

To: SPECIAL COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 2/28/2023

Subject: Core Areas Transformation Fund Application – Placemaking

Submitted By: James Goodram, Director of Economic Development

Prepared By: Trevor McWilliams, Manager of Business Development

Report No.: 23-029-CRE

File No.: C1101

Wards Affected: Ward 4

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Report 23-029-(CRE) Core Areas Transformation Fund Application – Placemaking be received;

AND THAT Council authorize the creation of a Downtown Cambridge Placemaking Capital Project to support the completion of a Placemaking Study and Pilot project installation;

AND THAT Council approve the draft Terms of Reference attached to this report and the creation of a Placemaking Working Group (PWG) as set out in the draft Terms of Reference;

AND THAT \$150,000 of funding for the project be drawn from the Core Areas Transformation Fund (CATF):

AND FURTHER THAT staff report back to Council on the conclusions and recommendations of the Placemaking Study prior to the associated pilot project installation for Downtown Cambridge.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Purpose

- To request Council's authorization and direction to approve a new Capital Project for a Placemaking Study/Project and a Terms of Reference for a new PWG.
- To permit the creation of a PWG and advertise for public members.
- And to authorize a maximum funding of \$150,000 for the project to be provided from the CATF to support the completion of a Placemaking Study and, eventually after future Council approval, a temporary Pilot Project to be installed at a location within Downtown Cambridge.

Key Findings

- The City seeks to leverage the 'Core Areas Transformation Fund – Placemaking' pillar to complete a Placemaking Study and install a temporary pilot project for Downtown Cambridge with recommendations to be made by a consulting firm.
- Recommendations of this Placemaking Study will determine what type of Placemaking project would be suitable, how it could be appropriately utilized, and where the project will be constructed in Downtown Cambridge. The project will be located on public property.
- Creation and development of Placemaking projects is one of the three (3) main pillars of the CATF.

Financial Implications

- The total cost of the project (Study and Pilot Project) is estimated at \$150,000 which is the maximum funding requested from the CATF.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

- ☒ Strategic Action; or
☐ Core Service

Objective(s): WELLBEING - Connect people to services that support individual and community wellbeing

Strategic Action: Lay the foundation for future community-building

Program: Council Support

Core Service: BIA / Core Area Support

BACKGROUND:

The CATF was approved in July of 2019 by Cambridge Council to establish programs and funding mechanisms to stimulate transformative investment to support city-building in Cambridge's three (3) urban core areas. Through this process, three (3) Investment Pillars were approved through the formal CATF framework.

These Investment Pillars are:

1. **Private Sector Stimulus:** provided through the Core Areas Community Improvement Plan Financial Incentives;
2. **Strategic Land Acquisition/Disposition:** to support the growth of the core area(s) population in terms of both workforce and residents; and,

3. **Placemaking & Experiences:** through CATF placemaking applications.

ANALYSIS:

What is Placemaking?

Placemaking is a term used to describe how any space can be designed and planned by involving the community. This ‘collaborative process’ is used to maximise the value of spaces for the community with the key element being to ensure community participation. Jane Jacobs herself, the famous American urbanist of the 1960s (and author of many texts that are required reading in the discipline of urban planning) stated that citizens should take ownership of the streets and that streets should have a vibrant public life. This is the very core principle of placemaking.

Understanding the importance of community involvement, the City of Cambridge created a Placemaking pillar within the framework of the CATF specifically for members of the community to put forth creative ideas/projects via formal, sponsored applications that would be used for the design and implementation of placemaking projects.

Current Application CATF 1/22

In the spirit of placemaking, Mr. Scott Higgins submitted a proposal for a Placemaking Study and associated pilot project to be completed in Downtown Cambridge on public property. This original application included a proposal for the City to grant funds to conduct a Placemaking Study and to follow up with a physical project. The idea was that such a project would catalyse further projects in the future and enhance the downtown core. The Core Areas Transformation Fund’s pillar three allows for Placemaking projects and the proposal fit into the mandate of that program.

