

**Appendix "5" – CDS-59-2013**

**RIDGEWAY-THUNDER BAY SECONDARY PLAN PROCESS – DRAFT OPA 15**

**Supplemental Secondary Plan Component Discussion & Information**

This Appendix provides additional information about the Secondary Plan components (*Residential, Commercial, Mixed Use, Open Space, Natural Heritage, Institutional, Cultural Heritage, Transportation and Servicing*), expanding on the general land use designations defined in the Plan and offering explanation and insight on certain aspects of the designations where it believed to be helpful.

**Existing Land Use Character**

The Secondary Plan Area comprises 527 hectares (approx 1300 acres). The existing land use character can generally be described as low density residential for much of the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay neighbourhood.

The Thunder Bay area of the Plan for the most part is almost completely low density detached dwellings with a few recently constructed townhomes (Ridgeway-by-the-Lake) and recent draft approval for semi-detached dwellings along Dominion Road (South Ridge Meadows). To date, most of the new development in the older, more established area of the Thunder Bay has been done through consent and low density detached in-filling.

The Ridgeway area has a slightly broader mix of unit type available, but it too is generally lower density with some multiples and higher density dwelling units scattered throughout the neighbourhood. Ridgeway also contains the commercial components that both Ridgeway and Thunder Bay residents access for their typical commercial needs.

The commercial areas within Ridgeway can be generally defined as two distinct districts; the downtown commercial core area and the Gorham highway commercial area.

The downtown commercial core was the original commercial centre, which developed further following the railroad's introduction of a station at this location. The evolution of the village core area was typical with commercial uses springing up in close proximity to the rail station and the residential community growing out from there. The rail and station have long since been removed with the Friendship Trail taking over the role of link in a recreational & active transportation context. The downtown commercial core has managed to retain much of its village character and ambiance over the years and is

experiencing a resurgence of interest following major capital replacement and streetscaping improvements.

Furthermore, with completion of the Village Square in the heart of the downtown, combined with the divestment of 283 Ridge Road North for re-development, the core area's social and cultural identity is being further enhanced. Redevelopment of 283 Ridge Road will be subject to site specific urban design guidelines to ensure a quality redevelopment that leverages its exposure on the square and presents an attractive backdrop for the civic site.

The Gorham commercial had developed in more contemporary times where automobile use was abundant and traffic patterns heading to Crystal Beach could be captured along with the immediate community being served commercially. The commercial character of the Gorham area makes provision for auto oriented customers by providing ample on-site parking. Many of the commercial structures are single storey with larger single user floor space than its downtown counterpart. This commercial district and its building stock is primarily commercial only with a few properties having a residential component.

There are several institutional uses in the Ridgeway area (Schools & Churches, Legion, Museum, etc;) with the remaining community comprising of parks/open space, very limited local commercial beyond the identified districts, environmental lands including the Mann Farm wetlands and waterfront. Much of the waterfront remains in private ownership with two public waterfront parks accessed by former Town road allowances.

More recent residential development activity has been occurring in the Prospect Point / Thunder Bay Road area with the Ridgeway Shores and Ridgeway-by-the-Lake subdivisions comprising largely bungalow detached and townhomes that have attracted a more senior demographic to the community.

Despite its large geographic coverage, which is almost completely built environment, the general character of the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay neighbourhood is low density, low intensity, with areas suitable for intensification that may offer a more diversified dwelling types supporting age-in-place concepts, a walkable community environment and adding to the viability of the existing and new commercial enterprise.

### **Components of the Plan**

Throughout the Secondary Plan's development, regard for the Vision Statement developed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process has remained a top level focal point.

