

Staff Report



To **Committee of the Whole**
Service Area Infrastructure, Development and Environment
Date Tuesday, February 6, 2024
Subject **Wyndham Street North Cross Section and St. George's Square Intersection**

Recommendation

1. That Council direct staff to reconstruct the Wyndham Street North corridor as follows:
 - a) Wyndham Street – Carden Street to Woolwich Street as one lane of traffic in each direction with parallel parking and separated unidirectional bike paths along both sides of the road with flexibility to accommodate the seasonal patio program; and,
 - b) St. George's Square as an offset intersection similar to existing conditions with operational improvements and separated unidirectional bike paths.
-

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement on the reconstructed form and function of the Wyndham Street North corridor from Carden Street to Woolwich Street including the geometrics of the St. George's Square.

Key Findings

The [Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program](#) (DTIRP) is advancing well and is achieving Council's goal of downtown revitalization. The Program has reached an inflection milestone where pivotal decisions are being made on the future form and function of Wyndham Street North, including the landmark St. George's Square that will serve Guelph well for generations to come.

After extensive technical and policy review, and public engagement and consultation over summer 2023, a [Public Information Centre on September 27, 2023](#) and a Have-Your-Say (HYS) opportunity, City staff have selected the preferred option for Wyndham Street and St. George's Square as:

- a) [Wyndham Street](#) – Carden Street to Woolwich Street as one lane of traffic in each direction with parallel parking and separated unidirectional bike paths along both sides of the road with flexibility to accommodate the seasonal patio program; and,
- b) [St. George's Square](#) as an offset intersection similar to existing conditions with operational improvements and separated unidirectional bike paths.

A Council Workshop is planned for April 17, 2024, to address Council’s resolutions of November 2019 on the streetscape level of service (good, better, best) and of November 2023 requesting staff bring options for streetscaping to Council in the first half of 2024 along with a funding strategy; and, discuss mitigating construction disruption and supporting Downtown businesses.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program, as part of the overall Downtown Renewal initiative, advances Strategic themes of ‘City Building’ and ‘People and the Economy’ as it promotes improving historic places and streets to create new places for gathering and recreation, and reinforces and expands the role of the core as a prosperous, attractive, and welcoming regional centre for residents, businesses and visitors alike. The expected outcome creates a downtown that supports people, the environment and creates opportunities for a thriving community and economy via enabling private investment in the future. This work aligns well with the City’s growth priorities and infrastructure renewal plans for downtown.

Guelph is doing what it takes to create more housing options to address Ontario’s housing crisis. As part of the City’s housing pledge, City staff continue to undertake works that provide flexibility and make it easier for housing to be approved and for more affordable housing to be built. The City’s Strategic Plan directs staff to take action to improve housing supply. Other City plans and policy documents, such as the [Transportation Master Plan](#), [Downtown Parking Master Plan](#), [Downtown Secondary Plan](#), and [Race to Zero](#), direct staff to conduct City business in a way that supports growth, modal choice, the economy and the environment. The Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program is a significant part of these housing aspirations.

Future Guelph Theme

City Building

Future Guelph Objectives

City Building: Improve housing supply

Financial Implications

Sufficient budget is included in the approved 2024 – 2027 multi-year budget (MYB) for the proposed infrastructure reconstruction efforts along the Wyndham corridor, except for the incremental cost if Council requires an increase to the streetscaping level of service as envisioned in the [2014 Streetscape Manual](#). Decisions on streetscaping may impact final designs and costs for the reconstruction work. Any adjustment to the capital budget will be included in the 2025 budget confirmation along with a funding strategy.

Report

Downtown Renewal

The City’s wide-ranging [Downtown Renewal](#) initiative considers the overall strategic direction and the objectives of many corporate initiatives – one of which is the [Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program](#) (DTIRP). There is an absolute need to replace the end-of-life and undersized infrastructure, however the DTIRP provides a

once-in-a-multigenerational opportunity to revitalize Downtown Guelph and build on the character that makes our Downtown one-of-a-kind. The City's overall Downtown Renewal efforts are described in [Committee of the Whole Report of June 6, 2023 "Downtown Renewal: Status Update"](#) (item 6.2, pg 183) along with a presentation of the short-listed reconstruction options.

The reconstruction of the Wyndham Street corridor has been considered in many documents to support the City's housing and economic growth goals. The strategies, studies and Master Plans approved by Council considered not only the measures required to address the long-term municipal servicing requirements of Downtown Guelph, but also the function of the main street at the heart of the Downtown Core. A goal of the Wyndham Street Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) was to compile the many findings to achieve the policy aspirations established in the Secondary Plan and other policy documents to offer a broad range of programming opportunities and support ongoing downtown vitality and revitalization efforts.

