

CASE
STUDY

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THE COLLINGWOOD HARBOUR STORY

*From Shipbuilding Center to Great Lakes Pollution Hot Spot
to Waterfront Revitalization*

The Collingwood Harbour Story: From Shipbuilding Center to Great Lakes Pollution Hot Spot to Waterfront Revitalization

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Situated on Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, the Town of Collingwood became an important shipbuilding center in the late 1800s, first for wooden skiffs and schooners and later for steel cargo and passenger steamers. At one point, 1,000 of the town's less than 5,000 residents were employed at the shipyards. It operated as a shipbuilding center for more than 100 years.

In 1985, the International Joint Commission identified Collingwood Harbour as a Great Lakes Area of Concern because of nuisance algal growth stimulated by excessive phosphorus inputs, habitat and wetland loss, shoreline hardening, and contaminated sediment (Krantzberg and Houghton, 1996). That same year, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment committed to developing and implementing a remedial action plan (RAP) to clean up the harbor and restore all impaired beneficial uses using an ecosystem approach. In 1987, the ministry hired Gail Krantzberg to coordinate this effort and assemble and then work with the Collingwood Harbour RAP Public Advisory Committee (PAC) to foster use of an ecosystem approach to achieve cleanup.

The Town of Collingwood and its stakeholders—including businesses, civic organizations, environmental organizations, and

more—quickly adopted the PAC goal to clean up the harbor and leave a sustainable legacy. RAP efforts:



This postcard shows a view of Collingwood's shipyards circa early 1960s with the freighter *Carol Lake*, built by Collingwood Shipyards, Ltd. in 1960. Courtesy of William Forsythe / Boatnerd.com.

- optimized the local sewage treatment plant with dual alum addition to meet the phosphorus loading targets;
- remediated 257,800 cubic feet (7,300 cubic meters) of contaminated sediment at a cost of \$1.2 million;
- stimulated further action to protect the existing 237-acre (96-hectare) Collingwood Wetland Complex;
- controlled invasive purple loosestrife in wetlands; and
- rehabilitated fish and wildlife habitat in the harbor and watershed, including Black Ash Creek where soil bioengineering was used to both prevent erosion and restore habitat (Krantzberg and Houghton, 1996).

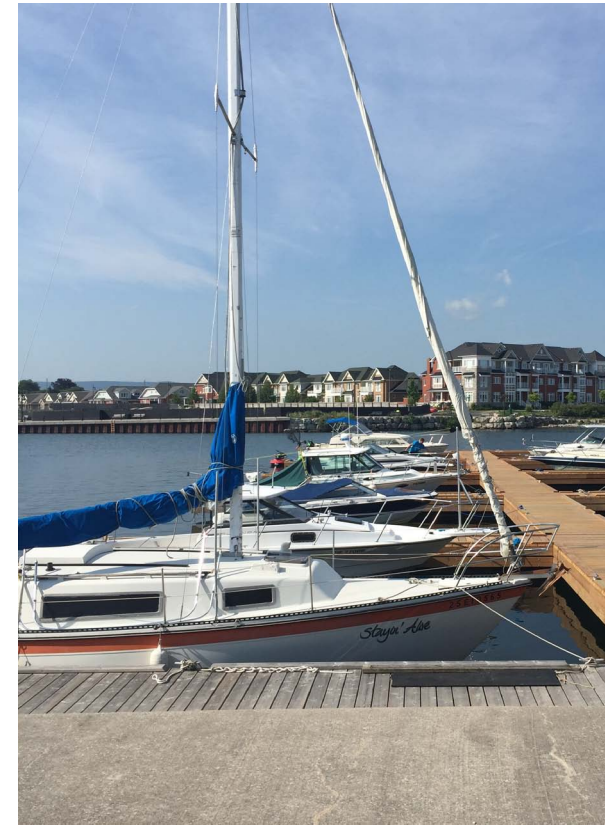
The Collingwood Harbour RAP PAC was incorporated in 1993. A storefront called the Environment Network of Collingwood opened for the Collingwood Harbour RAP to provide a central location for its activities (Krantzberg 2006; Krantzberg and Rich, in press). This also provided residents with an environmental resource library and, most of all, it gave residents and visitors a place to go with environmental questions and concerns. Several years later, the name was changed to the Environment Network. The

