

Staff Report

Report To: City Council
Report From: Tim Simmonds, City Manager
Meeting Date: March 25, 2024
Report Code: CM-24-001
Subject: River District Three-Year Video Camera Pilot Project

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CM-24-001 respecting the River District Three-Year Video Camera Pilot Project, City Council:

1. Approves the implementation of a three-year video camera pilot project in the River District as described in the report;
2. Approves the annual costs associated with the project for each of the three years, including initial capital costs and installation, to be funded from:
 - a. Any applicable federal or provincial grants; and
 - b. Any unfunded costs of the required capital and operating expenses for the three-year pilot be allocated to the Cannabis Reserve and Community Policing Reserve if grant options are not available or unsuccessful;
3. Directs staff to bring forward by-laws to:
 - a. Execute a memorandum of understanding with the Owen Sound Police Service (OSPS); and
 - b. Amend the Video Surveillance Policy to accommodate direct access by OSPS; and
4. Directs staff to bring forward a report to Council at the mid-point of the project and the conclusion of the project, identifying its overall effectiveness.

Highlights:

- The installation of video cameras is not a stand-alone security measure and should not be identified as such.
- If residents and visitors feel safer due to the presence of cameras, it can positively impact the City's reputation and potentially lead to economic benefits, such as increased tourism and business activities.
- Investing in community policing, social programs, and other strategies may offer a more holistic approach to safety and security in a downtown area. Some of these costs and oversights are not in the municipal purview.
- Funding for this pilot project is recommended through the Cannabis Reserve and Community Policing Reserve without impacting the general tax levy.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: This report supports the overall concept of Safe City but does not directly impact a specific Key Result.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

[Video Surveillance Program Policy](#)

Background:

On August 17, 2023, Sharif Rahman, 44, suffered devastating injuries as the victim of a serious assault outside his restaurant, The Curry House, located in the 900 block of 2nd Avenue East in the heart of the River District. He died from those injuries a week later in a London hospital.

Following this tragic event, there was a call for action from the public to add additional safety and security measures in the River District, namely video cameras, extra lighting, and additional uniformed foot patrol. The City Manager has been meeting regularly with the Owen Sound Police Chief over the past few months to discuss the implementation of all three of these measures. However, this report will only review the role and implementation

of video cameras as discussions are ongoing with respect to additional uniformed officers. In addition, enhanced lighting initiatives are being initiated, highlighted in [Report CS-23-093](#), presented at the September 13, 2023, River District Board meeting.

In recent years, the proliferation of video cameras as a security measure in downtown public spaces across North America has raised both praise and concerns. Supporters argue that video surveillance enhances public safety, aids law enforcement in crime prevention, and provides valuable evidence in investigations. In this view, cameras are necessary to combat criminal activities and ensure the community's well-being.

Opponents express concern that pervasive surveillance can lead to a surveillance “police” state where individuals are constantly monitored. This can potentially infringe on privacy rights and erode civil liberties.

Although video cameras are categorized as a security measure rather than a safety measure, safety, as noted in the Strategic Plan Refresh, is a concept concerned with achieving a positive state of well-being among people within social and physical environments. Not only is it about reducing and preventing injury and crime, but it is also about building strong, cohesive, vibrant, participatory communities. This means the perception of safety is as important as measuring injury and crime rates.

Therefore, staff supports the notion that video cameras could be a cost-effective measure that supports the Strategic Plan’s definition of Safety. However, staff recommends that installing video cameras would best be accomplished through implementing a three-year pilot project as a practical approach to the use and better understanding of the impact of video cameras in the River District.

The proposed pilot project and the installation and use of video cameras will be in accordance with the data minimization principle. Data minimization is “the principle of collecting, processing and storing only the necessary amount of personal information required for a specific purpose.”

Following this principle, the cameras do not have audio capabilities or the ability to collect other sensory information and will be installed to be:

- stationary and point at public areas;
- located on property owned by the City;
- restricted to prohibit the viewing of locations not intended to be monitored; and

- prevented from looking through the window of an adjacent building or areas where a higher level of privacy is expected.

Through an initial meeting with Owen Sound Police Service, the City was introduced to a provider of video equipment, [Liveable Cities](#). Liveable Cities is a division of LED Roadway Lighting Ltd., a clean technology company that is Canadian-owned and operated. Founded in 2007, the company is headquartered in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This is an important aspect to note, as all video images are stored in the cloud within Canada and not offshored. The particular product that is being proposed is the SLX-VIDEO. This solution is an easily installed and manageable streetlight accessory. The camera micro-sensor solution works on any streetlight from any vendor equipped with this standard socket. Leveraging existing streetlight assets allows for installation throughout a service area, with instant access to power (Attachment 3).