***“Our vision for Ridgeway and Thunder Bay is a community steeped in the old and where its village character is maintained while meeting the needs of all neighbourhood residents. In 20 years, Ridgeway/Thunder Bay is the best little town in Niagara, a great place to live life, work, play and visit”.***

## **Residential**

Ridgeway-Thunder Bay has led the Town over the past decade and a half in new residential development with almost 1/3 (31%) of all new residential dwellings being built within the Plan Area. Much of these are attributed to some of the last large parcels or development blocks including Ridgeway-by-the-Lake, North Ridge Meadows, Bay Ridge, Beaver Creek, Deerwood and Henry-Browne subdivisions having moved forward with new home construction. There are a number of remaining large parcel development projects that are either registered or draft approved including Ridgeway Shores, Ridgeway-by-the-Lake (Ph.3), Crystal Ridge, Dominion Woods, South Ridge Meadows and Deerwood (Ph.2).

Future development beyond what is already draft approved or registered/developing is for the most part anticipated to be occurring at a smaller scale. The large parcel land supply in Ridgeway-Thunder Bay has dwindled and new development will be occurring on smaller parcels of land, consolidations and through in-filling and consent.

Residential development will be occurring under three of the land use designations shown on Schedule RTB-2 of the Plan (Future Land Use). These designations are identified as the "Lower Density, the Medium Density and the Core Mixed Use" designations.

The Town's Official Plan seeks an optimal residential mix of unit type that is 80% low density in form and 20% that is medium and higher type/form. Presently in the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Plan Area that mix is approximately 90% and 10% respectively. In order to head towards the Town's targeted mix, and going forward with new development approvals, there will need to be an increase or intensification within the neighbourhood more along the lines of 60% and 40% at a minimum over the Plan's horizon (2031) to bring us closer to 80/20 mix.

The Plan provides for Low Density up to 25 units per hectare and is reserved for single detached and semi-detached units. Areas of low density are shown on the RTB-2 Schedule and comprise the vast majority of the residential designation.

Medium Density is provided for in areas that are considered reasonable to support intensification and that are also considered reasonable in terms of a walkability to such destinations as the downtown and Gorham commercial areas or open spaces, parks as well as natural feature areas, providing access to these amenities within reasonable proximity to their homes. With respect to the Downtown and Gorham areas, providing intensification in close proximity will assist in bolstering their commercial viability and offer increased consumer patronage and long term sustainability. Medium Density is planned to provide a range between 25-75 units per hectare and is generally reserved for townhome and apartment style development form. When applications for medium density development are brought forward on those lands identified on the RTB-2 Schedule, review to ensure the development is context sensitive and is providing compatibility with adjacent development.

The Core Mixed Use designation also provides for a component of residential as part of the permitted use in conjunction with commercial retail and office uses. While no density limit or range is being suggested in the policies, ultimately the zoning for the mixed use lands will be restricting such things as commercial only at grade and building height maximum of 3 storeys. Combined with minimum requirements for bachelor, one bedroom and 2 bedroom unit floor space and parking requirements for the residential component, residential in the downtown core area will essentially be maximized through a form-based approach. Residential in the downtown core is supported for the benefit of commercial sustainability, walkable environments and added choice and affordability to the housing stock.

### **Downtown Ridgeway and Gorham Commercial Gateway**

The downtown of Ridgeway and the Gorham commercial areas have served the residents and visitor/tourists throughout the communities early development years to present day and are being reinforced for continued commercial operation with the policies of the Secondary Plan.

The Town recognizes character difference between these two primary Commercial districts within the Plan Area. It is the intent of this Plan to continue to reinforce these separate identities. The downtown area was recently the subject of a comprehensive infrastructure and streetscaping replacement project, development of the civic square and in addition, a Façade Improvement and other funding programs are being developed for the (proposed) core mixed use lands within the RBIA boundary. To complete the planning tools consideration should be given towards developing a comprehensive urban design plan for the downtown.

Town staff have, however, introduced some fundamental urban design guidelines into the policies of the Plan for both the downtown and the Gorham areas as an interim measure to ensure new and re-developing sites are building on each of their respective area's contextual and functional setting. For Gorham, that represents a more auto-friendly commercial environment and for the downtown, reinforcing "village" image and character is the focus.

