




CITY OF HAMILTON
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Transportation Planning and Parking Division

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	May 4, 2022
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park (PED22075) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Rachel Johnson (905) 546-2424 Ext. 1473 Peter Topalovic (905) 546-2424 Ext. 5129
SUBMITTED BY:	Brian Hollingworth Director, Transportation Planning and Parking Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That staff be directed to develop a “Gage to Gore” Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park Program along King Street East that can be implemented as a single day trial or trials in 2022 on Sundays, with replication on subsequent weekends throughout 2023 and 2024;
- (b) That Staff be directed to engage key stakeholders including Hamilton Police Services (HPS), adjacent Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), and local community groups to help operationalize the temporary linear park concept and to maximize its value from a community, business and tourism perspective;
- (c) That Staff be authorized to allocate \$60 K from the Economic Development Initiatives Capital Account (3621708900) to fund the temporary street closure and programming of the temporary urban park major event nodes;
- (d) That Staff be directed to formalize a partnership with a local not-for-profit or community partner, to establish a civic incubator that would undertake the coordination of an Open Streets Program and related programming to a maximum upset limit of \$25 K from the Sustainable Mobility Project ID of

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OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

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4032155820 and connect this Program to other available grant programs in the City to help scale up worthwhile community activations;

- (e) That Staff collect and utilize data from the 2022 open streets event to develop a comprehensive plan for a succession of open streets events in future years and that the funding requirements for these subsequent events be considered as part of the 2023 Budget Process;
- (f) That the matter respecting Item BB, Options on How the City May Pedestrianize a Street or Collection of Streets be identified as complete and removed from the General Issues Committee Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the October 20, 2021 General Issues Committee meeting the following was approved:

“That staff be directed to report back to the General Issues Committee with recommendations on how the City may pedestrianize a street or collection of streets during the spring, summer, and fall seasons to assist in animating those areas for public use, to be primarily on, but not limited, to weekends”.

The purpose of Report PED22075 is to respond to this direction.

The City of Hamilton has many years of experience operating and supporting successful Open Streets pilot events in partnership with various community organizations and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs). Example, Open Streets events occurred on James Street North (2010 to 2016) and Barton Street in Barton Village (2017 to present), and typically had two to six day-long closures each year. Some of the challenges with these pilots and events is that they required significant effort for programming and extensive policing. This differed from other jurisdictions in North America, such as Montreal and Toronto, where the Open Streets events are long standing, involve longer stretches of street closures, are designed with less reliance on police resources for traffic and pedestrian control, and are geared towards physical activity and the creation of public space on the road.

Staff investigated six scenarios that are feasible approaches to creating an Open Streets program in Hamilton. Each are focused on the pedestrianization of a street or collection of streets. These scenarios draw on previous experience, preliminary consultation with relevant stakeholders such as Hamilton Street Railway (HSR), Transportation Operations and Maintenance (TOM), and Tourism and Culture, as well as, the experience of other jurisdictions. Scenarios included:

1. A network of BIAs having closures on the same days over the summer months;
2. King Street from Gage Park to Gore Park, along the future Light Rail Transit (LRT) corridor;
3. Main Street from James Street to the Delta at Gage Park;
4. James Street North (from King Street to Barton Street) and Barton Street (from James Street North to the Barton Village BIA);
5. Small Streets Networks; and,
6. Branded Activity Loops.

This Report proposes that the pedestrianization of a street takes place in the form of an Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park as opposed to a traditional street festival. This is a key distinction from other street festivals which involve full road closures, and it should be clear to businesses and the public, as it allows the open street to be in a large area to act as an active transportation spine in the City. The proposed Urban Park would be programmed at only a few strategic locations with the objective of allowing for the remainder of the corridor to function as open space for cycling, roller blading, scootering, running and walking. In order to engage the community and allow businesses and organizations to use the street in various ways, the City also recommends using its 100-in-1-Day urban activation planning tool to allow groups to self-organize in specific programmable node areas. Urban activations are small in scale and involve placemaking and animation activities run by small community groups, non-profits, businesses or individuals. The events are planned to take place on Sundays and will involve partnerships with BIAs and local businesses along the corridor.

This Report recommends a measured approach to traffic control with a reduced reliance on point duty police officers compared to what would be used for a full closure festival or parade. The recommendation is based on examples from other cities who have established temporary urban parks and use this type of policing, which requires fewer resources, allowing for the feasibility of operating the program. In some key nodes, along the urban park where there is programmed activity and a more typical event style set up, monitored and policed intersection control may be necessary.

