



TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council



SUBMITTED BY:

Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer



Wayne Anstey, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer - Operations

DATE: February 19, 2009

SUBJECT: Spring Garden Streetscape Design

ORIGIN:

The approved 2008 / 2009 Capital Budget.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- The Spring Garden streetscape design be revisited by all of the stakeholders over the Spring / Summer of 2009 and, once a consensus has been reached, the design be brought back to Regional Council for approval.
- A streetscape and undergrounding design project for Ochterloney Street be accelerated to determine feasibility, detail design, costs and timelines.
- The preferred option identified through completion of the schematic design report for Quinpool Road in the next few weeks proceed into Phase II, Detailed Design and Construction Documents.
- Staff work to assemble other sources of funding for Council approval in support of the Streetscape program
- As part of 09/10 budget deliberations staff make recommendations to Regional Council on which streetscape and undergrounding projects to advance in 09/10.

BACKGROUND

Spring Garden Road is the first streetscape project in a number of priority downtown streetscape projects intended to be implemented over the next ten years. Staff and Terrain Group consultants have been working with the public and stakeholders on streetscape improvements to Spring Garden Road. Owing to constraints in construction timelines the project has reached a critical point.

DISCUSSION

The Executive Summary of the Schematic Design report appears in Appendix A of this report. The Schematic Design report describes three options and two variations of Option #1. It recommends Options #1 or #2 are preferred depending upon funding availability. Option #3 (Status Quo Beautification) was developed primarily as a cost benchmark and has been rejected as a viable option due to its relatively high price tag and failure to address critical issues inherent in the current layout and functionality of the street. This relates especially to the inadequate width of the existing sidewalks which is 2m too narrow to accommodate even 2004 pedestrian volumes and traffic flows.

Considerable public and stakeholder consultation was conducted (see Appendix B) and four Public and Stakeholder Open Houses were held through the months of September to December 2008. This consultation did not result in a consensus over a preferred design option, however, input received at the Public Open House held on September 17, 2008, identified the following major design themes for the project:

- make the street more pedestrian-focused by de-emphasizing automobile usage
- close the street to privately-owned motor vehicles / restrict street usage to buses and taxis
- increase the police presence on the street, particularly at night
- widen the sidewalks to accommodate more pedestrians and increase comfort
- upgrade the existing bus stops with transit shelters
- promote businesses on Spring Garden and side streets with improved signage
- enforce better loading and parking regulations
- add more public art to the streetscape.

Throughout September to December, 2008, the following additional public service stakeholders were consulted and were generally supportive of the proposed improvements:

- HRM Transportation and Right-of-Way Services
- HRM Infrastructure and asset Management
- HRM Municipal Operations
- HRM Metro Transit
- HRM Urban Forestry
- HRM Regional Police
- HRM Fire
- Nova Scotia Power
- Aliant

- Eastlink
- Emergency Health Services
- Canada Post
- Brinks Canada.

Staff feels that Design Option #2 best addresses issues identified through the inventory and analysis stages. Based on the results of votes taken at the January 8, 2009 Stakeholder Open House there is support for the preferred option being undertaken and completed in a spring/summer construction period. (The merchant preference is actually for a March/ June construction period however construction of this type is difficult under winter and early spring conditions and carries a considerable cost premium.) Based on this support, Option #2 has been developed, over the last four weeks, through to detailed design and construction documents. This would have enabled the project to be a candidate for any, still to be defined, federal stimulus funds and possibly be built this spring and summer.

The Spring Garden Area Business Association has recently counter-proposed an alternative 18" to 24" widening of the sidewalks on both sides of the street. One of their primary concerns is for vehicular traffic flow along the street. This idea was evaluated early on in the process and was rejected as problematic. The SGABA proposal was recently rejected by HRM Traffic and Right-of-Way on February 17th (see Appendix C). Consequently, at the SGABA Board meeting on February 18th a motion was passed in support of Schematic Design Option #3, which had already been rejected as a viable option by HRM due to its high price tag and failure to address critical issues associated primarily with public safety related to the inadequate width of the existing 3m wide sidewalk.

