



Governance and Priorities Committee Report

For the Meeting of August 20, 2015

To: Governance and Priorities Committee **Date:** August 14, 2015
From: Katie Hamilton, Director of Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning
Subject: Johnson Street Bridge Public Realm Areas

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to bring forward options for Council to consider for completing the landscaping, plazas, and public spaces for the new Johnson Street Bridge.

Earlier public engagement noted that the bridge area is very much seen as a transportation hub, with a desire for enhanced walkability and cycling connections and improving overall accessibility. There is a desire to see animation of the public realm, with support for opportunities for social gathering through community events, festivals, and entertainment in the plaza areas. Opportunities to sit and view the harbour were identified as important and there is a desire to improve overall safety and introduce elements to encourage traffic calming.

The bridge approaches are considered gateways to Downtown and Victoria West neighbourhoods, and when asked to prioritize the public realm budget of \$1.3 million, the top priorities were (in order): landscaping, plaza amenities and pathway lighting/ pedestrian and cyclists safety.

As noted to Council during the July 16, 2015 Governance and Priorities Committee meeting, there is currently not enough budget to complete the approved landscape plan. With recent changes to the project budget and timeline, there are a number of options for Council to consider to guide the public realm itself and the corresponding engagement with the public.

An increase to the project budget is required to deliver the previously approved plans, however, it also presents an opportunity to reconsider the original design approach to the public realm in terms of the details that have not been implemented. This includes lighting, plantings and trees, benches, bike racks, trash and recycling receptacles, drinking fountains, and any finishings of wall surfaces.

Due to time and process limitations, earlier engagement did not include the opportunity for the community to inform the urban design and how the space would feel and be used. The timing of the two adjacent developments on the north east and south east corners of the project, also present opportunities to influence the public plaza areas.

There are limited funding options available within the remaining project budget to fund elements of the public realm and landscaping. Additional funds will be required.


RECOMMENDATION:


- 1) Direct staff to proceed with public engagement on urban design of public realm in fall 2015 and to report back to Council with a public realm design and corresponding budget options.

Respectfully submitted,


Bridget Frewer
Citizen Engagement Advisor



Katie Hamilton
Director, Citizen Engagement
and Strategic Planning


Jonathan Huggett
Director, Johnson Street Bridge
Replacement Project


Jonathan Tinney, Director,
Sustainable Planning and
Community Development

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:


August 14, 2015

List of Attachments

- Appendix A – Sharp & Diamond Landscape Strategy
- Appendix B – Public Realm Engagement Feedback Summary July 2012
- Appendix C – David Foster Way Staircase Concept and Proposed Accessible Entrance to Janion Residences
- Appendix D – Overview of Project Public Realm Areas and Timeline for Work

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to bring forward, as directed by Council, options for Council to consider for completing the landscaping, plazas, and public spaces for the new Johnson Street Bridge.

BACKGROUND

The Johnson Street Bridge Replacement Project impacts a diverse range of stakeholders including residents and businesses as well as visitors and people who commute through the area. In addition to building a new bridge with three vehicle lanes, on-road bike lanes, a multi-use trail and separated pedestrian pathway, the scope of the Johnson Street Bridge Replacement Project also includes revitalized public spaces, improved connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists, and three new plazas spaces. These plaza spaces include a new downtown trailhead for the E&N, Lochside, and Galloping Goose Regional Trails, improved accessible connectivity to the multi-use trail and pedestrian pathway, and new spaces for the public to enjoy downtown and views of the Inner Harbour.

At the time the contract was awarded to PCL Constructors Westcoast in December 2012, the budget for landscaping and all public realm elements including lighting and furnishings was estimated to be \$1.3 million. PCL's contract includes approximately \$500,000 for hard surfaces including sidewalks and pathways, the laydown of pavers for plazas, and construction of walls and stairs. A cash allowance of \$880,000 is also included in the contract for lighting, plantings and trees, benches, bike racks, trash and recycling receptacles, drinking fountains, and any finishings to wall surfaces. A cash allowance is a placeholder in the budget for landscaping and public realm. It allowed flexibility in the delivery of landscape and public realm elements, whereas the hardscape elements are included in the PCL contract to be delivered by PCL.

