



**SUBJECT: Civic Square and Brant Street renewal project update**

**TO: Committee of the Whole**

**FROM: Engineering Services Department**

Report Number: ES-10-24

Wards Affected: 2, all

Date to Committee: May 13, 2024

Date to Council: May 21, 2024

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**Recommendation:**

Receive and file engineering services department report ES-10-24 providing an update to the Civic Square and Brant Street renewal project.

**PURPOSE:**

**Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Increase economic prosperity and community responsive city growth
- Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment
- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

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**Background and Discussion:**

In 2021 the city received Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) – Community, Culture and Recreation Stream funding for the renewal of Civic Square and Brant Streetscape (from Elgin to Ontario on the west side).

To achieve efficiencies and a cohesive design, the Civic Square renewal project has been combined with two additional capital projects – the Brant Street entrance to City Hall and streetscape improvements on Elgin Street.

The overriding goal of the Civic Square and Brant Street Renewal project is to visualize, design, and implement the renewal of Civic Square, City Hall Entrance, and adjacent streetscapes to contribute to a healthier and more vibrant downtown core.

Engagement is critical to this project and is built into all stages of design development. Phase One of engagement began in September 2023 and was complete in February 2024. Phase Two of engagement began in March 2024 and continues to date.

This report provides an update on project progress, presents the three (3) concept designs, outlines the project schedule ahead, and summarizes engagement to date.

## **Strategy/process/risk**

### **Concept Designs**

The three concept designs are included as Appendix A.

The concept designs are the result of several key factors, including:

- an extensive engagement process to understand preferences and uses from a range of stakeholders,
- an assessment and analysis of the key findings from engagement,
- site analysis including strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) sun/shadow analysis, wind study, and grading study,
- relationship to adjacent public and private spaces, streetscape design, and access to City Hall,
- a review of precedent spaces in other communities, and
- a review of precedent design elements.

All the concepts reflect design decisions and contain physical elements that have been identified as important for a healthier and more vibrant space by concentrating on accessibility of the built environment, functionality, and enhancing the prominence and character of the site.

Each concept includes structures that shelter users from the elements, flexible spaces for gathering and rest, the addition of site furnishings, lighting, flagpoles, an interactive water feature, a focal point, and natural landscaping. All of the concepts offer event ready space(s).

In each concept the City Hall parking lot off Elgin Street is maintained, as either a like sized lot or as a reduced sized lot. Maintaining the parking lot is essential to providing equitable access to City Hall and Civic Square for people living with disabilities.

Where the concepts differ is in how the space is allocated to different uses, the location of the doors to City Hall, changes to the façade of City Hall, the provision of parking in the adjacent parking lot, and the design theme for the space.

Under a separate process, a public artist will join the project team so that public art has a meaningful integration into the final design. The selection process is currently underway.

### **Project Schedule**

To date, the project is meeting all critical milestones.

A summary of upcoming milestones and anticipated timing is included below.

<b>Project Milestones</b>	<b>Anticipated Timing</b>
<b>Report to Council with Project Update</b>	<b>May 2024</b>
Indigenous Community Engagement	Through July 2024
First Nations Consultation	Through July 2024
Stakeholder Engagement and Broader Community Information Sessions	Through July 2024
Concept Refinement	Through July 2024
Conceptual Design Complete and Preferred Concept Selected	July 2024
<b>Report to Council on Preferred Concept</b>	July 2024
Engagement Evaluation and Summary	July 2024
Detailed Design, Permits and Approvals	July 2024 – March 2025
Tender Period	February 2025
Construction Period	June 2025 – June 2026*
Opening Event	Summer 2026*

\*Note: The duration of the construction period and opening event dates are based on estimates only. Once the final design is selected, the duration of the construction period will be refined.

### **Options Considered**

The implementation and scope of work for this project is clearly defined and is in alignment with ICIP funding requirements and capital budget planning, thus limiting other options.

## **Risk**

A clearly defined scope of work and budget, healthy timelines, and a well-appointed, professional internal and external project management team has been crucial in the successful delivery of the project thus far. To date, the project is meeting all critical milestones for engagement, design development, and reporting.

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## **Financial Matters:**

### **Total Financial Impact**

### **Source of Funding**

The Government of Canada is investing \$1,984,900. The Government of Ontario is investing \$1,653,917. The city has already committed capital funding of \$884,744 with an additional \$808,750 forecasted in the 2025 Budget.

Capital funding in the amount of \$2,365,000, to support changes to City Hall related to this project, was approved in the 2024 Budget.

### **Other Resource Impacts**

The project continues to be a major undertaking for the project team. The commitment the city has made to fulfilling the schedule requirements of the project are well supported by the internal project team and the consulting team.

