



The Corporation of the City of Cornwall
Regular Meeting of Council
Report

Department: Planning, Development and Recreation
Division: Planning
Report Number: 2020-306-Planning, Development and Recreation
Prepared By: Mark A. Boileau, General Manager
Meeting Date: May 25, 2020
Subject: Closing of Pitt Street – COVID 19

Purpose

To provide Council with information regarding the closing of Pitt Street until Labour day as outlined in the New Business Motion approved May 11, 2020..

Recommendation

That Council receive this report; and

That Pitt Street from Third to First remain open to vehicles; and

That Downtown businesses be encouraged to make use of the City's Encroachment Agreement Application, should they wish to increase restaurant or retail space.

Financial Implications

Closing Pitt Street temporarily until Labour Day would have Municipal Works costs for setting up, and impact Transit by altering its terminal setup and routing signage. The conversion of parking spaces to restaurant or retail space would have minor impact on parking revenues collected.

Strategic Priority Implications

The downtown's success is vital to the City's mission of enabling a financially sustainable community, and more specifically in its economic development strategy which focuses on reducing the number of vacant commercial spaces.

Background / Discussion

At the Regular Council Meeting of May 11, 2020, the following New Business Motion was approved:

Whereas Cornwall's downtown businesses are struggling financially because of COVID19; and

Whereas COVID19 and social distancing means restaurants and stores will have to change their business models; and

Whereas Pitt Street was once a promenade; and

Whereas Augustus Street allows traffic to flow south on Pitt Street to Water Street.

Now therefore be it resolved that Administration prepare a report with respect to closing Pitt Street between Third Street and First Street until Labour day so that downtown businesses can expand onto the street for the summer months.

Now therefore be it further resolved that the report include options for closing only First Street to Second Street, options for relaxing By-laws surrounding outdoor patios, using existing street parking spaces for drop-offs or patios and look at options for keeping traffic partially open with wider sidewalks.

Now therefore be it further resolved that the report be presented to Council at its next Regular Meeting of Council of Monday, May 25, 2020.

The goal of the report should be to give Council a few options to choose from, with the highest impact on local businesses, that could take immediate effect once passed.

History:



Cornwall's downtown section of Pitt Street has seen many forms over the years. It was a traditional two-way street (above photo*) until the early 70's when one-way traffic was introduced to many Centertown streets (photo below*).



*Source: Cornwall Community Museum Archives.

On September 30, 1978, the portion from Third Street to First Street was officially opened as a pedestrian mall, named Pitt Street Mall. (photo below*)



On November 9, 1991, traffic was reintroduced to Pitt Street in the Dutch 'Woonerf' design, internationally known for its unique traffic calming elements which encourage lower speed limits and allow for more pedestrian activities. It was named Pitt Street Promenade and remains in place to date.

Pitt Street Promenade – Pedestrian/Vehicular Proportions:

