




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

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	December 6, 2023
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park 2023 Update (PED22075(b)) (City Wide) <b>(Outstanding Business List Item)</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Brian Hollingworth Director, Transportation Planning and Parking Planning and Economic Development Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

**RECOMMENDATION**

- (a) That the Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park concept, as successfully demonstrated through the closure of King Street East on Sunday June 18, 2023, be established as an annual program with a minimum of two events per calendar year;
- (b) That the James Street North Summer Art Crawl Pedestrianization Pilot that was implemented on Friday's in summer 2023 be incorporated into the Open Streets Program on an annual basis and include the months of May, June, July and August;
- (c) That the matter respecting Item J, Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park be identified as complete and removed from the General Issues Committee - 2023 Rate and Capital Budgets Outstanding Business List.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At Council's direction, the City's first Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park, on King Street East, was held in June 2023. King Street was closed to motor vehicle traffic from John Street to Gage Avenue, approximately four kilometres in length. The event ran from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and was attended by an estimated 15,000 individuals.

During the approval stages leading up to this event, staff engaged the community and prepared two reports in 2022 regarding the Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park program: Reports PED22075 and PED22075(a). At the May 4, 2022 General Issues Committee (Item 6), Council directed staff to collect and utilize data from the King Street event to develop a comprehensive plan for a succession of open streets events in future years and that the funding requirements for subsequent events.

In addition to the King Street Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park, in May 2023, Council also approved a motion to facilitate the closure of James Street to vehicular traffic on three Friday's as a pilot project. These closures were aligned with Art Crawl, which occurs on James Street the second Friday of every month with highest attendance in summer months.

Both the King Street event and the James Street Art Crawl events received positive feedback from the public and achieved their primary goals of promoting active transportation, supporting healthy communities, contributing to economic activity and generally encouraging community engagement and participation.

The purpose of this Report is to summarize the results of the Open Streets events held in 2023, including costs incurred and feedback received, and to recommend a plan for 2024 and future years.

Based on the results of the events in 2023, it is recommended that both the King Street Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park, and James Street Summer Art Crawl Pedestrianization initiatives be repeated for 2024 and future years.

Continuation of these Open Streets events and associated programming will require operating and capital resources. Primary expenses include traffic control equipment, pay duty police, advertising and programming, and business liaison. A capital budget request has been submitted for consideration as part of the 2024 Budget Process based on an estimated cost of \$225 K for both the King Street and James Street events, to be funded through the Economic Development Initiatives Capital Account (3621708900). This cost estimate was informed by the 2023 pilot events.

**Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 9**

**FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Financial:** In 2023, the King Street program was funded by grants and from the Economic Development Initiatives Capital Account (3621708900). The James Street Art Crawl Pedestrian Pilot was funded through the Tax Stabilization Reserve. For 2024, a Capital request of \$225 K has been included in the Preliminary 2024 Budget, inclusive of an Operating Impact to Capital of one full-time-employee for a Program Coordinator at an annual cost of \$105 K. This would include the direct costs for the road closures as well as programming for the events. The full program would be funded through the Economic Development Initiatives Capital Account (3621708900), including the James Street closure which, for 2023, was funded through the Tax Stabilization Reserve. Funding, for future events beyond 2024, would be referred to the Budget Process on an annual basis for consideration.

Other events such as Bike Month, Smart Commute Month, and Walktober events already have allocated funding in the Sustainable Mobility Budget and do not require further resources.

**Staffing:** The Capital Request submitted as part of the Preliminary 2024 Budget, includes one full-time employee for a Program Coordinator. This coordinator would be responsible for the consultation, organization and implementation of multiple Open Streets events identified in Recommendations (a) and (b) of this Report. They would also work with Business Improvement Areas and other stakeholders to program and promote these and other Open Streets events, as well as, to develop plans for future events and additional events. In 2023, some of this work was done by an external consultant, which would not be required in 2024.

**Legal:** None.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park concept was initiated in 2021 through a motion 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

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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.”

In May 2022, Staff prepared Report PED22075 to respond to Council direction. In summary, the Report recommended that Staff:

- be directed to develop an Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park event along King Street East;
- be directed to engage key stakeholders;
- be authorized to allocate \$60 K from the Economic Development Initiatives Capital Account (3621708900) to fund the temporary street closure;
- be directed to formalize a partnership with a local not-for-profit or community partner, with a limit of \$25 K from the Sustainable Mobility Project ID of 4032155820; and,
- collect and utilize data from the 2022 Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park event to develop a comprehensive plan for a succession of Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park events in future years and that the funding requirements for these subsequent events be considered as part of the 2023 Budget Process.

