



Planning and Development Services

Prepared for	Council-in-Committee	Report No.	PDS-14-2018
Agenda Date	February 20, 2018	File No.	350308.006

Subject

CRYSTAL BEACH SECONDARY PLAN INITIATION AND AUTHORIZATION – RECOMMENDATION REPORT

Recommendations

- THAT** Council authorizes staff to initiate the Secondary Plan process for the Crystal Beach Neighbourhood, and further
- THAT** Council authorizes staff to advertise an Expression of Interest to seek out interested persons to form a “Community Focus Group” to participate and provide regular input over the course of the Plan’s development, and further
- THAT** Council directs staff to prepare a recommendation report for Council’s approval of the Community Focus Group at a future meeting.

Relation to Council’s 2015-2018 Corporate Strategic Plan

- Priority: **Prosperous and Growing Community**
Goal: A1 - Achieve senior government commitment on key projects and policies
Initiative: A1.2 – Continue to communicate on key issues/advancements of projects
- Priority: **Strong Customer Service, Relationships and Communications**
Goal: C3 - Expand and improve connections with internal and external partners, stakeholders and agencies
Initiative: C3.2 - Engage government agencies to strengthen two-way relationship

List of Stakeholders

Landowners / Developers / Residents and Business Owners including the Crystal Beach BIA, Fort Erie Economic Development and Tourism Corporation, Region of Niagara, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Various Agencies, Utilities and Community Partners (such as, but not limited to Friends of Crystal Beach, Crystal Beach Beautification Committee, Advancing Crystal Beach, etc.).

Prepared by:	Submitted by:	Approved by:
<i>Original Signed</i>	<i>Original Signed</i>	<i>Original Signed</i>
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Purpose of Report

The purpose of Report No. PDS-14-2018 is to formally request authorization of Council to proceed with initiation of the Crystal Beach Secondary Plan and accompanying zoning by-law changes that would ultimately implement a final Plan through an Official Plan Amendment.

Additionally, staff are seeking Council's authorization to solicit the interest of community members to sit as a "Community Focus Group" and participate in strategic sessions at the beginning of the Plan's development and again, at milestone points throughout the process.

Background

The Town's Neighbourhood and Secondary Plan Program provides a vehicle for the detailed land use planning initiatives at the neighbourhood level. Section 5.5 of the Town Official Plan recognizes the importance of a more refined examination of the various land uses that comprise healthy, strong, livable communities that seek to provide a complete community concept for our many neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the Town's Official Plan directs that the Neighbourhood Plans be implemented by way of an Official Plan Amendment (OPA). The common term used for such an amendment is referred to as a "Secondary Plan".

A Neighbourhood Plan had been completed for Crystal Beach in June 2005 and further adopted by Council Resolution No. 17 in September 2005. The Plan served to provide background information and guidance on how the community may eventually evolve. However, the Plan was not processed as an Official Plan Amendment (therefore, not having formal status in the Town's Official Plan or that of the *Planning Act*) and remained to serve in an un-official capacity.

That document is now thirteen years old and since that time, there have been a number of changes to provincial and regional policy direction. Projected population growth from the 2006 Growth Plan was the leading edge of municipal belt tightening. The 'grow within' policy direction of the Province has resulted in municipalities examining their serviced urban areas for opportunities to intensify. Secondary Plans are used in these exercises to refine land use, provide more detailed policy and indicate population growth potential following partner agency engagement and a comprehensive, publicly inclusive process for municipal planning staff consideration, prior to any recommendations being brought forward to Council.

Council recently approved the Southend Secondary Plan and related zoning changes, which are now working their way through Regional approval and appeal periods. This has enabled staff resources to move forward on the next secondary plan.

On April 3, 2017, Council approved Report No. PDS-25-2017, which identified Crystal Beach as the next priority immediately after the Southend Plan's conclusion. In keeping with the approved order, staff are seeking Council authorization to begin the Official Plan Amendment and zoning change process leading to an approved Crystal Beach Secondary Plan.

