



Jenkins Architecture Ltd.

VISITOR RECEPTION CENTRE SITE SELECTION STUDY



2/24/2016

Waterton Lakes National Park

This report presents the results of the analysis of the Site Selection Study. The report is provided as a tool to assist Parks Canada Agency in selecting a site for the proposed Visitor Reception Centre. Throughout this study the overarching goal has been to select a site that will provide the best visitor experience and the maximum value in the Visitor Reception Centre.

Visitor Reception Centre Site Selection Study

WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK

Contents

OVERVIEW OF THE SITE SELECTION STUDY	3
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.....	5
PROCEDURE.....	6
Step One - Establishing Criteria.....	6
Step Two - Weighting Criteria	6
Step Three - Analysis/Evaluation.....	6
Step Four - Decision-making matrix.....	6
Step Five - Site Plan and Massing Diagrams.....	7
WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK	7
BACKGROUND OF THE EXISTING VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE.....	7
ANALYSIS /EVALUATION.....	8
1: The Site’s Ability to Attract Visitors	8
2: Ability to Accommodate Traffic & Required Parking	9
3: Views/Vistas, Physical Setting, Wow-factor.....	10
4: Benefit to Adjacent Uses (Educational Opportunities, Symbiotic Relationships)	11
5: Pedestrian Friendly	11
6: Environmental Impact (Wildlife Corridor, Development Footprint, etc.).....	12
7: Vehicle Friendly	13
8: Negative Influences on Adjacent Uses	13
9: Asset Reduction (Consolidation of Buildings).....	14
10: Public Safety (Site Accidents, Evacuation, etc.)	15
11: Site Characteristics / Topography and Constructability.....	15
12: Building Restrictions (Lot Coverage, Building Height, etc.)	16
13: Ability of Site to Accommodate Future Needs	17
ANALYSIS / EVALUATION SUMMARY.....	18
PROPOSED SITE DIAGRAMS	19
Site A Site Diagram	20
Site A Massing Diagram	21

Site B Site Diagram..... 22

Site B Massing Diagram 23

CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS..... 24

APPENDIX..... 25

Appendix A: Waterton Lakes National Park Managers..... 26

Appendix B: PCA Project Team 26

Appendix C: Original List of Criteria..... 26

OVERVIEW OF THE SITE SELECTION STUDY

Parks Canada Agency (PCA) has established two possible sites for a new Visitor Reception Centre (VRC) for the Waterton Lakes National Park (WLNP). This study examines the two locations to help determine the better option.

- Site A is a location at the Park Operational Compound.
- Site B is a location in the Park town site - Block 39, lots 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13 and 14.

A tested decision-making procedure was used in this study. The study was conducted by a third party (Jenkins Architecture Ltd.) with assistance from the PCA project team who facilitated with the data collection. Several stakeholders, including WLNP managers, have been consulted in the process of this study to determine the appropriate criteria to evaluate the sites.



IMAGE 1

Satellite View of Site A (Map Data © Google)



IMAGE 2

Satellite View of Site B (Map Data © Google)

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This report presents the results of the Site Selection analysis. The report comprises two complementary decision-making tools. The first one is a decision-making matrix with supporting rationale (See 'Analysis/Evaluation' section). The second is a series of diagrams showing a proposed site layout and building massing on each of the sites (see 'Proposed Site

Diagrams' section). These tools are provided to assist Parks Canada Agency in selecting a site for the proposed Visitor Reception Centre. Throughout this study the overarching goal has been to select a site that will provide the best visitor experience and the maximum value in the VRC.

PROCEDURE

The procedure of the study is described in the following five steps:

Step One - Establishing Criteria

Jenkins Architecture, with input from the PCA project team, compiled a list of proposed criteria based on aspects of site design that would be relevant for the proposed development. This list was further refined at a workshop in Waterton with WLNP managers where the final criteria list was compiled. See Appendix A and B for lists of the PCA personnel involved in establishing the criteria. The original criteria list composed by Jenkins Architecture can be found in Appendix C.

Step Two - Weighting Criteria

The weighting of each criterion was independently voted on by the eight current WLNP managers (see Appendix A). Each manager was allotted 100 points that could be divided among the established criteria based on the understood importance of each criterion. The managers were instructed to set aside their personal preferences and to score the criteria based on the goal of providing the best visitor experience and the maximum value in the VRC.