The SGABA has therefore been advised by HRM staff that, unfortunately, their February 18th decision comes near the end of the detail design phase of the project. Since there is clearly no consensus, the design will need to be jointly revisited over the Spring / Summer of 2009. Once a consensus is reached, it will then require 6-8 weeks for re-engineering of the design, 3 weeks for review and 6 weeks for tendering and award of the project, meaning that the project could not proceed during the 2009 construction year.

The delay in the Spring Garden Road project means that there is an opportunity to advance other priority projects in the downtown. Some of these projects are Ochterloney Undergrounding and Streetscape, South Park Street (Fares Block), Quinpool Undergrounding and Streetscape. All of these projects require some further work to determine which presents the most strategic opportunity in terms of impact, financial means and feasibility to complete. If the recommendations are approved, staff will return to Council with recommendations for advancing projects on 09/10 based on this further work.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

There are no budget implications at this time. All approvals for funding will be brought back to Regional Council.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES:

- 1) It is recommended that no streetscape and undergrounding projects proceed in 2009 and that funds be allowed to accrue to levels adequate for proceeding with one of the higher priority projects identified in Recommendation #1.
- 2) Council approve Option #2 as the preferred option for implementation.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Executive Summary

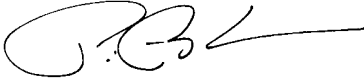
Appendix B - Chronology of Events

Appendix C - Traffic & Right of Way Response to SGABA Proposal


A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Barry Yanchyshyn, Senior Landscape Architect, Real Property Planning, IAM

Report Approved by:


Peter Bigelow, Manager, Real Property Planning - 490 - 6047

Report Approved by:


Phillip Townsend, Acting Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management - 490-7166

Appendix A

Prepared for:  by: 

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Spring Garden area forms an integral part of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Capital District and is the main shopping district in the downtown core. The high level of office workers and residents in the area, along with the area's role as a key tourist destination, support the vitality of the street. This area has the highest pedestrian volumes east of Montreal. The study focus extends from Queen Street to South Park Street.



Project Goal

Based on the Request for Proposal, "The 'Goal', is to: create a beautiful, treed and easily-maintained streetscape; provide for pedestrian comfort, amenity and fluidity of movement; mitigate the effects of traffic and transit on pedestrian activity; strengthen the vitality of retail areas by ensuring and enhancing pedestrian traffic; support transit ridership and operations; and, address requirements related to vehicular capacity and flow within the downtown streets network."

Project Guiding Objectives

The following objectives have been used to guide the direction of the design options to achieve the goal set above:

- create a more pedestrian-oriented street
- create a world-class streetscape
- implement sustainable initiatives within the design and implementation
- create an aesthetically pleasing environment that provides Universal Accessibility
- place services underground in the most cost effective and efficient manner
- achieve functionality of public spaces and their interface with adjoining private landholdings while maintaining flow
- seek to minimize construction disruption
- achieve a streetscape that can be operated year round
- understand the existing street pattern, texture, uses and challenges
- achieve safety of pedestrians and vehicles through the Spring Garden corridor
- maintain acceptable levels of traffic flows and adequate parking for servicing vehicles, taxis and transit
- work with stakeholders and the public to create a plan that people embrace

Design Process

In arriving at the development of three options that meet the goal and guiding objectives, a design process was carried out to understand:

- the street in context to surrounding land uses and transportation corridors
- the history of the street and development that is occurring in the immediate area that may influence the streetscape
- the demographic profile of the area
- traffic and pedestrian movements
- existing parking and loading
- the existing lighting levels
- how the street operates during the day and night

The analysis identified opportunities and constraints related to the streetscape that resulted in the evaluation of potential design concepts/elements that would assist in meeting the project objectives. These included widened sidewalks, multi-functional street light standards, flush intersections, gateway feature, mountable curbs and restricted loading times. These concepts were discussed through the consultation with stakeholders, business owners/operators and the general public. Key challenges identified through this process were:

Challenge 1: Sidewalk Widening

The desirable sidewalk width for Spring Garden has been based on 2004 pedestrian counts. From the calculations, the existing 2.5 - 3 m sidewalks are approximately 2 m too narrow.