In June 2020 Council approved the Core Areas Transformation Fund Framework which included the following criteria and process to evaluate proposals under the placemaking pillar.

Criteria include:

- Alignment with the City’s strategic direction
- Project cost (public/private funding? Etc.)
- Operating impact (public/private funds, staff resources? Etc.)
- Risk (is there a risk to the City? Etc.)
- Infrastructure impact (will the project enhance existing infrastructure/developments? Etc.)
- Community benefit (does the project contribute to Placemaking/Experience? Is the project transformational? Etc.)

Proposals for the following will **not** be considered:

- a) Streetscaping and infrastructure (such as sewer and water line replacement)
- b) Operating funds for city, non-profit or non-governmental organizations
- c) Special events (as the city currently has such a program)

Evaluation Process for Proposals:

Economic Development Staff, the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) along with the proponent will act as the initial review body for funding opportunities. Opportunities may be presented by or sponsored by City of Cambridge Staff, EDAC, BIA's and Council members etc.

Economic Development Staff will review and confirm strategic alignment and further develop the opportunity with input from EDAC and the proponent. A CATF Steering Committee comprised of the City of Cambridge staff with representation from multiple departments will be the secondary review body for funding applications and then make recommendations to the Corporate Leadership Team and City Council for final approval. The Steering Committee will review projects as needed during regularly scheduled meetings.

Members of the Staff Steering Committee

Director Economic Development
Manager of Business Development
Manager of Parks and Recreation Operations
Manager of Operations Forestry and Horticulture
Manager of Design and Approvals
Manager of Development Planning
Supervisor of Recreation, Arts, Culture and Events
City Landscape Architect

The final decision making and approval body for CATF fund allocations will be City Council. This approach provides several benefits related to accountability, transparency and responsiveness.

At the time of the proposal submission, during the lead up to the municipal election, the Economic Development Advisory Committee was in recess as their term concluded in June. Nevertheless, Economic Development Staff continued processing the application and circulated the proposal to the staff steering committee noted above.

Given the intrinsic public interest in such a foundational study and pilot project for placemaking, as well as it's ties to advancing the City's strategic direction (to be discussed further below), it was decided that a different approach to the proposal would be taken. It was decided that the City will proceed forward leading the project with a

consulting firm and create a PWG. While this implementation plan is different, the outcomes of the original application will be achieved.

The proposal before Council requests a maximum funding of \$150,000 from CATF for the completion of a Placemaking Study and temporary Pilot Project to be completed by a consultant. Such a proposal will provide a Study and eventual pilot project in Downtown Cambridge that will act as a catalyst for strategic policy creation and direction regarding placemaking. In the future, such Placemaking projects could be located throughout the three Core Areas as well as the City as a whole.

Placemaking Working Group (PWG)

Upon Council approval, the PWG will be created and will be comprised of the following positions:

- Chairperson – (to be determined by group)
- Vice Chairperson – (to be determined by group)
- Director of Economic Development
- One (1) Member of Staff
- Up to eight (8) Members of Public

The Committee will be composed of a Chair, Vice Chair, two (2) City staff members, and up to eight (8) members of the Public. Staff is recommending that one of the Staff positions be the Director of Economic Development (or designate) to ensure oversight for the working group. The Economic Development Division will also retain the services of the consulting firm through the City's procurement process. The PWG will work with the consulting firm and staff as the project progresses.

The PWG will be formed with a call to the public for applications to serve on the working group and applicants will express how their knowledge, skills and experience will assist in moving the project forward. Chair and Vice Chair positions will be voted on by working group members. The Director of Economic Development, who will be appointed to the PWG, will oversee and monitor the process of the PWG creation and operations.

This PWG will review and provide input on a Request for Proposals (RFP) to be written by staff and follow the City's procurement practices. It is important to note that the recommendations of the Study will be brought to Council first for final approval on the Pilot Project prior to its initiation.

