

CITY OF ORILLIA

TO: Council Committee - March 25, 2019
FROM: Development Services and Engineering Department
DATE: March 19, 2019
REPORT NO: DSE-19-14
SUBJECT: Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Plan Final Report

Recommended Motion

THAT the Downtown Streetscape Improvement Plan entitled Streets for All: Final Streetscape Improvement Master Plan, March 2019, prepared by Stantec's Urban Places and Landscape Architecture, be adopted in principle;

AND THAT the Streets for All: Final Streetscape Improvement Master Plan be used to inform future detailed engineering design projects for road reconstruction within the Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Project area.

Purpose

At its meeting held March 4, 2019, Council adopted the following resolution:

“THAT as recommended in Report DSE-19-12 dated February 19, 2019 from the Development Services and Engineering Department, the draft Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Plan and the draft Streetscape Improvement Master Plan be received;

AND THAT staff refine the character and identity of the proposed streetscape based on the comments received and report back to Council with a final Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Plan.”

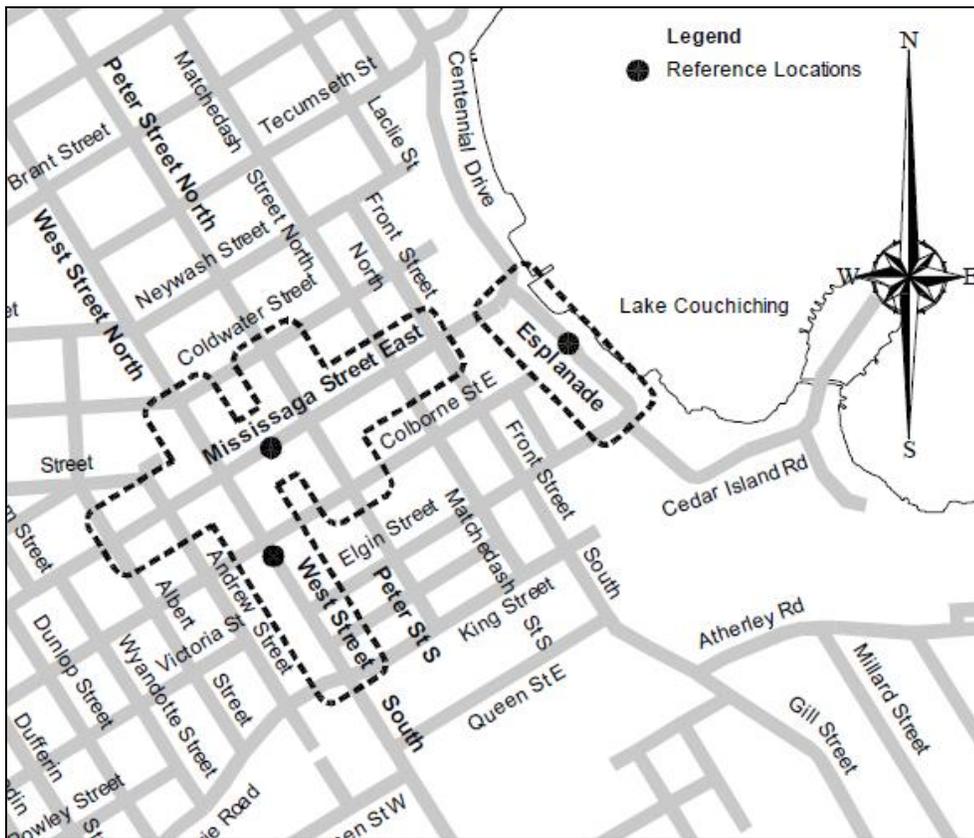
The purpose of this report is to request that Council adopt in principle, the City of Orillia Streetscape Improvement Plan (Streets for All: Final Streetscape Improvement Master Plan, March, 2019).

Background & Key Facts

- The DOSIP was initiated during the 2018 Capital Budget process.
- The streetscape project area includes Mississauga Street between Albert Street South and Front Street North, Peter Street between Coldwater Street and Colborne Street, West Street between Coldwater Street and King Street and the waterfront Esplanade, (also known as Lakeview Avenue) between Mississauga Street East and Elgin Street).

- On May 11, 2018, the Development Services and Engineering Department issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the DOSIP.
- On June 29, 2018, Stantec's Urban Places & Landscape Architecture was awarded the streetscape project.
- An internal project team was established to work with the consultant and consists of staff from the Development Services and Engineering Department's Planning and Engineering Divisions and the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department.
- Additional inter-departmental input has been sought during the design stage of the project and similarly, collaboration with the DOMB continues to be pursued as details of the plan further develop.