Currently, the right-of-way has provision for loading on both sides of the street. Because of the width of the existing right-of-way, any widening of the sidewalks along the street would result in a loss of loading spaces.

Challenge 2: Loading

The existing right-of-way width is below HRM's current Red Book standards. The street is classified as an arterial road, but lane widths (existing) barely meet local collector standards. Loading is occurring during peak pedestrian periods, thereby creating an undesirable environment and bottleneck points for both vehicles and pedestrians. Many loading vehicles are parked longer than allowed under the current regulations, requiring more rigorous enforcement.

A number of the shops along Spring Garden Road, primarily on the south-side between Queen Street and Dresden Row, can accommodate loading



from the side or rear of the store. However, the majority require loading from the front. It is being recommended that loading times be restricted to between the hours of 9 pm to 11 am with enhanced enforcement of the regulations. Clear signage will also be important in informing the public about loading and non-loading times. Existing spaces on side streets can be used outside of restricted loading times by couriers and small delivery trucks.

Challenge 3: Accessibility

Access between sidewalks is challenging based on the existing slope of the road (in some places 5%). This creates difficulty in crossing for mobility impaired people. The design concepts incorporate corner bulbing (Options 1 & 2) and flush intersections to shorten the pedestrian crossing distance and improve the transition between the sidewalks.

Challenge 4: Construction Disturbance

Property owners/business operators are concerned about the potential impact of construction disturbance and access to their property or businesses, particularly during the late summer shopping period. If implementation of the project occurs over two construction seasons, additional conflicting concerns have been raised. Other challenges to construction are existing regulations that regulate permitted hours of construction in the right-of-way. The preferred construction approach is outlined in **Appendix F**.

Design Options

The following plans detail the different components of the three options that have been developed from the site analysis and consultation. The overall preferred concept provides for

- widened sidewalks
- flush intersections with corner bulbing (pedestrian accessibility)
- mountable curbs
- two gateway entrances
- central node
- universal accessibility

The table that follows provides an assessment of the three options.

