

REQUEST FOR DECISION

Subject: Bear Street Construction Communications



Presented to: Council

Date: August 12, 2019

Submitted by: Jason Darrah, Director
Communications & Marketing

Agenda #: 8.1

RECOMMENDATION

That council direct administration to consult with Bear Street property owners and business managers on possible tactics for communications and marketing leading up to the reconstruction of the street, during the period of time the street is under reconstruction and opening of the street after the project is complete, to assist with development of a request during Service Review.

BACKGROUND

Reason for Report

On April 23, 2019, council provided administration direction on proceeding in 2020 with the reconstruction and renewal of Bear Street to enhance pedestrian-friendly features, amenities and infrastructure. The infrastructure improvements and shared street design aims to improve the visitor/resident experience and enhance the economic potential to businesses on the thoroughfare.

Summary of Issue

The Town of Banff is renewing the infrastructure of Bear Street into a more pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare. The project aims to enhance the economic potential of Bear Street, by improving the surface features to a shared streetscape for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. Transforming vehicle-centric streets into more walkable roads has been proven to create economic gains in many municipalities, especially on streets with retail, food and beverage services, arts and culture, and hospitality related businesses.

In 2020, the project will renew the road, improve surface drainage and underground utilities, remove curbs and enhance streetscapes of Bear Street to the Banff Refreshing standards and specifications. This vibrant downtown block of retail, restaurants, galleries and services attract visitors and residents year-round.

The construction impact will be significant, but access to businesses, for visitors and residents, will be maintained. In addition to the infrastructure investments, administration recommends investing communications strategies to keep residents, businesses and visitors informed about the project, and marketing to attract customers to the street's important businesses and services.

The Banff Refreshing (Banff Avenue) project in 2007 is similar in construction impact to this Bear Street project. In addition, the Bear Street project extends the design standards of Banff Refreshing. Therefore, administration has drafted communications tactics for Bear Street construction based on the successful communications and marketing strategy used for Banff Refreshing, proportionate to the smaller scope and impact of the Bear Street project.

Administration intends to bring a communications and marketing plan to council for consideration during Service Review. Administration seeks council direction on reviewing draft communications tactics with the stakeholders most affected by the project: businesses and residents on Bear Street.

This consultation will help administration better understand local knowledge and ideas from the Bear Street stakeholders, before developing cost estimates for communications options.

Response Options

- 1) Council directs administration to seek feedback on the draft communications plan from Bear Street business tenants and property owners.
- 2) Council does not direct administration to consult Bear Street businesses or prepare a report for Service Review.

IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

Budget

A report presented to council during service review will identify costs for consideration for the 2020 Operating Budget. Order of magnitude cost estimates are included in the attached tactics overview.

Town of Banff Incorporation Agreement

The municipality was incorporated to serve, as its primary function, as a centre for visitors to Banff National Park and to provide such visitors with accommodation and other goods and services.

Banff Community Plan

- Provide infrastructure that meets the future needs of residents and visitors.
- Introduce initiatives to reduce the demands for infrastructure expansion.
- Create memorable national park experiences.
- Provide a transportation system that encourages and complements pedestrian movement and cycling.
- Improve the movement and delivery of goods by specifically recognizing loading areas, access maneuvers and timing.
- Provide a wayfinding system that makes finding Banff facilities, amenities and attractions easy.
- Increase opportunities for public art projects that are consistent with our sense of place.
- Ensure all new development and redevelopment incorporates the highest quality architecture, landscape architecture, environmental and urban design that is complimentary to its location and surrounding context.

ATTACHMENT

- Draft Communications and Marketing Options for 2020 Construction

Circulation date: August 2, 2019

Submitted By: Jason Darrah,
Director Communications & Marketing

Reviewed By: On original
Randall McKay, Interim Town Manager

Banff Refreshing – Bear Street

Draft Communications and Marketing Options for 2020 Construction

Communications Need

In 2020, the Town of Banff will renew the road, drainage systems, sidewalks, underground utilities and streetscapes of the 200 Block of Bear Street, a vibrant downtown block of retail, restaurants, galleries and services that attract visitors and residents year-round. The construction impact will be significant, but access to businesses will be maintained. The Town of Banff proposes communications strategies to keep residents, businesses and visitors informed about the project, and marketing to attract customers to the street's important businesses and services.

