



Project Name: Downtown Brantford Streetscaping

MTE File No.: 46995-100

Purpose: PIC #1 – Q&A Town Hall Transcript

Date: December 21, 2020

Slide No.	
1.0	Cover Slide
	<p>Hello, and thank you for participating in the virtual public information centre, or (PIC) for the Downtown Brantford Streetscaping Environmental Assessment. I will be presenting on behalf of MTE Consultants, the consulting firm selected by the City of Brantford to assist with the Downtown Brantford Streetscaping Municipal Class EA. This question and answer presentation will address many of your questions about the streetscaping study that have been submitted in response to the PIC and materials that were posted to the project website on November 30th. We will quickly recap where we are in the EA process, and then answer the questions that have been submitted.</p>
2.0	PIC #1 Process
	<p>The PIC #1 virtual presentation was posted on the City’s project webpage on November 30th, and a 2-week period was allotted for questions and comments. We are currently at the Town Hall question and answer stage which includes this video answering the questions that were submitted. We will be accepting additional questions and comments for PIC 1 until January 15, 2021. We will then put together a frequently asked questions document that will be posted to the City’s project page on January 25, 2021</p>
3.0	PIC Presentation Video
	<p>If you have an interest in knowing more about this project, and have not had a chance to view the PIC video that was uploaded on November 30th, we recommend watching the video which can be viewed at the link shown. The PIC presentation will provide further details on the study area, the importance of the Municipal Class EA process and where we are in that process.</p> <p>The presentation also discusses the vision for downtown, and discusses the objectives of the project. There are a number of ongoing and background studies that are discussed, along with the constraints and priorities of the project. In August, the project team held a number of stakeholder workshops to gather feedback, and the presentation presents the feedback results of those workshops. This includes a number of cross sections for the downtown that were developed and presented to the public. Finally, the presentation looked at the evaluation criteria</p>



being proposed for the project, along with the process of utilizing the decision making criteria.

4.0 'Come Around To A New Downtown'

The City of Brantford conducted an online survey for residents to provide feedback on Downtown Brantford. The survey was available on the project webpage from October 13, 2020 to November 20, 2020.

- The survey included 11 questions, and received 418 responses.
- Residents were asked to provide feedback on their interaction and impressions of Downtown Brantford including:
 - How often do you travel Downtown
 - What modes of travel do you utilize to get Downtown
 - Once arrived, what mode of travel do you utilize within the Downtown
 - What are your main reasons for coming Downtown
 - What do you feel makes a Downtown (for any City) attractive for visitors?
 - What are your favourite elements of Downtown Brantford?
 - What are areas for improvement?

The following slides will present the results of some of the questions that were included in the survey.

5.0 'Come Around To A New Downtown'

While all questions provided valuable feedback to further understand travel and use trends, impressions, and preferences for Downtown Brantford, some of the questions are directly related to the streetscape and should be considered in determining and prioritizing alternatives for enhancements.

One question that was relevant to this streetscaping project was “How Do You Usually Travel TO Downtown”

Of the 418 responses, 309 people indicated that they drive to downtown, and an additional 69 people indicated that they are passengers, which includes cabs. 60 people indicated that they walk or run, while 26 indicated that they bike, and 19 indicated that they take the bus.

Based on this feedback, the majority of people travelling to the downtown are relying on vehicular travel to get to downtown. This is important to consider as we can assume that parking will be an



important provision within the downtown’s streetscape enhancements.

Enhancements through potential improvements to pedestrian and active transportation provisions to make the downtown more accessible for other modes of travel may also reduce the reliance on vehicular travel displayed through this response.

6.0 ‘Come Around To A New Downtown’

Another question from the survey way, “How Do You Usually Travel WITHIN Downtown” – select all that apply.

260 people indicated that they drive when getting around in downtown, and 205 people indicated that they walk to get around within downtown. 47 people indicated they were passengers, 20 people use a bike, and 8 use the bus.

Based on this feedback, the majority of people travelling within the downtown are also relying on vehicular travel, however pedestrian travel increases significantly once pedestrians have arrived.

This is important to consider as we can once again assume that parking will be an important provision within the downtown’s streetscape enhancements, but inclusion of components which contribute to walkability and pedestrian comfort should also be prioritized.

Regardless of travel by car, bus, bike, or foot, the public realm will need to provide barrier-free travel opportunities for all visitors within the downtown.

7.0 ‘Come Around To A New Downtown’

“What are some things that make you want to visit a city’s Downtown”

This question was open ended, and allowed each respondent to provide their own response. The use of key phrases or references for all respondents were reviewed and tabulated. The percentages shown on this slide reflect the number of respondents who made indicated that the listed items would make them want to visit a city’s downtown.

