

## Inclusion Advisory Committee Meeting

March 23, 2021

### Re-Imagine Churchill Square Concept Plan

#### SYNOPSIS

Anna Snook, a transportation system engineer with the City, updated the Committee on the visioning/concept plan exercise conducted. Some of the main needs outlined were wider sidewalks, enhanced lighting, conveniently placed bus stops, space needs to be more pedestrian oriented, more appealing landscaping, and more outdoor amenities. The proposal presented today is an attempt to incorporate these needs in the context of challenges with existing infrastructure and grading. A concept plan is not a detailed design but rather a much higher level look at a space so the process is still at the preliminary stage. As such, specific amenities/objects/structures are not illustrated in great depth on the plan as it is more of a blocking exercise to ascertain what could fit where, all of which will require Council's approval prior to going through a detailed design phase. In terms of feedback from the IAC, staff requested direction on the layout of accessible spaces for parking, noting that the Province's Service NL will have final authorization in this regard. Anna advised that feedback is required in time for her report to Council next week.

#### Other noteworthy points raised:

- transit stops require more strategic placement and frequency to ensure accessibility is accommodated;
- No objections were outlined in relation to the proposed layby area for public transit, as it was noted that it is always a safety challenge in busy areas to let people on and off GoBus/Metrobus.
- Assurance that sidewalks are kept clear to accommodate public transit passengers in particular. Staff advised that maintenance considerations must be incorporated within the plan. At present, Churchill Square is snow cleared by a private contractor. The businesses in the area have been consulted on the approximate cost to accommodate maintenance within the proposed plan.
- Reference was made to the prevalence of parking spaces in Churchill Square and how these may coexist with pedestrian use/access, i.e. community assembly, passive recreational opportunities, places for people to sit and meet, access to wifi. Staff advised that a total of 26 fewer parking spaces is proposed in the design. Though it is not obvious in the plan, the idea is provide lots of space for people to gather in front of businesses and sidewalk areas will be wider than the norm.
- Reference was made to the practical use by pedestrians given the challenges with weather during certain times of the year and what consideration has been given to shelters. Any space that is created should be usable space and not simply for the creation of space. Staff was asked to address the pedestrian

aspect more positively and with more geometry. Staff advised that amenities such as wind screening would happen at the detailed design stage. When it comes to pedestrian movements, the provision of connections are important.

- There is a requirement that 6% of the total number of parking spaces must be accessible. The plan currently shows 23 accessible spaces which is just over that requirement. The placement of accessible spaces is important to consider in line with those areas requiring ramped access to business. Terrace on the Square is a challenge in this regard as its entryway is high above ground. Reference was made to a space near Alpine Country Lodge which would provide a convenient connection to the ramp by CIBC.
- Reference was made to good examples in the City of seamless procession into buildings, i.e. Walmart and Starbucks where no ramps exist or are required. Concern was expressed about the area becoming a series of ramps and the revamping of the total site may be an opportunity to address the elevation and movement of pedestrians. It was suggested that there are good examples in Europe of modernized older buildings that have no curbs and use new technologies and designs for accessibility. Staff advised that they have looked at preliminary grading; however, it becomes cost prohibitive to regrade an entire site. To do so will functionally stall the project. There are also implications in relation to impacts on the underground infrastructure should regrading take place.
- It was suggested that one or two accessible spaces on Rowan near Pinebud Avenue would be in order. Staff advised this may be a challenge due to stairs in the area but staff will take it into consideration.
- Is the sidewalk outside the public area adequately wide enough? Staff advised it is 2 meters which is about half a meter larger than typical sidewalks. There is also another 2 meters for pedestrians on the other side as well.
- Reference was made to the demographic of seniors in the area who will appreciate the enhanced space, adding to their quality of life