



Community and Development Services

Prepared for	Council-in-Committee	Administrative Report No.	CDS-59-2013
Agenda Date	July 8, 2013	File No.	350313.002

Subject

**RIDGEWAY-THUNDER BAY SECONDARY PLAN
DRAFT OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDEMENT 15 - INFORMATION REPORT**

Recommendations

THAT Report No. CDS-59-2013 regarding Proposed Official Plan Amendment No. 15, being the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Secondary Plan, be received for information purposes.

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, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, School Boards and Utility/Communication Companies

Prepared by:	Submitted By:	Approved by:
<i>Original Signed</i>	<i>Original Signed</i>	<i>Original Signed</i>
Chris Millar, CPT, MCIP, RPP Neighbourhood Planner	Richard F. Brady, MA, MCIP, RPP Director of Community and Development Services	Larry C. Adams, AMCT Chief Administrative Officer

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information on the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Secondary Plan process and the draft Official Plan Amendment No.15 (OPA 15) prepared by Town planning staff.

The Town's Official Plan provides that Neighbourhood Plans be brought into the official planning framework of the Town, 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.

This report provides Council with relevant information about the current and proposed planning context for the area in advance of the scheduled Statutory Public Meeting. Following the Public Meeting and any subsequent modifications to the Plan as a result, a staff Recommendation Report for Council's consideration on adoption will be advanced at a future meeting.

Attachment "1" is a Key Plan showing the extent of the Secondary Plan Area

Background

Recent History

Report CDS-55-13 was approved by Council-in-Committee on June 10, 2013, authorizing the formal processing of the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Secondary Plan and setting out general timelines for approval. CDS-55-13 provided general information on existing character of the area, components of the Plan, key modifications made through the preliminary consultation process and general timelines anticipated with the remaining process. Council should refer to this report for background.

As our Official Plan now requires that Neighbourhood Plans be embedded into our Official Plan, the amendment process was initiated to complete the requirement.

Additional consultation has occurred over the course of the past 12 months and has included broad input and opportunities for stakeholders and general public to comment on the transition of this Secondary Plan from the earlier adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

A list of the recent consultations is attached as **Appendix "2"**

A summary chart of comments/submissions received is attached as **Appendix “3”**.

Public Notification

Notice of the draft Secondary Plan release and statutory Public Meeting were made using requirements of both the Planning Act and those endorsed by Council more recently that were capable of being met.

Appendix “4” attached to this report provides information regarding the Notice circulations and postings for the Public Meeting.

Analysis

2009 Neighbourhood Plan

From the outset staff has taken the position the 2009 Plan was well prepared and retains its relevance given its adoption is still considered recent in terms of planning timelines. The 2009 Plan acknowledged much of the newer provincial and regional policy updates and plans such as Provincial Policy Statement, Places to Grow, Regional Policy Plan and its environmental policy update and also the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authorities updated development policies and regulations under the Conservation Authorities Act.

The 2009 Plan also provided a series of mapping Schedules that reflected the newer policies and regulation.

As a result, the 2009 Plan was in “good shape” and planning staff have generally approached the consultations from this perspective. The formalization as an amendment requires a prescribed process under the Planning Act and staff has used this opportunity to gauge and gain public and agency input in “tweaking” the Plan and Schedules through the processing of draft Official Plan Amendment 15.

Key Considerations & Modifications

From the outset of initiating the Secondary Plan (draft OPA 15), staff have taken a position that the Neighbourhood Plan was sound in its approach and remained quite relevant to today’s policy regime. Through review of the document, staff determined some modifications should be explored for consideration in making changes prior to the Plan’s migration into the Town’s Official Plan.

The more recent consultations and information meetings provided staff with an opportunity to seek input and feedback. This has been beneficial in both re-affirming the Plan’s relevance and also, that proposed modifications discussed during Public Information Meetings and through circulations are being generally well received by stakeholders.

Some of the key modifications being proposed have been introduced as a means of supporting more of a “complete community” concept for the Plan Area including:

- More clearly defined 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.

Staff have also separated the environmental Schedules (RTB-3 and RTB3a of this current draft) from our previous draft release, which was a single, composite plan. The single schedule was determined to be too difficult to distinguish certain features. Now as two separate Schedules, they are more easily discernible and are more consistent with parent OP Schedules illustrating environmental features and designations.

Although not a modification, Planning staff are proposing to maintain the institutional land use designation and zoning on the school properties within the Plan Area. Staff and Council are aware of the District School Board of Niagara's recent announcement concerning Ridgeway-Crystal Beach High School. However, until such time there are more definitive details on the Board's intentions for the site, no change is proposed. The existing Institutional designation and zoning provide Council with the greatest control and input opportunity on the future land use as decisions on changing the designation will be treated as a site specific amendment.

Should Council seek further information on these key considerations and modifications, **Appendix "5"** to this report provides additional supplemental discussion under the relevant component headings contained therein.

Growth Management

In 2009 the Region of Niagara completed its work on their Growth Management Amendment. Despite the present status of their Amendment 2-2009 to their Regional Policy Plan, the allocation of projected growth for Fort Erie was delivered and has been the consideration of local planning staff on how these numbers will be met. The Neighbourhood Planning and Secondary Planning exercises have been instrumental in planning for the 25 year horizon attributed to the projected growth.

In 2009, the Neighbourhood Plan identified an approximate population at the end of 2008 as being 4200 persons. The existing unit count at that time was indicated as being 1940 units. The Plan was projecting an additional 1100 units and 2400 persons over the 25 year planning horizon (2006 to 2031).

Since the 2009 Plan, and very recently, the 2011 Census information from Statistics Canada was released and based on comparative figures, which included building permit activity between 2009 and 2011, the absorption and population projection was generally in line with forecasts. At the beginning of 2012, there were an estimated 4400 persons and 2120 units in the Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Plan Area.

