



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of October 26, 2017

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** October 18, 2017
From: Jonathan Tinney, Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development
Subject: Downtown Public Realm Plan Adoption

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Approve the City of Victoria Downtown Public Realm Plan, 2017, to replace the City of Victoria Downtown Beautification Strategy and Kit-of-Parts, January 26, 1995.
2. Direct staff to amend the Subdivision and Development Services Bylaw to reference the Downtown Public Realm Plan to direct frontage improvements for development within the downtown.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Draft Downtown Public Realm and Streetscape Plan has been updated based on consideration of Council feedback and discussion at the July 13, 2017 Council workshop. This report provides an overview of workshop feedback together with the design response and a brief rationale. The covering report for the July 13, 2017 Council workshop, which provided a detailed overview of the Plan, is included as an attachment to this report.

Adjustments made to the Plan in response to Council's feedback include revised expression of specific districts through streetscape design within the downtown, as well as, revised priorities for Government Street and Douglas Street.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the revised Downtown Public Realm Plan (Attachment 1) for Council's consideration for adoption.

BACKGROUND

The Draft Downtown Public Realm Plan was presented to Council in a workshop format on July 13, 2017, where Council discussed and provided a number of considerations for plan refinement (the July 13, 2017 Council Report is attached as Attachment 2 to this report).

"Committee agreed to consider a revised plan from staff that includes the comments made today before adoption of the Downtown Public Realm Plan."

Based on these considerations and further investigations, Staff have revised the Downtown Public Realm Plan as summarized below.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Emphasize Victoria as Capital City (pages 4, 15)

Celebrating and enhancing Victoria as the Provincial Capital is a key objective of the plan. This objective is addressed by a design framework and kit-of-parts that supports simple and elegant design and use of high-quality and iconic materials in focused areas. Additional wording has been added in introductory sections to emphasize the Capital City status as a key component of the background and rationale.

Review corner and mid-block 'bump out' approach for sidewalks in Old Town (page 34)

Corner bump outs were included as a general strategy throughout the downtown to improve pedestrian safety and connectivity. The plan has been revised to remove bump outs from Old Town where there are narrower streets and pedestrian crossings.

Review Public Realm Strategies to include Celebration and Play (page 19)

Additional wording was added to emphasize and better describe the role of play and celebration in the public realm.

Ensure clear references to and linkages with the Arts and Culture Master Plan (pages 7, 43)

The plan has been updated to more clearly reference the Arts and Culture Master Plan (not yet adopted) including guidelines for murals and site furnishings as public art.

Review bollard strategy to further simplify (pages 56, 66)

The plan has been updated to limit and focus use of heritage style (Type A) bollards in Bastion Square, Waddington Alley within Old Town, and within feature areas (including corner bump outs and plaza spaces) in the Inner Harbour; and removed from Chinatown (gradually as existing bollards require replacement).

Review street naming in ground plane - Reconsider use of blue tiles for street names (page 60)

The plan has been revised to include direction to explore the use of blue heritage-style tiles for street names on Government Street between Wharf Street and Chinatown dependent on ability to consistently source suitable tiles over the long term.

Review pedestrian light strategy (page 42)

The plan includes direction to develop a pedestrian light strategy for the downtown premised on maintaining the globe/cluster lights in Old Town, the Inner Harbour, along key downtown corridors, and to develop a new light standard based conceptually on the modern heritage stylings of the Ashbury Light shown in the plan. The actual design of the light standard will be based on a more detailed design and technical analysis, and future direction from Council.

Ensure accessibility was considered and integrated for all components of the plan (pages 41, 20)

A key objective of the Downtown Public Realm Plan is to create an accessible and barrier-free downtown pedestrian environment, which is addressed and integrated throughout the plan document, building on policies and objectives from the Official Community Plan and the Pedestrian master Plan. Draft plan concepts and approaches were presented to the Accessibility Working Group in fall of 2016, and feedback collected. Representatives from the Accessibility Working Group were also part of the Project Stakeholder Team which met four times throughout the process.

The following feedback was recorded as part of the December 5, 2016 Accessibility Working Group (AWG).

