

To: SPECIAL COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 5/31/2022

Subject: 2022 Placemaking Report to Council

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Report No.: 22-018-CD

File No.: C1101

Wards Affected: All Wards

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Report 22-018-CD - 2022 Placemaking Report to Council - be received for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides Council with an update on placemaking activities in the City of Cambridge. The report:

- Highlights current and recent projects that contribute to placemaking;
- Identifies existing processes and resources that support community-led placemaking initiatives;
- Describes recent targeted engagement activities specific to placemaking idea generation; and
- Provides information on pending and potential future projects.

The report also discusses placemaking within the City's Core Area Transformation Fund, the Council-approved process for considering community-driven placemaking projects for financial support by the City of Cambridge.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

- ☒ Strategic Action; or
- ☐ Core Service

Objective(s): PLACEMAKING - Promote and create a wide range of destinations and activities that capitalize on the beauty of the rivers and heritage buildings

Strategic Action: Create and activate spaces that offer things for people to do

Program: Not Applicable

Core Service: Not Applicable

Placemaking is city-building.

Placemaking is a collaborative, community approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces, with the intention of creating public spaces that add vibrancy, maximize public value and promote health, happiness and well-being.

Successful placemaking binds together the City's strategic goals of People, Place and Prosperity – by enriching daily life for residents and visitors.

BACKGROUND:

“Place” has been a core theme of Cambridge's strategic plan since 2016, when Cambridge Connected was first approved. In 2021, City Council approved updated goals and new objectives in the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan, including:

GOAL #2

Place: Embrace and celebrate our city's unique character while enhancing the spaces where people connect

OBJECTIVE #5

Placemaking: Promote and create a wide range of destinations and activities that capitalize on the beauty of the rivers and heritage buildings

Further, with the approval of the Core Area Transformation Fund in 2019, Council emphasized the importance of placemaking in the City's core areas by including it as a pillar for funding opportunities.

Council motion of June 29, 2021:

At its meeting of June 29, 2021 Council passed Motion 21-102 directing staff to report back on placemaking:

WHEREAS projections for the City of Cambridge indicate substantial and increased population growth in upcoming years and decades;

WHEREAS population growth will necessitate increased densification and intensification in core areas of Galt, Preston, and Hespeler;

WHEREAS Cambridge possesses exceptional geographical, historical, and natural attributes that are unique amongst Canadian cities, yet are under-utilized or under-developed, in comparison to their potential and their capacity to delight current and future residents and tourists alike;

WHEREAS 'placemaking' is an essential component, not only of city-building and connecting residents with their built and natural environments, but of Cambridge's Core Area Transformation Fund;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that staff be directed to provide Council with a report following a review on placemaking projects for future and current members of our Cambridge Community in each Core Areas of Hespeler, Preston, and Galt, which embrace novel, unique, and progressive ways of incorporating the river(s), local businesses, and physical activities such as cycling and walking paths, into the landscape.

This report is in response to Council's direction to report on placemaking projects.

ANALYSIS:

