

Acton Downtown Area Land Use Review

Draft Preferred Alternative Paper

January 25, 2011

Current Acton Downtown Boundary

Within the Town of Halton Hills Official Plan, the objectives for Downtown Acton are as follows:

- a) Maintain and promote Downtown Acton as a focal point for commerce, tourism and pedestrian scale activity;
- b) Encourage tourism and development in the Downtown area that capitalizes on expected growth in the Region and beyond;
- c) Encourage the development of a mix of uses to enhance the character of the Downtown area;
- d) Encourage streetscape and façade improvements that revitalize the cultural and historic character of the Downtown area;
- e) Further enhance the Downtown area so it continues to be a source of pride in the Region and beyond;
- f) Establish a definitive boundary for the Downtown area within which a mixed use, pedestrian oriented environment can be enhanced and fostered;
- g) Reinforce the importance of the Downtown area by identifying and promoting a complementary area for transitional commercial development; and,
- h) Protect the residential character of the area adjacent to the Downtown area.

The boundary and land use policies for Downtown Acton were established as part of the development of the Official Plan, which was adopted by Council in 2006. The current boundary of Downtown Acton and land use designations can be seen on Figure 1 and described below.

- **Downtown Core Sub-Area** - A focal point for commerce and hospitality in the Town. Accommodates a diverse mix of commercial, residential, cultural and social uses and opportunities.
- **Downtown Complementary Sub-Area** - 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.
- **Tourist Commercial Sub-Area** – Permits retail uses that are more specialized in nature, which would draw people from outside of Halton Hills.

**Figure 1: Acton Downtown Area and Sub-Areas,
2006 Town of Halton Hills Official Plan**



The 2006 Acton Downtown boundary was based on a number of background studies prepared at the time, some of which have since been updated. Revisions to the boundary for the Acton Downtown Area and the sub-area designations within the Downtown Area respond to the following:

- the absence of a proposal to develop the Tourist Commercial Sub-Area as originally contemplated by the Official Plan;
- the planned extension of GO Train service to Kitchener-Waterloo, which includes a future GO Train Station in Downtown Acton;
- the Town of Halton Hills Intensification Opportunities Study, which examined the potential for the Acton Downtown area, and the future role of the South Acton (former Beardmore Tannery) brownfield site to accommodate future intensification;
- preparation of the Town of Halton Hills Comprehensive Community Improvement Plan, which includes both municipal leadership programs and financial incentive programs for Downtown Acton and the South Acton (former Beardmore Tannery) brownfield site; and,
- an update to the Town's Retail Market Demand Study, which concluded that between 2010 and 2031, Acton will require an additional 54,000 square feet of commercial space.

Summary of Potential Sub-Area and Boundary Revisions

As mentioned previously, there are currently three sub-area designations in the Acton Downtown area as follows: Downtown Core; Downtown Complementary; and, Tourist Commercial.

The following areas are already included within the Acton Downtown boundary, but are identified as potential revisions to the sub-area designations in Downtown Acton. These areas will be subject to the evaluation criteria described later in this paper. Details of each of the areas are provided below, and shown on Figure 2.

- A. Change from Downtown Complementary Sub-Area to Downtown Core Sub-Area. This change would recognize that some of the parcels have historical built forms and land uses that are not typically associated with a Downtown, for example auto body repair establishments. Including these lands within the Downtown Core Sub-Area is intended to help facilitate redevelopment.
- B. Change from Downtown Core Sub-Area to Acton Downtown Complementary Sub-Area. The built form in these areas are predominantly single family detached dwellings, and may be more appropriately designated Acton Downtown Complementary Sub-Area which would continue to permit residential uses as well as a small range of commercial uses (such as business offices, medical offices) within the existing built form. This area is intended to provide a transition area from the adjacent Downtown Core Sub-Area.
- C. Change from Tourist Commercial Sub-Area to Downtown Core Sub-Area and Acton Downtown Complementary Sub-Area. The lands with frontage on Mill Street East are proposed to be within the Downtown Core Sub-Area and the remaining lands are proposed to be Acton Downtown Complementary Sub-Area.
- D. Change from Tourist Commercial Sub-Area to Acton Downtown Redevelopment Sub-Area. The Acton Downtown Redevelopment Sub-Area is a new designation, the focus of which would be for higher density residential uses in the Acton Downtown area, together with complementary commercial or institutional uses in proximity to the Downtown Core Sub-Area and the future Acton GO Train Station. This designation would no longer limit uses to those that are related to the tourism industry.

