



SUBJECT: Downtown Streetscape Guidelines
TO: Planning and Development Committee
FROM: Department of City Building – Planning, Building and Culture

Report Number: PB-50-19

Wards Affected: 2

File Numbers: 560-01

Date to Committee: July 9, 2019

Date to Council: July 15, 2019

Recommendation:

Receive and file the draft Downtown Streetscape Guidelines, included as Appendix A to department of city building report PB-50-19; and

Table department of city building report PB-50-19 to the Planning and Development Committee meeting of September 10, 2019 for debate and approval in principle of the Downtown Streetscape Guidelines with implementation subject to future budget considerations.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to present Council with the new Downtown Streetscape Guidelines (Appendix A), to guide the enhancement of the downtown street boulevards through future streetscape improvements. The guidelines provide an updated design framework and foundation for the transformation of the downtown streetscapes to improve accessibility, connectivity, safety, walkability, maintenance, and character.

If approved, the new Downtown Streetscape Guidelines will allow staff to update the engineering / urban design detail standards for each of the streetscape design elements that will contribute to the enhancement and positive aesthetic attributes of the downtown's public realm.

The Downtown Streetscape Guidelines provide general and specific design guidance for identified character areas within the downtown, as well as key strategies to assist with implementation of the recommendations contained in the document.

Implementation will take place through future street-related capital improvements and asset renewal as well as private development/redevelopment projects.

The updated Guidelines are based on input received from several public and stakeholder consultation sessions held since 2015. In May 2018, a draft of the Downtown Streetscape Guidelines was shared with the public and stakeholders for additional input and feedback.

The Guidelines support all four pillars of the Strategic Plan: A City that Grows; A City that Moves; A Healthy and Greener City; and, An Engaging City.

Background and Discussion:

Background:

The current downtown streetscape guidelines, known as the Streetscape Design Study for Downtown Burlington, were adopted in 1982.

In 2015, Council approved a capital project to study and update the downtown streetscaping guidelines due to changes to standards for accessibility, lighting and safety, and to consider advancements in technologies related to streetscape elements such as paving materials and lighting technologies. The timing of this approval also aligned with the emergence of the downtown as an area of interest for private growth and investment and in consideration of other public infrastructure investments such as those made to the waterfront park that adopted a new design language for Spencer Smith Park and segments of Lakeshore Road in the early 2000s, which strayed from the original theme of the Streetscape Design Study for Downtown Burlington.

Between 2015 and 2019, stakeholders and members of the public were engaged to develop new Downtown Streetscape Guidelines. This process took place over three phases, with the first two led by staff with support from a consulting team. The final phase was completed in-house lead by an interdepartmental staff team with representatives from Capital Works (Accessibility, Asset Management, Design and Build, Site Engineering); City Building (Planning and Urban Design); Roads, Parks and Forestry; Transportation Services; and, Transit.

The review and update process has included public open houses, a workshop and presentations to Heritage Burlington, the Halton Developers' Liaison Committee (HDLC), and the Burlington Downtown Business Association (BDDBA), on-line surveys and questionnaires. In May 2018, draft Downtown Streetscape Guidelines were shared with the public and stakeholders for additional input and feedback.

Upon adoption, the new Downtown Streetscape Guidelines would replace the current downtown streetscape guidelines.

Discussion:

A lot has changed since the current downtown streetscape guidelines were adopted when it comes to our understanding of the economic, social, and environmental benefits of streetscape improvements, not only through beautification, but also through a street's role, function, and operation. The new Guidelines are based on a consideration for these economic, social, and environmental benefits, as well as best practices for placemaking and policy alignment. Staff believe that a refreshed and renewed approach to downtown streetscape design and improvements will result in a more vibrant and attractive downtown, highlighting it as an amenity for all to enjoy while enhancing quality of life and economic development.

The proposed Guidelines support designs that encourage streetscapes where all users move through more cautiously and are aware of each other. Pedestrian-focused and -oriented streets can result in fewer accidents and prevent potential deaths or severe injuries. The Guidelines also support a reduction of impacts on the natural environment. For example, enhancements to the public realm that encourage people to walk rather than drive, result in reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Planting trees that can thrive and grow to maturity results in reduced heat island effect by providing shade on hardscapes, and water quality is improved through tree planting and planters that absorb and filter water. The recommended paving materials are about simplifying the palette of colours and materials proposed to better identify the downtown area. The new guidelines have considered the ability to replicate designs over the long-term to ensure cohesiveness into the future and when it is time to undertake repairs including winter maintenance.