Examples of hard surfaces included in PCL contract:



CONCRETE UNIT PAVING



CONCRETE BAND



PLAZA AND VIEWING



ASPHALT WITH CONCRETE EDGE



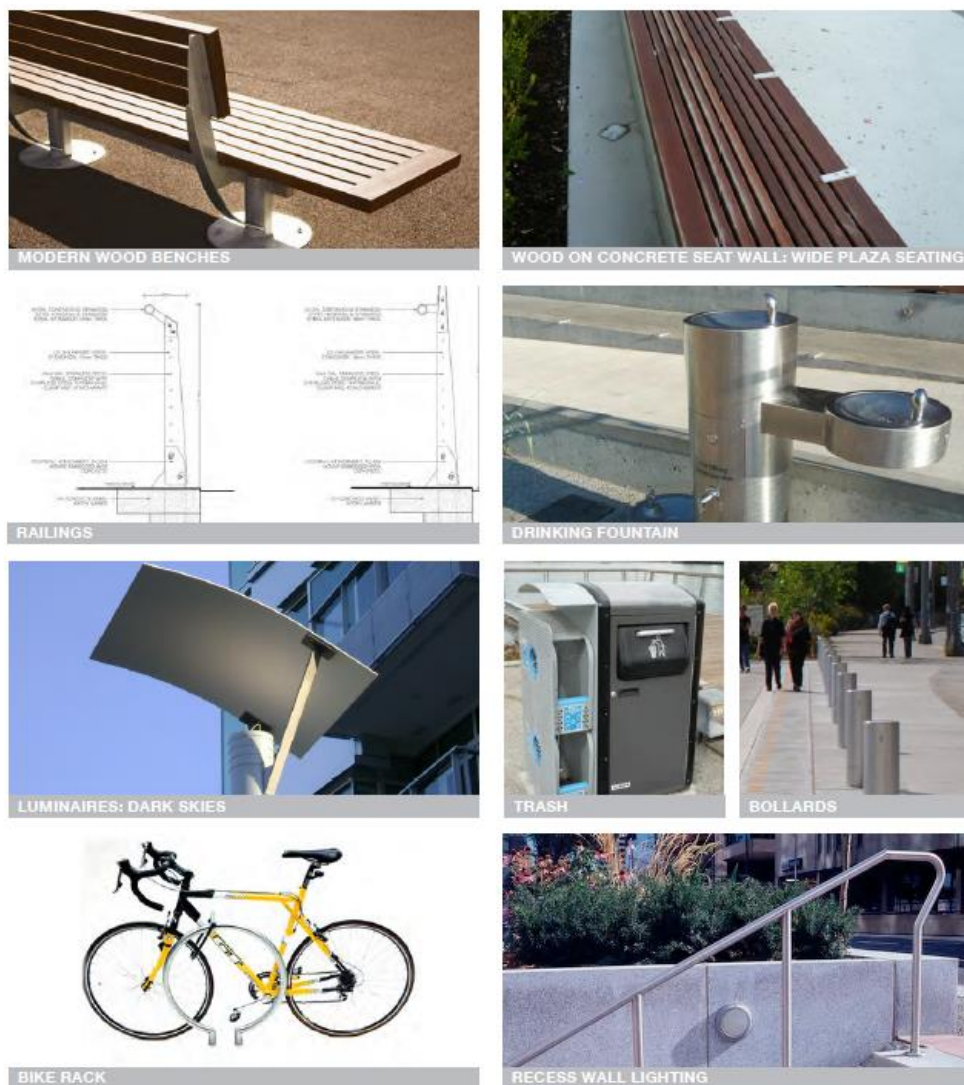
SCORED CONCRETE / GRID PATTERNS



STONE PAVING AT KEY EDGES

Landscape design drawings were produced by Sharp & Diamond Landscape Architecture as a subcontractor to MMM Group as part of their design contract for the new bridge (Appendix A). These drawings include designs for boulevards with plantings and trees, landscaped areas on both the west and east sides of the new bridge, irrigation for some but not all landscaped areas, and pavers for three plaza areas: two on the east side of the bridge and one the south west side of the bridge to be built on top of the existing bridge pier. All three plazas in the current design include seating and benches as well as architectural and safety lighting. In addition, the two east plazas include plans for trash and recycling receptacles and drinking fountains. The north east plaza, located beside the Janion development, includes bike racks.

Furnishings from Sharp & Diamond design (to be funded in cash allowance):



In the summer of 2012, the City consulted with the public on the public realm elements and received feedback from more than 200 people who participated in two public sessions. More than 100 surveys were received in addition to written submission from the Downtown Residents Association, Victoria West Community Association, and the Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition.

A number of themes emerged through consultation and helped inform the final design drawings produced by Sharp & Diamond and which are included as part of PCL's contract for the bridge. A full summary of the feedback was shared with Council in July 2012 and is attached (Appendix B). Some of the most common themes include:

- The area is very much seen as a transportation hub, with a desire for enhanced walkability and cycling connections and improving overall accessibility.
- A desire to see animation of the public realm, with support for opportunities for social gathering through community events, festivals, and entertainment in the plaza areas.
- Opportunities to sit and view the harbour were identified as important.
- A desire to improve overall safety and introduce elements to encourage traffic calming.
- The bridge approaches are considered gateways to Downtown and Victoria West neighbourhoods.

When asked to prioritize the public realm budget of \$1.3 million, the top priorities were:

- Investing in landscaping
- Plaza amenities
- Pathway lighting / pedestrian and cyclists safety

