

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Finance and Economic Development Committee / Comité des finances et du
développement économique
November 5, 2019 / 5 novembre 2019**

**and Council / et au Conseil
November 27, 2019 / 27 novembre 2019**

**Submitted on October 24, 2019
Soumis le 24 octobre 2019**

**Submitted by
Soumis par:
Court Curry**

**Manager, Right of Way, Heritage and Urban Design Services / Gestionnaire,
Services des emprises, du patrimoine et du design urbain Planning, Infrastructure
and Economic Development Department / Services de planification,
d'infrastructure et de développement économique**

**Contact Person
Personne ressource:**

**David Atkinson, Planner III/ Urbaniste III, Policy Planning / Politique de la
planification
(613) 580-2424, 15013, David.Atkinson@ottawa.ca**

Ward: SOMERSET (14)

File Number: ACS2019-PIE-RHU-0015

SUBJECT: Sparks Street Public Realm Plan

OBJET: Plan du domaine public de la rue Sparks

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

**That the Finance and Economic Development Committee recommend that
Council:**

- 1. Approve the Sparks Street Public Realm Plan as attached in Document 1.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the General Manager of Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development, upon agreement with the Sparks Street Mall Authority Board and the National Capital Commission Board, to make**

minor amendments to the Sparks Street Public Realm Plan from time to time, to improve precision, clarity and usefulness of the plan and its graphics.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité des finances et du développement économique recommande au Conseil :

- 1. d'approuver le Plan du domaine public de la rue Sparks ci-joint (document 1);**
- 2. de déléguer au directeur général de la Planification, de l'Infrastructure et du Développement économique, avec l'accord du Conseil de gestion du mail de la rue Sparks et de la Commission de la capitale nationale, le pouvoir d'apporter ponctuellement des changements mineurs au Plan du domaine public de la rue Sparks pour améliorer la précision, la clarté et la pertinence du texte et des éléments graphiques.**

BACKGROUND

The Sparks Street Public Realm Plan has been initiated in response to Recommendation 4 of the Sparks Street Mall Authority Governance Report ([ACS2016-CMR-OCM-0026](#)) to Ottawa City Council on July 13, 2016.

Recommendation 4: "Direct the General Manager, Planning and Growth Management Department to include the development of a public realm plan for Sparks Street in their 2017-2018 draft Budget and Departmental Work Plan, subject to the Memorandum of Understanding, as outlined in this report."

In response to the above recommendation, the Public Realm Plan has been developed over the last two years through a partnership between the City, the National Capital Commission (NCC) and Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) in collaboration with the Sparks Street Mall Authority (SSMA) and the Sparks Street Business Improvement Area (SSBIA).

The partnership retained VLAN + Civiliti, urban designers and landscape architects, who collaborated with WSP Engineering to support the development of the plan.

DISCUSSION

Context

As Canada's first pedestrian mall, Sparks Street is of importance to the City, the NCC and PSPC due to its prominent location at the interface between "Crown and Town" (capital and civic realms). Sparks Street is in close proximity to Confederation Boulevard and numerous capital symbols and landmarks, positioning Sparks Street as a key civic street of national and international importance.

Sparks Street is owned by the City, managed by the Sparks Street Mall Authority (SSMA), programmed in part by the Sparks Street BIA and surrounded by properties owned or leased by PSPC, the NCC and nine other private property owners.

Purpose and Use of the Plan

This plan is meant to serve as a tool for the above noted stakeholders in the following ways:

- Provide a strong, renewed and common vision for the future design, management and programming of the Sparks Street Pedestrian Mall.
- Become a reference tool for the NCC in its review of proposals requiring federal approval under the *National Capital Act*.
- Integrate several related policies, bylaws, studies and agreements that have been developed and approved since the street's last major renewal in 1989.
- Provide recommendations relating to how adjacent businesses and property owners could align to support the vision for Sparks Street.
- Inform the forthcoming update to the PSPC's Long-term Vision Plan for the Parliamentary Precinct.

Scope

The scope of the Public Realm Plan is generally limited to the public realm of the City owned right-of-way (building face to building face). However, the frontage of adjacent properties plays a large role in the configuration, use and character of the street's public realm and are addressed within the plan via strategic recommendations to property owners.

Methodology

The plan was developed through four phases:

- Phase 1 – Research and Inventory (Winter/Spring 2018). Inventory of existing conditions, policy directions, and urban context.
- Phase 2 – Functional Planning and Analysis (Summer/Fall 2018). A public realm vision, guiding principles and urban design analysis, with preliminary recommendations and functional options.
- Phase 3 – Design Development (Fall/Winter 2018-2019): Preliminary block-by-block design scenarios, strategies and guidelines.
- Phase 4 – Final Plan (Spring/Summer 2019): Demonstration plan with cost estimates, guidelines, detailing parameters, programming and phasing strategy.

