Project Name: Downtown Brantford Streetscaping

Purpose: Virtual PIC # 1 - Transcript **Date:** November 30, 2020

Slide No.	
1.0	**Cover Slide**
	Hello, and thank you for showing interest and participating in the virtual public information centre, or (PIC) for the Downtown Brantford Streetscaping EA. This presentation will explain what the project entails, including the project limits, the Municipal Class EA process, and provide potential options for the downtown. We are early in the EA process, and as you will see in this presentation, we are looking for comments and feedback from the public. All of the public input that is received is used to determine the direction of this project and be taken into account when evaluating the potential options for downtown Brantford
2.0	**Agenda**
	In this presentation we will discuss: • The project area, the EA Process and the current status. • The Vision of Downtown Brantford. We will present the problem/opportunity statement for the project. • We will discuss some of the previous and other ongoing studies that will impact this project. • We will review the key constraints that have been identified, as well as some of the most commonly identified priorities for the study area. • The results of the stakeholder workshops that were held in August will be shared. • Sample road cross sections that were developed in the workshop sessions will be shown, with the hope of getting your feedback, and any ideas for additional cross sections or design elements that you would want to see included. • We will look at the preliminary evaluation criteria that will be used to assess various alternatives as they are developed.
3.0	**Vision**
	The project team, working with City of Brantford staff has prepared a vision statement specific to this project. “Create a Downtown Brantford that is attractive, vibrant, and safe for all users while providing the infrastructure needed to handle growth in the City’s core.”

	We can break the vision statement down into a few components. Make Downtown a destination place - The goal of the project is to make Downtown a place people want to go to, and not a place people simply drive through on the way to somewhere else. Enhance infrastructure for all transportation modes including pedestrians, cyclists, transit users – this implies that the redesign of downtown should consider how to incorporate all modes of transportation, and whether priority should be given to any specific form of transportation. Improve accessibility – When considering any of the improvements to the downtown, providing accessibility must be at the forefront to ensure an equitable environment that is safe and comfortable for all users.
4.0	**Study Area and Scope**
	The study area is Colborne Street and Dalhousie Street between Brant Avenue and where Colborne Street and Dalhousie Street intersect at the east limit. The study area also captures the north-south streets between Colborne Street and Dalhousie Street, Brant Avenue, King Street, Queen Street, Market Street, Charlotte Street, and Clarence Street. The scope of this project is to look specifically at the underground utilities and servicing, including gas, telecommunications, etc., and the above ground infrastructure and streetscaping. Streetscaping includes the physical layout and composition of the roadways, such as one-way and two-way traffic operations, on-street parking, sidewalk widths, street lighting, street furniture, plantings and trees, and public art.
5.0	**Problem/Opportunity Statement**
	As part of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (or EA) process, the project team is mandated to develop a problem or opportunity statement. This statement acts as an anchor or a reminder for the project team as to what the goal of the project is, and what problem they are trying to solve. The problem/opportunity statement that has been identified for this project is to: “Revitalize Brantford’s core by improving infrastructure, accessibility, safety, and rebuilding an aesthetically beautiful and adaptable downtown.”

6.0	**Class EA Planning and Design Process**
	We are still very early in the planning and design process. The solid line in the figure represents what's been completed and where we are now, while the dashed line represents our next steps. In July of 2020 the project team sent out the notice of study commencement, and began collecting background information. This is the first of the two planned public information centers for this project where we are bringing our progress to the community for feedback. We are using this as an opportunity to gather questions and comments that will assist us in the next phases of the project where we will evaluate the alternative solutions for the study area.
7.0	**Studies**
	There are a number of studies that have preceded this EA, including the 2014 Transportation Master Plan, the 2011 Downtown Streetscape Design Plan, the 2010 Conversion of Colborne Street and Dalhousie Street to Two-Way Traffic Operations EA, among others. The findings of these studies have been used as building blocks for this study. There are also a number of studies that are being undertaken concurrently by the City. These studies include the Three Grand River Crossings EA, the Oak Park Road Extension EA, as well as revisions to the Transportation Master Plan, Master Servicing Plan and Official Plan. It is important that as we move toward developing functional plans for downtown, that they are in line with the findings of the other studies.
8.0	**Key Constraints**
	In order to develop designs for downtown, we first need to identify the constraints that exist within the downtown area. The following are some of the key constraints we have identified: • Curbside Management – this refers to garbage collection, areas for loading and drop-off • One-Way vs Two-Way traffic – both options have space requirements related to various traffic movements which will impact functional designs. • Vehicular Priority and Programming – determination of where and how priority for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists will be given. This will affect the timing of traffic lights, as well as other infrastructure requirements.

