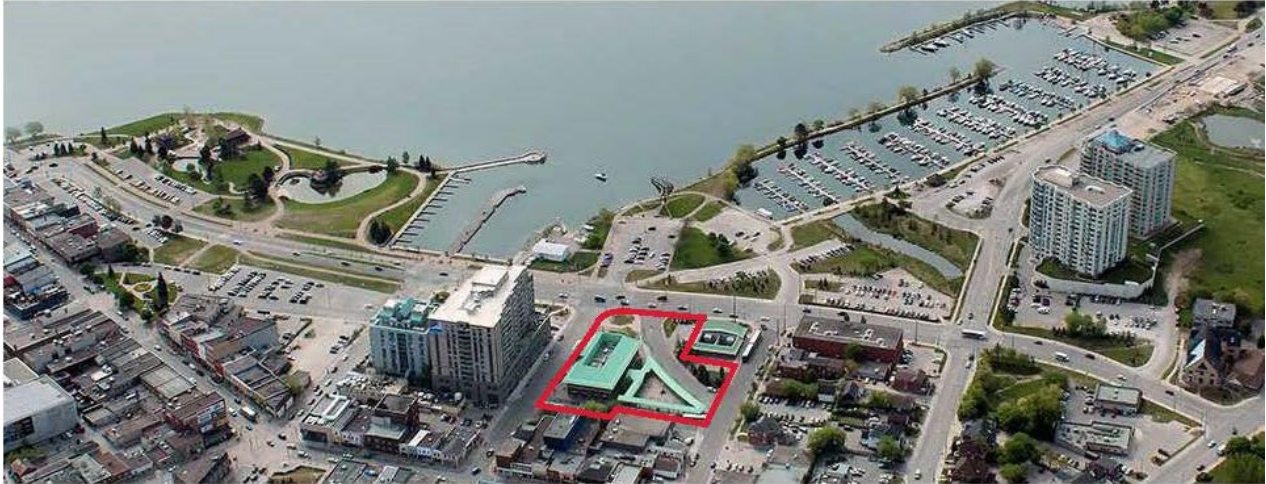




February 2022

Market Precinct Task Force Final Report



Aerial view of the Barrie waterfront including the Barrie Transit Terminal. Credit - DS Digital Media

The Concept

The Barrie Bayside Market District will be centered around two buildings. The current transit terminal on Maple Avenue will be converted to a permanent market building with vendors offering goods six or seven days per week. A new farmers' market building on the site will be home to the weekly farmers' market currently at Barrie City Hall, featuring vendors both indoors and outside. When not used by the farmers market, the building will be open to other groups and uses. Other buildings can be added to the area over time. The area surrounding the permanent market and the farmers' market will draw complementary businesses, including restaurants and artisans.

What is a permanent market? The 2020 Fotenn Planning + Design report commissioned by the city described it this way: "A permanent market is a space where buyers and sellers can convene for the sale of goods at all times of the day, week and year. Most often, permanent markets are located indoors, with ancillary outdoor space, to be able to function during all types of weather. A permanent market can host a range of different vendor types, such as food and drink, arts, or clothing. St. Lawrence Market in Toronto and the ByWard Market in Ottawa are successful examples of market precincts that are built around a centrally located, permanent market building."

Developing a permanent market in the site of the current transit terminal on Maple Avenue, along with building a new farmers' market building in the same location, is a unique opportunity for the City of Barrie. It will accomplish several things at once. It will help revitalize the west end of the downtown, not only because it will draw people to the market buildings themselves but because merchants and restaurants will be attracted to the surrounding area. It will provide farmers and craft people in Barrie and Simcoe County with a place to sell directly to our customers. It will provide those living in the city's core with another place to buy fresh groceries. It will encourage people to live in the city's core – look at the type of developments you see around Toronto's St. Lawrence Market where the market is a selling point for surrounding condos. It will be a place for local people to gather and connect. It will be a place for tourists to visit, take photos and talk about to their friends back home. As that Fotenn Planning + Design report says, the aim is to create "a Market Precinct in Downtown Barrie that celebrates local cultural, creative and community enterprises, while enhancing opportunities for economic development and downtown renewal."

