



REPORT

REPORT TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Tara Buonpensiero, Planner-Policy

DATE: April 26, 2010

REPORT NO.: PDS-2010-0047

RE: Acton Downtown Area Land Use Policy Review –
Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PDS-2010-0047 dated April 26, 2010, regarding the Acton Downtown Area Land Use Policy Review, Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report (provided under separate cover) be received;

AND FURTHER THAT staff be directed to hold a Public Open House to obtain public comments on the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report;

AND FURTHER THAT staff provide a follow up report on the results of the Public Open House;

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of Report No. PDS-2010-0047 be forwarded to the Acton Downtown Area Land Use Policy Review Stakeholder Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee.

BACKGROUND:

Report Purpose

Through approval of the recommendations of Report No. PDS-2009-0034, Council directed staff to review the land use policies for the Acton Downtown Area. The Terms of Reference for the Acton Downtown Area Land Use Policy Review outlined a five phase planning process as follows:

- Phase 1 – Prepare Background Report
- Phase 2 – Policy Alternatives Paper

Phase 3 – Select the Preferred Policy Alternative

Phase 4 – Initial Policy Formulation

Phase 5 - Final Policy Formulation

The purpose of this report is as follows:

- To provide a brief summary of the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report for Downtown Acton; and,
- To seek direction to hold a Public Open House to obtain public comments on the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report.

COMMENTS:

Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report

Staff have prepared a Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report for the Acton Downtown Land Use Policy Review, which is the key deliverable for Phases 1 and 2 of the planning process. The Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report is comprised of ten sections as follows:

- **Section 1.0 Introduction**

Section 1.0 is the introductory section and includes a summary of the purpose and structure of the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report.

- **Section 2.0 Downtown Acton Land Use and Policy Review**

This section of the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report provides a summary of the community profile of Acton, outlines existing land use and summarizes the factors that suggest a review of the Official Plan policies for the Acton Downtown Area should be undertaken.

- **Section 3.0 Provincial and Regional Policy Context**

Section 3.0 provides an overview of provincial and regional policies relevant to this study. Documents reviewed include the Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement, Places to Grow – Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan, the Greenbelt Plan and the Region of Halton Official Plan. Related to this study, both provincial and regional policies promote:

- intensification and infill;
- providing an appropriate mix of land uses;

- compact development to efficiently use land resources and infrastructure;
- the conservation of significant built heritage resources; and,
- the use of a range of transportation options and connectivity among modes.

This section also discusses the Provincial Greenbelt Plan and the implications for Acton related to the Greenbelt Plan.

- **Section 4.0 Town of Halton Hills Policy Context**

This section provides an overview of Halton Hills policies relevant to this study. Documents reviewed include the Town’s Strategic Plan and the Town of Halton Hills Official Plan. In addition to summarizing the overarching directions from the Strategic Plan and goals in the Official Plan, this section also generally describes the Official Plan designations in Acton and outlines in more detail the three sub areas within Acton Downtown which are listed below:

1. Downtown Core Sub Area - policies provide the framework for these areas to continue to function as focal points for commerce and hospitality in the Town, by accommodating a diverse mix of commercial, residential, cultural and social uses and opportunities.
2. Downtown Complementary Sub Area - intended to function as a transitional area between the Downtown Core Sub-Area and the adjacent stable residential neighbourhoods. The intent of this designation is to accommodate small scale commercial and residential uses within the existing built form, to maintain the character of the area while still being complementary to the Downtown.
3. Tourist Commercial Sub-Area - intended to build on the presence of the Olde Hide House and specifically the tourist nature of the clientele due to the specialized nature of the products being sold there.

The Official Plan Schedule for Acton Downtown can be seen on Schedule A of this report.

The Official Plan also includes the policy framework which provides the basis for the Acton Downtown Land Use Policy Review, specifically related to reviewing the Acton Tourist Commercial Sub-Area. In this regard, Policy D2.5.1.6.2 states that:

“The Town will monitor development activity within the Acton Tourist Commercial Sub-Area designation. If development opportunities appear too limited to ensure viability of the entire designation or part thereof, the Town shall further consider alternative land uses that would be appropriate given the location of these lands at the eastern gateway to Downtown Acton as part of the next review of this Plan or through a comprehensive study of the Downtown Area.”