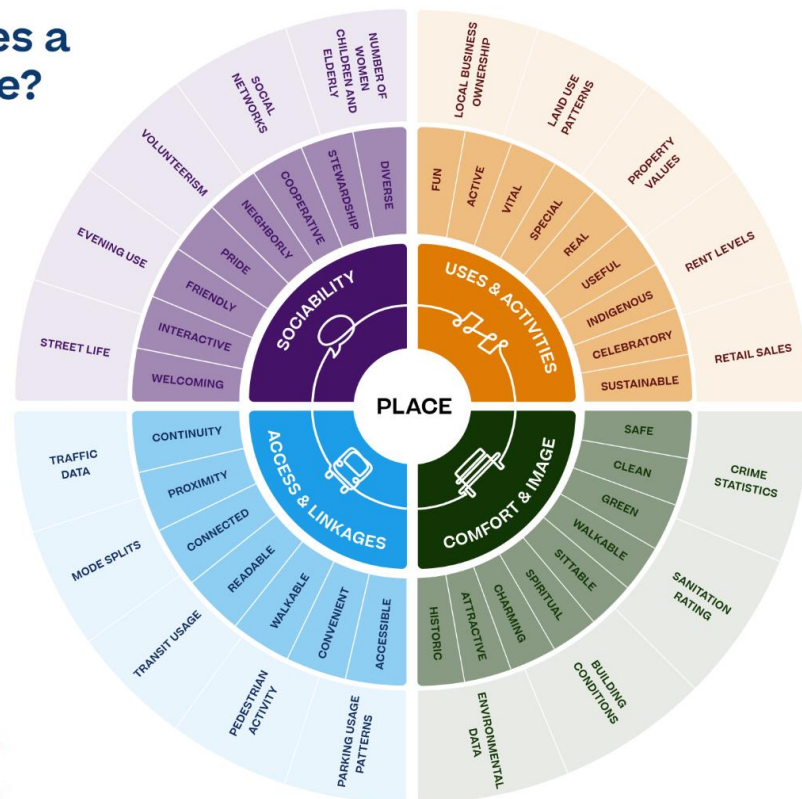
The City of Cambridge is growing – with a 6.6% growth rate from 2016 to 2021 according to the latest census data released by Statistics Canada – and will continue to grow: an anticipated 207,000 residents will call Cambridge home by 2051.

With projected population growth comes the need for investment – in housing, infrastructure, programs, services, facilities, opportunities and amenities. To manage projected growth, the City is undertaking significant immediate, mid- and long-term planning and projects, with People, Place and Prosperity at the centre.

The City applies a placemaking lens to inform and guide much of this work, to create public spaces that are vibrant, animated, attractive and interesting.

Project for Public Spaces has developed a useful diagram to assist with evaluating placemaking in public spaces.

What Makes a Great Place?



Project
for Public
Spaces

The above evaluation is guided by the following principles:

- **Access and Linkages:** spaces are accessible for people to get to and use
- **Uses and Activities:** places include people engaged in activities
- **Comfort and Image:** spaces are clean, safe and have a positive image / association
- **Sociability:** places where people meet each other and bring visitors to; strengthen social fabric and civic life

Recent and Current Placemaking Activities Underway:

Placemaking can be thought of in many ways. Public art, beautification projects and highly visible elements of public space design are perhaps the most easily understood placemaking concepts; however, many projects and initiatives promote “place” and placemaking.

In recent years, Council has approved a significant number of projects that contribute to placemaking in the City of Cambridge. Highlights include:

- Installation of the Pedestrian Bridge across the Grand River in Galt;
- Conversion of the historic Galt Post Office to the Idea Exchange;
- Completing streetscape improvements in the central core areas of Hespeler, Preston and Galt;
- Undertaking community dock repairs and river access improvements in Hespeler;
- Installation of a rainbow crosswalk at the corner of Dickson Street and Main Street in downtown Cambridge;
- Winter Illumination festival light installations throughout the City of Cambridge;
- Special events activating the civic square in front of City Hall (e.g., Cambridge Celebrates: WinterFest, Cambridge Christmas Market, Unsilent Night);
- Pandemic related summer street closures in core areas to enable pedestrian access and patios;
- Digital light shows at the Old Post Office Library; and
- Milling Road urban design concept integrating a “living street” or woonerf for future detailed design and construction.

Examples of significant projects currently underway include:

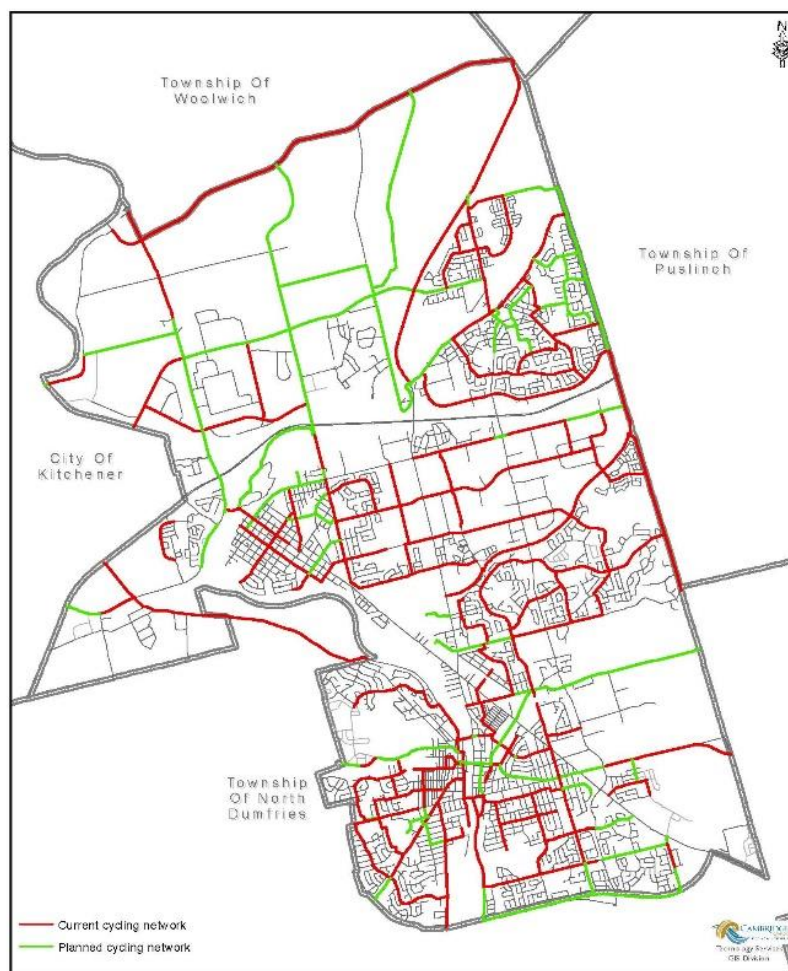
- Continued summer seasonal road closure of lower Main Street in downtown Galt and Queen Street in Hespeler Village;
- King Street Decorative Lighting project in downtown Preston;
- “Urban Alleyways Reimagined” project with the Downtown Cambridge BIA
- Public events as part of the 2022 Special Events season (e.g. Cambridge Celebration of the Arts; Thursday Night Live performances; Hespeler Village Music Festival; Galt 100 Open House; Cambridge Scottish Festival; Cambridge Fall Fair);
- Fountain Street Soccer Complex project;
- Soper Park Amenity Replacement Consultation and Design; and
- Designation as an age friendly community which supports inclusion, social participation and improved access to civic spaces and public life

Numerous Council-approved projects which contribute to placemaking are also planned, and are funded through capital and operating budgets. These projects include:

- Streetscape designs, including design of sidewalks, street furniture, trees, plantings and landscaping;
- A renewed parks master plan, to provide overall direction and guidance for the City’s parks and open space system as a whole;
- Heritage conservation projects to conserve Cambridge’s unique fabric and sense of place;

- An updated arts and culture master plan, to leverage cultural resources and support, promote and champion local art and artists, and an event strategy;
- Construction of new City recreation facilities and amenities; and
- Development of policies to guide land use and development decisions, which includes public realm improvements that will be incorporated into the City's Official Plan.

Council approved a Cycling Master Plan in 2020, with specific projects related to increasing our multi-use trail network, including those in and around the core areas as shown in the map below. The red lines indicate current active transportation trails, while the green represent future trials. A number of projects currently underway such as the background work for a Hespeler pedestrian bridge and trail extension as well as a Preston pedestrian bridge are part of that plan, which navigates through non-urban settings.