Figure 1 – Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Project Area



- The project officially began on July 11, 2018, with an inaugural meeting between the consulting team and the internal project team.
- On July 23, an extensive media campaign was launched which included a project website, media releases, and a social media campaign which provided information on the project initiative and the upcoming information sessions.
- On August 1, the consulting team held five (5) Key Stakeholder Meetings which consisted of small group sessions designed to encourage focused discussion.
- Participants included members of Council, Senior Staff, members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Active Transportation Committee, and the Downtown Orillia Management Board.

- On the evening of August 1, 2018, a Public Information Session and Workshop was held at the Orillia City Centre which provided an opportunity for members of the public to participate in a visioning and brainstorming exercise.
- The Public Information Session and Workshop attracted approximately 75 participants representing a wide range of backgrounds and interests including business owners, property owners, developers, residents etc.
- The consulting team also attended the Waterfront Festival held August 10-12, 2018, and the Annual Downtown Orillia Classic Car Show held August 18, 2018.
- A second Public Information Session and Workshop was held on the evening of January 24, 2019 which attracted approximately 45 participants.
- On January 31, 2019, the consulting team held discussions with staff from the Environmental Services and Operations Department and Development Services and Engineering Department to review and discuss the design concepts in detail.
- On March 4, 2019, Stantec Consulting presented the Draft Streets for All: Final Streetscape Improvement Master Plan at which time Council directed staff to refine the streetscape plan based on comments received and report back to Council with a final Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Plan.

Options & Analysis

Staff present the following option for consideration:

Option 1 - Recommended

THAT the Downtown Streetscape Improvement Plan entitled Streets for All: Final Streetscape Improvement Master Plan, March 2019, prepared by Stantec's Urban Places and Landscape Architecture, be adopted in principle;

AND THAT the Streets for All: Final Streetscape Improvement Master Plan be used to inform future detailed engineering design projects for road reconstruction within the Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Project area.

Furthering the inspirational work undertaken during the reconstruction of Mississaga Street in the late 1970's, the DOSIP has endeavored to create a well-designed, environmentally friendly, fully inclusive and accessible streetscape that will further define the City's downtown as a destination environment and contribute to an increasingly vibrant business community.

Innovative and well designed, the City's downtown streets have served the community well over the past 40 years. However, as with all streetscapes, the passage of time has inevitably led to the requirement of ongoing and increasing maintenance needs. In anticipation of this reality, the DOSIP is envisioned to create a streetscape plan that will inform future detailed engineering design and the reconstruction for the City's main downtown historic streets.

The DOSIP envisions a multi-functional and multi-modal typology for Mississaga Street and key cross streets that will be implemented through future streetscape and public space improvements. Enhanced connectivity between Mississaga Street and the waterfront will

facilitate two-way multi-modal traffic along the corridor, enhance the tourism attraction ability of the City's core, and stimulate new economic opportunities and employment.

As detailed in Report DSE-19-12, the key features of the DOSIP include:

- **A Flexible “Flex” Street Typology.** A flex street essentially eliminates traditional barrier curbs resulting in a relatively consistent grade from the building walls on each side of the street. The removal of traditional curbs will result in a fully accessible, multi-modal, shared streets approach. The travelled portion of the street is also narrowed, reducing the speed of vehicles and providing the opportunity for all modes of transportation to interact symbiotically.
- **Peter Street Arts District.** The prominence of the Peter Street Arts District as the home of artists, galleries and other arts related enterprises is further recognized and enhanced by the DOSIP. Peter Street provides a distinctive and exceptional sense of place that can be further enriched through creative urban design. These innovative design concepts will continue to define Peter Street's role as an artistic gathering place.
- **Laneways and Alleyways.** The downtown's numerous laneways and alleyways provide a unique opportunity to provide enhanced pedestrian connectivity from the numerous parking areas to Mississaga Street, Peter Street and West Street. It is envisioned that the alleyways could be transformed into inviting walkways through improved surface treatments, unique lighting, street furniture, entrance features, security cameras, enhanced way-finding signage, public art, and patios, resulting in the transformation of an underutilized resource into a functional and welcoming feature.
- **Parking.** Although a wide variety of opinions were received with respect to vehicular traffic and parking on the downtown streets, the consulting team has recommended maintaining two-way traffic and on-street parking. On-street parking not only provides convenient proximity to businesses, particularly for those with accessibility issues, but has been demonstrated to have a traffic calming effect, reinforcing the multi-modal objective of the flex street design. The current DOSIP design does not propose the elimination of any on-street parking spaces.
- **Snow Removal.** The flex street design has been reviewed and considered by Environmental Services and Operations staff responsible for maintenance and snow removal of the downtown streets. Operations staff is in favour of the Flex street concept as the design provides additional room to temporarily store snow until it can be removed. The elimination of curbs also reduces obstacles and difficult turning radii that currently present complications to snow plowing efforts. Further, with a widening of the sidewalk and ultimate realignment of boulevard trees, specialized snow removal equipment would no longer be required and standard sidewalk plows and blowers could be utilized.

