

## Staff Report To Council

**From:** Laura Christen, Director of Parks, Recreation & Culture  
Sherri Walden, CAO

**Date:** March 16, 2026

**Report:** PRC-02-26

**Subject** **Report PRC-02-26 East End Trails Extension Update FINAL.docx**

---

### Recommendation

That Report PRC-02-26 East End Trails Extension Project Options to Proceed be received; and

That council provide direction to staff with respect to their preferred option.

### Background

The East End Trails Extension Project has prompted neighbourhood communication, concerns and comments, as has been provided in the delegation to council earlier in this meeting. In addition to the concerns, positive community resident comments have been received both verbally at the Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> project meeting and by email.

This report is provided to outline the key details of the project and to confirm council's support and direction for the east end trails project completion. The report details the project's facts over the last 9 years of its' development history. The East End Trails Extension development has been decades in the making that was contingent on development coming to fruition in our east end. This trail extension has been adopted in the 2026 Mayoral Budget and therefore staff have actioned construction implementation.

## 1. East End Trails Extension Project History

### a) East End Trail Extension with our East End Development

At the January 16, 2017, meeting, council received information with respect to a proposed plan of subdivision dated November 2016 as prepared by WSP illustrating 78 lots and current ownership for those lands north of the green hazards zone or waterway to the shore of the Saugeen River. Discussion ensued with respect to the existing agreement dated December 10, 2001, between Huck Development Limited and the Town. This property had been purchased and the owner requested that a new Subdivision Agreement be established. Subsequently the property owner acquired adjacent lands to facilitate proposed trail development. ***Council directed staff to proceed with the necessary cost analysis of the land to be exchanged for the proposed trail, parking and fencing works and further that based on the above information, council direct staff to begin work on replacing the December 10, 2021 agreement with a new subdivision agreement that will include any of the outstanding issues within the***

**December 10, 2021 agreement, and Part 18 on the April 26, 2008 reference plan being conveyed to the new property owner.**

At the June 19, 2017, meeting, council received Report PB-10-17 Saugeen Cedar Heights West Subdivision Land Exchange. The report detailed the preliminary cost analysis for the proposed trail as part of the east end loop development and new parking area. The cost analysis detailed that the new trail and parking area could be constructed to achieve a break-even point in exchange for the lands detailed in Report PB-02-17. **Council directed staff to accept the cost analysis and that the proposed subdivision agreement include the confirmed requirements and that staff proceed to have the lands transferred to the overall subdivision plans.**

The lands were transferred in August 2023 at the time of filing the subdivision agreement.

Saugeen Cedar Heights East (SCHE) subdivision agreement was approved by council on June 17, 2019 (by-law 3071-19) and amended July 12, 2021 (by-law 3167-21). **The trail system was extended southward from the existing most easterly point of the trail to connect this subdivision. A new trail section and switchback were constructed by the developer at no cost to the Town.**

Council approved the Saugeen Cedar Heights West (SCHW) subdivision agreement on January 25, 2023 (by-law 3253-73). At that time of approval, **the trail in this area was separated from the subdivision agreement as the trail design was not at stage required for agency review for the approval process for the subdivision.**

As of May 2022, **the trail was closed from the westerly section of SCHW to 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue creating a dead end. This occurred at a similar time as the bridge closures for rehabilitation on our south line. At that time, there was considerable expressed community resident displeasure with the bridge closures and dead ended trail access.**

At the January 25, 2023, meeting council received Report PB-06-23 Ontario Inc Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that **detailed the written terms for the trail development between the Town and the developer. The MOU detailed the developer's agreement to construct the community east end trail and parking area through SCHW for typical trail construction as per the Town's guidelines and should the design required exceeding typical construction, then cost sharing of the increase will be shared between the development and the Town. The MOU documented the \$84,375 developer contribution to construct the trail and parking area. This reflected the cost analysis detailed above and supported by council.** Council subsequently defeated the approved of the MOU.

