



THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

OFFICE OF PARKS, FACILITIES, RECREATION & CULTURE

MISSION STATEMENT: *Committed to delivering cost-effective and efficient services for the residents of the Town of Amherstburg with a view to improve and enhance their quality of life.*

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To: Mayor and Members of Town Council

Subject: Open Air Weekends 2023 Options

1. **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that:

1. The report from the Manager of Tourism and Culture dated February 27, 2023 regarding the Open Air Weekends 2023 Report be **RECEIVED**;
2. Council **APPROVE** one of the options listed under the Financial Matters section of this report; and,
3. Council **DELEGATE** the Authority to the Chief Administrative Officer to **APPROVE** any exemptions and permits required for Open Air Weekends:
 - a. Noise by-law exemption (By-Law 2001- 43, as amended)
 - b. Road Closures

2. **BACKGROUND:**

On February 21, 2023, during the 2023 budget deliberations, Council requested that Options for 2023 Open Air Weekends be brought forward. This report outlines the options.

3. **DISCUSSION:**

The Open Air Weekends program has operated since 2020 in the downtown core. The primary objective of Open Air Weekends is economic development. The ancillary objective is to engage our own residents and visitors in a safe, inclusive, outdoor environment, which includes the promotion of Amherstburg as an immersive destination that is rich in social, cultural and heritage experiences.

Open Air Weekends continued to serve a vital role in 2022. The downtown, outdoor public space, venues and programming contributed economic stimulus and experiential activity for both residents and visitors. Since the onset of the pandemic, spaces such as downtown streets, parks, squares, plazas, pathways and trails have seen unparalleled use during all hours and all seasons. The unprecedented impacts of global events has continued to influence a shift for corporations and communities to pivot and plan for alternative, creative dynamics to enhance and foster growth.

Amherstburg is viewed upon respectfully as a tourist destination supported through Council's adopted Community Strategic Plan; Pillar 1 in Marketing & Promotion and Pillar 2 in Economic Development.

This view is reinforced through the Town's success in achieving favorable outcomes in grants and awards from entities such as Economic Development Canada (Fed Dev), Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, Tourism Association Industry of Ontario (TAIO), Festival and Events Ontario (FEO), Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation (SWOTC) and Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island (TWEPI).

At the time of this report, The Town of Amherstburg has been nominated as a finalist for "Municipality of the Year" and "Top 100 in Ontario; Open Air Weekends" among other programs by Festival and Events Ontario. The announcement is to be made on March 8th, 2023.

Municipality of the Year Award in particular, demonstrates the level of standards, customer service, policies and procedures, safe practices, results, partnerships and budgetary considerations that a Municipality adheres to in coordinating special events and initiatives

Amherstburg's downtown core includes a number of diversified retailers, services, restaurants, coffee shops, craft brewery and a historic waterfront park that makes the downtown area a walkable "place-making" destination. The downtown core offers visitors an opportunity to experience a clustered number of cultural and historical assets all within close proximity. Residents and visitors recognize that these amenities are exceptional and unmatched within the region as a tourist destination.

Throughout the Open Air Weekends programming, Administration has consistently met with the stakeholders, monitored the program and surveyed businesses that participated within the 2022 footprint.

The following 2022 Open Air Weekends' results were realized (see attached APPENDIX A – Business Survey Results);

- Approximately *122,020 people attended Open Air Weekends. *Twenty weeks of a clicker/counter system was implemented at main entrances.
- 38 downtown businesses were surveyed. Out of 38 businesses, these notable statistics apply;
- 89% liked the footprint of Open Air Weekends
- 87% liked the hours Open Air Weekends
- 86% would like to see Open Air Weekends continue from spring to fall annually

4. **RISK ANALYSIS:**

By not supporting 2023 Open Air Weekends at least until the end of Labour Day Weekend ending on September 3rd as noted in Option #2, there is an exponentially high risk of missed return on investment. Consecutive weekends of programming will draw a larger number of returning visitors, overnight guests, performing artists and musicians who will want to explore, stay overnight and spend more money both within the footprint and outside of the footprint.