Planned investment: Cycling network

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In addition to the projects traditionally funded through city capital dollars, there are a number of newer unique placemaking initiatives led through other means. The partnership with Buckingham Sports Properties on the expansion of the Cambridge Ice Park for the construction of the City's first quad pad arena is a good example of providing amenities to the community without a high upfront cost associated with construction. Another example is the contribution of the Hallman Foundation for the additional amenities that will be built in the Westwood Village subdivision, including the roundabout art installation and a donation of a multi-million dollar community park. The Westwood Village subdivision also introduced a number of placemaking initiatives in both the private and the public realm such as rest shade structures, bird friendly and sustainable design aspects, accessibility / inclusiveness features, naturalization initiatives and street trees as focal points at terminal vistas.

In 2015, the City explored the feasibility of a surf wave project, in partnership with not-for-profit group Surf Cambridge. At that time, the Grand River Conservation Authority was looking at the hydro generation project at the Parkhill Bridge in downtown Cambridge. The work to reconstruct the generation facility could have included a swale that would generate a year-round surf wave at this location. In 2018 the provincial Feed-in Tariff program that provided the revenue stream for such generation projects was cancelled and the plan at this location was discontinued. Therefore, the project is no longer feasible and the idea was abandoned.

Financial Resources

Core Area Transformation Fund:

In addition to the work already funded through the annual budget process and currently underway, members of the public can pursue future placemaking projects through the Core Area Transformation Fund.

The Core Area Transformation Fund (CATF) recognizes that vibrant, healthy core areas are a fundamental building block of great cities. The CATF was established by the City in 2019, and the proposal evaluation framework was approved by Council in June of 2020. The fund exists for property acquisition, private sector stimulus, and placemaking and experiences. The CATF Placemaking and Experiences pillar is specifically designed to support partnered placemaking projects. More detail on this pillar is provided in **Appendix 1**.

City staff will encourage and support Council Advisory Committees, organizations and industry to put forward applications, as well promoting the CATF to community groups and individuals to initiate project proposals.

Further information on the CATF is the subject of a separate report prepared for Council for May 31, 2022, Report 22-018-CRE Core Area Transformation Fund – 2022 Update.

Annual Capital Budget process:

Placemaking projects are typically identified for funding through the annual Capital budget process. Staff will continue to provide recommendations to Council as part of future annual budget processes.

Municipal Accommodation Tax:

The Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Reserve also holds funds which may be used to support specific placemaking projects.

In 2019 the City implemented a 4% Municipal Accommodation Tax for hotels and motels in Cambridge, and created a Reserve Fund to hold these funds. The Fund balance was \$594,526 as of March 31, 2022.

Funds may be used for:

- market research;
- tourism, sport and cultural infrastructure (permanent and event related);
- bid and grant funding for international, national and provincial-scale events;
- major festival and event expansion/development;
- one-time festival, sport and event acquisition costs;
- sport/festival/event infrastructure – permanent or one-time infrastructure such as washrooms, seating, staging, fencing, wi-fi etc.;
- collaborative tourism marketing efforts;
- additional staff resources, if required, to support efforts above.

MAT funding is anticipated to be a sought-after funding source for a range of post-pandemic tourism, festival, sport and event costs. The Economic Development Division is undertaking an Economic Development Strategy in 2022 and a significant component of that work will be to further refine a policy and program around the use of the Municipal Accommodation Tax. The pandemic has resulted in severely reduced revenues from what was projected so the timing is right to develop a policy and program so that when the hospitality and tourism sector rebounds from the pandemic the City is positioned to assist.

Grant funding:

Staff across the Corporation seek external funding opportunities to support a range of City projects, including projects which contribute to placemaking.

Recent successful grants received include the Old Post Office Projection Project in downtown Galt, with funds provided by the provincial government for the design and display of light shows. This event series was particularly successful as a pandemic-appropriate activity that animated public space. The City also received funding from Reconnect Ontario for Cambridge Celebrates: WinterFest, which supported a range of seasonal holiday events across the city.

It is noted that grant writing is time-intensive, highly competitive, without guarantee of success. The City has recently implemented an External Grant Framework to assist with the grant application process.