- **Lakeview Avenue / Esplanade.** Dovetailing with the conceptual work currently underway by the Ainely Group, the consulting team has been careful to integrate their design to ensure consistency. The Stantec design proposes through traffic between Mississaga Street East and Elgin Street and diagonal parking directly adjacent to the park. These elements are separated by a unique landscaping feature creating a safe and pedestrian friendly environment which is directly accessible to the park trail. A unique gateway/water feature is also proposed at the future Colborne Street East intersection which will serve to animate this area of the park and draw pedestrians along the Esplanade.

Financial Impact

The total project area includes 1,820 linear meters of streetscape with the flexible “flex” street design concept employed for 709 meters (approximately 39% of the total project area). The remaining 1,111 meters of the project area would be a standard or more traditional streetscape design.

Informed by streetscape estimates provided by the Stantec consulting team, the flex street design concept represents a premium of approximately 23% due primarily to the potential selection of surface materials (interlocking brick as opposed to asphalt and concrete) and low impact design (LID) silva-cell technology. For example, average standard streetscape costs have been estimated at approximately \$4,600 per linear meter whereas the flex street design has been estimated at approximately \$6,000 per linear meter. It is important to note that final materials selection during detailed design would provide additional budgetary flexibility.

The reconstruction of Mississaga Street and the intersecting cross streets are not contemplated in the 2017-2028 Road Reconstruction capital forecast save and except the West Street corridor which spans from Coldwater Street to King Street. This 566 meter section of West Street is identified for reconstruction in 2024. The West Street corridor section also has Capital Budget approval for detailed engineering design which has been held in abeyance pending the completion of a streetscape concept design and the selection and construction of a new Transit Terminal.

Notwithstanding the West Street corridor area, should Council wish to advance the DOSIP reconstruction project, contemplation would need to be given to the modification of the 10-year capital forecast in order to insert one or more of the project area streets into the reconstruction schedule. A special meeting of Council will be held in the early summer of 2019 at which time discussion could take place in this regard. However, as the streets identified within the DOSIP project area are not currently part of the 10-year capital forecast, the insertion of new projects may require the delay of currently identified projects, the creation of a special reserve contribution, or alternatively, debt-financing the project.

Consultation

A comprehensive and integrated public engagement strategy has been undertaken during the course of the DOSIP project to engage and provide as much information as possible to the community through the developmental stages of this planning exercise. This engagement strategy has been designed to maximize feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders and the public. The engagement strategy included key stakeholder meetings, public information sessions and workshops, social media, pop-up stations at downtown and waterfront events, walking tours with stakeholder groups, press releases and media advisories, and ongoing progress updates to the DOSIP web page.

Comments received include:

Downtown Orillia Management Board

The Downtown Orillia Management Board is pleased to support the proposed Downtown Tomorrow Improvement Streetscape Plan. The DMB passed the following motion of support at its February 19, 2019 meeting:

“THAT the Downtown Orillia Management Board supports the concept proposed in the Downtown Tomorrow Streetscape Improvement Plan as presented;

AND THAT Council allocate money to address critical areas on the sidewalks due to safety concerns in the interim.”

The board supports the concept of flexible streets as it allows for exceptional accessibility and offers the flexibility to change with the needs of the downtown, the different seasons and serve as a community gathering place. The proposed design complements our existing historic infrastructure as well as incorporates the most up to date technology and design theories to ensure a welcoming Downtown core for years to come.

The current streetscape, while worn now, has served us exceptionally well since its installation in the late 70's and early 80's – a testament to the foresight of those involved in the streetscape plan who embraced the most current design trends of the time. The charming streetscape has encouraged businesses to locate and flourish downtown and has served as a community gathering hub; the board believes proposed design will be equally successful in this regards.

The DMB does have concerns in regards to the timeline of the project and the ever deteriorating condition of the sidewalks. We respectfully request that in the interim, Council allocate a budget to address critical areas due to safety such as tripping hazards caused by missing bricks and heaving sidewalks around trees.

Thank you for your continued support of the Downtown and we look forward to seeing this project through to its completion.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

At its meeting held March 4, 2019, the following resolution was adopted:

“THAT the Accessibility Advisory Committee endorses the Streetscapes concept design as presented.”

Active Transportation Committee

At its meeting held March 20, 2019, the following resolution was adopted:

“THAT the deputation by the Senior Planner regarding the proposed Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Plan be received and endorsed as presented;

AND THAT design considerations prioritize pedestrian safety, clear site lines, and reduced speeds.”

Parks, Recreation and Culture

The plans prepared conceptually identify specific improvements to the downtown – those being; introduce a flex street (in identified areas), consistent use of unit pavers thru the roadway and sidewalk zone from building face to building face, preservation of the existing street trees, supplement with new street trees planted using silva-cell technology, greening and generally improving city parking lots and alleyways, and use of boulevard benches, trees, bike racks and bollards to create a sense of identity and to improve the aesthetics and usability/marketability of the downtown. The above are all generally in keeping with typical downtown improvement planning and if followed through to detailed design will result in a significantly improved downtown.

