



SUBJECT: Burlington Holiday Market
TO: Committee of the Whole
FROM: Recreation, Community and Culture

Report Number: RCC-02-23

Wards Affected: 2

File Numbers: 965-01

Date to Committee: February 1, 2023

Date to Council: February 14, 2023

Recommendation:

Receive and file recreation, community and culture report RCC-02-23 providing follow-up information on the Burlington Holiday Market.

PURPOSE:

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

Background and Discussion:

Council 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 in year's one and two. Staff provided the first follow-up report in March of 2022 (RCC-03-22) and Council provided further direction as follows:

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; and Direct the Director of Recreation, Community and Culture to report back in February 2023 on the economic impact of local business, cultural impact, and parking/active transportation impact of the Burlington Holiday Market. (SD-14-22)

The second Burlington Holiday Market was held on Thursday, December 8 through Sunday, December 11, 2022 (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 and included the use of Civic Square.

Strategy/process

Council asked staff to report back in February 2023 on the economic impact of local business, cultural impact, and parking/active transportation impact of the Burlington Holiday Market.

Due to the timing of this report cycle being early in the New Year, the Event Organizer did not have event metrics compiled and available for inclusion in the staff report to demonstrate the economic and cultural impact of the event. Staff hopes that organizers will be able to delegate to committee and provide this information directly. The Burlington Downtown Business Association (BDBA) has provided a letter of support for the continuation of the event in the downtown. The letter also outlines some suggestions on the timing and location of the event in the future. The letter can be found in Appendix A.

In 2022 Burlington's Holiday Market once again showed a substantial increase in pedestrian traffic downtown. (NOTE: The counter was installed on Elgin Promenade between John St. and Elizabeth St.). The counter tallies pedestrians and cyclists within 4 metres of its location on the promenade. People that walk on the other side (i.e., through parking lot #4) are not captured by the counter. Overall, there continues to be a substantial increase in the amount of pedestrian traffic during the event in comparison to the weekends before and after. The chart below compares pedestrian data from 2021 to 2022. Of note, in 2021 restrictions were in effect for indoor gatherings due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

| Burlington Holiday Market | 2022 | 2021 | |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Each weekend is defined as Thurs.-Sun. | Pedestrian traffic total* | Pedestrian traffic total* | Notes |
| Previous weekend | 1754 | 1592 | Event Dates: 2022: Dec 1-4, 8-11, 15-18 2021: Dec 2-5, 9-12, 16-19 |
| Market weekend | 7266 | 12443 | |
| Post-Market weekend | 1621 | 1793 | |
| The area measured saw the traffic count increase | 414% | 782% | increase over previous weekend |
| | 448% | 694% | increase over following weekend |
| * Traffic count includes pedestrians and bicycles | | | |

Parking staff provided data that is recorded through the city's municipal parking systems' new Business Intelligence (BI) units over three weekends to compare usage from Thursday – Sunday during the weekends before, during, and after the event. Data was obtained from Lot 4 (between John St. and Elizabeth St.) and the downtown parking garage at 414 Locust St. Data from Lot 3 (near the No Frills Plaza was unavailable due to a system error.) The BI units summarize daily usage counts on surface lots at 9am, 1pm and 6pm.

Although there was a slight increase indicated in the use of parking during the event (an average of 5% on event weekend) the data would also suggest that the increased volume of pedestrians who visited the area by a personal vehicle had a normal turn-over rate thus parking inventory never reached full capacity except for Lot 4 which tends to be near full capacity on a regular basis:

| Vehicle Parking | Lot 4 | Parking Garage | Notes |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Previous weekend | 80% | 25% | |
| Event weekend | 84% | 28% | Garage - increased use of 3% avg |
| Post-event weekend | 89% | 25% | Lot 4 - increased use of 6.5% avg |

The Festival and Events office did not receive any resident communications from the event. The office of Ward 2 Councilor reported receiving concerns via social media pertaining to the selection of items offered for sale by one of the market vendors and another reporting damage to a parking lot. Staff inquired about the reported damage through Parking Services and Roads, Parks, and Forestry but no reports of damage were noted by staff from either of these areas.

Options Considered

The options for the future of Burlington's Holiday Market are as follows:

- To decline or cancel any further events to take place
- To let it proceed but move it to the first weekend in December to coincide with the annual Santa Claus Parade (held the first Sunday in December)
- To let it continue to be held the second week in December as it is now in Downtown Burlington, or
- Move the event to another location in the city.

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

Not applicable.

Climate Implications

Since the event is held outdoors during 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. It was noted by the BDBA that the Lot 1 corridor north of Village Square has been challenging both years for event set-up due to this being a traditional wind corridor. The BDBA will be recommending that the organizers move the event footprint further west along the Elgin Promenade and consider adding the Burlington Performing Arts Centre (BPAC) plaza.

Engagement Matters:

Burlington Holiday Market organizers continue to work closely with the BDBA to collaborate on ways to market the area and spread the flow of traffic throughout the downtown core as well as communicate and engage with local businesses.

Conclusion:

After two consecutive years for Burlington's Holiday Market and based on the data reported along with there being no major issues or concerns arising from residents or local businesses, staff recommends that the event move forward if organizers continue to apply to host if there are no major changes or other impacts added like the introduction of any road closures or other such matter which would require a public consultation process. Staff would also ask that organizers consider the feasibility of scheduling the event one week sooner to coincide with the annual Santa Claus Parade held in the downtown.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Maxwell

Supervisor, Festivals and Events

905-335-7600 ext. 7724

Appendices:

A. 2022 BDBA Support Letter Winter Holiday Market

Notifications:

Brian Dean, Executive Director, BDBA

Burlington Holiday Market Co-Chairs:

Rick Burgess

Peter Van Dyk

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.