SUBJECT: State of the Business Improvement Areas (BIAs)

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Department of City Building

Report Number: PB-05-18
Wards Affected: 1 and 2
File Numbers: 560-08
Date to Committee: February 26, 2018
Date to Council: March 19, 2018

Recommendation:

Receive and file department of city building report PB-05-18 providing an update on the state of the business improvement areas.

Purpose:

This report is the eighth in a series of annual reports since the inception of Core Commitment, and third report since Council’s approval of the downtown performance measures. Its purpose is twofold: to provide an overview of the prior year’s highlights and to assess the current state of the downtown.

Additionally, the purpose of this report is to present Council with an overview of the highlights and state of the Aldershot BIA; and to discuss the need to establish a set of performance indicators in order to better assess and monitor the health of the Aldershot BIA.

This report aligns with the objectives set out in Burlington’s Strategic Plan 2015-2040, particularly with respect to strategic direction 1: A City that Grows; and subsection 1.1e, which states: “small businesses contribute to the creation of complete neighbourhoods where residents are close to goods and services.”

Background and Discussion:

Traditionally staff has brought forward an annual state of the downtown report, providing an accounting of the accomplishments, challenges, and key metrics (indicators) of
downtown health. As in previous state of the downtown reports, this year’s report provides an update on the status of the Core Commitment initiatives. Unlike past reports, this year’s report includes a look at goings-on in the Aldershot BIA (West Burlington) along Plains Road. The intent is to broaden the conversation and look closer at the overall health of both Business Improvement Areas (BIA) within the city limits.

This report will act in some respects as a comparison of the City’s two business improvement areas, although it is not intended to be one. Each area is unique and presented with very different challenges and opportunities.

1. THE DOWNTOWN BIA

On November 4, 2013, Council approved the revised and updated Core Commitment, which established a new vision for the downtown together with a set of guiding principles and a new set of recommended actions. With respect to the latter, Core Commitment includes a number of strategic initiatives intended to support and strengthen the downtown. The original Core Commitment was adopted and approved in May 2005.

Core Commitment is referenced in the City’s Strategic Plan 2015-2040 as the strategic action plan for the downtown. It is set out in the City’s Strategic Plan that the recommendations of Core Commitment will be put in place for the downtown, and extend, where possible, to other urban centres.

1.1. Core Commitment Initiatives

Core Commitment includes an implementation strategy and a series of strategic initiatives, approved in principle by Council, subject to budget approval. The table attached as Appendix "A" provides a review and status update on these initiatives.

1.1.1. Initiatives Completed

With the exception of the downtown employment strategy, all of the short-term initiatives have been completed.

1.1.2. Other Initiatives Underway

The following is an update on other initiatives identified in Core Commitment, as well as several downtown projects, which are currently underway.

- Burlington Beach Regional Waterfront Park Master Plan: Phase 1 was completed in spring 2017 and included an upgraded gazebo, concrete walkway, pedestrian lighting and benches, and tree and perennial plantings. Phase 2 commenced in 2017 and will
be implemented throughout 2018, work includes improvements along the waterfront promenade.

- **The ‘Elgin Promenade’:**
  Identified in Core Commitment as a strategic initiative to enhance pedestrian connections, this multi-use path capitalizes on the existing TransNorthern Pipeline Inc. and regional trunk sanitary sewer easements that run east-west through the downtown. The path will extend the Centennial Multi-Use Trail, which ends at Martha Street, to the heart of the downtown at Brant Street. Phase 1, from Pearl Street to Elizabeth Street, which included the rehabilitation of the surface parking lot (Municipal Parking Lot #1), was completed in spring 2017. Phases 2 and 3 are currently under construction and are planned for completion by spring 2018. The fourth and final phase is identified in the Capital Budget and Forecast for construction in 2019. Additionally, the work being completed through the Downtown Mobility Hub Planning (see Section 1.1.3. below) proposes to extend the multi-use trail to the hydro corridor adjacent to Brock Avenue.

- **Pop-up Patio Pilot:**
  Through report PB-20-17, staff recommended continuation of the pop-up patio pilot program and formalization of an application approval process. This year saw the successful addition of a second patio location on Brant Street. Staff will be reporting out on the 2017 season in Q1 of 2018.

- **Animating Civic Square:**

  Table tennis continued in Civic Square during the summer months of 2017. Paddles and a ping pong ball were made available to the general public for free from the information desk inside City Hall. Hours of operation were from Monday to Friday (9am - 4pm). This initiative saw a noticeable uptick in participation with the addition of a sign next to the sidewalk along Brant Street advertising the free activity.