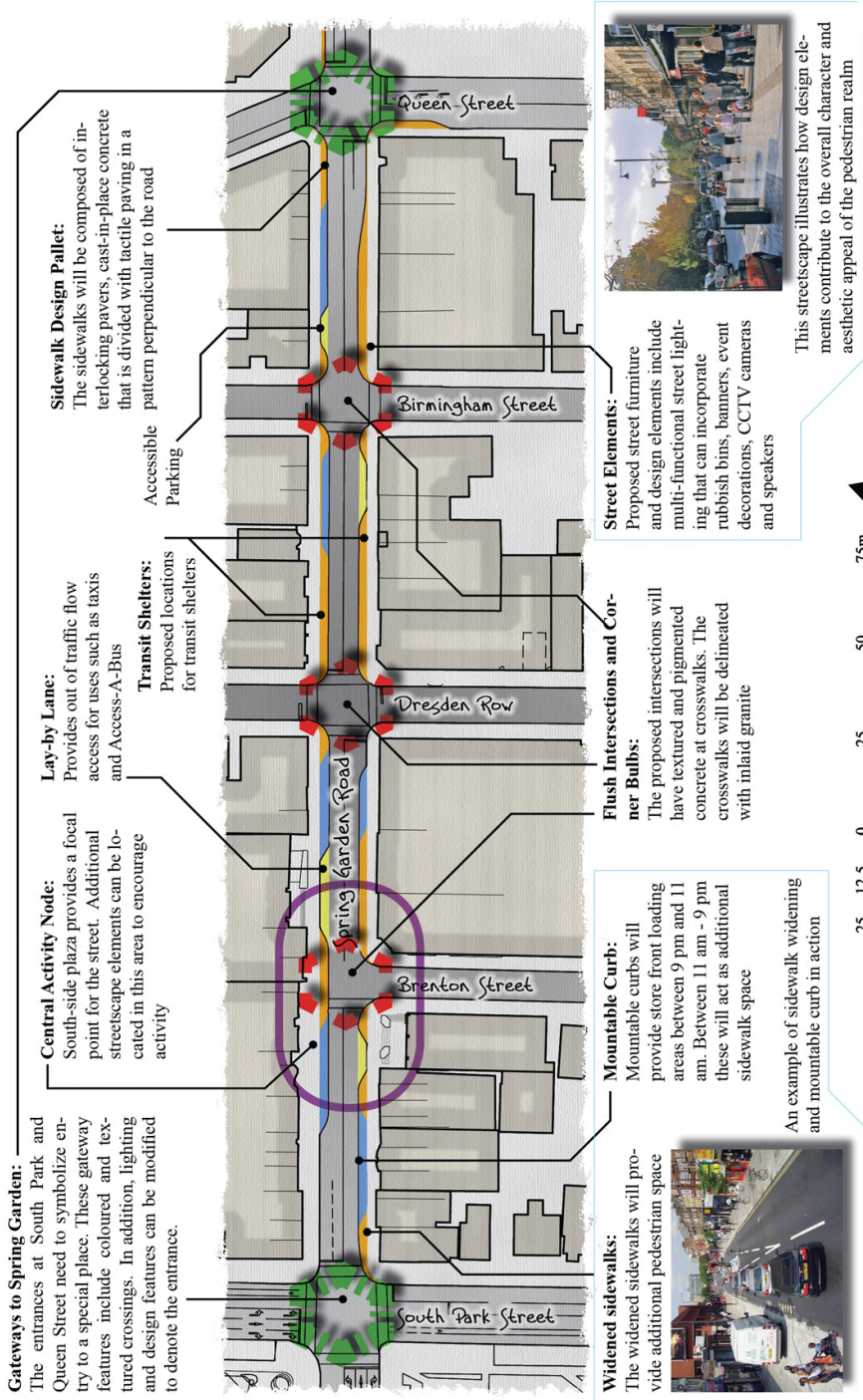


Photo taken by Bob Wilkins

SPRING GARDEN STREETSCAPE Options Analysis	Option 1 (with bollards)	Option 1 (no bollards)	Option 2	Option 3
Utilities undergrounded	XX	XX	XX	XX
Sidewalk width increased to meet 2004 requirements (alternating pedestrian / loading use areas accessed by mountable curbs) and safety concerns mitigated (inconsistent sidewalk widths [ie. bottlenecks] AND / OR reduction in effective width of sidewalk [ie. street fixtures placed 0.5m from curb])	XX	XX	X	
Potential ease of converting each option to a Transit / Pedestrian Mall over the 20-year projected lifespan of the project	X	XX	X	
Safety concerns (associated with lack of bollards to separation of pedestrians & vehicles in alternating pedestrian / loading use areas)	X		X	X
Space incorporated for functional and aesthetic elements to increase pedestrian comfort & interest (eg. trees, benches & public art)	XX	XX	X	
Universal access measures incorporated (ie. flush intersections, widened sidewalks & corner bulbing)	XX	XX	X	
CPTED measures incorporated	XX	XX	X	
Life-cycle accounting measures incorporated (ie. sustainability measures)	XX	XX	X	
Traffic flow improved	X	X	X	
Cost (lowest overall)		X	X	XX
Lowest maintenance & operating costs (no retractable bollards, trees, site furnishings)			X	XX
SCORE	15	16	12	7

COST (in millions) NOTE 1: Includes 3% HST NOTE 2: Phased costs are higher	\$6.40	\$5.10	\$4.90	\$3.95
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OPTION 1 - MAXIMIZE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT



Gateways to Spring Garden:
The entrances at South Park and Queen Street need to symbolize entry to a special place. These gateway features include coloured and textured crossings. In addition, lighting and design features can be modified to denote the entrance.