Upon internal consultation, Staff recommend that the pedestrianization of King Street from Gage Street to Gore Park (at James Street South) be implemented as a Temporary Linear Urban Park, which would also allow permit cycling, physical activity stations, and small urban activations. This option provides over four kms of linear roadway space for active transportation, animation, and supports the upcoming LRT construction project and future operation of Hamilton's LRT. It is proposed that one or two large scale Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park events take place in 2022 as a pilot. Following the event(s), an assessment of the program will be evaluated for operation in 2023.

The recommendations of this report are consistent with Priority Area 4 of the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Recovery (presented on December 9, 2020 General Issues Committee, Item 8.1):

“4) Champion street closures & placemaking projects through all seasons to help revitalize main streets and support local businesses through the winter months.”

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 9

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: This Report is recommending preliminary funding of a Civic Incubator Coordinator, through a local not-for-profit or community organizer. The proposed cost for this position is \$25,000 which would be funding through the Sustainable Mobility Project ID 4032155820. This community partner would oversee the consultation, organization and implementation of the Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park in 2022, alongside City staff.

Although further investigation is required, it is estimated the physical closure of the street, King Street from Gore Park (James Street) to Gage Street would cost approximately \$60,000, which would cover the cost for traffic control, paid duty police, and programming. These elements would be funded to an upset limit of \$60,000 from the Economic Development Initiatives Capital Account (3621708900).

Staffing: None. There are no immediate staffing implications associated with this Report. The consultation, organization and implementation of the Temporary Urban Park will be managed by existing staff resources within the Transportation Planning and Parking Division of the Planning and Economic Development Department. In consultation with Traffic Operations and Maintenance (TOM) staff, and Hamilton Street Railway (HSR) staff, as required.

Legal: None

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The concept of an Open Street was started in Bogota, Columbia in 1974, referred to as a Cyclovia (translated to “Cycle-way”) in most South American cities. The City of Bogota closed major streets to vehicular traffic on Sundays to allow pedestrians and cyclists to move about in the city. This event still runs today and covers 122 kms of streets. Open Streets events typically have a family-friendly festival type atmosphere but are not

organized as festivals. Since that time the idea has become popular around the world in cities of all sizes.

Hamilton has hosted many successful smaller scale open streets events. From 2009-2016, an organization, called Open Streets Hamilton, hosted an open streets event on James Street North, typically around 2 kms, to stretch out and explore. These events were typically held on one Sunday in June and included transforming the streets into a shared space for anyone and everyone to participate in. Event programming included three main pillars: 1) active transportation (walking, cycling, rollerblading, skateboarding), 2) supporting healthy communities through nutrition, active living, health and wellness, sports and recreation) and 3) sustainable economy (local sustainable businesses and organizations: food, services, arts, local products). Many different organizations were involved in the success of the event with grants, partnerships and collaborators/volunteers. The events were well attended and positively received, with over 12,500 people attending the 2010 Open Streets event on James Street North.

Since 2015 Hamilton has actively participated in 100-in-1-Day, an international citizen-driven City-building initiative that unites people across their city by engaging them in community developed projects, known as urban interventions or activations. On the first Saturday in June, all of the community projects are delivered with the goal of having “100” positive community interventions completed in one day. On 100-in-1-Day, everyone is encouraged to celebrate the by implementing an intervention or participating in one. Since 2015, over 750 interventions have taken place across Hamilton. The organization and success of urban interventions run across Hamilton are similar to the structure of the proposed Open Streets program. 100-in-1-Day has been organized in Hamilton by local not-for-profit groups and volunteers through a Civic Incubator. Given this success, Staff recommend that a civic incubator is established, through a community partner, who would undertake the coordination of Open Streets programming in Hamilton, building on the success of other events like 100-in-1-Day, in conjunction with internal Staff.