“The Accessibility Working Group would like the City of Victoria to consider the following:

- be consistent and predictable for the visually impaired when installing tactile surfaces and ensure a non-slip material is used
- use of reflective stripping for bottom of benches and lampposts to help visually impaired in the evenings (these can be tripping hazards)
- use of some wooden bench material may be porous and can hold allergens. Recycled hard plastic benches would be better.”

Complete minutes from the December 2016 AWG meeting are provided as Attachment 3 to this report. A summary of feedback from the entire process, including Stakeholder Workshop #4 attended by representatives of the AWG, is included as Attachment 4.

The Public Realm Plan proposes use of long-lasting, quality materials that are easily accessible and promote safety for all ages and abilities, and a materials palette that will facilitate barrier-free, universal accessibility throughout Victoria's downtown public realm. Public realm furnishings, materials and applications included in the Plan document are consistent with the MMCD standards and guidelines.

The plan includes a recommendation to use tactile “buttons” to mark pedestrian crossings in the downtown to improve accessibility for those with limited disability. The City will be undertaking pilot project at Fort and Government St. in the fall of 2017 to study and test the functionality of tactile “buttons”. In response to feedback received from the Accessibility Working Group representatives on the draft Plan document at the March 30, 2017 Stakeholder meeting, the draft Plan was revised to incorporate a more simplified approach to paving materials and patterns at intersections to enhance accessibility, and specifically, legibility for those with visual impairments.

Reconsider priority improvements and timelines with regards to Douglas Street improvements (pages 89-90)

The original draft plan provided direction to develop a lighting and furnishing strategy for Douglas Street as an interim measure, until such time as a more comprehensive reconfiguration of the street as a transit oriented corridor could occur.

The plan has been updated to remove direction for an interim measure, and to include direction to proceed with planning and conceptual design for the long term change envisioned for Douglas Street over the short term (1-5 years), with detailed design and construction to follow as opportunities (transit funding partnerships, etc.) arise.

Reconsider specificity of priority improvements and timelines with regards to Government Street (pages 89-90)

The implementation section of the plan has been updated to prioritize conceptual design of the Government Street Mall expansion (from Yates to Chinatown), and include considerations for updates to street trees and planters for the existing Mall (from Wharf to Yates) as part of the conceptual design.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Accessibility Impact Statement

The plan addressed comments provided by the Accessibility Working Group.

2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan

The plan adjustments are consistent with the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan.

Impacts to Financial Plan

There is currently a request for supplementary funding in the draft 2018 Financial Plan to allow for further design work to take place based on the priorities outlined in the Downtown Public Realm Plan.

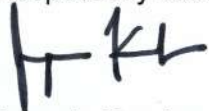
Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

The plan adjustments are consistent with the Official Community Plan.

CONCLUSIONS

The Draft Downtown Public Realm and Streetscape Plan has been updated based on consideration of Council feedback and discussion from the July 13, 2017 Council workshop. The Draft Plan represents a renewed vision, framework and set of design standards for the downtown public realm, and identifies priority projects and implementation steps. The Downtown Public Realm Plan will improve the walkability, legibility and accessibility of the City, support tourism, and contribute to a memorable and positive image of Victoria befitting of its status as the capital city. Staff recommend beginning implementation of identified Short Term Actions upon adoption of the Strategy, reporting back to Council as part of the 2018 financial planning process for funding to support implementation.

Respectfully submitted,



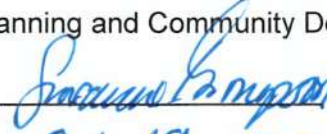
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Senior Urban Designer
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Jonathan Tinney
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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:


Oct. 19, 2017

List of Attachments:

- Attachment 1 - Downtown Public Realm Plan
- Attachment 2 - July 13, 2017 Council Report
- Attachment 3 - Complete minutes from the December 2016 AWG meeting
- Attachment 4 - A summary of feedback from the entire process, including Stakeholder Workshop #4 attended by representatives of the AWG
- Attachment 5 – Letter from Greater Victoria Place-making Network (July 5 2017)