
SUBJECT: St. Luke's Window to the Lake – implementation and required agreements
TO: Committee of the Whole
FROM: Community Services
Recreation, Community and Culture

Report Number: CSS-06-26

Wards Affected: all

Date to Committee: April 13, 2026

Date to Council: April 21, 2026

Recommendation

Direct the Director of Recreation, Community and Culture, Director of Roads, Parks and Forestry and Director of Engineering Services, in consultation with Legal Services, to negotiate, finalize and execute all agreements required to implement the St. Luke's (Church) Window to the Lake initiative with The Parish Church of St. Luke, for a term of up to 20 years. These agreements shall address matters including, but not limited to, land access, shared use maintenance responsibilities, and construction related to the St. Luke's (Church) Window to the Lake initiative, with content satisfactory to the relevant lead departments and in a form satisfactory to the Commissioner of Legal and Legislative Services/City Solicitor, and to make all necessary arrangements with The Parish Church of St. Luke as outlined in community services report CSS-06-26; and

Direct the Chief Financial Officer to incorporate the on-going operating impacts for maintenance of the new pathway and related elements into the 2027 multi-year budget simulation, to an upset limit of \$30,000.

Executive Summary

The Parish Church of St. Luke ("St Luke's Church") and the City of Burlington share an important pedestrian connection between Elgin Street and Lakeshore Road through the historic Church Avenue corridor (Appendix A – Context Map). This green space has served as a protected view corridor for more than a century and forms the approach to one of

Burlington's oldest heritage buildings. St. Luke's Church has expressed interest in formalizing a publicly accessible pedestrian route across its lands to support a more walkable downtown and enhance pedestrian connections between Apeldoorn Park and Spencer Smith Park (Appendix E).

In 2024, through Report [RCC-08-24](#), Council directed staff to work with the Church to explore the feasibility of an upgraded, accessible pedestrian route across both City owned and Church owned lands. Since that time, staff have advanced the concept to a schematic design level, including the review of construction requirements, legal considerations, operational impacts, and community feedback. The initiative formalizes and enhances the existing north-south connection but does not introduce a new crossing at Lakeshore Road; pedestrians will continue to use one of the two existing crosswalks to access the waterfront (Appendix D – Church Ave). The project area involves multiple landowners, shared-use areas and legacy access arrangements, requiring a coordinated suite of agreements related to construction, land access, shared use, and long-term maintenance (Appendix B – Properties Context Map).

St. Luke's Church has undertaken extensive community engagement and secured a private donor, in addition to various grants, to fund improvements on its lands, with funding contingent on the City leading implementation and long-term maintenance operations.

Construction will result in temporary disruptions of parking lots, pedestrian routes, and nearby facilities. Staff will work to manage these disruptions and maintain access wherever feasible. Planned changes to vehicular circulation, including the relocation of the Parking Lot 10 driveway to Nelson Avenue, will introduce incremental costs and operational considerations (Appendix C – Driveway and Parking Lot Reconfiguration). These impacts can be managed and mitigated through detailed design, updated signage and pavement markings, and coordinated agreements with St. Luke's Church and the Lakeside Cooperative Apartments Limited. Once complete, increased public use of the upgraded pathway will result in new long-term operating and maintenance responsibilities for the City, with costs directly tied to providing safe, accessible, and consistent public access. These operating impacts are estimated to be approximately \$30,000 annually.

This new publicly accessible pedestrian route is expected to strengthen downtown connectivity, improve access to a significant cultural and heritage area, and advance broader City objectives related to walkability, accessibility, and active transportation (Appendix D - Church Ave). Council approval is required to authorize the necessary agreements and operational planning to advance the St. Luke's Window to the Lake initiative.

Recommendation Report

Background

St. Luke's Church and the City of Burlington share an important pedestrian connection and visual gateway to the waterfront through the historic Church Avenue corridor (Appendix A – Context Map). This green space has served as a protected view corridor for more than a century and forms the approach to one of Burlington's oldest heritage buildings. Recognizing both its cultural significance and functional role, St. Luke's Church has expressed interest in enhancing this space to support a more walkable downtown and to improve pedestrian connections between Apeldoorn Park and Spencer Smith Park by formalizing and upgrading public access across its church-owned lands.

In 2024, through Report [RCC-08-24](#), Council authorized staff to work with St. Luke's Church to assess the feasibility of establishing a publicly accessible pedestrian route from Elgin Street to Lakeshore Road across both City owned and Church owned lands. Since Council direction was provided, and over the past two years of work on this file, staff have advanced the concept to a schematic design level to understand construction requirements, associated legal agreements, operational needs, financial implications, and potential impacts on the surrounding area.

Throughout this period, St. Luke's Church has led extensive engagement efforts with its congregation and surrounding neighbours to gather feedback and build awareness of the initiative. In parallel, the Church has pursued funding to support its portion of the project. Recently, a private donor has offered to fund construction of improvements on Church-owned lands, supplemented by grant funding, contingent on the City leading project implementation and executing the necessary agreements related to access, construction, and long-term maintenance.

This initiative does not introduce a new pedestrian crossing at Lakeshore Road. Instead, it formalizes and improves the existing north-south pedestrian connection to Lakeshore Road, directing pedestrians to one of the two existing signalized crosswalks to access the waterfront while enhancing accessibility, clarity of movement, and overall user experience.

Analysis

The St. Luke's Window to the Lake initiative has been developed within a complex land ownership context that includes City-owned lands, Church-owned lands, and neighbouring properties with legacy access arrangements (Appendix B). Advancing the project requires coordinated negotiations and updated agreements to clearly define responsibilities related to construction, land access, shared use, and long-term maintenance.

