



TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: PEDESTRIANIZATION OF DUNLOP STREET BETWEEN MULCASTER STREET AND CLAPPERTON STREET – AUGUST PILOT PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

WARD: 2

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: S. SCHLICHTER, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT, EXT. 5036

SUBMITTED BY: S. SCHLICHTER, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: A. MILLER, RPP, GENERAL MANAGER, INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That further to motion 20-G-085 approved by Council on June 1st, 2020, the findings provided in Staff Report ECD0009-20 related to the work of the Downtown Business Improvement Association (BIA) concerning the pedestrianizing concept and the BIA business plan on marketing and promoting the recommended outcomes, be received.
2. That staff in the Economic and Creative Development Department, Operations and Communications Departments together with the BIA’s existing working group comprised of BIA staff and board members develop a “Downtown Pedestrianization Pilot Program” and that affected City Departments, downtown businesses and emergency services be consulted as required.
3. That should City staff and the BIA working group develop a “Downtown Pedestrianization Pilot Program” that could be implemented in August 2020, City staff be authorized to execute the associated road closures and communications with the approval of the CAO and Executive Management Team.
4. That should a Pilot Program proceed, the City of Barrie contribute up to 50% of costs, to a maximum of \$10,000 to support road closure logistics and additional clean-up to be funded from the Community Benefit Reserve.
5. That staff in the Economic and Creative Development Department report back to General Committee on the outcome of the Pilot Program, in concept, or if executed, in partnership with the BIA by October, 2020 together with any associated recommendations for future pedestrianization programming of Dunlop Street.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

6. The purpose of this Staff Report is to report back on Council motion 20-G-085 approved on June 1st, 2020, regarding the Dunlop Street road closure between Mulcaster Street and Clapperton Street as follows:

“That pending this review, staff in Economic and Creative Development Department report back to General Committee on June 22, 2020 to provide details concerning the findings of the BIA business survey concerning the pedestrianizing concept and the BIA business plan on marketing and promoting the recommended outcome.”

7. Specifically, the report will confirm the BIA's interest in partnering with the City to develop a pilot program for pedestrianizing Dunlop Street, and the creation of a working group to develop the framework and execution strategy. The delivery of a pilot in 2020 will be contingent on market conditions, resourcing and the support of the BIA based on the business climate.

Background - Pedestrianization Concept

8. The concept of pedestrianizing Dunlop Street has generated community wide interest among businesses and residents alike for many years.
9. As part of the feedback received from the COVID-19 economic recovery plan consultation process, pedestrianizing Dunlop Street was identified as generally a positive initiative for the downtown core.
10. With the new Dunlop Street streetscape construction project expected to be complete through to Clapperton Street in mid-July 2020, and with the Province of Ontario's plans to continue to ease COVID-19 restrictions on business closures, the BIA and the City reviewed the pedestrianization concept in response to consultation feedback.
11. In order to be responsive to the community and determine Council's position, staff presented report ECD008-20 proposing to pedestrianize Dunlop Street between Mulcaster Street and Clapperton Street, pending BIA's final support of the concept.
12. BIA staff surveyed their membership in late May 2020 to gather input on conducting a pedestrianization pilot from June 15th to August 15th, 2020. The results of the survey revealed that 60% of retailers were in favour of a short-term Dunlop Street closure, while 40% were against it.
13. In the BIA membership survey, impacted storefronts identified significant concerns that a full-time street closure would negatively impact their businesses.
14. As a result of survey feedback, consultation with their membership and their Board, the BIA has proposed and endorsed the development of a pilot program that would be a hybrid model for pedestrianization. It is attached to 'Appendix A'
15. The majority of the BIA Board of Directors were in favour of considering a hybrid model of pedestrianization, and they have proposed the creation of a working group to develop the framework and execution strategy for a 'Downtown Pedestrianization Pilot Program'.
16. The BIA recognized the need for more information related to marketing and promotion of the pedestrianization program and provided commitments to strategically place promotional signage to draw visitors downtown and advertising through print, radio and social media channels that would comprise the components of the marketing plan, once a pilot project has been confirmed. The BIA has provided a concept marketing plan, attached in Appendix 'B'.