44.1% of people indicated that they visit downtown for the shopping and services, and another



39.5% indicated that restaurants, cafes and patios were the draw for them. Festivals and special events are what draw another 27%. 15.8% percent said they visit downtown if it is safe, 11.4% visit for the outdoor space, 10.9% indicated that the presence, culture and vision were important to them. Other responses to this question included entertainment, cleanliness, trails, cycling and recreation, walkability, art, and convenient parking.

The results from this question are important to consider as the enhancements to the streetscape can provide opportunities for increased engagement with built form, space for store-front seating areas and cafés, contribute to the presence and identity of place, and support pedestrian comfort. Each of the items noted can be enhanced through streetscape improvements, as an enhanced streetscape can propel further development and opportunities to further contribute to the opportunities and sense of place the Downtown can provide for all residents and visitors.

8.0	‘Come Around To A New Downtown’
	<p>One last question from the survey that was particularly relevant was “When thinking about Downtown Brantford, which of these elements are most important to you?” (rank 10 options from 1-10, with 1 being the most important, and 10 being the least important).</p> <p>The 10 items are listed to the left, with the centre-column noting the number of instances each item was noted as the #1 priority (with % of #1 ranking in parentheses).</p> <p>The final column indicates the average ranking out of 10 based upon all responses provided.</p> <p>201 of the respondents, or 50.9% indicated that enhancing public safety was their biggest priority. 54 people, or 13.7% indicated attracting new business, 32 or 8.1% indicated better walkability, 24 or 6.1% indicated keeping streets/walkways clear of litter. More greenery, place to socialize, bike lanes and parking, outdoor events, and enhancing corridors received a range of 1.8% to 6.1% of respondents indicating they were their number 1 priority.</p> <p>The results of the question are important, as they reflect the perception of the downtown as an unsafe place. Many respondents noted specifically in the previous question that as long as the downtown is perceived as unsafe, the downtown will not be successful.</p> <p>The enhancement of the streetscape which connects the downtown will play a pivotal role in changing the perception of the downtown. Better streets and enhanced character and</p>



accommodation for pedestrians offer more flexibility for programming and events. This can draw more people into the downtown and create interest in the area, which spurs development and further services, drawing more people into the downtown, and so on. The utilization of streetscape enhancement as a tool for economic development to the benefit of the local community is powerful, and the opportunity for a connected, accessible, and cohesive streetscape for Downtown Brantford can provide a stimulus towards changing the perception of the downtown into an inviting, vibrant, and safe destination for everyone within the community.

9.0 Questions and Answers

Since the PIC slides and walkthrough video was posted on November 30, 2020, we have received a number of questions and comments.

The remainder of this video will focus on addressing your questions and comments. The following slides paraphrase the questions and comments that have been received and will categorize them based on the themes that have emerged.

10.0 Preliminary Evaluation Criteria

The first theme for questions relates to the evaluation criteria. The question was, will each of the evaluation criteria have an equal weight in the ranking of the various options as each one is evaluated?

At this stage, the evaluation criteria are still proposed, as we are looking for feedback from stakeholders as to whether other factors should be considered. We have not determined if all criteria will have an equal weighting. We may look to maintain equal weighting, and combine criteria under subheadings which would allow for a more equal weighting.

11.0 One-Way versus Two-Way Traffic

Another theme for questions and comments refers to the preference for one-way and two-way traffic. From those comments received, preference for one-way versus two-way is fairly evenly divided.

We have received numerous comments from stakeholder sharing their opinion on whether Colborne Street and Dalhousie Street should be maintained with one-way traffic or if they should



be converted to two-way traffic, and there are pros and cons to each option. One of the key objectives of this EA is to determine a preferred alternative which includes the determination of whether these roads will be converted or not. The project team is currently conducting traffic studies which will help provide some clarity to the impacts of each option. Through this study we will evaluate how each road functions currently, and how it will function in the future with expected growth. It will also look at how each road will function if it were converted to two-way, today and in the future. Consideration will also have to be given to how the surrounding streets will be affected by any changes.

Aside from the traffic study itself, the project team will evaluate how each option impacts businesses, residents, overall safety, amongst many factors, and this requires feedback from key stakeholders and the public.