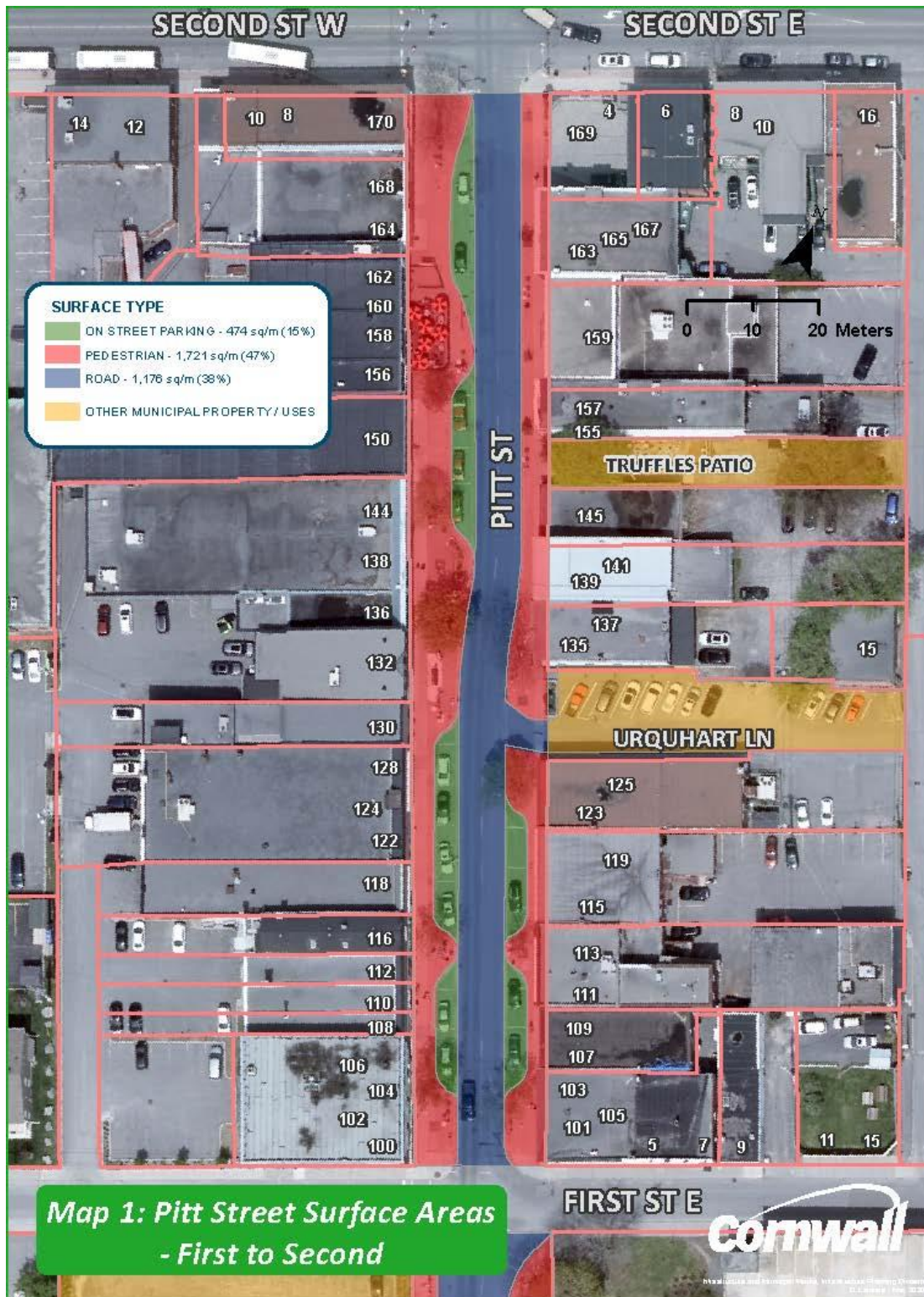
As indicated above, one of the benefits of a Woonerf design is that it reduces vehicular speed, therefore making pedestrian activity more comfortable. In addition, the design provides for greater pedestrian surface than a traditional layout, as confirmed in Table 1 following. For example, the block from First to Second (Map 1) contains 47% dedicated to pedestrians, 15% for parking, and 38% for vehicles. The block from Second to Third (Map 2) contains 54% for pedestrians, 9% for parking, and 36% for vehicles. The more traditional roads from Water Street to First St. (Map 3; 38/5/57), Third to Fourth St. (Map 4; 41/12/47) and Fourth to Fifth St. (Map 5; 23/7/69) contain primarily vehicular surface. The key therefore, is to find a better way to allow uses which could benefit from the larger pedestrian surfaces to do so.

It is worth noting as well, that the First to Third Blocks also benefit from a range of lanes and courtyards (Brown areas) which provide greater pedestrian opportunities, either permanently or periodically (Provincial Courtyard, George Assaly Lane, Pommier Square, Truffles Courtyard, Urquhart Lane).

