



# Standing Committee Report

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**REPORT NUMBER** 177-2026-Growth-Development Services

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**DATE**

**PREPARED**

April 20, 2026

**FILE**

**STANDING**

**COMMITTEE**

April 28, 2026

**MEETING DATE**

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**SUBJECT**

Pool 6 Visioning Concept for Master Plan Update

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## **PURPOSE**

WITH RESPECT to Report 177-2026-Growth-Development Services, endorsement of the Standing Committee - Growth is requested to forward the following recommendations to City Council;

WE RECOMMEND THAT Council adopt the Pool 6 / Tug Boat Basin Waterfront Master Plan Update;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides an overview of the Pool 6 / Tug Boat Basin Waterfront Vision and Master Plan Update and seeks feedback from the Standing Committee on Growth prior to its presentation to Council for adoption.

The purpose of the Update is to reflect opportunities realized since the original 2015 Waterfront Master Plan, as well as evolving community priorities, market conditions, and economic development opportunities. The Vision is intended to be a flexible framework, enabling the City to respond to market interest and development concepts brought forward through a future Call for Proposals process. Accordingly, future adjustments may occur, provided they substantially align with the Design Objectives outlined in the Waterfront Master Plan Update.

The Waterfront Master Plan Update and framework balances public access, environmental stewardship, and strategic economic development opportunities; supporting year-round activity and long-term economic sustainability. The conceptual plan envisions the site as a connected, vibrant, mixed-use waterfront destination organized around a central main street and connected public realm. This Vision contributes to the continued evolution of Thunder Bay's waterfront and supports the

objectives of the Smart Growth Action Plan by advancing a destination that strengthens economic activity, enhances livability, and attracts investment

The Vision features and preserves the site's unique natural attributes, with over 60 percent of the land as publicly accessible open space; protecting key views of Lake Superior and the Sleeping Giant. At the same time, it introduces carefully scaled opportunities for complementary development to add vibrancy to the area and support public and private sector partnerships. Active and alternative transportation modes will be prioritized, with parking provided at levels that support planned use while managing peak demand through complementary transportation and parking strategies.

Following consideration of Committee feedback, the Pool 6 / Tug Boat Basin Waterfront Vision and Master Plan Update will be presented to Council for adoption. Ongoing technical studies will inform future cost considerations and development strategies in advance of a Call for Proposals process to seek out development interest.

### ***KEY CONSIDERATIONS***

The Pool 6 Waterfront Vision and Master Plan Update is a key action in the City Manager's Workplan and the Smart Growth Action Plan.

Through a comprehensive and iterative design and engagement process, four development scenarios were explored. Following public and stakeholder consultation, a preferred concept (Scenario 2B) was further refined as the conceptual vision for the site shown in Attachment 1. This concept reflects a balanced approach that sets an appropriate development footprint supporting a mix of uses that enhance the site's function as a year-round destination, highlighting opportunities for cultural, recreational, tourism and commercial activities.

The Pool 6 lands represent a highly visible and strategically important waterfront site and a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape the next phase of Thunder Bay's waterfront. The preferred concept is not intended to prescribe a fixed end result, but rather to establish a flexible, market-responsive vision that can attract investment and guide future development by public and private partners. The Master Plan Update provides a clear framework and conceptual vision to guide future decision-making, investment and implementation.

The key considerations informing the preferred Waterfront Master Plan Update framework include:

- **Waterfront as a destination:** The lands have the potential to function as a major cultural, recreational, and tourism destination within the City and the broader region.

- **Balance of public and private interests:** The framework prioritizes maintaining significant publicly accessible open space and waterfront access while introducing carefully scaled opportunities for complementary development.
- **Economic opportunity:** The introduction of mixed-use development supports increased tourism activity, private investment, and long-term economic growth.
- **Environmental sensitivity:** The presence of wetlands, habitat features, and shoreline conditions requires a thoughtful and integrated approach to design and development.
- **Flexibility and phasing:** The framework is designed to be adaptable, allowing the City to respond to changing market conditions and partnership opportunities over time.

## **CONSULTATION**

On January 27, 2026, the Growth Standing Committee was presented with an update on the Pool 6 lands Vision project, outlining a proposed framework for the next phase of public consultation and engagement. Areas of feedback included consideration of adequate parking, transit accessibility and continuing the partnership with the Transportation Museum of Thunder Bay. The Vision includes parking to facilitate increased development and waterfront activity but does not intend to accommodate peak event parking demand on-site; peak demand is anticipated to be managed through alternative approaches such as transit and utilization of surrounding parking facilities. The Transportation Museum partnership continues to be reflected within the waterfront vision.

Public and stakeholder input has been undertaken as part of the Pool 6 Waterfront Master Plan Update process, including two online surveys and a public open house session.

### ***Online Survey 1 – February/March 2025***

An initial survey was conducted to gather input on which components of the 2015 Waterfront Master Plan the public would like to see retained, and to assess community priorities, desired amenities, and the overall vision for the Pool 6 waterfront lands. A total of 364 responses were received.

The survey results indicated strong support for retaining key elements of the 2015 Master Plan, particularly water-based and passive recreational amenities. Approximately 66.5% of respondents supported the inclusion of a canoe/kayak dock, and 63.5% supported passive recreational uses such as walking and cycling, as well as a fishing/picnic dock. In addition, 57.7% of respondents supported extending Sleeping Giant Parkway to the Central Avenue overpass.

In terms of future development, respondents expressed interest in a mix of uses that balance recreation and economic activity. Passive recreational uses were the most

supported (63.5%), followed by commercial and retail opportunities (53.6%), and hospitality-related uses such as hotels or spas (37.6%).