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):

The Council-approved Core Areas Transformation Fund (CATF) is specifically based on three Investment Pillars that act as a guideline to allocating funds. One of the pillars within the CATF exists to provide funding to support Placemaking and Experiences projects.

There is an existing policy/process framework in place for assessing projects for suitability under CATF; a copy of the process is attached to this report as **Appendix 1**.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

Projects captured in this report are funded through existing Council-approved capital project budgets or will be funded through existing Council-approved operating budgets and subject to existing delegated authority.

PUBLIC VALUE:

Leadership:

Placemaking is city building.

Effective placemaking demonstrates municipal leadership by furthering the City of Cambridge's vision – *A place for people to prosper – alive with opportunity* – by creating vibrancy and public value, and contributing to economic activity and joy. Placemaking directly relates to pride of place, creates active, valuable public spaces, and enriches lives and livelihoods.

Collaboration:

Placemaking is community-driven.

Collaboration with Citizen Advisory Committees, business and industry leaders, organizations, institutions and individuals is essential to the placemaking process and successful outcomes. Collaboration ensures representation of community interests, ideas and values. It is inclusive, accessible and open.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

Targeted consultation with the City's Advisory Committees was undertaken in fall of 2021.

An engageCambridge page with introductory information, maps, images, survey questions and other materials was shared with Advisory Committees in advance of their regular meetings in September and October of 2021.

Staff attended the meetings of the Advisory Committee meetings listed below, and facilitated discussions around placemaking, soliciting ideas from members. A report containing all comments received by the engageCambridge platform is attached as **Appendix 2** to this report.

Advisory Committees Consulted:

Arts and Culture Advisory Committee: September 21, 2021

Accessibility Advisory Committee: September 27, 2021

Cambridge Farmers' Market Advisory Committee: October 5, 2021

Economic Development Advisory Committee: October 13, 2021

Cycling and Trails Advisory Committee: October 14, 2021

Youth Advisory Committee: October 14 and 28, 2021

Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee: through engageCambridge

As the Placemaking pillar of CATF exists to support community-led, partnered placemaking projects, Advisory Committees will be encouraged to submit formal submissions under the CATF Placemaking application process. Staff will assist with

idea incubation and development as well as the project review process, including seeking Council approval.

Through feedback from the Council Advisory Committees, staff plan to review opportunities for some smaller dollar, “quick-win” placemaking projects which can be resourced using program and/or operating funds from existing approved budgets.

Projects may include:

- Working collaboratively with arts organizations and academic institutions, including the University of Waterloo (Department of Fine Arts; School of Architecture) and district school boards, on creative, participatory placemaking projects i.e., games, musical instruments, interactive experiences.
- Beautification projects on City-owned lands and infrastructure to enliven public spaces, such as maintenance covers on City streets.



Images are for illustrative purposes only.

Artworks (wall art, murals) and/or other infrastructure investment



PUBLIC INPUT:

Citizen Advisory Committee input as above via engageCambridge and facilitated discussion at Advisory Committee meetings; external consultation as below.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Internal collaboration has included:

- Accessibility and Diversity Services
- Communications
- Economic Development
- Engineering
- Finance
- Planning Services
- Recreation & Culture

External consultation has included outreach over summer/fall 2021 with key stakeholders, individuals and organizations, including Citizen Advisory Committees and BIA representation.

CONCLUSION:

This report is in response to Council's request for information on placemaking in Cambridge. Placemaking is an expansive concept, and there are many significant placemaking projects recently completed, currently underway and planned for the future.

Planned projects will be undertaken as approved. Staff will encourage applications under CATF for the Placemaking and Experiences pillar. Additional projects will come forward through the annual budget process.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **No**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

APPROVALS:

This report has been reviewed by the Chief Financial Officer and City Solicitor.

It has been reviewed and approved by the Deputy City Manager and City Manager.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 22-018 (CD) Appendix 1 – Core Area Transformation Approvals Process for Placemaking and Experiences Pillar
2. 22-018 (CD) Appendix 2 – Placemaking Ideation sessions - engageCambridge Report