In August 2022, Staff prepared Report PED22075(a), the purpose of this Information Report was to provide the General Issues Committee information regarding public engagement that had been completed regarding the Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park events.

On Sunday June 18, 2023, King Street was closed to motor vehicle traffic from John Street to Gage Avenue, approximately four kilometres in length. The event ran from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and was attended by an estimated 15,000 individuals.

On May 10, 2023, Council approved a motion moved by the Ward 2 Councillor for a James Street North Summer Art Crawl Pedestrianization Pilot. The motion included funding to facilitate the closure of James Street North to vehicular traffic between Barton Street West and Cannon Street West in conjunction with Art Crawl.

James Street North from Cannon to Barton was closed to automobile traffic during the June, July and August Art Crawls in 2023.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**

Not applicable.

## **RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

During the planning stages of the 2023 event, staff in Transportation Planning initiated a survey through Engage Hamilton, which was open from June 2, 2022 to June 23, 2022. The survey received 986 responses, with 86% of respondent in support of a temporary urban linear park on King Street for one weekend day. Overall, there was broad support for the program, both in the project area and across the City. There were also some responses from individuals who lived outside of Hamilton, showing some local tourism potential for this project. As well, staff would continue with ongoing engagement with impacted stakeholders and timelines.

In developing a plan for 2024 and future events, several internal stakeholders were consulted including:

- Public Works - Transportation, Engineering Services, Transit (HSR);
- Special Events Advisory Team (SEAT);
- 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 Transit Project in the King Street Corridor, Metrolinx was consulted regarding the recommended solution of an Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park 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 2024 initiatives move forward focused on external stakeholders, including but not limited to: the City's Mobility Lab focus group, the Hamilton Cycling Committee, Cycle Hamilton, Environment Hamilton, McMaster University, Mohawk College, Hamilton Health Sciences, Smart Commute Employer partners, residents, Business Improvement Areas, community organizations, and neighbourhood associations.

## **ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- **King Street Open Streets Event**

At Council's direction, the City's first Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park on King Street East was held in June 2023. Staff were directed to organize this event then report back on the feasibility of continuing to program additional annual events.

For the event, King Street was closed to motor vehicle traffic from John Street to Gage Avenue, approximately four kilometres in length. Several large signalized intersections along the route were open to North/South motor vehicle traffic. Five “Activation Hubs” were programmed in coordination with Metrolinx and located at future LRT stops (John Street, Wellington Street, Wentworth Street, Sherman Avenue and Scott Park). Forty local organizations, businesses and community partners offered various activities, for example, New Hope Community Bikes offering a bike rodeo, Parasport Ontario offered a wheelchair basketball opportunity, and McMaster University temporarily installed a large “People Make Hamilton” sign as a public art/engagement piece. The City of Hamilton contracted Environment Hamilton to organize these activation hubs and liaise with businesses along the corridor.

Approximately 15,000 participants attended the event, with 15 of the King Street East businesses participating with a sidewalk sale or temporary patio set up. In addition, 40 community organizations offered activities as part of the activation hubs. Four kilometres of linear roadway space were allocated for active transportation, animation, and areas featuring the LRT construction project and future operation of Hamilton’s LRT.

The event, in 2023, was a pilot to assess the feasibility and success of the program. The community response was overwhelmingly positive, and the event deemed a success. Success was measured by the number of event attendees, anecdotal feedback the organizers received both during and following the event, and through an on-line engagement survey, from both attendees and organizations who set up a booth. As detailed below, participants indicated they would like to see more events like this in the future validating the City’s direction of hosting more regular Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park events.

Surveys were sent out via email and social media to participants of Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park in 2023. Key findings from the on-line survey include:

- 81% of participants got to Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park by walking, biking or scootering;
- 51% attended for one to two hours;
- The length of the event, from Gage Avenue to King, was a long enough distance;
- 90% of participants would like to keep it on a Sunday;
- 95.2% of participants support the expansion of the program - more dates per year; and,
- 61.9% would like to see it happen three to four times per year.