Wyndham St. N. Corridor Reconstruction Recommendations

The City is completing an EA for the Wyndham Street corridor from Carden Street to Woolwich Street, including St. George's Square under the DTIRP. This Program is focused on the reconstruction of linear assets and alignment with other City initiatives to ensure Downtown Guelph will continue to thrive for generations to come. Completing the EA will determine the appropriate form and function of the road corridor, which will then serve as the basis for future streetscaping discussions.

Using the findings from the extensive technical and policy review, engagement and consultation, City Staff presented at the [September 27, 2023 Public Information Centre](#) (PIC) the preferred Wyndham Street cross-section and three options for the St. George's Square intersection. The three intersection options, while each having their own merits, would function well and were considered equivalent from technical and policy standpoints. Additional community feedback was deemed necessary to select the preferred geometrics for the square. A sketch and overview of the St. George's Square options are provided in Attachment 1.

While there was good public acceptance of the recommended Wyndham Street cross-section, no clear public preference for St. George's Square emerged from the options presented. However, those opposed to the traffic circle option were adamantly opposed. Given no pronounced preference, the estimated \$3M higher construction cost for the traffic circle option than an intersection, familiarity with the existing conditions, and the potentially high opposition to a traffic circle, Staff recommend intersection reconstruction using the current intersection geometrics with some operational improvements (Option 1).

In summary, the preferred reconstruction option recommended for Wyndham Street North and St. George's Square are:

- a) Wyndham Street North - Carden Street to Woolwich Street as one lane of traffic in each direction with parallel parking and separated unidirectional bike paths along both sides of the road with flexibility to accommodate the seasonal patio program (Attachment 2); and,

- b) St. George's Square as an offset intersection similar to existing conditions with operational improvements and separated unidirectional bike paths (Attachment 3).

A key level of service enhancement for the Guelph Downtown Core is the provision of protected cycling infrastructure, which aligns with the City's [Transportation Master Plan](#) (TMP), [Vision Zero](#) strategy, [Downtown Secondary Plan](#) and [Transit Future Ready Action Plan](#). The TMP identified the high potential for growth in pedestrian and cycling trips to and from Downtown based on the existing trends of people's trip lengths and patterns in the area. Providing protected spaces for people to bike is the safest and most effective way of supporting the City's mode share targets and contributes to making Downtown Guelph a vibrant and bustling people-friendly space – a great place for business, the environment, and people.

The seasonal patio program is an important economic opportunity for Downtown businesses. The recommended Wyndham Street cross-section enables this program to continue by facilitating the shifting of the bike lane into the parking area as depicted in Attachment 4.

Streetscape and Construction Mitigation Workshop

In 2014 Council approved the [Downtown Guelph Streetscape Manual, Built Form Standards and St. George's Square Concept](#) which implements a flexible street approach on key streets Downtown, creates streets that provide an attractive, accessible and safe environment for all modes of transportation (walking, cycling, vehicular) and sets out general design elements for St. George's Square. The 2014 Streetscape Manual provides an enhanced level of service beyond that existing along the Wyndham Street North corridor (DTIRP Ph1) however it comes at an estimated cost of \$15M currently unfunded.

After Council's approval of the EA, which provides the form and function of the Wyndham Street corridor, a Council Workshop is planned for April 2024 to discuss the:

- a) [November 2019 Council resolution \(item 27, pg.12\)](#): "That staff be directed to review the budget allocated to Downtown Streetscapes and the proposed civic square to identify good, better and best options for consideration and report back in 2022."
- b) November 29, 2023 resolution approved by Council during the 2024-2027 Multi-year Budget: "That staff be directed to bring options for downtown streetscaping to Council for consideration in the first half of 2024, with any adjustments required to the capital budget and funding strategy to be made through the 2025 budget confirmation."

The key discussion will be centered on the streetscape investment alternatives that can be made Downtown. The workshop will also explore business disruption and construction impact mitigation including the pace of construction.

Ultimately, a decision from Council is required regarding the streetscaping level of service and construction pacing for staff to complete work as part of the 2025 budget confirmation process and advance design. Therefore, after the Workshop,

staff intend to prepare a staff report that will outline recommendations for Council direction targeted for the June 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting (CoW).

Next Steps / Schedule

A detailed next steps schedule for DTIRP is listed below while a graphical overview of Downtown Renewal's journey to revitalization is provided as Attachment 5.