Additionally, the design recommendations contained in the new Downtown Streetscape Guidelines support establishing and reinforcing neighbourhood identity through four character areas with streetscape furnishings and materials that enhance the qualities of these areas as destinations. They reflect best practices to reinforce what is great about the downtown as well as create new places and destinations for people to explore through visual interest. The new Guidelines also attempt to move beyond the typical beautification measures with recommendations and strategies that encourage the exploration of entire street transformations. Research has shown that better quality streets lead to higher retail and residential values. In this regard, the new Guidelines are also about inspiring a long-term strategy for future revitalization and a sustainable and healthy downtown environment.

Project Scope:

The study area is defined by the area known as the Downtown Burlington Business Improvement Area (BIA) or Burlington Downtown Business Association (BDBA). It is important to note that the Guidelines apply only to the street boulevard or the area between the curb edge and either the front lot line of abutting properties and/or the building face as referenced in the Streetscape Anatomy section of the Guidelines. While some general design guidance is provided for streetscape improvements outside of the boulevard, specific recommendations related to the functional design of streets and/or intersections are outside the project scope. It is anticipated that updated functional design standards outside of the street boulevard will be explored as an action item resulting from the Integrated Mobility Plan.

Overview of the Downtown Streetscape Guidelines:

The Guidelines establish a renewed vision and design framework (including design principles, priorities, guidelines and strategies) for future streetscape improvements within the downtown's public rights-of-way and more specifically the various street boulevards. The intent is to provide recommendations on how to create and contribute to a safe, vibrant, cohesive, and walkable downtown environment.

Chapter one of the Guidelines provides the background and reason for the update. Chapter two sets out the design framework including a vision, set of guiding design principles, an overview of the new character areas, each of which aim to reinforce and support the unique qualities that already exist in the downtown while also assisting in making these areas visually diverse and distinctive. Chapter three establishes the project scope, which is limited to the street boulevard, and contains design priorities, guidelines and strategies for the implementation of future improvements. Chapter four sets out the implementation framework and introduces the need to establish an interdepartmental team that will be responsible for the coordination, design, review and implementation of all public-sector streetscape improvements, including capital forecasted plans and projects as well as operational maintenance projects such as sidewalk repairs, in the downtown.

The key highlights or changes from the current guidelines include:

- The introduction of a vision statement:
 - “To **enhance** the public realm by creating **high quality** downtown streetscapes that are **attractive, pedestrian-friendly**, and support **vibrant** destinations.”;
- The creation of five design principles for all decisions related to the design of the downtown streetscape:
 - Pedestrian First Focus;

- Green & Sustainable;
- Easy to Use & Equitable;
- Long Lasting; and
- Connect & Integrate;
- The establishment of Design Priorities to provide guidance when existing street geometry cannot accommodate all anticipated streetscape design elements;
- A renewed and inclusive approach to character areas;
 - Each of the different character areas will have its own distinctive group of furnishings while still maintaining an overall sense of unity.
- A careful consideration of the number of different furnishing pieces to simplify the on-going operations and maintenance of the downtown;
- The introduction of a streetscape anatomy and terminology to assist with establishing boulevard zones and priorities for the re-design of downtown boulevards through operational maintenance and necessary upgrades;
- A simplified boulevard treatment that aligns with the desired streetscape anatomy;
- Support for high-quality tree planting where possible;
- A simplified colour palette for metal components on streetscape elements and furnishings including paving materials (ending the use of red banding); and
- A renewed approach to pedestrian lighting with an emphasis on dual luminaires along Lower Brant Street to reinforce its status as the downtown 'main street'.

Consultation:

The formal consultation period for these design guidelines began in 2015. Public consultation and engagement took place in three phases:

Phase 1 – September 30, 2015

- An open house was held on September 30, 2015 attended by approximately 30 people. At this public meeting, participants had the opportunity to work in small groups and discuss potential improvements to downtown streetscape elements such as streetlights, benches, waste receptacles, paving materials and sidewalk crossings.

Phase 2 – June 25, 2016

- Some examples of possible future directions for the streetscape furnishings were displayed at Civic Square in front of City Hall. This included pavement options, waste receptacles and bench samples.

