



## Community and Development Services

<b>Prepared for</b>	Council-in-Committee	<b>Report No.</b>	CDS-78-2013
<b>Agenda Date</b>	September 3, 2013	<b>File No.</b>	350313.002

### Subject

**RIDGEWAY-THUNDER BAY SECONDARY PLAN  
APPROVAL OF TOWN OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT No. 15 (OPA 15)**

### Recommendations

- THAT** Council hereby endorses the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Secondary Plan (OPA 15) as appended hereto; and further
- THAT** Council authorize Staff to prepare the implementing Official Plan Amendment package for adoption and to forward all required documents and materials to the Regional Municipality of Niagara for approval, and further
- THAT** Council authorize Staff to commence CIP Planning for the Ridgeway downtown.

### Relation to Council's 2011-2014 Corporate Strategic Plan

- Priority: Infrastructure  
Goal 2: Enhance the ability of existing assets to meet future community needs.  
Initiative 2.6: Promote the use of our existing assets.
- Goal 3: Leverage value from infrastructure investments to generate future growth and revenue for the Town.  
Initiative 3.2: Promote development on brownfields and other existing serviced areas.
- Priority: Economic Development  
Goal 6: Engage with and support retention of existing businesses in Fort Erie.  
Initiative 6.4: Engage and support Fort Erie small businesses and BIA's.
- Priority: Community and Council Working Together (Governance)  
Goal 16: Increase public engagement in Town activities.  
Initiative 16.1: Improve our public communications strategy.

**List of Stakeholders**

Residents, Property and Business Owners including the RBIA in the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Secondary Plan Area  
Existing and Potential Developers  
The Town of Fort Erie, the Region of Niagara and the NPCA,  
School Boards and Utility/Communication Companies

Prepared by:

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**Purpose of Report**

This report has been prepared for the purposes of providing Council with Community and Development Services Planning staff recommendation respecting Draft Official Plan Amendment No. 15, commonly referred to as The Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Secondary Plan. **Appendix “1”** is a Key Map showing the extents of this proposed Amendment.

The Town’s Official Plan provides that Neighbourhood Plans be brought into the official planning framework of the Town, by amendment (Secondary Plan), with policies and land use designations specific to each of the neighbourhoods, while also supporting and conforming to regional and provincial planning policy. This process is a key component of the Town’s Growth Plan conformity exercise.

**Background**

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Council authorized CDS Planning staff to initiate formal processing of the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Secondary Plan. Initiating the process, staff subsequently scheduled a Statutory Public Meeting and undertook formal circulations for comment.

On July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013, a Statutory Public Meeting was conducted during the regularly scheduled Council-In-Committee meeting. Prior to the Public Meeting, staff conducted an extensive informal consultation process involving public, agencies and the approval authority (Region). The benefit of seeking early input allows staff to identify stakeholder concerns while providing opportunities to assess and address comments made, and where appropriate, modify the Plan accordingly. Early consultation is a key step in supplying community members with both awareness and opportunity to participate in the process.

For the purposes of comprehensive background reference, Council can refer to Information Report CDS-59-2013 received in July 2013. Report CDS-59-2013 provided Council with a comprehensive chronology of the process undertaken, including milestones and key commenting periods from public Information Meetings, Agency and Department circulations. Staff response accompanied the commenting submissions received up until that time, as summarized in charts contained in the Information Report appendices.

### **Analysis**

A “Complete Community” approach has been the underlying principle to provide for a:

- broader range of housing form with select areas for intensification;
- support and increased identity for Downtown Ridgeway and the Gorham Commercial Gateway;
- fostering employment opportunities; together with
- safe and efficient transportation systems;
- increased support for walkable neighbourhood environments and active transportation; and
- ongoing natural features protection.