Vision for Sparks Street

Sparks Street has long been a place for cultural exchange and civic celebration, this plan calls for a refocus and refinement around this same vocation by providing spaces and programming that celebrate and publicly reinforce the broad values and diverse traditions that unify us as Canadians. **Our connections to nature, our winter resilience, inclusion, equity, reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, sustainability, the CBC, hockey, poutine, maple syrup, and so on.**

Into the future, Sparks Street will continue to be characterized as a bustling weekday pedestrian environment that is supported and surrounded by an evolving mix of businesses, services and cultural institutions. Through this plan, the day-to-day public realm will be significantly beautified, greened and enhanced with more pedestrian amenities that encourage public lounging and social interaction.

Further, many flexible and programmable spaces will be introduced to accommodate a focused and curated program of thematic special events, artistic installations and cultural exchanges of civic, regional, national and international significance.

During the day and evening, and all seasons, Sparks Street will work in complimentary contrast to the formal character of Confederation Boulevard and will become known as **Ottawa's cultural celebration, entertainment and activity street.**

Strategic Design Directions

To realize the vision for Sparks Street, the Public Realm Plan advances six strategic directions and a series of 72 public realm recommendations with the following being a sample of the highest impact interventions:

- Physically control vehicles at all intersections with automated security bollards.
- Welcome cyclists as visitors but continue to prohibit through cycling along the pedestrianized section of Sparks Street.
- Integrate federal security requirements into design features.
- Introduce perennial planting and greening across all five blocks.
- Provide shade and seasonal comfort.
- Create year-round visual interest.
- Develop a core of seasonal special events.
- Continually animate the street with dynamic installations.
- Animate the street through public amenities and activities.
- Carefully curate the mix of ground floor uses.
- Integrate public realm improvements through property renewal.
- Provide commercial activation that contributes to the programming of the street.
- Maintain businesses to reflect “Best of Town” standards.
- Develop a cohesive interpretive framework.
- Carefully integrate permanent elements into the streetscape.
- Supplement permanent interpretive elements with digital media.
- Encourage and enable creative and interactive forms of interpretation.

Preferred Functional Plan and Landscape Demonstrations

Through extensive analysis and consultation, a preferred functional plan was selected, and is characterized by an emergency services route that alternates from north to south

to create pockets of intimate gathering spaces and social activity nodes around the middle of each block. This option maximizes opportunities for planting and flexible programming, and responds best to the heritage views, micro-climates and nuances of each block.

Within the Public Realm Plan, two contrasting design options were prepared, as examples, to demonstrate two possible landscape styles that work within the constraints of the preferred functional plan. The first is an organic, curvilinear style and the second is a more formal geometric approach. Though the curvilinear option seemed to resonate more with people throughout the consultation periods, both options have noted merits that will be further explored and refined through a future detailed design and engineering exercise.

Enhanced Street Detailing

In addition to the typical streetscape elements, some of the more enhanced elements that will be further explored through detailed design include two fountains, 10 automated security turntables/security bollards, granite accents and a self-cleaning public washroom. Also included in the cost estimate are enhanced utilities and program supportive infrastructures such as electrically heated surfaces at each of the five public activity nodes, a technical AV trench along the length of the street for maximum programming flexibility, and a greywater collection system.

Additional dynamic streetscape elements, which are largely associated with programming, will include movable and temporary seating, specialty lighting, quarterly artistic installations, seasonal decorations, catenary lighting, on-street vending carts and kiosks, windbreaks, sunbreaks and winter warming stations.

Operations and Maintenance

To ensure a renewed Sparks Street is operated and maintained to the 'best of town' standard that is broadly expected by the public, all operational aspects of the street will be clearly defined and assigned through an updated SSMA partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), as part of the detailed streetscape design and engineering phase. Elements that do not have clear operational resources committed and assigned will not be included in final detailed streetscape design.

Phased Implementation Strategy

While there are many aspects of this plan that will need to be timed and coordinated with major renewal of adjacent properties, particularly those planned by PSPC for

Blocks 1, 2 and 3 over the next 10 to 15 years, there are many actions and recommendations that can be advanced, regardless of the timing of any comprehensive renewal or road works. The approval of this plan will provide all partners and collaborators with the required guidance to advance the plan's many actions and recommendations associated with governance and administrative alignments, programming development, adjacent property and business coordination, pilot projects and interim physical measures. These aspects of the plan do not have new cost implications and are already being advanced through initiatives such as the recent high impact artistic installation "Impulse" (aka musical seesaws), near Lyon Station, plans for an interim immersive virtual parliamentary experience in the Wellington Building on Sparks Street, on-street recycling (planned for roll-out in 2020), continued pilot projects, an efficiency review of maintenance contracts, enhanced winter greening and formalization of a public realm design review committee, to name but a few.