Step Three - Analysis/Evaluation

The evaluation of the criteria was determined by Jenkins Architecture. Each criterion has been considered in relation to the proposed sites. Every criterion has been given a score between 1 and 5, with 1 meaning that the site performs extremely negatively on the criterion and 5 meaning that it performs extremely positively. Along with the score, rationale is provided in this report in the Analysis/Evaluation section.

Step Four - Decision-making matrix

The decision-making matrix combines the weighted criteria and the evaluated scores into a table that quantifies these ideas. The table is included in the 'Analysis/Evaluation' section. See Table A.

Step Five - Site Plan and Massing Diagrams

Schematic drawings of each development are provided in the 'Proposed Site Diagrams' section. They show a probable configuration of each site if developed with a VRC. For the purposes of this study, the proposed VRC will be a new two storey building with a total floor area of 600m². Motor vehicle parking will be provided at each location.

WATERTON LAKES NATIONAL PARK

The Park is southern Alberta's premier destination and plays a vital role in the province's tourism industry. Visitation occurs mainly in the summer months. Efforts are being made to increase visitation to the winter and shoulder seasons. Activities include hiking, cycling, horseback riding, snowshoeing, nordic and backcountry skiing, ice-climbing, camping, canoeing, kayaking, boating, wildlife viewing, picnicking, and golfing. The community of Waterton is the hub of visitor activity and serves as a springboard for 98% of visitors to the rest of the park.

BACKGROUND OF THE EXISTING VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

Waterton Lakes National Park currently has a small, 102m², Visitor Information Centre. Built in 1958, it is located on the Park's only road into the community of Waterton and has a very small parking capacity of approximately 30 parking stalls. This same parking area serves as the trailhead for Bears Hump trail, the Park's most popular day hike. On-site public washroom capacity of two male and two female stalls are inadequate to meet daily visitor needs. The existing Visitor Information Centre is situated in what is now known to be a natural wildlife corridor. The existing VIC's limited parking capacity combined with its proximity to the Park's main entrance road creates significant vehicle congestion and parking creep on to this road, creating a safety hazard for visitors throughout the entire visitor season. For these reasons, a new Visitor Reception Center (VRC) is required.

ANALYSIS /EVALUATION

The following section provides a description of each criterion and the rationale for the graded evaluation given. The full set of scores is summarized in the Decision-Making Matrix (see Table A). A Grade of 1 means that the site performs poorly on that criterion (1 is always negative). A grade of 5 means that the site performs excellent on that criterion (5 is always positive). A grade of 3 is neutral or average.

1: The Site's Ability to Attract Visitors

The goal of Parks Canada is to have a location for the VRC that draws in a high percentage of Park visitors. A site that is in a prominent location would be easy to find for first time visitors and would potentially attract a large number of Park users by the very nature of its hard to miss setting. Another factor that was taken into consideration was the ability of the site to encourage repeat visits. A location that is close to other Park amenities would be more likely to bring in visitors multiple times during their stay.

Site A is located in a prominent location that is visible to all visitors entering the park. It is a logical first point of contact after passing through the park gates and is an effective location that allows visitors to collect information without having to visit the town first. The efficient timing of this visit is critical for some day-user's schedules, such as hikers who have limited hours to complete their activities. However, this situation applies to a fairly small group of visitors; according to previous studies, 98% of Park visitors do visit the townsite at some point during their stay and it can be assumed that many people do stop in town before they embark on other park activities. Although the site is convenient for those driving into the park, it is not convenient for those visitors who are in the townsite. For this reason it does not provide the best opportunity for attracting repeat visits. **SCORE: 4**

Site B, located several blocks from the entrance point into the Waterton community, is not a visually prominent site and could be difficult for some visitors to find initially. As it is not on the main commercial street, some navigation through the townsite would be necessary, which would require quality wayfinding signage. WLNP has already initiated plans to upgrade wayfinding in the community. Some Park visitors also have access to GPS systems or use the internet to locate facilities before their arrival, which makes finding the VRC less of an issue.