The commercial uses found within the downtown are unique in their offerings and project more of an eclectic, small business feel over those found in the Gorham area. Not to diminish the value and commercial offerings of Gorham, or the fact that family businesses are found there, the image projected is truly more characteristic of highway commercial and seems to recognize that pass-by traffic can account for a good percentage of business; whereas, the Downtown has more of a destination and tourism driven commercial base.

In recognition of these two distinct commercial areas, the Plan is proposing to change the present "commercial" designation to a "core mixed use" designation that better

reflect the downtown built form, function and residential/commercial composition. There is generally little change in the intent by changing the designation, however it does move towards maintaining and protecting the village setting by restricting buildings to 3 storey heights, requiring new development to contain apportion of residential on upper levels and omits some of the permitted uses in the general commercial, such as the automotive uses and drive-thrus. Staff has heard from the RBIA on several occasions and there expressed interest in retaining their unique identity and quaint commercial niche'. As such staff are proposing the core mixed use designation as it strengthens the value expressed by RBIA and members of the public through the Public Information Meetings.

Respecting the Gorham Commercial Gateway, one of the discussion points during the consultations had been that the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Plan Area did not have designated employment lands. Staff are proposing that in addition to the more highway commercial setting currently embodying the area, that expanding commercial permissions to include such uses that are similar to what might be found in a light industrial designation, and restricting just where such expanded permissions could be considered. The zoning would define the types of uses in more detail, but generally uses fitting into this expanded commercial permission could be such things as a custom furniture manufacturer with some retail space up front, a commercial bakery as opposed to just a bake shop or a regional courier depot. Uses that are innocuous and do not require outside storage and uses that are Class 1 or better in terms of MOE criteria for sensitive land use / receptors (residential).

The majority of the Gorham Commercial Gateway area would promote commercial uses that are more stand-alone or multi-tenant commercial units in terms of built form and on-site parking provision.

### **Open Space (Parks, Linkage & Storm Water Management)**

Schedules of the Secondary Plan identify locations reserved for the Open Space designation. The Open Space designation contains a variety of uses including community and neighbourhood parks, specialized parks, linear linkages and storm water management facilities.

The Town of Fort Erie's Parks and Open Space Master Plan (OSMP) shall serve to generally guide the appropriate location and effective service area distribution for parks within the Secondary Plan Area. The OSMP identified the need for additional neighbourhood park space in the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Plan Area. A portion of that required is included in a Draft Plan for the Ridgeway Shores subdivision and is illustrated on the Schedules close to the northwest corner of Thunder Bay Road and

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Maple Leaf Avenue. This neighbourhood park will be acquired through the development process as a Condition of approval.

Also illustrated on the schedules is a neighbourhood park located north of the Bertie Public School. This park space was one of the modifications made wherein the 2009 Plan had an irregular park space adjacent to the natural features area and its configuration was not conducive to providing active play space. Staff are proposing the park space be situated adjacent to the school site to provide the public realm with a much broader sense of Open Space area. As a neighbourhood park, it is anticipated that standard provisions for this level of park space that will include facilities and structures. Details of the park's development would be looked at the time development in the area advances.

The Plan also has a collection of specialized parks either in, or straddling the Plan boundaries. These would be the Shagbark Nature Area, Maple Leaf Park (waterfront), Bernard Avenue Beach (waterfront) and the Friendship Trail. These specialized parks provide the public with passive recreational amenities and will be protected for their continued use in this capacity.

Augmenting the park spaces and in effort to build on connection for pedestrian networks and movement, there are a number of linkages that are provided within the plan area. Most notably, the plan is proposing to designate the unimproved Wells Avenue road allowance as open space, linking the Friendship Trail to Thunder Bay Road. The location of the Wells Road allowance is generally central in the Thunder Bay area of the Plan and in effort to take a leadership role in providing for increase pedestrian connection and active transportation options, this is seen by staff as a highly beneficial linkage addition. It is proposed that the trail be of low intensity and sensitively located along this route. It is envisioned to be a loose (permeable) surface trail of 1.5m in width with as much vegetation retention as possible, maintaining the bulk of the canopy and quality tree cover along this route.