For Council's immediate and general reference, the order approved from Report No. PDS-25-2017 was as follows:

1. Southend Secondary Plan (*currently awaiting final approval from Region*) and Riverwalk CIP (*in progress*)
- 2. Crystal Beach Secondary Plan with subsequent Downtown Core Area CIP**
3. Bridgeburg Urban Expansion Area
4. Walden / Garrison / East Kraft
5. Lakeshore

Planning staff are currently working on the Riverwalk Downtown Core Area CIP and expectation is for a spring 2018 implementation following public consultation and a decision of Council. This work will be carried out concurrently with the start-up of the Crystal Beach Secondary Plan.

For visual reference, **Appendix “1”** and **Appendix “2”** illustrate the progression of the Town's Secondary Plan and CIP completions.

Analysis

Report No. CDS-26-2015 (April 7, 2015) outlined some of the anticipated topics of interest or focus for the various secondary plans on the priority list at that time. The chart below illustrates some of the topics listed for Crystal Beach, but is not limited to these alone. Staff anticipates additional points to be raised through Community Focus Group engagement, public consultation and the partner/agency review stages.

(CDS-26-2015 excerpt)

Secondary Plan Name	Background Points	Key Considerations	Recommendation Rationale
Crystal Beach Secondary Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Neighbourhood Plan good guide but now outdated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bay Beach Master Plan approval ▪ Crystal Ridge Park Master Plan ▪ Active Real Estate Market ▪ Long term commercial viability ▪ Parking ▪ CIP implementation ▪ Leverage DC Exemption Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key Master Plans completed or being completed. Construction imminent. ▪ Review commercial viability and designation limits. ▪ persistent pressure from businesses for CIP ▪ Seasonal Parking solutions. ▪ Secondary Plan candidate in very near term.

The Crystal Beach neighbourhood has seen increased interest from persons seeking or planning inter-municipal or regional migration from areas outside of Niagara and most commonly the GTA. While staff can attest to the high level of real estate related calls it receives through potential new resident or investor due diligence, staff speculates “baby boomers” outside of southern Niagara Region are seeking to downsize in a market area where they can convert their equity into cash for other investments or to finance a retirement plan. It was a common occurrence throughout Niagara during the sharp

increase in real estate prices over the past two years and Crystal Beach presented many with opportunity to invest in a lakefront community at an attractive price.

Planning staff will be in receipt of detailed demographic information from Statistics Canada (via Niagara Region data request) in the very near term and will be able to compare it to the previous census in an 'apples to apples' scenario. Staff is expecting to see a bump up in the "boomer" presence of the bell curve in the neighbourhood and with that presence comes an interest in having a variety of choice in the housing market to enable age-in-place opportunities well into the future.

Key Considerations that will be reviewed in context with the 2006 Neighbourhood Plan will include:

- Growth Management (Regional Projection for Greater Fort Erie to 2041);
- Land Use and Density;
- Potential areas for intensification and building stock diversification;
- Parks/Open Space (in conjunction with the Parks and Open Space Master Plan);
- Commercial designation limits;
- Beautification and urban design;
- Transportation and Parking (seasonal driven parking accommodation)

Growth Management

Regional Growth Management exercises had advanced to a point where expectation of population was being presented at the local municipal level. While the Region has suspended further work on the Growth component pending additional information from the Province, Town staff are expecting the final approved projections to be similar to that presently projected at approximately 13,000 by the year 2041. The Town will be in a better position to direct the anticipated growth through their secondary plans, including a new plan for the Crystal Beach neighbourhood.

Crystal Beach has demonstrated popular interest as a destination for residential growth. This past year has seen Crystal Beach claim second only to the neighbouring Ridgeway-Thunder Bay neighbourhood with respect to new residential permit activity. Details on the 2018 year end Subdivision, Building and By-law activity are expected in a report to Council next month (March 2018).

Land Use and Density

The 2005 Crystal Beach Neighbourhood Plan exercise had examined land use designations and provided direction for development interests at the time. As indicated earlier, that document is now 13 years old and while a progressive tool in its day with respect to intensification and compact design/development, additional planning related exercises completed (or close to completion) since that time (Provincial, Regional and local) are expected to influence this Secondary Plan process.

