



Report to Council

Department: Infrastructure Services
Division: Infrastructure Services
Date: November 15, 2021
Prepared by: Kevin Girard, P.Eng., MBA
Director, Infrastructure Services
Report Number: Infrastructure Services-2021-09
Subject: Essex Centre Streetscape Flex Street Concept
Number of Pages: 6 (plus 97 appended)

Recommendation(s)

That Infrastructure Services – 2021 – 09 entitled, “Essex Centre Streetscape Flex Street Concept” prepared by Kevin Girard, Director of Infrastructure Services dated November 15, 2021 be received, and

That the presentation titled, “Essex Centre Streetscape Flex Street Concept”, as presented by Kevin Girard, Director of Infrastructure Services presented at the November 15, 2021 Regular Council Meeting be received, and

That Council endorse the change to the “2013 Downtown Essex Streetscape Plan” by Stempski Kelly Associates to include the flex street concept as presented by the Director of Infrastructure Services on November 15, 2021.

Purpose

In 2013, Council endorsed the Streetscape plan for the Essex Centre Streetscape that was completed by Stempski Kelly Associates. Therefore, any significant changes to the plan should

be presented and adopted by Council. The purpose of this report is to propose a change to the 2013 Streetscape Plan to include a flex street design concept within Zone 1 (Core Area) along Talbot Street in Essex Centre as identified in Figure 16 of the appended 2013 Essex Centre Streetscape Plan.

Background and Discussion

The 2013 Streetscape plan identified three zones within Essex Centre, core, transitional, and void as shown in the figure 1. For the purposes of this report, the area where the flex street concept is being proposed is along Talbot Street between Victoria Ave and Laird Ave in zone 1 (the core).

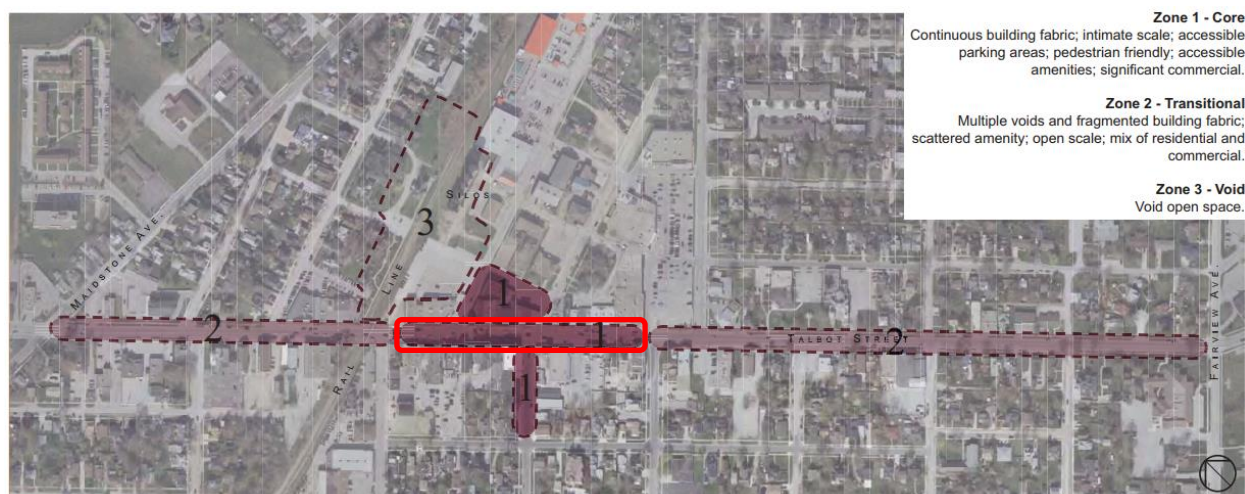


Figure 1: Essex Centre Zones

A comparison of the current design and the flex street design of Talbot Street between Victoria and Laird is shown in Figure 2. As shown, the flex street design provides more flexibility for sidewalk patios and retail space and would provide better accommodation for any future downtown event such as parades and open streets. This is done by closing parking spaces with temporary (removable) bollards to accommodate additional sidewalk area, while still providing lanes for vehicular traffic.

