



City of
Peterborough

TO: Members of the Planning Committee

FROM: Ken Hetherington, Manager, Planning Division

MEETING DATE: August 27, 2012

SUBJECT: Report PLPD12-052
Site Selection for a Downtown Public Square

PURPOSE

A report to recommend the preferred location for the Downtown Public Square.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report PLPD12-052 dated August 27, 2012, of the Manager, Planning Division, as follows:

- a) That the staff presentation on the site selection for a Downtown Public Square be received for information.
- b) That the term and priority functions of a "Downtown Public Square" be reserved for a location of greater size and prominence than the Louis Street site, and further that the future redevelopment of the Waterfront Commercial Area in the general vicinity of the Little Lake Marina be considered the preferred location for the Downtown Public Square, at this time.
- c) That the Louis Street site as depicted in Planning Report PLPD12-052 be recognized as the preferred site for the creation of a public commons/urban park to complement the planned reconstruction of Charlotte Street, and to stimulate the renewal of the Downtown Commercial Core and the Charlotte Street West Business District, in this planning horizon.

- d) That staff be authorized to complete the Urban Design Study for the Louis Street site but that the focus of the study be on the creation of a public commons/urban park in this location.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate budget or financial implications arising out of the selection of a site for a Downtown Public Square. While Council has approved capital funding of \$100,000 to undertake the Urban Design Study no construction funding appears in the capital budget forecast at this time. The next steps in the design process will lead to the development of a preliminary design and construction cost estimate for consideration by Council in a future budget year.

BACKGROUND

Report PLPD12-002, dated February 6, 2012, recommended the establishment of a Downtown Public Square at the Louis Street Municipal Parking Lot and on Louis Street north of the Driveway entrance to Rivulet Apartments. There were six sites analyzed, including the Louis Street site, Peterborough Square, the Harvey's site, the Ontario Court of Justice/Gas Works Lot, Victoria Park and the No Frills Parking site.

The site evaluation criteria used at that time resulted in the Louis Street site scoring the highest, closely followed by Peterborough Square. The establishment of a public square at the Louis Street site was recommended due to its proximity to a high density and variety of land uses. In addition, it was seen as providing a catalyst for redevelopment to occur in the area and, there were not any significant obstacles to its implementation.

The Peterborough Square site scored high due to its location directly adjacent to the Clock Tower and The Market Hall and due to its proximity to other Downtown features. The greatest impediment to the development of the Peterborough Square mall site for a Downtown Square is that it is privately owned, and buildings have been constructed on and under the site.

Council, at its meeting of February 21, 2012 deferred the Planning staff recommendation to establish a Downtown Public Square at the Louis Street site and approved the following motion:

That the recommendation be deferred to allow staff to:

- a) provide additional rationale for the Louis Street site and,
- b) identify other opportunities for a civic/public square in the Central Area as the downtown continues to grow.

The creation of a Downtown Public Square is one of the many key strategies of the Central Area Master Plan (CAMP). The strategy seeks to create a permanent Public Square in the Downtown for the benefit of the entire community. The CAMP recognizes that the City of Peterborough does not have a large multi-purpose outdoor venue for gatherings and community celebrations. The text of the Strategy as it appears in the Master Plan is appended as Exhibit A. On May 25, 2009 Council adopted OPA No. 140 and as a result the 21 strategies of the Central Area Master Plan now form part of the Official Plan.

Council has expressed the preference that the fulfillment of the Master Plan Strategy, the Downtown Public Square, be reserved for the best opportunity and not necessarily the best available opportunity. Council has expressed that the best opportunity would be a large site with high profile and significance. The site would quite possibly enjoy a waterfront presence or be an integral component of a major redevelopment opportunity of regional importance.

There is a potential for development of the City's waterfront beyond the present planning horizon. The Waterfront Commercial Area, in the area of Del Crary Park and the Marina, presents exciting possibilities for the future development of additional public open space. This area includes the Public Works site, the Market Plaza, the Holiday Inn and lands directly in front of Del Crary Park. Although this area is not currently in the Downtown Core, it is in the Central Area as defined in the Official Plan and as the City and the Downtown continues to grow, the limits of the core could expand into this area. It is the logical place for the redevelopment of properties, which could include a significant public space component including the Downtown Public Square. This area is included within the Urban Growth Area as defined by the Provincial Growth Plan and the City's Official Plan,

The Waterfront Commercial Area, adjacent to the Little Lake Marina, on the west side of George Street has the following strengths lending to the development of a future Public Square:

1. It is directly across from the Marina. Its redevelopment could greatly enhance the attractiveness of the area, improving its regional tourism draw potential.
2. Jackson Creek runs through the area. With the re-development of the Public Works property, the creek could be opened up, creating an attractive pedestrian oriented feature.
3. With the development of the Jackson Creek Walkway or Promenade, a pedestrian link could be created through the Downtown Core.
4. The re-development of the area could include a Downtown Conference Centre, the development of Civic buildings, high density residential, commercial space, an expansion of the Holiday Inn, and a new building for municipal parking.
5. The site has great visibility and is on the City's Downtown north-south main street.