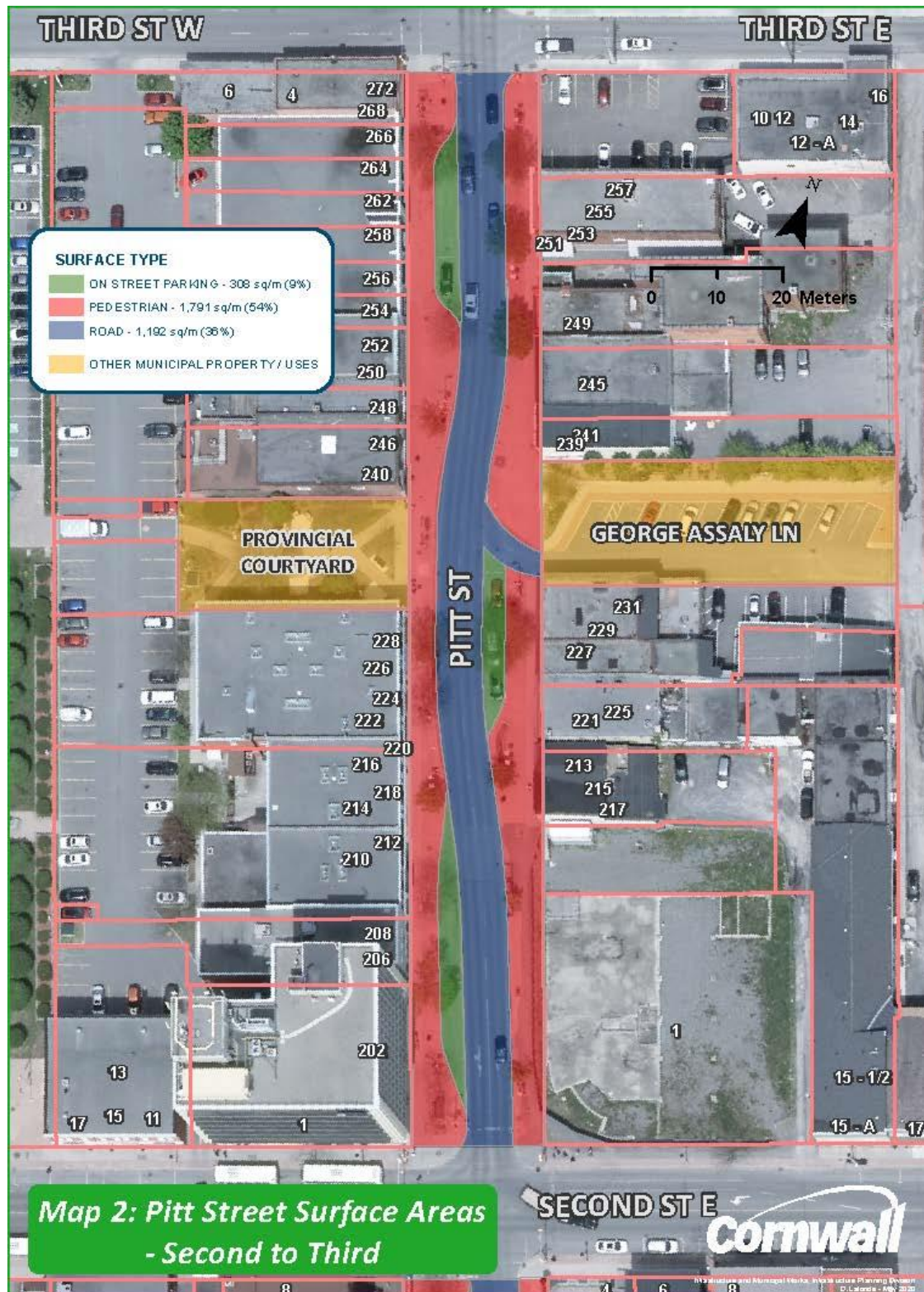
Table 1: Pitt Street Surface Areas

Map 1: First to Second		
Surface Type	Area sq/m	Percentage
On Street Parking	474	15%
Pedestrian	1,721	47%
Road	1,176	38%
Map 2: Second to Third		
Surface Type	Area sq/m	Percentage
On Street Parking	308	9%
Pedestrian	1,791	54%
Road	1,192	36%
Map 3: Water to First		
Surface Type	Area sq/m	Percentage
On Street Parking	162	5%
Pedestrian	1,301	38%
Road	1,973	57%
Map 4: Third to Fourth		
Surface Type	Area sq/m	Percentage
On Street Parking	390	12%
Pedestrian	1,319	41%
Road	1,529	47%
Map 5: Fourth to Fifth		
Surface Type	Area sq/m	Percentage
On Street Parking	214	7%
Pedestrian	695	23%
Road	2,054	69%

Map 1: Pitt Street Surface Areas – First Street to Second Street (Woonerf)



