



OAKVILLE

REPORT

SPECIAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETING

MEETING DATE: APRIL 10, 2018

FROM: Economic Development Department
DATE: March 16, 2018
SUBJECT: Downtown Mitigation Strategy Update
LOCATION:
WARD: 3

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the report entitled *Downtown Mitigation Strategy Update*, from the Economic Development department, dated March 16, 2018, be received.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Major construction affecting the downtown business commercial district will occur along the Lakeshore Road corridor in two phases from spring 2019 – autumn 2019 and spring 2020 – autumn 2020 (Lakeshore Road Reconstruction and Streetscape Project).
- Staff provided a report to Planning and Development (P&D) Council on March 20, 2017 outlining the Downtown Mitigation Strategy Framework, with a detailed report to be provided to Council in Q1 2018.
- This report includes information about the mitigation initiatives that are planned at the present time. Staff is continuing to explore additional options for mitigation and will be consulting with the downtown business community and other stakeholders in this regard.
- Staff will report to P&D Council in Q4 on final recommended mitigation initiatives and associated costs.

BACKGROUND:

Overview

The Lakeshore Road Reconstruction and Streetscape Project involves a significant financial investment by the Town to improve the appearance and functionality of

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Lakeshore Road. The final outcome will provide benefits to the community and help improve the economic activity in the area. It is recognized that in realizing these benefits, there will be some level of disruption to the businesses in the area during the construction period. The Downtown Mitigation Strategy is being developed to address the business impact of the construction project.

A majority of the engineering design work for the Lakeshore Road Reconstruction and Streetscape Project is completed. The project will be tendered later this year and construction will commence in the early spring of 2019, phased over two years. Each phase is planned to be completed by the autumn season of both years.

The details of the Downtown Mitigation Strategy must align with the design and implementation plans for the reconstruction and as such, are being developed in tandem with that process.

Mitigation Team

Based on the findings and interviews with other jurisdictions that recently completed or were in the process of undertaking commercial district streetscape projects, a staff mitigation team was formed in 2016. The mitigation team includes staff from Economic Development, Engineering and Construction, Planning, Parks and Open Space, Recreation and Culture, and the Downtown Oakville Business Improvement Area.

The mitigation team is responsible for creating and guiding the implementation of the Downtown Mitigation Strategy. The pre-construction responsibilities of the mitigation team include:

- Leading the development of the Downtown Mitigation Strategy
- Creating the final design (Engineering and Construction)
- Establishing a Downtown Project Office at the former Post Office building
- Hiring a Senior Liaison & Communications Advisor (FTE, contract – 3 years) and revising the role of the Marketing and Communications Coordinator (PT)

The Senior Liaison & Communications Advisor (SLCA) will be the lead staff person for the implementation of the Downtown Mitigation Strategy. This staff person commenced her role in January 2018 and responsibilities include:

- Developing relationships in the business district
- Opening the Downtown Project Office
- Managing a consultant for the development of the marketing and communications plans and protocols
- Implementation of the marketing and communications plan
- Establishing a stakeholder committee
- Liaison with stakeholders throughout the construction project

One of the key roles of the SLCA is to serve as the main point person between the community/stakeholders and the town. There are several key stakeholders who will be involved throughout all stages of the project. The following diagram outlines the stakeholders and the two-way communication that will exist between them and the SLCA.

Figure 1 – Key Stakeholders



The SLCA will be stationed at the Downtown Project Office, once the office has opened. It is expected that construction on the Project Office will be completed in May, 2018.

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During the 2019/2020 construction periods, the mitigation team will shift into a guiding role, providing support and communication to the SLCA as well as implementing some of the recommended strategies.

Achievements to date

To date, there have been numerous initiatives undertaken that benefit the downtown commercial district, including the following:

- ✓ Lakeshore Road bridge reconstruction completed
- ✓ Pedestrian crossover at Navy St. and Church St. completed
- ✓ Two-way conversion of Navy St. completed
- ✓ Street furniture finalized
- ✓ Final public consultation on design including virtual reality simulation of finished streetscape
- ✓ Heritage Oakville permit approved
- ✓ BIA boundary expansion process completed
- ✓ Harbour master plan initiated
- ✓ Application to Fed Dev Ontario submitted for renovation to the former Post Office for innovation space
- ✓ Senior Liaison & Communications Advisor position hired
- ✓ Marketing RFP issued and firm hired to undertake the Marketing and Communications Strategy
- ✓ Interviews with external stakeholders
- ✓ Ongoing patio pilot project
- ✓ 20-minute parking spaces on Lakeshore created
- ✓ Christmas overnight parking pilot implemented
- ✓ Honk Mobile parking app launched
- ✓ Perspective Magazine publication highlighting the upcoming work along Lakeshore Road as Creating Canada's best downtown in Oakville - distributed through the Globe and Mail.