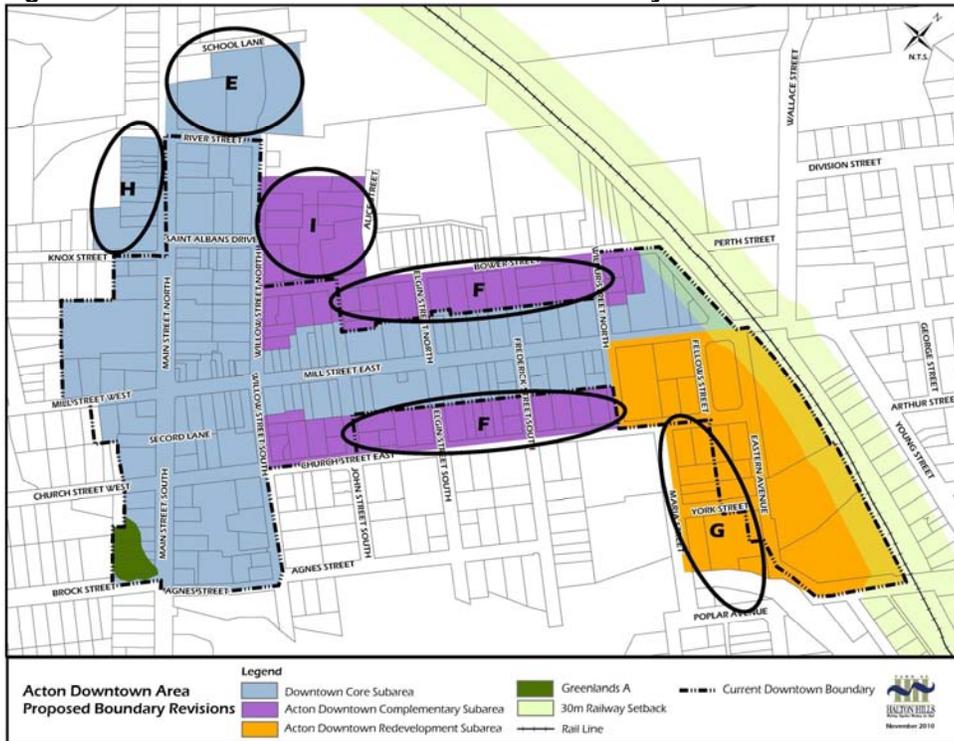
Figure 2: Acton Downtown Area - Potential Sub-Area Changes



The following areas represent potential revisions to the boundary of Downtown Acton as well as new sub-area designations within the Downtown Area. These areas will be subject to the evaluation criteria described later in this paper. Details of each of the areas are provided below, and shown on Figure 3.

- E. Include the Acton library.
- F. Include as Acton Downtown Complementary Sub-Area, which would permit a small range of commercial uses within the existing built form and would provide a transition area from the adjacent Downtown Core Sub-Area.
- G. Include as Acton Downtown Redevelopment Sub-Area which would provide additional lands for future mixed use redevelopment in the vicinity of the future proposed GO Train Station.
- H. Include as Downtown Core Sub-Area to provide opportunities for future redevelopment on lands that front onto Main Street North.
- I. Include as Acton Downtown Complementary Sub-Area which would include the Post Office in the Downtown. This area would continue to permit residential uses as well as a limited range of commercial uses (such as business offices, medical offices) within the existing built form.

Figure 3: Acton Downtown Area – Potential Boundary Revisions



Evaluation of Alternatives

Through the Background and Preliminary Alternatives Report, staff conducted a review of applicable provincial, regional and local policies. Through this policy review it was evident that since the provincial and regional policies are more broadly applied, they would not directly influence the delineation of the boundary for Downtown Acton, or the sub-areas within Downtown Acton. It is recognized however, that changes to Downtown Acton that promote a mix of uses in the Downtown area support the following broad provincial and regional policy areas:

- promoting infill and intensification;
- protecting agricultural resources;
- providing an appropriate range of housing choices;
- providing an appropriate mix of land uses;
- enhancing the viability and vitality of Downtowns;
- making efficient use of transportation systems;
- supporting energy efficiency and improved air quality; and,
- promoting compact growth.