Site B is a convenient location due to the fact that almost all visitors stop in at the townsite at some point during their stay, many of them heading there immediately upon arrival to get something to eat or to arrange accommodations. A VRC located on Site B, and offering a wide variety of activities, would be more likely to attract repeat visitors than the same facility and programs located at Site A due to the nearby concentration of people and amenities in the townsite. **SCORE: 4**

2: Ability to Accommodate Traffic & Required Parking

If the VRC is to draw in a high percentage of the approximately 450,000 annual visitors to the Park, the site and adjacent roadways must be able to deal with the associated automobile traffic and be able to provide sufficient parking so that any visitor who wants stop at the VRC can easily find a convenient place to park. For the purposes of this study Parks Canada has suggested a target of 90 parking stalls. While the guidelines of the Waterton Community Land-Use Directive require only 12 stalls for a building the proposed size of the VRC, the additional spaces would help ensure that there is adequate parking during peak demand periods.

Site A is located immediately adjacent to Highway 5, the main road serving the Waterton townsite, and there is sufficient space available within the site for vehicle circulation and the required amount of parking, although some relocation of existing roadways on the site would likely be required. Since the compound site will continue to have traffic from maintenance vehicles, the site planning will have to mitigate conflict between visitor vehicles and maintenance vehicles. It has been noted that on busy summer long weekends traffic trying to get into the townsite can back up along the highway past the entry into the compound. Vehicle access into and out of Site A could be difficult on these occasions. A VRC on Site A would add to the congestion on the highway by increasing the number of vehicles travelling back and forth between the townsite and the compound, as well as by centralizing visitor and operations traffic in a single location. **SCORE: 5**

Site B can be designed to accommodate the required motor vehicle needs. The site is well served by the existing roadways, although repairs to the existing asphalt would be recommended. Given the location of existing features on the property, such as the public washroom facility and a portion of the playground, it is unlikely that all of the required 90

parking stalls can be accommodated on the site. It would not necessarily be desirable to have a parking lot with the capacity of 90 cars on the site due to the amount of green space that would be lost. Community guidelines also call for small, carefully screened parking lots within the townsite. Therefore, some portion of the parking will occur on the adjacent streets. The on-site parking provided would ease the existing parking deficiency in the townsite and allow opportunities for parking spaces to be shared between different services. Studies have shown that virtually all visitors visit the townsite. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there would be a significant increase in the total number of motor vehicles in the townsite as a result of adding a VRC to Site B. **SCORE: 4**

3: Views/Vistas, Physical Setting, Wow-factor

Ideally the VRC should be located in a setting that showcases the natural beauty of Waterton Lakes National Park. The “wow factor” was evaluated based on the existence of dramatic views from the site of the lakes and surrounding mountain peaks. In addition to distant views, the nature and character of the immediate surroundings were also taken into account.

Site A is an excellent vantage point, with picturesque views of Middle Waterton Lake and Vimy Peak beyond. The Prince of Wales Hotel is visible from some portions of the site and the mountain range with Mount Crandall is the backdrop to the compound. The physical setting is compromised, however, by the close proximity of the maintenance yard and the constant movement of maintenance vehicles in and out of the site. Visual screening, by a combination of berms, trees, and fencing could be used to block direct views into the compound, but the noise of the activities in the maintenance yard would be difficult to mask and would not contribute to a positive experience for visitors. It would also not be the best setting for any outdoor interpretative experiences offered by the VRC. The proximity to the highway detracts from the natural beauty of the site as well. This highway factor would be especially noticeable on busy days in the park. A VRC on Site A could be designed to take advantage of the great views, but it would be difficult to fully screen out the less desirable aspects of the location. **SCORE: 4**

From its location within the townsite, Site B offers excellent views of the surrounding mountain peaks, although there are no direct views of Waterton Lake from ground level. The immediate context is fairly typical of the small town character of the townsite. Some of the older cottages,

however, are very simple buildings located on lots with little vegetation other than grass. This results in a somewhat barren streetscape in some areas. The site is adjacent to Recreational, Cottage, Commercial-Retail sites, and is a short walk away from Commercial-Accommodation uses and the lakeshore. A well-designed VRC building, following the building guidelines in force in the townsite, would fit into the context of the town as well as enhance the overall appearance of the area. **SCORE: 4**

4: Benefit to Adjacent Uses (Educational Opportunities, Symbiotic Relationships)

The VRC could be beneficial to existing uses located on adjacent properties by providing services that complement neighboring functions.