Thirty program partners filled out the post-event survey. Highlights of the responses from program partners include:

- 100% of program partners would participate in Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park again;
- 83% agreed it should be held on a Sunday again;
- 100% of businesses expressed that they had more or significantly more customers on the day of Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park than on another Sunday and that the event attracted more or significantly more new customers;
- 89.7% of partners support the expansion of Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park;
- 29 out of 30 program partners shared that Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park should run more than once per year with results shared between: two, three, four, every week in the summer, monthly from May to October; and,
- 28 program partners shared how many participants stopped at their activation - the average number was 113.

The total direct cost of the King Street event was \$72 K. This included the cost of two mail-outs, the Traffic Control Plan, road closure, Hamilton Police Services, consulting services by Environment Hamilton, and day of expenses. This cost was within the initial budgeted estimate of \$85 K. It is noted, however, that this cost does not include the significant amount of staff time that was put into planning and on the event day, some of which was on a volunteer basis.

- **James North Closure**

Art Crawl is held on James Street North the second Friday of every month. It is an informal event which enables residents and visitors to explore James Street North including the many galleries, shops, street art, performers, vendors and craft markets. In recent years, the event has grown in popularity particularly during the summer months. Prior to 2023, there was minimal, or no traffic control implemented during the event. As such, pedestrians attending the event found sidewalks to be highly congested when the roadway remained open for vehicular traffic.

On May 10, 2023, Council approved a motion for a James Street North Summer Art Crawl Pedestrianization Pilot. The motion included funding to facilitate the closure of James Street North to vehicular traffic between Barton Street West and Cannon Street West in conjunction with Art Crawl.

The closure of James Street subsequently occurred on June 9, 2023, July 14, 2023 and August 11, 2023, between 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. The closure was implemented by the Transportation Division of Public Works.

The initial estimate of the cost for the three events was \$30 K. It is estimated that actual costs were similar to this estimate, noting that much of the work was completed by Public Works staff.

The closure of James Street North from Cannon to Barton during the June, July and August Art Crawls in 2023 was a success from an Active Transportation and safety perspective. Attendees to the event were able to walk and cycle more effectively and exhibitors had more space, creating a more comfortable and convenient experience for all those who participated.

One of the key comments from staff who participated in the James Street closure suggested an approach more similar to Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park would further enhance the event. The recommendation of applying an Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park approach to the Art Crawl event would involve some minor changes to the closure including better accommodations for cyclists, a focus on supporting James Street North businesses in the event, minimal Active Transportation programming, such as enhanced bike parking.

Additionally, the closure did not fully consider the needs of emergency services and vendor loading and unloading needs. Both of these can be addressed with more advanced planning.

- **Proposed Plan for 2024 and Forward**

Based on the results of the 2023 events, and subject to funding approvals through the budget process, it is proposed that both the King Street and James Street events be continued. There was an overwhelming desire from the public, Business Improvement Areas, and supportive organizations for the event to continue on King Street East, which aligns with the LRT proposed corridor.

In 2024, the program plans to implement the core King Street and James Street events, which will be evaluated each year, to include more events. For King Street, a minimum of two events would be held while the James Street closure would be implemented during the months of May, June, July and August.

- **Additional Active Transportation Events**

Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park events are those that are focused on developing temporary parks, encouraging physical activity for residents, promoting walking, cycling and transit, and improve equity outcomes. There are other active transportation events that share the same mandate, and the timing of Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park and the Art Crawls complements these events which include Bike Day, Winter Bike Day, Bike Month, Smart Commute Month, and the



Walktober program. A full-time staff person to support these events alongside Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park and Art Crawl would create an active transportation event eco-system that would focus on behaviour change and physical activity outcomes that go beyond events and street festivals.

A predictable funding stream with associated staff resources would also support other events wishing to embed active transportation, behaviour change principles and the Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park concept to help encourage more physical activity and demonstrate to residents that there are alternative ways to travel in the City beyond the automobile. This work is already underway with an Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park partnership with the Barton Village Business Improvement Area that took place in 2023.

Many of these supporting events occur across the City in multiple wards. By investing in this eco-system, Staff would be able to leverage this work to bring the Open Streets Temporary Linear Urban Park concept to more wards in the City and having benefit for more residents.

#### **ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

Council could choose to direct staff to focus on only one event, either on King Street or James Street. This would reduce the direct costs associated with the street closures. This alternative would reduce the community, health and economic benefits that were demonstrated through the 2023 events. It would also be counter to the feedback from the public to implement more events. There are also some economies of scale with implementing more than one event.

#### **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Not applicable