



**SUBJECT: Burlington Holiday Market Follow-Up**

**TO: Environment, Infrastructure & Community Services Cttee.**

**FROM: Recreation, Community and Culture Department**

Report Number: RCC-03-22

Wards Affected: 2

File Numbers: 965-01

Date to Committee: April 7, 2022

Date to Council: April 19, 2022

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**Recommendation:**

Receive and file recreation, community and culture department report RCC-03-22 providing follow-up information on a new event launched in December 2021 called Burlington Holiday Market.

**PURPOSE:**

**Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

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**Background and Discussion:**

Committee approved the application for a new event called Burlington Holiday Market in September 2021 under report number RCC-12-21 for a two-year period (2021 and 2022) with a request to provide a follow-up report and provide metrics on the event's overall impacts.

Approve an event called the Burlington Holiday Market as outlined in recreation, community, and culture department report RCC-12-21 for 2021 and 2022, and report back in Q2 2022 on the economic impact of local businesses, cultural impact, and parking/active transportation impact of the new event; and

Authorize the Director to Recreation, Community and Culture to implement the specific details required to support the various components of the event that are to be hosted on city property.

The first Burlington Holiday Market was held on Thursday, December 9 through Sunday, December 12, 2021 (including set-up and tear-down time) and was anchored in Parking Lot 1 (431 Elizabeth Street) as well as utilized the Elgin Promenade and the new Promenade expansion (431 Pearl Street) that connects Lot 1 to the Centennial Trail.

Event organizers worked closely with the Burlington Downtown Business Association (BDBA) to engage business owners and showcase the area. Businesses were invited to further participate in the day by applying to set-up an outdoor location as part of the vendor marketplace. Out of a total of 41 vendors who made up the marketplace, 9 of them were BDBA businesses however, 2 had to cancel (due to resourcing related to COVID) and thus out of the total vendors they made up 22% of successful vendors who activated that weekend.

The event was marketed online through its own website at: [www.burlingtonholidaymarket.com](http://www.burlingtonholidaymarket.com) and various local mediums including posters in addition to social media attracted 755 followers through Instagram and 127 followers and 95 likes on Facebook.

Although the Burlington Holiday Market had a late start to the planning season for its inaugural year and as a result decided to reduce their overall footprint in the core, they managed to secure sponsorship dollars from fifteen (15) corporations and developed strategic partnerships with eight (8) other organizations to support the event of which are identified on their website.

Burlington's Holiday Market showed a substantial increase in pedestrian traffic downtown. (NOTE: The counter is installed on Elgin Promenade between John and Elizabeth.) It is counting pedestrians and cyclists that use the promenade at this location. The counter can only count pedestrians/cyclist that cross this location within 4m of the counter and in this case, it only picks up the pedestrians/cyclists on the promenade and not the ones walking on the other side (i.e. through parking lot #4). Overall, there was eight times the amount of pedestrian traffic during the event in comparison to traffic counts recorded on the same days (Thursday – Sunday) one week before and one week after the event as shown:

<b>Burlington Holiday Market 2021</b>	<b>Pedestrian traffic total</b>	<b>Percent increase</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Previous weekend	1592		Dec. 2 – 5, 2021
Market weekend	12443		Dec. 9 – 12, 2021
Post-Market weekend	1793		Dec. 16 – 19, 2021

The area measured saw the traffic count	782%	increase over previous weekend
	694%	increase over following weekend

\* Traffic count includes pedestrians and bicycles

### Strategy/process

To mitigate impacts related to an anticipated influx of people coming to the area and further support businesses downtown during the holiday season, organizers hired the city's Parking Ambassadors to assist with directing people to nearby parking locations when visiting downtown. Parking staff monitored the use of the municipal lots and downtown parking garage to provide metrics on the available supply and use of parking during the weekend which indicated that municipal lots were being utilized more than average in comparison to the weekend after the festival.

For instance, the increase at the 414 Locust St. parking garage on event weekend as compared to the weekend after:

- Thursday December 9, 2021 – 25% increase
- Friday, December 10, 2021 – 50% increase
- Saturday, December 11, 2021 – 100% increase
- Sunday, December 12, 2021 – 300% increase

The garage was only 50% full, at the busiest of times, showing that the vehicles were turning over regularly throughout the day and that there were always spots available.

While the municipal parking lot inventory saw an overall increase during the event weekend; parking lots 3 and 4 indicated no difference in usage. Lot 3 (near the No Frills plaza) remained at 30% capacity and Lot 4 (between John St. and Elizabeth St.) remained at full capacity across both the event weekend and the following weekend which is typical for this lot.

The BDBA did a follow up survey with their membership on the event and impacts. There was a limited response, 12 members. Most respondents were supportive of the event, see appendix A for the report.

The event organizer also provided post-event letters of support, see appendices B and C.

The Festival and Events office did not receive any resident complaints because of the event.

### Options Considered

Organizers for the 2021 Burlington Holiday Market deemed it to be a successful first year and garnered much interest and support through the local community along with

attracting people to the area. In 2022, with further lead time to plan appropriately, organizers anticipate introducing the other aspects of the event as initially proposed including a licensed area and introducing a main stage to provide further attractions.

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### **Financial Matters:**

Not applicable.

### **Total Financial Impact**

Event organizers paid for any city resources utilized. There was no cost to the city.

### **Source of Funding**

Not applicable.

### **Other Resource Impacts**

Parking Services supplied the Parking Ambassadors for the event that were covered through fee for service.

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### **Climate Implications**

Since the event is held outdoors during the month of December it is susceptible to potential harsh climate impacts such as snow, ice, freezing temperatures or strong winds. Outdoor events always face weather related risks at any time of year, but winter weather can have harsher impacts resulting in higher risks for potential delays, cancellations or decreased attendance.

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### **Engagement Matters:**

Burlington Holiday Market organizers worked closely with the Burlington Downtown Business Association (BDDBA) to collaborate on ways to market the area and spread the flow of traffic throughout the downtown core as well as communicate with local businesses. Resident consultation on the proposed new event was conducted in August 2021 as part of the general approval process for new events taking place in Burlington. The city did not receive any complaints directly related to the 2021 Burlington Holiday Market after the event was held.

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## **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the introduction of the new Burlington Holiday Market event was deemed to be a welcome new event addition in downtown by most businesses based on feedback from the BDBA, residents and the event organizers. The event was well attended based on the increased level of pedestrian traffic and parking use overall indicating that, even with eight times the amount of pedestrian traffic in downtown, there was still ample parking available to support the residents and businesses downtown. Organizers were pleased with the outcome for their first year and have started to plan for the 2022 event.

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Respectfully submitted,

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## **Appendices:**

- A. Burlington Downtown Business Association Holiday Market survey results
- B. Holiday Market letter of support from Burlington Downtown Business Association
- C. Holiday Market Organizers post-event follow up letter

## **Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.