Background

The Town of Banff is a major Canadian tourist destination, with four million visitors annually, and about 9,000 residents who are required to work in Banff to be eligible to reside in the town. The municipality was incorporated as the service centre for visitors to the mountain community. Tourism is Banff's primary industry and a significant contributor to Alberta's economy. Based in Canada's first national park, Banff strives to be a model environmental community.

The Town of Banff is renewing the infrastructure of Bear Street into a more pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare. The project aims to improve the visitor/resident experience and enhance the economic potential of Bear Street, by improving pedestrian experiences in Banff. Transforming vehicle-centric streets into more walkable, shared streets has been proven to create economic gains in many municipalities, especially on streets with retail, food/beverage, arts/culture, and hospitality.

In 2007, the Town of Banff initiated the major **Banff Refreshing** project to renew the major infrastructure of two blocks of main street, Banff Avenue, in the heart of the shopping and tourism district. The primary reason for the project was to renew aging underground infrastructure, including water and sewer lines, as well as the road and sidewalks.

Capitalizing on the need to replace infrastructure, Banff Refreshing also implemented significant streetscape enhancements to improve the pedestrian experience, including wider sidewalks, more crosswalks, more places to sit, landscaping beds and all new lighting. The project implemented a consistent and appealing design standard of the Downtown Enhancement Concept Plan that complements Banff's inspiring natural environment, while creating greater capacity for visitation, through different seasons.

The 2007 construction project tore up two blocks of Banff Avenue during the height of tourism season, from March through October. With any major construction project, a negative impact on affected businesses is a significant risk. In 2007, the Town of Banff committed \$1 million for communications and marketing to maintain awareness of businesses and to inspire customer visits. This project was branded *Banff Refreshing* to demonstrate a commitment to positioning the project as an investment to celebrate, with an outcome of enhancing tourism and business prosperity.

The 2020 project to renew one block of Bear Street will have similar impact as the 2007 Banff Avenue project. This project will extend Banff Refreshing design standards. The Town proposes communications and marketing, commensurate with activities in 2007, to maintain business and visitation to Bear Street, and promote the benefits of the investment.

Audiences

- About 9,000 **residents** live in Banff. The Town of Banff's primary purpose is as a service centre for visitors, which requires providing a high standard of living for the residents who work in the resort community. Bear Street is often called the *residents' street* due to the cluster of professional services and specialized retail that serves locals. Residents must be aware of continued access to Bear Street tenants.
- **Owners and managers of the businesses** located on the 200 block of Bear Street. These businesses deserve support in maintaining customers during the Town's construction project. The Bear Street business owners and managers also require frequent and reliable information about the construction project and the efforts to assure customer access, as well as opportunities to review and provide input in day-to-day construction activities.
- **Banff visitors** total 10,000 to 40,000 each day. In summer, visitors look to experience the majestic mountain vistas and natural scenery, within the world-class urban comforts of the townsite. Visitors seek cultural attractions, hotels, retail stores, tourism services, and food and beverage establishments. Visitors must be actively attracted to the Bear Street businesses through the construction period.
- **Town of Banff staff and employees of partner organizations** require tools and techniques to help visitors and residents learn about the project and the vibrant retail, service and hospitality available on Bear Street.

Communication objectives:

- Maintain resident, business and stakeholder awareness about the Banff Refreshing Bear Street project, timelines and updates, and empower their communications to visitors
- Maintain Bear Street business and resident satisfaction with the Town project
- Facilitate opportunities for Bear Street business leaders to provide input on construction timing and process, recommend strategies to address unforeseen issues
- Employees, residents, business and stakeholders have an understanding of construction impacts, mitigation strategies and contingency plans
- Visitors understand construction is underway, and are aware of tenants are open for business and there are added attractions on Bear Street.

