



Date: November 21, 2023
To: Mayor and Council
Author: Karen Loney
RE: Open Streets 2024 .docx
Report No.: 06-2023

RECOMMENDED ACTION

That Council **APPROVE**,

1. The road closures of King St. (Chestnut St. to Division St. N), Chestnut St. (from King St. to Main St.), and Walnut St (from Chestnut St. to the driveway from the municipal parking lot) for the Kingsville Block Party (formerly Kingsville Open Streets) **BE APPROVED** on the following dates and times.
 - a. Saturday, July 20, 2024 from 4:00 pm to 10:30 pm
 - b. Saturday, August 17, 2024 from 4:00 pm to 10:30 pm
 - c. Saturday, September 21, 2024 from 4:00 pm to 10:30 pm
2. And that Administration **BE DIRECTED** to request County Council to close County Road 34 West from Victoria Street to County Road 27 from 4:00 pm to 10:30 pm to host events in Cottam on Saturday, June 15, 2024.

BACKGROUND

Open Streets began in 2020 in response to COVID-19 and is now recognized as a local and tourist attraction that other communities model. On March 8, 2022, Festivals & Events of Ontario awarded the Town of Kingsville Open Streets event one of the top 100 events in Ontario.

The purpose of Open Streets is to:

- Support community belonging and create excitement about things to do in Kingsville,
- Encourage people to shop locally,
- Invest in the arts and culture sector, and
- Be a regional tourism draw destination for those familiar and unfamiliar with Kingsville, with multiple activities to engage in.

Each year, following a debrief, Open Streets has been adapted to the community's changing situations, needs and interests.

DISCUSSION

During COVID, Open Streets was a welcomed event in that it provided support for small businesses and restaurants. Post-COVID, the Town has received mixed views, mostly from two extremes: those strongly supportive of Open Streets and those strongly opposed to Open Streets. Two online surveys, one for visitors to Open Streets events and one for businesses/vendors, were completed. The results of the survey are as follows.

Comments from the 467 participants who responded included:

- 85% of those who responded live within Kingsville, and 15% live outside of a one-hour radius
- The age range of people who responded included under 18 (3.9%), 19 – 39 (25.3%), 40 – 59 (43.7%) and 60 plus (27.2%).
- When asked if the participant would come back, 90.7% stated yes.
- Participants were asked to write what they liked, and the trends in order of importance were:
 - Live music (93)
 - Great atmosphere (75)
 - Variety of vendors (60)
 - Sense of community to Kingsville (52)
 - Children's activities (43)
 - Variety of activities for all ages (35)
 - Pedestrian Friendly and closure of street (32)
 - Outdoor patios (23)
 - Bites and beer section (21)
 - Other comments included how the free entrance made the event accessible to all, the themes added fun and enjoyment.
- Participants were asked what they would change. While 33 respondents said they wouldn't change anything, other trends, in order of importance were:
 - Having more Open Street days scheduled throughout the year on a regular schedule (38)
 - More vendors are needed (37)
 - More food trucks (30)
 - More adult activities (24)
 - For local business to participate (23) and stay open (16)
 - More seating and washrooms (22)
 - More children activities (10)
 - Other comments included having the street licensed for open alcohol consumption

Of the 318 people who responded to the question, 'Do you want Open Streets to continue?' 88.1% said yes. Building on the questions, 317 respondents said they want Open Streets weekly in July/August (59.3%), twice a month July/August (19.9%), or once a month June to October (15.1%), and 5.7% of respondents say other.

Comments from the 18 businesses that responded included:

- Of the 10 businesses that participated in Open Streets, they saw an increase in foot traffic, and 7 respondents saw an increase in revenue.
- 4 respondents reported a decrease in revenue, but it was not identified if they were open.
- When asked if Open Streets should continue, 12 said yes, 4 said yes but in a different way, and 2 said no.

Kingsville Block Party

Based on the above comments, Open Streets is very well-liked by participants and supported by those businesses that did respond, recognizing not all businesses did respond. It is also clear that there is support for changing the Open Streets Program. Now in its fifth year, the concept of an "Open Streets" event has become more popular across the Province, with some local municipalities creatively branding their events as Tecumseh Twilight, Leamington's Mill St. Market, and Amherstburg's Open Air Weekend to distinguish their events from other similar events. In response to the survey and the need to reinvigorate, administration is recommending rebranding the event as "Kingsville Block Party".

This includes refocusing the event with the 'block' including a portion of Walnut Street, Chestnut Street, and King Street centered on the Municipal Parking lot adjacent to King Street (see Appendix A, Map). This parking lot was the location of earlier successful Night Markets last held in 2016.

This new location will rectify many challenges with closing both of the main corridors of downtown Kingsville. These challenges include the logistics of closing a main thoroughway with volunteer support, the street closure impacting the later hours of "9-5" businesses, and the events competing with existing businesses on Main St. and Division St.

Kingsville Block Party will embrace being a community event and a complement to the businesses on Division St. and Main St. The organizers respect that the hard work of Kingsville's businesses is a draw in itself to the downtown, and the Kingsville Block Party will be an addition to their success, rather than a competition or detraction. It is recommended that the Kingsville BIA build on this and encourage people to continue to 'Walk the Block' and enjoy dinner at local shops.