In terms of use and design of the plaza spaces, public consultation in 2012 also identified:

- the north east plaza as an important multi-use trail connection and gathering point.
- the south east plaza as a trail and pedestrian connection to the bridge and further David Foster Way and presents an opportunity for harbour viewing.
- the south west plaza is seen as an opportunity for social gathering and harbour viewing.

As a result of the 2012 consultation, several changes to connectivity and landscape designs were made, including:

- the addition of three traffic medians, two along Esquimalt Road, and one at Johnson Street between Wharf Street and the bridge.
- additional marked crosswalks were added at the intersection of Esquimalt and Harbour Roads.
- a sidewalk was added along the south side of Esquimalt Road, connecting to the pedestrian pathway over the bridge.
- enhanced crossings for pedestrians and cyclists (elephants feet bicycle crossing) were added at the multi-use trailhead downtown.
- a cyclist left turning lane from Wharf Street to the multi-use trail was added.
- the public identified locations for additional way-finding signage on the west side, in addition to way finding signage on the downtown side, to be added by the City at project completion.
- the extension of Harbour Road was narrowed from original designs.
- the south west plaza was designed with additional benches for harbour viewing.

In addition, the speed limit for the bridge area has also been set at 30km/h.

Due to time and process limitations, what was not included in the earlier engagement was the opportunity for the community to inform the urban design and how the space would feel and be used.

In 2014, an engagement strategy was developed to engage the community on the future of the three plaza spaces for the bridge project and the new city park to be developed in the former Esquimalt Road "s-curve" alignment and consolidated green space areas.

However, staff recommended that genuine engagement specific to the future use of the spaces could not proceed without complete information on timelines and budget. The community has expressed that financial constraints are important and it's important that all constraints are communicated and understood by all.

In addition to the public realm aspects, the project currently identifies \$250,000 for the fabrication and installation of public art. At the time the rail bridge was removed in February 2012, a section of steel from the rail bridge was set aside to be used for a future public art piece. The steel is currently being stored at the Public Works Yard.