Storm water management facilities are also lands that are designated as open space, and while these facilities are designed to mitigate quality and quantity of storm events, the Town desires to have these facilities present themselves in an aesthetically pleasing manner while not detracting from their functional requirements. The Town ultimately assumes storm water management facilities from developers who are required to design them to Ministry of the Environment standards. There are several existing storm water management ponds within the plan area and through new development additional facilities will be required to be constructed. The Town will work with developers to ensure the ponds are designed in a manner that contributes positively towards the public realm.

### **Natural Heritage**

The Plan contains areas of environmental sensitivity and most notably the Mann Farm Wetland, which is a Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) located centrally in the Plan. The Mann Farm wetland and other PSW's associated with the Beaver Creek and Six Mile Creek, and the shoreline area of Lake Erie are shown as Environmental Protection (EP) on Schedules of the Plan.

There are several designations used in the Plan that capture the various natural and environmental features found within the Plan Area. The Schedules of the Plan are used to help simplify where each of the features are located relative to one another. Schedule RTB-2 shows the high level designations of Environmental Protection, Environmental Conservation Areas and 30m PSW setback limits. Schedule RTB-3 and 3a further define where these features are found and components that make up the designations such as hazard lands (flood plain), Locally Significant Natural Areas and Woodlots over 2 hectares.

Respecting the areas shown with an Environmental Conservation (EC) overlay on Schedule RTB-2, the Town uses the overlay as a means to identify that these lands have an environmental attribute that requires confirmation of significance through Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to determine whether any development can occur within the EC areas. The purpose of providing the underlying land use designation is in the event that development was permitted within an EC area, the use of the lands has already been predetermined.

The EC overlay shown on Schedule RTB-2 is generally identifying or indicating Significant Natural Areas or Woodlots in excess of 2 hectares. The balance of the natural features are generally in the Environmental Protection (EP) designation that prohibits or severely limits any development potential, such as PSW's or Hazard Lands and therefore, are designated for protection under with the EP designation.

The approach of using an EC overlay is consistent with the parent OP documents and other secondary plans completed in the municipality. The Town has also now implemented the EC overlay in its Comprehensive Zoning By-law.

The NPCA are responsible for regulating the PSW's, Flood Plains and Shorelines. Any potential development in or within close proximity will be subject to their review and approval of any requisite supporting environmental studies.

For areas of EC that are not identified as significant, the Town is the approval authority. Development will still require an EIS be completed to the Town's satisfaction and consultation with the NPCA and Region would still be undertaken.

The policies found in the parent OP under Section 8 are comprehensive and apply to all Natural Heritage resources within the municipality. In addition to the policies contained within the Secondary Plan, the Section 8 policies shall be relied upon for guidance when development is being considered that could have impact on environmental features or sensitive areas within the Secondary Plan area.

Staff has consulted with the Fort Erie Environmental Advisory Committee on two occasions during the Secondary Plans development and has received Committee's endorsement through Resolution. The Committee recognizes that the Plan is maintaining its protection for the environmental features and that the strength of the parent OP policies are carried forward in this amendment for the long term protection and conservation of what is important to maintaining a healthy environment and ecosystem. Staff are appreciative of the Committee's involvement on these matters.

### **Institutional**

Schedule RTB-2 illustrates the lands designated for institutional uses. No new institutional designations are being proposed in the Secondary Plan and those showing are already in existence. As discussed earlier in this report, although the District School Board of Niagara have announced the planned closure and relocation/consolidation of Ridgeway-Crystal Beach High School with Fort Erie Secondary, planning staff are choosing to leave the high school lands designated for institutional use.