The location of the Barrie market district is perfect. It is located next to the waterfront, which is a natural draw for both residents and tourists, and makes it fairly unique in the province. It is centred in an area which will see thousands of new people within a 15-minute walk within the next 10 to 20 years, people who will form the backbone of the daily visitors to the market. There are more than 4,000 units approved or in the approval process in the city centre and there will undoubtedly be more in the coming years. The market site is half a block away from Dunlop Street, Barrie's main downtown commercial street, to which it will be connected not only by Maple and Mary streets but by a new store-lined arcade in the middle of the adjoining Debut condos, which also features commercial uses on all sides. As Open Air Dunlop continues to evolve, there is a natural link to the market district. There is a great fit with The Sandbox and the Small Business Centre on the second floor of the current transit terminal since the market area will serve as an incubator for food-and-craft-based businesses. The market will be just a couple of blocks from the proposed new performing arts centre and the market district itself will spill into the neighbourhood immediately adjacent to the centre over time. Meridian Square, with its ability to host entertainment and gatherings, is just two blocks away and there are opportunities to link the market and Meridian not only by Dunlop but by a new waterfront corridor along Simcoe Street. We envision people not just visiting the market and going home; those people will be encouraged to visit our waterfront or stroll through the rest of our downtown to see what it has to offer.

The Committee

On March 22, 2021, Barrie City Council approved a motion to create the Market Precinct Task Force. It noted a council priority is the revitalization of the west end of Downtown Barrie and charged the task force with the task of coming up with a plan for investments in the economy and in public spaces in the west end of Downtown Barrie.

The Market Precinct Task Force was chaired by Deputy Mayor Barry Ward. The original task force consisted of:

Ward 2 Coun. Keenan Aylwin

Ward 9 Coun. Sergio Morales, who is also the chair of Downtown Barrie

Tom Ambeau of Gel Marketing

Christy Bremer of C2 Design

Craig Busch of Busch Systems and The Sandbox

Eric Carter of the Barrie Farmers Market

Jon Grootveld of the Barrie Farmers Market

Linda Loftus, realtor

Mike Madden of the Barrie Farmers Market

Kelly McKenna of Downtown Barrie

Carol-Ann Ryan of the Barrie Public Art Committee

Richard Tremblay, financial adviser

Sarah Jensen and Hannah Bregman joined the task force soon after its creation. Artist Marlene Hilton-Moore replaced Carol-Ann Ryan and Kristen Eatch of Downtown Barrie replaced Kelly McKenna.

Staff support included Stephannie Schlichter, the city's director of economic and creative development, Michelle Banfield, the city's director of development services, Anna Sajecki, the city's supervisor of growth management, and Emma Sharpe, a communications advisor with the city, along with Nina Brancaccio and Lauren Wilde from the mayor's office. There were also many subcommittee member recruited by the subcommittee chairs.

The entire task force met 10 times between May, 2021 and January, 2022. There was also a walking tour of the market area and numerous subcommittee meetings. The subcommittees were:

- Buildings
- Boundaries
- Farmers' Market
- Funding
- Parking
- Public Art
- Streetscape and Public Spaces

The subcommittees were asked to prepare recommendations for certain area which were then discussed by the task force. All subcommittee reports are attached as appendices.

The Survey

The task force did a survey to determine what people thought about the idea of a permanent market in the current transit terminal and a market district generally. The survey was open for about a month, ending Nov. 21, 2021. Most were completed online although board members also surveyed market patrons and downtown visitors in person.

In those few short weeks, we received 2,124 responses, which are summarized in the appendices. Not all the comments were positive but the overwhelming majority of them were. More than 1,000 people went beyond just answering a, b, c or d. They took the time to write in their comments about what they wanted to see and what they remembered best from public markets they had visited around the world. There were comments on markets not only across Canada but in the United States, Europe, Africa and the Far East. There was a space at the end of the questionnaire for additional comments and more than 500 people took the further chance to respond.