There are additional works planned for 2018 that will contribute to the improvements in Downtown Oakville:

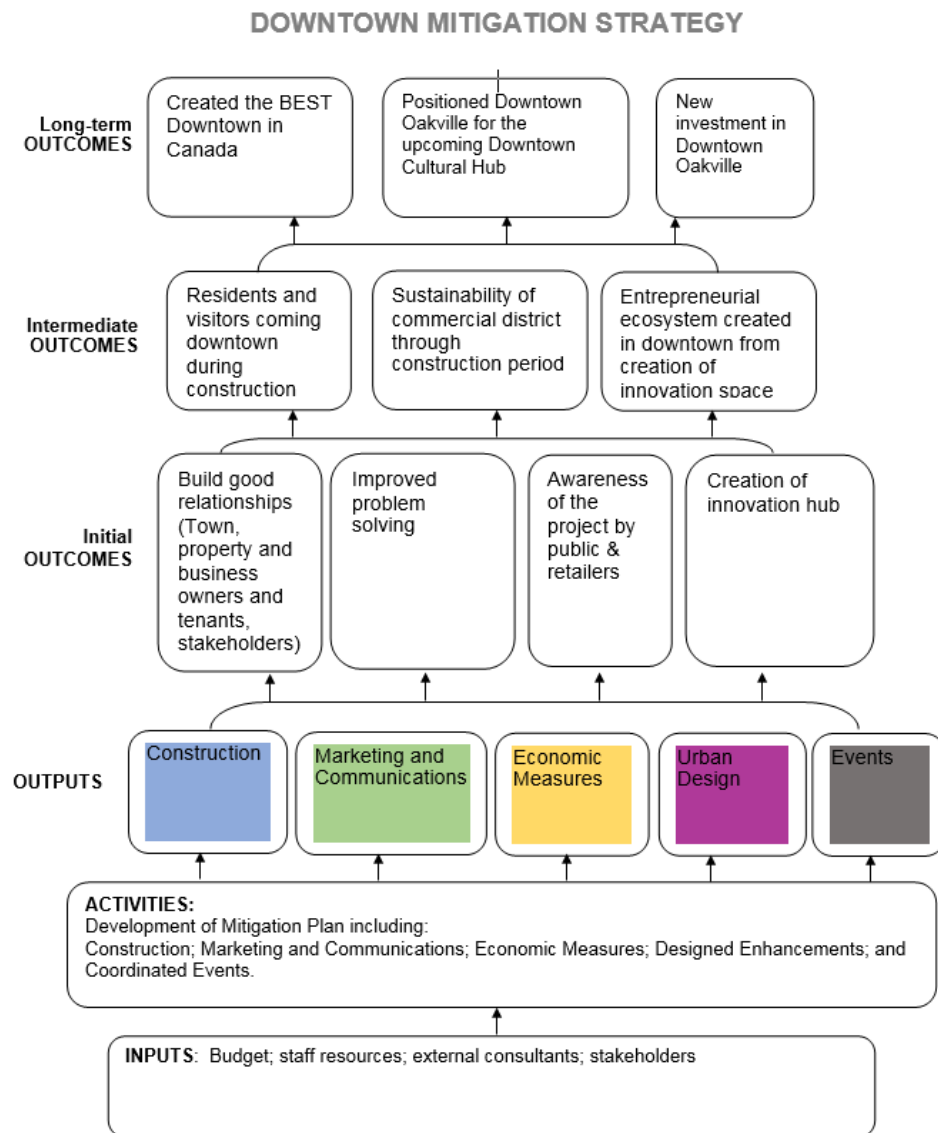
- ✓ Finalization of the streetscape design
- ✓ Two-way street conversion, including resurfacing of selected roads north of Lakeshore, west of Trafalgar
- ✓ Further development of the wayfinding initiative
- ✓ Ongoing patio pilot project
- ✓ Opening of the Downtown Project Office
- ✓ Public consultation on Towne Square
- ✓ Finalization of Urban Design guidelines for Downtown
- ✓ Consultation with stakeholders on the mitigation options
- ✓ Completion of marketing and communications plans

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Downtown Mitigation Strategy Goals

The Downtown Mitigation Strategy has several goals/outcomes over the short, medium and long-terms. Figure 2 outlines, at a high level, the inputs and activities that will go into the Downtown Mitigation Strategy in order to achieve the goal of creating the best Downtown in Canada.