The City and McMaster collaborated on the 100-in-1-Day program since 2015 and supported many groups and individuals to operate their own urban activations, which are low effort, high impact actions that make their city a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable place. In order to promote the Open Streets temporary urban park and to organize the use of the corridor, it is recommended that the City work with a community group to coordinate the event. The City also supported this process by having a streamlined approval process for these activations, rather than requiring SEAT applications, and the City covered the insurance costs. For activations to qualify, they could not be profit motivated, political, or religious, and had to be free to attend, and small in scale.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic mobility patterns have shifted and around the world there has been significant uptake in walking, cycling, and generally being outside more. Many cities have recognized this and innovated in many ways including through pop-up bike lanes, temporary dining spaces, quiet streets, and free or discounted transit. The most common measures have been the reallocation and expansion of space at the curb and on the street to accommodate people walking and cycling. In North America specifically, the most common measure has been the opening of entire streets for non-motorized activities (Combs and Pardo, 2021). The majority of COVID-19 mobility measures around the world have been new initiatives, with only about 5% having been previously identified in existing plans, or part of ongoing planning efforts (Combs and Pardo, 2021).¹

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

N/A

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Several internal stakeholders were consulted in the primary development of the six proposed options including:

- Public Works - Transportation Operations and Maintenance (TOM), Engineering Services, Transit (HSR);
- Healthy and Safe Communities - Public Health Services - Healthy Environments; and,
- Planning and Economic Development – Economic Development, Tourism and Culture.

As the proponent of Hamilton’s Light Rail Project in the King Street Corridor, Metrolinx was consulted regarding the recommended solution of a Gage to Gore Open Streets event, and they will continue to be a key stakeholder as staff continue to develop an implementation plan and timeline. It is recognized that any street closures could not conflict with construction activities.

Engagement will continue as the project moves forward focused on external stakeholders through the City’s Mobility Lab focus group which includes the following organizations: the Hamilton Cycling Committee (HCyC), Cycle Hamilton, Environment

¹ Combs, Tabitha & Pardo, Carlosfelipe. (2021). Shifting Streets COVID-19 Mobility Data: Findings from a global dataset and a research agenda for transport planning and policy.

Hamilton, McMaster University, Mohawk College, Hamilton Health Sciences, Smart Commute Employer partners and residents, and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs).

Engagement with and between these groups will continue throughout the development and finalization of an Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park program in Hamilton.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Staff investigated six scenarios that are feasible approaches to the establishment of an Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park system in Hamilton and determined the closure of King Street from Gore Park, at James Street South to Gage Street to be the preferred option. The six options included:

1. A network of BIAs having closures on the same days over the summer months;
2. King Street with a closure from Gage Park to Gore Park, along the LRT corridor (preferred option);
3. Main Street with a closure from Bay Street to the Delta at Gage Park;
4. James Street North (from King Street to Barton Street) and Barton Street (from James Street North to the Barton Village BIA);
5. Small Streets Network, which includes a series of local streets that are closed to automobile traffic and chosen through engaging with ward councillors and community partners; and,
6. Branded Activity Loops or Loops, consisting of large-scale closures happening in one or more thoroughfares in the City for the purposes of encouraging physical activity. Examples of a larger activity Loop would include the closure of the Linc/Red Hill, opening of the historic Around the Bay route for a longer duration, linking the Hamilton Bayfront trails to the Confederation Park trails, or a closure along the entire mountain brow.

The recommended King Street (Gage to Gore) option provides over four kms of linear roadway space for active transportation, animation, and supports the upcoming LRT construction project and future operation of Hamilton's LRT. It is proposed that one or two Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park events take place in 2022 as a pilot. Following the event(s) an assessment of the Program will be evaluated for replication or modification in 2023 and 2024. Conversations with the HSR and TOM Staff have provisionally indicated that this section of roadway would be suitable for closure on a weekend without major impacts, making this segment a good place to test the concept of a larger street closure to establish a temporary linear urban park.

Civic Incubation and 100-in-1-Day Hamilton

The organization and success of urban activations operated across Hamilton through the 100-in-1-Day program are similar to the structure of the proposed Open Streets

Temporary Linear Urban Park program. 100-in-1-Day has been organized in Hamilton by local not-for-profit groups and volunteers through a Civic Incubator, resulting in over 750 urban activations since 2015. The experience and success of 100-in-1-Day, built over years of expertise, highlights the strength of using a Civic Incubator for this proposed program. Staff recommend that a civic incubator is created, through a local not-for-profit, who would undertake the coordination of Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park program in Hamilton in conjunction with internal Staff.

