
MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: April 24, 2017
To: Mayor and Council
From: Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer
Stephanie Potter, Policy & Research Associate
Report#: COU17-018
Attachments: Letter to Mayor Dan Mathieson from Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Waterloo dated March 27, 2017

Title: Proposed Comprehensive Public Consultation Process: Cooper Site Master Plan, Including a New "Grand Trunk" Community Hub

Objective: To propose a public consultation process to support the creation of a Master Plan for the Cooper Block, with particular focus on the "Grand Trunk Community Hub."

Background:

A) Council Direction

On 24 October 2016, Stratford City Council passed the following resolution:

That City staff be directed to meet with the Stratford Festival to obtain a full understanding of their redevelopment proposal and report back to City Council;

That City staff examine the future of the Kiwanis Community Centre facilities and user and other potentially impacted activities as part of discussions with the Festival;

That staff also be directed to examine the potential of developing a larger community facility using the Provincial "community hub" model, that would provide a range of programs and service for all citizens, including active seniors.

That staff consider potential preferred locations for such a "community hub" in the City, including the Cooper Site;

That City staff explore potential partnership opportunities with community groups and more formal organizations, including Kiwanis Community Centre users, the YMCA and the University of Waterloo;

That staff be directed to pursue the necessary senior government level funding required to support any new community facilities;

And that City staff develop a comprehensive public consultation process for Council's consideration.

This report briefly outlines the work that has been more recently undertaken, early discussions with the University of Waterloo, and recommends a comprehensive public consultation process for the Cooper Site. A letter from the President of the University of Waterloo (dated March 27, 2017) stating readiness to participate in the master planning process, and to consider a “student life centre” in the Community Hub, is also appended.

B) Overview

For the purpose of this report, the “Cooper Block” is being used to refer to the lands bounded by Downie, St. Patrick, Cooper, and St. David Streets. This block is largely owned by the City of Stratford, but also contains properties owned by the Stratford Perth YMCA and the University of Waterloo (Stratford Campus for Digital Media and Accelerator Centre).

Amendment No. 21 to the Stratford Official Plan (OPA 21) describes the goals and objectives for the Cooper Site as follows:

- i) To encourage public and institutional uses which will restore a sense of purpose and vibrancy to the Cooper Site making it a focus of activity in the southern part of the Downtown Core.*
- ii) To ensure that development in the Cooper Site complements and supports the role of the Downtown Core as the primary focus of the City with its own distinct character and identity.*
- ii) To ensure that the historic use of the Cooper Site is appropriately commemorated with an emphasis on the importance of rail to the development of the City.*

OPA 21 also provides, in policy 4.11.4, that development of the Cooper Block lands shall be in accordance with a Master Plan prepared and adopted by the City which will establish the general land use and transportation structure, and provide direction for other related issues such as servicing and urban design. OPA 21 is currently under appeal, as it relates to the Cooper Block, by 1353837 Ontario Inc./Lawrence Ryan. The appeal is subject to a motion to dismiss before the Ontario Municipal Board returnable April 20-21, 2017.

In order to plan for the full development of the Cooper Block, and potentially in the short term a new community hub (detailed in subsequent sections of this report), the following considerations and elements are required:

- An overall development (building) concept for the Cooper Block;
- Integration of functional movements to, and within, the Block (e.g. pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles);
- Consideration of phasing options;
- A location for the community hub;
- Collaborative land uses; and
- **The assembly of all elements into a flexible master plan, which can be responsive to development opportunities, while adhering to the guiding elements of the master plan.**

C) Initial Meetings Over 2016/2017

Mayor Mathieson and the CAO have held meetings with the University of Waterloo, the Stratford Festival and with senior levels of government. The Provincial and Federal governments have been asked to contribute \$10 million in funding each for a new community hub, with the City of Stratford contributing an additional \$10 million, for a total investment of \$30 million. Staff have also had early, exploratory discussions with some potentially affected community stakeholders including the Kiwanis Club, the Stratford Lakeside Active Adults Association, the Rotary Club, the Lawn Bowling Club, the Stratford Perth YMCA and the University of Waterloo.

