



News Release

Council Moves Forward with Final Design for Officers' Square

Revised plan based on extensive archeological studies

Fredericton, NB, November 8, 2021 – Fredericton City Council has voted to move forward with the final design plan for Officers' Square. This plan has been revised based on one of the most extensive archeological studies in the province's history.

Over the past decade, the public has expressed a desire for Officers' Square to be a peopled urban space with capacity to host special events that helps foster a strong sense of community and that brings business into the downtown. Those desires were reflected in the 2018 revitalization plan for Officers' Square.

Shortly after the 2018 plan was completed, the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture directed that an archeological assessment and indigenous consultation would need to take place in order for the City to obtain the necessary permits to proceed. This work, led by the Province with collaboration from the City, took place over the past two years.

A major outcome of the archeological work and the indigenous consultation has been the discovery of the paleo shoreline at the southwest corner of the Square. Indigenous and Acadian archeological resources have been discovered in this location. First Nations partners have requested to the Province that this area be avoided as revitalization work advances, and the City has wholeheartedly agreed. This is why the final plan provides protection for this area, as per City Council's direction.

"The City is ready to move forward in a way that both creates the community gathering space residents have asked for and offers the opportunity to collaborate with Indigenous partners to identify, protect and accurately portray past indigenous use of the property," said Fredericton Mayor Kate Rogers, adding that construction of elements not impacted by the consultation will happen concurrently, starting in spring 2022.

The final plan for Officers' Square includes (for more details, see Background):

- a new perimeter wall and cast ornamental fence to replace the former one that had failed. The new wall respects conservation principles but is stronger than the previous one. The wall is also built to preserve the roots of the large trees that grow near it.
- a rain-protected stage to accommodate community theatre troupes to large festivals, and everyone else in between. The stage facility will also store electrical equipment for users, a "plug and play" capability that will dramatically lower costs for community groups wanting to use the facility.
- The new stage and electrical infrastructure will provide electrical services to run the hugely popular Garrison Night Market and other community events in the space.








City of Fredericton	Ville de Fredericton
<i>Corporate Communications</i>	<i>Communications générales</i>
397 Queen Street	397, rue Queen
Fredericton, NB E3B 1B5	Fredericton (N.-B.) E3B 1B5
T 506-460-2181	T 506-460-2181

www.fredericton.ca

- a new chilled skating track and walkway constructed around the perimeter of the Great Lawn will be enjoyed during all four seasons. The track and walkway were shifted to the north to protect the newly-discovered paleo shoreline.
- a playground and water feature at the northeast corner of the Square.

City listened to residents

The final plan provides several elements requested in recent years by the public during City-led engagement for Fredericton’s Municipal Plan, the Garrison District Plan and the City Centre Plan: A skating surface and new stage are two examples of elements requested by the public. “Public engagement has always been part of the planning efforts for the Historic Garrison District, going as far back as the Imagine Fredericton project in 2013,” said Bruce Grandy, Councillor and previous Chair of the Economic Vitality Committee. “We’ve taken the feedback and concerns and adapted our initial plan to make the Officers’ Square project even better than originally conceived.”

What we heard	What we did	Result	
Don't cut the trees	Redesign and floated walls over tree roots	Mature trees saved	
Don't want chemicals for rink	Designed a brine cooling system	No chemicals in rink	
New garrison building too big	Redesigned added services building	Existing building stays	
More archaeology required	Collaborated with Province-led archaeological work	Discovery of Indigenous and Acadian archaeological resources	
Not respecting the heritage of the National Historic Site	Developed a plan to conserve the important heritage features	Received Heritage Permit approvals from the Province	
Not enough green space	Redesign of the project protected mature trees and added green space	More green space added	
Save the existing wall and ornamental fence	Wall redesigned to incorporate current conservation and public safety standards	New wall and ornamental fences will protect Officers Square for many years	

City has respected character-defining elements

The Historic Garrison District is a provincial heritage site within which Officers’ Square is located. A Provincial statement of significance that lays out the character-defining elements is drawn up as part of the designation of such sites. The designation applies to the entire Garrison district, of which Officers Square is but one element.

