A New Visitor Centre To Better Serve Canadians

IN WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK | JUNE 18, 2016
Agenda

▲ Background: The purpose of a new visitor centre
▲ What do the Canada National Parks Act, Management Plan and Community Plan say?
▲ The site selection process
▲ Why Block 39
▲ Next steps
BACKGROUND

WHY WE NEED A NEW VISITOR CENTRE
Visitor Centres in Canada’s National Parks

▲ A primary service offered by Parks Canada

▲ Managed by Parks Canada on behalf of all Canadians for their benefit and enjoyment
Provides essential services and more to park visitors

- Welcoming Canadians and visitors from around the world
- Enhancing the visitor experience with enriched learning opportunities
Built in 1958
363,000 VISITORS
2015

600 ft²

486,000 VISITORS
40% ARE new visitors

ONLY 17% use the visitor centre

2011 VISITOR SURVEY
WHAT DO THE CANADA NATIONAL PARKS ACT, MANAGEMENT PLAN AND COMMUNITY PLAN SAY?
Core documents

- Canada National Parks Act
- Waterton Lakes Management Plan
- Waterton Community Plan
- Stakeholder engagement
CANADA NATIONAL PARKS ACT

4(1) The National Parks of Canada are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment, subject to this Act and the regulations …

8(1) The Minister is responsible for the administration, management, and control of parks, including the administration of public lands in parks and, for that purpose, may use and occupy those lands
Powers in relation to land use planning and development in park communities may not be exercised by a local government body, except as provided in the agreement referred to in Section 35 (re Banff Agreement)

2(1)(d) Identifies the community of Waterton as the visitor centre for the National Park
“The Waterton Community Plan 2000 will continue to guide the Waterton community within the context of this management plan and the Canada National Parks Act and Regulations.” (page 29)

“...the Waterton community is the gateway to broader national park experiences. In many ways, the community is the heart of the park. It is a significant part of the visitor experience...” (page 7)

“The Waterton community is administered by Parks Canada and is subject to the National Parks Act and regulations. The federal government retains ownership of all land within the community. Guided by the Waterton Community Plan 2000, Parks Canada Agency is the authority for community planning, land use, development and environmental issues.” (page 7)
“Improving the critical role for visitors at the "View from the Edge" level of experience who desire a perceptually safer, more comfortable national park experience. The community will be a staging area for visitors…going further into the park.” (page 29)

Improving the communities use as "the focal point for interpretation and other communications activities and programs…for multicultural and multi-generational audiences that focus on the park's nature, history and culture.” (page 29)

“Improving visitor information and wayfinding in the community by creating improved signs to inform visitors of points of interest and services.” (page 29)
“The Waterton Community is designated as a visitor centre. Its role is to provide visitor services and facilities.” (page 4)

“A location within the community will be found for a Visitor Reception Centre.” (page 28)
Stakeholders Engaged

- Improvement District #4
- Waterton Lakes Leaseholders Association
- Chamber of Commerce
- Waterton Park Community Association
- Individual cottage owners
- Commercial leaseholders
- Blackfoot Nation
- Rotary
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
THE SITE SELECTION PROCESS
Location selection criteria

- How to best serve park visitors
- How to best achieve key Parks Canada objectives
- How to achieve maximum value of the investment
- The role of the townsite as the centre for visitor services in the National Park
Location selection criteria

- 12 locations proposed and reviewed
- 9 identified by Parks Canada staff
- 3 identified by community members
WHY
BLOCK 39
Why Block 39

- Central, easy to access
- Interaction with visitors
- Reduced traffic, increased pedestrian access
- Best value for investment
- Meets all foundation criteria
Conclusion

- Consistent with all foundational documents
- Balances the needs and concerns of the Waterton community
- Best opportunity to enhance the visitor experience
NEXT STEPS
Next steps

- Explore design options: look and function; integration with townsite
- Make design options available to public: Fall/Winter 2016
Thank you.