Environmental Services and Operations Department

The flex street design has been reviewed and considered by Environmental Services and Operations staff who are responsible for the maintenance and snow removal of the downtown streets. Operations staff are in favour of the flex street concept as the design provides additional room to temporarily store snow until it can be removed. The elimination of curbs also reduces obstacles and difficult turning radii that currently present complications to snow plowing efforts. Further, with a widening of the sidewalk and ultimate realignment of boulevard trees, specialized snow removal equipment would no longer be required and standard sidewalk plows and blowers could be utilized. However, Operations staff have noted that any boulevard placement of benches, trees, bike racks and bollards will present obstacles and should be carefully considered and minimized to the highest degree possible. It is proposed that seasonal street furniture would be removed during the winter months in order to facilitate snow clearing efforts.

Peter Street Arts Community (working with Kent Guptil & Jacqueline Soczka)

The flex street is good. Having flexibility to close the street off in the summer months for event space is key for growing the district. However, the interlock on Peter Street is expensive and available funds could be used more effectively putting in event infrastructure rather than the interlock proposed. Also, the artists have said that the interlock is not conducive to three dimensional street art and that concrete would be a much better canvas for the promotion of the street as an arts district. There also needs to be adequate event infrastructure, lighting, power, water, and impeded anchors for large tent supports. Elements such as gateway signage, garbage cans and seating should reflect the Arts District theme. Staff should continue to work with the Art in Public Places Committee to incorporate this in their workplans as upgrades are being developed.

Economic Development Impact

The Economic Development Department is supportive of the Streetscape Improvement Plan and the proposed Vision Statement. A strong, cohesive streetscape can increase pedestrian traffic, enhance the visitor experience and create a more vibrant area for the community to work and live.

Development in the downtown core which may complement the streetscape improvement efforts, including pedestrian walkways and alleyway improvements and outdoor gathering spaces may be eligible for grants through the Downtown Tomorrow CIP Grant Program (DTICP).

Communications Plan

Designed to inform and engage, ongoing communications have continued throughout the duration of this DOSIP project. The various means of communication throughout the project have included press releases and advisories, web page updates, and direct email notifications. The concept designs have been made available on the project web page, and have been directly communicated to key stakeholders, workshop attendees and community partners such as the City's various Boards and Committees, the Downtown Orillia Management Board and the Peter Street Arts Community. The project web page will continue to be updated to reflect the current status of the project and will include a copy of the Streets for All: Final Streetscape Improvement Master Plan, March, 2019.

Relation to Formal Plans, City of Orillia Policy Manual and/or Guiding Legislation

The recommendation included in this report is related to the following formal plans, City policies and/or guiding legislation:

- Downtown Tomorrow Plan (DTP)

Section 5 of the DTP identifies seven Goals which are to be achieved by pursuing 33 Strategic Initiatives over the next 20 years. Goal number five (5) is to "Improve Connectivity and Streetscapes". The DTP notes that: "...*the streetscapes of the*

primary east-west streets through the historic core need improvement to beautify Downtown and encourage street life. The excellent waterfront trail system is a well-used part of the Downtown mobility network. More clearly defined and safer connections through the core, particularly for cyclists, will improve access to the waterfront trail as well as destinations throughout Downtown.” (DTP page 73)

Strategic Initiative #18 of DTP includes the Upgrade and Enhancement of Mississaga Street East.

“Mississaga Street has a distinct and generally attractive main street character. The streetscape, however, is showing its age and there is the potential to narrow the roadway and widen the boulevards, at the same time refreshing the paving treatments, maintaining on-street parking and preserving healthy trees. There are also opportunities at corners and where there are gaps in the street wall to add pedestrian amenities, such as benches, planters and signage, as well as improved signage to parking”.

- City of Orillia Official Plan

The City’s Official Plan recognizes Mississaga Street as the City’s “Main Street” and promotes the economic revitalization of Mississaga Street within a context of historic preservation, while at the same time recognizing that adaptive reuse, moderate development and intensification can be accommodated. The Official Plan identifies Mississaga Street as requiring special consideration in terms of the design and treatment of the public realm.

Conclusion

Staff recommend that Council adopt in principle the City of Orillia Streetscape Improvement Plan (Streets for All: Final Streetscape Improvement Master Plan, March, 2019), prepared by Stantec’s Urban Places and Landscape Architecture, be adopted in principle and that the Streets for All: Final Streetscape Improvement Master Plan be used to inform future detailed engineering design projects for road reconstruction etc. within the Downtown Orillia Streetscape Improvement Project Area.

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