Based on the objectives and policies for Downtown Acton as outlined in the Official Plan and the Town of Halton Hills Strategic Plan, staff have conducted an evaluation of the proposed revisions to the land use designations and the Downtown Acton boundary based on the degree to which the proposed revision meets the following criteria:

- provides opportunities for appropriate intensification and infill;
- supports the future GO Train Station;

- provides for additional retail/commercial opportunities as identified by the updated Retail Market Demand Study;
- is compatible with surrounding residential neighbourhoods;
- includes community infrastructure or community focal points;
- provides opportunities for redevelopment;
- protects and enhances the Town's Natural Heritage System;
- protects the Town's cultural heritage resources;
- provides connectivity to the former Beardmore Tannery property; and,
- results a logical boundary and sub-areas for Downtown Acton.

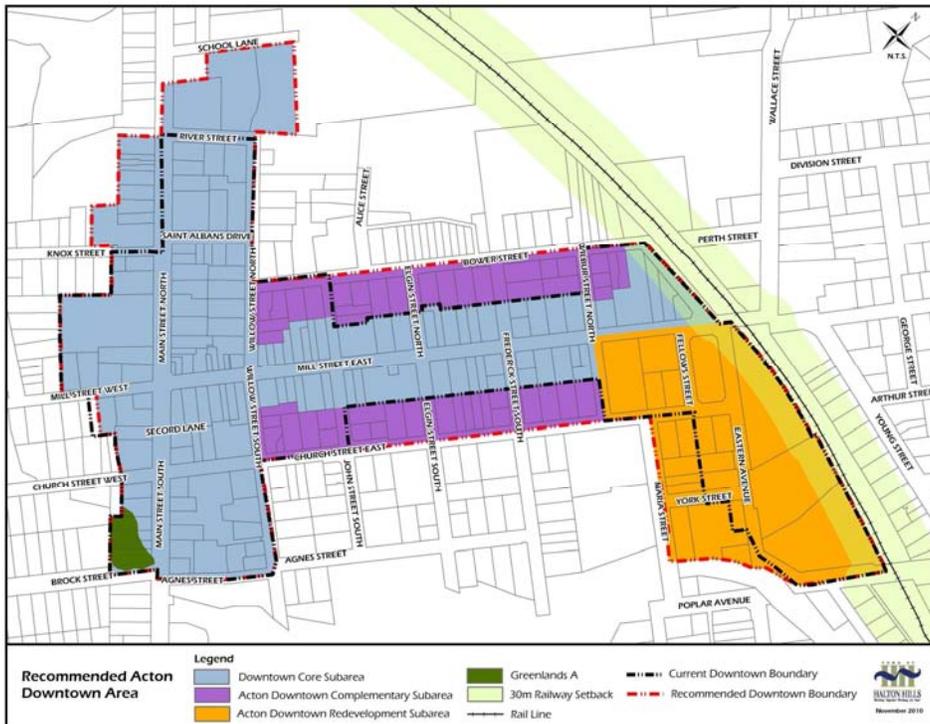
Recommended Downtown Acton Boundary and Sub-Area Designations

The results of the detailed analysis conducted on the proposed boundary revisions and sub-area designations for Downtown Acton are outlined in detail on Schedule 1 to this paper. Where applicable, each area is assigned a Low, Medium or High classification for each evaluation criteria. Low would be considered slightly meeting or supporting the evaluation criteria and high fully meeting or supporting the evaluation criteria. Based on this analysis, staff are recommending that the changes proposed in Areas A – H be included in Downtown Acton. The recommended boundary and sub-area designations are depicted on Figure 4 below.

In recommending the revised boundary and sub-area designations for Downtown Acton, staff have concluded that the resultant boundary is logical, best supports the future proposed GO Train Station and the future development forecasted on the former Beardmore Tannery property, provides opportunities for appropriate infill and intensification within the Downtown area, and with appropriate uses permitted in areas directly abutting stable residential areas, it was concluded that impacts on these areas could be minimized. In addition to the changes identified above, a slight boundary revision is also being recommended south of Mill Street West to align the Downtown Acton boundary with more appropriate regard to the current land uses in the area.