Implementation of the Town's Waterfront Strategy, approval of the Bay Beach Master Plan, approval of the Crystal Ridge Park Master Plan and public school closures are a few key pieces of the public and private realm considerations that will play a role in land use decisions for the community. Efforts to find balance in residential and commercial density to assist in more year-round commercial viability for the full time residents of Crystal Beach is also of interest to staff during this exercise. A seasonal population

surge must always be expected for this community and the impacts associated with the temporary population rise need to be considered. First and foremost, the Crystal Beach neighbourhood needs to be recognized as the year round community it is, but also, as more and more people move into the neighbourhood, how and where those persons may be accommodated.

Intensification and Diversity of Building Stock

As part of the review process, select areas of the community may become the focus for consideration on residential intensification with an eye to providing multi-unit residential and/or mixed use residential commercial as a means of further diversifying the housing stock from the predominant detached dwelling landscape north of Erie Road. Following the strategic sessions that will establish goals, objectives and a vision statement, staff will examine suggestions from the group and also conduct open house meetings to gather and consider comments from the broader public on how they see their community growing in future. Having a diverse supply of housing and tenure gives the highest chances for people to remain within their community as they cycle through the various stages of life; and not only seniors, but also our youth. Age-in-place is more than just a senior citizen consideration.

Parks and Open Space

The Town update to the municipal-wide Parks and Open Space Master Plan is currently underway and will naturally include examination of the parks and open space amenity within the Crystal Beach neighbourhood. Furthermore, the Bay Beach Master Plan and Crystal Ridge Park Master Plan are slated for construction in 2018 and will form an intricate part of the public realm and rejuvenation within the community context.

Planning staff see these as catalysts and particularly the Bay Beach works to be an impetus and commitment to the local public realm that may help leverage and stimulate additional private sector investment in the immediate commercial/residential vicinity.

Recommendations and outcome of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan will assist in the land use considerations and policies to be generated as part of the secondary plan process.

Commercial Designation and Limits

As part of the Crystal Beach Secondary Plan process, review of the current commercial designation will be a consideration. A number of properties have maintained a commercial designation and zoning but have realized only longstanding residential land use. Consideration will be given to changing the land use designations to perhaps reflect that of the common residential use and may lead to a slight contraction of the total designated commercial area. Staff seeks to ensure long term viability for commercial lands in use or in strategic locations; it will explore limiting the commercial lands by re-designating un-used, surplus commercial sites that have not developed as such. There is no certainty this will lead to a contracted core, but it will be something looked at during this planning exercise.

Beautification and Urban Design

As mentioned in a previous section, the Bay Beach Master Plan will commence construction in 2018 and is expected to become a focal point for not only residents but also visitors to the community. Detailed urban design elements will provide visual

aesthetic and identity through quality design. It will be of interest to ensure that new development, particularly that of the Erie Road corridor and up into Derby Road, carry that sense of good design beyond Bay Beach and into the commercial district. The Town's recently approved Waterfront Strategy made recommendations related to urban design and the secondary plan process can explore how these tools may apply or be implemented to serve the community and underscore the desire for good quality design of both public and private realm projects.

A long awaited Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is also anticipated for implementation following adoption of a Secondary Plan and may offer financial assistance through eligible grant programs for certain improvements to commercial buildings, or creation of new residential units in the core area commercial. Details of the CIP will follow in a separate process at the conclusion of the Secondary Plan exercise.

Transportation and Parking

Transportation is a fairly broad heading. For the most part, addition of new roads in the neighbourhood is generally not expected, except for those related to new subdivisions in the north end of the neighbourhood. The Neighbourhood already displays a strong grid network of existing roads that serve the neighbourhood well and are quite permeable, but staff anticipates transportation related topics to dominate discussion. These would include such matters as municipal transit, active transportation (sidewalks and cycling infrastructure) and seasonal parking demand.

Crystal Beach has a high summer tourist draw for day-trippers coming into the waterfront area to access Bay Beach. Solutions to the increased parking demand will be a focus in this exercise. While a ten point parking strategy was recommended in the Bay Beach Master Plan, it was recognized that refinement would occur through the secondary plan process. Staff has anticipated parking concerns needing additional attention and have forecasted retention of a transportation consultant to assist in arriving at the most feasible solution(s) to this ongoing community concern.

Community Focus Group

Should Council authorize staff's request to commence, the first order of business will be to announce the Plan's initiation with an invitation for interested persons to submit their names for participation on a "Community Focus Group" (CFG) via "Request For Expressions of Interest". As in past, staff have sought to select a cross section of the community in composing a 10-12 member CFG.

