

Staff Report

Presented By: Ruhul Amin, Manager, Engineering Services

Meeting Date: October 28, 2024

Subject: Public Engagement Comments and Feedback on High Street Reconstruction and Cenotaph Improvements Project

Attachment(s): Public Feedback Summary Presentation
Rotary Cenotaph Letter Sept 2024

Recommendation

That Council receive the Public Engagement Comments and Feedback on High Street Reconstruction and Cenotaph Improvements Project report for information.

Report Summary

This report presents to Council the narratives on comments and feedback from the public and other community partners on the proposed concept designs for the High Street Reconstructions and Cenotaph Upgrade projects.

Background/Analysis

High Street Reconstructions:

RJ Burnside was retained as the consultant, to advance the concept plan created by the Southampton Business Improvement Area (SBIA) by not only applying engineering design, industry standards and practices to the plan but also engage the community in developing the 'best fit' solution for High Street.

A public information centre (PIC) was held on July 4, 2024, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre. The community members were provided the opportunity to review the preliminary design plans and talk one-on one with the project team members. 110 people signed-in and writing stations were made available for completing comment sheets. Overall, the PIC was well attended with lots of in-depth discussions taking place with team members, Councillors, and amongst the residents themselves, about the proposed design features and both the positive aspects and potential negative impacts of each feature on the downtown users and businesses.

The community was provided with five platforms to express their opinions and preferences on the preliminary engineering design concept that was presented at the PIC. Burnside and Town staff were then tasked to collect the feedback from the different sources and channels to carefully consider the comments and analyze them in a consistent manner. The analysis involved assessing the feedback collected from each individual platform that was made available to the public. Although each provided different points of view on the various design features the outcome was consistent with the feedback project team heard in-person at the PIC. Following are some key points from community feedback on proposed concept design:

Parking Capacity:

- About half of the people usually can't find available parking within a block of their specific point of destination.
- Too many parking spaces are being removed to accommodate the road redesign. The number of curb extensions needs to be reduced where they impact parking.
- Accessible parking is important and there needs to be more than the existing number of spaces on High Street today.

Road Safety:

- All way stop control is well supported provided no additional stop conditions are added between intersections.
- Cycling delineation on the road and signage would encourage drivers to slow down and be more careful when backing out of parking spaces.
- Pedestrian crossings at intersections should be made safer and more visible to drivers.
- Reduce posted speed limit from 40 km/hour to 30 km/hour.

Streetscaping and Sidewalk Upgrades:

- One third of people also walk and/ or bike to the downtown core.
- More outdoor seating/ benches.
- Add trees and other beautification upgrades.
- More bike racks.

Next Steps for High Street Reconstruction:

There is a strong message from the community that the opportunities for parking on High Street are already limited and design changes need to be made to mitigate the loss of parking spaces. Burnside and Town staff have started looking at ways to modify the design features to address this main concern, with a focus on still improving the experience for all users in keeping with the SBIA endorsed vision for High Street.

The design team and Town staff will make any final adjustments to a revised design following this Council meeting. A presentation will be made to the SBIA at their Annual General Meeting on November 5th and subsequently presenting the final design at the Town Council's targeted for November 25th.

Cenotaph Upgrades:

At the above noted PIC, Burnside also presented the following four (4) proposed versions of the cenotaph elements and site for review and discussion:

- Option 1 – Rebuild/Restore the Existing Cairn and Cross
- Option 2A – Proposed 2 Stone Columns (previously presented by the Cenotaph Committee)
- Option 2B – Proposed 2 Stone Columns with Existing Cairn and Cross (previously presented to Council by the Cenotaph Committee)
- Option 3 – Rebuild/Restore the Existing Cairn and Cross with a Memorial Wall (as discussed in a focus meeting convened by the Mayor with the Legion and Cenotaph Committee, Town staff and Burnside on June 27, 2024).

The community was provided with comment sheets to document and quantify their opinions and preferences on the proposed four cenotaph concept options that were displayed at the PIC. Burnside reviewed the collected feedback from the returned comment sheets and summarized it for discussion with Town staff. The summary was shared with the Legion's President on September 10, 2024, in the presence of Town staff.

Feedback Comments Summary:

The following are some of the key comments received:

- Rebuild the cairn as is to remember the men who built the cenotaph and gave their lives for freedom
 - Preserves the history and shows respect and honour
- Remove the illuminated cross as it is historically inaccurate
 - Canadian soldiers fought for country not religious reasons
 - Lots of non-Christian members of community, as well as passed family members that fought in the war
 - Enemy soldiers were also Christian
- Consult with living family members of those whose names are on the Cenotaph
- Safety concern with having enough space to stand and reflect by Cenotaph
- Benches in behind Cenotaph for meditation and reflection
- Incorporate the cross with the cairn instead of the standing illuminated cross
 - Or use different symbology such as wreath of maple leaves
- Memorial wall is a great idea and way of recognizing the people who gave their lives for peace (names on plaques)
- Consider involving the Saugeen First Nations stone masons to rebuild the cairn using the "dry wall" method
- Keep the cross as it represents important things that are not religious
- The cross in Flanders fields
- An upside-down sword used to mark the grave of a warrior
- Associated with Remembrance Day

- Contemplation garden added instead of forecourt for reflection
- Only 8 of 58 Saugeen Shores men have their name on the Vimy Memorial, can use this cenotaph to add missing names
- The Town of Saugeen Shores received a letter (attached) from the Rotary Club of Southampton expressing their concerns about any significant change in the original design presented to them. In the event that the final approved design differs substantially from the original, and if Rotary Club is not in agreement with these changes, they may request the return of their donation of 15,000.00.

Next Steps for Cenotaph:

There is a strong message to retain the Cenotaph features in their present form and composition with refurbishment and updates to the plaque contents. Burnside sent a structural engineer to review and assess the conditions of the cairn and cross and reported back that the cairn appears to be stable and may require some repair and maintenance.

The design team and Town staff will make any final adjustments to a revised design and accommodation to the overall High Street design following this Council meeting. A presentation that will be made to the Legion board members on November 5th and subsequently presenting the final design at the Town Council's meeting is targeted for November 25th. A meeting and presentation to Rotary Club on the final design will be scheduled after Council approval.

Linkages

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 1: Meeting the Needs of a Growing Community
- Business Plan Alignment: Development Services Major Initiative

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding

Cost associated with this program are contained within the existing budget.

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