place.

KEY FEATURES

1 Active Living Centre

New ice rink and aquatic facility central to the waterfront space, and providing social spaces, recreational uses and parking for the larger park. Outdoor uses include a fully accessible sport court, integrated stormwater features and rain gardens, and small outdoor social spaces at the main entrances.

2 Future Development Sites

Possible future mixed-use development at the intersection of Stevens and Winton, and at the heart of the original downtown. Ground-oriented retail at street level with residential housing above, with views to the water, and combination of rental, supportive and market housing.

MASTER PLAN CONTEXT



ALC PLAN



ALC RENDERS



Entry bridge to the ALC



Gallery for Indigenous art, the Group of Seven art, and historical Town of Marathon learning



Hockey rink with elevated bleachers



Indoor pool, hot tub, and sports courts.

Stevens Avenue: A Downtown Destination

THE CONCEPT

Grounded by the development of the Active Living Centre, Stevens Avenue has the opportunity to once again establish itself as the heart of downtown Marathon. A vibrant public realm, combined with a new mixed-use zoning framework, will support local economic development, invite pedestrian activity, and expand housing options - all within walking distance of both the Active Living Centre and the nearby waterfront recreation. This renewed focus on Stevens Avenue repositions it as a civic, commercial, and cultural spine - bringing the Town Centre back to the water.

KEY FEATURES

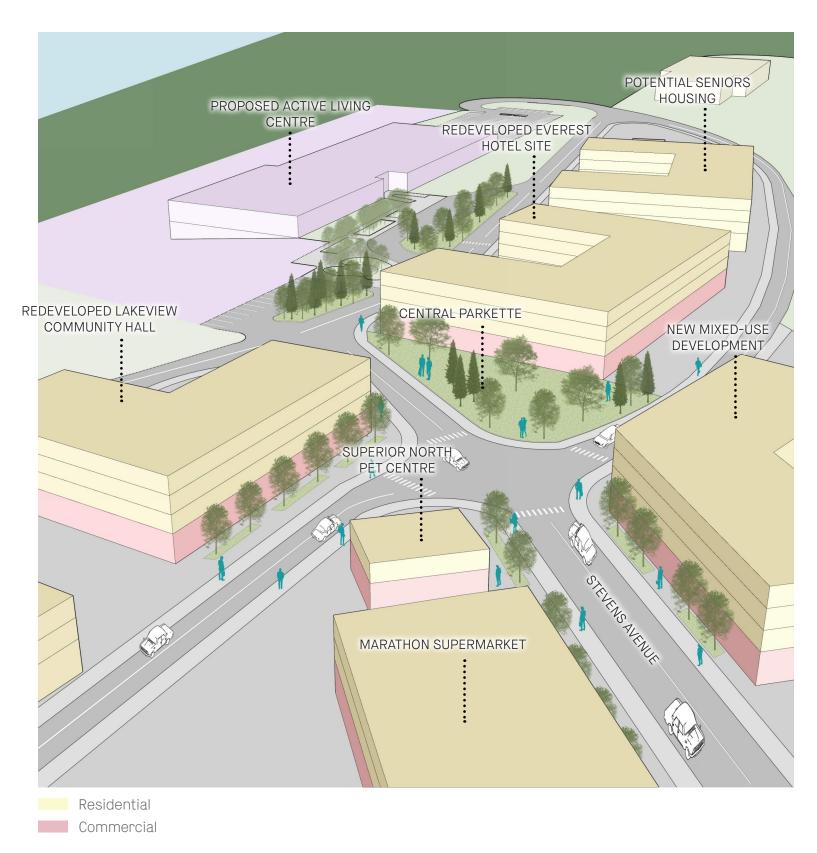
- 1 New Mixed-Use Zoning
 - The zoning would allow for buildings of three to four storeys, featuring active ground-floor commercial spaces—such as shops, cafés, and services—with residential units above. This approach supports local economic development, increases housing options, and enhances street life, all while maintaining a scale that fits comfortably within the small-town context.
- 2 Enhanced Public Realm Streetscape design that prioritizes pe

Streetscape design that prioritizes pedestrian comfort, accessibility, and placemaking through wide sidewalks, street trees, lighting, seating, and active frontages. These elements work together to create safe, welcoming spaces that support local businesses, encourage social interaction, and reflect the character of the community.

Views to the Water

Ensure that public spaces highlight views to the water. Buildings should be located to preserve and frame views to the water both from the ground level streetscape and within the building itself.