D) Proposed Features of the Grand Trunk Community Hub (A Key Element of the Cooper Block)

The creation of a new community hub (notionally described as the “Grand Trunk Community Hub” to reflect the City’s rich rail history) presents the opportunity to create a multi-use facility that will address a number of the municipality’s purposes and Stratford’s needs. Amenities and spaces expected to be integrated into the Hub include:

- A new active adults facility, featuring recreational and social programming as well as essential independent living services for the area's growing population of seniors;
- A new top-tier YMCA facility that would serve local families with recreational, cultural, community, and child-enrichment services. This would replace the current facility that is nearly 50 years old and would allow for the creation of 50 new daycare spaces and two new indoor pools;
- A new Student Life Centre that would support the University of Waterloo Stratford Campus;
- A new public library maker-space; and
- New additional facilities for public and community events.

It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive or confirmed, as the Hub is in the early concept stages.

E) Preferred Location of the Community Hub

Several sites have been considered for the location of the Community Hub. Currently, the Cooper Block has been identified as a preferred location for a multi-faceted community hub for the following reasons:

- Location:
 - The Cooper Block is located on the southern boundary of the downtown core;
 - The Cooper Block is easily accessible and is located on current transit routes and offers opportunities to create well-planned, mixed-use development with pedestrian and cycling links between the downtown core to the north and residential areas to the south;
 - A portion of the Cooper Block was expropriated by the City in 2009, expressly for municipal purposes, including to facilitate the establishment of a University of Waterloo campus and ancillary / complementary uses;
 - The University of Waterloo Stratford Campus is currently located on a portion of the site and the integration of a Student Life Centre and possibly a new student residence as part of / in conjunction with the Hub is ideal. The University shares an interest in advancing an overall plan for the Cooper Block which will guide the eventual campus expansion. A letter from the President of the University of Waterloo dated March 27, 2017 is

attached, and describes the University's interest in participating in the master plan process and the inclusion of a student life centre in the Community Hub.

- Opportunity: The transformation of this site has been a long standing goal. The development of the Hub on this site can be a catalyst for the redevelopment of the entire Cooper Block, including expansion and integration of the University of Waterloo's presence across the Cooper Block;
- Readiness: The City of Stratford has already committed substantial resources to this site in terms of property acquisition, consultation, remediation, development and structural studies, and zoning to bring it to the "shovel-ready" state. The City is undertaking final environmental due diligence over 2017;
- Heritage:
 - In 2015, Ventin Group Architects outlined scenarios for the adaptive reuse of the building on the Cooper Block. The creation of a Community Hub provides a potential use for the existing building or a portion thereof.
 - Utilizing the Cooper Building for a new Grand Trunk Community Hub could create one of the most impressive municipal / public spaces in Ontario.

F) Technical Review

The City has completed an initial technical review, examining such matters as Official Plan designation, zoning by-law regulations, and environmental conditions. Urban Strategies Inc. has been retained to identify the potential location of the Community Hub on the Cooper Block and to integrate it into a larger conceptual plan for the longer term full development of the entire Block. N. Barry Lyon Consultants and CB Richard Ellis have also been retained to assess initial market interest in the Hub proposal. Representatives of the University of Waterloo and the YMCA have been consulted to consider how their respective interests could be accommodated, but at a conceptual level only at this stage.

Analysis: In order to advance the establishment of a master plan for the Cooper Block, a comprehensive and flexible public consultation process is proposed for 2017. The proposed process was designed after reviewing municipal best practices, as well as other less traditional approaches to create a proposed consultation strategy, described below.

A) Purpose

The process as proposed is designed to create different opportunities for focused and constructive public participation, to respond to and build upon the technical review work, and to give residents the freedom and flexibility to choose when and how they provide feedback. This includes accommodating the personal preferences and schedules of interested individuals to allow for comments to be received remotely (e.g. from homes and businesses) or in person. Staff would be available as a resource throughout the consultation process.

The proposed public consultation process is intended to fulfill the following objectives:

1. Inform:

- To notify the public and community stakeholders of the of the Cooper Block redevelopment and Community Hub proposal;
- To expedite an understanding of the project, options, solutions and decisions; and
- To prepare stakeholders for other forms of engagement.

2. Consult:

To obtain public feedback regarding priorities and decisions related to the Community Hub and Cooper Block master plan / redevelopment proposal.

3. Involve:

To work directly with key stakeholders to ensure that their needs, goals, and concerns are understood and considered throughout this process.

B) Proposed Next Steps

The proposed framework for the public engagement process is as follows:

1. Facilitator

Retaining a facilitator would ensure that the public consultation process runs smoothly. Urban Strategies is able to facilitate this process, as they have extensive experience with municipal public consultation work and community project designs, and were engaged to undertake the technical review.

