
REPORT TITLE: Evaluation of the Welcoming Streets Pilot Program

FROM: Sean Baird, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That a one-time grant in the amount of up to \$150,000 be approved to extend the Welcoming Streets Pilot Program until December 31, 2023, funded from within the approved 2023 Housing Support operating budget; and**
- 2. That the Grant Agreement between The Regional Municipality of Peel and The Corporation of The City of Brampton for the Welcoming Streets Pilot Program be amended to extend the term for up to an additional twelve months; and**
- 3. That the Director of Housing Services be delegated authority to execute such agreements and ancillary documents on business terms satisfactory to the Commissioner of Human Services and on legal terms satisfactory to the Regional Solicitor, as may be necessary to extend the Grant Agreement with The Corporation of The City of Brampton.**

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- In June 2021, Regional Council approved a one-time payment of \$250,000 to the City of Brampton for the implementation of a one-year pilot program in downtown Brampton called Welcoming Streets (Council Resolution 2021-608).
- The Welcoming Streets pilot program was co-designed through the fall of 2021 and launched in January 2022.
- The evaluation revealed Welcoming Streets had a positive impact in downtown Brampton.
- There are opportunities to reduce duplication between Welcoming Streets and the Regional Outreach program.
- As such, staff recommend the Welcoming Streets pilot program conclude by December 31, 2023 and the services delivered through the Welcoming Streets pilot be delivered on an ongoing basis through a redesigned Regional Outreach program that is place-based.
- Staff also recommend that the re-designed Regional Outreach Program continue to serve the entire region with the addition of four place-based teams in downtown Brampton (which will extend to the Queen/Kennedy area), as well as Malton, Cooksville and along the lakeshore in Mississauga.
- It is recommended that Council consider and approve these proposed enhancements to the outreach program through a comprehensive service level report coming to Council in May 2023.
- At this time, staff is seeking Council approval to provide one-time funding to the City of Brampton of up to \$150,000 from within the 2023 Housing Support operating budget, with no net impact. This will extend the existing pilot in downtown Brampton until the end of December 2023 and avoid a disruption in service while broader program changes are contemplated.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

On November 26, 2020, through Resolution 2020-991, Council directed staff to investigate the feasibility of a grant program that would support business owners in downtown Brampton. Based on the feasibility study, staff recommended that a “Welcoming Streets” pilot program be created in response to Council’s motion.

Through the report, “Creating A Welcoming Streets Pilot Program for Brampton”, on June 10, 2021, Regional Council directed the Region to issue a one-time grant of \$250,000 to the City of Brampton to implement a one-year Welcoming Streets pilot program.

In collaboration with the City of Brampton, and with the support of the Downtown Brampton BIA, Peel Regional Police, the Canadian Mental Health Association/Peel Branch (CMHA), Regeneration, and Regional staff representing Housing Services, Health Services, and Waste Management, the Welcoming Streets pilot program was co-designed through the fall of 2021 and implemented in January 2022. Four Welcoming Streets staff, known as “Leaders”, were hired on part-time contracts through the City of Brampton, reporting to the City’s Downtown Coordinator. Throughout the pilot period, Regional and City of Brampton staff monitored program activities and regularly sought feedback from the program’s design table.

This report provides Council with the results of an evaluation of the Welcoming Streets pilot program and recommendations for next steps.

2. Findings

a) Evaluation and Feedback

i) Welcoming Streets Leaders

Welcoming Streets Leaders collected statistics about their daily activities, including interactions with various stakeholders. Between January 24, 2022, to January 20, 2023, the Welcoming Streets program had:

- 701 interactions with businesses (includes check-ins during daily walkabouts and calls for assistance)
- 301 interactions with vulnerable individuals
- Made 143 referrals for vulnerable individuals (e.g., referrals to central intake, Housing Services, Regeneration, shelters)

ii) Peel Regional Police

Staff conducted an analysis of Peel Regional Police data over a 10-week period from July-September 2022 to estimate the effects of the Welcoming Streets program on Peel Regional Police outreach calls. The analysis revealed that following a spike in Welcoming Streets calls, there was a highly significant drop in outreach calls to Peel Regional Police the following week (>95 per cent confidence).

iii) Outreach Program

The pilot program revealed considerable overlap in responsibilities between the Welcoming Streets leader position and existing outreach workers. The pilot also

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demonstrated that dedicated place-based teams improved response times for businesses and others requesting assistance and helped build trusting relationships.

iv) Survey – Downtown Brampton Business Improvement Association (BIA), business owners and employees, residents, others

Regional staff administered a survey to solicit feedback and help inform recommendations. A total of 130 responses were received, primarily from business owners and employees.

The main challenge in downtown Brampton as reported by 45 per cent of respondents was “individuals who appear to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol and/or displaying aggressive behaviour”, followed by “individuals who appear to be loitering and/or soliciting”, and “community safety” (e.g., property damage, theft, lack of crime prevention resources).

More than half of survey respondents (57 per cent) were aware of Welcoming Streets, however only 36 per cent accessed services offered by the program. The top 3 services were:

1. De-escalation of an individual on business premises;
2. Connecting street involved individual with Welcoming Streets staff; and,
3. Assistance with individuals sleeping or loitering on premises.