Staff would be seeking representation from long-time residents, new residents, business owners, developers, youth and seniors as we work through a strengths, weakness, opportunities and constraints exercise, to establish goals and objectives and generate a vision statement to guide the Secondary Plan's development. Just as in past practice, the CFG would be invited to convene for a strategic planning session and then reconvene at various points through the process as staff works through the steps towards generating a draft land use and policy document with potential zoning changes.

Staff recognizes there are other community groups active in the interests of Crystal Beach and will make opportunities available to meet with representatives of those

organizations early in the process as well. However, for the purposes of a Community Focus Group profile, staff would be interested in structuring a cross section of unaffiliated persons to gather insight and fresh perspective at the start of this process.

Regardless of Town staff organizing structured meetings and events for input, any member of the public may make comments at any time in the process for staff consideration. This process remains an open process beginning to end.

Partner Agency Consultation

As with all the Secondary Plans, department and agency input will be requested at the various milestones of the process. Key partner agencies such as Niagara Region and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority will be alerted to this report being considered by Council and will be actively engaged over the course of its preparation.

Under the current Memorandum of Understanding, the Region of Niagara (who hold delegated approval authority by the Province for this type of approval) have the ability and authority to further delegate approval authority to the Town. Planning staff will be seeking a clear indication from the Region at the outset of this amendment as to who will hold such approval authority, to avoid confusion at the latter stages of the planning process. This is rooted in the numerous “Notices” that are issued over the course of the Plan’s preparation that will often indicate who holds the approval authority. Staff wishes to be in a position to convey this to the public with assurance at the earliest possible opportunity.

Secondary Plan Limits

The study area limits of the Crystal Beach Secondary Plan generally reflect the same neighbourhoods as shown on the Official Plan Schedule “A1”. Slight adjustment to the northern limit is being made, but this is due to the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Secondary Plan having included the small area between Farr Avenue and the unimproved road allowance (Dominion Road) at the north end of the Crystal Ridge Community Park. Overlap is being avoided. **Appendix “3”** illustrates the Boundary for this Secondary Plan Area.

Financial/Staffing Implications

There is limited financial implication related to this Secondary Planning process, Costs related to retention of a transportation consultant to assist in parking solutions have been accounted for in the 2018 for consultant services. If necessary, additional funding would be sought in 2019.

Staff have also used a facilitator in the strategic sessions, which is also accounted for in the 2018 budget.

Other than those items identified, planning staff will to lead this secondary planning exercise, which forms part of the of normal business activities and budgeted for in the Planning and Development Services operating budget. Staff are estimating approximately one year to complete the exercise, however; resources are also involved with other variable day-to-day duties that could influence or protract the estimated

timeline. The Director of Planning and Development Services will be kept informed of progress or delays throughout the initiative.

Policies Affecting Proposal

The Town Official Plan directs that Neighbourhood Planning be conducted for the municipality's various neighbourhood areas in order that land use and development can be implemented at a more detailed local level and that furthermore, these planning exercises result in an amendment (Secondary Plan) to the Town's Official Plan (Section 5.5). Consultation with neighbourhood residents, property owners, municipal partners and stakeholders is also a requirement of the Town's Official Plan (Section 5.5.1).

Comments from Relevant Departments/Community and Corporate Partners

Should Council authorize staff to proceed, contact and notification with all departments, agencies, municipal partners and stakeholders will follow, advising of the Plan's initiation. Consultations and commenting from these bodies will form part of the process.

Communicating Results

Should Council authorize staff to commence with this Secondary Plan, general notification of its initiation will be released to the public by way of "Request for Expression of Interest" being broadcast and published with usual media outlets (newspaper, Twitter, Facebook, etc.);

Alternatives

The alternatives to the recommendation being made herein would be:

- 1) not to proceed with the Crystal Beach Secondary Plan; and/or
- 2) direct staff to undertake an alternate neighbourhood area on the priority listing.

Staff would not recommend either as alternatives and would seek Council's continued support for the secondary planning order established in Report No. PDS-25-2017.

Conclusion

Following Council's priority order as outlined and approved in Report No. PDS-25-2017 (April 2017) Planning staff are now in a position to commence the Crystal Beach Secondary Plan and related zoning by-law changes, and seek Council's authorization to begin this work.