Since that time, **Town staff have continued to work with the developer who remains committed to fulfilling their commitment to construct a trail and parking area in the SCHW subdivision as part of the east end trail development.**

## **b) East End Trail Development Design**

The following is a summary of the east end trail design milestones:

- Environmental Impact Study completed | November 2023
- Preliminary design completed | August 2022
- SVCA Initial Consultation | October 2023
- Detailed Trail Design completed | July 2024

- Structural Design for Pedestrian Ramps completed | August 2025
- Application for Permit submitted to SVCA | August 2025
- SVCA Approval | September 2025

## 2. Trail Support | Town Legislated Documents and Planning Processes

### a) Hanover Official Plan Bylaw 2858-14

This is a **legislatively required document that guides the development of our Town.**

Key Official Plan content with respect to Trail Development includes:

- Trails are detailed in our Official Plan (OP) (E3.3) including Schedule D Trail Network that includes the proposed east end trail loop.
- Identifies Town **shall** consider potential trail development that could enhance and improve the trail system connectively and linkages withing the Town of Hanover (E3.3.6).
- New subdivisions and other development **shall be designed** with the intent of enhancing trail system connectivity whenever possible.
- East end trail location is within land identified as Hazard (D10 & Schedule A).
- Permitted use in Hazard area is passive recreation (D10.3.1).
- Passive recreation definition includes trail per the Zoning By-law (page 27; see definition under Zoning Bylaw).

### b) Comprehensive Zoning By-law Bylaw 2912-15

This is a **legislatively required document that guides the development of our Town.**

Key Zoning By-law content with respect to Trail Development includes:

- Recreational, Passive definition means **the use of land and / or water for the purpose of passive leisure activity and shall include** a park, a garden, a picnic area and the like, equestrian and **hiking trails**, as well as a play lot with activity equipment for children.
- Hazard permitted use includes passive recreation and accessory structures for trails (ie markers, bridges benches) (24.2).

### c) Hanover Strategic Plan 2023 to 2027

Key Strategic Plan content:

- Based on the citizen questionnaire completed by 457 residents, the following conclusions were determined:
  - Respondents indicated trails and outdoor spaces make Hanover a great place to live (Q1 citizen questionnaire). 62% selected, “outdoor open space, parks, **trails**, and river access” as either their **first, second or third preferred choice.**

- Trails and outdoor spaces are important to households (Q2 citizen questionnaire). The third top response was, “Parks, **trails**, playgrounds & open spaces” with an average score of 4.3 out of 5.’
- Increase and maintain spending on parks and trails was noted as important (Q4 citizen questionnaire).
- Invest tax dollars – 71% selected “Parks, **trails**, playgrounds and open spaces” as either their first, second or third preferred choice. (Q6 citizen questionnaire)

#### **d) Hanover Parks, Recreation and Culture (PRC) Master Plan 2018**

Community engagement including a resident survey and focus groups were part of the PRC Master Plan. The **Master Plan Engagement Report** included the following key notes:

- **Hanover Community Trails System** noted as strength by residents.
- ‘Well managed open spaces, parks, **trails**, recreation and cultural facilities and programs are a **source of pride and focus** in Hanover.’
- Trail connectively identified as need to complete / improve.

#### **PRC Master Plan Action Objectives include:**

1. Healthy Community Objective 1 – System of Experiences: Parks, Recreation and Culture | Over the next 10 years, establish a range of facilities and programs for parks, recreation & culture. The range of programs should reflect the Town’s demographic profile (35% senior, 40% adult and 25% under 25).

Action # 4 within this objective:

#### **Trail System Completion / Active Transportation Network**

##### **Recommendations:**

- Develop a **strategy to complete the Trail Design Plan** that includes all classes of trails and on-road components, over the next 15 years.
  - **Connect multiple destinations to meet the needs of recreational and active trail users and promote healthy lifestyle via active transportation opportunities.**
2. Healthy Community Objective 4 – Cross – Departmental Planning | To achieve the goals of the plan, over the next 15 years, continue and enhance on-going efforts in cross – departmental collaboration.

