



Working together with our community

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Council-In-Committee Meeting – March 19, 2019

Subject: Downtown Simcoe Secondary Plan
Report Number: DCS 19-44
Division: Development and Cultural Services
Department: Planning
Purpose: For Information

Executive Summary:

To provide an update to Council and seek acceptance of the draft Downtown Simcoe Secondary Plan policies for public consultation. The draft policies are intended to be the foundation and framework to be provided publically, to create the vision for future initiatives and proposals for downtown Simcoe.

Discussion:

Downtowns are an important component of the vitality of a community, and provide a strong sense of pride and character for a town. A downtown is intended to serve as the primary activity centre for the area, and provide a wide range of activities including commercial, retail, business and professional services, entertainment and cultural, recreational, and residential and institutional. Downtown Simcoe has been the topic of much discussion over the last number of years, given a decline in the traditional retail component, an increasing number of store vacancies within the downtown core and commercial growth along the Queensway. This issue has been raised by Council, a number of local groups and municipal staff.

A brief background of events relating to the discussion of Downtown Simcoe is summarized as follows:

January 30, 2015 – Downtown Simcoe businesses met with Norfolk County elected representatives and staff to discuss establishing an action plan for the downtown.

April 9, 2015 – Businesses and County staff / elected representatives undertook walking tour of downtown Simcoe to gather ideas and solutions.

May 5, 2015 – Ideas from walking tour shared and discussed.

August 5, 2015 – Businesses supported Norfolk County preparing an action plan. Staff get to work preparing a document for next year's budget.

December 1, 2015 – Draft Downtown Master Plan is circulated to businesses and stakeholder groups for feedback. Positive responses and support were received.

January 12, 2016 – Norfolk County Council-in-Committee reviewed a report proposing the development of a Norfolk County Downtown Master Plan.

February 29, 2016 – South Coast Business Coalition (SCBC) informed Norfolk County Council they will be taking a lead role in the revitalization efforts. It was understood that an update would occur in March. Council put hold on further development of Master Plan.

May 3, 2016 – South Coast Business Coalition made verbal presentation about downtown revitalization to Norfolk County Council-in-Committee. The SCBC offered to take a lead role in the downtown revitalization effort. It has hired a consultant, Jeremy Freiburger of CoBALT Connects. As a result, the development of Norfolk County's Downtown Master Plan was suspended until the report comes back from the SCBC.

August 5, 2016 – The South Coast Business Coalition asks business owners and employers in Norfolk County to complete a survey to explore ideas related to downtown revitalization.

January 27, 2017 – Norfolk County Council removes the funding placeholder of \$50,000 from 2017 budget for Downtown Revitalization, awaiting plan from South Coast Business Coalition.

May 29, 2017 – Representative of South Coast Business Coalition made a verbal presentation to the Tourism and Economic Development Advisory Board. No written report will be coming forward.

January 23, 2018 – Norfolk County establishes Urban Renewal Partnership project, focusing on Downtown Simcoe Secondary Plan and other projects. Province of Ontario provides additional one-time 50% funding in the amount of \$86,845.14 for downtown revitalization efforts.

As part of the Urban Renewal Partnership, a number of departments worked together to create a variety of initiatives. A summary of the initiatives is provided in Report DCS 19-34 – Downtown Revitalization Report, which is also being presented at the Council-in-Committee meeting of March 19, 2019. As part of the Downtown Revitalization initiatives, a Master Plan or Secondary Plan is considered to be a key piece of policy for the long-term growth of the community and to help foster a streamlined process and efficient use of infrastructure and investment.

A Downtown Secondary Plan is a comprehensive vision for revitalizing the downtown and is intended to address two important functions. First, it presents the community's vision for the future of the Downtown to guide public and private decision-making.

Second, the Plan indicates what the County's priorities will be for publicly funded initiatives in the Downtown.

Secondary Plans can be considered a second layer of the Official Plan, and include a land use plan with implementing policies that are adopted into the Official Plan to ensure that their intent is legally binding. They provide specific policies for areas identified within an Official Plan as requiring more detailed direction on topics such as land use, infrastructure, the natural environment, transportation and urban design.

Secondary Planning is a specific tool, which:

1. Helps understand opportunities and address issues related to land use in certain defined geographic areas.
2. Provide specific policies for those areas of a municipality where more detailed direction is needed for matters beyond the general framework provided by the Official Plan.
3. Provide an opportunity to promote consistency in new/developing areas and compatibility within existing areas that require revitalization.

Norfolk County Official Plan

The Norfolk County Official Plan is the principal land use planning tool to manage growth and development within the County. The primary purpose is to provide a policy framework to guide economic, environmental and social decisions that have implications for the use of the land.

Within the basis of the Plan, Section 1.3 i) notes that the Plan promotes the maintenance, improvement and conservation of building heritage and cultural heritage landscapes of the Downtown Areas and main streets of Simcoe, Port Dover, Delhi, Waterford and Port Rowan as the predominant social, cultural and community foci of the County. The Plan further promotes these areas as unique mixed commercial, office, residential areas that act as commercial, cultural, recreational and entertainment focal points in the County.

The Plan also provides the basis for development of secondary plans to address growth and development issues unique and specific to areas of the County, such as the lakeshore and the urban areas.