Marketing objectives:

- Visitors seek Bear Street businesses and attractions, maintaining similar level of business to pre-construction year
- Visitors move easily through the construction area
- Visitors have a positive experience, learn about street enhancements, and look forward to return to Banff's Bear Street once it is "refreshed"

Draft Strategies

Pre-Construction Phase

Pre-Survey of residents and businesses

- Gauge awareness about the project, primary concerns and feedback on communications plans

Bear Street Refreshing Communications Committee

- Establish a committee of Bear Street property owners and business leaders, along with representation from Banff & Lake Louise Tourism, and Town of Banff project manager.
- Committee will meet regularly about the project timeline and processes, compile concerns and rumors, address unforeseen issues, and disseminate facts and messages to improve accurate and timely information about the project to businesses, residents and customers.

Media Campaign

- Provide local news media with information and multimedia about the project, and key contacts for updates.
- Develop paid media campaign with information for residents and businesses about the project and establish a social media presence for updates.
- Establish a project website for multimedia, information and engagement, including a subscription based e-newsletter on the Banff Refreshing Bear Street project.
- Recruit engagement and e-newsletter subscription from key groups, including cyclists, residents who use Bear Street professional services, and Bear Street businesses' employees.

Banff Refreshing Bear Street Open House

- Host an information session over two days to provide residents and Banff businesses information and displays on the project, and identify key contacts and information resources.
- Plan follow-up small-group meetings with key stakeholder groups.
- Maintain displays after sessions in Town Hall or public space adjacent Bear Street

Banff Refreshing Bear Street Signs, Wayfinding and Streetscape Campaign

- Begin development of hoarding scrim (fence wrap) reflecting the natural environment for moveable construction fencing (see construction phase for options).
- Plan moveable pathway system for maintaining customer access to businesses that also attract visitors.
- Plan signage system for informing customers about all businesses on Bear Street and activities/attractions.
- Identify options for streetscape attractions such as Bison/Bear statue, selfie stations, and participatory pathways.

Banff Refreshing Bear Street Business Liaison

- Designate/Employ a representative for the Town and construction firm (part-time in pre-construction phase) as the main point of contact to work with Bear Street businesses and residents about the project.

Construction Phase

Info Updates on Banff Refreshing Bear Street project

- Weekly website and e-newsletter updates during construction
- Monthly paid ad in local media (print/radio)
- Monthly poster updates at display locations in town
- Monthly updates to Town and Partner employees
- Daily web-based construction cameras will record construction progress and monitor pedestrian traffic flows and issues

Bear Street Refreshing Communications Committee

- Regular meetings on construction updates, identify concerns, share mitigation ideas and to disseminate messages to businesses and customers.

Bear Street Refreshing Info Sessions

- Every two months public open houses are to be held for active presentation of project updates and to help residents and employees understand key aspects of the project.
- Displays identify project purpose, timeline and design.
- Construction crews are invited to meet project leaders and businesses in two sessions.

Banff Refreshing Bear Street Business Liaison

- Full-time representative during summer season provides primary contact for Bear Street business leaders and employees, and residents to address questions and concerns and provide liaison with construction firm and Town leaders.

Bear Street Refreshing Ambassadors

- Spring, summer and fall variable staffing representing the project on Bear Street. About six individuals are hired and provided scripting and branded apparel to roam the area and staff Welcome to Bear Street kiosks.
- Ambassadors receive customer service and tourism-related training, as well as engagement advice. Ambassadors provide in-person welcome and encouragement to visit destinations on Bear Street, answer project questions, and compile concerns for the communications committee to address.
- Host a workshop or construction crews to provide information points and visitor-services tips, as well as branded stickers for hard hats

Bear Street Refreshing Hoarding, Signs, Art, Wayfinding and Streetscape Campaign

- Deploy hoarding scrim reflecting the natural environment for moveable construction fencing. Depictions could include bear photos and bear facts, heritage images of Bear Street through decades of change, and/or bear safety information.
- Scrim would include peep-holes allow passersby to see construction activity, and fence height would be limited to ensure sightlines of buildings on opposite sides of the street and mountain vistas.
- Add signage on construction fences for each business.
- Deploy moveable pathway system/boardwalk for maintaining customer access to businesses.
- Deploy signage system for informing customers about all businesses on Bear Street and activities/attractions.