  With the success of this initiative, a cross-section of city staff took Civic Square animation to the next level by repainting the existing tables and affixing board games to top of several tables.
pieces were made available to the general public for free from the information desk inside City Hall. Hours of operation were from Monday to Friday (9am - 4pm).

- **Streetscape Design Guidelines:**

  The existing streetscape design guidelines adopted in the early 1980s are outdated. A cross-departmental team including Capital Works, City Building, Roads, Parks and Forestry, and Transportation Services are rethinking the city’s approach to street design, including new guidelines for wider sidewalks, street furniture, urban trees and lighting. Through alignment with current and planned city-initiatives, this staff team will be developing a set of new design guidelines to administer throughout the downtown over the next 20 plus years. Stakeholder and public involvement has been and will continue to be integral to the project and will help inform the new standards. These standards will contribute to strengthening the public realm by creating an attractive, connected, vibrant and pedestrian-friendly downtown and reinforce the downtown as a premier destination. Staff will be bringing forward a recommendation report to Committee / Council later this year.

1.1.3. **New Initiatives Underway**

- **Downtown Mobility Hub Planning:**

  In April 2017, work begun in earnest on the Downtown Mobility Hub Study. A significant amount of public consultation and engagement opportunities have taken place between then and now. On January 23, 2018, a recommendation report related to the proposed new Downtown Precinct Plan and associated policies for the Downtown Mobility Hub was presented to Burlington City Council.

  Burlington's proposed new Official Plan is scheduled for release in February 2018. This version will contain revisions that were made as a result of feedback the city received as part of the Downtown Mobility Hub Area Specific planning process.
Work on the Downtown Mobility Hub will continue as the proposed new Precinct Plan is further refined through the development of a Downtown Mobility Hub Area Specific Plan (secondary plan).

- **Waterfront Hotel Planning Study:**

  The Waterfront Hotel Planning Study kicked-off in March of 2017. Three public meetings / workshops have been held in May, July and September, respectively. On November 28, 2017, an update on the status and progress of the Waterfront Hotel Planning Study was presented to Council at the Planning and Development Committee meeting. Work on the Waterfront Hotel Planning Study continues as the project team assesses input on the two emerging preferred concepts and engages in additional consultation in order to support the development of a final preferred concept that will be delivered to Council in 2018.

1.2. **Downtown Performance Indicators**

   In the 2015 State of the Downtown report (DID-2-15), staff developed a series of downtown performance indicators using the Results Based Accountability (RBA) approach.

   Highlights from the 2016 downtown performance indicators include:

   - A historically low turnover or “churn” rate, which is consistent with last year’s lowest rate in 10 years;
   - An increase in overall assessment value in the downtown;
   - An increase in attendance at events in the downtown; and
   - An increase in walk scores for 4 of 5 downtown locations.

   These metrics continue to demonstrate that the downtown is strong and vibrant, with improved walkability, which has attracted more visitors and development in 2016 than in 2015.

   A complete summary of the current indicators is attached in Appendix "B".

1.3. **Brant Street Pedestrian Counter**

   In October 2015, the City installed a pedestrian counter on the east side of Brant Street (at James Street) to measure the number of people who walk by each day. In December 2016, the city repositioned the pedestrian counter from the above location to a new location on the west side of Brant Street (at Pine
Street). The data for this past year does not include people who walk on the east side of Brant Street across from the counter or people who walk on any other streets.

The results from the Brant Street counter show the following data from November 1, 2016 to November 23, 2016 and from December 1 to October 31, 2017 (a period of approx. 12 months):

- Total pedestrian traffic: 489,797 people passed by the counter
- Daily average: 1,365
- Busiest day of the week (on average): Saturday
- Busiest days of the period:

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Staff will continue to monitor pedestrian activity in the downtown and report back on statistics annually.

1.4. Burlington Downtown Business Association

The Burlington Downtown Business Association (BDBA) is a key partner and stakeholder in the delivery of the vision of Core Commitment. In 2017, the BDBA adopted and approved a new Strategic Plan (Focus 2020). This plan will set the framework for efforts over the next few years. In 2018, the BDBA will place their focus on a number of business recruitment, customer attraction, member engagement, beautification, and relationship building efforts as they continue to strengthen their organizational brand.