Enhancing the Community

This proposal has significant ties to the City's Strategic Plan. Council will recall that in January 2021, Council approved the updated goals and objectives of the Cambridge

Connected Strategic Plan. Within this plan are several strategic actions which Staff is of the opinion that the Study and Pilot project fulfill, namely:

- **Establishing our core areas as attractive destinations** – adding a Placemaking project to Downtown Cambridge will enhance the area by providing a ‘place’ where people will want to visit.
- **Enhancing equity and inclusion efforts** – creating a ‘place’ for all to enjoy as it will be available, accessible and free.
- **Encouraging safe and healthy neighbourhoods** – the proposal will take place in Downtown Cambridge and not in a public park. It will encourage people to be active while enjoying the ‘place’.
- **Enhance opportunities to enjoy built and natural heritage** – with the goal of bringing more people into the core with an attractive placemaking initiative, the City is providing more opportunity for the public to spend time in historic Downtown Cambridge.
- **Create and activate spaces that offer things for people to do** – the objective of a free placemaking initiative delivers specifically on this strategic objective.

These strategic actions are entirely compatible with the proposal noted in this report and seek to improve quality of life through Placemaking.

Process

Staff has provided a brief project process and key milestones below for Council's information:

1. Approval of Terms of Reference and Placemaking Working Group (PWG);
2. Staff creates a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) to be reviewed by PWG;
3. Consultant initiates Placemaking Study which will include Community engagement – the public and stakeholders, including the Downtown Cambridge BIA;
4. Placemaking Study will include best practices research and examples (i.e., other areas that have utilized similar ideas). Auditing of physical and cultural assets, namely what do we currently have in Downtown Cambridge;
5. Recommendations and Conclusions of the Placemaking Study brought to Council, including a recommendation for the Pilot Project;
6. Pilot Project creation;
7. Review of pilot project.

The goal of these milestones is to return to Council in summer 2023 with a project recommendation and seek direction at that time.

Moving Forward

The Study will act as a catalyst for further strategic policy creation and direction with regard to placemaking as a whole with the eventual goal for permanent Placemaking Project(s) that will be located in Cambridge's three (3) Core Areas and across the City as a whole.

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):

There is no existing policy/by-law.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

- Request for the creation of a Downtown Cambridge Placemaking capital project with a budget of \$150,000 to be drawn from the CATF.

PUBLIC VALUE:

Collaboration:

Collaboration will involve working with the public in providing funds to support a Placemaking Study as well as the eventual installation of a temporary Pilot Project.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

Not Applicable

PUBLIC INPUT:

Posted publicly as part of the report process.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

As per the CATF Terms of Reference for applications, the following members of the CATF Steering Committee are circulated and have provided comments and questions related to this proposal:

Members of the Staff Steering Committee

- Director Economic Development
- Manager of Business Development
- Manager of Parks Recreation Operations

- Manager of Operations Forestry and Horticulture
- Manager of Design and Approvals
- Manager of Development Planning
- Supervisor of Recreation, Arts, Culture and Events
- City Landscape Architect

Financial and Legal Services – were also circulated on the funding request.

CONCLUSION:

Staff is of the opinion that vibrant and prosperous core areas are essential to the economic and social well-being of a community. They represent the image and character of a city and provide a place for a wide range of unique, exciting destinations and activities. This project will add to the prosperity of Downtown Cambridge and catalyse other city-wide projects for the future.

Staff acknowledges that revitalization of a core area can be challenging but is justified by the potential benefits realized in terms of quality of life and economic growth. The very creation of the Core Areas Transformation Fund has successfully advanced partnerships and has supported transformative projects in all three core areas. Placemaking projects will support this transformation and support stimulate all forms of development, create jobs, build transit ridership and increase assessment growth, among other tangible benefits.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **Yes**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **Yes**

Policy: **No**

APPROVALS:

This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following as required:

Manager of Realty

Director

Deputy City Manager

Chief Financial Officer

City Solicitor

City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Draft Terms of Reference, Placemaking Working Group