Over the past two years, staff have advanced the concept to a schematic design level. Appendix D illustrates the refined pathway alignment and amenity features including accessible seating and gathering spaces. A key element is the proposed relocation of the Parking Lot 10 driveway from Elgin Street to Nelson Avenue, which is intended to eliminate vehicle- pedestrian conflicts along the proposed Window to the Lake pathway (Appendix C). While this change introduces incremental operating considerations, they can be appropriately managed through detailed design, signage, pavement markings, and coordinated agreements with the Church and Lakeside Cooperative Apartments Limited.

A key consideration in advancing the project is establishing a consistent and sustainable maintenance approach for the upgraded pathway and adjacent publicly accessible areas. To ensure maintenance aligns with City service standards and to avoid inconsistent practices that can arise from shared responsibilities, staff recommend that the City assume full responsibility for maintaining all publicly accessible areas within the project boundary. Under this approach, the City would provide year- round maintenance for approximately 175 metres of pathway, including weekly sweeping from April through November, as well as winter plowing following major snowfalls. Seasonal grounds maintenance would also include grass cutting and hedge trimming. Centralizing maintenance under City operations ensures that safety, accessibility, and aesthetic standards are consistently met. It will align service levels with those provided in comparable City- managed parks and public spaces. Staff will include the ongoing operating costs into the 2027 multi-year budget simulation, with expenditures estimated to be no more than \$30,000 annually.

A summary of project costs and funding is provided in the table below, which highlights the significant contribution being made by St. Luke’s Church toward the overall project costs for an amenity that will be enjoyed by both its congregation and the broader Burlington community for many years to come.

Table 1.0 Project Budget and Capital Cost Estimate

PROJECT FUNDING		
City Project PR-PO-2184 (2026 Budget)	\$	250,000
Church Contribution (incl. Grants, donations)	\$	422,000
Total Budget	\$	672,000
PROJECT COSTS (rounded)		
City PO-PR-2184 Driveway Relocation	\$	175,000
City PO-PR-2184 (33%) New Path (Elgin to Parking Lot)	\$	75,000
Church (67%) New Path (Parking Lot to Lakeshore)	\$	177,500
Church- Amenity Spaces	\$	197,000
Project Contingency and Incidentals	\$	47,000
Total Construction Estimate	\$	672,000

Options considered

Staff considered several implementation options, including delaying or cancelling the project entirely. The recommended approach, to proceed with the full initiative in partnership with St. Luke's Church, offers the greatest long-term benefit, aligns with the Church's vision, and leverages committed donor and grant funding. Delaying the project risks losing third-party financial support and prolonging uncertainty for all parties. Community engagement to date has been strong, with St. Luke's consulting its congregation and neighbours and staff engaging adjacent landowners regarding access and maintenance expectations. Overall, the project is ready to advance, supported by funding commitments, community engagement, and a clear understanding of legal and operational requirements.

Recommendation Details

Staff recommend that Council authorize the City to proceed with the St. Luke's Window to the Lake initiative in partnership with St. Luke's Church. This includes allowing staff to negotiate and enter into the necessary agreements related to construction, land access, shared use, and long-term maintenance across both City-owned and Church-owned lands, in consultation with Legal Services. Council approval would also support staff working with St. Luke's Church and the third-party donor to implement the planned improvements on Church property. Following construction, the City would assume responsibility for maintaining all publicly accessible areas within the project boundary, including pathway upkeep, seasonal grounds maintenance, tree care, and winter operations. Staff would also be directed to advance operational planning and public communications to manage construction impacts and support a smooth transition to the new publicly accessible pedestrian route. Lastly, implementation of the project will include a comprehensive community communications plan to keep residents informed throughout construction and to promote the newly accessible pedestrian connection once complete.

Key Dates & Milestones

April 2026

- Council endorsement for staff to proceed

May to October 2026

- Development and/or amendment of required legal agreements
- Detailed Design

October to December 2026

- Tender and contract award

Spring/Summer 2027

- Construction
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Implications

The St. Luke's Window to the Lake initiative will deliver a publicly accessible pedestrian connection from Elgin Street to Lakeshore Road, improving downtown walkability and enhancing access to a culturally and historically significant area. While construction will result in temporary disruptions to parking, circulation, and pedestrian access, these impacts can be effectively managed through coordinated design measures and communication.

From a financial perspective, the project introduces incremental operating costs for pathway and grounds maintenance, snow clearing, and long-term tree care, which will be incorporated into the multi-year budget simulation; capital costs are shared proportionately between the City and the Church/donor based on land ownership and improvements.

From a human resources standpoint, implementation and ongoing maintenance requirements can be accommodated within existing staff capacity, with work focused on construction coordination, agreement execution, maintenance oversight, and public communication.

From a climate and environmental perspective, the project offers opportunities to enhance sustainable travel choices and integrate climate resilient design elements such as improved tree health, enhanced shade, and active transportation connections.

Overall, the initiative supports broader City objectives related to walkability, accessibility, heritage preservation, and public realm investment, representing a meaningful long-term benefit to the community.

References

[RCC-08-24 St. Luke's Window to the Lake opportunity](#)

Strategic Alignment

- Designing and delivering complete communities
 - Providing the best services and experiences
 - Protecting and improving the natural environment and taking action on climate change
 - Driving organizational performance
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Appendices:

- A. Context Map
- B. Properties Context Map
- C. Driveway and Parking Lot Reconfiguration
- D. Church Ave.
- E. St. Lukes Church – Letter of Partnership Support

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and approved by the Commissioner, Head of Corporate Affairs, Chief Financial Officer, and Commissioner of Legal and Legislative Services/City Solicitor.