Phase 3 – May 17, 2018

- Two drop-in open houses were held on May 17, 2018 at the Art Gallery of Burlington and was attended by approximately 30 people.

Following Phase 2 a draft version of the design guidelines was prepared and released for public review and posted on the City's website. A commenting period for review of the draft document ran from May 2018 to May 2019.

Summary of feedback and changes

Based on feedback gathered from the online survey and the first two phases of public consultation, residents told us they would like to see:

- wider sidewalks where possible in the downtown;
- an increase in the number of pedestrian crossings to help feel safe when crossing the street;
- more garbage, recycling and compost bins;
- more benches to sit and enjoy the downtown;
- more greenery and street trees on downtown streets;
- a greater number of bike lanes and bike racks in convenient locations; and
- a style of furnishings that reinforces the 'main street' character along Brant Street.

With the input gathered through the first two phases of consultation, the city released a first draft of the Downtown Streetscape Guidelines in May 2018, with additional opportunities for the public to comment and share input, including two open house events on May 17, 2018. Through this public comment period, we received the following feedback:

- General agreement with the defined character areas, particularly agreement with Lower Brant Street as a 'main street';
- Consider exploring different colours outside of Lower Brant Street;
- A heritage theme of furnishings should extend beyond Lower Brant Street, but maintain a specific treatment for Lower Brant Street; and
- A desire for waste receptacles to have multiple streams for recyclables, compost, etc.

Because of the feedback received for the draft Guidelines released in May 2018, the document was refined further to include the following revisions:

- A reduction in the total number of furnishing options (from three to two);
- The addition of a new section entitled Design Priorities to inform the preliminary planning, design, and implementation of the guidelines (Section 3.2);

- The addition of guidelines specific to Transit Stops (Section 3.3.3);
- A recommendation for the Lakeshore Road Character Street streetscape elements to be painted grey; and
- The addition of a concept drawings to help demonstrate a typical layout scenario for each of the Character Area streetscapes (Appendix A).

The development community has been integral to the review and development of the Guidelines. Several meetings and opportunities to provide written feedback have taken place during the consultation phases. Members of HDLC, namely the Hamilton-Halton Home Builder's Association (HHHBA) and Mr. Mark Bales on behalf of Carriage Gate have raised several concerns with respect to the timing, financing, and general and specific implementation.

Staff believes the Guidelines as revised address many of the concerns expressed by the development community including how to navigate design constraints where the street geometry is not anticipated to change (through the addition of the Section 3.2 Design Priorities). Other comments, point to considerations that are very important to overall street design, however, they are outside the scope of this project (such as specifications for bump-outs, reduced land widths, and reduced turning radii). Staff's general commentary here is that there appears to be a misunderstanding of the role of design guidelines. As noted above, the Guidelines provide a framework to inform the decision-making process. This document is not putting forward a plan with concepts or a redesign of each street within the downtown. Were this the case, many of the comments received from the development community would be appropriate and staff would have addressed each and everyone of them directly. Moreover, while Urban Design staff agree that these are all valid design solutions that promote the Design Principles of these Guidelines and support a walkable and pedestrian-oriented downtown, the development of standard specifications would have been considered as part of a more comprehensive street design initiative and are currently outlined in the Guidelines as a key strategy or outcome of the Guidelines' approval.

Other comments suggest that a list of approved plants and trees be provided to assist consulting landscape architects with their plan preparation to development application submission. Staff note that this list will be made available as part of the Tree Planting Guidelines update. Future iterations of the DSG may incorporate this as an appendix. Several questions dig deeper than the scope of this project, for example questions about integration of a stormwater management system and the use of permeable pavers. At present, the Guidelines only recognize these techniques as opportunities to explore for future consideration of streetscape and stormwater management design. As such, they are identified as key strategies in the document.

All feedback received to date, including comments from staff from various departments within the corporation and that may be impacted either directly or indirectly by the

Guidelines, have informed refinements to the document presented for approval and attached to this report as Appendix A.

Implementation:

The Guidelines provide a general implementation framework for future downtown streetscape improvements that will occur through either private or public sector investments and development. At least initially, it is expected that private sector development or redevelopment proposals will account for the more significant frontage improvements. Downtown public sector investments for streetscape improvements on the other hand, will be planned and implemented in accordance with the capital investment and budget framework and aligned with the city’s approved Asset Management Plan. The timing of implementation will be coordinated with other roadway works with consideration of funding, available resources, and prioritization of other city projects.

