



Town of East Gwillimbury

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT P2013-31

To: Committee of the Whole Council
Date: July 29, 2013
Subject: Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and CIP
Origin: Development Services, Economic Development Branch

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **THAT** Development Services, Economic Development Branch Report P2013-31, dated July 29, 2013, regarding the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and CIP, be received;
2. **THAT** staff be authorized to proceed with this project and to retain specific consulting services, as required, to assist with the preparation of a Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Strategy and Community Improvement Plan;
3. **THAT** the recommendations of this report be ratified in the July 29th, 2013 Council meeting to enable staff to move forward with the project in a timely fashion.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide additional information regarding a Downtown Revitalization Strategy and Community Improvement Plan (CIP) for the Community of Mount Albert and to make recommendations as to next steps.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of June 24th, 2013, Council received a previous report regarding the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Project. At that time, Council authorized staff to secure additional funding for the project through South Lake Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) but sought additional information regarding how funds would be spent.

The general area to which a CIP for Mount Albert would apply is illustrated on Appendix 1 attached and reflects the Village Core of the existing community. Specific boundaries would be determined through the CIP process.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Development Services Report P2013-25 dated June 24th, 2013 provided general background information as to activities completed to date in support of the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization initiative. Work to date has included consultation with the Mouth Albert Village Association (MAVA), the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) and key

community stakeholders. The following provides general information regarding the purpose and intent of Community Improvement Plans and explains the proposed structure for completing the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization project.

What is a Community Improvement Plan?

CIP's provide municipalities with planning and financial tools to rehabilitate and revitalize targeted areas. A CIP is a flexible tool that can address various challenges such as physical, social, economic or environmental in a particular area. The following is a summary of information from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's Handbook on CIPs:

- Community improvement planning activities are shaped by local needs, priorities and circumstances. Through community improvement plans, municipalities can:
 - focus public attention on local priorities and municipal initiatives target areas in transition or in need of repair, rehabilitation and redevelopment
 - facilitate and encourage community change in a co-ordinated manner
 - stimulate private sector investment through municipal incentive-based programs.
- A community improvement approach is a flexible, comprehensive, coordinated and strategic framework for dealing with lands and buildings, which can address many physical, social, economic or environmental matters. Over the years, community improvement plans have been used for a broad array of priorities aimed at rehabilitating and revitalizing targeted areas. Project areas may range from specific properties and employment areas to streets, neighbourhoods and entire communities, while program coverage can span a wide spectrum of municipal objectives including, but not limited to:
 - Municipally-Driven Programs: infrastructure works; municipal property acquisition, land assembly and sale of lands; municipal facilities construction and rehabilitation; public space, parks and recreation works; signage, streetscape and landscaping improvements.
 - Incentive-Based Programs (grant, loan and property tax assistance): brownfields environmental assessment, remediation and redevelopment; commercial building façade improvements; downtown/core area and waterfront revitalization; preservation and adaptive reuse of heritage and industrial buildings; provision of affordable housing; property tax assistance for remediation purposes; project feasibility studies; space conversion for residential and commercial uses; structural improvements to buildings (e.g., Building Code upgrades); improvement of community energy efficiency; and accessibility enhancements.
- Many of these programs support sustainable planning principles relating to more compact land uses, intensification, mixed uses, proximity of residential uses to employment areas, restoration and reuse of vacant or underused buildings, reclamation of contaminated lands, and strategies that integrate and link built form with open spaces.

- Common to all these programs is the alteration of the physical landscape of communities so that, in the medium and long term, public benefits can be achieved that result in more socially cohesive, environmentally friendly and economically sound communities. In short, municipalities are finding ways to become more sustainable through the use of community improvement plans.

Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Project

This study is expected to deliver on the following objectives:

- strengthen the engagement and participation of community groups, organizations, and residents in the revitalization of Mount Albert;
- strengthen and preserve the cultural identity of Mount Albert throughout the Downtown Revitalization and CIP Project;
- recommend initiatives, designs, drawings and project management strategies for Downtown Mount Albert;
- develop a Community Improvement Plan for Downtown Mount Albert including financial incentives;
- identify a variety of tools to finance revitalization objectives throughout strategy;
- identify specific promotional and marketing recommendations for the community based on the economic analysis of the conditions of the community; and
- provide strategies and recommendations that identify potential partnerships for redevelopment - short, medium, and long term.

The Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Project will be lead and substantively undertaken by Town staff. Extensive community consultation will take place through this project with various stakeholders and residents. This consultation process is critical in terms of creating collective “buy in” for the programs. Considerable research and community presence will be required by Town staff. Components of this project will require the assistance of specialized consultants for such work as the preparation of detailed streetscape plans. The project will be lead by the Economic Development Officer with assistance from the Youth Intern retained by the Town through funding from a South Lake CFDC grant. Staff will be undertaking a number of activities including:

- Conducting a community assessment
- Conducting business assessment and mapping information
- Collecting building ownership information for the downtown area
- Working within Downtown Mount Albert once a week throughout the duration of project as a point person for businesses and residents (potentially at policing centre)

- Conducting downtown revitalization surveys with businesses and residents of Mount Albert
- Providing assistance where necessary with consultants work
- Attending all public consultation on Downtown Revitalization project
- Developing communication material, in consultation with the Town's communications staff, to ensure the community is aware of and involved with the project
- Developing regular staff reports and updates on project

A draft project timeline has been prepared and is attached as Appendix 2. It provides general timing for various elements in the Downtown Revitalization project.

Consultant Expertise

As noted previously, staff will be taking on both management and co-ordinator roles as well as undertaking a significant amount of the consultation and background work. There are key areas which would benefit greatly and/or require specific external expertise, as follows:

- Facilitator assistance for conducting public consultation/workshop exercises;
- Market research, marketing recommendations, recommended fiscal tools available to finance revitalization efforts (public and private);
- Promotional and marketing materials for the project and recommendations for promoting the downtown area on a longer term basis; and
- Urban and architectural design recommendations for both public and private realm.

A description of and deliverables for each of these areas as well as information concerning the expertise required is attached to this report as Appendix 2.

NEED FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

All agendas, reports and minutes are made available to the public through postings on the Town's website. Extensive consultation will be undertaken as part of the CIP process.

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 amount has been reaffirmed as part of the 2013 Budget. Based on staff's experience and the experience of other municipalities having undertaken similar projects, staff notes that \$40,000 may be sufficient for the preparation of a CIP. Pending the outcome of the consultant selection process the Town may consider seeking additional funding through sources including South Lake CFDC and Central Counties Tourism.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1 – Context Map, Potential Focus for Downtown Revitalization/CIP Area
Appendix 2 – Consultant Expertise Requirements
Appendix 3 – Draft Project Timeline

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

Dan Stone, MCIP, RPP
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Reviewed and Approved by:

Original report signed by

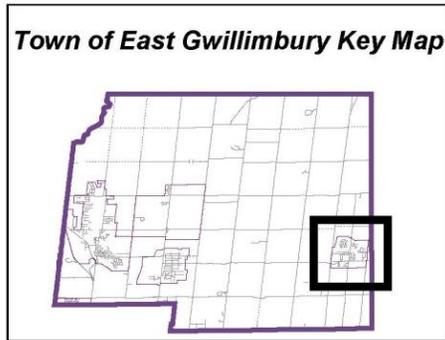
Carolyn A. Kellington, MCIP, RPP,
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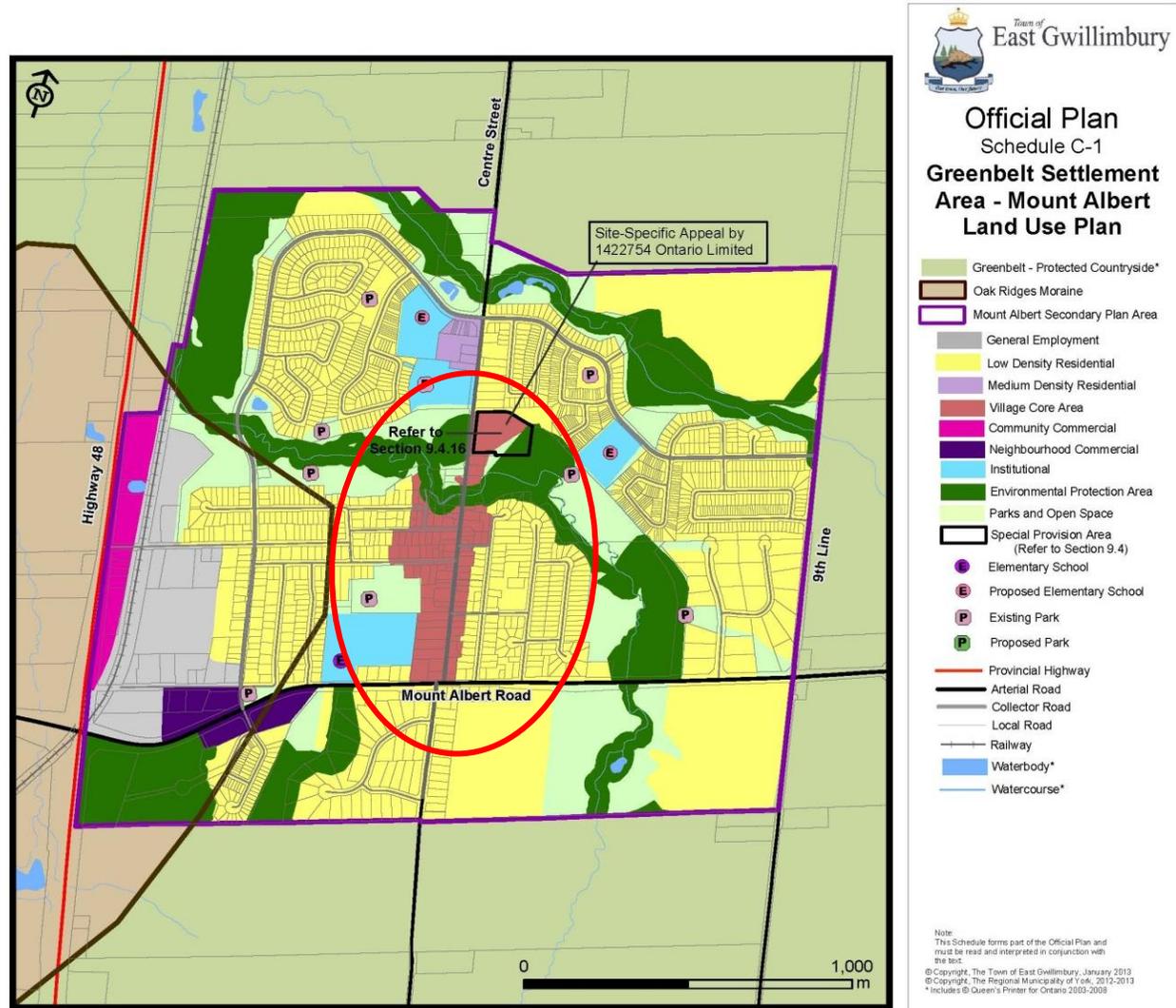
Original report signed by

Thomas R. Webster
Chief Administrative Officer

APPENDIX 1 – Potential CIP Area



**Potential Focus of
 Downtown
 Revitalization/CIP Area**



APPENDIX 2 – Consultant Expertise Required

The following is a brief description of the expertise required and expected deliverables from consultants who would be involved in this project:

- **Facilitator assistance for conducting public consultation/workshop exercises**

The consultant will work with staff in facilitating public consultation sessions with the community of Mount Albert throughout the project. The public consultation process will include: a kick-off introductory meeting/workshop, 2-3 consultation sessions (focus on streetscaping/design work, marketing/promotional material, etc.) and a final launch session for implementation of the Downtown Revitalization Strategy and Community Improvement Plan. Consultant assistance will be targeted to the detailed workshop sessions. The consultant(s) will require excellent communication and facilitation skills to ensure Mount Albert Residents and Businesses are highly engaged and involved with the projects development.

- **Market research, marketing recommendations, recommended fiscal tools available to finance revitalization efforts (public and private)**

The consultant will conduct extensive market research for the community of Mount Albert, including but not limited to, the analysis of the existing investment condition and new business attraction strategies. The consultant will be required to have previous experience in developing and using fiscal tools and incentive programs for Community Improvement Plans. The Consultant will be expected to provide recommendations for fiscal tools to be used to implement the Community Improvement Plan.

- **Promotional and marketing materials for the project and recommendations for promoting the downtown area on a longer term basis**

The consultant will develop a marketing package for the Mount Albert Downtown Revitalization Initiative. This will include recommendations on promotional and advertising campaigns to highlight short and long term strategies. The consultant will also make recommendations on signage and gateway designs/drawings. Consistent marketing is a critical element for this part of the project. The consultant's portfolio will include expertise in marketing and the preparation of promotional materials.

- **Urban and architectural design recommendations for both public and private realm**

The consultant will develop a comprehensive and detailed urban and architectural design framework specific to the community improvement plan area. Recommended designs and drawings will be required for the following areas of focus: parking, facade improvements, streetscaping, landscaping, decorative lighting, etc. This will require expertise in a variety of areas such as: landscape architecture and design, architectural and urban design, and transportation planning and traffic management.