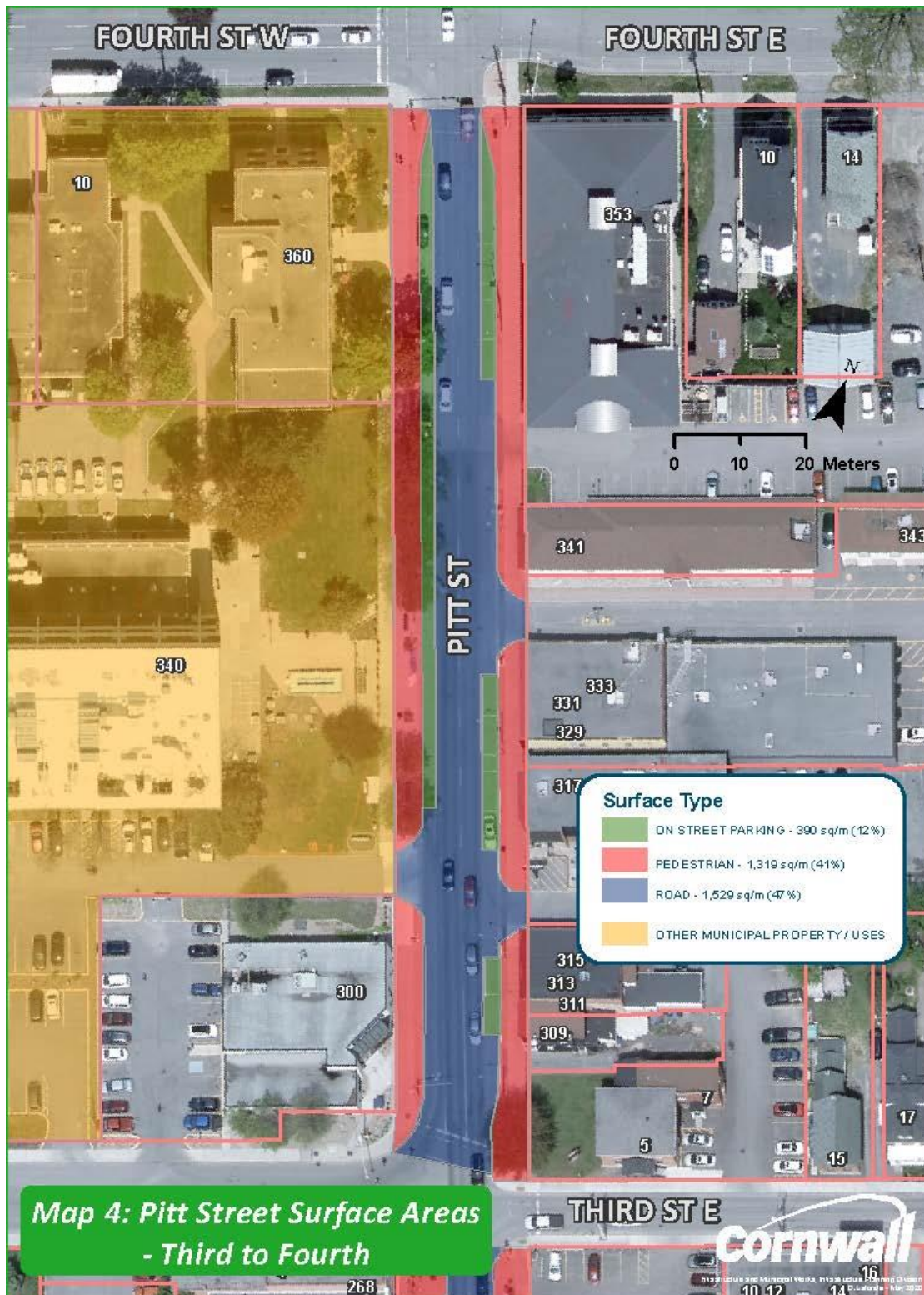
Map 2: Pitt Street Surface Areas – Second Street to Third Street (Woonerf)