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## **Climate Implications:**

As the design evolves, servicing and design features that are responsible and responsive to our changing climate will be incorporated. These will be reflected in the final design.

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## **Engagement Matters:**

### **Summary of Engagement to Date**

#### First Nations and Indigenous Engagement

The project team is pursuing opportunities to engage with First Nations and the local Indigenous community throughout the project.

Engagement with First Nations has so far included an introductory meeting in January 2024 and a virtual design session in April 2024 with the Six Nations of the Grand River. An introductory meeting with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation was held in April 2024 with their consultation staff. Both First Nations have expressed an interest in the project.

An introductory meeting with the Indigenous Talking Circle was held in January 2024. The project team is exploring ways to facilitate a follow-up meeting with other Indigenous Peoples in Burlington.

#### Phase One Engagement– September 2023 through February 2024

Phase One engagement focused on an introduction to the project and gathering information about current uses, preferred design priorities, and preferred amenities. Key findings of Phase One engagement were used to develop the three concept designs.

From September 2023 to February 2024, the project team coordinated and attended more than 30 engagement events, including meetings with:

- members of council
- internal stakeholders – staff
- council appointed advisory committees and boards
- external stakeholders – third party event organizers, Burlington Downtown Business Association, local historian, adjacent property owner
- general public
- Burlington Youth Student Council

An online survey was conducted through the Get Involved Burlington platform from September 2023 until January 2024. A total of 269 completed surveys were received.

#### Existing Space

From the online survey, we learned that 35% of respondents never visit Civic Square, and 22% visit only annually. Responses also indicate that 61% of respondents do not interact with Civic Square in a meaningful way, answering that they never visit (8%), walk through (26%), or are passersby (27%).

We heard that while people appreciate some of the current features of Civic Square, for example the fountain, heritage clock, flagpoles, seating, and trees, there are issues that

are impacting their enjoyment and use of the space. These include unwelcoming, uncomfortable, and outdated design, inaccessible slope, steps and surface materials, insufficient lighting, and under used/inactive space.

### Key Themes & Priorities in Developing Concept Designs

Over the course of the first phase of engagement, key themes became evident. These include:

- Accessibility
- Flexible, programmable space for small to large scale gathering opportunities
- Infrastructure to support programming – power, wi-fi, A/V, water
- Animation of the space for people of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds
- Multi-purpose elements
- Functional and affordable design
- Stronger connections between Civic Square and City Hall's interior, 400 Brant Street, and adjacent streets
- Consistent and coordinated material selection
- Improved security through monitoring and design
- Green infrastructure, including landscape and storm water management
- Public art elements integrated with design
- Reference to Indigenous Community.

While all the design priorities identified for this project are critical to its success, we heard that the design priorities that people value most are creating a space that is accessible and safe, welcoming and comfortable, and versatile.

We heard that that the following design elements are most important to improving accessibility and safety:

- more seating
- clear, level, and firm surface
- lighting improvements
- animation of the space through a variety programming opportunities.

We heard that design elements that will make Civic Square a more comfortable and welcoming space include:

- protection from summer and winter elements
- natural landscaping
- public art
- access to water
- lighting.

In addition, we heard that design elements that can improve the versatility of the space include:

- a variety of gathering spaces, for passive and active use, including formal, informal, group, and individual spaces
- design that facilitates year-round use, including protection from the elements
- design that facilitates the closure of Brant Street during events and supports pedestrian safety
- event infrastructure, including permanent and temporary electrical connections, outdoor A/V, water, wi-fi and charging stations.

#### Phase Two Engagement – March 2024 through June 2024

Phase Two engagement focuses on receiving feedback on the three concept designs.

The project team completed the following engagement events prior to the delivery of this report:

- council appointed advisory committees
- council drop in sessions
- staff design charette
- Conservation Halton

Following the delivery of this report, the project team will continue to engage advisory and other committees, internal and external stakeholders, and the broader public on the concept designs.

The public can stay informed via the external facing project page on Get Involved Burlington.

Following phase two of engagement, the project team will consolidate comments and prepare a single preferred concept plan.

In July 2024, staff will report to council with a project update, the single preferred concept plan, and a summary of engagement. After delivery of that report, the project team will proceed with the third phase of engagement.

#### Phase Three Engagement – July 2024

Phase three of engagement will inform stakeholders of the final design concept. This will include preferred concept plan refinements and advancement in to detailed design.

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### **Conclusion:**

By way of engineering services report ES-10-24, the Civic Square and Brant Street Renewal project is well underway and hitting all planned milestones. In July 2024, staff will report back to council with the final preferred design concept that will reflect input from the engagement process. This project is anticipated to be tendered early in 2025 and construction to start in June 2025.

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Respectfully submitted,

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### **Appendices:**

- A. Concept Plans
- B. Presentation to Committee

### **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.