Area I is not being recommended for inclusion in Downtown Acton at this time. Although the area includes the Post Office and appropriate development could have limited impact on adjacent residential areas, Area I was seen to be too far from the core Downtown streets (Main Street and Mill Street), would have limited relationship with the proposed GO Train Station and the future development forecasted on the former Beardmore Tannery property and would provide limited opportunities for intensification and infill in proximity to Downtown. In addition, since the block is not directly adjacent to a Downtown Core Sub-Area, it was not necessary to have a transitional area in this location.

Figure 4: Recommended Acton Downtown Area



Proposed Policy Revisions

In addition to the recommended boundary and sub-area designations for Downtown Acton, some policy revisions are also proposed as described below.

Acton Downtown Redevelopment Sub-Area

It is proposed to remove all reference to the Tourist Commercial Sub-Area and replaced with a new designation called the 'Acton Downtown Redevelopment Sub-Area'. This area is intended to be a focus for higher density residential uses in the Acton Downtown area, together with complementary commercial or institutional uses in proximity to the Downtown Core Sub-Area and the future Acton GO Train Station. The main permitted uses in the Acton Downtown Redevelopment Sub-Area are proposed to be limited to street or block townhouses, multiple and apartment dwellings; long-term care facilities and retirement homes; and retail and service commercial uses in existing buildings. It is intended that complementary retail and service commercial uses, medical offices, institutional uses and restaurants would be permitted on the first floor of a residential building. New development or redevelopment would require a Zoning By-law Amendment with a supporting Comprehensive Development Plan including all contiguous lands.

Since this area is adjacent to the future Acton GO Train Station, the proposed density range is 75 to 150 units per net residential hectare based on the portion of the overall site dedicated to the residential use, with a building height ranging from four to eight storeys. The minimum density proposed for developments consisting solely of street or block townhouses shall be 21 to 50 units per net hectare.

Acton Downtown Complementary Sub-Area

The Downtown Complementary Sub-Area is proposed to be split into two sub-area categories: the Acton Downtown Complementary Sub-Area and the Georgetown Downtown Complementary Sub-Area. The rationale for this change is to respond to the comments received through public consultation and the evaluation criteria related to compatibility with surrounding residential neighbourhoods by limiting the permitted uses in the Acton Downtown Complementary Sub-Area to exclude small scale restaurants and new retail and service commercial uses. The proposed permitted uses for the Acton Downtown Complementary Sub-Area include residential uses, home occupations, medical offices, business offices, a range of institutional uses and existing retail and service commercial uses.

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	Proposed Sub-Area Revisions			
	A	B	C	D
Provides Opportunities for Intensification and Infill in Downtown Acton Area	Medium - Redevelopment of some properties could support mixed use infill development	Low - Stable residential area	Medium - Redevelopment of some properties could support mixed use infill development	High - As a mixed use area adjacent to proposed GO Train Station
Supports Future GO Train Station	Medium - Not in close proximity to proposed GO Train Station, but redevelopment will support proposed GO Train Station	Low - Stable residential area, not in close proximity to GO Train Station	Medium - Future redevelopment will support proposed Go Train Station	High - As a mixed use area adjacent to proposed GO Train Station
Provides for Additional Retail/Commercial Opportunities	Medium - Could provide an opportunity for additional retail/commercial uses	Low - Could provide an opportunity for a small number of live/work (possibly office type) units	Medium - Some properties already redeveloped	High - As a mixed use area adjacent to GO Train Station
Is Compatible with Surrounding Residential Neighbourhoods	High - Areas proposed to be added as Core are predominantly bound by roads	High - As a transitional area between the Core and the adjacent residential neighbourhoods	High - Area bound by roads	High - Already in Downtown , just changing sub-area designation
Includes Community Infrastructure or Community Focal Points	Medium - Adds church	Medium - Adds municipal parking lot and old Acton Town Hall	Low - No new community infrastructure added	High - Includes proposed GO Train Station
Provides Opportunities for Redevelopment	Medium - Some redevelopment opportunity	Low - Not suitable for residential redevelopment but some opportunities for a small number of live/work (possibly office type) units	Medium - Some redevelopment opportunity	High - Large parcels suitable for redevelopment
Protects and Enhances the Town's Natural Heritage System	The only natural feature within the Downtown Area is floodplain from Black Creek, which will continue to be protected.			
Protects the Town's Cultural Heritage Resources	Cultural Heritage Resources in and around Downtown Acton continue to be identified. Policies will ensure appropriate consideration of conservation options for heritage buildings that are determined to have heritage value.			
Provides Connectivity to Former Beardmore Tannery Property	Medium - Provides good east/west linkage from Downtown Acton by extending Core area along Main St. S.	Medium - Possible future connectivity, particularly the properties fronting onto Church Street East	Low - Limited connectivity	Medium - In proximity to former Beardmore Tannery Property
Results in a Logical Boundary/ Sub Areas for Downtown Acton	High - Already in Downtown, just changing sub-area designation	High - Already in Downtown, just changing sub-area designation to provide transitional area	High - Already in Downtown, changing from Tourist Commercial to reflect existing businesses	High - Already in Downtown, just changing sub-area designation
Recommended Change in Sub Area Designation or Boundary	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Schedule 1 to Draft Preferred Alternative Paper

