



The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie
COUNCIL REPORT

September 23, 2019

TO: Mayor Christian Provenzano and Members of City Council
AUTHOR: Stephen Turco, RPP, Senior Planner
Patrick Lo, Planning Intern
DEPARTMENT: Community Development and Enterprise Services
RE: James Street Area Revitalization Plan – Update

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an information update in relation to the following Council Resolution, dated March 5, 2018:

James Street and Surrounding Area Revitalization Plan

Moved by: Councilor M. Shoemaker
Seconded by: Councilor O. Grandinetti

Whereas the CTV W5 program “Steel Town Down” focused on the opioid crisis across Canada, and how it is affecting mid-sized cities like Sault Ste. Marie; and

Whereas the program featured Sault Ste. Marie’s Jamestown neighbourhood as one of the areas in Sault Ste. Marie where the use of opioids and other substances is prominent; and

Whereas the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre’s GIS department has been presenting data to stakeholders in the community for a number of years on the lack of park services and outdoor recreation activities in the Jamestown area and throughout the downtown core; and

Whereas the lack of activities in Sault Ste. Marie was cited as one of a wide number of factors that results in individuals turning to substance use, and ultimately substance abuse, in Sault Ste. Marie; and

Whereas the provision of park services and outdoor recreational activities is an area of direct municipal responsibility and an area where the City can play a leading role in combating part of this issue;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved that Community Development and Enterprise Services staff, in consultation with the Innovation Centre’s GIS department, be

requested to bring forward to City Council forthwith a James Street and surrounding area revitalization plan, including, but not limited to:

- possible expansion of Anna Marinelli Park;
- conversion of unused green space in the area for recreational use; and
- an examination and assessment of James Street and a recommendation on how best to use James Street as a public space; and
- recommendations on the creation of a park or green space in the Downtown core.

BACKGROUND

In January 2019, City staff invited three firms to submit proposals for a visioning exercise on the revitalization of this area. After reviewing the proposals, staff, in June of this year, retained the services of The Planning Partnership, at a price of \$11,300.00 plus HST.

The Planning Partnership has previously worked with the City on other public space projects, such as the Etienne Brule park and school site, the Canal District Neighbourhood Plan, and most recently, the new Downtown civic plaza. As well, the price proposed by The Planning Partnership was the lowest among the three proposals received.

Planning staff will be working with The Planning Partnership this fall to develop a plan for Anna Marinelli Park and the James Street area (i.e. Jamestown) that will address the points raised in the Council Resolution referenced above. In addition, staff will also explore other public realm and community development initiatives, including:

- conversion of James Street into a shared street, facilitating the reintroduction of vehicles while maintaining a strong pedestrian focus;
- creation of functional spaces for programming, such as markets or events;
- increased recreational and natural play spaces and opportunities;
- establishment of a community hub similar to the Gore Street Neighbourhood Resource Centre – in conjunction with City staff's work on a separate Council Resolution entitled Jamestown Health Equity Centre, passed May 28, 2018;
- improved linkages and connections between the James Street area and the Downtown that are safe and accessible; and
- potential opportunities for new private investment in the area that could make the James Street area more of a 'complete neighbourhood'.

Staff anticipate that the data and results from this visioning exercise can be used to develop longer-term policies to guide future land use and development decisions in the James Street area. Hence, this project will be branded and budgeted under the Planning Division's ongoing Shape the Sault – new Official Plan project.

Staff wish to note that the James Street area is not part of the City's Downtown, as there is a significant distance between the two areas. With respect to "recommendations on the creation of a park or green space in the Downtown core", Planning staff are in the process of planning the new Downtown civic plaza, and other recreational or green space improvements in the Downtown will be assessed as part of the City's ongoing Downtown Development Initiative.

ANALYSIS

According to Innovation Centre data on the City's parks, the households living in the area around Anna Marinelli Park are, on average, among the youngest and lowest-income compared to households living around all other City parks. This area also has the fourth highest number of children aged 0 to 17 living in low-income households (after the areas around Rosedale, Boston and Sutton parks).

Best practice research on engaging communities, especially lower-income communities, on the design of public spaces provides two important considerations:

- To create a place that people would want to visit, stay and regularly use, the most important group of people to involve in the design process is the people who would use that place.
- Emphasize an effective and inclusive engagement process, where decision-makers and designers understand the community they are creating the public space for. This means understanding local demographics, recognizing previous missteps, learning the community's past and present desires, and identifying and engaging key local leaders and stakeholders who can help with accessing the community.

In support of the above, Planning staff recommend hosting a series of stakeholder and neighbourhood engagement activities as part of developing a plan for Anna Marinelli Park and the James Street area. These activities include:

- Local champions meeting: Brainstorming and priority setting session with local champions – key neighbourhood and external stakeholders – to discuss community objectives and opportunities and methods for community engagement.
- Neighbourhood survey and outreach: For collecting ideas and other preliminary input and data, as well as inviting neighbours to attend upcoming engagement sessions.
- Neighbourhood mixers / idea sessions: Casual come-and-go sessions to gather ideas from neighbours – including residents as well as operators and owners of neighbourhood businesses and services.
- Design workshops with The Planning Partnership: Sessions where local champions and neighbours have an opportunity to work with professional designers from The Planning Partnership on turning ideas into drawings and plans.

- Public open house at the Soup Kitchen: Presentation of the final draft of the plan.

Staff anticipate that all of these public and stakeholder engagement activities will take place over the course of this fall, with a plan ready for Council's review by December 2019 or the beginning of 2020.

Staff have already begun reaching out to partners such as the District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board, the Soup Kitchen Community Centre and FutureSSM's Social Equity Coordinator to assist in making this project as collaborative, inclusive and successful as possible.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The budget for this engagement and visioning exercise is \$12,500 and is included in the Planning Division's existing budget for the Shape the Sault – new Official Plan project.

STRATEGIC PLAN / POLICY IMPACT

The objectives and engagement strategies for the Anna Marinelli Park and James Street area revitalization plan, as outlined in this report, are consistent with all four focus areas of the Corporate Strategic Plan:

- Infrastructure – in terms of planning for new infrastructure and maintaining existing infrastructure;
- Service Delivery – in terms of delivering excellent service to Sault Ste. Marie citizens;
- Quality of Life – in terms of providing a high quality of life for residents; and
- Community Development and Partnerships – in terms of creating social and economic activity through revitalization of public spaces, as well as collaborating and developing partnerships with community partners and stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Senior Planner dated 2019 09 23 concerning the James Street Area Revitalization Plan be received as information.

Respectfully submitted,



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