Future use of the site is dependent on further decision of the Board and any speculation on its plans for the site is considered premature by staff. At an appropriate time in the future, the Town will become engaged in discussion with the Board over its plans and should further amendment be required, such an amendment would be subject of an independent application process, which would be a public process like any other individual application.

### **Cultural Heritage**

Schedule RTB-2 also illustrates a number of structures that are either Designated Heritage Buildings or are on the Municipal Register as having been identified as potential for designation in future. In total there are 4 properties in the Plan Area that are Designated and 17 that are on the Register.

Planning staff have met with the Museum & Cultural Advisory Committee on several occasions to discuss the Plan and to gain feedback on the policies included in the Cultural Heritage section of the Plan. Staff has received endorsement of the Committee through Resolution in support of the Secondary Plan. Staff will continue to engage the Committee as it works towards structuring planned Community Improvement Plan funding programs for the downtown and to solicit feedback as it relates to such matters



as facade improvement. Staff is appreciative of the Committee's involvement and the input received through our consultations.

### **Transportation Systems**

Schedule RTB-4 of the Secondary Plan illustrates the Transportation Systems envisioned for the long term. The Schedule illustrates the broad range of transportation options and infrastructure that provides a framework to improve the overall network, and more importantly, provides for choices people can make in planning their movements throughout the Secondary Plan and beyond.

The foundational structure is that belonging to the road network and its hierarchy of service levels. For the most part, the road network represents that of a historical grid series of streets which provides for effective routing in the community. The Schedule illustrates the arterial Regional roads within the Plan Area and also the Town's collector and local road network. A large percentage of the road allowance have been developed or improved throughout the years, however some road allowance remain unimproved. Collectively, the road networks act and provide the primary role for movement within the community.

Acknowledging this, the Plan seeks to enhance select roads by identifying them as locations to strategically plan for improvement in the infrastructure to for other forms of transportation. While staff also acknowledges that such planning occurs generally over the long term, early identification is critical in building awareness and to subsequently plan for future improvement with identification in the Development Charges By-law and capital budgeting.

There is tremendous momentum building in the policies of upper tier governments towards implementing "complete streets" policy framework that considers provision of multiple modes of transportation as components of road allowances, particularly those which are considered primary routes.

Council may be familiar with the term "active transportation", which is the parent description for alternative modes of transportation involving people powered movement. Essentially, walking & cycling predominate under this term and in order to facilitate opportunities for active transportation, infrastructure is a consideration. Fundamentally, this translates to sidewalks and bicycle lanes. Not everyone has access to automobile use in their daily choices for travel and moving towards complete streets is a more inclusive approach to facilitating choice extending opportunity.

Providing a safer environment within our road allowances for alternate modes of transportation has been considered for select roads within the Plan. Not only do sidewalks and bike lanes improve conditions and promote healthier lifestyle for those

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choosing such means, it also increases accessibility for persons with disabilities within our community and also leisure use for simple recreation.

While complete streets focuses on enhancing infrastructure in the road allowances, active transportation is a pedestrian focus that can be enhanced by the ability to create a pedestrian network, furthering the choices on route selection. The goal is to provide an integrated network of trail systems and pedestrian routes (typically sidewalks of the road networks) that link common destinations within the Plan Area, such as parks, schools the waterfront and downtown.

The Friendship Trail is an extremely valuable asset in terms of active transportation. Its central location is an ideal east-west location that connects key destinations such as Gorham, the downtown and the Mann Farm natural area and its reach is regional in scale. As part of the Greater Niagara Circle Route, its already playing a key role in the recreational identity of the Region and promoted for recreational tourism that this community can benefit and build on. Connection to the broader Secondary Plan Area is a natural extension of this asset. Connection of pedestrian networks to the Friendship Trail is being provided for in the Schedules of this Plan. One such connection being the unimproved Wells Road allowance that staff is proposing be designated as Open Space and furnished with a walking trail leading to the south.