We constantly saw people use terms like "the vibe," "unique," "fun," "diversity" and "international" when describing what they liked in other markets or what they wanted to see in a Barrie market. Atmosphere was very important. People talked about the sights and sounds of a market and a surprising number referred to the smells they associated with their favour markets. Someone wrote that, after visiting a market in another place, "You left with a good feeling about the city you were in." That could be Barrie in a few years. The importance of local vendors was stressed time and time again. There were also frequent references to a market being a place to meet and chat with friends. As one person wrote, the market should give people in the area "the ability of eat, shop and socialize."

Here are few specifics:

When asked what they wanted to see at the market, food was the most common response: fruit and vegetables (95%), pastries and baked goods (87%), meat and dairy (68%) and take-out meals (66%). Flowers (58%) and crafts (55%) also scored highly.

Asked what they also wanted to see, food trucks (77%) were the most commonly mentioned item, followed by musical performances (72%), craft-making (68%) and public art (64%).

Many people suggested there be a meeting space and such things as cooking classes.

Special seasonal markets were frequently mentioned, especially a Christmas market.

Local vendors and local products were considered very important. Many survey respondents talked about establishing a personal connection with the vendors. Many people also mentioned how the market should reflect Barrie.

People did not want to see a “flea market.”

Vehicle parking was important. Almost 72 per cent of survey respondents said they drove to the current Barrie Farmers Market. On a sliding scale of 1-5, with 1 being “not very” and 5 being “very,” 50% said nearby vehicle parking was a 5, almost 20 per cent said a 4 and about 18 per cent said a 3. About 8% said parking was “not very” important.

Hours of operation were important. Many respondents said they would like to go to the current farmers’ market but were tied up Saturday mornings. More than half of respondents said they would visit a permanent market in the morning or afternoon while less than 30 per cent said they would visit it in the evening. Almost 74 per cent said they would be most likely to visit on a Saturday followed by 56 per cent saying they would do so on a Sunday and 53 per cent on Thursday or Friday.

Security and safety were mentioned by many survey respondents with people saying they wouldn’t visit a market if they didn’t feel safe.

About half of respondents said they would visit a permanent market at least once a week while 80 per cent said they would visit a few times per month. By contrast, about 12 per cent of respondents said they visited the Barrie Farmers Market weekly and just under 40 per cent visited at least once per month.

Asked if they would be more likely to live in the area if there were a permanent market, 60 per cent said “yes.”

The survey respondents were fairly equally spread throughout Barrie with the largest number (just under 23%) living in north or northwest Barrie followed by 21 per cent who lived in southeast Barrie. About 8.5 per cent of respondents lived outside Barrie, almost all of them in the surrounding four municipalities.

History of the Permanent Market Concept

The idea of turning the Barrie Transit Terminal into a permanent market has been around for at least a decade. On June 24, 2013, Councillors Lynn Strachan and Barry Ward introduced this motion at General Committee: “That staff in the facilities and transit department be directed to provide a report to General Committee on the steps necessary to having a feasibility study prepared on converting the bus terminal to a market building, including possible funding sources for the study.”

That was approved by both General Committee and Barrie City Council. On Dec. 16, 2013, Council passed Motion 13—G-323, Downtown Market Feasibility Study. The motion authorized staff to conduct a feasibility study for a self-sustainable year-round market in the downtown.

The Market Feasibility Study for a Public Market in Downtown Barrie was prepared by the Resource Management Consulting Group and released in February 2015. It identified four recommendations for determining its feasibility: 1. The market be a collaborative partnership 2. The market be authentic 3. The market be based on a concept that brings together food, community and culture, and 4. The market be in a permanent location with both indoor and outdoor spaces.

On June 8, 2015, Council passed Motion 15-G-131 accepting the feasibility study report on a year round public market. Two months later, in August, the Downtown Market Steering/Working Group was formed and the consulting team of Three Sixty Collective was subsequently retained, in March 2016, to undertake the Downtown Barrie Permanent Market Business Plan. That plan, released in October 2016, recommended a Market Precinct Layout for the transit terminal site that included the renovation of the transit terminal to house the year round market vendors and a second building to be built that would house the farmers' market on Saturdays with the option of additional days/hours, plus a commercial kitchen and daily/weekly programmed events. It also presented a vision statement: "The Downtown Barrie Market partnership will create an authentic all-season experience within an acceptable and flexible gathering space that attracts, fosters and complements all of our local and regional communities."