6. The site has good proximity to the Otonabee River Trail and the Crawford Trail extension.

A significant re-development opportunity presents itself if there is a re-location of the Public Works Operations Centre. Successfully negotiating the incorporation of privately owned properties in a re-development plan for the area adjacent to Del Crary Park and the Marina would be key to moving its implementation forward.

Other areas considered have been the Harvey's site and the No Frill's site. These sites are key downtown waterfront sites that should be considered as part of the City's ongoing public waterfront initiative. The sites also possess the locational qualities of profile and waterfront proximity and therefore could be considered for the Downtown Public Square in time.

Accordingly, staff are recommending that the term and priority functions of a "Downtown Public Square" be reserved for a location of greater size and prominence than the options currently available, and further that the future redevelopment of the Waterfront Commercial Area in the general vicinity of the Little Lake Marina be considered the preferred location for the Downtown Public Square, at this time.

A Development Catalyst for the Current Planning Horizon

Planning Staff have given further consideration to the development of urban open space in the Downtown in order to fulfill the spirit of the Central Area Master Plan within the current planning horizon. This public investment would be seen as a complementary project of the Central Area Master Plan that can be made now as an incentive to private investment, and to add depth to the quality of downtown life. In the current planning horizon Planning staff continue to recommend the Louis Street site for the development of urban open space. To distinguish this opportunity from the Downtown Public Square project, staff are describing the opportunity as a public commons or urban park.

The Louis Street site offers the greatest potential to provide high quality urban open space in the near future. Its strengths are as follows:

1. The initial phases of development can take place on land owned by the City.
2. Converting a large surface parking lot into quality urban open space would rejuvenate the area.
3. The improvement to the living environment for those who reside nearby, and the potential to draw people to the Downtown Core with events held at Louis Street would be substantial.
4. Its development would provide a catalyst for the development of property around it, such as the vacant property on the south side of King Street, the vacant (privately owned surface parking lot) on the north side of Charlotte Street and properties along Aylmer Street.
5. Close parking can be provided as the King Street Parkade is right next door.

6. Its design can be conceived in concert with the Charlotte Street renewal project, creating a seamless flow between the two, improving the “sense of place” for this area of the Downtown Core.
7. The site is on a City transit route with good proximity to the transit hub. There is potential to enhance the profile of City transit by including an attractive transit stop in the design.
8. The site can be developed in the short term (within the next five years).
9. There is existing programming (Downtown Farmer’s Market and other events) looking for appropriate space
10. There would be frontage on Charlotte (a main street), King Street and Alymer Street.
11. The site has excellent pedestrian access and good proximity to the planned Bethune Street trail.

Although the public consultation process has not involved the public with respect to the programming of the space, staff and the consultant are showing a design that includes the following components:

1. A Downtown Farmer’s Market: by interfacing with Charlotte Street, the space is perfectly suited for this function.
2. A small stage area for entertainment
3. A large area of open space to accommodate public gatherings
4. Flexibility in design to accommodate a variety of events and to respond to summer and winter time uses (example: stage area used in summer can be used in the assembly of a winter skating rink).
5. Passive sunny and shaded areas for people to sit and read, for social gatherings, or to eat their lunch
6. Seasonal outdoor cafés

Accordingly staff recommend that the Louis Street site as depicted in Planning Report PLPD12-052 be recognized as the preferred site for the creation of a public commons/urban park to complement the planned reconstruction of Charlotte Street, and to stimulate the renewal of the Downtown Commercial Core and the Charlotte Street West Business District, in this planning horizon.

Staff also recommend that the Urban Design Study for the Public Square be completed for the Louis Street site but that the focus of the study be on the creation of a public commons/urban park in this location.

SUMMARY

In the longer term, the Waterfront Commercial Area in the vicinity of the Little Lake Marina presents an opportunity for the development of the Downtown Public Square in

conjunction with the re-development of the publicly and privately owned properties around it. Planning staff believe this area along the City's waterfront has great potential.

The establishment of a public commons or urban park at the Louis Street site in conjunction with the first phase of the Charlotte Street improvements presents an exciting opportunity to transform and rejuvenate the area. This type of public investment can be a catalyst for private investment, as was experienced subsequent to the creation of the Hunter Street Café District.

Submitted by,

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Attachments:
Exhibit A - Public Square Strategy – Central Area Master Plan
Exhibit B - Urban Design Study Power Point Presentation – EDA Collaborative Inc.