



CITY OF KINGSTON

INFORMATION REPORT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

Report No.: PC-10-013

TO: Chair and Members of Planning Committee

FROM: Cynthia Beach
Commissioner, Sustainability and Growth

RESOURCE STAFF: George Wallace
Director, Planning and Development Department

DATE OF MEETING: 2010-01-07

SUBJECT: **Urban Design Guidelines – New Neighbourhoods and Low and Medium Density Residential Intensification**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City of Kingston has retained Brook McLroy Inc. Planning + Urban Design / Pace Architects to undertake two sets of urban design guidelines. The first set of guidelines will be for new neighbourhoods, while the second set of guidelines will address low and medium density residential intensification.

The Urban Design Guidelines for New Neighbourhoods will apply to large areas of land within the urban area that have not been previously developed, or that have the potential to be extensively redeveloped. The guidelines will assist the public and private sectors in the design and development of individual subdivisions, as well as larger communities or secondary plan areas. The design guidelines will also apply to large redevelopment projects, including brownfield sites.

The Urban Design Guidelines for Low and Medium Density Residential Intensification will apply to residential additions, infill, and redevelopment in the urban area. The guidelines will assist the public and private sectors in the restoration, development, and redevelopment of buildings in a way that is compatible with existing residential neighbourhoods.

As part of the development of the design guidelines, two public open houses and workshops are planned. The first open house and workshop will tentatively be held on Wednesday, February 3, 2010 in Memorial Hall, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., and again from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Both sets of design guidelines are expected to be complete by the summer of 2010.

RECOMMENDATION:

This report is for information purposes.

AUTHORIZING SIGNATURES:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER Cynthia Beach, P.Eng., MCIP, RPP, Commissioner, Sustainability and Growth
ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER Gerard Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer

CONSULTATION WITH THE FOLLOWING COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Thurston, <i>Community Development Services</i>	N/R
Commissioner Leger, <i>Corporate Services</i>	N/R
Jim Keech, President, <i>Utilities Kingston</i>	N/R

(N/R indicates consultation not required)

OPTIONS/DISCUSSION:

The City of Kingston has retained Brook McIlroy Inc. Planning + Urban Design / Pace Architects (BMI/Pace) to undertake two sets of urban design guidelines: Urban Design Guidelines for New Neighbourhoods and Urban Design Guidelines for Low and Medium Density Residential Intensification. BMI/Pace is a multi-disciplinary firm, with expertise in planning, urban design, architecture, and landscape architecture, who have previously done work for the City, and they have completed similar studies for a number of other municipalities.

Urban design guidelines for both new neighbourhoods and residential intensification will support the implementation of the new Official Plan, which recognizes the value of quality architecture and vibrant communities. The Intensification Guidelines were initially identified several years ago through the Downtown Residential Review and as part of the preparation of the Official Plan. The New Neighbourhood guidelines were identified several years ago as a result of design challenges related to new subdivisions. Currently, the only urban design guidelines for the City are the *Downtown and Harbour Area Architectural Guidelines* (2008), and the *Urban Design Guidelines for the North Block Central Business District* (2007), both of which have been incorporated in the new Official Plan. However, there are also a number of heritage conservation districts and secondary plans that contain policies and provisions related to design.

The intent of the design guidelines will be to describe, in words and illustrative pictures, the City's policies and general urban design objectives for both new development and redevelopment within Kingston. The guidelines will be of assistance to development proponents when preparing plans for their project, and to staff, the public, and City committees in assessing the merits of the proposals.

Depending on the final product, there may be elements of the guidelines that may be incorporated as policy amendments to the Official Plan, as well as the new Comprehensive Zoning By-Law.

The remainder of this report describes the two sets of design guidelines in more detail, as well as the next steps for the overall project.

Urban Design Guidelines for New Neighbourhoods

Urban Design Guidelines for New Neighbourhoods will support the implementation of Official Plan policies that address the need for neighbourhoods to be attractive and foster a sense of community. More specifically, these guidelines will ensure that communities are designed to be safe, accessible, and sustainable, and that they contribute to the variety of building types and designs in the City. The guidelines will also assist in formulating the new Comprehensive Zoning By-Law.

The appropriate design of buildings and streetscapes is an important component to the growth of a City, and is essential for achieving sustainability in an urban environment. The Urban Design Guidelines for New Neighbourhoods will help to implement the policies of the Official Plan and facilitate the approvals process by highlighting the desired form of development.

The Urban Design Guidelines for New Neighbourhoods will apply to large areas of land within the urban area that have not been previously developed, or that have the potential to be extensively redeveloped. The guidelines will assist the public and private sectors in the design and development of individual subdivisions, as well as larger communities or secondary plan areas. The design guidelines will also apply to large redevelopment projects, including brownfield sites.