The following table lists some of the current and forecasted private and public sector development projects that represent the best opportunities to implement the new streetscape improvements over the short-term.

Table 1: Current and Forecasted Projects

Project	Status
Private Sector	
The Bridgewater	Site Plan Approved
The Berkeley	Site Plan Approved
Saxony	Site Plan Approved
Nautique	Site Plan Reviews
Brock II	Site Plan Reviews
Gallery	Site Plan Reviews
Public Sector	
James Street Reconstruction	Identified in 10 year Capital Budget and Forecast
John Street Reconstruction	Identified in 10 year Capital Budget and Forecast

Note: several more known private development applications are in process for land within the Downtown but do not yet have any status,

which would present additional opportunities for short-term implementation.

It should be noted that based on the known public and private investments identified in the table above, full conversion to refreshed streetscapes throughout the Downtown will be a long-term implementation strategy. As such, there will be situations where abrupt transitions between the current and refreshed streetscapes will occur in the downtown.

Should Council wish to accelerate implementation of the new streetscape guidelines beyond the public investments currently identified in the City's Asset Management Plan, further analysis of funding options is required.

Downtown Streetscape Implementation Team

The City will establish a multi-disciplinary interdepartmental staff team that will be responsible for the design, review, and implementation and monitoring of all public sector streetscape improvements. This group will also be responsible for identifying implementation opportunities and informing the capital budget on public realm investments related to infrastructure, public service and transportation facilities throughout the downtown. Operational impacts to budgets will also be presented for consideration as part of any implementation strategy. The team will be coordinated jointly by the Departments of City Building, Capital Works, and Transportation Services and meet at least once a quarter or as needed.

For private sector development applications, streetscape plan review will occur through established planning processes such as site plan approval.

Next Steps:

Upon Council endorsement of the Guidelines, staff will begin to update engineering / urban design detail standards and establish a downtown streetscape implementation team.

Should Council wish to direct staff, further public consultation and engagement opportunities can continue for the selection of specific streetscape elements (e.g. benches, bike racks, streetlight fixtures). Otherwise, staff will proceed straight to the procurement of street materials and furnishings based on the themes established in these guidelines. The chosen selections will be incorporated into the Downtown Streetscape Guidelines document and used as streetscapes in the downtown are reconstructed.

Strategy/process

Appendix A is a copy of the final draft of the new Downtown Streetscape Guidelines, which is presented for Council approval.

Options considered

Consideration of all feedback received to date has resulted in a revised final draft of the new Downtown Streetscape Guidelines. A wide range of issues were considered given that the ultimate realization of the Guidelines impacts several City departments.

An alternative option is to maintain the status quo and continue to require streetscape improvements that reflect the current standards. However, since this option is dated and does not reflect current industry best practices, this is not a recommended option.

Financial Matters:

A preliminary review has been undertaken to estimate the costs of constructing a typical 120-metre-long segment of boulevard based on the new streetscape recommendations contained in the Guidelines. A cost premium of approximately \$1,185 per linear metre is estimated. See the table below for a cost breakdown and comparison between the costing for the current and proposed streetscapes. Accordingly, if approved the streetscape guidelines will require funding adjustments for future capital projects. As highlighted in the table below, a significant source of the increase in capital costs are the result of the city's new standard use of underground soil cell technologies for planting in urban environments. The new tree planting standards account for approximately 80% of the cost increase. Soil cells provide for a minimum amount of uncompacted soil volumes to support healthy street trees in the downtown and positively contribute to Burlington's urban canopy. It should be noted that this new direction and associated costs are independent of the streetscape guidelines and will be brought forward simultaneously by the Tree Management Service for approval.

Table 2: Estimated Costs per 120 metre Segment of Downtown Streetscape

		Current	Proposed	Difference	Difference (\$/metre)
i.	Hard Landscape	\$50,019.12	\$67,230.00	\$17,210.88	\$143.42
ii.	Soft Landscape	\$17,500.00	\$123,000.00	\$105,500.00	\$879.17
iii.	Street Furnishings	\$72,200.00	\$80,400.00	\$8,200.00	\$68.33

iv. Demolition and Site Preparation	\$11,400.00	\$11,400.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL	\$151,119.12	\$282,030.00	\$130,910.88	\$1,090.92

Minor increases for hard landscape costs can be associated with the use of paver units in furnishing zones. Although, these costs can be expected upfront because unit pavers are a premium product treatment in comparison to the alternative pour-in-place coloured concrete. Staff expect the long-term benefits of using unit pavers such as durability and ease of repair will be more cost efficient over time.