network went on to develop a strategic plan called the Greening of Collingwood that championed pollution prevention for residents, businesses, and industries. To this day the network operates as a cooperative, providing people with opportunities for work and a place for people to learn how they can operate their business or home in an ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable manner (Krantzberg and Rich, in press).

Use of democratic dialogue and participatory decisionmaking enabled consensus and local ownership of the RAP and its legacy goal of sustainability (Krantzberg 2006). The Collingwood Harbour RAP became a model for use of an ecosystem approach and delivering environmental results for the community. After monitoring confirmed restoration of all impaired beneficial uses, in 1994 Collingwood Harbour became the first Area of Concern to be delisted, meaning that it was removed from the list of Great Lakes pollution hotspots.

Transformation of Collingwood's Shipyards

The Collingwood shipyards closed in 1986 after a 103-year history as one of Canada's busiest shipbuilding centers. For nearly 20 years, the



Collingwood Harbour today. Credit: Nancy Farrer.

Collingwood shipyards then sat abandoned on the waterfront with an uncertain future. Meanwhile, Collingwood and the vicinity adapted to the loss of the shipyards and became better known as a four-season vacation destination, including skiing in the winter at Blue Mountain and golfing, biking, hiking, and many water

sports in summer. This attracted vacationers from all over the province and beyond.

Finally, in 2004 the former shipyards site was purchased by a developer that wanted to offer waterfront living in downtown Collingwood, close to restaurants, shops, and services. It took years of environmental assessments and remediation, approvals from all levels of government, and building goodwill in Collingwood, but finally The Shipyards development was born as a 40-acre (16.2-hectare) mixed residential-commercial waterfront development. This award-winning waterfront community will ultimately include more than 600 homes in a pedestrian village, with condominium townhouses, bungalows, mid-rise condominium buildings, a hotel, retail shops, and restaurants. The development design also took into consideration the RAP with the creation of underwater reefs to enhance fish habitat. The Shipyards also includes a waterfront promenade accessible to all, a 7-acre (2.8-hectare) waterfront park, a community amphitheater, and hiking trails that will eventually link to the Georgian Trail. Sales started in 2010 and the development is being completed in phases.

It should be noted that the economic downturn of the 2000s led to extension of the



The Shipyards is a European-inspired, waterfront development with more than 600 homes in a pedestrian village located on the site of Collingwood's historical shipyards. Credit: FRAM Building Group.

construction timeline for The Shipyards. Similar to many other developments during this time period, progress on The Shipyards stalled until investor confidence in the local market returned. However, this redevelopment project is now back on track.

Municipal Fiscal Impact Analysis

In the early 2000s, the Town of Collingwood retained C.W. Watson and Associates to undertake a municipal fiscal impact analysis

of the proposed redevelopment of the former Canada Steamship Lines lands in the Town of Collingwood. This fiscal impact analysis was undertaken to help determine the overall financial implications of the redevelopment of the site, considering the proposed development would ultimately require significant investment by both the developer and the Town of Collingwood. Zegarac et al. (1994) provided estimates of costs and benefits of remedial actions in the context of overall municipal spending, showing the value of remedial actions in terms of phosphorus removed. The analysis also showed the benefits of ongoing maintenance of environmental controls.