- **Section 5.0 Related Planning Initiatives**

Section 5.0 provides an overview of other planning initiatives currently underway or recently completed, which could have implications on the Acton Downtown Land Use Policy Review as follows:

- a) Halton Hills Intensification Opportunities Study - examines the potential for intensification throughout Halton Hills including the Downtown Area of Acton.
- b) Halton Hills Community Improvement Plan - outlines incentive programs and municipal leadership strategies for eight areas of the Town, one of which is Downtown Acton.
- c) Draft Comprehensive Zoning By-law - the new Town wide Zoning By-law.
- d) Cultural Heritage – the Town is in the process of developing a comprehensive Heritage Register which will result in an inventory of all buildings and structures identified as having cultural heritage value.
- e) Acton Business Improvement Area (BIA) – in response to a request from the BIA, Council recently passed a By-law to expand the boundaries of the Acton BIA to include Prospect Park.
- f) Halton Hills Retail Market Demand Study – an update to this study has been initiated which will recommend the amount of additional commercial floor space warranted for the Acton local market to the 2031 planning horizon.

- **Section 6.0 Servicing Status**

This section summarizes the current servicing status in Acton. In summary, the water and wastewater services for Acton are at capacity, but it is anticipated that the Region will be reporting to Regional Council in the near future on the status of servicing studies currently underway for the Acton community.

- **Section 7.0 Transportation**

Section 7.0 provides updates on relevant provincial transportation studies. Of particular relevance to Downtown Acton is the Georgetown to Kitchener Rail Expansion Environmental Study. This study is recommending GO Transit rail service to Kitchener and Guelph on the Georgetown rail line as early as 2011, and recommends that a GO Train station be located in Downtown Acton, adjacent to the Olde Hide House property.

- **Section 8.0 Preliminary Alternatives for Downtown Acton**

Five preliminary alternatives for Downtown Acton have been developed by staff and modified based on discussions with both the Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Committees. The preliminary alternatives include a review of both the boundary of Downtown Acton and the sub areas within the Downtown area.

The boundaries proposed in the alternatives range from status quo in Alternative 1 to the most significant boundary change in Alternative 5. In Alternative 1, although the boundary remains the same, changes are proposed to the sub areas. The area designated Downtown Complementary Sub Area has been reduced slightly, the Downtown Core Sub Area has been enlarged slightly, and the majority of the lands currently designated as Tourist Commercial Sub Area are proposed to be changed to Downtown Redevelopment Sub Area. This designation is intended to recognize the mixed use redevelopment potential in the vicinity of the future GO Station. Alternative 1 can be seen on Schedule B of this report.

Since each alternative builds upon the previous alternative, Alternative 1 provides the basis for the other four alternatives.

Alternative 2 proposes an adjustment to the Downtown Acton boundary to encompass the future Acton Library and extends the boundary to Bower Street and Church Street East, between John Street and Wilbur Street. The sub areas are the same as proposed in Alternative 1, with the following additions:

- The Acton library site is proposed to be within the Downtown Core Sub Area.
- The additional properties that front onto Bower Street and Church Street East, between John Street and Wilbur Street are proposed to be included in the Downtown Complementary Sub Area.

Alternative 2 can be seen on Schedule C of this report.

Alternative 3 builds on Alternatives 1 and 2, and proposes to add lands in the south east portion of the study area around Maria Street. These additional lands are proposed to be included within the Downtown Redevelopment Sub Area. Alternative 3 can be seen on Schedule D of this report.

Alternative 4 builds on Alternatives 1 through 3, and proposes to add properties fronting onto Main Street North in the vicinity of Knox Street. These additional properties are proposed to be included within the Downtown Core Sub Area. Alternative 4 can be seen on Schedule E of this report.

