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Downtown Parking Review - Analysis of Joint BIA/Town Task Force Workshop Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2020-60

Department(s): Innovation & Strategic Initiatives

Author(s): Susan Chase

Meeting Date: August 24, 2020

Recommendations

1. That the report entitled Downtown Parking Review – Analysis of Joint BIA/Town Task Force Workshop dated August 24, 2020 be received; and,
2. That Council endorse this roadmap in principle and give specific direction with respect to the short term initiatives; and,
3. That Staff be directed to prepare plans for the medium and long term initiatives that will be brought to Council for budget approval at the appropriate times.

Purpose

To update Council of the staff analysis of the outcomes resulting from the Joint BIA/Town Task Force on opportunities to increase parking in the Downtown area.

Background

Parking in the downtown area has been discussed many times over the years with a variety of recommendations and outcomes being developed. None have fully satisfied the community nor has the solution seemed to have been resolved with ongoing calls for more parking. To this end, in 2019, the Town and the local Business Improvement Area (BIA) collaborated through the creation of a 'Joint Task Force' to address the concerns. This Task Force met several times, held feedback sessions and participated in walkabouts of the area to identify potential solutions. This culminated in a facilitated

workshop where numerous ideas for additional downtown parking were listed for review. The Joint Task Force also established decision criteria to help them to prioritize the very best solutions and then worked through an impact/effort exercise, using that decision criteria to rank each idea.

This list of prioritized ideas was then provided to staff to more fully analyze, based on recent studies, evaluations and current assessments. Staff met on several occasions to share knowledge and to more fully develop the feasibility of each idea. This list is presented to Council today for their approval and to provide direction to staff.

Discussion

The Joint Task Force established a set of decision criteria to help prioritize and inform the development of a roadmap for implementation. The following is the list decision criteria identified:

- Cost
- Revenue
- Location
- Proximity
- Ease to Implement
- Ownership
- Timing
- Public Concern
- Safety

Staff reviewed each idea evaluating against this criteria to develop a roadmap for project implementation. Ideas that had available resources, were easy to implement, and would address immediate concerns were identified as 'short-term' and could begin immediately upon Council approval. Projects that require more time for planning or additional resources but can still be accomplished within the next 1 – 3 years, have been identified as medium term. Those projects that require further resources or outside agency approvals or other such implications have been identified as long term, to be implemented in the next 3 – 5 years.

Roadmap:

Details of the evaluation of the ideas are included in Attachment A and an overview map of the area is Attachment B. A roadmap summary is provided here.

Short term Opportunities

These short term opportunities are ideas that should be able to be completed in 2020/21, extending into 2021 as a result of the pandemic. Several of these are already underway or may be more easily accomplished. If these are completed, it is anticipated we will provide an **additional 50 parking spaces** at an approximate cost of less than

\$30,000. Staff believe some of these costs can be assumed in the current approved project budgets although a further review will be required post-pandemic. The ideas that can be completed in the short term are:

- Agreement with St Paul's Church to use the parking lot
- Additional street parking on D'Arcy and Church Street
- Change parking designations along Main Street

Also, to be noted, 4 new parking spaces near the tennis courts were reclaimed when staff relocated the "Tennis Dome Bin" and the "Farmers Market Bin" in November, 2019.

Medium term Opportunities

The ideas that require additional planning, resourcing or procurement processes have been identified as medium term and are expected to be completed in the next year to 3 years. If these are completed, it is anticipated we will provide **an additional 12 – 100+ parking spaces**. Costs are difficult to estimate due to the number of variables and final decisions made but current estimates range from \$10,000 for the implementation of one idea to close to \$100,000 for one of the more complex solutions. The following ideas were identified as medium term:

- Convert green spaces in the Commons North Parking Lot (Formerly P3) behind Main Street
- Change 3 - 8 spaces on Cedar (currently for loading)
- Expand Gorman Pool Parking (2nd option to shift/move Gorman basketball court to expand existing parking lot further)
- Change Bylaws (some may be done quickly but recommendation is to consider holistically as part of a longer term parking strategy.)
- Shared agreements with church, day-cares and other businesses
- 449 Eagle St.
- Convert AOK greenspace (2 options)
- Remove loading zone @ Main and Timothy
- Overflow parking currently used by York Regional Police will made available to the Town once YRP moves to their new headquarters.

Long term Opportunities

Several ideas were identified as long term due to budget requirements, property approvals or in 1 case, aligned with another project underway. For these reasons, estimates for number of new spaces or costs have not been provided. The long term ideas include:

- Property Acquisitions
- Tennis Area
- Parking Structure – (permanent, modular or temporary)

- Expand/use parking at Newmarket Lawn Bowling site

Finally, the following suggestions were deemed not practical due to factors such as high cost, ownership, safety or perhaps will be part of a future scheduled study.