Action #2 within this objective

#### **Development Planning**

**Recommendation: Work in conjunction with Building, Planning, and Development Services to leverage opportunities to connect trails system.**

3. Healthy Community Objective 6 – Priority Infrastructure & Services | Complete required infrastructure and services over the life of this master plan in an organized, prioritized manner. Complete priority ranking framework in 2018. For 2019 onwards, priority ranking system to be used for capital recommendations.

Action #2 within this objective:

### **Active Parks, Trails & Open Spaces**

#### **Recommendation:**

Develop active park criteria and design guidelines using cross departmental, collaborative process – explore opportunities for:

- **Linking multi-purpose trails and creating an Active Transportation Network**
- **Re-developing / enhancing access nodes along the Saugeen River**
- Updating play value of existing playgrounds
- Converting some playgrounds to adult fitness equipment.

### **e) Community Trails System Design Plan | 1997**

Our Community Trails System Design Plan has successfully guided our trails development since 1997. In the formative years of our trails design implementation (south line, big black bridge and section between Commemorative Grove and current dead end at easterly point), community volunteers provided input, fundraising and physical assistance to ensure the trail came to fruition for the benefit of our entire community.

#### **Key Points**

- **Realize development of quality Community Trails System** for passive and active recreational interests (1.2).
- **Varied benefits of the Saugeen River** and former railway lines are the key foundation for the trails system (1.2).
- **Trail system should be continuous and there should be possibility of loops throughout** (5.2.1).
- **Loops, frequent trail heads / access points and numerous connecting trails provide a multitude of trail use possibilities; allows for almost unlimited number of routes and options for length of trail use** (5.2.2).
- **East End Trail - identified unfortunate possibility of a dead-end; important when area developed to provide for ‘looping back’ of the trail along the existing stream / draining course (zoned as Hazard Land)** (5.2.6).
- **All future residential developments be planned in a way that provides for linkages** through park land and open space **to the Trails System** (5.2.7).
- **East End Streambed (6.8) – identified possible trail path; existing stream bed / hazards land and from this point the trail will follow the stream bed northwestward to Rail Lands Leisure Park; Serves 3 important functions:**
  - **Eliminates dead end;**

- Penetrating residential community south of the trail, **it will make this end of the trail system more accessible and connected to Hanover citizenry;**
- Provide educational opportunities and **increase public awareness of another dimension of the Saugeen River system through interpretation of the stream bed landscape.**

## Discussion

### 3. East End Trail Completion

Hanover's Community Trail System is a community asset that supports active living, contributes to the Town's tourism strategy, and provides opportunities for residents and visitors to experience the natural environment. The trail network is a critical part of the community's active transportation infrastructure by providing connections between neighbourhoods, parks, commercial, businesses and other destinations throughout the community.

As noted, the proposed East End Trail Development represents the opportunity to complete a long-planned extension of the trail system included in both the Town's Official Plan, the PRC Master Plan and the Community Trail System design plan (1997). Completion of this section would extend the existing trail beyond the current termination point near the soccer fields and provide a continuous route that connects trails, roads, and sidewalks. This connection would allow users to travel through the east end of the community and continue toward 24th Avenue and other destinations, improving overall connectivity within the broader trail network. With the potential expansion of our community, the east end trail loop is key to future trail linkages.

### 4. Environmental Considerations

The proposed trail is located adjacent to a creek and treed natural area and falls within a regulated area under the jurisdiction of Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA). For clarification the EIS for the SCHW subdivision is specific to its construction and is not applicable to the trails construction.

Due to the environmental characteristics of the proposed trail location, an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) was completed and **identified specific recommendations and mitigation measures for the trail construction.** The study acknowledges that some tree removal is required and wetland loss within the corridor is unavoidable due to the location of the proposed trail, but the study also identified that locating a trail adjacent to wetland areas can provide opportunities for environmental awareness and education and provided measures are intended to minimize environmental disturbance and maintain the natural characteristics of the area. The mitigation measures include:

- Vegetation / tree removal prior to March 31st and after November 1;
- Minimize vegetation / tree removal; only remove what is necessary;
- Design of pedestrian ramp and included in trails design to protect wetlands areas and address topography;
- Construction practices – includes:
  - the use of silt fencing as a temporary sediment control barrier;

- Storage / staging area are not located within the SCVA Floodplain Boundary
- The design includes the use of rip rap and landscape fabric in trail sections closest to the water to support erosion control and bank stabilization.