Locating the VRC on Site A would provide minimal benefits to the adjacent uses, which are all Parks Canada facilities. In fact, bringing large numbers of Park visitors to the operational compound could interfere with operations there. The dramatic views from the upper portions of the compound already attract some visitors looking to get photographs of the scenery.

SCORE: 1

There would likely be significant benefits to nearby uses if the VRC was located on Site B since it would attract visitors to the core business and amenity area of the town. The VRC would also provide improved cultural and educational opportunities for users of the adjacent recreational facilities. In fact, the opportunity would exist to integrate the existing recreational uses into the design of the VRC. Additionally, the increased number parking stalls that would go along with the VRC development would benefit both businesses and visitors in the area. **SCORE: 5**

5: Pedestrian Friendly

How easy it would be for visitors to get to the VRC on foot was evaluated in this criterion. Since most visitors are concentrated in the townsite, walking distances from locations within the community were the primary consideration. The existence and condition of sidewalks and pathways were also part of the evaluation.

Site A does not have convenient pedestrian access to or from other visitor uses. It is located approximately 1.6 km away from the entrance to the townsite; far enough that the vast majority of visitors would choose to drive. If, however, they elected to walk, there is a sidewalk along the highway that, at present, reaches the Linnet Lake parking lot, almost directly across from the Operational Compound. During daylight hours this sidewalk would be a reasonably safe walking route. Its location on the south side of the highway, however, would require visitors to cross the roadway to access the VRC. Supplemental lighting could be added along the sidewalk to increase safety after dark. **SCORE: 2**

Site B is centrally located in the townsite and is within easy walking distance from most, if not all, areas of the community. Pedestrian access is hampered somewhat by the lack of sidewalks on some streets. Within the immediate area of the site, only Wildflower Avenue has sidewalks. Completing the sidewalk system on the adjacent streets could be conducted as part of the VRC development if Site B is the site selected. **SCORE: 5**

6: Environmental Impact (Wildlife Corridor, Development Footprint, etc.)

As with any other new development within the Park, the VRC could have a negative environmental impact if it is located on an inappropriate site. Factors that were evaluated for this study include the location of wildlife corridors and the existing natural or disturbed/developed nature of the site.

The majority of Site A, particularly the higher elevations, is developed land and contains a number of service and administrative buildings, gravel parking areas, and other pieces of infrastructure, including a helipad and small buildings housing pumps and lift stations. Much of the lower portion of the site is currently undeveloped open space with native vegetation. Depending on where it is located, a VRC on Site A would increase the percentage of developed land and reduce the amount of natural vegetation on the property. Parks Canada has indicated that there are wildlife corridors running through the lower areas of the site. Animals passing through parts of the site include bears, sheep, goats and the occasional cougar. The presence of a VRC on Site A would further constrict wildlife movement corridors and wildlife trails with physical barriers and sensory disturbance (e.g. increased human use). Compared to Site B, the

compound sees more interaction with more species of wildlife for a longer period of the year.

SCORE: 2

Site B is currently developed for recreational use and consists mainly of open green space, although a portion of an adjacent playground occupies most of Lot 3 and extends slightly into Lot 4. Tennis courts are located nearby along the north property line. The only building on the site is a public washroom facility. While a VRC would take over a significant portion of the existing green space, the proposed size of the VRC would allow there to be generous amounts of open space around the building and all of the existing facilities would be retained. Since the site is already developed and surrounded by existing roadways, there would not be any new development footprint. No designated wildlife corridors have been identified on this site, although deer are common throughout the townsite during certain times of the year.

SCORE: 3.5

7: Vehicle Friendly

Vehicle access to each site was evaluated in this criterion.

Vehicle access is convenient at the compound site. As discussed in other categories, this site is adjacent to the highway and has ample room to provide sufficient parking and vehicular traffic. Provisions for the separation of service vehicle traffic will have to be considered in any designs for Site A. **SCORE: 5**

Site B is well served by the existing street network in the community. The roadways bordering the site are not used to capacity and are wide enough to provide on-street parking and vehicle access. Several of the streets in the area are in need of repaving. Parks Canada has indicated that repairs to the road surface will be undertaken as part of the current water and sewer upgrades. **SCORE: 4.5**

8: Negative Influences on Adjacent Uses

A VRC could have potential negative impacts on neighboring sites. It will be a major draw, attracting a large number of visitors and the associated vehicular traffic could cause issues for some types of adjacent uses. There is also the potential for noise and the loss of privacy.