The proposed Secondary Plan has been carrying forward with projections contained within Regional Growth Management Amendment (2-2009) and until such time there is a need to review otherwise, these numbers are being proportionately accommodated within the Plan Area.

Components of the Plan

The various land use designations are shown on the series of Schedules of the draft Secondary Plan and are highly consistent with the 2009 Plan, save and accept those which have been outlined in the modifications listed earlier in the report. The designations are accompanied by policy text within the document. The Secondary Plan will be a complete section of the Official Plan if approved, which is also consistent with the format in which our parent Official Plan is structured.

The Objectives of the Plan are set out in “Part B” of the amendment document and lists 20 of the main objectives of the Plan in achieving the goals and fulfilling the vision developed through the Neighbourhood Plan process. The policies and land use designations are designed to support development that will meet with municipal and community expectations and to provide guidance on new and re-developing areas within the Plan that stay focused on the long term vision.

The components of the Plan are set up and relate to the Schedules in that each designation is provided with a set of policies that are to be read in conjunction with the parent Official Plan document. Primary components of the Plan are such headings as ***Residential, Commercial, Mixed Use, Open Space, Natural Heritage, Institutional, Cultural Heritage, Transportation and Servicing.***

Detailed discussion on any of these primary components can be found in Appendix “5” to this report.

Residential & Intensification

The Plan Area is predominantly low density. In fact 90% of the building stock is low density single detached housing with the remaining 10% being in the form of townhomes and small apartment buildings.

The Town’s optimal target for residential mix is 80% low density to 20% medium to higher. With the disproportionate percentage existing in the Plan Area, efforts are being

made to intensify select areas of the Plan to move the community closer to the optimal mix.

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. This trend is expected to continue over the coming decade and in order to accommodate growth, intensification is used to provide the additional units in ways that can positively support community interests such as increasing the residential in and around the downtown, while at the same time introducing residential unit types that can help with choice considering demographics and age-in-place opportunities.

In other words providing more senior accommodation in apartment or condominiums and offering places for our Town's youth to establish themselves in apartments such as those located above commercial use in the downtown. The Plan has sought to provide for these additional units and form with the proposed policies and Schedules.

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

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.

The Core Mixed Use designation in downtown Ridgeway is also being acknowledged for additional supply of residential units above the at-grade commercial.

Appendix "5" provides additional discussion on the Residential components of the Plan.

Financial/Staffing Implications

The required Secondary Plan and any subsequent 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.

Policies Affecting Proposal

The Planning Act and the Provincial Policy Statements support the development of Neighbourhood Plans, as a way to promote and manage smart growth, and to encourage increased densities and in-filling to reduce urban sprawl. The Town's Official Plan also identifies Secondary Plans as a means of furthering its goals and policies at a more detailed level.

The Town's Official Plan places strong emphasis on the Neighbourhood Planning component in achieving more detailed land use distribution and a "complete community"

approach to providing long term goals for ultimate build-out scenarios for the many Neighbourhoods in Fort Erie.

Staff is proceeding with the requirements of our Official Plan, under the direction of Council, on set priority of order in which the Secondary Plans are to be advanced and adopted. The Region of Niagara is the approval authority for Secondary Plans and following approval, the Secondary Plan will then form part of our Official Plan, giving it status under the Planning Act. The Secondary Plan process is a key initiative towards meeting higher level provincial and Regional growth management objectives and developing complete communities.

Comments from Relevant Departments/Community and Corporate Partners

Staff has received comments from interested departments and agencies through informal circulation for comment. We have also received comments from the public through our two information Open House meetings conducted for just such a purpose.

Staff has received formal comments from the Region of Niagara (the approval authority for this Amendment), which are supportive of the Secondary Plan. Additionally, staff has consulted with the NPCA respecting their informal comments and have addressed matters that could be accommodated. To date we have not received the final comments of the NPCA.

Resident and business owners had also expressed concerns over some components that have been addressed in the latest draft, namely the Wells Avenue road allowance, commercial close to Bernard Avenue at Thunder Bay, commercial identity of the downtown vs. Gorham and some conceptual road locations. These were identified in the Key Considerations & Modifications section of this report.

Staff has summarized the written commenting received to date in the charts provided as **Attachment "3"** to this report.

Formal request for comment has been issued and staff are receiving agency comments presently, and those having been received are noted in the chart. Staff will continue to receive formal comments and if in the event that issues are identified that have not already been dealt with through the informal process, staff will bring any such matters to the attention of Council and how the matters were resolved at the time of the Recommendation Report.

Alternatives

N/A

Conclusion

This report has sought to provide Council with a summary of activity related to the Secondary Plan's development and to provide explanation on components of the Plan and their role in working towards structuring a "Complete Community".

Informal circulation and consultations with stakeholders including the public, agencies the approval authority (Region), Advisory Committees of the Town and RBIA has been extensive. Staff will consider all formal submissions from public and agencies prior to bringing forward a Final Draft and Recommendation Report at a later date for Council's consideration on adoption.

Staff will consider all formal submissions from public and agencies prior to bringing forward a Final Draft and Recommendation Report at a later date for Council's consideration on adoption.

Attachments

- Attachment "1"** – Key Map of Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Secondary Plan Area
- Attachment "2"** – List of Recent Consultations
- Attachment "3"** – Charted Commenting Submissions
- Attachment "4"** – Public Meeting Notice Circulation and Posting Information
- Attachment "5"** - Supplemental Secondary Plan Component Discussion and Information
- Attachment "6"** - Draft Ridgeway-Thunder Bay Secondary Plan (Draft OPA 15)