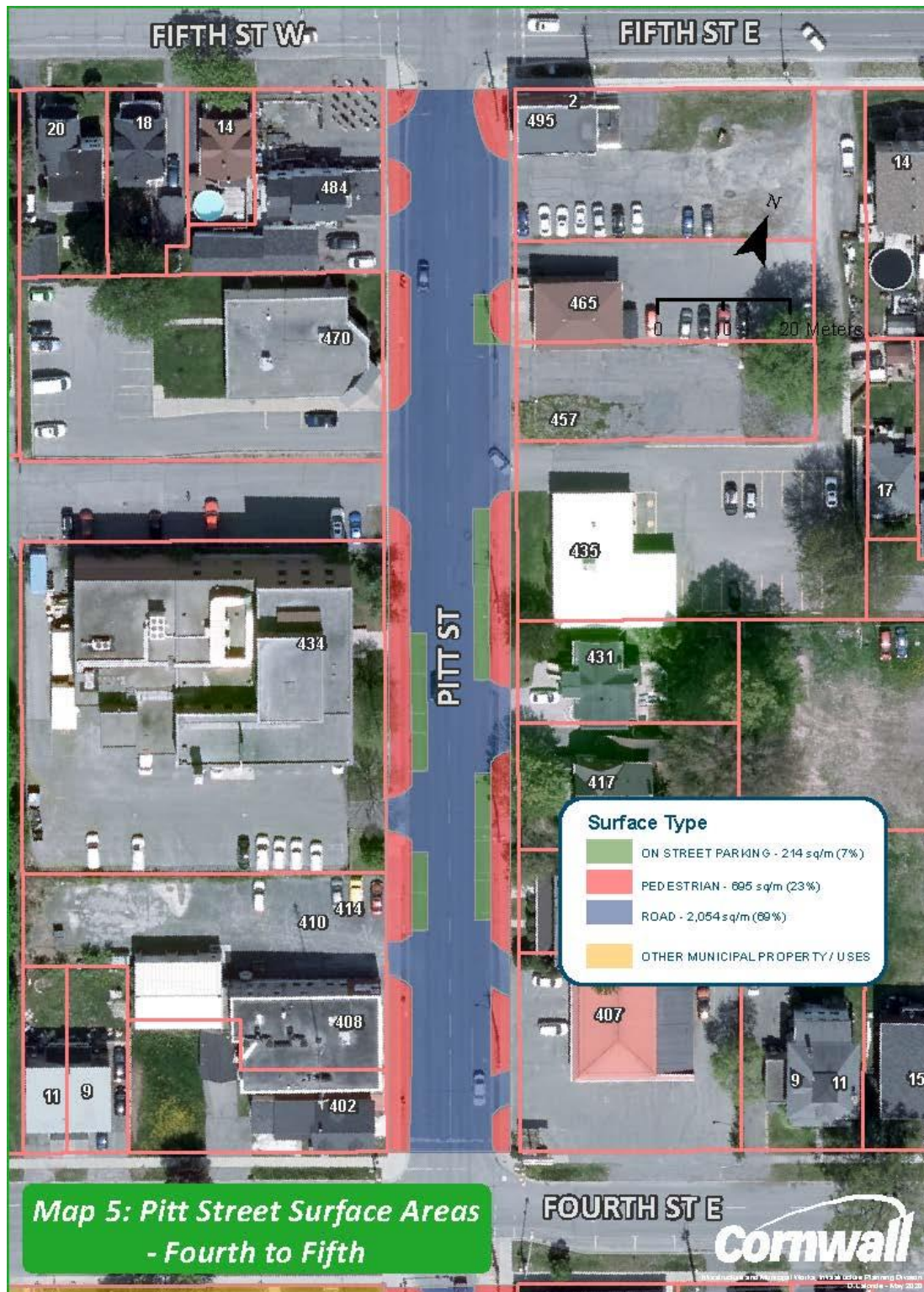
Map 3: Pitt Street Surface Areas – Water Street to First Street (Traditional)



Map 4: Pitt Street Surface Areas – Third Street to Fourth Street (Traditional)