The addition of a VRC would pose very little negative influence on Site A. Compound activities, however, might have to be adjusted to accommodate the presence of visitors around the site. Vehicle circulation in the compound, for instance, would likely have to be revised to allow for separate roadways for visitors. Furthermore, the visual appearance of the compound would be under greater scrutiny. The provision of screening devices to block views of the compound would be an important consideration if the VRC were to be located on Site A. **SCORE: 5**

The character of Site B would be altered by the addition of a VRC. Some of the existing recreational open space would be replaced with parking and the VRC building. This change would mostly affect nearby seasonal leaseholders. There are five cottage properties adjacent to Site B as well as other cottages across Wildflower and Harebell Avenues. The loss of green space would be offset by the cultural and educational opportunities provided by the VRC that would benefit all visitors. Although the overall townsite traffic is not expected to increase with the addition of a VRC on Site B, there would probably be an increase in traffic movement around the site. **SCORE: 3.5**

9: Asset Reduction (Consolidation of Buildings)

Depending on where the VRC is located, there is the potential to amalgamate some existing Parks Canada functions into the new building, thereby reducing the number of Parks buildings that need to be maintained. Development of the new VRC on either site would allow for the elimination of the existing Visitor Information Centre (VIC). It is important to note that this site selection study does not consider the implications of other uses, beyond the VRC, being added to either site. Dimensional limitations and land use zoning restrictions would have to be considered with any asset reduction measures.

Site A has a number of existing buildings but Parks Canada is not considering incorporating any current functions of the operations compound into a VRC is located on this site. The compound also provides few opportunities for visitor experiences and is not conducive to visitor functions because of its distance from the townsite. As a result, consolidation of functions at Site A is limited. **SCORE: 1**

Site B would allow for some consolidation of additional functions and provide an opportunity for the reduction of existing assets. It has been suggested by Parks Canada that the functions housed in the current Administration Building and the Falls Theater are likely to be relocated to a VRC located on Site B. **SCORE: 4**

10: Public Safety (Site Accidents, Evacuation, etc.)

The concentration of visitors and their vehicles at the VRC has the potential to be a public safety issue. It is also important to consider how existing adjacent uses could affect the safety of visitors to the VRC. The safety of Park visitors is a priority for Parks Canada and it is our opinion that both sites can be designed to adequately protect the public from danger.

One possible advantage of Site A is that this scenario could divide the visitor population so that there are fewer people in town during an evacuation. On the other hand, dividing the visitors into two locations could make emergency response more difficult because the first responders could be more spread out. The mixing of Park visitors with a busy service compound creates potential safety risks that would have to be dealt with in the design of the VRC. Helicopter and Fire Operations activity, for instance, tend to attract onlookers which can interfere with those activities as well as creating a safety hazard. **SCORE: 4**

The potential increase in the frequency of vehicle traffic into and out of the vicinity of Site B could create safety concerns for users of the playground and other recreational facilities. The existing fencing along the north and east sides of the playgrounds already addresses much of this issue. Other measures, such as traffic calming devices, could be incorporated into the design of the VRC. **SCORE: 4**

11: Site Characteristics / Topography and Constructability

A number of site factors, such as existing grades, vegetation, and the location of underground services, could impact the cost and design of the VRC.

Site A is on a slope which could result in higher costs for construction of the building and the parking lots. It could also limit where on the site the VRC can be located. Barrier free design would be difficult to achieve if terracing of the site is required. PCA staff have indicated that

tying into site servicing would be complicated at the compound because the location of the existing service lines are scattered. Construction staging and site access for construction vehicles is quite simple at the compound although careful planning would be necessary to allow the compound to remain fully functioning during construction. **SCORE: 3**

The relative flatness of Site B would make construction very straightforward. The site, however, is located within the potential flood zone of Cameron Creek. While the likelihood of a flood has been reduced by the engineered reinforcement of the banks of the creek, the risk has not been eliminated completely. Simple design measures, such as locating mechanical equipment above grade and elevating the level of the main floor slightly, could minimize damage to the VRC in the event of a flood. Construction staging and construction access is straightforward but would be more restricted than at the compound site. **SCORE: 4**

12: Building Restrictions (Lot Coverage, Building Height, etc.)

