



**SUBJECT: State of the Downtown Report 2016**

**TO: Development and Infrastructure Committee**

**FROM: Planning and Building Department**

Report Number: PB-68-16

Wards Affected: 1, 2

File Numbers: 560-08

Date to Committee: December 13, 2016

Date to Council: December 19, 2016

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**Recommendation:**

Receive and file planning and building department report PB-68-16.

**Purpose:**

The State of the Downtown report aligns with the following objectives in Burlington's Strategic Plan 2015-2040:

A City that Grows

- Promoting Economic Growth
- Intensification
- Focused Population Growth

A City that Moves

- Increased Transportation Flows and Connectivity

A Healthy and Greener City

- Healthy Lifestyles

An Engaging City

- Community Building through Arts and Culture via Community Activities

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**Background and Discussion:**

Council approved the revised and updated Core Commitment on November 4, 2013, which established a vision for the downtown and a set of guiding principles. Core



Commitment also includes a number of initiatives intended to support and strengthen the downtown. It has been staff's practice to report on the State of the Downtown with an accounting of the accomplishments, challenges and key metrics/indicators of downtown health.

As in previous State of the Downtown reports, this report provides an update on the status of Core Commitment initiatives.

### **Core Commitment Initiatives Update**

Core Commitment includes a series of initiatives, approved in principle by Council, subject to budget approval. The table in Appendix A provides a status update on the initiatives.

### **Initiatives Completed**

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

The employment strategy is the responsibility of the Burlington Economic Development Corporation (BEDC). BEDC has advised that it intends to develop a strategy for the QEW Prosperity Corridor and use it as a template for a future downtown plan.

Additionally, as part of the new Official Plan, Planning and Building staff are considering potential policy approaches to encourage more office space in the downtown. These findings will help inform the BEDC's employment strategy.

### **Other Initiatives Underway**

In addition to the initiatives identified in Core Commitment, there are several downtown projects currently underway.

- Development of a Computer 3D model:  
Capital Works staff have developed a 3D computer model of the downtown that has captured existing conditions and will be continuously updated as new developments are approved and built. The model will provide an excellent tool for community engagement and visioning exercises for the downtown and will assist staff and Council in assessing development proposals and options.
- Streetscape Design Guidelines:  
The current streetscape guidelines approved in the 1980s, which established the current standards for sidewalks, street furniture and lighting, are outdated. Led by the Special Business Area Coordinator in co-operation with a cross-



department team including Capital Works, Roads and Parks Maintenance and Transportation Services, a consulting team has been retained to prepare new guidelines reflective of contemporary design standards. Stakeholder and public involvement has been integral to the project and will help to inform the consultants and staff team. Final recommendations are expected later this fall.

- Elgin Promenade:

Identified in Core Commitment as an “Ongoing Initiative” and referenced in the City’s Strategic Plan 2015-2040, this proposed multi-use path takes advantage of the existing TransNorthern Pipeline/Trunk Sanitary easement that runs east-west through the downtown. The path will extend the Centennial Bike Trail, which ends at Martha Street. Preliminary designs have been completed in-house and the first phase of the project is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2016, in association with the rehabilitation of the surface parking lot (Lot #1) between Pearl and Elizabeth Streets.

The Burlington Downtown Business Association (BDBA) is committed to providing additional funding for beautification elements such as benches in keeping with its mandate to beautify publicly owned spaces in the downtown. Funding for the first phase of the Elgin Promenade project (between Elizabeth Street and Pearl Street along the north side of the Village Square parking lot) was provided through the 2016 Capital Budget and Canada 150 funding with the intention to construct it in the fall of 2016.

As a result of delayed approvals from the Trans-Northern Pipeline Inc., construction has been delayed to 2017. Staff hopes that construction will take place in spring 2017 (March-April) prior to the major festivals and events season in the summer.