Staff respectfully request Council's approval of the recommendations contained in Report PDS-14-2018.

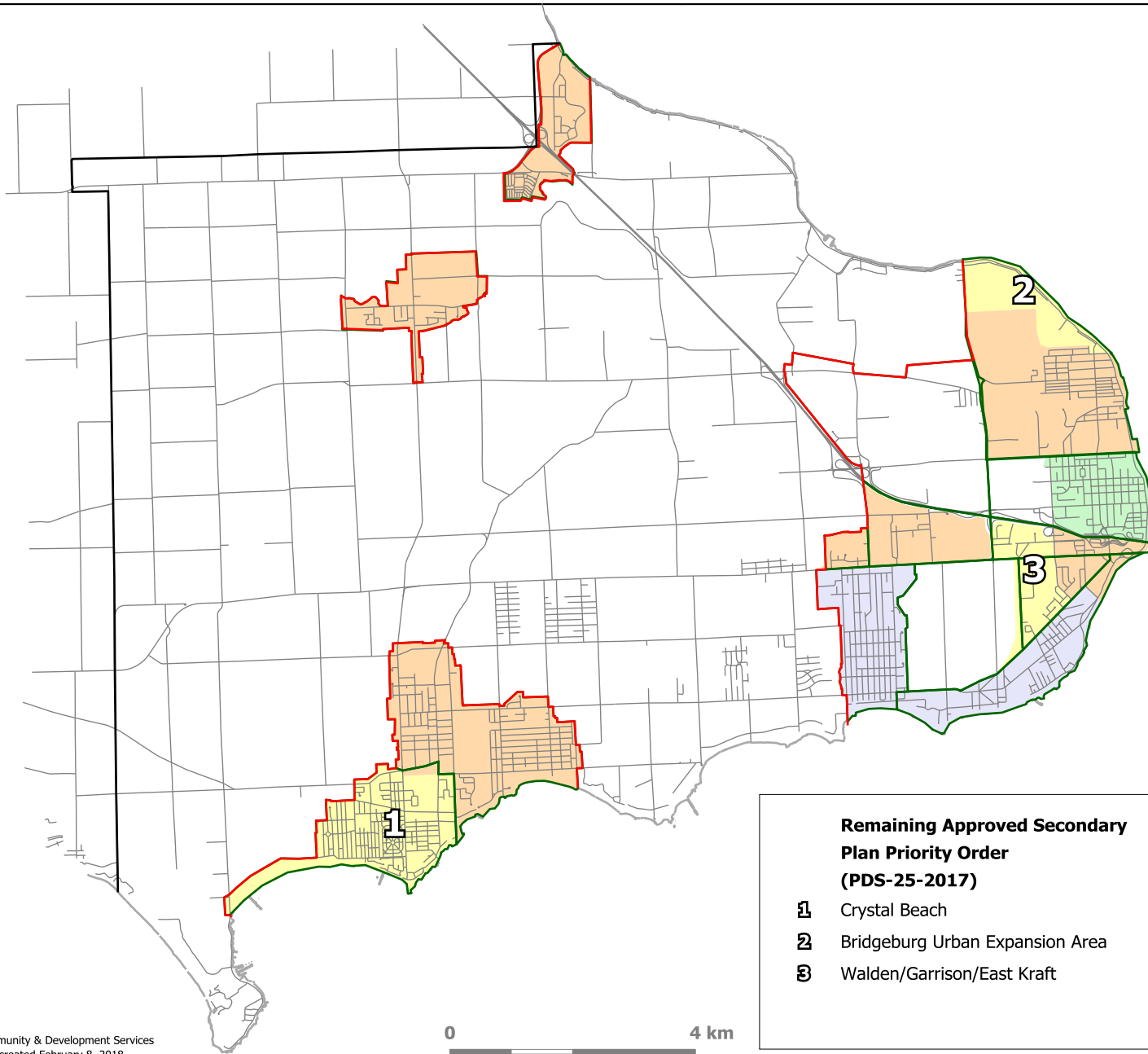
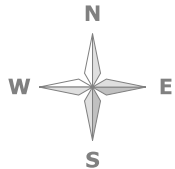
Attachments