The project implementation has continued to move forward as the required approvals have been obtained, including the adopted 2026 Mayoral Budget and a SVCA permit issued to complete the construction.

We are at critical construction start period to ensure that our environmental mitigation as noted above can be achieved. Based on the knowledge that a delegation was coming forward, site preparation work scheduled to start the week of March 9<sup>th</sup> was paused. Should construction prep, not occur prior to the March 31<sup>st</sup> date, the trail construction would be deferred to 2027.

## 5. Public Engagement

Public engagement has occurred at multiple stages of the project including:

- **Jan 9, 2023** | Public meeting was held, where the conceptual version of the project was introduced. An action from this meeting was that town staff committed to a follow up meeting once additional technical work was completed and project approvals obtained.
- **February 25, 2026** | Public Open House held and project information was available and staff were present to provide details, respond to questions, and receive comments from attendees.

Direct resident communication includes:

- Staff have continued to listen to, acknowledge and respond to residents via email, phone and in person.
- Several onsite meetings have been conducted with property owners to discuss site specific concerns related to the project.
- Receiving positive verbal and email comments from residents with respect to support for the trail project.

## 6. Areas of Concern with the Proposed Trail System Extension

Consistent with the concerns detailed in tonight's delegation, residents in the neighbouring properties have noted concerns with respect to:

- trail safety,
- privacy, and
- the proximity of the trail to adjacent residential properties.

To address the specific concerns noted in the delegation presentation, the following mitigation measures are noted:

### a) Destruction of Wetland

- The EIS considers the environmental and natural aspects of the areas and provided recommendations with respect to mitigation.

- Some wetland loss is unavoidable, but mitigation strategies have been incorporated to minimize impacts. Mitigation strategies include (also detailed in 4 above):
  - Vegetation / tree removal prior to March 31<sup>st</sup> and after Nov 1;
  - Minimize vegetation / tree removal; only remove what is necessary and reseed with an appropriate seed mix;
  - Design of pedestrian ramp and included in trails design to protect wetlands areas and address topography;
  - Construction practices – includes:
    - The use of silt fencing as a temporary sediment control barrier;
    - Storage / staging area are not located within the SCVA Floodplain Boundary.
  - The design includes the use of rip rap and landscape fabric in trail sections closest to the water to support erosion control and bank stabilization.
- SVCA is the approval authority for work in a Hazard area. They have reviewed the trail design and construction plan and approved it with consideration for their Regulatory requirements.

#### **b) Fiscal responsibility and use**

- Community trails system development and expansion is included in our legislated Official Plan. The OP states language including ‘**shall consider potential trail development**’ and ‘new subdivisions and other development **shall be designed with the intent of enhancing trail system connectivity.**’
- Our community trails system is a valued asset as noted by our residents in our Strategic Plan and PRC Master Plan. Specifically, our 2023 to 2027 Strategic Plan resident input from 457 survey respondents indicated high support (50% responded to increase spending, 48% responded to maintain spending) for further investment, as well as continued operational funding for outdoor spaces, parks and trails.
- A complete trails system ensures community connectivity and is a benefit to the community as a whole.
- The east end trail construction is funded through developer financial commitment, grant funding and some tax levy support.
- Annual trails maintenance is minimal; projected maintenance costs are \$5,000-\$7,000 per year and includes addressing surface material repairs, bench repairs, etc.

#### **c) Privacy and security of residents**

- We acknowledge and understand this concern.
- Proactively to address prior trails related safety concerns, the Town implemented a Trails Eyes and Ears program in partnership with Hanover Police Service. This program continues and we know that our volunteers are very engaged and there is presence on our trails daily May to October.
- Hanover Police Service bike patrol remains active and hours are dedicated to trails and parks patrol.
- In January 2023, we heard the input of residents in the Barry Subdivision area who attended the public meeting and expressed this concern. At that time we indicated our objective to establish the trail north of the water way. We have achieved that.