2. Kick-Off Council Presentation

Urban Strategies would present the initial concept to Council and introduce the consultation program.

3. First Public Open House

The City would host a first public open house to present the conceptual vision for the Community Hub and Cooper Block, answer questions, and hear initial feedback. The Open House would be organized as a drop-in session, with a brief presentation by Urban Strategies at the outset followed by opportunities to ask individual questions, and to leave feedback on comment boards. Interactive feedback opportunities would also be available, such as drawing alternative visions for the development of the Cooper Block. The University of Waterloo Stratford is a preferred location for the open house. The open house may be held on a Saturday to better accommodate weekday schedules.

4. Online Feedback

Concurrently with the public open house, the City would post project information, conceptual drawings, and a list of Frequently Asked Questions on the City's website and through social media. Public feedback would be invited online through a virtual comment board and via the City's mobile app. The virtual comment board could be available for viewing on the City's website.

5. Comment Cards

Printed comment cards would also be made available at municipal service desks, community centers, and the YMCA so that hand-written feedback can also be accepted. Residents would be able to fill out comment cards and drop them off at any municipal service desk or through the City Hall back door mail slot after hours. Droboxes would also be placed around the City for convenience.

6. Talking Wall

A large board could be created and placed at the Cooper Block. This could be a plywood chalk board, a version of which is shown in the picture below. People could be encouraged to write their vision for the future of the site on this board.



7. Kitchen Table Meeting Kits

The City would offer “Kitchen Table Meeting Kits” that contain group activities to generate feedback and ideas for the future of the Cooper Block and the Community Hub. These activities can be conducted at home, in community groups, classrooms, or any constructive group setting. Two different kitchen table kits would be created; one for children and one for youth to seniors. Kits would be available for pick up at municipal service desks, or could be downloaded from the City’s website and printed at home. Participants would record their results and ideas and return them to the City for analysis, and could again use the City Hall mail slot after hours. Dropboxes could also be placed around the City for convenience. Limited staff resources could be made available to facilitate these sessions as well.

8. Stakeholder Engagement

Urban Strategies would hold stakeholder engagement sessions with interested groups to ensure their vision for the Hub and the redevelopment of the Cooper Block are understood and considered.

9. Second Public Open House

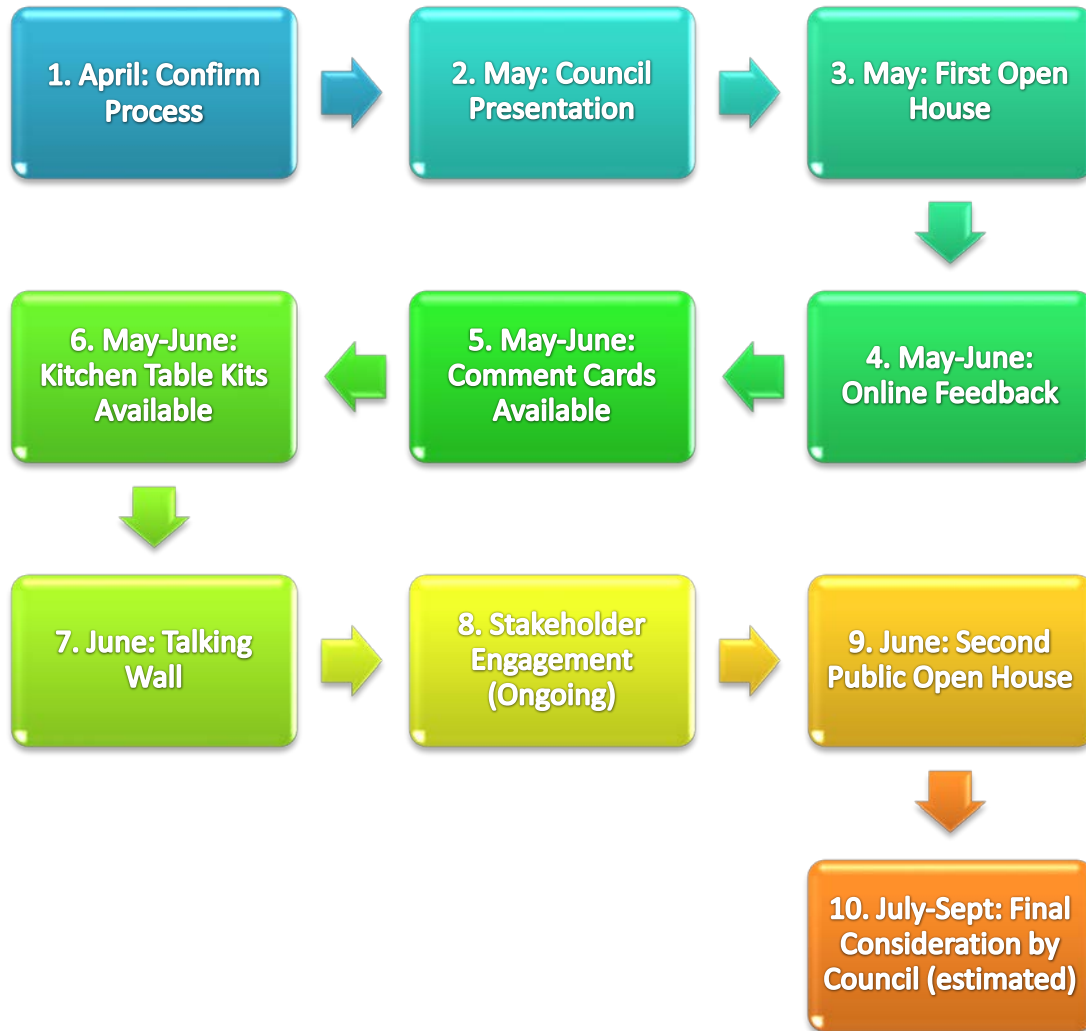
A refined Cooper Block Redevelopment and Community Hub conceptual plan would be presented at a second public open house. The consulting team would answer questions and hear public feedback. A flexible master plan would be presented as well. The University of Waterloo Stratford again is a preferred location for the open house. The open house may again be held on a Saturday to better accommodate weekday schedules.

