



Town of East Gwillimbury

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT ED2014-06

To: Committee of the Whole Council
Date: July 7, 2014
Subject: Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and CIP
Origin: Development Services, Economic Development Branch

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **THAT** Development Services, Economic Development Branch Report ED2014-06, regarding the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and CIP and dated July 7, 2014 be received; and
2. **THAT** Council endorse the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and CIP (Appendix 1); and
3. **THAT** Council direct Staff to develop and report back with a detailed implementation strategy for the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and CIP.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and Community Improvement Plan (CIP), attached as Appendix 1. This Report also provides an overview of the process undertaken in preparing the Strategy and CIP, including the extensive business, community and staff consultation that has taken place.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of July 29th, 2013, Council authorized a work plan for the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Project. This has been lead and substantively undertaken by Town staff. Components of this project required the assistance of specialized consultants, such as the preparation of detailed streetscape plans and identification of related financial tools.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The following provides an overview of the steps taken through the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Project:

Community Baseline Information Gathering

In 2011, the Town engaged in the First Impressions Community Exchange (FICE) Program with the community of Schomberg. Recommendations provided in the FICE report identified the need to establish a Downtown Revitalization Project for the community of Mount Albert.

Following Council authorization of a work plan for the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Project, Town Staff conducted a community assessment of Mount Albert and created a business inventory. Businesses located within the village core were identified and building ownership was documented to establish baseline information for the downtown core. This information provided a better understanding of the community's current retail structure and allowed Town Staff to identify any gaps or services that could potentially be addressed through a marketing and/or business attraction strategy.

Community Kick-off Meeting

A Community Kick-off Meeting was held on October 16, 2013 at the Mount Albert Community Centre. The meeting was promoted throughout the community and a total of 80 people were in attendance. Excellent feedback was received regarding what the community would like the project to accomplish. The results of the community feedback activity are summarized in the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and CIP document.

Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Project Resident Survey

A Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Project Resident Survey was promoted and accessible on the Town's website. In addition, hard copies of a survey were mailed out, collected and analyzed. In total, 154 resident surveys were received and the information gathered has been incorporated in the CIP document.

Business Owner Interviews

Town Staff created a Business Owners' survey. Business Owners have been interviewed by the Downtown Revitalization Project Coordinator. This initiative gave Business Owners an opportunity to provide their input on what they would like to see in the downtown as well as express the challenges they experience as a business in Downtown Mount Albert. The information gathered was summarized and incorporated in the CIP document.

Key Stakeholder, Council & Town Staff Interviews

Key Stakeholder, Council and Town Staff interviews took place on November 22, 2013. Common themes that emerged from these interviews included: a need for a community "draw", community gateways, timing and the project's expectations, pedestrian connections, building improvements, implementation of project strategies, parks and other green space. The feedback gathered from the key stakeholder, Council and Town Staff interviews has been incorporated in the CIP document

Community Design Charrette

A Community Design Charrette was held on December 11, 2013 at the Mount Albert Community Centre. This meeting was lead by Town Staff with assistance from The Planning Partnership. Afternoon and evening drop-in sessions were held. A total of 50 individuals attended.

The Design Charrette gave attendees an opportunity express their ideas, learn more about the design of Downtown Mount Albert and engage with The Planning Partnership. Architectural Drawings from the Design Charrette have been revised and incorporated into the CIP document, including:

- Community Concept Plan
- Public Realm Strategy
- Urban Design Concept: Village Core Area
- Urban Design Strategy: Downtown Area
- Main Street Strategy: Street Cross Sections (A & B)
- Building Façade Strategy (Example 1 and 2)

Working Group Meeting

On June 10, 2014, a presentation of the draft document was provided to the Working Group. Members of the Working Group included: Town Staff from Economic Development, Building, Planning, Finance, Community Parks and Recreation, Engineering and Operations as well as members of the Mount Albert Village Association (MAVA), the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), and Kathy Simpson (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food & Ministry of Rural Affairs) as an expert advisor.

Following the Working Group meeting, comments and feedback were submitted to the Downtown Revitalization Project Coordinator, reviewed by the Economic Development Branch and incorporated in the CIP document.

Key Recommendations

The Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and Community Improvement Plan includes key recommendations to support the implementation of this project. These focus on the public realm streetscape, various implementation tools, private redevelopment, regulatory provisions, marketing and promotion.

NEED FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization project included advertised events in the community as well as an online presence. This assisted in providing general background information, project updates and online links to relevant external resources. The online presence

also allowed residents to access the resident survey and sign up for the project's mailing list for updates. Staff note that a statutory public meeting will be required for the CIP. Recommendations as to the timing of this meeting will be part of further reporting on the implementation strategy for the CIP. All agendas, reports and minutes are made available to the public through posting on the Town's website.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization project was identified as a Capital Project in the 2012 Business Plan and Budget. The Town's contribution to this capital project was set at \$40,000. This Capital Project has been carried forward through the 2013 and 2014 budget processes. In accordance with the approved work plan, The Planning Partnership provided services in the area of urban design and streetscape treatments, particularly with the Design Charrette. Additional specialized consulting services were required to finalize the strategy and CIP documentation.

The project has been lead by Economic Development Branch staff, primarily through the work of the Town's Downtown Coordinator. The Downtown Coordinator position was funded through South Lake Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) under the youth intern program. Project costs are under budget. Residual funding from the original capital project is being used to leverage continued financial support from the South Lake CFDC, together with Central Counties tourism funding and the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs "Rural Economic Development" (RED) program. This additional funding would provide for continued downtown revitalization work and the extension of the Downtown Coordinator contract.

Implementation of the Mt Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a long-term effort and will require funding support to deliver on both private and public sector improvements identifies in the final report. As identified in the CIP document, funding sources for the overall effort could include:

- Private sector contributions through the establishment of a Business Improvement Area (BIA) and associated tax levy;
- Capital projects relating to streetscape and public realm improvement through Development Charge funding and potentially the collection of Local Improvement Charges (LIC's) from benefitting property owners;
- Capital project funding generated through the sales of surplus municipal lands in the Mount Albert community;
- Partner contribution funding through Central Counties Tourism for signage and wayfinding;
- Funding support from the OMAFRA (RED) program and the South Lake CFDC;
- Establishment of a municipal reserve fund to enable a loan or grant program through the establishment of a Community Improvement Plan.

Staff are recommending that a detailed implementation strategy be compiled for the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and CIP. This would be the subject of future reporting to Council. It is anticipated that components of this implementation strategy would have to be considered as part of future Business Plan and Budget processes.

NEXT STEPS

Town Staff are recommending the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and CIP be endorsed by Council with direction to Staff to develop an implementation strategy. As previously noted, a statutory public meeting will be required for the CIP.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and Community Improvement Plan (cover page only – full document distributed under separate cover)

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The focus of this report is aligned with the Growth Management Pillar of the Towns' Strategic Plan.

This report has been reviewed by the Senior Management Team.

Prepared and Recommended by:

Original report signed by

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Reviewed and Recommended by:

Original report signed by

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Reviewed and Approved by:

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Approved for Submission by:

Original report signed by

Thomas R. Webster
Chief Administrative Officer

APPENDIX 1

NOTE: Document distributed separately and/or posted on website as a separate link.



Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy & Community Improvement Plan

June 2014