- Buffering with vegetation and tree planting will be implemented. We have heard from residents that they want to know the specific locations and types of buffering that will occur. This information will be provided, but we need to realize the trail completion and where the high priority buffering areas are located and select the plantings most appropriate for the area. We will continue to investigate other buffering options and welcome suggestions.

## 7. Options to Proceed

Staff are seeking council’s direction with respect to their preferred option for the project. It is imperative that this decision be made at this time to ensure this project can proceed without further construction delays and financial implications. Most notably is the site preparation and the ordering of the pedestrian ramps.

### Option 1: Proceed with East End Trail Construction as Planned

| Pros   | Cons  | Financial Considerations   |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Work plan is established.</p> <p>Developer is engaged and committed.</p> <p>East end trail loop will be fully completed in 2026.</p> <p>We have followed our council approved and legislative documents including OP, Zoning and various strategic plans noted previously.</p> <p>Prior council approval and direction for the east end trail development and location within SCHW, dating back to subdivision inception with new owner.</p> <p>Ensure our trail system remains a connective asset for our entire community.</p> <p>Mitigation to expressed resident concerns can be implemented.</p> <p>Construction can start immediately to ensure we meet the March 31<sup>st</sup> EIS tree and vegetation requirement.</p> <p>The construction timeline can proceed within the timeframe that minimizes impacts in the construction area.</p> | <p>Discontent expressed from some neighbouring residents in the trail area citing privacy, security, fiscal responsibility and wetland impacts.</p> <p>Buffering required to offset the tree and vegetation.</p> <p>Loss of vegetation; note: in the 3 acre parcel, there is approximately 30 trees with a 6” dbh or more; and some other small sapling and cedars identified to be removed</p> | <p>The project is included in the adopted 2026 Mayoral budget.</p> <p>Developer financial commitment confirmed.</p> <p>Grant funding approved and can meet the Sept. 2026 completion deadline.</p> <p>Supports strategic plan’s resident questionnaire input rating investment in tax dollars in parks and trails as high.</p> |

Note – This space intentionally left blank. Report continues on the next page.

**Option 2: Phased Construction**

- **Phase 1 Completion of the parking lot area and the trail westerly to 22nd Ave.**
- **Phase 2 includes 22nd Ave westerly connecting to the existing trail.**

| Pros  | Cons  | Financial Considerations   |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Work plan is established</p> <p>Developer is engaged and committed</p> <p>East end trail loop will be fully completed by 2027.</p> <p>Experience and establish the success of a trail in this location</p> <p>Provides link to only parking area and access for our trail in the east end.</p> <p>Trail provides safe active transportation route, given there are no sidewalks from 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave easterly to 24<sup>th</sup> Ave.</p> <p>We have followed our council approved and legislative documents including OP, Zoning and various strategic plans noted previously.</p> <p>Prior council approval for east end trail development and location within SCHW, dating back to subdivision inception with new owner.</p> <p>Ensure our trail system remains a connective asset for our entire community.</p> <p>Mitigation to expressed resident concerns can be implemented.</p> <p>It acknowledges expressed resident concerns received and it is an alternative compromise.</p> <p>Phased approach for East end trail construction.</p> <p>Construction can start immediately to ensure we meet the March 31st EIS tree and vegetation requirement.</p> <p>The construction timeline can proceed within the timeframe that minimizes impacts in the construction area.</p> <p>Allows us to establish a trail in phases in a neighbourhood with concerns.</p> | <p>The localized opposition has impacted this direction verses consideration for all community feedback including the positive trail user comments received with respect to the completion of the east end trail route.</p> <p>Anticipated increased construction costs.</p> <p>Delayed trail connectivity.</p> | <p>The project is included in the adopted 2026 Mayoral budget.</p> <p>Developer financial commitment confirmed.</p> <p>Grant funding approved and a portion of the project can meet the Sept. 2026 completion deadline.</p> <p>There is potential for grant reductions due to the scope of project change.</p> <p>Supports strategic plan's resident questionnaire input rating investment in tax dollars in parks and trails as high</p> <p>May increase project costs.</p> |