In September 2013, staff brought forward options for Council to consider regarding the budget for public art. Following support of the City's Public Art Advisory Committee, Council set the budget for public art at \$250,000. At the time, it was believed that a public art budget of this magnitude would be the largest in the City of Victoria's history and more than sufficient to produce a substantial piece of art. Staff indicated in the report that the public art process would follow the City's Art in Public Places Policy with a nationwide artist competition with a three-staged jury process. Council's direction at the time was to bring forward more information on the public realm prior to Council making any further decisions related to public art for the project. In response to Council's direction, staff approached the landscape architect to produce more detailed drawings of the public realm areas. These drawings were shared with Council during a GPC meeting in July 2014. No further decisions related to public realm or public art were made at that time.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

In July, Council approved a budget increase of \$2.554 million with funding from the Building and Infrastructure reserve fund for a total project budget of \$96.8 million. According to PCL's latest project schedule, the new bridge is expected to open in the spring of 2017 with final project completion, including removal of the existing bridge and completion of all landscaping and plazas by the fall of 2017.

The total budget for the public realm was estimated at \$1.3 million. At the time the contract was awarded to PCL in 2012, approximately \$500,000 was included in PCL's contract for the completion of all the hardscaping for the public realm including walls, pavers in the plazas, sidewalks and pathways. The remaining \$880,000 to complete all plantings and trees and furnishings including bike racks, benches, lighting, trash and recycling, and drinking fountains was included as a cash allowance in the contract. It was also identified that Parks staff would select the tree species and plantings to be included with the landscaping with the City of Victoria approving any expenditures from the cash allowance.

Public Realm item	Funding source	
Landscaping and furnishings: Trees, shrubs, benches, trash and recycling, lighting	Cash allowance	\$880,000
Hardscaping: sidewalks, pathways, walls, plaza pavers, stairs.	PCL contract	\$500,000
		\$1,380,000

To date, \$345,000 has been allocated from the cash allowance for all work and fixtures related to safety and architectural lighting in the public spaces around the bridge. This leaves a remaining total of \$500,000 to complete all remaining public realm elements as per MMM's landscape design drawings.

Bids received by PCL for the remaining landscape and furnishing work beyond the hardscape surfacing indicate there is currently not enough budget available in the cash allowance to complete the approved landscape plan. This means an increase to the project budget is required to deliver the previously approved plans, however, it also presents an opportunity to reconsider the original design approach to the public realm in terms of the details that have not been implemented. Items to be completed within the cash allowance include: lighting, plantings and trees, benches, bike racks, trash and recycling receptacles, drinking fountains, and any finishings to wall surfaces. PCL's contract includes hard surface sidewalks and pathways, the laydown of pavers for plazas, and construction of walls, stairs, and handrails.

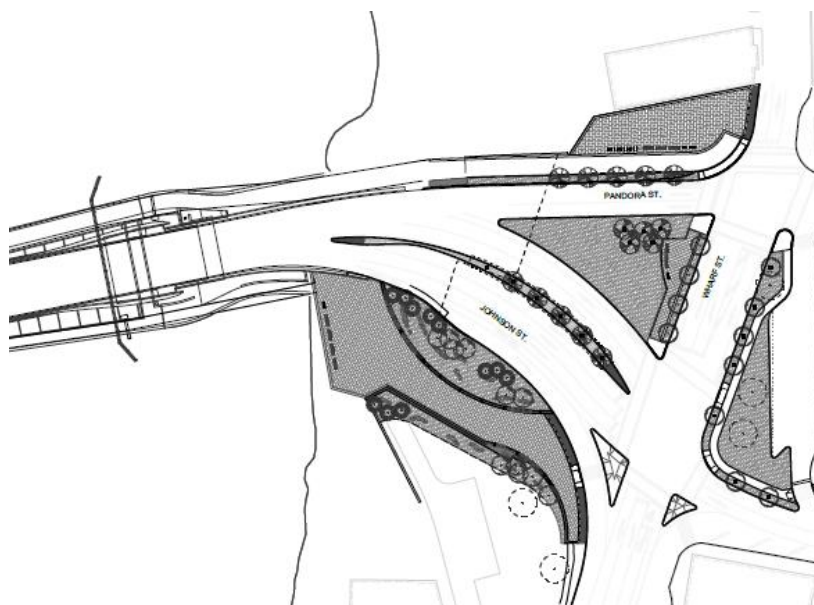
Current Plaza Space Design and Opportunities:

North East Plaza



NORTH EAST PLAZA

The north east plaza in its current design will be located beside the new Janion development and is designed to serve as the trailhead for the region's Galloping Goose, Lochside, and E&N multi-use trails. The current design includes new bike racks, a drinking fountain, and new recycling and garbage receptacles. Way-finding signage could be installed at project completion. The space is designed with opportunities for electrical and water utility hook ups. Some future opportunities in this space may include ground level uses in association with the Janion development such as outdoor café or seating, small events, public art, interpretive signage related to history of the crossing, E&N Rail, original Janion Hotel story, and Chinatown.



East side landscape site plan

The Janion development is currently scheduled to be completed by July 2016 with the new plaza space and the Janion development sharing a close interface. Due to limited space within their property, the Janion development included a bike parking variance and contributed \$1,700 to the City to be used towards the installation of seven bike parking stalls in the north east plaza, in lieu of providing this bike parking on the Janion property. The City will install these bike racks as part of the completion of the new plaza.

In order to ensure a pedestrian link to the David Foster Harbour Pathway from this plaza, the City has worked with the Janion's architect to develop a staircase concept (Appendix C). Given the grades required, it was determined that an accessible ramp would not be possible in this location, as such a staircase with bike wheel ramps has been designed. Accessible access will be available on the south side of the Johnson Street Bridge. Staff are also working with the Janion's architect on an external staircase and accessible ramp in the right-of-way which serves a dual purpose of improving accessibility into the Janion but also helps to define the space between the upper plaza and the staircase connection. It also provides an area for some landscaping to help soften the edges of the hardscape (Appendix C).

Further design work is also underway to advance the David Foster Harbour Pathway beneath the Johnson Street Bridge. In the short term, this will include designing to the subgrade level in advance of the bridge girders being installed, after which heavy equipment will not be able to access the site.

South East Plaza

The new plaza on the south east side of the bridge in its current design provides an accessible connection with the new bridge's pedestrian pathway and future David Foster Way. This plaza is designed to include benches alongside landscaped areas creating a new downtown space for people to sit and enjoy views of the harbour. The plaza is designed to include an accessible grade from the bridge to downtown, a drinking fountain, and new recycling and garbage receptacles. Way-finding signage could be installed at project completion. The space is designed with opportunities for electrical and water utility hook ups. Some future opportunities in this space may include integration with proposed Northern Junk property development, public art and small event programming.