On January 30th, 2017, Council passed Motion 17-G-020, receiving the Three Sixty Collection plan as a guiding document in the development of a year-round market and authorizing staff to conduct a Conceptualization Study to complete a financial and technical validation of the Downtown Barrie Permanent Public Market Business Plan conducted by Three Sixty Collective. LETT Architects was contracted to do the study after an RFP was issued in April, 2017. On December 11, 2017, Staff Report FCT006-17 was presented to General Committee which provided LETT Architects' Conceptualization Study of the financial and technical aspects of the Downtown Barrie Permanent Public Market Business Plan. Of the four options provided, Option C – transit relocation -- was presented as Staff's recommended option and accepted by city council. This option involved a phasing approach. In Phase One, a new Barrie Transit terminal facility was to be constructed at a location determined by the Transit Study(since determined to be Allandale). Following the relocation of Transit, Phase Two would begin which includes the renovation of the existing Barrie Transit terminal building to the Permanent Market Building and the new construction of the Farmer's Market Pavilion Building.

On December 18, 2017, Motion 17-G-325 was approved which outlined additional information and options to be provided to General Committee to reduce the overall project budget for both the market and new transit hub by \$2M and \$4M

Staff Report FCT004-18 on June 11, 2018 followed this up by recommending ways to save \$2M to \$4M total on both projects.

On December 14, 2022, Barrie City Council approved Staff Report DEV040-20 which included a Barrie Market Precinct Initial Site Analysis and Considerations report prepared by Fotenn Planning and Design. It recommended approval in principle of the transformation of the transit terminal to a permanent market and outlined the next steps to bring this about, including the preparation of a business case for a permanent market and a precinct plan.

Finally, on March 22, 2021, Barrie City Council approved a motion to create the Market Precinct Task Force.

Finances

The 2016 report from the Three Sixty Collective estimated the capital cost to be between \$5.6M to \$6.5M, including a 7,500-square-foot farmers market building but not including any site preparation costs because the condition of the soils were unknown. The 2017 Lett Architects report estimated the cost of the permanent market renovations and the 7,500-square-foot farmers' market construction, using 2018 figures, to be \$8,985,640 while also offering \$700,000 in possible cost reductions. This estimate included site preparation costs, along with "soft costs" such as marketing and tenant inducements. It should be noted the task force is recommending a 10,000-square-foot farmers market building. The city's 2018 capital plan included \$6.8 million in design and construction costs for the market. The Market Precinct Task Force is not providing any further estimate of the capital costs for the initial phase but its funding subcommittee does estimate a total cost of \$29M to \$32M over 13 to 15 years for the permanent market, farmers' market and three or four additional buildings in the area, plus additional facilities such as a skating trail and artisans village. There would also be a cost associated with providing Barrie Police Services with a new downtown home.

Operating costs were estimated in the Three Sixty Collective report to range from \$324,500 to \$709,500, depending on the number of employees, the extent of activities, whether the market paid property taxes, whether costs, such as security, were paid by the market or the city, and other factors. The Three Sixty Collective estimated revenues at between \$324,000 and \$405,000, indicating the market could operate on a break-even basis or possibly a loss which would have to be covered by the city. The Lett Architects report did not include an estimate of operating costs. The Market Precinct Task Force's funding subcommittee estimates operating costs to be about \$550,000 annually and that the market could operate on a break-even basis.

Timeline

Construction cannot begin until the transit terminal is relocated to Allandale, likely no sooner than April/May 2023. Planning for the Barrie Bayside Market Area could begin by mid-2022, once a contract position was filled or a consultant was hired. Lett Architect's Conceptualization Study estimated the design and construction time, through a design build, would take about 16 months, meaning the market would not open until sometime in 2024.