ANALYSIS

17. Street pedestrianization has been adopted as a best practice among numerous cities in North America and Europe, both in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and as a critical tool in generating foot and bicycle traffic that drives business to local shop owners.
18. With the completion of the construction and streetscaping in mid-July on the section of Dunlop Street east side of Five Points, this area of downtown will have an entirely new look and visitor experience. A pedestrianization pilot and robust street activation and marketing plan, provides a unique opportunity to attract the community to the downtown to showcase the new and improved elements of the street and for them to engage with retailers for a one-of-a-kind downtown shopping experience.
19. The BIA is supportive of the concept, and will need additional time to work with impacted businesses to address their concerns. In addition, requirements and considerations associated with Provincial Orders regarding physical distancing and other health measures will need to be assessed on an ongoing basis to ensure conditions are conducive for pedestrianizing portions of Dunlop Street.
20. The delivery of a pilot in 2020 will be contingent on market conditions, resourcing and the support of the BIA based on the business climate and the outcomes of the working groups concept planning and findings.
21. Creating a working group comprised of the Downtown BIA Executive Director, members and board as well as relevant City departments (Economic and Creative Development, Operations, and Communications) and consultation with other key stakeholders, will allow for centralized planning, decision making and communications with impacted businesses, BIA members and the public to ensure an effective implementation and logistics plan for the closure of Dunlop Street as a pilot program for August.
22. The Downtown BIA will be the project lead and would be responsible for managing the execution of the pilot, including responsibility for executing the road closures, with input, and potential road closure supplies provided by City Operations. The Downtown BIA would work on a street activation program partnering with the Barrie Farmer's Market to drive traffic to Dunlop Street, which would offer a streetscape similar to Promenade Days where shop owners could extend their store frontage out into the street. They will also seek to garner feedback through pedestrian surveys throughout the pilot program.
23. The City would provide marketing and communications support including strategically placed promotional signage to draw visitors downtown, and advertising through print, radio and social media channels. Economic and Creative Development would provide support in alignment with their mandate related to economic recovery and supporting the downtown and the BIA would look to survey pedestrians throughout the pilot date.
24. As part of the logistics plan, the Working Group will also work to establish messaging for pedestrians and businesses to ensure physical distancing measures are maintained. The Working Group will consult with municipal By-Law Enforcement staff as part of this strategy, in order to minimize strain on their resources, as By-law Enforcement will be unable to provide a full-time presence in the Downtown during the closure period.
25. This pilot program may provide an opportunity to link to other City and BIA initiatives including improved connectivity with the Lakeshore Bike Trail as an urban bike trail, in addition to leveraging the Emerging Musicians Program for a livelier experience, etc.

26. The BIA has asked for the City's partnership in providing some of the amenities associated with the pilot program including matching fiscal support at 50% with the BIA up to \$10,000. This will provide the necessary support with physically closing the street, additional street cleaning support, messaging and potential security required overnight.
27. Should it be determined to be not feasible or prudent to deliver a pilot program in 2020, developing a concept program for a Dunlop Street pedestrianization pilot project would lay the groundwork for recommendations for 2021 and beyond.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

28. There are no environmental matters related to the recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES

29. The following alternatives are available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1

General Committee could decide to not to approve the concept development of a Dunlop Street Pedestrianization Pilot Program

This alternative is not recommended as the BIA has developed a proposed working group concept with support of the City to address, market conditions, activation opportunities and concerns associated with temporarily closing Dunlop Street from Mulcaster Street to Clapperton Street.

Developing a concept pilot program will provide the opportunity to address community support with pedestrianizing Dunlop Street, in addition to assessing the impacts to businesses in the downtown. Outcomes of vetting out the concept in greater depth and detail, will lay the groundwork for 2021 programming and beyond.

FINANCIAL

30. The BIA has asked for the City's partnership in providing some of the amenities associated with the pilot program, should it proceed in 2020. Matching fiscal support at 50% with the BIA up to \$10,000 will provide the necessary support with obtaining the appropriate equipment to physically close the street, additional street cleaning support, and potential security required overnight.
31. A portion of the fiscal contribution may be allocated internally to the Operations Department for internal staffing costs that may associated with providing equipment and street cleaning.
32. As the pilot project was borne from the consultation process related to the Economic Recovery Action Plan, funding would be allocated from the Community Benefit Reserve.

LINKAGE TO 2018-2022 COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

33. The recommendation(s) included in this Staff Report support the following goals identified in the 2018 - 2022 Strategic Plan:



Growing Our Economy

- a) Making it easier to do business.

Building Strong Neighbourhoods

- a) Create great public spaces.

APPENDIX "A"- Draft Pedestrianization Pilot Proposal

June 16th, 2020
Prepared by Kelly McKenna

Downtown Barrie Business Association (BIA)
Pedestrianization Pilot Proposal



BACKGROUND:

There has always been community wide interest in the idea of pedestrianizing Dunlop St. and with the new Dunlop St. Streetscape investments into Downtown Barrie and COVID 19 social distancing rules; the idea was raised again by the community to Downtown retailers and the City of Barrie.

The Downtown Barrie BIA was contacted by the City of Barrie to reach out to our membership to gain their input regarding pedestrianizing Dunlop St. East anytime between June 15th - August 15th. Staff began surveying the membership on May 21st and followed up with personalized emails and interviews to the retailers who would be directly affected. A **60% Yes** and **40% No** were the results of the membership survey. The personal outreach to retailers raised serious challenges regarding pedestrianization for the BIA to consider:

- Construction is still happening on Dunlop St.
- Deliveries of supplies
- Customer accessibility
- Activation of space
- Timing ~ Downtown Retailers have been struck hard by construction and now COVID 19. They would like more time to prepare for the new normal before embarking on a new street project.