### **The Secondary Plan**

As discussed in Information Report CDS-59-2013, this Secondary Plan strongly reflects the approved 2009 Neighbourhood Plan. There have been modifications made to further support key objectives and to address some of the commenting made during the public process. For Council’s immediate reference, this Plan’s key modifications have been to:

- More clearly define the distinction in purpose between the Downtown Commercial Core Area and the Gorham Commercial Area;
- Provide policy that better defines their commercial roles (eg. – prohibiting new automotive uses and drive-thru facilities in the Ridgeway downtown core);
- Seeking to broaden permitted uses in a select portion of the Gorham Commercial Area;
- Re-designation of Downtown Commercial to Core Mixed Use designation;
- Minor additions to the medium density residential designation to support intensification objectives and better support the existing commercial while providing for additional opportunities of unit type diversification;
- Provides specific criteria for establishing new residential intensification sites not designated in this Plan
- Increased identification and pursuit of active transportation awareness and infrastructure;
- Efforts to enhance pedestrian and trail networks including identifiable connection between the Friendship Trail and the water front areas; and

- Removes some of the conceptual roads that were shown on the 2009 Neighbourhood Plan, most notably Wells Avenue and on lands south of Thunder Bay Road.

### **Commenting and Agency Input**

The Information Report and presentation delivered to Council on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013 provided details on these highlights and also contained the commenting summaries.

Staff extended the commenting period following the Public Meeting in order to ensure persons receiving notice via water bill announcement could have an opportunity to submit comments with suitable time made available to them. No further calls or inquiries were received from public as a result of the Water Bill Notice.

**Appendix “2”** represents a summary of the comments received at and after the Statutory Public Meeting. This Appendix also notes staff’s rationale as to why no further modifications were made based on the comments made at the Public Meeting. There were only very minor modifications made to the texts and mapping as a result of additional agency commenting during this same period, which are also noted in **Appendix “2”**.

The Statutory Public Meeting was conducted on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at which, two (2) persons spoke. During the course of addressing Council, the first speaker had made several statements, one of which was concerning existing transit routing. Planning staff are aware that Council was in receipt of a memo from Infrastructure Services that provided information and rationale as to how the present route was established. This memo is included as part of **Appendix “2”** for record relating to this Secondary Plan exercise.

Respecting the first speaker’s comments on the schools sites within the Secondary Plan, staff would note that the District School Board of Niagara is being afforded the opportunity to complete their review(s) and make a determination as to their future school site needs. Until such time that the School Board has made a determination involving their land holdings, Planning staff recommend maintaining the Institutional designation and zoning for these properties. Any potential changes will be dealt with at the appropriate time in the future. Furthermore, the School Board has not made any request for a change in designation.

The second speaker made reference to his original submissions and his desire for Council to review them. Staff has assembled the speaker’s written submissions and submission made at the Public Meeting, again for record, and in response to the speaker’s stated preference. These are assembled as **Appendix “3”**.

As a result of the formal circulation process, staff are pleased with the outcome, which has resulted in very minimal and minor modification / addition to the draft document and schedules since formal initiation of the Amendment. The draft Secondary Plan has been provided in a format which shows where the modifications and edits have occurred in the document. This is attached as **Appendix “4”**.

This planning exercise has been highly inclusive and staff are pleased with the resulting Secondary Plan. **Staff are requesting Council endorse the Secondary Plan (Official Plan Amendment No. 15) for adoption and continued processing towards Regional Approval.**

Planning staff look forward to furthering efforts in the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Neighbourhood. Should Council adopt the Secondary Plan, staff will begin examination of the necessary implementing zoning changes to bring the zoning into conformity with the Secondary Plan and seek to move forward in the process of Community Improvement Plan development.

### **Community Improvement Planning**

A Community Improvement Plan for the core mixed use area within the Ridgeway BIA had been identified in the Neighbourhood Plan and again during the Secondary Plan process as a desirable attribute and companion to the Secondary Plan. The financial incentives that can be made available through Town structured programs can provide/stimulate opportunities for property and business owners to make physical improvements to their buildings where they had otherwise not been in a position to commit financially previously.