5.2 f) The County shall encourage the integration and design of arts, cultural and recreational facilities with local businesses, health and social services facilities, schools, parks, civic buildings and other appropriate public uses. Priority shall be given to arts and cultural facilities that locate within the Downtowns, and recreational facilities that locate within the Urban Areas or Hamlet Areas. Where appropriate, community services will be encouraged to locate in community hubs, preferably in or near Downtowns, where the congregation of diverse services will be beneficial to client groups and where efficiencies may be gained through the sharing of facilities and resources.

6.4.1 i) The County shall encourage the development, redevelopment and rehabilitation of the Downtown Areas. To encourage this, the County may undertake a downtown revitalization strategy for each of the County's Downtown Areas. The revitalization strategies may include design guidelines that respect the unique physical character of each Downtown Area which will assist in shaping public and private investments. The revitalization strategies will also include a strategy for the provision and management of parking in Downtown Areas.

Implementation of Secondary plans is managed under Section 9.5.1 of the Official Plan, and shall be prepared to plan for growth and development on large tracts of land within the County or existing portions of the County that require special land use policies. Should tracks of land for growth and development be identified, that are beyond the existing Urban Area boundaries as a result of subsequent reviews of this Plan, a secondary plan shall be required prior to development. The following policies shall apply to the preparation of secondary plans:

- a) The establishment of a secondary plan area shall account for any existing uses within the area.
- b) Secondary plans may be used to establish unique or more detailed land use policies or land use designations than that of this Plan.
- c) Secondary plans shall establish the location of key community services and amenities including schools, parks and related uses.
- d) Secondary plans shall be adopted as amendments to this Plan and shall be placed in Part II of this Plan. .
- e) The preparation of a secondary plan and establishment of a secondary plan area shall be approved by resolution of Council.
- f) The costs of preparing a secondary plan shall be borne by the affected landowners, and not the County. Should Council direct that a secondary plan be undertaken for an area that requires special land use policies, the County may either share in the costs of preparing the secondary plan, or choose to assume the costs without landowner participation.
- g) The goals, objectives and policies of this Plan shall be maintained in any secondary plan.

Secondary Plans shall generally include the following:

- a) A statement of the basis or rationale for the preparation of the Secondary Plan;

- b) A description of the area under study and the role and relationship of the area to the County as a whole;
- c) A description of the current land use, ownership, built and natural environment, and infrastructure in the area;
- d) A statement of the desired land use arrangement for the area;
- e) Goals and objectives appropriate for the area including a statement of how they are in keeping with the Goals and Objectives of this Plan;
- f) Concept plan(s) showing, where appropriate, the following:
- i. land use designations of the desired type and pattern of development with due consideration to the community design policies of this Plan,
 - ii. the nature and location of public facilities,
 - iii. the desired transportation network for the area and its links to the existing transportation network of the County,
 - iv. the nature and location of municipal services,
 - v. the identification, protection and integration of significant cultural heritage resources and Natural Heritage Features, and
 - vi. the phasing of development and infrastructure;
- g) Specific policies and strategies for achieving the goals and objectives established for the area that complement the policies of this Plan; and
- h) Implementation measures to ensure the orderly delivery of the planned development.

The Draft Downtown Simcoe Secondary Plan policies are attached as Appendix A for Council's consideration and direction to engage in public consultation.

Financial Services Comments:

The work related to the Downtown Simcoe Secondary Plan is being completed in-house and absorbed within the current base operating budget for Community Planning.

There are no direct financial implications as this report is to provide an update to Council regarding the Downtown Simcoe Secondary Plan and to receive direction from Council to engage in public consultation regarding the Downtown Simcoe Secondary Plan draft policies.

Interdepartmental Implications:

Through the Downtown Revitalization initiative and the Secondary Plan discussion, a number of departments and agencies have been involved including:

- Building and By-Law Enforcement

- Heritage and Culture
- Economic Development and Tourism
- Roads
- Norfolk County Public Library
- Downtown Simcoe BIA
- Simcoe Chamber of Commerce

The groups have worked together to stimulate projects within the Downtown, provide input, and assist in the framework for the Secondary Plan. Continued discuss will take place based on the acceptance of the Draft Secondary Plan policies to ensure a functional document is achieved for all involved.

Consultation(s):

Planning staff held two (2) Imagination Walks in June 2018 to engage the public and seek feedback to help establish the foundation for the secondary plan policies. Planning Staff also provided questionnaires to the public and local business during the Christmas in July event, and met with individual members of the community.

Consultation has also occurred between Planning, Heritage and Culture, Building and By-law Enforcement, Roads, Economic Development and Tourism and the Simcoe BIA.

Strategic Plan Linkage:

This application is related to Goal #1: Financial Sustainability and Fiscal Responsibility and Goal #2: Improved Essential Infrastructure. The establishment of new development in Norfolk County assists with increasing the tax base and improving the local economy, as well as creating financial sustainability and increased community pride.

Conclusion:

Downtown Revitalization is a key component to the growth and development of the community and economic stability. The policies are considered draft at this point and are intended to summarize the input received to-date. Through public consultation, the policies will be reviewed and revised to ensure that they are meeting the needs and intended desires of the community.

Recommendation(s):

THAT Report DCS 19-44, Downtown Simcoe Secondary Plan, be received as information;

AND THAT staff receive direction to engage in public consultation regarding the Downtown Simcoe Secondary Plan draft policies.

Attachment(s):

Appendix A – Downtown Simcoe Secondary Plan draft policies

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