While both sites would be subject to standards such as the National Building Code and National Parks Regulations, there are other sets of controls that affect each location differently. Within the townsite, the Waterton Community Land-Use Directive, contained within the WLNP 2000 Waterton Community Plan, influences development by establishing standards for such things as setbacks, building height, eave heights and maximum lot coverage. These controls do not apply at the Operational Compound.

Within the Community Plan the designated land-use for Site B is Recreational Reserve (RR) District. Although the RR district calls for open space for recreational and cultural uses, the Discretionary Uses section does allow for developments that support recreational and cultural uses. The Community Plan also specifically states that a site will be found within the community for the VRC, which would potentially eliminate Site A from consideration. It is the opinion of WLNP management that both locations can be accommodated based on policy guidance in the community and management plans. This site selection study, therefore, accepts that both sites are valid locations for the VRC and evaluates them under this criterion only on the basis of factors affecting building form and size.

Since Site A is not subject to the guidelines that limit building form in the townsite, there is the potential to have a more expressive and dynamic VRC at this location. This site offers a higher degree of flexibility for building height, style, and siting. **SCORE: 5**

Being located within the area covered by the Waterton Community Plan means that a VRC on Site B is subject to the guidelines contained within that document. For institutional uses the development requirements limit buildings to two storeys in height, with the upper floor contained almost entirely within the roof. The resulting form would tend to be a traditional pitched roof building with dormers. There are provisions, however, for variations to the requirements in response to the unique needs of a use or where there is a specific benefit to the community. A development in the townsite would also have to be sensitive to its context and the surrounding property users. **SCORE: 3.5**

13: Ability of Site to Accommodate Future Needs

Over time, it is possible that the functional requirements of the VRC could change. The ability of each site to accommodate future expansion or adapt to changes of use was evaluated in this criterion.

Site A is very flexible in terms of dimensional restrictions. This could be beneficial if additional building area is required. In the event of downsizing, the site is also quite flexible since the development can be converted to another use without land-use restrictions and without disruption of the adjacent uses. **SCORE: 3**

Site B is more dimensionally restricted than the compound site option but still has room for some expansion. Furthermore, expansion could occur by spreading use into other buildings on nearby sites. Land-use guidelines for this site might restrict repurposing of the development. **SCORE: 3**

ANALYSIS / EVALUATION SUMMARY

The following Decision-Making Matrix summarizes the criteria grades and gives the weighted scores.

Evaluation Criteria		Weighting Factor	Site A: Compound		Site B: Townsite	
			Grade	Weighted Score	Grade	Weighted Score
1	Ability to Attract Visitors	0.200	4	0.80	4	0.80
2	Ability to Accommodate Traffic & Required Parking	0.134	5	0.67	4	0.54
3	Views/Vistas, Physical Setting, Wow-factor	0.129	4	0.52	4	0.52
4	Benefit to Adjacent Uses (Educational Opportunities, Symbiotic Relationships, etc.)	0.105	1	0.11	5	0.53
5	Pedestrian Friendly	0.089	2	0.18	5	0.45
6	Environmental Impact (Wildlife Corridor, Development Footprint, etc.)	0.080	2	0.16	3.5	0.28
7	Vehicle Friendly	0.060	5	0.30	4.5	0.27
8	Negative Influences on Adjacent Uses	0.054	5	0.27	3.5	0.19
9	Asset Reduction (Consolidation of Buildings)	0.052	1	0.05	4	0.21
10	Public Safety (Site Accidents, Evacuation, etc.)	0.039	4	0.16	4	0.16
11	Site Characteristics / Topography and Constructability	0.024	3	0.07	4	0.10
12	Building Restrictions (Lot Coverage, Building Height, etc.)	0.020	5	0.10	3.5	0.07
13	Ability of Site to Accommodate Future Needs	0.014	3	0.04	3	0.04
Total		1.000		3.43		4.16

Table A: Decision-Making Matrix

PROPOSED SITE DIAGRAMS

Conceptual Site Plan diagrams and conceptual Massing Diagrams are provided to show a possible configuration of the developments for each of the two sites. These diagrams are included in the study to provide a sense of scale and to ensure that the proposed development on these sites is physically possible.