- Implement Bear Street attractions such as moveable life-size bear statue, bear plywood cutouts with holes for visitors to position family members for photos, selfie stations, and/or locally commissioned bear sculptures to create a cultural attraction.
- Nighttime static projections on buildings showing bears.

Bear Street Refreshing Media Campaign

- Update project website for multimedia, information, business profiles and activities, supported by a subscription based e-newsletter for residents, businesses and stakeholder.
- Provide local news media with milestone announcements and multimedia about the project, and key contacts for updates.
- Implement paid media/social media campaign with information for visitors before arriving in Banff, and for in-market customers about business profiles and scheduled activities.
- Activate branded social media presence to respond to inquiries and provide accurate information about the project and business opportunities.

Bear Street Refreshing collateral material

- Develop customized posters and table tent-cards for Bear Street businesses, and “sister” businesses elsewhere in Banff.
- Provide content for Banff businesses and agencies to use in e-newsletters and websites.
- Disseminate resident postcards promoting the project website and e-newsletter.

On-street activities

- Launch block party with participating businesses, construction crews, residents and visitors.
- Convert Welcome to Bear Street kiosks into periodic mini-stages for street performers in nodes to attract visitors from Wolf and Caribou streets during July and August.
- Bear Street businesses hand out limited-edition Bear Street Refreshing branded items in phases, such as hat, T-shirt, toque, mini bear cutout to first 5,000 people in August and September.
- Install and host bear-themed selfie zones. Invite visitors to share photos from specific locations on Instagram, with special hashtag, to create a crowd-sourced time-lapse of development.
- Promote giveaway days for Bear Street business products or merchandise.

Off-site support and promotions

- Five parking and traffic ambassadors provide wayfinding from the primary parking lots to access Bear Street, and support traffic flow at key locations on Lynx St., Buffalo St. and Railway Ave. on weekends during late June, July and August.
- Bear Street Refreshing Ambassadors provide information to pedestrians on Banff Avenue directing visitors to Bear Street.
- Resident shuttle service to provide residents with shuttle from their home or other Banff location to Bear Street professional service during peak summer season. Service would allow six free shuttles per person for the year.
- 10 wayfinding and information signs in key parking locations direct visitors and residents to Bear Street.
- Bear paw prints on Banff Ave intersections and down Wolf and Caribou streets guide visitors to Bear Street.

Construction survey and data

- A mid-point survey will gauge Bear Street business and resident satisfaction with the project and identify concerns or suggestions.
- Pedestrian counters on Bear Street will be monitored for weekly traffic.

Wrap-up activity

- A post-event survey will measure satisfaction with the project and compile lessons learned.
- A Bear Street Refreshed event will mark the fully opened street, with representation to include elected officials, businesses and construction crews. This event would occur after major street and sidewalk obstructions and fencing are removed, but may occur before implementation of all street furniture and landscaping.

Budget estimate

Total: \$526,400

Includes:

- \$240,000 – design and implementation of:
 - 3 welcome / performance kiosks
 - Skrim/fence wrap
 - Moveable directional pathways
 - Posters, tent cards, collateral material images, and business signs
 - Commemorative Bear Street Refreshing caps
 - Selfie stations photo opportunities
 - Street and wayfinding signs
 - Paid advertising
- \$60,000 – street performers
- \$150,000 – ambassadors for welcome and parking/traffic
- \$70,000 – Liaison contract
- \$4,000 – information sessions and displays
- \$2,400 – fiberglass bison or bear