In addition to the Wells Avenue road allowance, there are other pedestrian linkages and trails shown on the Schedules; some for purely connectivity purposes, while others may be more of a passive recreational intent. The Shagbark Nature Trail being one such example. Efforts to institute an educational nature trail for the Mann Farm wetlands is shown schematically on the Schedules and efforts to implement this trail will require co-operation with external agencies. Nevertheless, staff believes its identification in the Secondary Plan is appropriate in order to plan appropriately in capital budgets as well as working towards actual implementation when the time comes.

Lastly, as part of the overall Transportation Systems consideration, access to transit service is given consideration for the long term. Transit service is presently provided to the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay community as part of the route that also services the Crystal Beach neighbourhood. In light of long term growth captured under this Plan, and a demographic that is aging within the community, the long term viability of transit is seen as a critical element in servicing transportation need within the community. The Schedule illustrates existing and potential transit route locations that in the opinion of staff, reflect a reasonable expectation in terms of potential routing over the long term. Staff acknowledges that transit service must be reviewed on a municipal wide basis in an ongoing manner and that sustainability of service is dependent on ridership. If demand for service is realized and ridership increases, the Plan is providing proposed routing for consideration should expansion occur.

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In addition to the existing and proposed municipal transit routing shown on Schedule RTB-4, staff have included policy in the Plan texts that recognizes inter-municipal transit is operating to Fort Erie and the opportunities should be explored that promote extending the regional service to Ridgeway-Thunder Bay. The suggestion being an intermodal transit hub or stop for the Gorham Commercial Gateway area (Dominion and Gorham Road), which is located at the intersection of the only two regional roads in the Plan Area. Furthermore, such regional service levels might then be capable of servicing Stevensville and Douglastown on its route back to the QEW and onto Niagara Falls.

As regional transit requires much broader government level discussion, staff are not identifying an inter-municipal transit location on the Schedules of the Plan, however should such an option become feasible, policy in the Secondary Plan text has identified this location as suitable in meeting such an objective.

Individually or collectively, the intent of providing an integrated transportation and pedestrian network is embodied in the Transportation Systems section of the Secondary Plan. It provides the opportunity and guidance in providing existing and future residents with options in making transportation choices.

Staff has met with the Fort Erie Active Transportation Advisory Committee and discussed the draft Secondary Plan with respect to the policy section devoted to active transportation policies and have subsequently received Committee's endorsement of the draft Secondary Plan via Resolution of the Committee.

### **Servicing**

Sanitary servicing within the Plan Area is available and does not represent any constraints to future development activity. A Wastewater and Stormwater Master Plan completed in 2010 for the Town of Fort Erie by XCG Consultants Ltd. indicated available capacity at the Plan Area pumping stations, having accounted for the projected population identified in the 2009 Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Neighbourhood Plan.

The Region of Niagara are presently planning upgrade to one of the pumping stations (Shirley Road), however, the upgrade is un-related to capacity and is characterized as more of a mechanical upgrade for improved efficiency.

Stormwater Management within the Secondary Plan Area will be required to be addressed for new development and shall be refined during the processing of development applications. Developers within the Secondary Plan Area shall be required to submit detailed stormwater management plans/reports demonstrating criteria and capacity are being met for their respective development proposals or how these matters will be addressed and resolved prior to any consideration of approval.

There are a number of existing stormwater management ponds presently in operation within the Plan Area with additional, new ponds proposed as part of current and future

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development activity. New stormwater management ponds require the approval of the Ministry of the Environment via a Certificate of Compliance.

The Secondary Plan Area will continue to receive its potable water supply via the Rosehill Water Treatment Plant operated by the Region of Niagara. Existing distribution networks within the Secondary Plan Area will be expanded or upgraded, as the case may be, as a result of capital works or replacement scheduling, or as a result of development activity of the private sector in consultation with the Town and Region. Supply of water to serve the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Secondary Plan Area is available and does not represent concern with municipal engineering staff.