Alternative 5 builds on the previous four alternatives and includes a new block of properties between Willow Street North and Alice Street, north west of Bower Street. These additional properties are proposed to be included within the Downtown Complementary Sub Area. Alternative 5 can be seen on Schedule F of this report.

- **Section 9.0 Draft Evaluation Criteria**

The next phase (Phase 3) of the planning process for this study includes determining a preferred policy alternative for Downtown Acton. This phase of the project entails selecting one of the five alternatives outlined above. In order to provide guidance in the selection of an alternative, it is proposed that each alternative be evaluated based on the degree to which it:

- is in conformity with provincial and regional policies;
- is in conformity with Town of Halton Hills policies;
- supports intensification, infill and encourages redevelopment;
- maximizes opportunities provided by the proposed future GO Station;
- provides for additional retail/commercial opportunities as identified by the updated Retail Market Demand Study;
- minimizes negative impacts on surrounding residential areas;
- includes community infrastructure;
- enhances the environment and protects the natural heritage system;
- protects and enhances cultural heritage features; and,
- provides a logical boundary for downtown Acton and the sub areas within the downtown area.

- **Section 10.0 Next Steps**

This final section states that the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report has been reviewed and revised based on comments received by both the Steering Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee. The next steps are to bring the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report before Council and to seek endorsement to present this information at a Public Open House.

Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Committees

To provide input into the Acton Downtown Area Land Use Policy Review, a Technical Advisory Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Committee has been established. The Technical Advisory Committee includes staff representation from the following Town departments: Planning, Development and Sustainability; Recreation and Parks; and, Infrastructure Services. In addition to Town staff, there are also staff representatives from the Region of Halton and Credit Valley Conservation.

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee is comprised of staff from the Planning, Development and Sustainability Department, Councillor O'Leary, two Acton residents, and the Acton BIA Manager.

In late February 2010, meetings were held with both the Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Committees to obtain their comments on the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report. The five proposed alternatives for Downtown Acton, which are outlined in a previous section of this report, reflect input from the Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Committees.

Next Steps for the Acton Downtown Area Land Use Policy Review

Through the recommendations of this report, staff are seeking direction to hold a Public Open House to obtain public comments on the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report. Staff will consider comments received from the Public Open House when moving forward with Phase 3 of the planning process which includes selection of the preferred policy alternative.

During Phase 3, meetings will be held with both the Technical and Steering Committee to obtain input on the preferred policy alternative, followed by a second Public Open House. Subsequent to the Public Open House, the preferred policy alternative will be prepared and presented to Council for approval.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

The Strategic Plan sets out a broad vision for the community contained in eight strategic directions. This report relates to the following Strategic Directions:

- Foster a Healthy Community
- Foster a Prosperous Economy
- Preserve, Protect and Promote Our Distinct History
- Achieve Sustainable Growth
- Provide Responsive, Effective Municipal Government

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with this report.

COMMUNICATIONS IMPACT:

A copy of this report will be forwarded to both the Stakeholder and Technical Advisory Committees that have been established for this study.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

Environmental impacts will be considered through the evaluation of alternatives, which will be completed in Phase 3 of the planning process for this project.

CONSULTATION:

Through staff representation on the Technical Advisory Committee, affected Town departments (Recreation and Parks and Infrastructure Services), the Region of Halton and Credit Valley Conservation have been consulted on the preparation of the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report.

CONCLUSION:

This report has summarized the Acton Downtown Area Land Use Policy Review Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report, and outlined the next steps in the project which include obtaining public comments on the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report through a Public Open House and initiating Phase 3 of the planning process which involves selection of a preferred policy alternative for Downtown Acton.

Respectfully submitted,

Tara Buonpensiero, MCIP, RPP
Planner - Policy

Bruce MacLean, BA, MCIP, RPP
Director of Planning, Development &
Sustainability

Dennis Y. Perlin
Chief Administrative Officer

ACTON DOWNTOWN AREA

TOWN OF HALTON HILLS OFFICIAL PLAN
SCHEDULE A7