The methodology involved an operating and capital cost analysis that established 2002 as a base year (based on the tax rate at that time) and estimating annual municipal revenues and expenditures for a ten-year period (Watson and Associates 2004). Based on this fiscal impact analysis, a deficit of \$61,000 was estimated for Year 1, followed by a net positive impact in each subsequent year thereafter (Table 1). A net municipal surplus of \$174,157 was estimated for Year 2, followed by a progressive increase to \$914,484 in Years 5-10. It should be noted that the same forecast of a \$914,484 surplus in each of Years 5-10 is indeed accurate based on this

operating and capital cost analysis. The overall conclusion of this fiscal impact analysis was that it would provide a net positive contribution to the Town of Collingwood (Watson and Associates 2004).

It must be recognized that this analysis was limited in scope to impacts on the municipality. Clearly, there are other spin-off economic benefits, including spending by visitors, residents, employees, and other operations that have not been quantified.

Today, The Shipyards development is part of a larger master plan for the Town of Collingwood. This plan calls for developing the waterfront as

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7	YEAR 8	YEAR 9	YEAR 10
Property Tax Revenue	\$187,974	\$522,761	\$857,547	\$1,192,333	\$1,580,388	\$1,580,388	\$1,580,388	\$1,580,388	\$1,580,388	\$1,580,388
Non-Tax Revenue	\$28,894	\$57,788	\$86,682	\$115,576	\$150,601	\$150,601	\$150,601	\$150,601	\$150,601	\$150,601
Total Revenue	\$216,868	\$580,549	\$944,229	\$1,307,909	\$1,730,989	\$1,730,989	\$1,730,989	\$1,730,989	\$1,730,989	\$1,730,989
Total Expenditures	\$278,199	\$406,393	\$534,593	\$662,790	\$816,505	\$816,505	\$816,505	\$816,505	\$816,505	\$816,505
Surplus (Deficit)	(\$61,331)	\$174,157	\$409,637	\$645,119	\$914,484	\$914,484	\$914,484	\$914,484	\$914,484	\$914,484

Table 1. A summary of the fiscal impact of the proposed development of the former Canada Steamships property (now called The Shipyards) in Collingwood, Ontario (Watson and Associates 2004). Note: Data are presented in 2002 dollars

an urban destination with high-quality public spaces, housing, and mixed-use development, and strengthens connections between downtown and the waterfront, while increasing local commercial activity (Town of Collingwood, 2016). These efforts are building on Collingwood’s existing strengths of natural beauty, a historically significant harbor,

a vibrant commercial downtown, and an active community life.

Concluding Thoughts

The Collingwood Harbour RAP is a success story in its use of a locally designed ecosystem approach to restore impaired beneficial uses and remove

the harbor from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern. Further, the Environmental Network in Collingwood is an excellent example of capacity building for sustainability and of life after delisting as an Area of Concern (Krantzberg and Rich, in press). Community stakeholders continue to be fiercely protective of the town’s excellence in pursuit of sustainability. This is evident in the harbor restoration, brownfield cleanup at the former Collingwood shipyards, and redevelopment into The Shipyards waterfront community. A municipal fiscal impact analysis of the proposed redevelopment of the former shipyards concluded that in five years there would be a net annual surplus of more than \$900,000 to the Town of Collingwood. Even though the development timeline had to be extended due to global economic forces, the redevelopment is clearly proceeding at a good pace again.

“Without the cleanup of Collingwood Harbour in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the revitalization of Collingwood’s waterfront would not have been possible,” notes Nancy Farrer, Director of Planning and Building Services, Town of Collingwood. “Today, our revitalized waterfront is beginning to realize its potential and the social, economic, and environmental benefits are increasing exponentially.”



Aerial view of Collingwood Harbour showing Millennium Park, Collingwood Yacht Club, and The Shipyards. Credit: FRAM Building Group.

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Cover photo of Collingwood Harbour Yacht Club with The Shipyards in the background courtesy of FRAM Building Group.

All monetary amounts are in Canadian dollars.

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The Collingwood Harbour case study is part of a larger project to evaluate achievements and lessons learned from 32 years of efforts to clean up Great Lakes AOCs. Case studies will be used to help sustain support for cleaning up AOCs and to inspire and motivate others to restore other degraded aquatic ecosystems.

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