A Civic Incubator supports emergent and established city-builders to create, implement, and scale projects, and programs that advance social, environmental, and economic sustainability of their communities and cities. It does this through skills training and education, mentorship, and access to a network of physical and human resources, alongside the 100-in-1-Day program, which enable prototyping and co-creation with peers. The Civic Incubator is grounded in a community-based program design methodology that responds to specify community-identified needs.

This Program has also been connected to various City-run grant programs to help those organizing urban activations for community benefit scale up their program and sustain its success. This could continue to happen with Open Streets as a catalyst to improve more community-led, community-benefit projects in the City.

Policing Practices for Temporary Urban Park Programs

This Report recommends a less resource intensive use of HPS for traffic control compared to a more typical street festival event with a full closure. The proposed Temporary Linear Urban Park would not require full Police control of intersections at each street. The reason for not enforcing each intersection with Police, as is typically done at large street closure events, is that staff do not expect large congregations of people crossing intersections as the amount of space the street closure will take up is vast and density of attendees will be scattered. Pedestrians and cyclists will be required to follow existing intersection controls (e.g. traffic signals and stop-controls). This type of intersection control will lead to reduced policing costs, allowing for the feasibility of operating the program. In nodes, where there is programmed activity, a more typical event style set up, with monitored intersection control will be necessary.

There are numerous examples of variability in policing rates for temporary urban parks, the most prominent of which occurs in Montreal over the summer months. Rue St. Catherine's, a very central thoroughfare in the city, is closed to car traffic for most of the summer and does not rely on point duty police for pedestrian and traffic control at any intersections. Signage and street closure control elements are used to remind pedestrians of the intersections and to proceed with caution and according to the traffic laws. A local example is King William Street in Hamilton, which is smaller in scale than the Montreal example, but follows the same set of principles.

The other five options mentioned in this Report are described more fulsomely in the Alternatives for Consideration Section.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

There are several options for an Open Streets type program in Hamilton. Six ideas have been highlighted in the Report. A discussion of the five other alternatives considered but not recommended at this time are as follows:

1. A network of Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) having closures on the same days over the summer months

Through preliminary investigation it was determined that many BIAs have their own street festival type event, which often involve a road closure. BIAs plan these events well in advance and they take significant resources to implement. Many BIAs would not have the resources to undertake another large event(s) in 2022. The Open Streets Temporary Urban Park program should not interfere or compete with BIA programming, but rather complement it.

2. Main Street from Bay Street to the Delta at Gage Park

This option, while similar to a closure of King Street, is more complex in terms of re-routing required for traffic and transit vehicles. Through the east part of the Downtown, Main Street is also more institutional in nature and may not benefit as much from a business uplift.

3. James Street North (from King Street to Barton Street) and Barton Street (from James Street North to the Barton Village BIA)

These areas of the City have longstanding events taking place during the year. While the City does have experience running Open Streets events on these streets, new events have fulfilled the animation of these streets. The recommended program allows animation of streets to be spread to other areas of the City.

4. Small Streets Network

This option would be a series of smaller street closures around the city. While this would be attractive for engagement across the city, it may have less City-wide and broader regional attraction and be harder to promote from a tourism perspective. The usage is predicted to be local and would not be a typical Open Streets event. This type of event could be co-created with street

block parties, as is done in other cities, and does not qualify as an Open Streets or Cyclovia event.

5. Branded Activity Loops

Activity loops or health and wellness loops could be large scale road closures around the city which would encourage residents to walk, cycle or roll a great distance on streets that are typically reserved for motor vehicles. This event would be a large-scale operation with higher costs for road closures, policing and programming and may be too challenging for the first year of this type of Open Streets programming in Hamilton. This type of program would be similar to the ActiveTO Open Streets programming on Lake Shore Boulevard in Toronto. Considerations should be made for this type of program in future year; however additional traffic mitigation measures may be required.

While all of these options are interesting and will have much fanfare, they all present large-scale challenges. Starting with a four to six km linear track on King Street will help Staff better understand the impacts of growing the Open Streets into an even larger activity loop in the future.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement and Participation

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community

Economic Prosperity and Growth

Hamilton has a prosperous and diverse local economy where people have opportunities to grow and develop.

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive City where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

Clean and Green

Hamilton is environmentally sustainable with a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces.

Built Environment and Infrastructure

Hamilton is supported by state-of-the-art infrastructure, transportation options, buildings and public spaces that create a dynamic City.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

N/A