Central Activity Node:
South-side plaza provides a focal point for the street. Additional streetscape elements can be located in this area to encourage activity

Lay-by Lane:
Provides out of traffic flow access for uses such as taxis and Access-A-Bus

Transit Shelters:
Proposed locations for transit shelters

Sidewalk Design Palette:
The sidewalks will be composed of interlocking pavers, cast-in-place concrete that is divided with tactile paving in a pattern perpendicular to the road

Accessible Parking

Widened sidewalks:
The widened sidewalks will provide additional pedestrian space



An example of sidewalk widening and mountable curb in action

Mountable Curb:
Mountable curbs will provide store front loading areas between 9 pm and 11 am. Between 11 am - 9 pm these will act as additional sidewalk space

Flush Intersections and Corner Bulbs:
The proposed intersections will have textured and pigmented concrete at crosswalks. The crosswalks will be delineated with inlaid granite

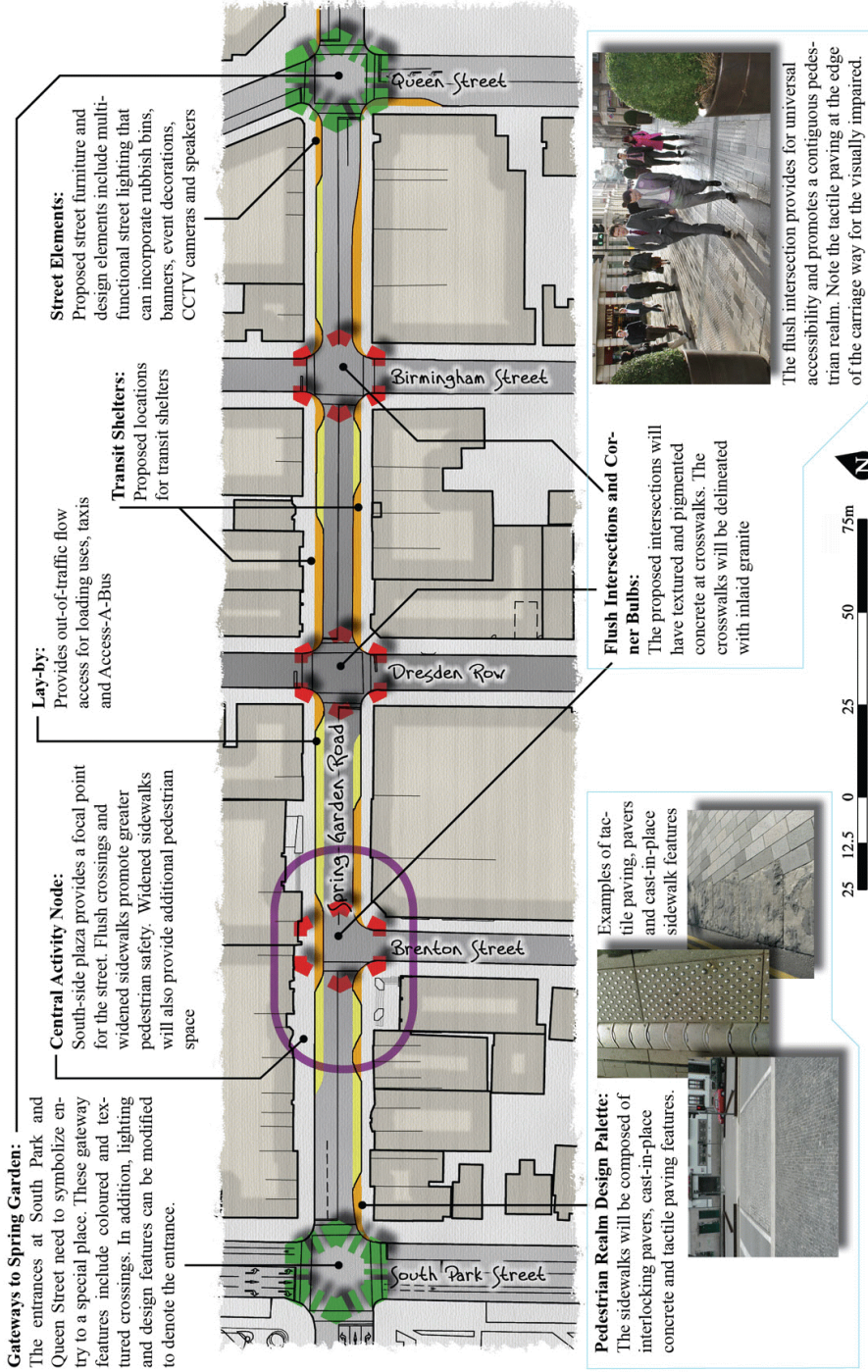
Street Elements:
Proposed street furniture and design elements include multi-functional street lighting that can incorporate rubbish bins, banners, event decorations, CCTV cameras and speakers