10. Presentation to Council (Deliverables)

The consultants would provide the following to Council:

- Summary of public and stakeholder input;
- Potential revisions/alternatives to the original concept plan for the Cooper Block;
- Detailed recommendations relative to the Grand Trunk Community Hub; and
- A recommended flexible master plan to guide Stratford City Council relative to future development opportunities on the Cooper Block.

Summary of Recommended Phases and Timelines:



Financial Impact: It is important to note that the Grand Trunk Community Hub project cannot proceed without Federal and Provincial investment. Proposals for the Community Hub have been submitted to the Provincial and Federal governments, specifically seeking an investment of \$10 million from the Government of Ontario and \$10 million from the Government of Canada. The City would match this investment with \$10 million, for a total investment of \$30 million from three levels of government. The timing of senior government decisions is unknown at this time.

The cost to retain Urban Strategies to conduct the Community Hub public consultation process would not exceed \$60,000 plus applicable taxes. Procurement would occur in conformity with the City’s purchasing policies.

Staff Recommendation: That Stratford City Council endorse the proposed comprehensive public consultation process for the Cooper Block, as described in this report.

Rob Horne

Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer



Stephanie Potter, Policy & Research Associate

March 27, 2017

City of Stratford
1 Wellington Street
PO Box 818
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Attn: Mayor Dan Mathieson

Re: University of Waterloo, Stratford Campus
Advancing Our Shared Interests

Dear Dan:

Further to my letter of January 16th, 2017, I am writing to provide a brief progress report relative to the University of Waterloo, Stratford Campus and our shared interests.

First, let me congratulate you and City Council on taking the initiative to build a new community hub. With the “Cooper Site” as a preferred location, we have already and continue to express our interest in incorporating a new student life centre into the hub. To that end, I also continue to support your efforts to secure senior government funding.

Given the need to plan for this hub, and the significant growth in our Digital Media Degree Programs (undergraduate and graduate), we appreciate the need to begin looking at how the entire Cooper block can ultimately be developed. With a sizable property and significant development potential, I appreciate that the entire block must be well planned, particularly in terms of buildings, functionality and overall excellence in design. In short, we must all work toward the redevelopment of this block in a way that we can all be proud of.

It is my understanding that you will begin a community consultation process in the near future to plan the Cooper site. The University of Waterloo would support this initiative and would be interested in being an active participant. As you know, we also need to advance planning for the Stratford Campus, and a collaborative exercise would provide a useful forum to share ideas and to ultimately develop a well-conceived master plan.

I look forward to discussing the details of this valuable initiative further with you, and to beginning the process.

Yours truly,



Feridun Hamdullahpur
President and Vice-Chancellor