Additionally, a successful initiative like Open Air Weekends takes months of planning, coordinating and research. Planning needs to begin immediately as some government grants are currently calling for 2023 applications. Timing for infrastructure, necessary permits, business agreements, sponsorships and application to government funding opportunities is of the essence.

5. **FINANCIAL MATTERS:**

Open Air brings significant tourism and economic benefit to the entire community. Realizing that businesses within the Open Air footprint are impacted by street closures, if Council wishes to make a reduction in Open Air, option number two as indicated in the chart below, allows for a consistent schedule and straight-forward communication between businesses and their patrons, which is a major contributing factor to Open Air's success. It reduces costs slightly due to the number of weeks streets are closed and this option has the lowest reduction in economic impact.

Options	# Weeks & Dates 2023	Cost Share between Public Works Roads Staff & Tourism	Total Cost	Economic Impact (EI) *TREIM Model
#1. Status Quo 20 weeks	20 weeks May 19 - Oct 1 (3 pm Friday to Sunday)	PW/Roads \$17,000 Students \$24,882 Program \$22,000	\$63,882	\$13,261,204
#2. Shorter Time Frame (Most Effective for ROI) 16 weeks	16 weeks May 19 – Sept. 3 (3 pm Friday to Sunday)	PW/Roads \$13,600 Students \$19,906 Program \$17,600	\$51,106	\$10,608,963

#3. Shorter Time Frame (14weeks)	14 weeks June 2 – Sept 3 (3 pm Friday to Sunday)	PW/Roads \$11,900 Students \$17,417 Program \$15,400	\$44,717	\$9,282,843
#4. 1 day Saturday only (20 Weeks)	May 19-October 1 (Saturdays Only 11am to 10pm)	PW/Roads \$23,574 Students \$8211 Program \$11,000	\$42,785	\$4,376,197
#5. Every Other weekend – 12 weeks	May 19-October 1 (Every other weekend 3 pm Friday to Sunday)	PW/Roads \$10,200 Students \$19,035 Program \$11,000	\$40,235	\$7,956,722

**Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM) visitor count (OA) results:*

- 122,020 total number of Open Air Visitors
- 18% > 40 km = 21,964 visitors X \$253 per day = \$5,556,892
- 82% < 40 km = 100,056 visitors x \$77 per day = \$7,704,312

According the TRIEM model \$13,261,204 in Return on Investment (ROI) was realized during Open Air Weekends 2022 in the Town of Amherstburg.

6. **CONSULTATIONS:**

- The downtown commercial businesses within the 2022 Open Air Weekends footprint were consulted via surveys, emails and ongoing site consultations during the operating weekends.
- The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
- The Director of Community and Protective Services
- The Director of Engineer & Infrastructure Services
- The Director, Development Services & Deputy CAO
- The Manager of Roads and Fleet
- The Public Events Committee
- Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island (TWEPI) were the survey facilitators and program partners

7. **CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, Administration is seeking Council direction to select one of the options as outlined in the Financial Matters section of this report. The Town of Amherstburg's investment in Open Air Weekends is minimal compared to the economic return on investment. In addition, the socioeconomic benefits to the community are immeasurable.

Amherstburg's geographic location is off course in terms of connection to key intersections and major route corridors. Open Air Weekends is one motivator that provides a choice for visitors when determining a destination to choose to spend time and money in during peak tourism season.

As aforementioned, one of Amherstburg's Community Strategic Pillars is Tourism and the concept of "Placemaking" is not a new idea (<https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>). Communities that are advancing to a multi-faceted approach in the planning, design and management of public spaces are attractive and sought after as a positive lifestyle choice for both the resident and visitors. These communities become the destinations of choice in a highly competitive market.




Anne Rota Ussolotti
Manager of Tourism and Culture

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Open Air Weekend 2023 Options .docx
Attachments:	- Map Open Air 2023.pdf - Appendix A Business Survey Results.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Mar 8, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



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