This streetscape illustrates how design elements contribute to the overall character and aesthetic appeal of the pedestrian realm



OPTION 2 - SIDEWALK SCOPE REDUCED



OPTION 3 - STATUS QUO - BEAUTIFICATION

Street Elements:

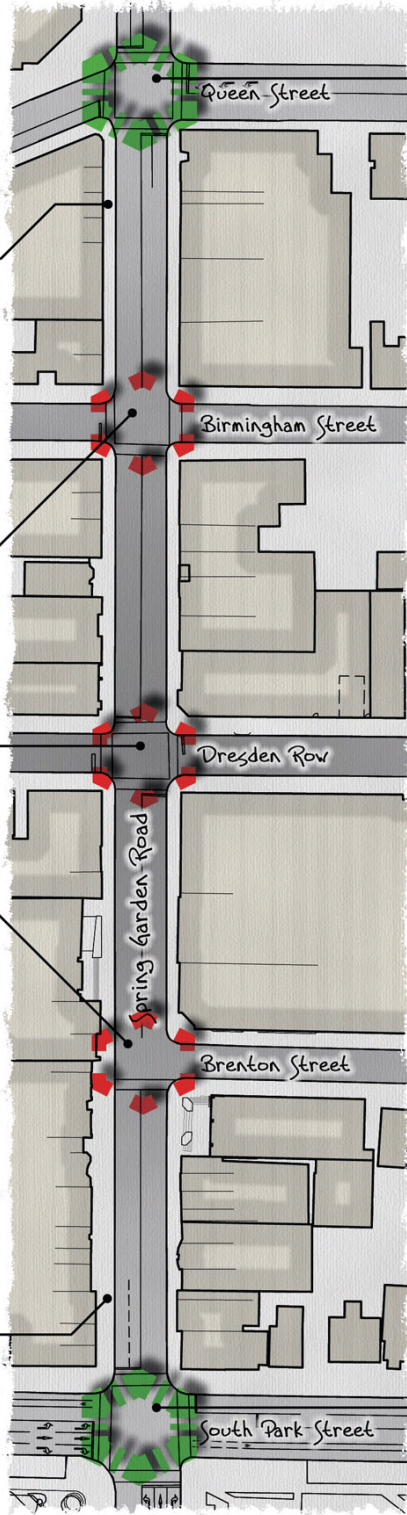
Proposed street furniture and design elements include multi-functional street lighting that can incorporate rubbish bins, banners, event decorations, CCTV cameras and speakers.

Flush Intersections:

The proposed intersections will have textured and pigmented concrete at crosswalks. The crosswalks will be delineated with inlaid granite.

Sidewalk Design Pallet:

The sidewalks will be composed of interlocking pavers, cast-in-place concrete, and tactile elements for the visually impaired.



Gateways to Spring Garden:

The entrances at South Park and Queen Street need to symbolize entry to a special place. These gateway features include coloured and textured crossings. In addition, lighting and design features can be modified to denote the entrance.



Conclusion:

Spring Garden Road is the most vibrant and important commercial streetscape in HRM. With Option 1 (no bollards), future requirements to convert the street into a Transit and Pedestrian-Oriented Street (as suggested by HRMbyDesign) will amount to simply adding signage to limit access to buses, loading vehicles, and bicycles; all other options will involve significant curb and drainage modifications with their associated costs as well as future disruptions to business. Since the Traffic and R.O.W. Services Staff questions the safety of Option 1 without bollards, Option 2 may be the selected option. Option 3 is not considered viable since it offers no functional solutions to the need to widen sidewalks and it effectively reduces the existing sidewalk width by about 0.5 m.