Parallel to advancing the above non-construction related recommendations of the public realm plan, the Sparks Street Mall Authority has commissioned Tate Economic Research Inc. to complete a retail strategy for the Sparks Street Mall. The retail strategy is intended to provide property and business owners with specific market analysis and broader retail trends applicable to Sparks Street. Recommendations from the retail strategy will be used by the Mall Authority and its members to gradually strengthen retail offerings over time in ways that will support the vision of Sparks Street as a cultural celebration, entertainment and activity street.

Detailed Design and Streetscape Construction

Costs associated with implementing aspects of this plan that are related to a phased physical renewal of the streetscape and all its components are being negotiated with PSPC, who has been asked by the City to finance the next phase of detailed design and engineering beginning in 2020 and continuing to 2022. Once PSPC responds to the City's request, City staff will work with PSPC to develop a funding/cost sharing agreement and return to FEDCO and Council in 2020 with an update on the financial implications and a related funding strategy to advance the detailed design and subsequent construction phases which have a current total cost estimate of between \$57-\$83 million (Class C estimate, 2019 dollars).

A preliminary phasing strategy anticipates the earliest streetscape construction occurring in 2022 on Block 5, between Kent and Lyon Streets, with remaining construction phases to be confirmed through detailed design and coordinated with PSPC's planned renewals and works within the City right-of-way.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

The public and stakeholder consultation included the following:

- Ongoing project web-presence and open invitation for public input
- Coordinated social media promotion: *#MySparksStreet*
- **Phase 1:** Mayor's Town Hall event at City Hall and online public realm questionnaire
- **Phase 2:** Project storefront studio at 79 Sparks Street, which hosted targeted stakeholder workshops and a week-long public open house/drop-in series to establish the guiding principles and strategic directions of the plan. Summer street pilot projects to test initial public feedback included removable bollards at every intersection, a mix of public lounging furniture/elements, a mini public library and interactive family games at key social nodes along the street.
- **Phase 3:** NCC Urbanism Lab event "Walk This Way: Designing a Pedestrian Paradise". Continued stakeholder workshops, detailed property and business owner surveys and winter pilot projects that included ice games, warming stations, live entertainment and layers activation focused around Winterlude.
- **Phase 4:** Final public open house at 79 Spark Street and a month-long drop-in invitation to provide final refinements to the draft plan content.

The online questionnaire, three public open houses and storefront/studio drop-ins received over 12,000 comments on over 30 planning and design topics. Analysis of this feedback revealed that people clearly wanted to see more greenery, more comfortable and diverse public spaces to lounge, relax and eat, more activities, events and installations, better winter adaptations, increased restrictions to vehicles and closer attention paid to details associated with operations and maintenance. The expectation that Sparks Street's visual character be elevated to reflect a "best of town" standard was a clear desire from the public.

The project team also consulted on two occasions with both the City's Urban Design Review Panel and the NCC's Advisory Committee on Planning, Design and Realty. Input received from these consultations have be integrated into the final Public Realm Plan.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR

Councillor McKenney is a current member of the Sparks Street Mall Authority Board and has provided input and strong support throughout the development of the Public Realm Plan.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to adopting the recommendations in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct asset management implications associated with the recommendations of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with the report recommendations. The financial implications associated with implementing the Sparks Street Public Realm Plan are to be determined and will be within the 2020 report to FEDCO and Council.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

The Sparks Street Public Realm plan has been developed with universally accessibility embedded into its core guiding principles. Strategies and recommendations throughout the plan advance aspects of equitable and flexible use, simple and intuitive design, highly perceptible public information and appropriate size and space considerations for all public amenities and services. The Public Realm Plan also references the City of Ottawa's Equity and Inclusion Lens Handbook, The City of Ottawa Accessibility Design Standards and Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Clearing Our Path publications as key documents to be used during all future detailed design and engineering phases.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

As a pedestrian street away from regular vehicle traffic, Sparks Street offers very unique opportunities for greenscape treatments that are unavailable to most urban streets.

Through a combination of 50 new canopy trees, partially above ground planters, small greenspaces, perennial gardens, surface water infiltration and runoff capture systems, Sparks Street will fulfill one of its primary roles as a lush pedestrian oasis through the Central Business District.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

This project addresses the following 2015-2018 Term of Council Priority:

- Strategic Initiative EP2-3, *the renewal of the Sparks Street Mall*

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 Sparks Street Public Realm Plan

DISPOSITION

Upon approval of the Sparks Street Public Realm Plan, staff from the Heritage and Urban Design Branch will continue to work with partners and key stakeholders to advance the actions and recommendations outlined in the Implementation and Phasing Strategy section of the Public Realm Plan. Staff will also coordinate internally to ensure that the forthcoming updates to the Cycling Master Plan and the Official Plan are aligned to the findings and recommendations of the Sparks Street Public Realm Plan.