- **February 27, 2024** - CoW Report approval re: Wyndham Street Cross Section and St. George's Square Intersection
- **April 17, 2024** - Council Workshop re: streetscape and construction mitigation
- **Q2 2024** - Commence final design
- **June 2024** - CoW Report re: Streetscape Level of Service and pace of implementation
- **Q2 2024** - Construction activities commence with utility relocations
- **Q2/Q3 2024** - Engagement re: Capital Implementation Plan (staging, disruption mitigation)
- **Q4 2024** - Finalize Capital Implementation Plan with presentation to Council; this plan will include phasing/staging, consider construction impact to local businesses and key events such as the Guelph bi-centennial
- **Late 2024 / early 2025** - Finalize Macdonell and Allan's Structure EA for Council's consideration
- **2025** - Continue utility relocations, community engagement and final design
- **Q4 2025** - Tender reconstruction contract
- **Spring 2026** - Commence reconstruction of municipal infrastructure

Financial Implications

DTIRP is a significant multi-year financial investment that includes a number of individual projects underway and related to DTIRP Phase 1 (i.e. PN0879 Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program - Capital Implementation Plan, PN0060 Wyndham St. N. Reconstruction - Phase 1 Carden to North Cork Street, PN0061 Wyndham St. Environmental Assessment, PN0062 Wyndham St. N. Reconstruction - Phase 2 St. George's Square to Woolwich, and RB0013 Macdonell Bridge and Allans Structures Modifications, PN0850 Wyndham St. S Reconstruction - Wellington to Carden). It's important to note that the City's investment in the Downtown unlocks growth revenues and economic activity required to meet the goals of the Strategic Plan as well as commitments in the Housing Pledge.

Sufficient budget is included in the approved 2024 - 2027 MYB for the proposed infrastructure reconstruction efforts along the Wyndham corridor, except the incremental cost to increase the streetscaping level of service as envisioned in the [2014 Streetscape Manual](#). The incremental cost over the current level of service provided along the Wyndham Street North corridor from Carden Street to Woolwich Street is valued at \$15M. A Council workshop on streetscaping service levels and cost, discussed above, is planned for April 2024.

Council will continue to receive quarterly progress updates through the Tier 1 capital project reporting.

Consultations and Engagement

Community Engagement

The following specific engagement activities were undertaken as part of the [Wyndham Street EA](#):

- August 2021 – Project Launch
- August 2021 – A Downtown merchants meeting
- 2021 to 2023 – Three Downtown Guelph Business Association meetings
- 2021 to 2023 – Two Guelph Economic Development Advisory Committee meetings
- November 2022 – [Public Information Centre](#) and HYS survey
- June 2023 - Participation at the Multicultural Festival to share information about the project
- June and July 2023 - Tactical urbanism event and HYS survey
- September 2023 – [Public Information Centre](#) and HYS survey

Internal Consultations

Given the wide-ranging impact on all departments and areas of operation in the City, an internal list of over 40 subject matter experts (SMEs) is maintained to be called upon for the life of DTIRP through planning to design and construction. Specific to this Staff Report, the SME's were involved as a group and individually to participate in understanding and creating a short list of viable options from a long list. The same group was also convened to provide input on the selection of the preferred options. Further, the DTIRP Steering Committee is updated and consulted bi-monthly to provide direction on the progression and direction of the overall Program of projects.

Attachments

Attachment-1 St. George's Square Reconstruction Options

Attachment-2 Recommended Wyndham Street Cross Section

Attachment-3 Recommended St. George's Square Intersection

Attachment-4 Seasonal Patio Program

Attachment-5 Downtown Renewal - Journey to Revitalization

Attachment-6 Staff Presentation – DTIRP Wyndham Corridor

Departmental Approval

DTIRP Steering Committee

- Antti Vilkkö, General Manager, Facilities and Energy Management
- Nectar Tampacopoulos, General Manager, Environmental Services
- Krista Walkey, General Manager, Planning and Building Services

- James Goodram, Manager, Economic Development and Tourism
- Doug Godfrey, General Manager, Operations
- Tara Baker, Treasurer, General Manager, Finance
- Lisa Duarte, General Manager, Strategic Communications and Community Engagement

Report Author

Reg Russwurm, Manager, Design and Construction

This report was approved by:

Terry Gayman, P.Eng.

General Manager/City Engineer, Engineering and Transportation Services
Infrastructure, Development and Environment

519-822-1260 extension 2369

terry.gayman@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Jayne Holmes, P.Eng., PMP

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Infrastructure, Development and Environment

519-822-1260 extension 2248

jayne.holmes@guelph.ca