Recommendation:

Depending upon funding availability, Options 1 and 2 are preferred.

Options 1 & 2: Central Node Perspective



Appendix B Chronology of Events

In arriving at the three design Schematic Design options, throughout the months of September to December during the data collection phase of the project, a considerable number of one-on-one interviews were conducted by the consultants with those business and property owners who responded. Sixty-two percent of the businesses and landowners contacted by the consultants either called or e-mailed back responses. Most of those resulted in a face to face meeting or phone call to discuss details of the project. The response from the business and property owners was generally mixed. Input was also received at this time from four of the twelve major property owners who responded (33% response rate). Their contradictory suggestions spanned the range from “turning the street into a pedestrian mall like Sparks Street in Ottawa” to total opposition to street widening “as the present situation works very well”.

Beginning in October, Spring Garden Area Business Association (SGABA) representatives began writing letters to the Mayor and Council suggesting that there was considerable opposition to the design options being developed and recommending that a further option be pursued (described vaguely as a 18" to 24" widening of the sidewalks on both sides of the street). Reasons presented by HRM’s I.A.M. Real Property Planning (RPP) staff for the unacceptability of such an approach were seemingly not accepted by SGABA. Generally speaking the SGABA proposal was not pursued since:

- 1) It would require the removal of parking/loading along one side of the street in order to provide acceptable width for travel lanes and curbside loading (on one side), however, businesses on both sides of the road require front loading (NOTE: As a result of the SGABA proposal, one side of the street would not be serviced with loading);
- 2) The sidewalk widening proposed by SGABA is 1.5m deficient in width to accommodate 2004 pedestrian volumes (0.5m widening proposed rather than the required 2.0m); and,
- 3) The cost of the SGABA proposal is about the same as the consultant’s recommended Option #2.

The February / March construction start dates suggested in the SGABA’s letter of December 18, 2008, had been shown to be unattainable back in June 2008 when the Critical Path was first developed.

Subsequent to the Phase I - Schematic Design report’s completion in early December 2008, additional meetings were held with HRM’s Traffic and Right-of Way in which it was determined that Option #1.b (mountable curbs without bollards) was not acceptable due to pedestrian safety considerations. Option #1.a (mountable curbs with automatically retractable, heated bollards) is estimated to cost about \$1.5M more than Option #2 being recommended for implementation. If the project area is ever to become a pedestrian / transit corridor, the bollards would be redundant. For these reasons, in mid- December 2008 the CAO directed RPP to proceed into Phase II, Detailed Design and Construction Documents based upon Option #2.

Copies of the Spring Garden Streetscape Schematic Design report were supplied to SGABA representatives in early January 2009 and on January 8th a Stakeholder Open House for business and property owners (which all agreed was well attended) was held to review the results of the Schematic Design Phase and the preferred Schematic Design Option #2. Two votes were taken by the President:

- 1) Should construction occur over a 1 year or 2 year period? The vote was in favor of carrying out the work over 1 year; and,
- 2) Should renovation of the street proceed at all? The answer was yes.

To date RPP staff directly involved in the project have only received direct feedback to the proposed design options from the SGABA Board representatives. This feedback has been generally negative, however, no viable alternatives to the three options developed by the HRM consultants have been advanced by them. On January 27, 2009, the SGABA representatives sent a memo to the twelve major property owners in the Spring Garden Area attaching “a list of concerns that the Board of the SGABA has with respect to actual proposed design changes to the street”. On February 12, 2009, reps from HRM’s RPP met with six members of this group of twelve that the SGABA representatives alleged to be very dissatisfied with the streetscape design. It did not appear that any of those present had been provided with or had the opportunity to review the Spring Garden Schematic Design report. Whereas, a major design consideration in the streetscape project is the provision of loading opportunities for those businesses that require front-loading off Spring Garden Road, all six of these major landholders in attendance own properties where loading is provided from the rear.

