

Staff Report

Report To: City Council
Report From: Viveca Gravel, Community Development Coordinator
Meeting Date: June 26, 2023
Report Code: CS-23-075
Subject: Animation of the River District through the Promotion of Sidewalk Merchandise Displays – One Year Trial

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-23-075 respecting Animation of the River District through the Promotion of Sidewalk Merchandise Displays – One Year Trial, City Council approves the one-year trial as outlined in the report, including the waiver of the \$50 fee associated with approval.

Highlights:

- The animation of the River District is supported by the City’s Official Plan, the Harbour and Downtown Master Plan, and River District Action Plan.
- The City’s Street Furniture & Sidewalk Patio Design Guidelines provide details for the location of merchandise on the sidewalk portion of the right-of-way to ensure accessibility and safety.
- A one-year trial is proposed to encourage the animation of the River District by the individual business to allow them to place merchandise on Saturdays and Sundays from July 1 to October 31 in accordance with the Guideline.
- Promotion will include those businesses participating to support the initiative, including a social media campaign.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Prosperous City - KR1 - Reduce commercial vacancy in the River District by 10%

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

[Street Furniture & Sidewalk Patio Design Guidelines](#)

[River District Action Plan](#)

[Delegation of Authority By-law No. 2014-109](#)

Background:

The City's Harbour & Downtown Urban Design/Master Plan Strategy was created as part of the City's mission to establish sound planning initiatives and strategies in the redevelopment and revitalization of the River District.

The Plan's goal is to create a vibrant shopping and business area with the physical infrastructure of the street supporting this goal. In pursuit of this, sidewalks, particularly in the Second Avenue section, were widened with the addition of benches, planting areas, flowerpots, heritage lighting, and other pieces of furniture.

The vision for the River District, as reflected in the City's Official Plan (OP), also supports a vibrant, active, and attractive area with a pedestrian environment that is comfortable, accessible, and aesthetically pleasing. The OP embodies a clear direction-setting framework that prioritizes safety and accessibility within the urban environment. The Urban Design Policies of the OP emphasize the provision of furniture and amenities that encourage public activity and pedestrian traffic.

The River District Action Plan approved by the River District Board and the City includes four main pillars:

- River District Branding;
- River District Management;
- River District Experience Development; and

- River District Promotion.

Under the River District Experience Development pillar, the Plan calls for creating an engaging space, including the animation of the River District.

The City's Street Furniture and Sidewalk Patio Design Guideline was developed to support this vision for the River District and support the animation and activation of the street.

In speaking with stores and businesses in the area, there is a desire to have merchandise and wares in the sidewalk area on a regular basis.

The purpose of this report is to present this idea and seek approval of Council for a one-year pilot program to allow all River District businesses to have retail/merchandise tables or displays within the sidewalk area.

Analysis:

The Street Furniture & Sidewalk Patio Design Guidelines includes locational criteria to maintain accessibility and safety, including:

- A sidewalk corridor must be a minimum of 3.0 metres wide before a sidewalk patio will be considered;
- A clear, unobstructed, accessible pedestrian path shall always be maintained at a minimum of 1.2 metres wide;
- Curbside amenity/street furniture strips must have a maximum width of 1.5 metres. Street furniture/signage display strips at the building face must have a maximum width of 0.9 metres;
- A minimum overhead clearance of 1,980mm must be maintained in the clear pedestrian path; and
- Items or furniture that protrude more than 100mm into the pedestrian path require distinct cane-detectable edges; proprietors shall take care with protruding hazards that sit 680mm to 1,980mm above grade for the benefit of the visually impaired.

Attachment 1 shows where these items would be permitted in the sidewalk area.

The placement of retail merchandise would need to be consistent with these criteria.

The proposal would be to permit the animation on Saturday and Sunday subject to the following:

1. Compliance with the guidelines;
2. Completing an application and providing a sketch site plan of the area proposed to be used;
3. Only the area in front of a business can be used; and
4. Provision of liability insurance where the City is an additional insured party.

Approvals under the policy have previously been delegated to staff under the Delegation of Authority By-law.

The Community Development Coordinator is planning a Saturday/Sunday shopping promotion.

This will encourage animation and encourage businesses to consider being open Sundays with the promotion of the stores and times that businesses would be open.

Financial Implications:

There is normally a \$50 fee for the season for street furniture within the sidewalk. For the one-year trial, Council is asked to waive this fee under the City's Fees and Charges By-law. The revenue lost from applications will be minimal; however, it may generate interest for subsequent years.

Communication Strategy:

Staff will send an email directly to the River District membership promoting the sidewalk opportunity, including all the paperwork they will be required to send back in. In addition, staff will spend time in person communicating with the businesses in the River District to ensure they have a full understanding of the program and promotion.

Promotion will include a Media Advisory to local media outlets, a social media campaign, a website content feature and alert, posters, and rack cards.

Consultation:

Staff has consulted with the City's Senior Planner on the Street Furniture & Sidewalk Patio Guidelines and the Director of Public Works and Engineering

on the placement of street furniture within the City right-of-way. Provided that the placement of the furniture is confined to the limits of the sidewalk and complies with the criteria noted above, including compliance with the guidelines and an agreement with the City, there are no concerns.

Attachments:

1. Sidewalk Sketch

Recommended by:

Viveca Gravel, Community Development Coordinator

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Pamela Coulter at pcoulter@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1252.