- Pop-up Patio Pilot:

Through report PB-44-16, staff recommended continuation of the pop-up patio pilot program and recommended approval for two locations in the summer of 2016. Staff will work towards formalizing a process for both pop-up patios and sidewalk patios for implementation in 2017.

- Pedestrian Counters:

In 2015, a pedestrian counter was installed on the east side of Brant Street (at James) to measure the number of people who pass by each day. Staff plans to install the counter in various locations throughout the downtown to collect data on pedestrians. Data from the Brant Street pedestrian counter is included in the section of the report on Downtown Performance Indicators.



## **New Initiatives**

- Pong in the Core:

In June 2016, a ping pong table was placed in Civic Square from Monday to Friday during business hours with paddles and balls available at the information desk inside City Hall. This initiative has had some uptake on social media using the hashtag #ponginthecore.

- Temporary Use By-law:

In July 2016, staff recommended approval of a temporary use by-law to allow entertainment and recreational uses such as live music on outdoor patios in the downtown for a three year period.

- Mobility Hubs Planning:

In July 2016, the Planning Department received funding to begin Mobility Hubs planning around the four Mobility Hubs (Aldershot, Burlington and Appleby GO Stations and the downtown). The Special Business Area Co-ordinator will play an important role in the Mobility Hubs work for the downtown and for Aldershot.

## **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. As a result of the 5-year Census cycle, staff is not expecting 2016 data until early 2017 and, as a result, some of the targets and measurements cannot be evaluated until next year in the 2017 State of the Downtown report.

Highlights from the 2016 downtown performance indicators (Appendix B) include:

- The lowest turnover or “churn” rate for downtown businesses in 10 years
- Increased assessment value in the downtown
- Increased construction value of building permits (including the building permits for the Joseph Brant Hospital expansion)
- Increased attendance at events downtown
- Increased walk score downtown representing improved walkability

These metrics continue to demonstrate that the downtown is strong and vibrant, attracting more visitors and more development in 2015 than in 2014.



### 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. This data does not include people who walk on the west 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 October 30, 2015 to October 31, 2016 (12 months):

- Total pedestrian traffic: 507,558 people passed by the counter
- Daily average: 1,380
- Busiest day of the week: Saturday
- Busiest days of the period:

Rank	Date	Count	Festivals & Events
1	Friday, July 1, 2016	4,995	Canada Day
2	Saturday, October 29, 2016	4,747	Treats in our Streets
3	Saturday, September 3, 2016	4,269	Rotary Club Ribfest
4	Saturday, June 18, 2016	4,128	Sound of Music Festival
5	Saturday, October 31, 2015	3,808	Treats in our Streets

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

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### Financial Matters:

Future phases of the Elgin Street Promenade construction, recognized as an ongoing initiative of the Core Commitment is brought forward in the 2017 proposed capital budget and forecast as part of the roadways capital program (RD-SW-1756). In total the budget for the project spans over 2017-2019 for a total of \$2 million. An application for funding this project has been submitted to Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (PTIF) for 50% of Phase 2 and Phase 3 costs. The project plan and budget coincides with the Financial Plan for the 2015 Strategic plan (F-21-16) presented to Council in the summer earlier this year.

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## **Connections:**

With the City's Strategic Plan 2015-2040 now in place, there are opportunities to align the Downtown Performance Indicators (approved in September 2015 through staff report DID-2-15) with the Progress Indicators set out in the new Strategic Plan.

Staff will look to build on the current RBA approach in next years State of the Downtown report by integrating, where feasible, Progress Indicators from the new Strategic Plan into the metrics that support completion of the Core Commitment initiatives and achievement of the downtown vision.

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## **Conclusion:**

The downtown continues to evolve each year and 2015 saw a number of positive changes including the lowest "churn" rate in 10 years, increased walk scores for four of the five downtown sites, increased assessment value in the downtown and increased attendance at events downtown.

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Respectfully submitted,

Rosa Bustamante, Manager of Mobility Hubs

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## **Appendices:**

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

## **Notifications:**

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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.