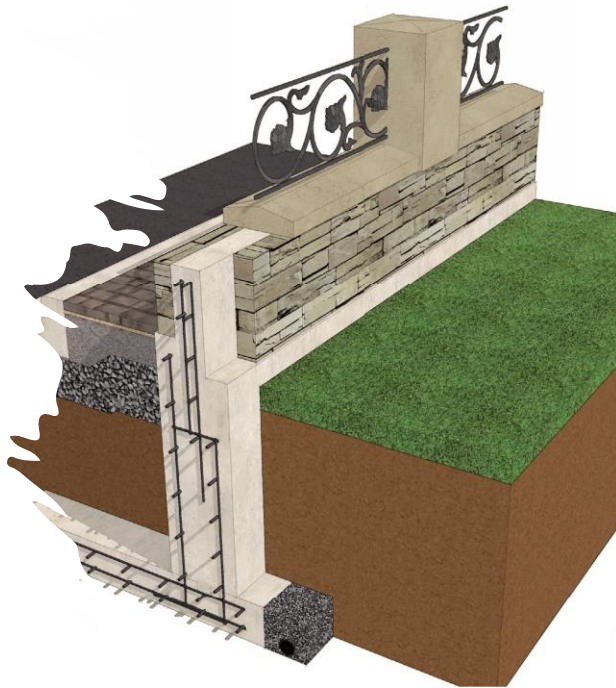
The City has respected the character-defining elements of Officers’ Square and, where design changes have been made, sought and obtained written consent from GNB before proceeding. These GNB-approved changes to character-defining elements include moving the statue of Lord Beaverbrook to the Sculpture Garden next to the Beaverbrook Art Gallery - a more fitting place of the statue - and re-building the perimeter wall and replacing the cast ornamental railing.

Background:

Perimeter Wall

The wall, portions of which date back to 1901, and had been falling apart for some time and was no longer strong enough to hold back Pointe-Sainte-Anne Blvd and Queen Street. With safety being top of mind, Council directed that the wall be reconstructed. Staff designed the wall using conservation principles and met the current structural and safety needs for the space. The sandstone cladding, which was originally used, will weather with age to a fine patina. We also added bollards at the entrance to the Square, another safety feature. Finally, the cast ornamental fencing atop the original wall was also failing, so new cast ornamental fencing has been created that respects conservation principles but is also stronger than the original. This new fencing will be installed next spring.

City engineers also designed the new wall in such a way that it “floats” above the roots of the mature trees to which it is adjacent, thereby eliminating any need to remove those trees.



Stage

A rain-protected performance stage was one of the features requested by the public during engagement on the Historic Garrison District. As well, an “open space for concerts and theatre” is among the character-defining elements of this provincial heritage site, as set out by GNB. Designed by the renowned New Brunswick firm Acre Architects, the stage to be “plug and play,” meaning the required electronic equipment will be stored there permanently and it will be the right size to accommodate large festivals to community theatre troupes and everyone in between. The new stage and electrical infrastructure will provide electrical services to run the hugely popular Garrison Night Market and other community events in the space.

The roof will allow performers (musicians, theatre, dance, you name it) to entertain safely when it rains (or snows!), which is a huge bonus: Had the City been programming shows this summer (2021) on the current stage, at least 30% of the scheduled performances would have been cancelled due to weather. The stage will be located in the northwest corner of the Square because it allows spectators to both take in the show and enjoy the stately beauty of the Fredericton Region Museum building.

Skating Surface

A skating surface was a feature people requested over and over again during public engagement on the Historic Garrison District. As well, “ice skating in the winter” is one of the character-defining elements of this provincial historic site, as set out by GNB. The recommended plan proposes a square walkway within the Square and around the Great Lawn that will double as a chilled skating track in the winter. As Officers’ Square is in a wellfield protection area, the City will be using an environmentally-friendly brine solution as a cooling agent for the ice surface. In the unlikely event that the solution leaks into the wellfield, it would have no impact on water quality.

The skating surface was moved north from what was planned for originally in order to avoid the archeological resources in the paleo shoreline discovered during the Province’s archeological assessment.

Playground and Water Feature

The updated Officers’ Square will be home to a new playground and water feature in the northeast corner. It will feature lots of opportunities for climbing, sliding and imaginative play including a “beaver lodge” with ladders, stepping stones and a slide, a “dam” with fallen logs and boulders, a music area with drums and talk tubes and an obstacle course. The space will also showcase a water feature for cooling off on summer days.

Public café / seating area / Married Quarters area

A public café and seating area at the southwest corner of the Square near the Museum had been planned from the outset, but the results of the Province’s archeological investigations have revealed a paleo shoreline near this location, used by both Indigenous and Acadian peoples and containing artifacts. This necessitated a re-think by staff, culminating in a direction by Council to protect the area (see purple shading in final plan rendering).

The City sees this discovery as a great opportunity for interpretive programming to showcase our rich Indigenous and Acadian history. As a result, the plan for this location at the southwest corner, including the married quarters, remains to be determined but will be led through collaboration with Indigenous and Acadian stakeholders.