Of those who accessed Welcoming Streets, most indicated they had done so once or twice during the pilot. Overall, 60 per cent of respondents rated their satisfaction with Welcoming Streets. Of these respondents, 51 per cent were very satisfied or satisfied, 42 per cent were neutral, and 5 per cent were not satisfied. Satisfaction with the program was largely driven by the fact that the Welcoming Streets staff were able to respond to requests for assistance within 30 minutes.

b) Program Outcomes

Staff reviewed the pilot data to assess how Welcoming Streets met program outcomes.

Program Outcomes	How Met?
More timely responses to businesses' request for assistance with loitering individuals	Met
Enhanced communication and collaboration among stakeholders	Met
Improvements in cleanliness as well as perceptions of community safety and well-being	Somewhat met
More options to resolve issues outside of police involvement and security responses	Met
Improved support to vulnerable populations in accessing programs and services to improve their outcomes	Somewhat met
Business owners have an increased awareness of supports available through the Welcoming Streets Program	Somewhat met
Vulnerable individuals have an increased awareness of supports available through the Welcoming Streets Program	Somewhat met

Please refer to Appendix I for more information about how program outcomes were achieved and tracked. Appendix II provides information about the referrals completed by the Welcoming Streets Leaders.

3. Recommended Next Steps

Evaluation of the Welcoming Streets Pilot Program

Based on the evaluation results and heat maps of homelessness hotspots, produced by CMHA, the current provider of the outreach program (see Appendix III), staff recommend that the services delivered through the Welcoming Streets pilot be delivered on an ongoing basis through a redesigned Regional Outreach program that is place-based. More specifically, staff recommend:

- The current pilot and its contract positions continue until for up to nine months to December 31, 2023.
- The services provided by the Welcoming Streets pilot be delivered on an ongoing basis through a re-designed place-based Regional Outreach Program.
- That the re-designed Regional Outreach Program continue to serve the entire Region, with the addition of four place-based teams in downtown Brampton (which will extend to the Queen/Kennedy area), as well as Malton, Cooksville and along the lakeshore in Mississauga.
- The redesigned place-based outreach program include formal mechanisms to collaborate with existing local municipal staff who support businesses and other stakeholders, e.g., City of Brampton's Downtown Coordinator.

Preliminary annual cost estimates for the enhanced place-based outreach program are included in the table below. The estimates are subject to further analysis as the outreach program is redesigned.

Cost for 1 Team	Cost per Team (2 total teams)	Cost per Team (3 total teams)	Cost per Team (4 total teams)	TOTAL (4 teams)
Up to \$2.01M	Up to \$1.68M	Up to \$1.19M	Up to \$1.19M	Up to \$6.12M

The table below provides a summary of existing and proposed outreach services and their costs. The enhanced place-based outreach program is estimated to add up to \$3.65 million to the existing outreach budget of \$2.47 million.

	Place-based teams	Mobile teams	# of staff ¹ (FTE)	Evenings and weekend shifts	Services	Cost ²
Existing Outreach	No	Yes	16 ³	Yes	supplies, referrals, case management	\$2.47M (actual)
Enhanced Outreach	Yes (4)	Yes	45 ⁴	Yes	supplies, referrals, case management	\$6.12M (estimate)
Welcoming Streets pilot	Yes (1)	No	2	No	referrals	\$250K

¹ # of staff includes: outreach workers and 24-7 street helpline. They work 12-hour shifts, as will the new place-based outreach teams. Does not include relief staff.

² Costs are inclusive of staffing, management, administration, and other program related costs.

³ An average of 8 staff per mobile team.

⁴ An average of 11 staff per place-based team.

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In May 2023, Regional staff are bringing several affordable housing and homelessness service level recommendations to Council in one comprehensive report. Staff recommend that Council consider and approve the proposed enhancements to the outreach program through the May report, to allow Council to consider the recommendations within a broader set of recommended system changes.

Through this report, staff is seeking Council approval to provide one-time funding of up to \$150,000 to extend the existing pilot program in downtown Brampton up to December 31, 2023. This will avoid a disruption in service in downtown Brampton while broader program changes are contemplated.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

The Welcoming Streets pilot program addressed a gap in service for businesses in downtown Brampton. This report recommends concluding the pilot, while continuing the services through an enhanced place-based Regional Outreach Program. This will ensure the Region avoids duplication in service, while enhancing service levels for homelessness and maintaining the responsive service to businesses that occurred through the Welcoming Streets pilot.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To extend the Welcoming Streets pilot until the end of December 2023 and to ensure no disruption to existing services, the Region will provide a one-time grant in the amount of up to \$150,000 that will be funded from within the approved 2023 Housing Support operating budget.

The financial implications for the re-designed place-based outreach program, should the enhanced program be approved by Council, will be addressed in the 2024 budget.

CONCLUSION

This report provides Council with the evaluation of the Welcoming Streets pilot program.

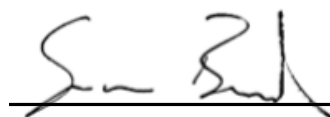
Staff recommend that the services delivered through the Welcoming Streets pilot be delivered on an ongoing basis through a redesigned Regional Outreach program that is place-based. This will enhance service levels for homelessness and maintain the responsive service to businesses.

APPENDICES

Appendix I – Program Outcomes

Appendix II – Program Referrals

Appendix III – Hot Spot and Encampment Activity, Region of Peel, 2022



Sean Baird, Commissioner of Human Services

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