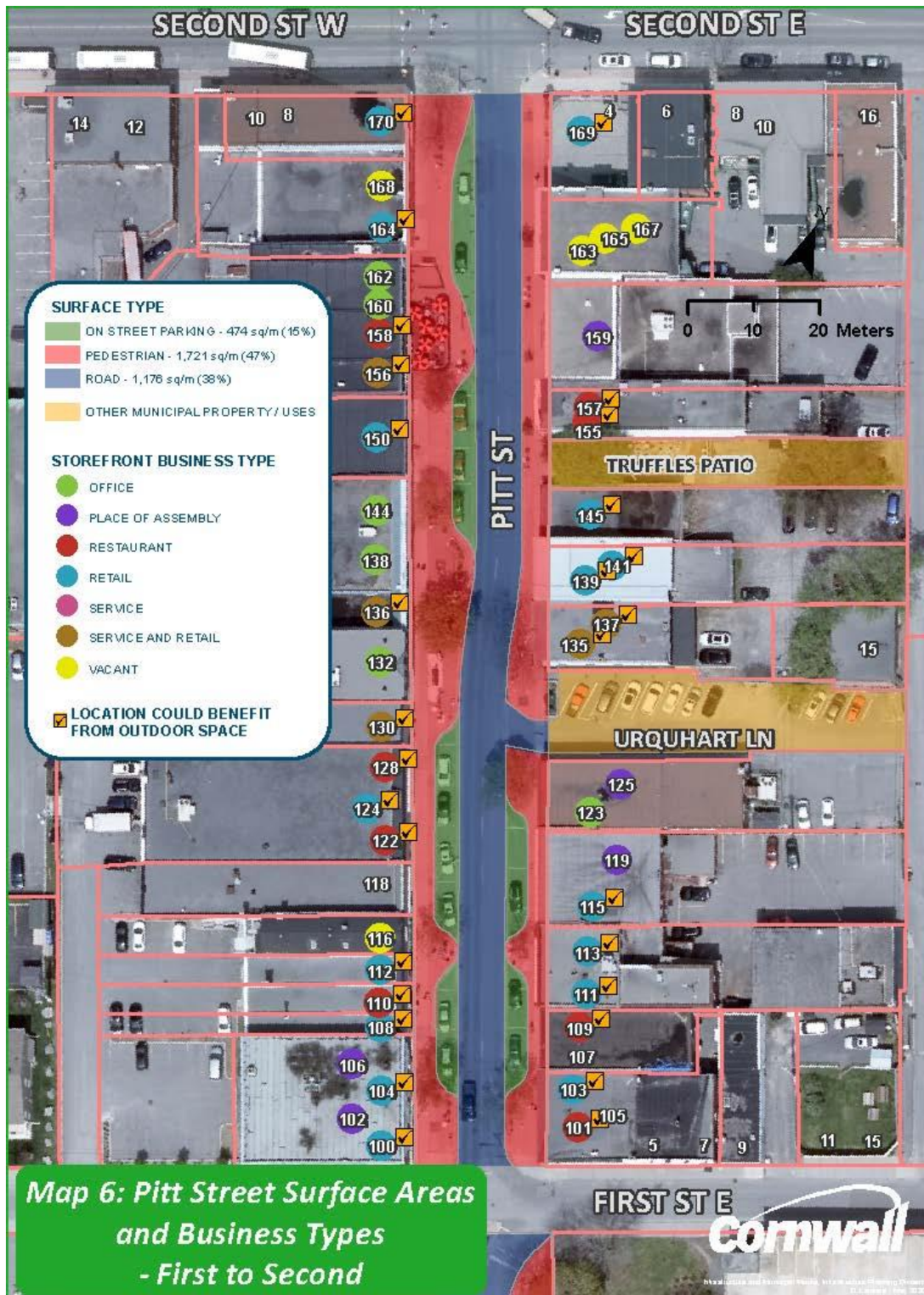


Map 5: Pitt Street Surface Areas – Fourth Street to Fifth Street (Traditional)