12.0	Curbside Management / Garbage
	<p>Another theme for questions and comments received is curbside management and garbage. Will there be significant Improvement to litter control?</p> <p>Improving curbside management is a key objective of this EA, which includes garbage collection, loading and unloading, etc. Excessive garbage in the streets is a comment has been received quite frequently, and is something that will be addressed in this streetscaping EA. Currently there is insufficient infrastructure to contain the garbage that is collected daily, and with the reconstruction, we will look at including infrastructure that will increase the storage capacity of garbage. Improvements to the infrastructure for businesses to store garbage will keep the garbage off the streets, and proper storage areas may help reduce the frequency with which garbage collection is required.</p>
13.0	Accessibility
	<p>Another theme for questions and comments received is accessibility. What are the distinct features of the downtown that support accessibility?</p> <p>One of the key objectives of this EA is to design a streetscape in the downtown that is accessible for people of all ages. There are some challenges in regards to connecting to the existing built form which we will look to address in the design. As an example, there are buildings that currently have a step up or down to the front door, and so we will look to find ways to minimize the impact of these accessibility features.</p>



The streetscape design will also follow all current AODA standards and barrier free design, so through redesign, accessibility concerns should be addressed.

The Project Team has received a number of questions about how the streetscape design will address concerns of accessibility for older adults and incorporate age-friendly design principles.

In addition to the past and concurrent studies that City has conducted such as the Transportation Master Plan, Official Plan, etc., the Project Team will be looking at other City strategies including the Age-Friendly Plan to ensure that any options are consistent with those directions. The 8 domains addressed in the age-friendly planning guide will be addressed throughout the design in various ways such as creating more accessible sidewalks, as well as other features. Once we get further into the design phase, these components will be addressed in more detail.

14.0

Parking

Another theme for questions and comments received is parking. How will Downtown balance the need for convenient parking, especially for persons with accessibility issues, with demands for space?

Is there opportunity to increase the quantity of on-street parking?

Parking is also a significant focus of the EA, specifically how much parking, what type of parking, and the location of the parking. Part of this EA includes a detailed evaluation of the utilization of the existing parking lots, and a look at the amount and use of on street parking. As we move forward through the EA, we will be working towards providing a parking strategy that ensures adequate parking for all users, including accessible parking.

It should also be noted that a number of respondents have indicated that they believe there is a lack of on street parking in the downtown.

15.0

Active Transportation

Another theme for questions and comments received is active transportation. Cycling to school and work means fewer cars in the downtown, less noise and pollution. People would cycle to special events if bicycle stands were part of the streetscape.



The inclusion of active transportation in the downtown is important to the City, and through the EA we are looking at ways to integrate the cycling networks that exist into the downtown. For cyclists, it is important that there be connectivity with the trails and bike paths used surrounding the downtown. The Grand River is so close to the downtown, and as part of the design we will look at ways to create connections with this trail system as well as others.

Active transportation also includes pedestrians, and so we will also be looking at ways to make downtown more walkable. This can be done with widening sidewalks, improving the overall pedestrian experience, and increasing the level of pedestrian safety.

16.0 Safety / Social Issues

Another theme for questions and comments received is safety and social issues. How will the new Downtown promote a safe environment for walking and visiting?

How will the new Downtown address public safety concerns and social issues such as homelessness?

It has been abundantly clear through feedback received at the stakeholder workshops and feedback from the first PIC process that safety is a key concern for people in the downtown. The project team will aim to construct a downtown that is safe for all users, that includes the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, drivers and residents. The intent is for downtown to be a destination, and if people do not feel safe downtown, then they will not visit downtown. While we are not addressing social issues directly through this Environmental Assessment, a principle in the study will be to view the options through a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) lens, to assess the impact of any options on improving safety through the downtown.

17.0 Businesses

Another theme for questions and comments received is businesses. How will the new Downtown attract new businesses?

How can environment Downtown be created that attracts residents and tourists?

Downtown Businesses are incredibly important to the success of Downtown Brantford. That is why the Downtown Brantford Business Improvement Area and Brantford-Brant Chamber of Commerce are significant stakeholders in this project, and as a project team we have been in contact with them regularly. Their feedback is critical to ensuring that the plans for Downtown Brantford meet the needs of the business community on the whole. Their input and support of the



plans for downtown are paramount to the streetscaping being a success for the City of Brantford.

18.0 Downtown Programming

Another theme for questions and comments received is Downtown programming. What are specific features of Downtown that make it a destination for families, and which make it a must visit hotspot destination?

At this stage of the EA, we are still trying to gauge what type of events and activities the public and the City would like to see occurring downtown. Through the EA and streetscape design, we intend to include features that allow the downtown to be flexible so a wide variety of events can be held downtown, including street festivals, concerts, and any other type of event that may come up in the future. Some examples may include removable bollards to close sections of the street, power sources at street lights, Wi-Fi to name a few. We will make sure that as we reconstruct the downtown, that the infrastructure that is put in place is flexible so that it can support a wide variety of potential downtown programming.

19.0 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. Questions and comments to be included in the final Frequently Asked Questions document will be accepted until January 15, 2021 and the final document will be posted to the project webpage on January 25, 2021, concluding this PIC.

Thank you.