

REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: January 10, 2022

SUBMITTED BY: Barry Cronkite, Director of Transportation
Suzanne Charles Watson, Director of Equity, Anti-Racism & Indigenous Initiatives

PREPARED BY: Elin Moorlag Silk, Project Manager, Equity, Anti-Racism & Indigenous Initiatives

WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward 1

DATE OF REPORT: December 8, 2021

REPORT NO.: COR-2022-007

SUBJECT: Strategy to Review the Renaming of Indian Road

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council approve the strategy outlined for the review for renaming Indian Road.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to present, for Council consideration, a strategy and workplan for the renaming of Indian Road, which is situated in Ward 1
- The proposed strategy will take place over a 12-month period, in collaboration with multiple stakeholders including the Regional Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group
- The cost estimate for this renaming strategy is between \$65,000 – \$90,000
- Conducting community engagement is a key component of this strategy. Staff will work with residents and business owners on Indian Road, students and staff from Grand River Collegiate Institute situated on Indian Road, and local Indigenous communities.
- This report supports A Caring Community through the City's commitment to operating as a municipality where racism and oppression are not permissible at either an individual or systemic level.

BACKGROUND:

The renaming of Indian Road has been brought up on many occasions by Kitchener citizens. Recently, in May of 2021, the issue surfaced through a group of high school students from Grand River Collegiate Institute who wrote an [open letter to the City](#) outlining their call for change, stating "Indian Road is insensitive and offensive to Indigenous Peoples and should be changed."

At the time of this open letter and subsequent media coverage, the city issued a statement in response to the students, which stated: "Reviewing the name of Indian Road will be part of a larger initiative the City is undertaking that looks at the naming of public spaces (e.g. roads,

parks, facilities, etc.) This will be done through the Reconciliation Action Plan work. The process for changing street names takes time and involves community input. In the case of Indian Road, it will require meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and leaders.”

The Regional Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RAPWG) has struck a subcommittee that is focused on the larger issue of renaming public spaces and has been underway for several months. City of Kitchener staff are represented on this subcommittee and continue to work alongside and collaborate with other area municipalities on this issue, though it has been noted that this work is in the very early stages and direction from this group may not be coming for quite some time. This issue of renaming Indian Road has been brought up by members of local Indigenous communities and has been identified in the RAPWG subcommittee as a priority.

Thus, there are several reasons for why it makes sense for the City of Kitchener to start moving forward now on the process of changing the name of Indian Road:

- The ever-pressing expectations from the community for the City of Kitchener to demonstrate tangible actions when it comes to Indigenous reconciliation
- Moving forward on this work demonstrates tangible action in relation to the recently-adopted Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Policy ([GOV-COR-2025](#)), which outlines the City’s commitment to operating as an organization where racism and oppression are not permissible at either an individual or systemic level, and with this commitment is the expectation that as an organization the City is working on actions to address, mitigate and eliminate racism and oppression.
- The estimated time frame for implementing this project from start to finish is twelve months, which will allow for ongoing collaboration and alignment with the Regional RAPWG, and may serve as an example project that the subcommittee could use to their benefit when making recommendations
- There is a dedicated and enthusiastic group of students and staff from Grand River Collegiate Institute who are eager to be involved in this project and see change happen. This is a great opportunity for youth engagement, which would be a real benefit to the overall project.

In addition to the above points, leading this process is very much in line with the recently published article by the Ontario Human Rights Commission¹ (OHRC) focused on the development of a new policy statement on the discriminatory display of names, words and images. Proposed content of the new OHRC policy particularly relevant to this project includes the following:

- Recognize the enduring impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples and Ontario’s historical links to slavery by promoting awareness about the negative impacts the discriminatory display of names and images has on individuals and groups
- Duty to prevent and maintain a non-discriminatory environment, to be aware of a poisoned environment, and to take steps to respond to discrimination

¹ http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/ohrc-engages-public-develop-new-policy-discriminatory-display-names-words-and-images Published on September 23, 2021

- In some cases, it may be necessary to revisit long-standing norms and change certain names, descriptions or images
- Training and public awareness may be necessary to help address misinformation, prejudice and other barriers that contribute to tension and conflict
- A collaborative approach may be needed to help promote social inclusion of affected groups, and bring communities together to find the best solutions

REPORT:

Staff have prepared a strategy and workplan to undertake a review of the renaming of Indian Road. Following the guidelines outlined by the OHRC, and after researching emerging practices being used in other Canadian municipalities (for instance, the renaming of Dundas Street in Toronto), a comprehensive strategy has been developed which includes the following elements:

- Key internal stakeholders at the City of Kitchener
- Relevant Corporate, Municipal & External Resources & Policies
- Key External Stakeholders
- Targeted Community Engagement Strategy
- Financial Implications & Cost Estimate

Illustrated in the graphic below is an overview of the four phases of the strategy over 12 months.



STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports A Caring Community through the City's commitment to operating as a municipality where racism and oppression are not permissible at either an individual or systemic level.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Operating Budget – The recommendation will require between \$65,00 - \$90,000 for the following project elements:

- Stipend for the 36 households situated on Indian Road
- Stipend for residents, owner/management company for the apartment complex at 125 Indian Road
- Engagement consultant to support community engagement efforts (if required)
- Creation & installation of new road signs (four signs on existing posts)

Funding for this project will be referred to the 2022 budget process.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- **INFORM** – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.
- **CONSULT** - Ongoing communication, transparency about the process, inclusion in the decision-making about the name change, and the provision of opportunities for ongoing engagement throughout the project will be a key part of this review.
- **COLLABORATE** – Conducting community engagement is a key component of this review strategy. Staff will work with residents and business owners on Indian Road, students and staff from Grand River Collegiate Institute situated on Indian Road, and local Indigenous communities. These three groups will be included in the entire process of choosing the new street name - first from a broad perspective (should it be a concept? A person/name? An important word?), and later in the process of narrowing down the list of options to take to Council.

APPROVED BY: Victoria Raab, General Manager of Corporate Services
Justin Readman, General Manager of Development Services