**Option 3: Trail and Sidewalk**

- **Completion of the parking lot area and the trail westerly 24<sup>th</sup> Ave to 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave.**
- **22<sup>nd</sup> Ave westerly to existing trail would utilize the sidewalk.**

| Pros   | Cons  | Financial Considerations   |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Work plan is established.</p> <p>Developer is engaged and committed</p> <p>East end trail loop will be completed with a compromised approach</p> <p>Experience and establish the success of a trail in this location.</p> <p>Provides link to only parking area and access for our trail in the east end.</p> <p>Trail provides safe active transportation route, given there are no sidewalks from 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave easterly to 24<sup>th</sup> Ave.</p> <p>We have followed our council approved and legislative documents including OP, Zoning and various strategic plans noted previously.</p> <p>Prior council approval for east end trail development and location within SCHW, dating back to subdivision inception with new owner.</p> <p>Ensure our trail system remains a connective asset for our entire community.</p> <p>Mitigation to expressed resident concerns can be achieved.</p> <p>It acknowledges expressed resident concerns and it is an alternative compromise.</p> <p>Construction can start immediately to ensure we meet the March 31st EIS tree and vegetation requirement.</p> <p>The construction timeline can proceed within the timeframe that minimizes impacts in the construction area.</p> | <p>The localized opposition has impacted this direction verses consideration for all community feedback including the positive trail user comments received with respect to the completion of the east end trail route.</p> <p>Sidewalks are intended for pedestrians. Trails promote multi uses such as walking, cycling and snowshoeing.</p> <p>Altering the trail design could reduce the natural experience offered by the wooded area, which is a valued feature for trail users</p> | <p>Forfeit partial grant funding and possible negative implication for future grant applications</p> <p>Portion of developer financial commitment may be forfeited</p> <p>Investment in trail design work is not realized.</p> |

Note – This space intentionally left blank. Report continues on the next page

## Financial Implications

The following is based on our 2026 capital provided at the time of budget. The project includes the parking lot and east end trail construction in SCHW and rehabilitation of the trail from 24<sup>th</sup> Ave. easterly to the access point to SCHE (\$24,000 funded through reserve fund due to prior year capital project approval and subsequent deferral).

|                      |                  |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Total Projected Cost | \$159,500        |
| Funding              |                  |
| Taxes                | \$ 60,000        |
| Grant                | \$ 47,800        |
| Misc Other Revenue   | \$ 27,700        |
| Reserve Fund         | <u>\$ 24,000</u> |
| Total                | \$159,500        |

The developer contribution is being realized through direct preparation and trail construction work which is anticipated to be \$84,375. The finances above reflect a projected \$27,700 from the development commitment. The remaining \$56,675 is the projected direct preparation and trails construction work commitment of the developer.

To date, the Town has incurred \$14,450 in expenditures (EIS, engineering, SVCA permit) related to the project.

## Link to Strategic Plan

This report supports the indicated Strategic Goals and Action Plans of the Town of Hanover.

### **Goal 1: Safe and Reliable Infrastructure**

Build, maintain and continuously improve our municipally owned properties, buildings, and equipment.

### **Goal 2: Healthy and Welcoming Community**

Care for our natural environment and provide an enviable quality of life for everyone who calls Hanover “home”.

### **Goal 3: Strong and Vibrant Economy**

Refresh downtown Hanover and retain and attract local economic investment and jobs.

### **Goal 4: Balanced Growth**

Work together to create a community we can all be proud of.

### **Goal 5: Open and Responsible Government**

Deliver services in a friendly, efficient and effective manner while providing an exceptional working environment for our employees.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sherri Walden  
CAO

Laura Christen  
Director, Parks Recreation & Culture

# Appendix A

# East End Trail Project