At the February 12th meeting, RPP presented a 3-D computer simulation of two of the four blocks of Option #2 and answered questions posed by the merchant / landowner group. No new design concepts beyond the 18" to 24" widening of the sidewalks were advanced by the SGABA. The group was informed by RPP that on February 26th, in order to maintain the Critical Path, the Detailed Design and Construction Documents package for HRM’s Option #2 would be completed and circulated to the Technical Committee for final review. The group was also informed that any new concept they advanced could jeopardize project implementation:

- The new concept would have to be appropriately vetted and consensus reached with all project stakeholders, which could easily take the months of spring and summer 2009;
- Any significant change in concept would then require 6-8 weeks of re-engineering followed by 6-8 weeks for the tender, award and start-up process; and,
- The project, therefore, would not proceed during the 2009 construction year and therefore, may not be considered eligible for infrastructure funding valued at approximately \$3.5M .

On February 17th SGABA representatives met with staff from HRM’s RPP and Traffic and Right-of-Way to review their proposal for an 18" to 24" widening of the sidewalks on both sides of the street, which was again rejected by Traffic and Right-of-Way. At its February 18th Board meeting, the SGABA passed a motion in support of Option #3, which represents a significant change in concept that has already been rejected as a viable option by HRM due to its relatively high price tag, potential to jeopardize infrastructure funding and failure to address critical issues associated primarily with public safety related to the inadequate width of the existing 3m wide sidewalk, which has been calculated to be 2m deficient in width to accommodate even 2004 pedestrian volumes.

Appendix C

Traffic and Right-of-Way Response to SGABA Proposal

From: Roddy MacIntyre
To: Barry Yanchyshyn <yanchyb@halifax.ca>
CC: Ken Reashor <reashok@halifax.ca>
Taso Koutroulakis <koutrot@halifax.ca>
Creation Date: 2/5 2:40 pm
Subject: BID Option for Spring Garden Road Streetscape

Barry,

In response to your request that I assess the potential for implementation of the modifications to Spring Garden Road proposed by the Spring Garden Area BID, I offer the following;

Based on the information you provided, it is my understanding that the proposal by the Business Association would involve widening the sidewalks by 0.5-0.6 m (18"-24") on both sides, retaining loading on both sides of the street with provision of a 3 lane roadway cross-section (3 x 3 m lanes). As I have not seen the letter you received outlining this proposal, I can only go by the information you provided in your e-mail stating that the intent of the 3 lane cross-section would be to provide a centre lane (suicide lane as you described it) which would be for use by vehicles travelling in either direction to get around stopped busses or trucks.

The three lane cross-section would absolutely not be considered. "Suicide lanes", in urban areas, are not meant to be used for passing stopped vehicles as suggested in this proposal. They are intended to provide for left turns, where required, and Spring Garden Road does not require this type of treatment. Passing lanes of this type are intended for controlled access highways where proper sight distance, geometry and lane width is provided.

The existing roadway width on Spring Garden Road is approximately 12.5 m. The sidewalk widening proposed by the BID would reduce the roadway by at least 0.5 m (18") on each side, resulting in an overall width of 11.5 m. As Spring Garden Road is a designated truck route, we would not consider 3 m lanes to be adequate to accommodate the truck traffic since truck widths are in the range of 2.8 m. The minimum lane width we would consider to be adequate for this road would be 3.5 m, resulting in a required travel way of 7.0 m (min) for through traffic in both directions. This leaves a total of 4.5 m (2.25 m per side) left over to accommodate curbside loading/unloading. This would not provide for adequate space to accommodate both curbside loading/unloading and through traffic without significant safety and operational concerns.

If the BID wishes to move forward with their proposed sidewalk widening, it would require the removal of parking/loading along one side of the street in order to provide acceptable width for travel lanes and curbside loading (on one side).

I would be happy to discuss this, or any other, proposal the BID may have with regard to modifications on Spring Garden Road. My contact information is provided below.

Regards,

Roddy

Roddy MacIntyre, P.Eng.
Transportation Engineer
Traffic & Right-of-Way Services
Halifax Regional Municipality

Phone: (902) 490-5525

Fax: (902) 490-6727

Email: macintr@halifax.ca