Significant development has taken place in the City of Kingston over the last few years, particularly in the form of new residential subdivisions. However, many of the subdivisions have been developed primarily with single detached dwelling units, and very few local amenities, such as community or commercial services. The result has been that these areas are very auto-dependent with respect to traveling to work or shopping locations. Also, over the course of many developments and proposals, numerous design-related concerns have arisen. Some of the concerns are specific to the design of the subdivisions, while others are broader concerns about the design of the community or overall neighbourhood.

Some of the recurring broader community design issues include:

- The homogeneity of housing types and densities (primarily small lot, single detached dwellings);
- Housing designs where garages dominate the front yard/public realm;
- Lack of mixed use in larger neighbourhoods;
- Open space – a need for balance in terms of the number of parks, locations throughout neighbourhoods, community versus neighbourhood sized parks, and the quality and location of lands dedicated for parkland;
- Conservation of natural features and topography;
- Overall street layout and connections to adjacent areas;
- The “walkability” of neighbourhoods and pedestrian linkages; and,
- Other sustainable design issues – site layout for passive solar energy, accommodating cyclists and transit, etc.

The concerns relating to the design of individual subdivisions include:

- Street widths and design, including concerns about snow removal, particularly on cul-de-sacs and “bulbed” corners;
- Side yard setbacks and issues with the overhang of roofs;
- Lack of on-street parking spaces;
- The width and area of driveways in relation to the overall size of the front yard, including concerns about snow storage; and,
- Lack of space in the right-of-way for tree planting, infrastructure, snow storage and other amenities.

The Urban Design Guidelines for New Neighbourhoods will address the concerns raised above. The intent of the project is to produce general design guidelines that can be used throughout the City to guide the development and redevelopment of neighbourhoods.

The main objectives of the Urban Design Guidelines for New Neighbourhoods are as follows:

- 1) To create streetscapes and public spaces that are attractive, safe and accessible;
- 2) To have a more compact urban form that will consume less land and fewer natural resources;
- 3) To protect and integrate the environmental, topographic, and cultural features of a site or area into the overall design of the neighbourhood;
- 4) To ensure compatibility and linkages between different land uses in the neighbourhood, and with adjacent neighbourhoods;
- 5) To provide for different housing types, sizes, and designs that accommodate a variety of occupants and lifestyles, and that offer quality, accessibility, affordability, and a sense of identity and place;
- 6) To facilitate the development of residential sites that are designed to provide appropriate spaces for parking, snow storage, street trees, and other amenities, and to help regulate garage setbacks so that they don't dominate the streetscape;
- 7) To create a comfortable and convenient pedestrian and cycling environment;
- 8) To facilitate transit-oriented development;
- 9) To provide appropriate standards for road design that maximize safety (e.g. traffic calming measures), and minimize impacts on municipal operations (e.g. snow removal);

- 10) To establish a system of parks and greenspaces that are plentiful, accessible, and connected to each other;
- 11) To include community facilities and commercial services and businesses within the overall design of the community; and,
- 12) To incorporate environmental innovation and sustainability by using "green" technology and design principles.

In terms of the application of the Urban Design Guidelines for New Neighbourhoods, they will be used to:

- Provide direction to the development review process for areas without an approved secondary plan;
- Complement and enhance any design considerations in approved secondary plans;
- Assist in the preparation of any future secondary plans, as well as updates to the Official Plan or Zoning By-Law; and,
- Provide a foundation for zoning provisions related to yard setbacks, driveways, etc. in the new Comprehensive Zoning By-Law.

The Urban Design Guidelines for New Neighbourhoods will illustrate the City's design expectations, including aspects of sustainable design, and provide guidance to staff, Council, the development community, and the public during the development review process. These guidelines are not intended to address the details of every individual site, but instead, will provide guidance on the relationship between adjacent sites and between a site and the public street.

Urban Design Guidelines for Low and Medium Density Residential Intensification

The Urban Design Guidelines for Low and Medium Density Residential Intensification will support the implementation of Official Plan policies that address the need to preserve the character of existing residential neighbourhoods. More specifically, these guidelines will help to: maintain the unique sense of place derived from the various streetscapes; protect the heritage character of some of the older neighbourhoods in the City; encourage compatible additions, alterations, and renovations to buildings; and, facilitate compatible new construction.

As part of the process of producing the new Official Plan, the *Urban Growth Strategy* was undertaken to determine how and where the City should develop in the future, until 2026. A major component of the *Urban Growth Strategy* was the recommendation for intensification within the existing urban area, in order to take advantage of existing infrastructure and services.