Staff also recommend funding this project through the Cannabis Reserve and the Community Policing Reserve. Therefore, there will be no impact on the general tax levy through the three-year pilot timeline.

Analysis:

Video surveillance as a solution to instill safety in those working, visiting, shopping, and living in the River District depends on various factors. It's crucial to assess the effectiveness of the direct financial costs and the broader impact on crime rates and public safety. Here are key considerations:

Installation, Maintenance, and Operational Costs

Staff recommend a video surveillance system consisting of up to 17 cameras implemented in two phases during the three-year pilot. A phased approach will allow staff to determine if nine cameras provide sufficient coverage; if not, phase two will be the installation of up to eight additional cameras. A phased approach will also provide additional time to apply for any provincial grants that may be available. The nine video cameras installed in phase one will be completed within four to five months. The one-time upfront combined phase one and phase two cost of installing a comprehensive video surveillance system will be approximately \$41,000. This includes \$34,000 for 17 cameras and \$7,000 for installation costs, which include the required signage identifying video camera operations and use. A proposed location

map is provided in Attachment 1. The proposed locations for all 17 cameras are as follows:

Phase 1 Locations

East Side Intersections

- 8th St and 2nd Ave N|S
- 8th St and 3rd Ave E|W
- 9th St and 2nd Ave N|S
- 9th St and 3rd Ave N|S
- 10th St and 2nd Ave N|S and E|W – one camera each direction
- 10th St and 3rd Ave E|W

West Side Intersections

- 9th St and 2nd Ave (E|W only)
- 10th St and 2nd Ave (E|W only)

Phase 2 Locations

East Side Intersections Phase 2

- 8th St and 2nd Ave E|W
- 8th St and 3rd Ave N|S
- 9th St and 2nd Ave E|W
- 9th St and 3rd Ave E|W
- 10th St and 3rd Ave (N|S and E|W – one camera each direction)
- 10th St and 4th Ave (E|W only)
- 11th St and 2nd Ave (N|S only)

Data storage and transmission infrastructure is cloud-based and supplied as part of a yearly service fee; additional software is not required. The cameras are 4K quality and set up as a “plug and play” on current streetlights, generally without extra hardware.

Beyond installation, ongoing maintenance, monitoring, and operational costs must be considered. This includes regular system updates, repairs, and addressing technical issues. The annual service contract with the provider which covers these items has a yearly cost of \$13,000 for a total of \$39,000 for the three-year pilot.

Combining the capital costs with the annual operating costs, the three-year pilot cost will be \$80,000.

Return on Investment (ROI)

Assessing the cost-effectiveness involves evaluating the return on investment. This includes measuring the system's effectiveness in preventing and solving crime(s). The system is deemed more cost-effective if the reduction in crime rates justifies the initial and ongoing costs. Its effectiveness is unknown now, and undertaking a three-year pilot program will give greater insight into the program. Owen Sound Police track current types of calls for service in the River District; these can be reviewed in Attachment 2. Measuring the calls for service will assist in creating a baseline as the program is monitored.

Crime Reduction and Prevention

The effectiveness of video surveillance in deterring and preventing crimes is a critical factor. Staff have reviewed a great deal of information about the use of video cameras, and most have shown mixed results regarding the direct impact of surveillance cameras on crime rates. While some studies suggest reducing certain types of crimes, others argue that determined criminals can adapt to the presence of cameras.

Real-Time Monitoring and Response

The proposed video surveillance system **does not** offer real-time monitoring. The video system will capture video footage and store that information in accordance with the City's Video Surveillance Program Policy.

Integration with Owen Sound Police Service

The effectiveness of video surveillance often depends on its integration with law enforcement efforts. Collaborative efforts between City staff and OSPS are crucial for maximizing benefits. This proposed three-year pilot has been drafted with the participation of Owen Sound Police Service. In addition, OSPS recommends the proposed video camera system.

The City will be working with OSPS over the next three months to create a memorandum of understanding and standard operating procedures that will allow OSPS to have direct access to the system while ensuring that the City remains compliant with *the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* as per the Confidential Legal Opinion requested from external legal counsel Aird & Berlis – John Mascarin. While OSPS will have access to the system, the City will be responsible for auditing the access process.

It is worth noting that although OSPS would have access to the video footage, the Clerks Division would process all other requests for video surveillance footage.

Public Perception and Trust

The success of video surveillance in the River District may also hinge on public perception. Suppose residents and visitors feel safer due to the presence of cameras. In that case, it can positively impact the City's reputation and potentially lead to economic benefits, such as increased tourism and business activities.