On Site A the VRC is located on the lower, flatter portion of the site. The building is oriented towards the view and the parking area, along with trees, berms and retaining walls, acts as a buffer between the VRC and the Operational Compound. The existing maintenance access road, along with the helipad, is relocated to provide sufficient parking. A separate visitor access road is provided to minimize conflicts with Parks Canada vehicles.

At Site B parking is provided off of Harebell Avenue, in an area where there is an existing gravel parking area. Trees are provided around the perimeter of the parking lot, as well as along a central landscaped median, to provide shade and to screen views of the cars from neighboring properties. The VRC building faces onto Wildflower Avenue to take advantage of sunlight and views. There is room for a smaller parking lot at the south end of the building. Trees are used throughout the property to reinforce a park like setting.

Site A Site Diagram

Park Operational Compound Site



Site A Massing Diagram

Park Operational Compound Site



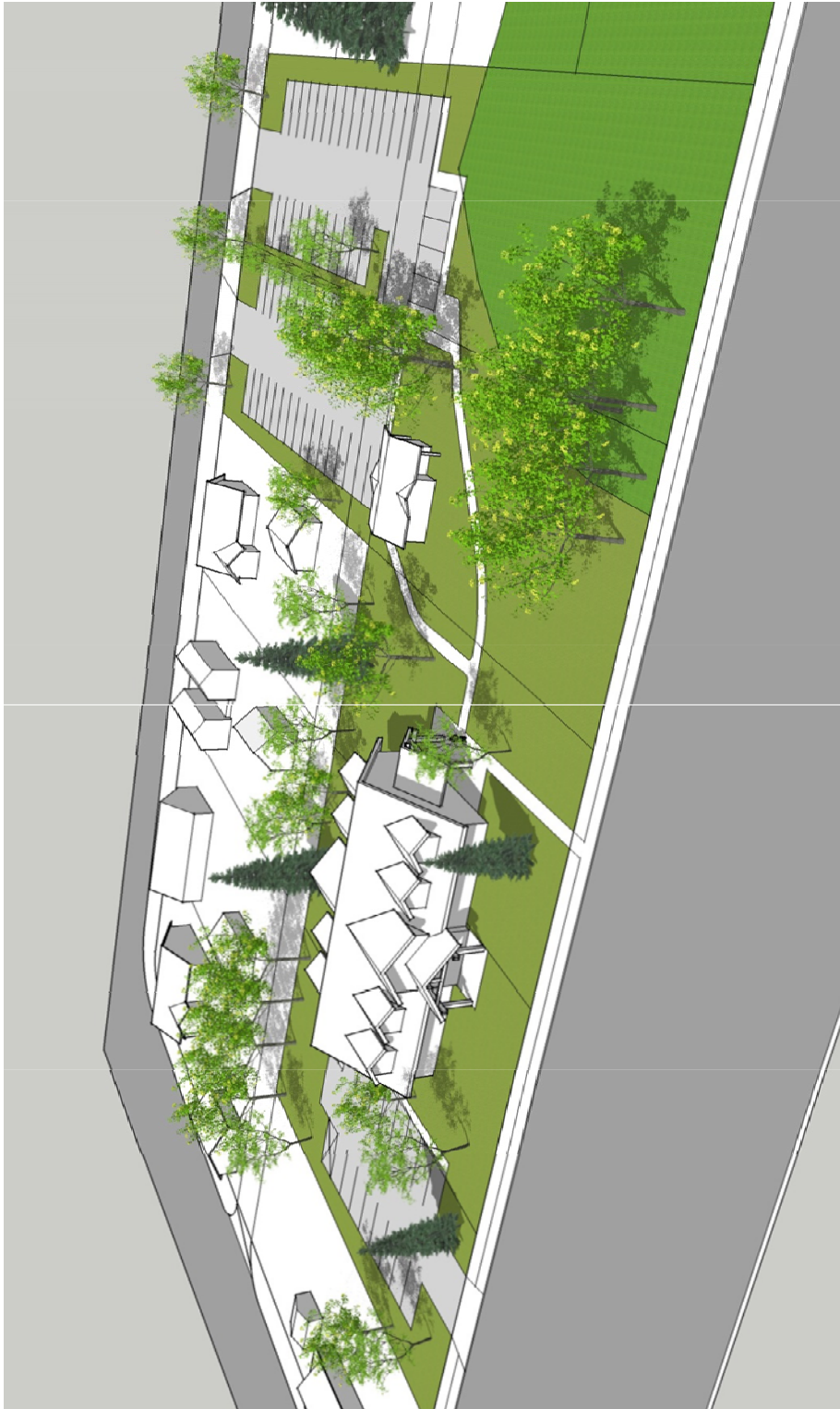
Site B Site Diagram

Townsite



Site B Massing Diagram

Townsite



CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this study is to assist Parks Canada in selecting one of two possible sites for a new Waterton Visitor Reception Centre. The methodology used to make this selection is a matrix which weights and evaluates the important attributes of each site such as views, access, buildability, etc. Based upon the results of this matrix, the townsite option is favored over the highway option as a location for the Waterton Visitor Reception Center.

The most significant difference between the two sites is that one site is a highway setting that is oriented towards the automobile exclusively, while the recommended site is located in the center of the Waterton townsite which is, by definition, oriented more towards pedestrians with adequate parking for cars at the same time.

Small villages and towns struggle to create a “critical mass” at the centre. A Visitor Reception Centre at the centre of town can assist in creating this critical mass and a sense of “place” for the Community of Waterton.

In fact, with hotels and a campground and the adjacent Park nearby, the Visitor Reception Centre presents the opportunity to create an “event” in the townsite fabric that can be far more than a building where people drop in for 10 minutes to get hiking trail information. In this location, this building could have many other activities and options to engage, educate and entertain visitors of all ages.

