

**To: Mayor Meed Ward and members of Council**

**From: Councillor Shawna Stolte Ward 4**

**Date: April 16, 2020**

**Re: Road closures to aid social distancing during the COVID 19 emergency**

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**Staff Direction:**

**Direct the Director of Transportation Services to assess, create and implement as soon as possible, and with input from other city departments and members of the Cycling and ITAC Committees, a “Shared Streets Burlington” Pilot Project with the goal of temporarily closing portions of roadways to allow for safer physical distancing for pedestrians and cyclists for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**Background Discussion:**

The residents of Burlington, along with City Council and City Staff, are all committed to the goal of stopping the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Our role, as City Council and staff, is to amplify the message of medical experts in regard to adhering to physical distancing requirements while also considering a longer-term plan that acknowledges residents need for physical exercise and fresh air in order to effectively manage their mental health and wellbeing.

A recent Angus Reid Poll asked, “if there is anything residents are doing more of than normal since being isolated” and 53% reported “going for more walks” and 26% reported “taking up extra exercise”.

City streets and sidewalks remain some of the few places residents are permitted to travel outside their homes, but sidewalks are simply not wide enough to ensure the physical distancing requirements recommended by medical experts and the informal use of grass boulevards does not provide a safe nor viable alternative for wheelchairs, strollers or bicycles.

These sidewalks and multi-use paths are becoming more congested as the seasons change, temperatures are rising, and residents seek outlets to support their mental health and wellbeing.

The space to expand outdoor physical distancing is available.

Roadways are underutilized due to reduced traffic volumes and represent a clear and simple alternative to “expand the sidewalk”.

There are many resources already available, as well as an established work group comprised of dedicated residents from the ITAC and Cycling Committee who have been meeting to research strategies and suggestions for implementation.

Some suggestions are as follows;

- to begin with a Pilot Project to measure, monitor and learn as well as to assess the willingness of the community to participate in a safe manner
- to consider a phased approach that can adapt/expand as needed
- to offer multiple, local, widespread, “very ordinary” locations to create the opposite of a destination to avoid gathering crowds
- to network streets and coordinate with park locations
- to ensure strong signage and communication
- to consider a variety of options such as closing off curb lanes on thoroughfares (ex. Maple, Palladium Way, Prospect -east of Guelph) or installing strong “Shared Streets” signage on key neighbourhood streets (ex. Spruce, Townsend, Palmer, Millcroft Park)

This motion is intended to encourage a realistic, longer term plan that will ensure safe “physical distancing” as well as strive for the balance that is needed to support physical exercise and mental health initiatives, by literally creating more space for people to get outside and breathe.

I encourage Council to join the 60+ other cities around the world as well as Brampton, Calgary, Edmonton, Kitchener, Montreal, Ottawa, Vancouver, Victoria and Winnipeg who have already implemented or are actively exploring this creative alternative as a means of supporting the wellbeing of their residents.

Thank you,  
Councillor Shawna Stolte