1.5. Development

In general, the downtown has experienced a steady amount of new mixed-use and residential development over the past several years. Mixed-use development continued in the downtown in 2017. Construction of the mixed-use developments at 2060 and 2080 Lakeshore Road and 501, 503, 511, and 515
John Street and 2027 Maria Street, Bridgewater and Berkeley, respectively, are underway. Additionally, approvals have been granted for 2085 Pine Street (Roman Home Builders) and 421-431 Brant Street (Carriage Gate Homes). These developments would account for an additional 474 residential units and approximately 5,285 square metres of new commercial / office space within the BIA boundary.

At the time of writing this report, there were two active development applications within the BIA boundary [490-492 Brock Avenue, 1298 Ontario St. (The Molinaro Group); and, 452-454 Locust St. and 1437-1445 Elgin St. (Saxony Condominiums)], which propose a combined residential unit count of 223 and 594 square metres of commercial / office space. One other major mixed-use project in the downtown, 374 Martha Street (Nautique), is awaiting a decision by the Ontario Municipal Board.

1.6. Arts and Culture

The city’s public art program continues to enhance the quality of life for residents by bringing the work of recognized artists to neighbourhoods in Burlington. This year collaboration begun on the design and execution of a new sculpture entitled Portal that will be installed as part of the public open space within Phase 3 of the aforementioned ‘Elgin Promenade’. Portal will be located adjacent to Brant Street. The artwork will be made from two large diameter panes of glass sandwiching a ring of lights, encased in a frame and set on a concrete pedestal. This piece of public art will use colour, light, and optical effects to act as both a mirror reflecting the past and a window to the future.

2. ALDERSHOT

As noted above the Aldershot BIA is unique. It is different from the downtown in that small businesses are primarily accessed via automobile and these amenities are currently generally less walkable and less pedestrian-friendly. Nevertheless, Aldershot has seen significant transformation over the last two decades and like the downtown is experiencing greater intensification attracting both businesses and people to enjoy the quality of life. This growth is having a positive impact on the area's transition from a highway to a multi purpose arterial and mixed-use corridor. Accordingly, staff’s approach to this section of the report is to set a new approach and consider the health of the Aldershot BIA in the same manner as the downtown. Aldershot BIA is one of two business improvement areas within the limits of the City’s municipal boundaries. It's boundaries span approximately 8 km east-west along Plains Road from east of the
Queen Elizabeth Way to Highway 6 and captures properties that abut either side of the Plains Road allowance.

2.1. Year in review

In the absence of a formalized action plan and performance indicators, the following is an overview of some of the initiatives and projects that took place within the Aldershot BIA over the past year.

2.1.1. Development

In general, Aldershot has experienced a significant amount of new mixed-use and residential development over the past several years. Mixed-use development continued along Plains Road in 2017. Construction of the mixed-use and stacked townhouse development at 405 Plains Road East is largely completed. And the recent developments at 34 Plains Road East (Seasons Condominiums) and 70 Plains Road West (Village West) were completed and occupied as of fall 2016. Additionally, approvals have been granted for 35 Plains Road East (Breeze Condominiums) and 320-340 Plains Road East (Affinity Condominiums). These developments would account for an additional 357 residential units and approximately 1,480 square metres of new commercial / office space within the BIA boundary.

There is currently two active development applications along Plains Road (92 and 484-490 Plains Road East) that propose a combined residential unit count of 447 and 1,155 square metres of commercial / office space.

There are two other major residential projects in Aldershot outside of the BIA boundary, including 101 Masonry Court (Stationwest) and 610 Surrey Lane (Georgian Court).

2.1.2. Arts and Culture

In October, a new public art sculpture entitled Crescendo (Rising Wave) was unveiled. The piece of public art is intended to represent a contemporary and historic Aldershot Village and helps beautify Plains Road. It is located at the northeast corner of Plains and Waterdown Roads.

Additionally, in November a design proposal entitled Dwelling was selected for the Plains Road median public art installation near the intersection at Francis Road in close proximity to the BIA’s eastern gateway. This piece will act as a marker for the community and help to reinforce a sense of identity and belonging. It is expected to be completed by spring 2018.
2.1.3. Aldershot GO Mobility Hub Planning

The Aldershot GO Mobility Hub is a locally recognized Mobility Hub centred around the Aldershot GO Station. The project study area boundary is comprised of an area of approximately 800m around the GO Station, south of Highway 403, along Waterdown Road and extending along the Plains Road corridor.