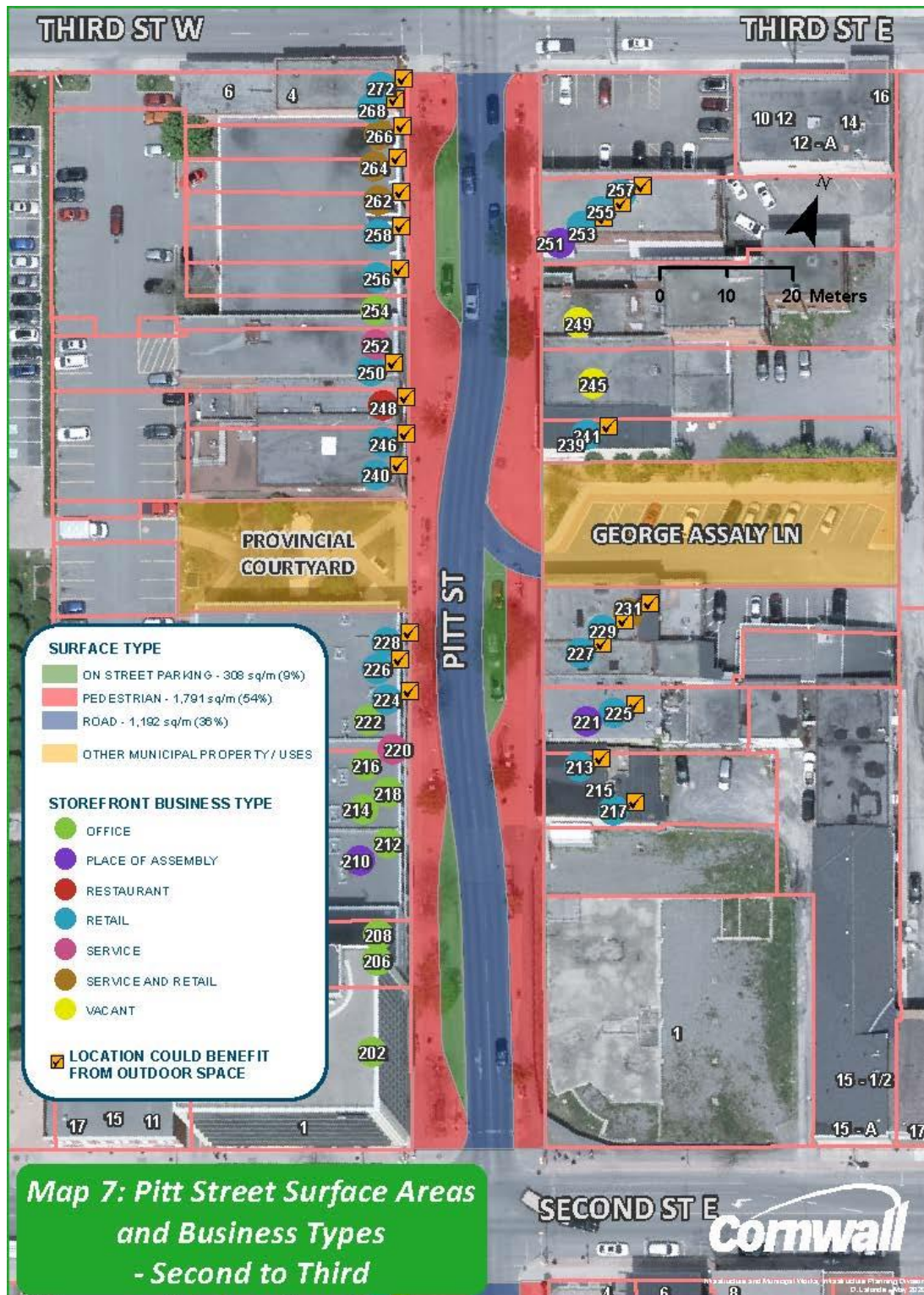


Maps 6 and 7 (following) display the specific uses within the First to Third blocks, in order to help in determining the locations which could benefit from outdoor space. For example, restaurant and retail uses would certainly have opportunities, particularly in the COVID period when space will be beneficial and at a premium for some smaller facilities. They are identified as well with a checkmark. On the other hand, office uses would generally not benefit from outdoor space. It is worth noting that there is a considerable number of uses which could benefit from outdoor space in this corridor, however few have historically done so. Schnitzel's restaurant has for years (including its predecessors), Truffles in the side courtyard, Gemini Café in the past, and small cafes and retailers have to some extent.

Map 6: Pitt Street Surface Areas and Business Type Identified – First Street to Second Street



Map 7: Pitt Street Surface Areas and Business Type Identified – Second Street to Third Street



A report (attached) was prepared in 2016 on the subject of Temporary Outdoor Patios for the downtown and Le Village and approved by Council. It provides considerable detail regarding encroachment agreement opportunities, not only on the 'pedestrian' portions described earlier, but also in parking stall areas where space is limited. The Encroachment Agreement Process Application includes good visual examples (pages 22 and 23 of document) of how they would be protected by barrier or solid fencing to provide a safe and clearly defined area.

While there have not been any applications since the approval of this provision in 2016, this pandemic and its effect on space requirements could activate more ideas of outdoor retail or eating space. Should any of the stalls be requested by the adjacent businesses, likely for restaurant or retail uses, it would increase the corridor's pedestrian surface from the existing estimate of 50% to potentially over 60% for this two block area. This would of course reduce on-street parking spaces, which may not be preferred by some merchants or shoppers, and will reduce municipal revenue accordingly. The current Encroachment Agreement application has a one-time cost of \$370, which is relatively low when compared to other Ontario municipalities.

Other Options:

Closing only First to Second portion:

As indicated in the Transit comments following, the impact of closing any portion is the same, and detrimental to its operations.

Closure of either block would also reduce access to east side municipal parking lots, with George Assaly lane providing access to one-way angled parking in its lane (would no longer be accessible), and to the Library parking lot. Similarly, the closure of the south block would prevent access to Urquhart Lane, and its angled parking, as well as its access to the Warrington Brown parking lot.