Ideas such as an indoor theater to accommodate films or plays or concerts, a climbing wall inside the centre to engage younger visitors, and a Discovery centre to educate and entertain visitors about the unique ecology of Waterton and its flora and fauna could ensure that this could become a significant “event” and draw in the centre of Waterton.

This draw would create a significant symbiotic relationship with the hotels, campground, retailers and restaurateurs in the centre – bringing more visitors to the centre and more potential revenues to all businesses located in the centre and from an urban design viewpoint, bringing more visitors animates the streets and creates a lively heart for the Waterton townsite.

VISITOR RECEPTION CENTRE SITE SELECTION STUDY

APPENDIX

Waterton Lakes National Park

Appendix A: Waterton Lakes National Park Managers

The following Waterton Lakes National Park managers participated in establishing the list of evaluation criteria and the determining the weighting of each criteria used in the decision-making matrix.

- Ifan Thomas, Superintendent
- Locke Marshall, Visitor Experience Manager
- Bob Elliot, Townsite Manager
- Dennis Madsen, Resource Conservation Manager
- Allen Nelson, Acting Asset Manager
- Doreen McGillis, Manager of External Relations
- Joe Fontoura, Finance & Administration Manager
- Anders Hawkins, Law Enforcement Officer

Appendix B: PCA Project Team

The following Parks Canada Agency personnel participated in establishing the list of evaluation criteria used in the decision-making matrix and reviewed preliminary drafts of this report.

- Dion Jones, Project Manager
- Stephen Suen, Program Manager
- Jim Lambe, Project Manager, Waterton

Appendix C: Original List of Criteria

On December 4, 2015, Jenkins Architecture provided a list of possible criteria that could be used to evaluate the merits of each site. This original list is as follows:

- Natural Risks (Flood, Avalanche)
- Pedestrian Oriented vs. Vehicle Oriented
- Ability to Accommodate Traffic & Required Parking
- Building Restrictions (Lot Coverage, Building Height)
- Visitor Experience: Welcoming, Orientation, Reception, Information.
- Environmental Impact (wildlife corridor, development footprint,)
- Public Safety (site accidents, evacuation)
- Visibility / Prominence of VRC
- Convenience for Visitors (ease of access, proximity to other facilities, multiple/repeat visits)
- Benefit to adjacent uses (educational opportunities, symbiotic relationships,)

- Negative influences on adjacent uses
- Capital Cost: Infrastructure & Building Costs (Construction Cost Limitation \$10M)
- Views/Vistas, Physical Setting
- Ability of Site to Accommodate Future Needs
- Urban vs. Highway Style: dictated by setting
- Asset Reduction
- Site Characteristics / Topography