Building on the feedback staff received from the community beginning in May and again in September, a preferred concept for the Aldershot GO Mobility Hub was presented to the Planning and Development Committee of Council for consideration on December 4, 2017. Work on the Aldershot GO Mobility Hub is continuing as the preferred concept is further refined through the development of the Aldershot GO Mobility Hub Area Specific Plan (secondary plan).

2.2. Moving towards measures

There are currently no defined set of metrics, indicators, performance measures or monitoring tools that are being used on a consistent basis to track trends or assess value-added investments affecting the Aldershot BIA. The establishment of such metrics will be imperative to consider the health of the Aldershot BIA.

In this regard, it will be critical to work with the BIA and other key stakeholders to establish a set of performance indicators that will provide a baseline of information for assessment of the health of the Aldershot BIA and allow for comparison over time. The results would be used to develop an action plan and a set of performance targets.

The first step in establishing such indicators or metrics is mapping, understanding what data sources are available (where limitations in access to custom data exists) and what metrics are important to achieve the goals and objectives specific to Aldershot. Metrics could range broadly and include anything from the number of residential units built in the past year to how many new businesses set up, to police response times to the number of independent bookshops or to kilometres of bicycle lanes. These metrics will look at the social, economic, physical, and organizational aspects affecting the BIA and not only help to gauge its health but will tell us its deficiencies, so that an action plan for improvement can be completed.

The next steps would include assigning responsibility and funding sources (if needed) to identify which actions will happen now, in the short-term (1 to 5
years) or medium-term (5 to 10 years), therein developing an implementation strategy and lastly a monitoring plan.

An alternative for the Aldershot BIA is to participate in ongoing work being completed by the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA). A recent study conducted by OBIAA entitled Return ON Investment to increase understanding of the impact of BIAs, had the primary goal of identifying a set of common indicators for BIAs across Ontario. These indicators will act as a benchmark for BIAs across the province and help to establish the impact BIAs are having in communities of all sizes across Ontario.

The study has four primary goals:

1. Establish a set of common indicators for BIAs across Ontario.
2. Create a pool of Tools and Metrics for BIAs to share their impact and analyze trends.
3. Understand what is happening on the ground in our downtowns and main streets and the successes and challenges currently faced by BIAs.
4. Outline existing gaps in the data base and provide recommendations on how to go about filling them.

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**Financial Matters:**

**Downtown BIA**

Future phases of the Elgin Street Promenade construction, recognized as an ongoing initiative of the Core Commitment was brought forward in the 2018 Capital Budget and Forecast as part of the Roadways Asset Categories Capital Works Program (RD-SW-1756). In total the budget for the project spans over 2017-2019 for a total of $2.8 million. This project was approved for funding from the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (PTIF) for 50% of Phase 2 and Phase 3 costs. The project plan and budget aligns with the Financial Plan for the 2015 Strategic Plan (F-21-16) presented to Council in the summer of 2016.

The fourth and final phase of this project, from Pearl Street to Martha Street, is forecasted for construction in 2019. $650,000, which is included in the total cost of $2.8 million above, has been approved through the 2018 capital budget and forecast.

**The BDBA is contributing a total of $50,000 over 5 years to this project.**

**Aldershot BIA**

Establishing, collecting, and tracking data will require staff resources from a cross-section of departments including Capital Works, City Building, Finance, and Roads,
Parks, and Forestry Departments. Continued support from the Aldershot BIA and Burlington Tourism will be necessary to undertake and analyze data.

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**Conclusion:**

Burlington’s business improvement areas continue to evolve each year.

In the downtown increased walk scores for four of the five downtown sites, increased assessment value and a rise in attendance at downtown events in 2017 are a few of the positive changes.

Aldershot also continues to grow and sees private and public investments contributing to the creation of a more pedestrian-friendly urban corridor. Through this report staff has identified the importance of indicators, metrics, and performance measures to begin to understand the exact profile of the Aldershot BIA and set benchmarks to assess its health over time and compare it to other healthy BIAs. In this regard, staff will continue to work with the Aldershot BIA to establish a set of performance indicators in order to assess and monitor its health.

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Respectfully submitted,

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905-335-7600 ext. 7870

**Appendices:** (if none delete section)

- a. Core Commitment Initiatives Tracking
- b. Downtown Performance Indicators

**Notifications:** (if none delete section)

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Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, Director of Finance and Director of Legal. Final approval is by the City Manager.