Figure 2 – Downtown Mitigation Inputs Outcomes



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Mitigation Initiatives

The 2017 report on the Downtown Mitigation Strategy Framework identified four main categories that were to form the framework for the downtown mitigation strategy: construction, communications, marketing and economic. The detailed components in each category were to be developed and reported back to Council.

Through the process of developing the Downtown Mitigation Strategy, the framework has been realigned into the following five categories: Construction; Marketing and Communications; Urban Design; Events; and Economic Measures. These categories are detailed below.

1) Construction

Details of the Lakeshore Road Streetscape and Reconstruction Project are contained in a separate report to P&D Council. Mitigation initiatives related to this project are detailed below.

Pre-Qualification of Prospective Contractors and Construction Tender

In order to provide a higher degree of quality for this project, staff will implement a pre-qualification process to ensure that only contractors meeting certain requirements will be permitted to submit tenders for this project. The pre-qualification process will commence in the late summer/early fall of 2018, and a call for tenders will follow later in the fall. It is expected that a contract will be awarded to the successful contractor by January 2019.

Construction Phasing

Construction will begin in the early spring of 2019 and include two phases over a two-year period, Phase one will commence in March/April of 2019 and be completed by mid-November of that year. The second and final phase will commence in March/April of 2020 and be completed by mid-November of 2020. The phased approach will help to provide some relief to businesses during the construction period, particularly during key points in time such as the Christmas shopping period.

Faster Project Completion

In order to minimize the construction timeline, prospective bidders will be advised that extended hours of operations (e.g. daylight hours) Monday through Saturday will be permitted. This will require an exemption of the Town's Noise by-law during the warmer months as daylight hours would go beyond the time threshold (6:00 p.m). In addition, due to the nature of some of the businesses, certain construction operations may have to proceed later in the evening or overnight (e.g. water and wastewater service disconnections/reconnections). The Board of the Downtown BIA supports efforts to reduce the timeframe for construction including extended hours of construction.

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Pedestrian and Vehicle Access

During construction, deliveries to businesses will be coordinated via the side streets, with the implementation of commercial loading zones which will be completed in 2018 when the balance of one-way streets in the downtown core are converted to two-way operation.

Pedestrian activity to the various shops along Lakeshore will be maintained. There will be times when pedestrian access may be restricted (e.g. during the removal of the existing concrete sidewalks or the forming of the new sidewalks directly in front of a store entrance). These restrictions will be minimized to the greatest extent possible and will be communicated/coordinated with the respective merchants in advance.

Temporary Signage and Wayfinding

Regulations will require the contractor to place construction related signage outside, at and within the limits of the project (e.g. road closure, etc.). In addition, detour signs will be provided around the work site to enable traffic to bypass the work zone safely. Wayfinding signs advising pedestrians about which businesses are located within the work zone will be provided at each block at the intersecting side streets.

Maintenance of the Work Site

The construction contract will include specifications requiring the contractor to keep, to the highest extent possible, a clean and organized work site throughout the course of the project. Noise will be kept to minimum where possible; however, work of this nature will generate high levels of noise at times.

The successful contractor will be required to use high quality construction fencing to separate/delineate pedestrians from the work area, and provide temporary walking surfaces during specific work operations.

Downtown Project Office/Issues Management

In 2018, the town will open a Downtown Project Office at the former Post Office building on Church St. The SLCA as well as a part-time marketing and communications staff member will be based out of this office. The Town will also have a project management and contractor team presence at the Project Office during the construction phases. An opening event is currently in the planning stages with an objective to build community awareness of the project.

The Project Office will be open to the public and will serve as a project information office for the community. Staff will be available to answer questions and provide information about the project. Regular community stakeholder liaison meetings will also be held at the Project Office throughout the course of the construction phases. The community and stakeholders (e.g. BIA, local councillors, local residents'

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association representatives, etc.) will receive regular project updates during these meetings, and issues that may develop during the course of the project can be addressed.

As previously noted in Figure 1, the SLCA will serve as the main point person between the key stakeholders (including property and business owners, tenants and area residents) and the town. Construction on the Downtown Project Office is in progress is expected to be completed in May, 2018.

Smart City Technologies

The engineering design for the project is planning for various smart city technologies to be implemented as part of the construction phases and part of a future initiative.

