

## Elgin Street redesign open to input from residents

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The city is tearing up and redesigning Elgin Street, but first it needs a blueprint for how the prime commercial strip should be transformed.

Should there be cycling lanes? Fewer parking spots? Wider sidewalks?

“There will be a need for compromise,” development review manager Derrick Moodie predicted.

There isn't much room with which to work on Elgin. The city has rights to 18 metres between the property lines.

Residents can start chiming in Tuesday during an open house at city hall, the first consultation session on the major infrastructure project. The session starts at 5:30 p.m. in council chambers and Jean Pigott Hall. The city is asking interested participants to RSVP with transportation engineer Vanessa Black at [vanessa.black@ottawa.ca](mailto:vanessa.black@ottawa.ca).

Another open house will happen in the fall.

The one-kilometre stretch of Elgin between Isabella and Lisgar streets is up for reconstruction because the underground pipes and sewers need replacing. Some of the watermains date back to the late 1800s.

Moodie said this type of project would cost in the range of \$20 million to \$30 million, but the final price tag for Elgin will be nailed down during the design work.

The redesign and construction will also include the short stretch of Hawthorne Avenue between Colonel By Drive and Main Street.

The city, with help from a working group, has been floating about 15 ways to redesign Elgin ahead of the open house. Each option has different takes on cycling, parking, the number of lanes and the size of sidewalks. Moodie said representatives from businesses and community

associations have been participating in the working group.

A final draft design is scheduled to be finished in January. Construction could begin in 2018 and take two to three years.

Here are the elements that will surely draw close scrutiny from the public:

## **Cycling**

There will be pressure for the city to install cycling infrastructure, since Elgin isn't exactly a comfortable biking route. The city is considering options that include segregated bike lanes, raised cycling tracks and painted bike lanes. Another option to retain a mixed-traffic setup, where cyclists and cars share a lane.

## **Sidewalks**

Sidewalks have become tighter for pedestrians with the introduction of more restaurant patios. As many as 950 pedestrians are on the sidewalks north of Waverley Street between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. each day, according to the city's research. Though the minimum standard sidewalk width is usually 1.8 metres, the city wants downtown sidewalks to be between three and five metres wide. When it comes to Elgin, the city will need to decide if it wants to give up existing car lanes and on-street parking for more sidewalk space.

## **Parking**

There are 120 parking spots on Elgin and about 28 on Hawthorne with parking restrictions during peak periods. It's hard to imagine a new street design that has zero parking on Elgin, even though it's an option. "I think businesses certainly would want to retain some on-street parking," Moodie said. Other concepts consider raised "flex" parking spaces the same height as the sidewalks, and traditional on-street spots, either on both sides of the street or on one side.

## **Lanes**

Elgin currently has four vehicle lanes with one in each direction also used for on-street parking. The city could decide to shrink the road and have one lane in each direction. Another option is having three lanes in total: one in each direction, plus a left-turn lane up the middle. The travel lanes in each direction must be a minimum width of 3.3 metres to accommodate OC Transpo buses. The turning lane must be at least three metres wide. The most congested part of Elgin is traditionally south of Argyle Street during the afternoon rush hour, when up to 1,000 vehicles are driving south.

## **Streetscape**

On top of freeing up enough room for pedestrians, the city will give thought to bus stops, benches, trash cans, bike rings and trees along the sidewalks. The city could even consider charging stations for things like phones and tablets, like the Bank Street BIA is adding. The city could bury the hydro lines, but council might need to approve the work since it's costly. When it comes to street lights, the city could go with the typical tall, concrete light standards, or consider a more interesting design to jazz up Elgin. It will come down to price.