It is worth noting that Cornwall's one-way street system makes it difficult to access this portion of Pitt Street (Third to First) with a pedestrian mall (closed road). With Third, Augustus, First, and Sydney providing a counter-clockwise one-way system, it provides limited accessibility, particularly for newcomers.

Roadway partially open (one lane, wider pedestrian ways):

Transit has indicated it is equally uncomfortable with reducing the number of lanes. It would provide difficult maneuvering space, not only for City buses but also for delivery vehicles and utility vehicles. It is not uncommon as well for delivery vehicles to stop at the stores' curbside periodically, therefore reducing traffic to a single lane. This would cause deliveries to be rerouted, and delayed.

Comments from other Departments/Agencies/Social Media:

Transportation Section:

If the street is closed, it will likely be more detrimental to the curbside only arrangement. If part of the street is closed, even some days, that should be in consultation with BIAs. Perhaps some businesses like restaurants would benefit on the weekends having tables set up on the parking spaces, some lanes, etc., when and if this is allowed. Also, parts of the sidewalks are 6 m on Pitt St. and at least 3 m. This could accommodate some business needs, particularly if they are for dining type of business, with case by case encroachment agreements.

Transit Services:

Cornwall Transit is not in favour of any kind of closure of Pitt St between First and Thirds streets. The closure would affect three bus routes: the Montreal Road route, the Community Service route and the Riverdale Route. This would reduce or eliminate service to the Cornwall Square. Three (3) Cornwall Business Park routes would also be affected in the mornings and afternoons. The on-street downtown transit terminal would need to be moved to the corner of Augustus St. and Second St. for the entire duration of the closure. The operator's downtown lunchroom and washroom facilities are located above Gordon's Jewelry Store and moving the Terminal would create an inconvenience in this time of promoting hand washing. In the past, Cornwall Transit has been requested to move the Terminal to accommodate special events, usually a few Saturdays in the summer, and have always cooperated. The request to move the downtown terminal and revise routes for the entire summer would cause a great hardship to the system.

Cornwall Transit will experience the same concerns and inconveniences to the system if the closure only included the block between First and Second St.

Cornwall Transit is also not in favour of partial closures or the reduction to one lane of traffic on Pitt St. Cornwall Transit would be very uncomfortable travelling through a partial lane restriction scenario due to safety concerns.

Cornwall Transit is in favour of identified parking spots for curb-side pick-up.

Waste Management Services:

Further complications would occur regarding business and residential recycling and garbage collection.

Facebook Comment Summary:

Comments collected between May 11, 2020 at 8:29 PM and May 15, 2020 at 11:30 AM.

Public feedback

Reviewing Facebook comments (250) on the Cornwall News Watch post regarding the potential closure of Pitt Street has resulted in the following findings.

- 83% of those commenting do not support the closure of Pitt Street
- The top three reasons for not supporting the initiative are;
 - It has failed in the past (42%)
 - It will not help business at this time, specifically making it more challenging to do curb side pick up (18%)
 - Accessibility will be an issue / older population with mobility issues (15%)

Comments also revealed a few suggestions;

- If closed on a temporary basis, perhaps start with weekends only
- Make use of bump outs, and existing wider sidewalk areas instead
- Allow increased access to sidewalk, parking spaces, bump outs to restaurants only
- Change street to 1 lane of traffic, and use other lane space for business

Business owner feedback

Reviewing Facebook comments on the Cornwall News Watch post, and through a business owners' group chat, the following summarizes the potential closure of Pitt Street.

- The majority of downtown business owners do not support this initiative
- They feel increased parking spaces would be of greater assistance
- Remove some of the extended interlocking brick to allow for angled parking which will increase the total number of spaces available
- Possibly supportive of closure on Friday and Saturday night
- Business owners would like to have the opportunity to state their case before any changes are made

Document Title:	Closing of Pitt Street - 2020-306-Planning, Development and Recreation.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report 2016-29-PL-PDR Temporary Outdoor Patios (UB 2016-26) November 14 2016 (002).pdf - ENCROACHMENT-AGREEMENT---FINAL.pdf - Le Village BIA -Closing of Pitt St. COVID-19, May 18, 2020.pdf - DBIA - Closing of Pitt Street and Parking Survey Feedback, May 18, 2020.pdf - Cornwall Chamber of Commerce - Closing of Pitt Street and Parking Statement, May 19, 2020.pdf
Final Approval Date:	May 19, 2020

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

Tracey Bailey - May 19, 2020 - 2:59 PM

Maureen Adams - May 19, 2020 - 3:41 PM