Examples of smart city technologies include:

- Public WiFi
- USB charging stations
- Electric vehicle charging stations (on-street)
- Traffic and pedestrian counting devices
- Digital way-finding/information kiosks
- Parking sensors and electronic parking information boards
- Solar powered self-compacting trash bins with cellular messaging (at high trash locations)
- Hydro smart grid technologies

Towne Square

As part of first phase of the Lakeshore Road Streetscape and Reconstruction Project, Towne Square is planned to be rehabilitated. There was some initial public consultation undertaken in 2014/2015 as part of the Downtown Transportation and Streetscape Study - a preferred concept/option for Towne Square was not finalized during that process. Parks and Open Space has retained a landscape consulting firm to renew public consultation on modifications to Towne Square. It is expected that public consultation will occur in late March through the end of June. Detail design is expected to be completed in time for the tendering of the Lakeshore Road Streetscape and Reconstruction Project. The final design concept for Towne Square is expected to be presented to P&D Council at its meeting on July 9, 2018.

2) Marketing and Communications

Marketing and communications will be an integral component of the overall Downtown Mitigation Strategy. In Q4 2017, the town issued a Request for Proposals to secure the services of a consulting firm specializing in the area of marketing and communications. The work includes the development of a three-year marketing and communication plan that aligns with the Mitigation Strategy. A firm was selected in early 2018 and is expected to complete the plan in Q2 2018.

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The marketing and communication plan and subsequent implementation will:

- Build awareness, gain support and educate stakeholders about the Lakeshore Road Reconstruction and Streetscape project;
- Encourage the various stakeholders to be part of the change with a focus on the project outcome;
- Address concerns that may be raised by the businesses about the impact on their operations;
- Communicate logistics for people navigating the construction zone;
- Encourage people to dine, shop and explore the downtown – before, during and after construction; and
- Disseminate the message that “Oakville is Building the Best Downtown in Canada”

The plan will identify the shared marketing roles for the town and the BIA and identify the requisite tools and tactics to be developed for the implementation of the communication and marketing plan, as well as evaluation methods to measure the success of the overall plan.

The marketing and communications plan is to be completed by the end of Q2 2018. Implementation of the plan will be led by the Senior Liaison & Communications Advisor, and supported by the part-time marketing and communications coordinator.

3) Urban Design

Grouped under this theme are several initiatives that can result in immediate positive impacts prior to and during the construction period, along with longer-term investments and activities that have the potential to leave a legacy throughout the downtown. These initiatives are intended to enhance the appearance and the functionality of the downtown’s overall public realm, including the boulevard, urban squares and other public spaces.

Patios and outdoor merchandising displays

The current pilot program will be extended through the pre-construction and construction phases to permit for boulevard/parking lane patios and outdoor merchandising. Continuing the program while construction is underway will be assessed on a block-by-block basis to mitigate any construction interruptions, ensure user comfort, and minimize financial inputs for operators.

In 2018, staff will continue to assess and permit requests for patio and outdoor display spaces, whether for a returning program participant or new applicant. Also this year, staff will develop a fulsome patio and outdoor display program (complete with standards, design guidelines, application process and associated fees) that will consider the following scenarios:

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- Permanent seasonal patios and displays on the new Lakeshore Road boulevards
- Permanent seasonal patios and displays on boulevards and temporary seasonal patios in parking spaces on other streets within the downtown (also applicable to Kerr Village and Bronte Village BIAs)

Wayfinding signage and elements

Concurrent with Lakeshore Road Streetscape and Reconstruction Project and the Downtown Mitigation Strategy, staff have been developing a wayfinding strategy to understand and respond to the navigational needs of residents, visitors and business patrons coming to downtown.

Prior to construction commencing in 2019, wayfinding elements and signs may be needed during the conversion of the one-way streets to two-way routes. In addition, there is an opportunity to continue on-site engagement and to test mocked-up signs to get feedback in 2018.

During the construction phases, temporary wayfinding elements and signs will be installed to provide for predictable and safe movement of residents, patrons, employees and visitors around the downtown. Permanent major wayfinding elements are to be installed prior to finalizing each construction phase in order to minimize any disturbances to the new streetscape surface treatments.

After construction has been completed in late 2020, wayfinding element and signs, whether temporary or permanent, will be installed throughout the remainder of the district to provide information and directions for movement to and through the downtown.

To date, the project team has identified the key destinations, decision points and general locations for three wayfinding information pillars (frontage along Towne Square, the south-east corner of Centennial Square, and near the intersection of Lakeshore and Trafalgar Roads). The exact locations for these primary and secondary wayfinding elements will be confirmed upon the completion of the detail streetscape design drawings, once additional public and stakeholder consultation has been completed, and as the design parameters for signage and elements advances.

A separate detailed staff report *Wayfinding Initiative for Downtown Oakville* is being presented to P&D Council.

