

Staff Report



Development Services Department

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REPORT TO: Committee of the Whole

DATE OF MEETING: December 16, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: Barry Cronkite, Director, Transportation Services,
519-783-8955

PREPARED BY: Darren Kropf, Manager, Active Transportation and Development,
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WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward 1

DATE OF REPORT: December 13, 2024

REPORT NO.: DSD-2024-524

SUBJECT: Indian Road Update

RECOMMENDATION:
For information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council on COR-2022-07: Strategy to Review Renaming Indian Road.
- The key finding of this report is that the renaming of city streets is a complex, multi-jurisdictional project that should be led as a shared priority by the municipalities of the Reconciliation Action Partnership.
- There are no financial implications.
- Community engagement included conversations with Grand River Collegiate Institute, local Indigenous communities and residents/businesses of Indian Road
- This report supports **the delivery of core services.**

BACKGROUND:

In May of 2021, a group of high school students from Grand River Collegiate Institute (GRCI) wrote an open letter to the City of Kitchener outlining their call for change and the renaming of Indian Road, stating “Indian Road is insensitive and offensive to Indigenous Peoples and should be changed.”

On December 8, 2021, Council directed staff to review the renaming of Indian Road through report COR-2022-007 “Strategy to Review the Renaming of Indian Road”. This strategy directed staff to engage with three audiences: GRCI, local Indigenous communities and residents/businesses of Indian Road. This engagement occurred in 2022-2023 and was co-led by Transportation staff and the City’s Senior Indigenous advisor. Due to staff departure, work was paused on this project and staff took time to reflect on lessons learned through the engagement process.

*** This information is available in accessible formats upon request. ***
Please call 519-741-2345 or TTY 1-866-969-9994 for assistance.

REPORT:

Community engagement

City staff hosted a series of engagement efforts to provide information and hear feedback from the three primary audiences identified in this project: GRCI, local Indigenous communities and residents/businesses of Indian Road.

City staff and GRCI staff held regular meetings to discuss the project and plan for engagement activities. Together, City staff and Grand River Collegiate Institute hosted a feast with students, GRCI staff, and Clarence Cachagee of Crow Shield Lodge, who led a ceremony of cultural sharing and personal learning.

City staff reached out to First Nations rights holders and Kitchener-based Indigenous groups to invite their participation in this project. Through this outreach, it became apparent that prior to proceeding with such a complex and potentially significant project, staff involved in this initiative would benefit from deeper cross-cultural competency in order to develop stronger and more intentional relationships with Indigenous communities. Staff also heard from the Indigenous groups that responded that Indian Road is not the only problematic name in the City of Kitchener. There was a greater desire from some Indigenous community members for a broader review of problematic names of City assets like streets, parks or buildings. Further, the groups recommended a broader renaming convention be presented that would address concerns holistically rather than a series of one-off “token” projects.

City staff also mailed all affected residents and businesses with addresses along Indian Road a letter describing the project and inviting them to attend two drop-in Open Houses, and/or to engage online at Engage Kitchener. During these consultations, some residents expressed support for this project as an important step in the path towards reconciliation, but response was limited. Staff also heard concerns related to transparency in the review process, as well as the potential costs and inconvenience associated with renaming Indian Road, including changing letterhead, business cards, personal identification, etc..

Next Steps

Based on the feedback received from members of Indigenous communities early on in this project, staff recommend pausing any further action on COR-2022-007 until such time that a broader naming convention strategy is prioritized and led by RAP, recognizing that a holistic, intermunicipal approach to this work is more meaningful than a single street name.

When sharing this recommendation with GRCI leadership, the school administrators expressed disappointment with this direction and requested that staff continue the renaming process. They noted that for Indigenous students at GRCI, attending a school that is located on a street named Indian Road does not create a safe school environment. City staff and GRCI have discussed the option of re-addressing GRCI so that its address would be from Heritage Drive, rather than Indian Road. While this does not fully eliminate the existing street name, it is a relatively simple process, as the school has frontage on both Indian Road and Heritage Drive. Staff will continue to assist GRCI and the school board with the process to readdress the property, should they wish to do so.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports **the delivery of core services.**

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting. Staff has notified the following audiences of this report’s recommendations:

- Grand River Collegiate Institute
- Crow Shield Lodge
- Anishnabeg Outreach
- Residents and businesses fronting on Indian Road.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

COR-2022-077 Strategy to Review the Renaming of Indian Road

GOV-COR-2025 Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Policy

APPROVED BY: Justin Readman, General Manager, Development Services