

Report to Council



Date: 11/23/2015
File: 1120-21-010
To: City Manager
From: J. Säufferer, Manager, Real Estate Services
Subject: Public Place Making Initiative - Bernard Ave Laneway
Report Prepared by: B. Walker, Property Officer II

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the Report from the Manager, Real Estate Services dated November 23, 2015, with respect to the benefits of public placemaking in the City of Kelowna;

AND THAT Council directs staff to explore the viability and potential for a public placemaking initiative for the Bernard Avenue laneway, across from the sails sculpture and adjacent to 229 Bernard Avenue and report back to Council.

Purpose:

To advise Council of the benefits of public place making and obtain Council support to explore a public placemaking initiative with respect to the vacant Bernard Avenue laneway adjacent to 229 Bernard Avenue.

Project Background:

Public Placemaking

Public place making has been defined as “a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value”¹. In this context, targets of public placemaking initiatives often include underutilized public spaces (such as laneways and alleys), as these provide an ideal environment to capture and foster the needs, culture and character of the local community in a manner that maximizes impacts and minimizes costs. Successful public placemaking projects create a flexible and fully programmable environment that has the ability to accomplish a variety of events and functions. These spaces are often interchangeable to accommodate a variety of activities such as:

- Simple passive urban pocket parks or plazas; or,
- An entertaining space filled with activities ranging from food vendors, festival sites, live performances, movie screenings, and even special diner events.

¹ Project For Public Spaces; “What is Placemaking”; www.pps.org

Key examples of revitalized public laneway projects include the following:

- 2013 Laneway Project - Kelowna, British Columbia
- The Laneway Project - Toronto, Ontario
- Kimber Lane - Sydney, Australia
- Camberwell Laneway - Boroondara, Australia
- Hidden Laneway Project - Melbourne, Australia
- Green Alley Program - Chicago, United States

The Bernard Avenue Laneway

The Bernard Avenue laneway is a prominent, yet underutilized public space in the heart of the downtown located at the west end of Bernard Avenue, directly across from the Sails sculpture. The laneway runs north to south, connecting Bernard Avenue to Lawrence Avenue. As such, it serves a number of practical purposes such as:

- a utility corridor for municipal utilities;
- a service corridor for deliveries and waste management for surrounding businesses; and,
- a key access corridor connecting pedestrians between Leon Avenue, Lawrence Avenue and Bernard Avenue.

The location of the laneway, including photos of its current condition, are attached as Schedule “A”.

History of “The Laneway Project”

In August 2013, a temporary parkette titled “The Laneway Project” was installed along the Bernard Avenue laneway. The project’s intent was to reinvent a small piece of unused land that had long been ignored, overlooked and abandoned, and turn it into a vibrant and animated space for expanded social opportunity. The installation was the result of a collaboration of minds that included local landscape architects, architects, artists, industrial designers, fabricators, and, most importantly the public.

Team members took a nontraditional approach to the public laneway installation known as “Tactical Urbanism” (i.e. a “do it yourself” intervention on the urban environment) and in doing so they were able to construct the project so that it aligned with the 2013 Summer Block Party (run by the Downtown Kelowna Association). As a result of this installation, over 200 members of the public signed a petition in support of a permanent pedestrian laneway.

Photos from the Laneway Project are attached as Schedule “B”.

Given the prominent location of the Bernard Avenue laneway, its underutilized potential, and the previous success and public support experienced in the 2013 “Laneway Project”, the Bernard Avenue laneway appears to be an ideal target for a more permanent public placemaking initiative.

Advantages of a more permanent place making project

A more permanent place making project for the Bernard Avenue laneway would be expected to include the following benefits and opportunities for the downtown:

- create a blueprint and act as a catalyst for the development of other downtown laneways in the future;
- build and support the local economy;
- create improved safety and accessibility for pedestrians using the laneway;
- create a cost effective distinct urban public park; and,
- promote strong community involvement and a diverse user group.

Items that would need to be coordinated in order to implement a successful placemaking project include the following:

- cooperation from neighbouring business, community groups and land owners to ensure a unified vision and support for the initiative; and,
- working with waste management, utilities and the fire department to ensure municipal needs are met.

Moving Forward

With Council endorsement, the City would look to spearhead a project team to develop a placemaking initiative for the Bernard Avenue laneway in a way that reflects the local community's needs, culture and character. This would be best approached through a collaborative and cooperative process that would include key stakeholders such as the Downtown Kelowna Association, the original laneway project team, local contractors, local businesses and, most importantly, the citizens who want to directly impact the way their neighbourhood looks, feels and functions. A placemaking analysis for the Bernard Avenue laneway would include a review of the following key components:

- the advantages and disadvantages of various levels of programming and animation;
- the projected construction costs associated with the various options;
- the advantages and disadvantages of the various land tenure possibilities associated with animating the laneway (e.g. leasing the land, selling a portion of the land, etc);
- potential revenue opportunities for the space (e.g. activity concession, food and beverage concession, etc); and,
- the extent to which the various options resonate with the local community, stakeholders, and the public.

Following a comprehensive review of placemaking alternatives based on the principles above, Staff would return to Council at a future time with a recommendation for a specific placemaking initiative. This recommendation will include a description of the proposed project, costs, revenue opportunities, land use impacts, community/stakeholder support, and any other relevant details.

Internal Circulation:

Manager, Urban Planning
Manager, Development Engineering
Manager, Transportation & Mobility
Manager, Long Range Policy Planning
Manager, Grants & Partnerships
Manager, Cultural Services
Divisional Director, Active Living & Culture

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:
Legal/Statutory Authority:
Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:
Existing Policy:
Personnel Implications:
External Agency/Public Comments:
Communications Comments:
Alternate Recommendation:

Submitted by: J. Säufferer, Manager, Real Estate Services

Approved for inclusion: D. Edstrom, Director, Real Estate

Attachments: 1. Schedule "A" - Map and photos for Laneway
2. Schedule "B" - Photos from the "Laneway Project"
3. PowerPoint Presentation

cc: T. Barton, Manager, Urban Planning
S. Muenz, Manager, Development Engineering
M. Hasan, Manager, Transportation & Mobility
J. Moore, Long Range Policy Planning
L. Gunn, Manager, Grants & Partnerships
S. Kochan, Manager, Cultural Services
J. Gabriel, Divisional Director, Active Living & Culture