STEVENS AVENUE STREETSCAPE



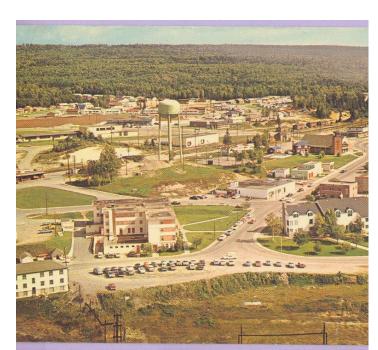
TOWN ZONING



HISTORIC IMAGES



Marathon Recreation Hall



Winton and Stevens Intersection



Current Winton & Stevens Intersection

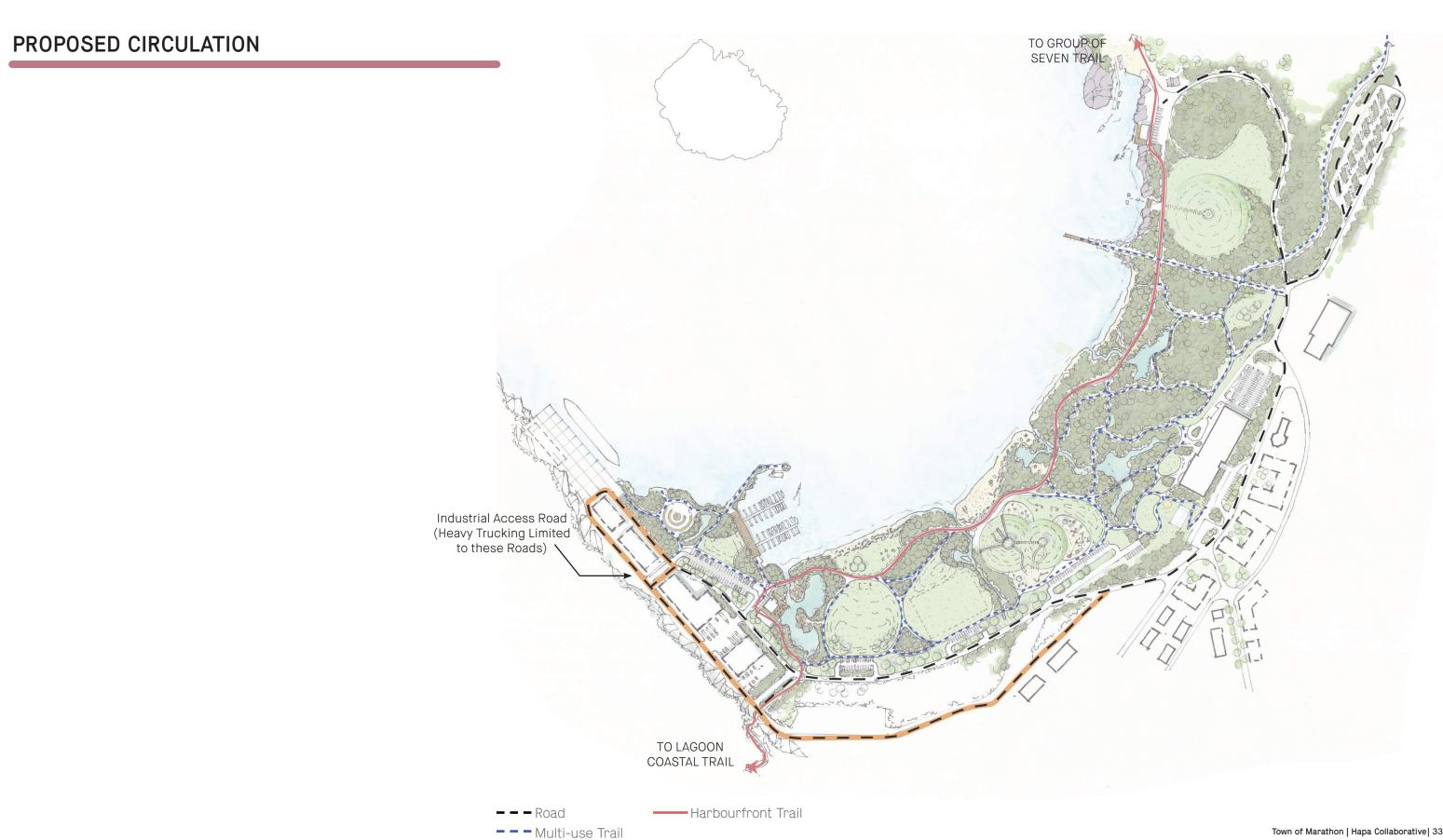


The Everest Hotel

05 POST DESIGN ANALYSIS

PROPOSED ZONING





NEW WATER COURSES



PROGRAMMING

Social & Interpretive

- 1 Warming Hut
- 2 Marina
- 3 Picnic Area
- 4 Natural Lawn Amphitheatre
- Environmental & Indigenous
- 9 First Nations Gathering
- 10 First Nations Learning
- 11 Ethnobotanical Walk
- 12 Bird Habitat
- Recreation & Play
- 17 Playground
- 18 Multi-Use Sports Court
- 19 Existing Boat Launch
- 20 Cross-Country Skiing

- 5 Flat Open Lawn
- 6 Cruise Dock
- 7 Lake Superior Lookout
- 8 Boardwalks
- 13 Creek Daylighting
- 14 Wetland Restoration
- 15 Stormwater Management
- 16 Native Planting
- 21 Winter Skating
- 22 Fitness Equipment
- 23 Dog Park
- 24 RV Camping



ALTERNATIVE - NORTH MARINA EXPANSION

The preferred design shows a new Marina to the South of the site, by the existing pumphouse. This has the benefit of capitalizing on growth and development associated with the industrial area. Utility connections are more accessible and would allow for the conversion of the historic pumphouse structure into both a marina club house and event space.

However, an alternative option for the Marina location was explored within the master plan design process. This option explored expanding the existing marina area by the boat launch. A breakwater is added allowing for additional boat slips. There is a boardwalk along the shore, and an expanded clubhouse with an opportunity for storage. The advantage of this option are the efficiencies with there already being a marina in this location. Costs for development would be cheaper as many of the features such as parking, and moorage slips already exist.



06 Next Steps

PHASING

Phase 1
The Active Living Centre

Phase 2
The Wood Yard, The Emerging Forest & RV Camping

Phase 3 The Clearing & Lookout

Phase 4
Jellicoe Cove Marina & Pumphouse, Everest Pier & Welcome Circle

Phase 5
Stevens Avenue: A Downtown Destination