The even more marginal increases for street furnishing costs are attributed to the new design guidelines for streetlighting, which suggest that spacing should be 15m. The intent of this spacing suggestion is to create a rhythm along a segment of street, alternating between a street light pole and street tree every 7.5m. As such, one additional street light and one additional street tree can be accommodated along a stretch of 120m. Another consideration of the new Guidelines, suggest that throughout the downtown benches should be placed at intervals of 30m. This guideline is based on best practices and directly aligns with the city’s Active Aging Plan that seeks to provide areas of rest more frequently.

Also, in 2015, Council approved the BDBA’s request to alter the boundaries of the Burlington Downtown Business Improvement Area by way of By-law 30-2015, enacted on March 23, 2015. The boundary expansion resulted in an increase in the number of streets now within the downtown area. These additional streets or street segments are now subject to the streetscape guidelines and will therefore impact the future capital as well as operational and maintenance costs required to implement and maintain their streetscape improvements.

Additionally, a preliminary review of the day-to-day operation and maintenance of the Downtown has been undertaken by the Roads, Parks, and Forestry (RPF) Department. The findings indicate that there is at present, a funding gap in the level of service being provided in the downtown. This has been estimated at 1.67 FTEs and a total operating budget request of approximately \$105,000.00 for service expansion. This gap includes: weekend foot patrol; waste removal; sidewalk sweeper; roadway sweeper; 3 shifts for snow removal; a new sidewalk plow/slater; horticulture maintenance, including flower planting and watering of planters and flower pots, weed control of municipal parking lots and streetscape sidewalks, mowing/trimming of boulevards; spring placement of benches, waste receptacles, planters and their fall removal; and replacement of site furnishings.

It is anticipated that an additional 2.83 FTEs and an additional operating budget request of approximately \$255,000.00 is required to maintain the new Downtown Streetscape

Guidelines as recommended. This additional costing is based on service expansion to the expanded BIA boundaries including additional benches, waste receptacles, trees, and planters, additional maintenance required for an increase in streetscape furnishings within the core, and anticipated labour costs associated with unit paver maintenance as well as additional maintenance required for the new street tree planting standards.

Requests for additional funding to maintain existing service levels and provide for enhanced service levels will be subject to future budget deliberations.

As identified earlier in this report, implementation of the new streetscape guidelines is a long-term strategy based on known public and private investments. Should Council wish to accelerate the renewal of its downtown streetscapes, further work can be done on financial costing of the recommendations and strategies contained in the Guidelines.

Source of Funding

Funding of \$95,000 was approved as part of the 2015 Capital Budget, which covered the cost of consulting services to delivery the first two phases of this project including background research, public consultation, and delivery of a draft document. An internal staff team built on the work provided by the consultant's original work and are responsible for the delivery of the final draft of the new Downtown Streetscape Guidelines (Appendix A).

Connections:

The Guidelines align with the key strategic directions set out in Burlington's Strategic Plan and connect to various approved documents and ongoing initiatives. Moreover, it is important to note that the Guidelines are intended to be a living document that will be continually edited and updated to evolve with the downtown yet still provide predictability for short-, medium-, and long-range planning and investments.

If approved, the Guidelines will signal the City's commitment to investment in the downtown public realm that will improve the success of small business, including local tourism, and delivery of safe and pedestrian-friendly streets as well as a commitment to design excellence. Accordingly, the recommendations contained in the Guidelines will lead to renewed streetscapes throughout the Downtown that will require a sustained need for enhanced levels of service and corresponding financial resources.

Public Engagement Matters:

Staff hosted several public consultation sessions over the course of 3 years, including a public workshop, 2 open house drop-in sessions, an online survey, and a dedicated web

page. Print and social media were used to advertise these community engagement opportunities.

Conclusion:

The update to the Downtown Streetscape Guidelines are needed to help plan, design, and implement future streetscape improvements throughout the downtown. This report recommends approval of the Downtown Streetscape Guidelines.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Evershed, MCIP RPP
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Appendices:

- A. City of Burlington Downtown Streetscape Guidelines (July 2019)

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.