Overall, the results reinforced the importance of maintaining public access, supporting recreational opportunities, and introducing complementary development that enhances the site's function as a year-round destination. These findings helped inform the development of the four conceptual scenarios evaluated in the next phase of engagement.

### ***Online Survey 2 – February/March 2026***

A second survey was conducted to evaluate public preferences related to four conceptual development scenarios and to further refine the Vision for the Pool 6 lands. The survey received 417 responses, providing a broad range of community input on the proposed concepts and future direction of the site.

Survey results indicate a strong preference for a balanced approach to development that values public access, natural features, and community-oriented amenities, while accommodating economic development opportunities. Respondents consistently supported maintaining a significant portion of the site as publicly accessible open space, with an emphasis on continuous waterfront access, walking and cycling trails, and the preservation and enhancement of natural features.

In terms of programming, the survey identified strong interest in uses that contribute to an active and vibrant public realm. A public market emerged as one of the most supported features, particularly as a flexible indoor-outdoor space capable of operating year-round. Additional support was expressed for smaller scale food and beverage uses, including cafés and waterfront dining.

While there was some support for hospitality uses such as hotels, this support was strongest when integrated with complementary public facing uses. Residential uses and larger-scale private development received more limited support, particularly where these were perceived to reduce publicly accessible space.

### ***Public Open House Session – March 1, 2026***

An in-person Public Open House was held on March 1, 2026, at the Baggage Arts Building at Prince Arthur's Landing, with approximately 100 participants in attendance. The event provided an opportunity for attendees to review the Framework Plan and four development scenarios and to provide direct feedback to the project team.

Feedback from the open house reinforced the importance of achieving a careful balance between public access, community amenities, and economic development opportunities. Most participants expressed support for minimizing the overall development footprint while maintaining a high-quality, publicly accessible waterfront.

Participants placed significant emphasis on the importance of natural features and ecological integration, including the preservation of green space, habitat areas, and

shoreline access. There was also strong support for enhancing the public realm through trails, seating areas, and gathering spaces that encourage social activity and community use.

In addition, participants highlighted the value of incorporating cultural and educational elements into the site, including Indigenous cultural representation, heritage interpretation, and opportunities to reflect the history and identity of the waterfront.

### **Summary of Engagement Findings**

Overall, both the online surveys and the Public Open House demonstrated a strong and consistent desire for a publicly accessible waterfront that prioritizes natural features, recreation, and community use, while accommodating carefully considered development that supports long term economic sustainability.

A key theme across all engagement activities was the importance of balancing public access and open space with opportunities for economic development, while limiting the overall development footprint. There was strong support for enhancing the public realm through trails, gathering spaces, and year-round programming, as well as incorporating destination-oriented uses such as a cultural amenities, public market and complementary food and beverage offerings.

Based on the feedback received through this process, Scenario 2B emerged as the preferred development concept and formed the basis of the conceptual rendered drawings in the Master Plan Update.

In addition to public engagement, consultation has been undertaken with internal departments, external agencies, and stakeholders, including the Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC), to ensure alignment with economic development objectives and technical considerations.

Overall, engagement completed to date has helped to shape the conceptual Vision that reflects community priorities, balances public and private interests, and supports the long-term development of the waterfront.

### ***FINANCIAL IMPLICATION***

The Waterfront Master Plan Update establishes a long-term conceptual framework for development. One of the Guiding Financial Principles approved by City Council through the Long Range Financial Plan is Supporting Growth and Economic Development: The alignment of financial strategies with economic opportunities to foster a thriving community.

While detailed cost estimates have not yet been prepared, the Vision is informed by the 2025 Highest and Best Use Study completed by the CEDC which includes high level

cost and revenue projections. Additional technical studies will inform future cost considerations, revenue projections and development strategies.

Future financial implications may be associated with:

- Detailed design and engineering work
- Infrastructure investment
- Environmental remediation and site preparation
- Potential partnership and development facilitation

These costs will be further defined through subsequent phases of the project and brought forward for Council consideration through future reports and budget processes.

## ***BACKGROUND***

In 2015, Council adopted the Pool 6 / Tug Boat Basin Waterfront master plan, envisioning the development of the former industrial Pool 6 lands into a public, nature focussed waterfront area and extension of Prince Arthur's Landing. The plan emphasized public access, connected trails, naturalized landscapes and open spaces, along with recognition of the site's industrial and cultural heritage.

Since that time, the City has made meaningful progress toward implementing the original vision, including investment in waterfront infrastructure, expansion of the trail network, improvements to the cruise ship terminal, and the advancement of major cultural projects, including the Thunder Bay Art Gallery under construction and the proposed 'Science North' new science centre. These investments have helped establish the waterfront as an important civic destination and have created momentum for further transformation.

Evolving market conditions, increased tourism activity and a growing emphasis on economic development have highlighted the need to revisit and update the 2015 Waterfront Master Plan.

## ***NEXT STEPS***

Following consideration of Committee feedback, the Waterfront Master Plan Update will be brought forward to Council for adoption.

Advancing the framework plan toward implementation will require a series of technical studies to further explore site conditions, assess development viability and inform future decision making related to land use, infrastructure, and potential partnerships.

A timeline for a Call for Proposals process to identify potential private sector partners and innovative development ideas that align with the vision and objectives of the Master Plan will be established following completion of the required technical studies.

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Further updates will be brought forward to Committee and Council as additional information becomes available and as the project progresses toward implementation.

***REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED***

Attachment A: Pool 6 Visioning Rendering

Attachment B: Draft Pool 6 Tugboat Basin Master Plan Update

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Date 04/20/2026