9.0	**Key Constraints**
	• Accessibility – ensuring that areas where accessibility is a concern is addressed through design to meet AODA and barrier free standards. • Tree Plantings and Landscaping – careful consideration to where and what types of vegetation is used. Certain species are more well suited than others, and considerations such as the use of underground cells for vegetation can be included in design where possible. • Bike Lanes are important to meet the city's active transportation objectives, but there needs to be connectivity with this cycling network.
10.0	**Key Constraints**
	• Existing built form refers to the shape and type of each building in the corridor. Each building is different, and some have challenges with accessibility. • Sustainability and Surface Treatment of Runoff will need to be considered. An evaluation of the existing stormwater collection system and its ability to convey significant storm events are a significant element that must be considered as part of any design alternative. • Parking – the right amount and right location for parking is important. A parking study is ongoing to determine the parking capacity and utilization of lots and street parking. • Lighting – the lighting to be included in the downtown must be sufficient for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.
11.0	**Workshop Findings**
	In the workshops that were held in August 2020, participants were asked to create cross-sections for Colborne, Dalhousie, and the north-south streets in between that fall within the study area. The configuration of these main streets in terms of vehicle capacity will have implications for nearly all other elements of the streetscape, including the space provisions for sidewalks, bike lanes, street furniture, parking, etc. What we found in the workshop

	sessions was that the participants were evenly split on their preference. Of the 20 cross sections developed for Colborne Street, 11 groups preferred one-way traffic, while 9 preferred two-way traffic. Similarly, for Dalhousie Street, of the 11 cross sections 5 groups preferred one-way while 6 preferred two-way. What this finding indicates is that among all of the stakeholders, there is no overall preference.
12.0	**Workshop Findings – Typical Cross Section Summary**
	This slide illustrates additional findings from the workshop cross section exercise. In general, nearly every group indicated that bike lanes should be included, whether they be on road or separated. Wider sidewalks to encourage walkability and accessibility were important to almost every group that participated. Parking was another area in which most of the participants were in agreement, in that there should be some on street parking. Consideration during design will need to be given to where and how much on street parking should be maintained. Some groups during the workshop decided to develop cross sections of some of the side Streets, Queen Street in particular. In general, the consensus was that the side streets could be an opportunity to introduce additional parking, or enhanced pedestrian or mixed use areas.
13.0	**Workshop Findings – Common Priorities**
	All participants at the workshops were asked to anonymously indicate their top 3 priorities for Downtown. The most common priorities were: • Create a pedestrian friendly environment – wider sidewalks, patio space, public benches, outdoor seating and pedestrian only areas. • Implementation of dedicated bike lanes through the downtown core • Increase the feeling of safety in the downtown area • Overall beautification through tree planting, green spaces, etc. • Slower or reduced traffic in the downtown • Conversion to two-way traffic and maintaining one-way traffic (as mentioned this was split amongst participants) • Addressing accessibility
14.0	**Workshop Findings – full list**
	Illustrated on this slide is the list of priorities and the number of responses each received.

	Even though some of the items such as curbside management, traffic flow and infrastructure improvements were not listed as priorities for a large number of people, they are critically important to this study.
15.0	**Preliminary Evaluation Criteria**
	In order to evaluate the input from stakeholders, and make the key decisions about what can and should be included in the functional designs for downtown, decision making criteria must be used. The project team has developed a preliminary set of evaluation criteria that could be used to evaluate various design elements. At this stage, these criteria are being proposed as being used to evaluate functional designs and various elements considered for downtown: Vision – we will be evaluating how each feature fits in with the overall vision of the project. The level to which each feature or attribute is to being in line with the vision will determine how it fits into the scale shown the legend below. Social environment is a broad item as it relates to streetscaping. It will look at impact to businesses as well. Natural environment looks at existing trees, wildlife, which are generally minimal in a downtown area, but can include stormwater management practices and what type of natural environment will be created once complete. Archaeological and cultural heritage studies are being completed for the project, and they provide insight into what elements exist and should be preserved. The project will also consider what heritage elements could be introduced to the project. Aesthetics will also be a manner in which elements of the streetscape are evaluated. Traffic operations and side street impacts look at how items like bike lanes or one-way versus two-way traffic will influence how people move through downtown. A key objective of the EA is to ensure that downtown is safe, and so consideration will be

	given to how drivers, pedestrians and cyclists will be kept safe. Of course cost will also be considered, not only the capital costs associated with the project, but how will it all be maintained and what will those costs be. Rather than applying weighted values to each criterion, we are proposing to use a scale shown at the bottom of the slide. Each element would be evaluated based on how it meets each criterion. The next few slides will show some examples of how this evaluation style will be used.
16.0	**Common Cross Sections – Two-Way Traffic**
	The next few slides will look at some of the common cross sections that were developed by the stakeholders at the workshop sessions. The first cross section includes 2-way traffic with bikes lanes and some on-street parking. What can be seen is that when bike lanes and parking are included, there is not a whole lot of space remaining for wide sidewalks or outdoor seating areas. Using some of the evaluation criteria from the previous slide, the cross section elements could be evaluated: Vision – How does this cross section fit in with the overall vision of the project? There are some areas for outdoor seating and wider sidewalks, so it does a fair job of fitting in with the overall vision. Safety – pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles are all separated from each other, so this cross section would do a good job of addressing safety. Traffic Operations – Narrower lanes and two-way traffic would slow traffic through the downtown, and turn lanes would be required to address two-way traffic. So overall this cross section could be considered fair as it relates to traffic operations. Aesthetics – this cross section could be made to look drastically different from the