Locating the event in/on this "block" of a portion of Chestnut St., King St., and parking lot adjacent to King St., and a portion of Water St., will not require closures of Main St. or Division St.

Administration recommends only a portion of Chestnut St should be closed, as this maintains an entry point for the library-adjacent parking lot and emergency personnel access to the alleyway behind the Main St. businesses.

This location does have several businesses in its footprint, but all of them are closed before 4:00 pm on Saturday (according to their publicly available hours).

Dates and Timing

Businesses and visitors repeatedly expressed a need for consistent dates and times for Open Streets 2023. Resourcing the 2023 events was challenging as fewer volunteers gave their time towards the event. People were not interested in monitoring barricades or patrolling the area.

In our feedback, we had a flux in responses to how often this event should be hosted and ensuring it does not compete with other local events. To build excitement for the events, Administration is proposing the following schedule to close the roads with the official event time being from 5:00 pm to 10 pm.

- Saturday, June 15, 2023, in Cottam from 4:00 pm to 10:30 pm (Event from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm)
- Saturday, July 20, in Kingsville from 4:00 pm to 10:30 pm (Event from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm)
- Saturday, August 17, in Kingsville from 4:00 pm to 10:30 pm (Event from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm)
- Saturday, September 21, in Kingsville from 4:00 pm to 10:30 pm (Event from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm)

Regarding the times, the street closures at 4:00 pm allow the organizers and vendors to set up safely. The event would formally begin at 5:00 pm and end at 10:00 pm, with streets reopening by 10:30 pm. Reopening by 10:30 pm gives the organizers a half-hour window to ensure all visitors and vendors are safely off the roads before reopening.

Regarding the dates, we maintained the theme of "every third weekend." This continues beyond the Kingsville Block Party season, as October's third weekend is Migration Fall Festival, and November's third weekend is Fantasy of Lights' opening ceremonies and parade. These dates also do not compete with existing events, including Hogs for Hospice on August 3, Kingsville Music Festival on August 9-10th, or existing holidays.

In Cottam, there were reports that consistency is needed, which is why we propose Cottam's events have the same time as the Kingsville events. Further, the Cottam businesses said they support having one summer event with the expectation that it allows the organizers to create the highest quality event. This is also why we want to start in Cottam: it acknowledges the excitement of the Cottam community to support this type of event. It also allows for more consistent messaging in location for the rest of the events.

Market Vendors and Food Trucks

The following fee structure will be implemented to enhance the participants' experiences and respond to the requests to have more vendors.

- Kingsville (includes Cottam and Ruthven) Vendors / Food Trucks – will have no fee
- Outside of Kingsville - \$20 per event

All market vendors will be required to be self-sufficient. Food trucks will be allowed to bring a portable low-volume generator. Any vendor selling food must apply to the Windsor Essex County Health Unit and the Kingsville Fire Services, if appropriate. Staff will support vendors and food trucks to ensure any permits and certificates of insurance are completed or provided before the event.

Licensed Event

Both businesses and visitors have expressed that they would like to see open alcohol introduced to these events. In 2023, the name "Open Streets" had to be clarified often to visitors and vendors that it did not mean "open" alcohol, which is how many perceived the name. Staff and volunteers had to dedicate significant resources to explaining the rules (that alcohol is allowed only on designated patios). When speaking to people, the majority said, 'they assume they could walk around with alcohol as other communities allowed it'.

A new addition was added this summer called 'Beer and Bites.' Joe's HOT+COLD organized and hosted this Beer and Bites area, which provided people with an area to drink alcohol. This was a designated area that limited people's access to the event. Joe's HOT+COLD carried the special occasion permit (SOP) and insurance to do this.

It is recommended that a Request for Proposal be issued to the community to seek a vendor to provide local beer and wines, plus hold the SOP and insurance. This allows for more efficient planning and marketing of the event and alleviates concerns about monitoring multiple vendor practices, which were a problem in 2023.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

In 2023, Council approved \$15,000 to support the Open Streets Event. These funds are used for security, providing volunteers with safety supplies (i.e. vests, batons), performers, and theme night supplies.

Funds will be used approximately in the following manner;

- Marketing \$4,000
- Security \$3,000

- Music/Themes \$8,000

There are human resource costs related to organizing and implementing the event that impacts the CAO office (HR, Clerks, Communications, Legal), Finance (Economic Development/Tourism), Public Operations (Parks, Recreation/Facilities), Growth and Development with a significant impact on the Recreation and Special Events area.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Any supplies purchased follow the single-use plastic policy.

CONSULTATIONS

- Kingsville Fire Chief
- Director of Planning and Development
- Director of Public Operations
- Manager, Parks and Recreation
- Economic Development Officer
- Communications and Public Relations Coordinator
- Programs and Events Coordinator
- 2023 Open Streets Participant Survey
- 2023 Open Streets Businesses Survey

PREPARED BY:



Karen Loney, MA
Manager of Recreation Programs and Special Events

REVIEWED BY:



Richard Wyma, CSLA
Director of Planning and Development