SOUTH EAST PLAZA LOOKING EAST

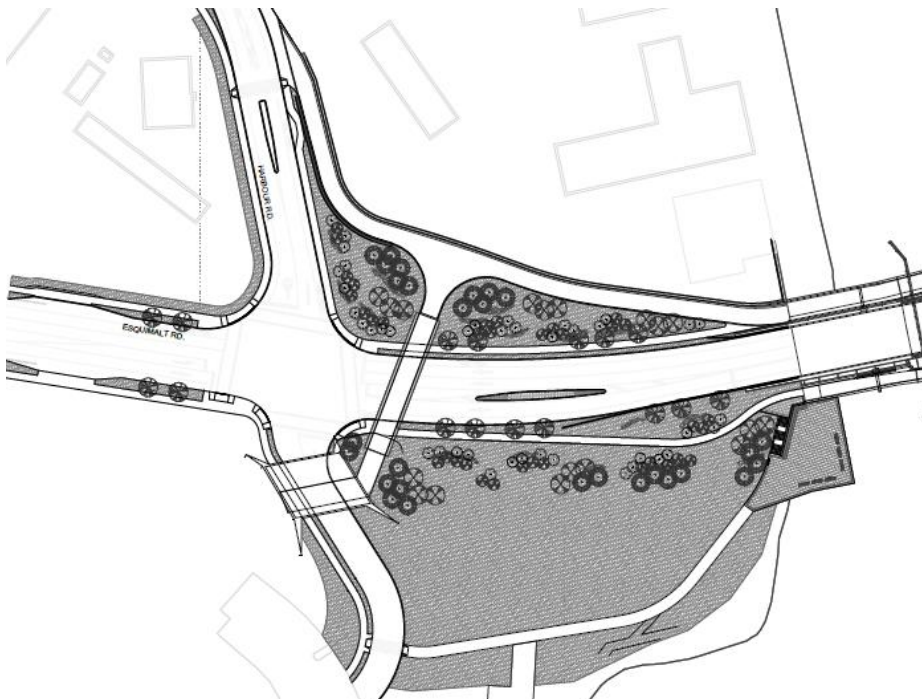
South West Plaza

The new plaza on the south west side of the bridge in its current design creates a new space for the public to sit and enjoy views of downtown Victoria and the Inner Harbour. It will be adjacent to the area identified for a future waterfront park and could allow for future event and entertainment programming. It is currently designed to connect to an accessible pedestrian pathway to Harbour Road and pedestrian pathway over the bridge. A staircase will connect directly to the bridge's pedestrian pathway. The space is designed with opportunities for electrical and water utility hook ups. Some future opportunities in this space may include interpretive signage about Victoria's history, First Nations history, history of the crossing, E&N Rail, public art, murals, green "living" wall, and small event programming.



WEST PLAZA

The two south plazas will be built on top of the existing bridge's abutments, and cannot be completed until the existing bridge is removed in 2017. Wayfinding signage is identified for each of the plazas and could be added by the City at project completion. Interpretive signage recognizing the history and significance of the area may also be added.