Appendix “1” - Secondary Plan Status Illustration

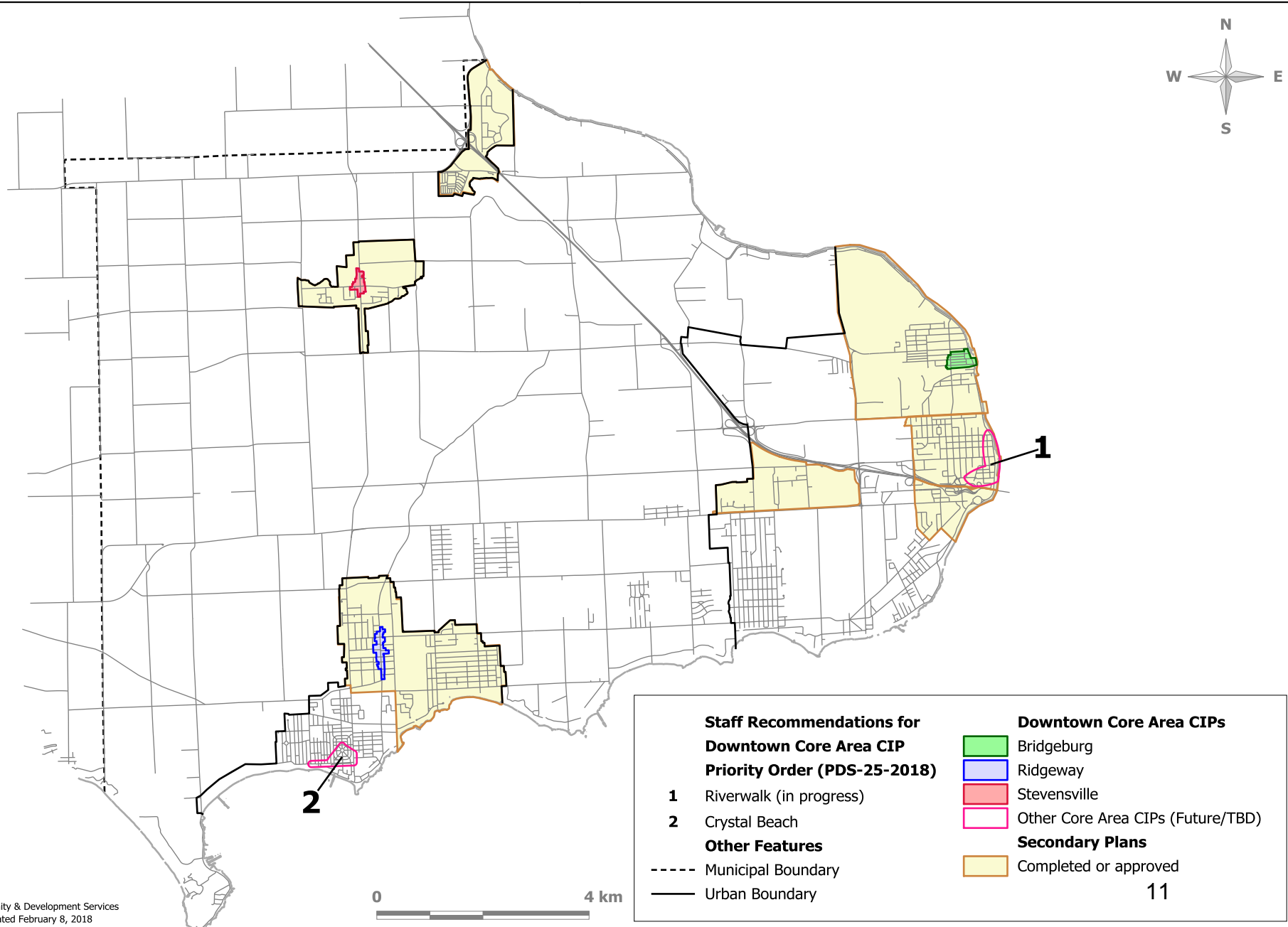
Appendix “2” – CIP Status Illustration

Appendix “3” – Boundary of Crystal Beach Secondary Plan Study Area

Secondary Plan Status & Remaining Priority Order



Downtown Core Area Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Status





CRYSTAL BEACH SECONDARY PLAN AREA