- Change parallel to angled (Main Street)
- Build behind Cachet
- On street parking west side of Main
- Residential street parking (streets close to Main)
- Build on low, soggy area @ Fairy Lake 1, 2, 3 and 4 Parking Lots (Formerly P1)

Further Consideration:

Parking Strategy:

A very basic parking strategy was developed by WSP Consultants in their report dated March 2017, entitled “Old Town Hall Parking Study and Parking Strategy”. This strategy recommended immediate, short-term (within 5 years) and long-term (within 10 years) solutions that could be explored by the Town. Strategies such as encouraging businesses to provide shuttle services or valet parking for their patrons, enhanced signage, better co-ordination for the scheduling of downtown activities, reduced parking duration in some areas, better use of websites to show parking availability, developing a generic “Communication and Parking Plan” for events, and the introduction of paid parking were put forward. Several of these ideas have been implemented and have provided some relief.

A more fulsome and updated Parking Strategy should be developed to help guide discussions and decisions over the longer term. As an organization, and in consultation with the community, we should establish the overall objective of parking in the downtown core. Opportunities and convenience would have to be balanced with safety and fairness in determining the strategy. Goals and objectives would be identified and these will inform other decisions that would be made. Once the objective of a parking strategy has been established, there are tools available to bring the strategy to fruition. For example:

- Update bylaws to better reflect current defined requirements such as shorter time allowances to promote higher turnover rates, increasing fines to discourage extended parking beyond the time limit and increase patrols of the area;
- Designated loading areas could be established in certain areas, which would allow us to remove existing one-off loading zones and increase parking space availability;
- Consider paid parking in particular lots/areas.

The Parking Strategy should also address parking requirements for **special events**. These may require specific solutions based on unique needs. Large community events require people to utilize existing parking lots and on street parking. The result is a longer walk for event goers, however, this has been generally understood and accepted by event participants. Area residents are also accepting of additional on-street parking on residential roads around the downtown area during these occasions. In some instances, the Town has deployed bus shuttle services from the Magna Centre and/or the Ray Twinney Complex, however, this tends to only occur when the event has required the elimination of some existing parking to support it (e.g. Canada Day utilizing Commons North Parking Lot (Formerly P3) as part of the event site). Newmarket also benefits from having the Tom Taylor Trail as a picturesque walk from other parking areas to the downtown and this could be promoted even more in the future.

The overall Parking Strategy should also address **Wayfinding**. Signage is a key solution to identifying parking options and should include the use of technology in both 'smart signs' and apps to provide up to date information.

Parking as close as possible to the many businesses and events in the downtown area is typically in high demand. It is safe to assume that only local residents will have an understanding of where there may be available parking that is accessible to the area however, it is not always obvious to a visitor. Signage is one way to address this issue however there is always the concern of too many signs, or signs that are difficult to see, are ineffective with limited information or simply add to the quantity of signs in the area.

A holistic review of signage should be undertaken to ensure the signs that are in the area are effective and meaningful. Consideration should be given to the use of technology, both in the way of digital signs as well as through apps that would provide guidance and information about local parking spaces and other information. Digital signs and apps would have up-to-date data transmitted to them in real time from some sort of data collecting devices in the parking lots. Research indicates this could be through sensors, either embedded in the lots or located on light posts, or through digital cameras or through parking management systems (i.e. payment, gates, etc.) An investment in this technology would be required but it could provide the updated information to residents, businesses and visitors to the area. Data collected would also be valuable to municipal staff to better manage the parking resources and to make better decisions regarding parking solutions in the downtown area.

Conclusion

This review of ideas for new parking spaces to serve the downtown area has identified a clear roadmap for implementation. It is evident that solutions could be implemented now but some solutions require a deeper analysis and resourcing. Communications of the solutions and plans will be critical to success and ultimately reducing people's frustrations with the parking situation.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

Well-planned and connected. Strategically planning for the future to improve access and enhance travel to, from, and within Newmarket. This report also links to Council's 2018 – 2022 Strategic Pillars and Priorities.

Consultation

In addition to the Joint BIA/Town Task Force meetings, many inter-departmental consultations through a working group have been on-going since early 2019 to complete the analysis and review of the opportunities presented at the workshop. The draft of this report has been reviewed by each Commission as well as the BIA prior to presentation to Council.

Human Resource Considerations

Most solutions will not have a major human resource consideration. Those that will are subject to the annual budget approval process.

Budget Impact

Preliminary budget impacts have been identified in the analysis above however, there are some solutions that will be required to be reviewed through the annual budget process to come to Council for final approval.

Attachments

A more detailed evaluation of each idea is attached (Attachment A) as well as a map (Attachment B) to better indicate areas of discussion.

Approval

Esther Armchuk, Commissioner, Corporate Services

Ian McDougall, Commissioner, Community Services

Peter Noehammer, Commissioner, Development & Infrastructure Services

Jag Sharma, CAO

Contact

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