Preparation of a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a separate process to that of a Secondary Plan and staff are seeking Council's authorization to formally commence the preparation of a CIP. A CIP Project Area will need to be identified and established through By-law and the program(s) themselves, which apply to the defined Project Area, are adopted locally by By-law as well. Creation and application of a CIP does not require Regional approval. The process is an open and public process, much like a planning application, with an informal Information Meeting, public engagement and circulation commenting. There would also be a Statutory Public Meeting required prior to Council's consideration on approval.

Presently, staff envision developing three (3) financial programs for the RBIA area including a Facade Improvement Plan, a Signage Plan and a Mixed Use Residential Incentive Plan to encourage upper level apartment dwelling creation / intensification. Staff have collected some background work that will assist them in structuring incentive programs, particularly a Facade Improvement Program. Staff have an almost complete inventory of the buildings in the core and will make good use of this information to develop a program.

All details of the financial incentives will be developed as the process unfolds; however, the programs mentioned are those which staff believe will provide immediate benefit for those interested in pursuing further enhancement and residential incentive in the Ridgeway Downtown core. A decision on which programs to implement will be the decision of Council at a later date.

Should Council authorize staff to proceed, staff will prepare a report for a future meeting outlining the steps it will follow in the CIP's development, together with a projected timeline for Council's information and direction.

### **Financial/Staffing Implications**

The required Secondary Plan and any subsequent implementing Zoning By-law Amendments will be completed as part of the Town's Neighbourhood/Secondary Plan Program as provided for in the Community and Development Services operating budget.

Staff will also use its resources to advance a CIP program for downtown Ridgeway. Currently there are no financial impacts respecting initiation of the program and should staff identify a resource shortfall or need for additional budget allocation, this shall be identified in the Information Report being brought back to Council for their consideration and direction.

### **Policies Affecting Proposal**

#### Upper Tier Legislation and Policy

*The Planning Act* and the Provincial Policy Statement support the development of Secondary Plans. *The Provincial Policy Statement* notes that municipalities must have regard to the maintenance and development of communities that promote the "efficient, cost effective, development of land use patterns". This is best achieved through the completion of a Secondary Plan exercise. The development of Secondary Plans represents the Town's approach to addressing Provincial and Regional Growth Plan conformity requirements while having regard for local issues.

#### Municipal Planning Documents

The Town's Official Plan also identifies the need for the completion of Secondary Plans as a means of implementing the goals and policies of the Official Plan through a more comprehensive planning approach. Secondary Plans are the vehicle to allow for this more detailed examination and distribution of proposed land use formats, taking into consideration local context and local interest in developing a vibrant, diverse neighbourhood built on the fundamental principles of a complete community .

### **Comments from Relevant Departments/Community and Corporate Partners**

As noted in the Analysis portion of this report, comments can be found charted and summarized in **Appendix "2"**.

With the exception of **Appendix "3"** attached to this report, all written submissions (including Appendix "3"), commenting and response will form appendices attached to the final (adopted) document for submission to the Region of Niagara for their consideration on approval of the Official Plan Amendment (OPA 15).

### **Alternatives**

Council may choose to:

1. Support and endorse the proposed Secondary Plan (OPA 15) for adoption; or
2. Defer its decision to a later date; or
3. Request modification to the proposed Secondary Plan, to be brought back at a later date for consideration.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the level of consultation and participation by public and agencies in this process, staff believe this proposed Secondary Plan has been vetted thoroughly. Staff have considered all aspects of Provincial, Regional and Local interest in moving the Neighbourhood Plan of 2009 forward to its present state, as draft Official Plan Amendment No.15.

The draft Secondary Plan embodies and balances the goals and objectives of provincial legislation and our parent Official Plan with those of local interest. The Plan sets the framework for the development of a complete community while maintaining Ridgeway-Thunder Bay's village feel and character well into the future. Staff recommend Council support this Plan and direct staff to bring forward the adopting By-law.

### **Attachments**

- Appendix "1" - Key Map of Amendment Area
- Appendix "2" - Commenting Summary Chart – Post July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013 Public Meeting
- Appendix "3" - Public Meeting Speaker No.2 Original Submissions
- Appendix "4" - Proposed Secondary Plan (OPA 15) with Modifications