	existing downtown, and would be good from an aesthetic perspective. It should be noted that these are not formal evaluations of the cross sections shown. These cross sections are examples from the workshops, and the evaluations are samples of how they could be evaluated. Once the criteria are established, the project team would use them in this way to evaluate design elements going forward. It should also be noted that as we move forward with evaluating alternatives, the "Do-nothing" alternative will also be evaluated using the same evaluation criteria.
17.0	**Common Cross Sections – Two-Way Traffic**
	Another cross section developed shows 2-way traffic, on-street bike lanes but this time the on-street parking is removed. In this cross section there is space for outdoor dining areas as well as wider sidewalks and street furnishing areas. The on-street bike lanes are sharrowed, meaning that the bike lane is not differentiated, and the lane acts as a shared lane. The result of this cross section would be much slower speeds and vastly reduced capacity of traffic in the downtown. Vision – This cross section would drastically slow down traffic through downtown and would encourage only those visiting downtown to drive here. This is in line with the place making theme within the vision. The slower traffic would also factor into poorer traffic operation. Safety – As cyclists are on the road and in the lane with drivers, this would not be as safe as other cross sections Aesthetics – This cross section allows for more pedestrian, sidewalk, and street furniture space, improving overall aesthetics.
18.0	**Common Cross Sections – Two-Way Traffic**
	This cross section is also 2-way traffic, with separated bike lanes, and reduced on-street parking. With a cross section like this, it is not indicating that all downtown parking would be removed, just that there would be some areas where there would be no parking and more space dedicated to sidewalk areas. The separated bike lanes provide greater pedestrian safety and improve traffic capacity.

	Vision – The slow speeds, and additional street furniture space would be in line with the vision, and the separation of cyclists, vehicles and pedestrians would make this a safe alternative. Traffic operations would be slow, but the wider sidewalks would allow for more street furniture and beautification.
19.0	**Common Cross Sections – One-Way Traffic**
	This cross section shows 2 lanes of one-way traffic, with on-street layby parking and an on-road cycle lane. This allows for wider sidewalks and outdoor seating areas. Vision – This cross section does a bit to address the overall vision of downtown, however sidewalks would only be marginally wider than existing. Narrower lanes would reduce speeds which would help with overall safety, and two lanes of one-way traffic would still allow for good traffic flow through downtown. Aesthetically this would be a fair option.
20.0	**Common Cross Sections – One-Way Traffic**
	Another example of a 2 lane one-way traffic cross section with layby parking, this time including a separated bike lane. The separated bike lane introduces some challenges for how a cyclist can move through downtown. From the separated lane, they would not be able to cross anywhere mid-block. The evaluation of this cross section would be the same as the previous slide, except that the safety factor is increased as the separated bike lane is included, separating cyclists, pedestrians and drivers.
21.0	**Common Cross Sections – One-Way Traffic**
	This is an example of a 2-way cross section that has a separated bike lane, but with reduced on-street parking. This cross section illustrates the outdoor dining space, wider sidewalks and space for features like bus stops, curbside management, etc.

	Vision – As much of the parking is removed in this alternative, the wider sidewalks allow for greater walkability and outdoor space, making it more in line with the vision. The separated bike lanes and reduced lane widths contribute to a safer cross section. Traffic operations would be impacted by the narrower lanes and slower speeds, and overall the additional space would allow for more beautification of the downtown.
22.0	**Next Steps**
	At this stage we have been working with stakeholders to collect as much information and gather as much feedback as possible. Additionally, we are undertaking a number of studies within the EA, including natural environment, cultural heritage, archaeological, traffic and parking studies among others. The information from these studies will contribute to establishing any constraints, such as culturally significant sites, species at risk, archaeological sites, etc. The traffic study will be heavily relied upon for determining the effects of future traffic conditions and how one-way traffic will compare to two-way traffic in the long term scenario The next step will be to begin assembling preliminary functional designs that compile all of the information we have collected along with the studies. We will begin working towards presenting a number of alternative solutions, or various ways of addressing the problem. This will include looking at 1 way and 2 way options, as well as looking at number of lanes, parking etc. These alternative solutions will be presented to the project team, and evaluated using the evaluation criteria once it is established. The alternative solutions will be presented back to the stakeholders, and we will work towards a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative will be presented to the public for comment, and the EA will be filed with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks.
23.0	**Comments / Questions**
	On behalf of the project team I would like to thank you for your interest, and taking the time to participate in this study. We appreciate any and all feedback, and look forward to hearing from you.

We welcome any questions or comments you may have at this time. For details about how to submit feedback, please visit the project webpage at www.brantford.ca/NewDowntown. There you will find a link to fill out the comment/question form, as well as contact information for the Project Team members. Following this video being posted, the first question and comment period will be open for two-weeks, closing at 4:30pm on December 14, 2020. Following this will be a question and answer townhall video presentation being posted to the project webpage on December 21, 2020 at 3:00pm. The second question and comment period will be open for four-weeks, closing at 4:30pm on January 15, 2021. Following this, a frequently asked question document will be posted to the project webpage, summarizing the feedback received, on January 25, 2021 at 3:00pm, concluding the virtual Public Information Centre.