	Proposed Boundary Revisions				
	E	F	G	H	I
Provides Opportunities for Intensification and Infill in Downtown Acton Area	NA - Only proposes to add library	Low - Stable residential area	High - As a mixed use area adjacent to proposed GO Train Station	Medium - Currently predominantly residential but possibly future redevelopment	Low - Stable residential area
Supports Future GO Train Station	NA - Only proposes to add library	Low - Stable residential area	High - As a mixed use area adjacent to proposed GO Train Station	Medium - Not in close proximity to proposed GO Train Station, but redevelopment Downtown will support proposed GO Train Station	Low - Stable residential area, not in close proximity to GO Train Station
Provides for Additional Retail/Commercial Opportunities	NA - Only proposes to add library	Low - Could provide an opportunity for a small number of live/work (possibly office type) units	High - Add additional mixed use development in proximity to proposed GO Train Station	Medium - Could provide an opportunity for redevelopment	Low - Could provide an opportunity for a small number of live/work (possibly office type) units but properties are further from Main and Mill Sts
Is Compatible with Surrounding Residential Neighbourhoods	NA - Only proposes to add library	High - As a transitional area between the Core and the adjacent residential neighbourhoods	High - Proposed mixed use development and is bound by roads	High - Bound by roads and adjacent to Prospect Park	Medium - As a transitional area from Core to the adjacent residential neighbourhoods - Uses could be limited to be compatible
Includes Community Infrastructure or Community Focal Points	High - Adds Acton library property	Low - No new community infrastructure added	Low - No new community infrastructure added	Medium - Adds church	Medium - Adds post office
Provides Opportunities for Redevelopment	NA - Only proposes to add library	Low - Not suitable for residential redevelopment but some opportunities for a small number of live/work (possibly office type) units	High - Properties adjacent to proposed GO Train Station suitable for redevelopment	Medium - Some redevelopment opportunity	Low - Minimal opportunity for redevelopment
Protects and Enhances the Town's Natural Heritage System	The only natural feature within the Downtown Area is floodplain from Black Creek, which will continue to be protected.				
Protects the Town's Cultural Heritage Resources	Cultural Heritage Resources in and around Downtown Acton continue to be identified. Policies will ensure appropriate consideration of conservation options for heritage buildings that are determined to have heritage value.				
Provides Connectivity to Former Beardmore Tannery Property	Low - Limited connectivity	Medium - Could provide future connectivity, particularly the properties fronting onto Church Street East	Medium - In proximity to former Beardmore Tannery Property	Low - Limited connectivity	Low - Limited connectivity
Results in a Logical Boundary/ Sub Areas for Downtown Acton	High - Logical to include Library in Downtown Acton	High - Logical to end boundary at Church and Bower Streets	High - Predominantly bound by roads	High - Logical boundary to extend Core along Main St. N. and bound by Prospect Park	Low - Stable residential area removed from core of Downtown - Not needed for transitional area
Recommended Change in Sub Area Designation or Boundary	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No