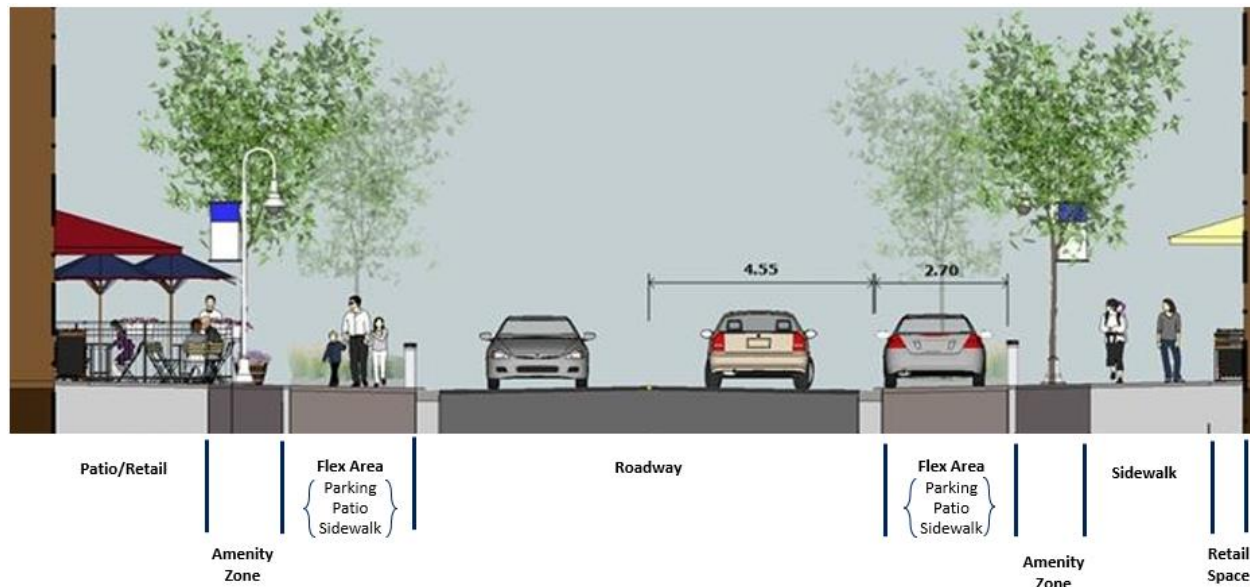


Figure 2: Current Design vs Flex Street

In consultation with the Town's consulting engineer, Stantec Consulting, the proposed design can be implemented while still following the streetscape plans recommendation for theming. An example concept of what is being proposed is shown in Figure 3.

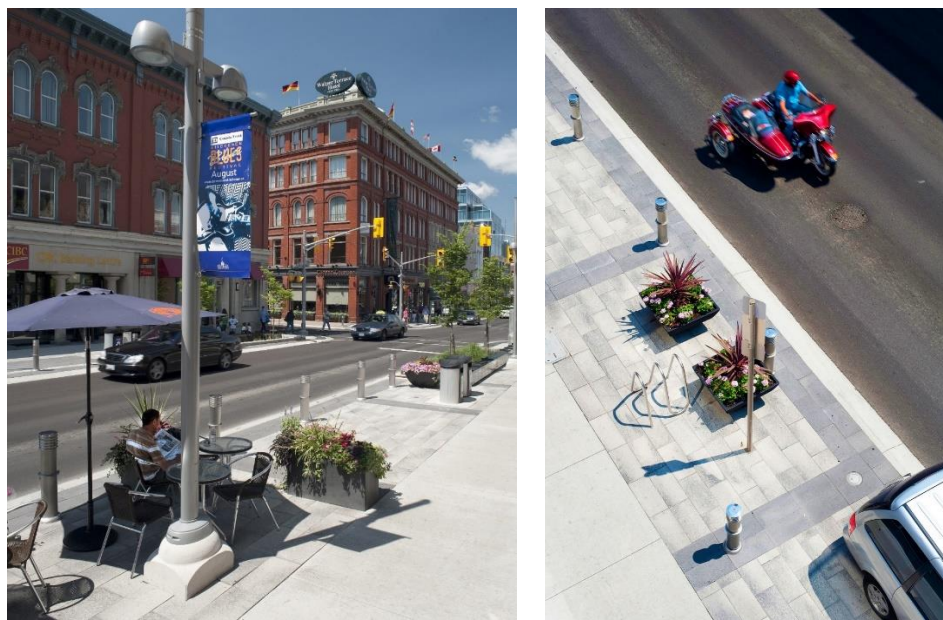


Figure 3: Example Flex Street Design

In order to evaluate whether the proposed design would be an adequate fit for the Essex Centre Streetscape, a list of advantages versus disadvantages is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Advantages v. Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a unique sense-of-place and enhances the distinct identity of Essex. • Identifies Essex as a regional destination for shopping, dining and celebration. • Allows for seamless transformation of parking spaces into restaurant patios and social gathering space during events. • Improves the aesthetic of the downtown area by extending and placing emphasis on the pedestrian environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces available on-street parking spaces along Talbot Road when patios, etc. are in place. • Increased risk of damage to Town amenities • Increased capital cost to implement.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes livability and animates the public realm, encouraging residents and visitors to linger. • Encourages motorists to reduce their speed. • Reduces urban heat by reducing asphalt surfaces and increasing tree cover. 	
---	--

In addition, individual face-to-face meetings with businesses were held on November 3, 2021. These meetings were held on a drop-in basis to garner some feedback on the flex street concept and provide businesses an opportunity to discuss any concerns they may have regarding the streetscape project. Many of the concerns that were raised were related to construction timing and duration, access to businesses during construction, cost, and parking.

The comments received on the flex street concept were very positive and all the businesses that were consulted expressed that they were in favour of the flex street concept over the current design. All comments that were received were documented and are appended to this report.

Financial Impact

The overall financial impact of the Essex Streetscape will be presented in the proposed 2022 Capital Budget.

Consultations

Doug Sweet, Chief Administrative Officer

Nelson Silveira, Economic Development Officer

Lori Chadwick, Director, Development Services

Link to Strategic Priorities

- ☒ Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure which meets current and future needs of the municipality and its citizens.
- ☐ Create a safe, friendly and inclusive community which encourages healthy, active living for people of all ages and abilities.
- ☐ Provide a fiscal stewardship and value for tax dollars to ensure long-term financial health to the municipality.
- ☐ Manage responsible and viable growth while preserving and enhancing the unique rural and small town character of the community.
- ☐ Improve the experiences of individuals, as both citizens and customers, in their interactions with the Town of Essex.
- ☐ **Improve the Town's capacity to meet the ongoing and future service needs of** its citizens while ensuring the corporation is resilient in the face of unanticipated changes or disruptions.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Essex Centre Streetscape Flex Street Concept - Infrastructure Services-2021-09.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Essex Streetscape Silo District Report- Accessible_reducedsize.pdf- Essex Centre Streetscape Comments.pdf- Flex Street Concept_Final.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Nov 10, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug Sweet', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Doug Sweet, Chief Administrative Officer - Nov 10, 2021 - 9:04 AM