It is important to note the construction project on Dunlop St. E is due to be completed by July 15th whilst the Streetscape construction project will continue on Five-Points and Dunlop St. W until November 2020.

After consultation with the Downtown Barrie BIA Board of Directors, all are in favor of considering a hybrid model of pedestrianization Dunlop St. E for 2020. The Downtown Barrie BIA, Executive Director's recommendation to the Board is that we **pause** putting a definite date (i.e. Saturdays in August) for the rollout of a pilot project until we can convene a working group with the intent of putting together a framework for the implementation. Developments from this working group will give us a better understanding of the budget and resources needed. More importantly, the working group can help identify the realistic timelines needed to deliver a **successful pilot pedestrianization**.

Possible 2020 dates to be considered by the working group will include later in the summer, fall or even a winter pedestrianization pilot. The working group will determine the timelines for success.

HYBRID MODEL FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD

1) Summer Pilot Concept Overview

- The initial Pedestrianization Pilot of Dunlop St. E. to take place only *once the construction is complete and the Province relaxes social distancing regulations.*
- Dunlop St. E from Mulcaster to Clapperton would be closed.
- BIA staff would survey visitors and its membership during this initial pilot to see if there is an appetite to continue and/or need to modify the pilot.
- Pedestrianization will be similar to Promenade Days allowing for retailers, restaurants and bars to use the full extent of the new Streetscape.
- Partner with the Barrie Farmers Market on promoting the Downtown Barrie. The Farmer's Market draws hundreds of people every week. The BIA would install signage at the market to help draw people to Dunlop St.
- The Downtown Barrie BIA will look into installing bike racks at the Meridian Place.
- Downtown Barrie BIA would activate Meridian Place with music, flowers and kiosks for hand sanitizer and masks.
- The City of Barrie would install and secure 10 tables and 40 chairs in Meridian Place.
- The BIA and the City of Barrie would partner on the cleaning crew.

REASONING:

A pilot project in 2020 will provide visitors a unique opportunity to visit the new Downtown Barrie Streetscape. Good weather and activation of the space are major factors to the success of pedestrianizing Dunlop St. A hybrid model should be considered, rather than a continuous closure, in order to respond to many of the concerns raised by the membership.

APPENDIX 'B'
Draft BIA Marketing Plan

High Level Marketing Strategy (for consideration only)

Marketing goals	Inviting the greater Barrie Community to come Downtown and enjoy their newly completed Dunlop St. E Streetscape, shop at the Farmers Market or listen to music overlooking Lake Simcoe at Meridian Place.
Marketing initiatives	CTV Barrie commercial campaign to capture visuals of the new Dunlop St. Streetscape, Meridian Place and the connectivity of Downtown Barrie to Lake Simcoe. Budget: \$10,000+ Video: 1-3 months in advance of launch CTV Campaign - 1-3 months in advance of launch Social Media Campaign & Contest Long-term City of Barrie parking campaign to build new parking habits and educate visitors on the multitude of parking options in our Downtown.
Target market	Families enjoy the waterfront connection via bicycle where there is a place to park and grab some frozen yogurt & bike tuneups. Senior citizens walk through Downtown Barrie and enjoy sitting on patios and/or enjoying Meridian Place. Young Professionals pick up their fruit and vegetables at the Barrie Farmers Market and then scroll down Dunlop St. for cheese, homewares and something new to wear.
Market analysis	Considerations for success: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emergency Services Access• Barrie Police Pedestrianizing Safety Plan• Compliance with Ontario's Accessibility Standards, COVID 19 Reopening Stage• Construction Completion• Creation of working group to develop rollout strategy including, but not limited to, the BIA, City of Barrie & Barrie, Farmers Market on communications and roll out strategy
SWOT analysis	Strengths: Community wide interest. A hybrid model of pedestrianizing helps address retailers challenges with a more permanent model. The pilot helps create more space for people to social distance; ultimately allowing for more people Downtown Barrie. Weaknesses: Timing & preparedness of retailers to reopen in a Stage 1 COVID 19 environment. Perception: there is no parking available Downtown Barrie. Opportunities: Rebrand Downtown Barrie as the safe, family friendly place where you can enjoy shops, restaurants, events at Meridian Place with a view of the Lake, MaLaren Art Centre and the City of Barrie Library all within the downtown core. Threats: Allowance of crowd sizes in Stage 1 of COVID 19 reopening. Ability to activate space with limited financial resources and services. Contingent on Safety Plan, Accessibility Plan, Construction Delays