As defined by the *Provincial Policy Statement*, intensification can mean the development of a property, site, or area at a higher density than currently exists, through redevelopment, including the use of brownfield sites; the development of vacant and/or underutilized lots within previously developed areas; infill development; and, the expansion or conversion of existing buildings.

The design of buildings and streetscapes is an important component to the growth of a City, and is essential for increasing densities appropriately in an urban environment. The Urban Design Guidelines for Low and Medium Density Residential Intensification will help to implement the policies of the new Official Plan and facilitate the approvals process by highlighting the desired type of development. Also, as part of the approvals process, the new provisions of Section 41 of the *Planning Act* now allow municipalities more control over exterior design through the Site Plan Control process. The new Official Plan includes enabling policy to utilize these new review powers. The specifics of these new provisions will be dealt with in a future Planning Committee report.

Intensification in the City of Kingston has already taken place in the downtown, particularly in the neighbourhoods surrounding the main campus of Queen's University. Concerns have been raised by residents that many of the additions and infill projects in this area are out-of-scale and not in keeping with the character of the neighbourhood. Specific concerns have included the massing, scale and height of the buildings, the incompatibility of the design and building materials used, and the loss of outdoor amenity space, often to accommodate parking for more cars or large building additions. Also of concern, has been the development of units with large numbers of bedrooms. While this form of development may suit the residential needs of some

students, it is not consistent with meeting the needs of other groups of people (e.g. graduate or mature students, individuals, young couples, seniors, small families, etc.).

In response to some of these concerns, the City formed the Downtown Residential Review (DRR) Committee in 2002 and 2003. The DRR Committee supported the idea of appropriate intensification for the downtown area, and provided a number of recommendations. While some of the recommendations involved amendments to the zoning by-laws, there were other longer term recommendations, one of which was the creation of design guidelines for residential intensification.

The Urban Design Guidelines for Low and Medium Density Residential Intensification will have to address the specific concerns over intensification in the downtown, including the heritage architecture of this portion of the City. However, the intent of the project is to produce general design guidelines that can be used throughout the City to guide residential intensification, regardless of the type of architecture in a specific neighbourhood.

The Urban Design Guidelines for Low and Medium Density Residential Intensification will be used to assist in restoration, development and redevelopment projects, so as to ensure that the integrity and character of existing residential neighbourhoods is maintained. The guidelines will also create an environment where old and new buildings can co-exist in harmony, and assist property owners in planning appropriate building renovations and any new construction.

The main objectives of the Urban Design Guidelines for Low and Medium Density Residential Intensification are as follows:

- 1) To enhance city streets and improve the public realm;
- 2) To have a more compact urban form that will consume less land and fewer natural resources;
- 3) To appropriately integrate new development into an existing neighbourhood by honouring its character, architecture, and landscape heritage;
- 4) To provide for housing designs that offer variety, quality, accessibility, and a sense of identity and place;
- 5) To provide for housing designs that accommodate a variety of occupants, and that can be viable on the wider housing and rental markets for the long term;
- 6) To incorporate environmental innovation and sustainability by using "green" technology and design principles; and,
- 7) To support and extend established landscaping, especially the inclusion of more soft landscaping and plant material.

Next Steps

As part of the development of the design guidelines, two public open houses and workshops are planned. The first open house and workshop will tentatively be held on Wednesday, February 3, 2010 in Memorial Hall, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and again from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. In addition to this, the consultants will be conducting interviews with staff from various departments, as well as other relevant stakeholders. Both sets of design guidelines are expected to be complete by the summer of 2010.

EXISTING POLICY/BY-LAW:

The issue of urban design is dealt with in Section 8 of the new Official Plan. The Official Plan recognizes the value associated with quality architecture, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, and vibrant neighbourhoods, and states that the City may undertake urban design guidelines that apply to specific types of development, to specific areas of the City, or to the entire City. Any urban design guidelines that are developed may be used for the following reasons:

- To clarify the strategic intent and design objectives of the Official Plan;
- To complement and enhance any design considerations in development applications; and,
- To assist in the preparation of any future secondary plan, community improvement plan, or other relevant planning document.

NOTICE PROVISIONS:

N/A

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

This report is available in different formats upon request from the Accessibility Coordinator.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The funds for both sets of urban design guidelines were allocated in the capital budget.

CONTACTS:

- George Wallace – Director, Planning & Development Dept. (613-546-4291, ext. 3252);
- Cherie Mills – Manager, Policy Planning, Planning & Development Dept. (613-546-4291, ext. 3289); and,
- Sonya Bolton – Senior Policy Planner, Planning & Development Dept. (613-546-4291, ext. 3237).

OTHER CITY OF KINGSTON STAFF CONSULTED:

Staff from a number of different departments will be involved in the review of the design guidelines as they are developed.

EXHIBITS ATTACHED:

N/A