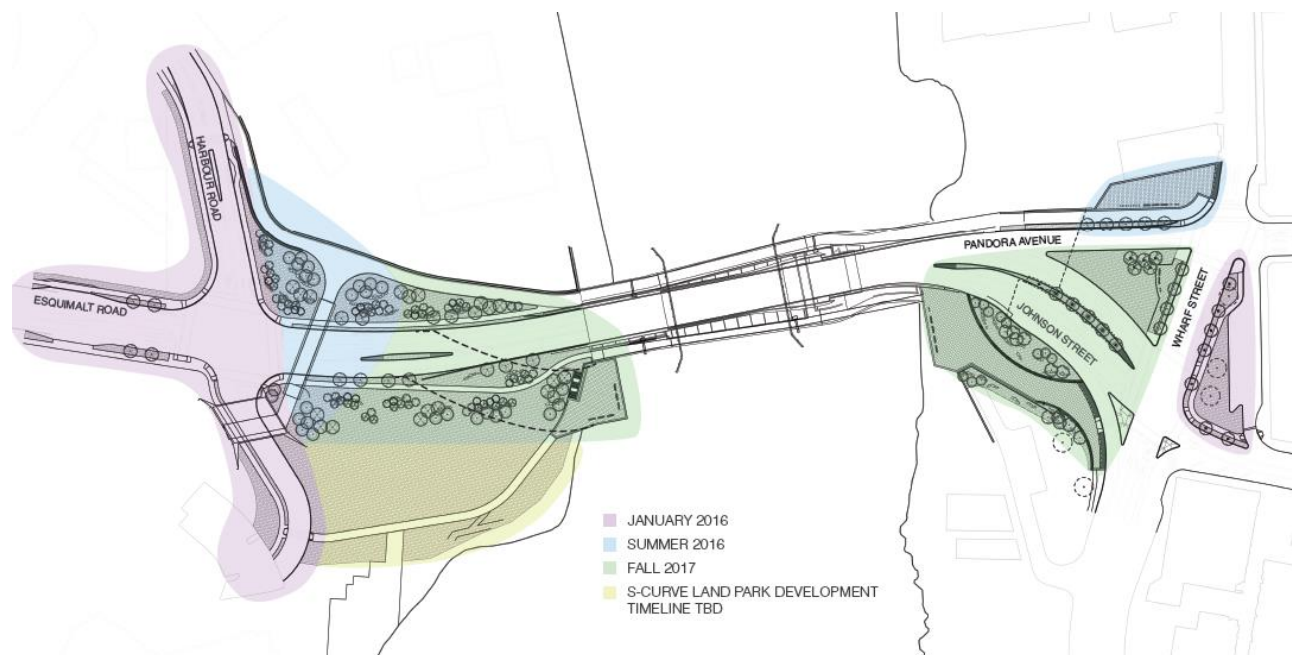
West side landscape site plan

PCL's contract includes construction of all of the hardscaped elements of the public realm including sidewalks, pathways, stairs, laydown of pavers, and construction of retaining walls,

which are all currently identified in the landscape design construction drawings. The remaining landscape work was included as a cash allowance within PCL's contract, subject to the City's approval for any of the work.

Construction drawings have been issued for steel fabrication, new road alignments including relocation of underground utilities, sidewalks, pathways, plazas, and landscaping. A significant level of work related to the roads, intersections, and sidewalks has been completed or is nearing completion. Changes to these elements would result in significant costs. All other elements remain somewhat flexible if Council desires.

Upon agreement of public realm approach and timeline, based on PCL's most recent schedule, staff and PCL have identified the opportunity to complete some of the work in phases. Taking this approach to completing the work would minimize the appearance of a construction area and return public space to the community as it becomes available. An overview of the public realm areas and expected timelines for construction work completion is attached with this report (Appendix D).



Timeline for work

Construction activity along Esquimalt Road and Harbour Road, including road work, curbs, and sidewalks is expected to be complete by the end of this year. Staff and PCL have identified that irrigation and landscaping for this area could be completed by December of this year.

On the east side, crews are currently completing road alignment work and underground utility work along Wharf Street between Johnson and Pandora Avenue. This work is expected to be complete by the end of the year. Once complete with the new widened sidewalk, the boulevard area in front of the businesses between Johnson and Pandora could be irrigated and landscaped in January 2016.

PCL expect to have the new multi-use overpass in place by July of 2016. Once this work is complete, the areas around the new overpass could be landscaped.

Work on the north east plaza beside the Janion could begin in January 2016. Development of the Janion currently anticipates being complete with residents moving in by July 2016.

Construction and landscape work for the two south plazas and landscaping of the centre boulevard area between new road alignments on the downtown side of the bridge cannot be completed until after the existing bridge is dismantled in 2017 and new roads are in place.

At this time, the proposed Northern Junk development has not submitted their revised development proposal to the City. The current timeline for development will depend on a number of factors, including Council approval.

Under the current Building Canada funding agreement, the City is required to replace the former rail station with a new station by project competition in 2017. Council previously directed staff to locate the station as close to downtown as possible. Staff had identified a few possible locations in Victoria West, including in the former Esquimalt Road “s-curve” lands and new park area. The location of the future rail station will need to be considered as part of any engagement with the community on the future of the s-curve lands park as it is one of the few locations where a station could be located. As rail is not currently running on Vancouver Island, Council could direct staff to approach funding partners to ask if the requirement to build the rail station could be removed for the project requirements and completed at a later date.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Based on a better understanding of financial constraints and opportunities, there are a number of approaches available for Council to consider:

1) Urban Design Approach with Budget to be determined (recommended)

Engage the public on design and future use of spaces and develop budget options.