Privacy Concerns and Legal Compliance

Addressing privacy concerns and ensuring compliance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) is crucial. Intrusive surveillance practices can incur additional costs and undermine the system's perceived benefits. In addition, all applicable signage will be installed to communicate to the public in the River District that the area is under video surveillance as per MFIPPA, the IPC Guidelines, and the City's Video Surveillance Program Policy.

Alternative Crime Prevention Measures

Assessing the cost-effectiveness of video surveillance should involve comparing it to alternative crime prevention measures. Investing in community policing, social programs, and other strategies may offer a more holistic and cost-effective approach to improving safety and security in the River District. Some of these costs and oversight are not in the municipal purview. However, staff continues working with the River District Board of Management to create a robust calendar of activities to encourage more people to shop, visit, dine, or establish a business there. As noted, Owen Sound Police Service is reviewing opportunities for more enforcement 'boots on the ground' in the River District.

Conclusion and Next Steps

In conclusion, **installing video cameras is not a stand-alone security measure and should not be identified as such, nor does it provide real-time monitoring.** The effectiveness of video surveillance as a security measure in the River District is nuanced. While it is proposed that video cameras will contribute to deterrence and aid OSPS in identifying suspects, reconstructing events, and building a prosecution case, its success depends on integrating with other strategies and considering privacy concerns.

Staff have carefully assessed the specific needs and challenges of the River District with OSPS when proposing to deploy a two-phased video camera surveillance system and have determined that a three-year pilot program is the best option to maximize their effectiveness and address evolving security and safety concerns.

An additional benefit to the suggested video camera system is that video cameras can be moved within the River District or to nearly any other geographic location in the City with little effort that has street light infrastructure. If a camera is requested to be moved, notice will be provided in accordance with the City's Video Surveillance Program Policy.

Staff anticipates that if the recommendations in the report are approved without amendment, phase one of the project will be initiated in April 2024 and be fully operational by Q3 2024.

Financial Implications:

The three-year pilot program costs approximately \$80,000, and the City Manager recommends, in consultation with the Chief of Police, to fund the three-year pilot program from the Cannabis Reserve and the Community Policing Reserve if no provincial or federal policing grants are available to fund the entire project or a portion of the project. The Cannabis Reserve has a balance of approximately \$41,000. The Police Services Board administers the Community Policing Reserve and has sufficient funds to cover the annual service fee for each of the three years.

However, over the past few years, the provincial government, through the Ministry of the Solicitor General, has offered the Ontario Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Grant Program as part of the Ontario Guns, Gangs, and Violence Reduction Strategy to Community Police Services across the Province. This grant covered 50 per cent of the video project's costs. As of the report date, there is some hope that this grant could be announced again in Q2 or Q3 2024 and would be applied to phase two of the project to purchase up to eight additional video cameras. However, barring that announcement or the notion that the grant application would be successful, the reserves have sufficient funding to cover phase one and two costs.

The \$80,000 cost of the program is as follows:

Year 1/Phase 1 - \$18,000 Cameras

(Funded: Cannabis Reserve)

\$7,000 Signage and Installation related costs

(Funded: Cannabis Reserve)

\$13,000 Service Agreement-Cloud Storage, Technical

(Funded: Community Policing Reserve)

Year 2/Phase 2 - \$13,000 Service Agreement

(Funded: Community Policing Reserve)

\$16,000 Additional eight Cameras, if required

(Funded: Cannabis Reserve)

Year 3/Phase 3 - \$13,000 Service Agreement

(Funded: Community Policing Reserve)

As previously noted in the report, the above costs do not include staff time in setting up and auditing the system. These costs will be tracked as required and reported in future reports identifying the system's effectiveness.

Communication Strategy:

If the report is endorsed by Council, a Media Release will be prepared, which communicates the scope of the initial project. Additional media advisories will be prepared as the project moves to installation and full deployment. If any grant funding is successful, that information will be contained in the above-noted advisory.

A copy of this report will be forwarded to the next scheduled River District Board Meeting. The City Manager will meet with and update the Owen Sound and District Chamber of Commerce on the project.

Consultation:

Information and Privacy Coordinator

Manager of Legislative Services

City Clerk

Owen Sound Police Services – Chief

Owen Sound Police Services – Director of Information Technology

External Legal Counsel – Aird & Berlis Confidential Legal Opinion: *Video Surveillance and Compliance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and the Police Services Act*

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – River District Map - Camera Locations

Attachment 2 – River District 2022-2023 OSPS Service Calls

Attachment 3 – Liveable Cities Micro-Sensing Presentation

Recommended by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Tim Simmonds, City Manager, at tsimmonds@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1210.