

Staff Report

Report To: City Council
Report From: Chris Webb, Manager of Engineering Services
Meeting Date: June 25, 2018
Report Code: OP-18-032
Subject: Municipal Class Environmental Assessment: Downtown River Precinct Master Plan and Farmers' Market Schedule 'B' EA Process - Recommendation of Preferred Alternatives

Recommendations:

That in consideration of Staff Report OP-18-032 and the presentation by City Staff and GM BluePlan Engineering respecting the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment for the Downtown River Precinct Master Plan and the Farmers' Market Schedule 'B' EA, City Council approve the Recommended Preferred Solutions, as follows:

1. Master Plan: One-way pairs on 1st Avenue East and 1st Avenue West between 8th Street and 10th Street in a clockwise direction. More specifically:
 - a. Maintain 1st Avenue West (800 Block) as one-way northbound;
 - b. Convert 1st Avenue West (900 Block) to one-way northbound;
 - c. Maintain 1st Avenue East (900 Block) as one-way southbound;
and
 - d. Convert 1st Avenue East (800 Block) to one-way southbound.
2. Schedule 'B' EA: Re-locate the 800 Block of 1st Avenue East from the west side of the Farmers' Market building to the east side.

Strategic Initiative:

Objective 1: Retain and grow existing local businesses and business opportunities.

Action 1.4 Implement the Downtown River Precinct Plan

Background:

Northwood Associates Landscape Architects were retained in August 2012 to prepare a conceptual and schematic design plan for the Downtown River Precinct employing an urban design approach.

The project goals were:

- To improve the character and perception of the project area;
- To make it an inviting and inclusive public space, strengthening the image and identity of the downtown; and
- To embrace and highlight the natural environment of the Sydenham River.

At its meeting January 28, 2013, Council approved the following resolution:

That City Council hereby approves, in principle, the Downtown River Precinct conceptual and schematic plan prepared by Northwood Associates Landscape Architects, and further;

THAT the plan be considered an addendum to the City's Downtown and Harbour Master Plan, and further,

THAT implementation of the plan be referred to the Community Planning and Heritage Advisory Committee.

It is important to keep the project goals in mind as well as the Master Plan framework. In 2000, the City approved a master plan framework for the entire downtown area of the City. This master plan study and the execution of the phases completed to date (the "Big Dig") have set a positive direction and climate for redevelopment in the downtown. The plan states: '*Communities prosper when places are livable and people enjoy being there*'.

One of the key master plan strategies is to "*strengthen the image and identity of Owen Sound's Harbour and Downtown*". This includes a phased implementation of improvements to the physical environment based on clear master plan design criteria and a new approach to marketing to build on and reinforce downtown themes.

In 2016, the City retained GM Blue Plan Engineering to initiate a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) Process to move the project forward. This EA includes:

1. Downtown River Precinct Master Plan: One way traffic flow northbound along 1st Avenue West and southbound along 1st Avenue East, between 8th Street and 10th Street. This is a Schedule A+ activity under the Municipal Class EA. It is considered a pre-approved activity subject to public notification.
2. Farmers' Market Schedule 'B' EA: Realignment of 1st Avenue East from the west side to the east side of the market building. This is subject to a 30-day Public Review Period and includes a provision for a Part II Order request.

The EA process was based on information from other studies including, but not limited to, the Master Plan Framework (Northwoods & Associates), Archaeological Assessment (ASI), and a Traffic Impact Study (WSP/MMM Group). All of this information, as well as the public input, were important in formulating *Recommended Preferred Solutions* for consideration by Council. Functional Design Drawings were developed to better inform the process.

A Public Information Centre (PIC) and meeting was held September 28, 2017 at Temporary City Hall. There was a follow up meeting on March 13, 2018 at the Harmony Centre where the public input that had been received was reviewed in detail with responses to the various issues and comments that had been identified. Following the presentation, staff were available to discuss and obtain comments at display boards. Although the opportunity for public comment remained open until April 3, 2018, public comment has continued to be encouraged and considered since that time.

City staff and the consulting team have also met one on one with a variety of individuals and businesses to respond to site specific issues and City staff also attended the DIA Annual General Meeting on March 27, 2018 to respond to questions pertaining to the plan.

At the meeting on June 25, 2018, staff will make a presentation that reviews the responses to the various public input.

The following are the recommendations of City staff and the GM Blue Plan Engineering Consulting team:

Downtown River Precinct Master Plan

Recommend one-way pairs on 1st Avenue East and 1st Avenue West between 8th Street and 10th Street in a clockwise direction.

Under the Master Plan, this recommendation is a Schedule “A” activity in the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process and, as such, is considered “pre-approved”. The proponent (the City) may proceed without appeal after providing a public notice that it plans to proceed with this change.

Farmers’ Market Schedule ‘B’ EA

The *Recommended Preferred Solution* is to realign the 1st Avenue East roadway in the south segment of the 800 Block from the west side of the Farmers’ Market Building to the east side.

This is a Schedule ‘B’ EA activity and, once the Council has identified the ‘Preferred Solution’, the City is required to make the Project File available for public review during a 30 calendar day review period. A Notice of Completion is submitted to review agencies and the public at that time. If concerns are raised during the 30-day review period that cannot be resolved with the City, then a request for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to issue a Part II Order for the project can be made. This could require the City to fulfill additional public consultation and/or conditions of approval to satisfy any identified concerns.

Financial/Budget Implications:

The project will require a phased approach to implementation.

The OCIF funds can be used to fund the project.

The implementation will be addressed at the time of budget 2019.

Communication Strategy:

The Municipal Class EA has a required defined public notice provision. The City has met and far exceeded the requirement for communication with the Public Information Centre, follow-up public meetings and presentations, one-on-one meetings, email responses and analysis of public input. A webpage dedicated to the project including all the background information, reports and presentations has been an important part of ensuring the public has full information on the project.

Consultation:

City Manager, Director of Public Works and Engineering, Director of Community Services and GM Blue Plan Engineering staff.

Attachments:

Prepared By: Chris Webb Signature on File

Supported by: Pamela Coulter Signature on File

Submitted By: Wayne Ritchie Signature on File