4) Events

The majority of events hosted in the Downtown BIA catchment area are programmed by the Downtown Oakville BIA. Consultation with the BIA and their Board of Directors has indicated their desire to hold as many events as possible in 2019 and 2020. One possible exception to the BIA's existing line up for community events is that the Songs of Summer festival may be put on hiatus during the construction period.

Activities and events that align with and celebrate key milestones of the streetscape project will be held. It is intended that these events will be identified and explored during the preparation of the communication and marketing plans as ways to support the project messages and to invite patrons and the public to come downtown through the construction period.

A primary consideration that will guide the BIA's ability to host and the town's ability to issue permits for all existing and any new events in the downtown during 2019-2020 will be the status of construction in the downtown and any foreseen impact on event logistics. In addition, the town's ability to support events will be determined by the resources available to the Events Service at the time. Events support sustainability will be the subject of a future report to Council.

Staff will work with the BIA to plan for revised event plans as the construction timeline and footprints are confirmed. Staff will work with all event organizers who host events in the downtown to determine if the event is able to take place in the downtown area, or if it is necessary or desirable from the organizer's perspective to relocate the event to another location in the downtown area or otherwise.

It is anticipated that the Santa Claus Parade will be able to continue in the downtown with no interruption as construction is planned to end by mid-November each year.

The appropriateness and the ability of the town to produce both existing and new events in downtown Oakville during construction will be determined through the Events Support Sustainability report.

5) Economic Measures

The economic measures outlined below relate specifically to the businesses in the downtown commercial district. The BIA has indicated that its membership would like to have 'free parking' implemented during the construction period and/or taxes reduced as way to minimize the impact of construction on their businesses.

Parking

Staff is exploring various ways to make parking more convenient for visitors to the downtown commercial district. An example is the creation of new (temporary and permanent) parking spaces to offset those spaces impacted by the construction. Another example is the use of new technologies such as HONK mobile to assist in finding and paying for parking.

Property Taxes and Levies

Staff investigated the Town's ability to rescind property taxes for the land owners along Lakeshore Road during the construction period. It was determined that there is no legislation to provide for an exemption on the assessments (the basis for taxation) as it relates to these properties. In addition, Section 106(2)(d) of the Municipal Act prohibits a municipality from giving a total or partial exemption from any levy, charge or fee. Therefore, this mitigation option will not be explored any further.

Oakville Innovation Hub

A plan for a technology-based innovation hub has been developed for the former post office site on Church Street. An application for federal funding has been submitted for the fit-up costs of the building. If the funding application is successful, it is anticipated that the innovation hub will open in 2019, injecting new life into the vacant building and spurring economic activity during the streetscape construction period.

Other Economic Measures

Staff is exploring other economic measures to assist the businesses in addressing the disruption to the normal operating environment downtown. Consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders during Q2-Q3, 2018 to understand their priorities for mitigation.

Other Considerations – BIA Mitigation Initiatives

The Executive Director of the Downtown BIA has been consulted regarding the proposed Downtown Mitigation Strategy. The five elements of the strategy will also have BIA involvement in varying degrees. For example, the marketing & communications plan currently being developed will be integrated with the BIA marketing and communication initiatives so that resources and execution are both consistent and complementary. There are town, third party and BIA events that require on-going coordination and planning during the construction period.

The feedback from consultation with stakeholders regarding the Mitigation Strategy will be shared with the BIA; this may assist in their consideration of their own initiatives for mitigation.

Next Steps

The SLCA will undertake consultations with stakeholders in order to obtain their input regarding mitigation initiatives and to determine their prioritization of same. Consultations will be undertaken in Q2-Q3, 2018. They will include meetings with property owners, tenants and other stakeholders.

Staff will investigate the costs associated with additional mitigation options. This information, coupled with input from stakeholders regarding their mitigation priorities, will help shape the final recommendations which will be provided in a report to P&D Council in Q4 2018.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

While there are many stakeholders associated with the Mitigation Strategy, the ones most impacted are the owners and tenants in the Downtown BIA. Notification of the Mitigation Strategy Update report will be provided at the Annual General Meeting of the BIA and through the above-noted consultation process.

(B) FINANCIAL

This report does not have any financial implications. Recommendations for additional mitigation options and their associated costs will be outlined in a future report to P&D Council.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

The work identified in this report will be undertaken by existing staff through the approved operating budget.

(D) CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to:

- enhance our economic environment
- provide outstanding service to our residents and businesses

(E) COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

The Mitigation Strategy for Downtown Oakville will help to address the economic environment in the downtown commercial district which will be impacted by the Lakeshore Road Streetscape Project.

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