Engagement level: Involve

Host a design charrette with neighbourhood associations, neighbouring developments, local design community, neighbours and businesses in the area to develop an updated urban design for the areas around the bridge. Develop budget options and work within space parameters of completed hardscaping and road alignments.

2) Urban Design Approach within a Set Budget

Increase budget and work with the community through further engagement to develop holistic design options for public spaces and landscaping within approved budget.

Engagement level: Involve

Host a design charrette with neighbourhood associations, neighbouring developments, local design community, neighbours and businesses in the area to develop an updated urban design for the areas around the bridge. Work within budget parameters and space parameters of completed hardscaping and road alignments.

3) “Stay the Course” with existing landscape plan

Direct PCL to go to competitive tender to fulfill approved landscape plan. It is estimated that this will result in a landscape budget shortfall and will require additional funding to complete the work.

Engagement level: Inform / Consult

Inform the public and stakeholders on landscape plan and consult on use of public spaces to inform future programming, opportunities for place making, public, banners, etc.

4) Scale back existing landscape plan (not recommended)

Use remaining \$500,000 in the cash allowance to complete the work. With the remaining funds, plazas could be hardscaped with pavers, walls, and lighting as per the landscape construction plans. Irrigation could be installed per the landscape plans and missing irrigation could be added.

Areas identified for landscaping would be “hydroseeded” and remain as grassed areas until further funding is identified. This option would not allow for any furnishing, other than the bike racks in the plaza adjacent to the Janion development.

Engagement Level: Inform/Consult

Inform the public and stakeholders of revised landscape plan and outline construction timeline and impacts. Inform the public and stakeholders on landscape plan and consult on use of public spaces to inform future programming, opportunities for place making, public, banners, etc.

Engagement Approach:

All options will include engagement with the Downtown and Victoria West neighbourhood associations, neighbouring approved and proposed developments (Janion and Northern Junk), the local design community, neighbours and businesses in the immediate areas, and citizens with an interest in the area. Each option would continue to engage the Janion and also engage the proposed Northern Junk development to coordinate design to adjacent areas and any supporting costs, to the extent possible.

Should Council choose either of the first two options, the engagement approach would include a design charrette and produce an outcome of updated urban design of the spaces and landscaping in the area. A landscape architect would be engaged to produce updated design and construction plans.

With PCL's current schedule to complete the north east plaza (adjacent to the Janion) beginning in early January 2016 and the Janion development expecting occupancy by July 2016, it is recommended that engagement with the public occur this October and staff report back to Council in November with the results of engagement. This will allow for any revisions to landscape and plaza designs and for completed areas to be landscaped as they become available. Construction of the north east plaza could begin by January and timed with the expected completion of the Janion development.

Funding Considerations:

There are limited funding options available within the remaining project budget to fund elements of the public realm and landscaping. Additional funds will be required.

Guiding City Documents:

2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan

- 2015 Action: Keep the Johnson Street Bridge replacement project moving forward
- 2017 Outcome: Johnson Street Bridge is complete

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

- Improve connectivity of the cycling and pedestrian networks and give priority to sustainable modes of transportation

RECOMMENDATION:

1) Direct staff to proceed with public engagement on urban design of public realm in fall 2015 and to report back to Council with a public realm design and corresponding budget options.

CONCLUSIONS:

The urban design of the area approaching and within the Johnson Street Bridge project is critical to the economic vitality, usability and liveability of the entire area. The project budget will need to be increased regardless of approach to deliver on all elements originally contemplated, however, there is opportunity for the public realm design to benefit from public input on both public realm design, and financial constraints.

List of Attachments

- Appendix A – Sharp & Diamond Landscape Strategy
- Appendix B – Public Realm Engagement Feedback Summary July 2012
- Appendix C – David Foster Way Staircase Concept and Proposed Accessible Entrance to Janion Residences
- Appendix D – Overview of Project Public Realm Areas and Timeline for Work