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## Local News

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## Fonthill, Fenwick future looks coming into focus

Posted By WAYNE CAMPBELL/Tribune Staff

Posted 19 days ago

PELHAM — For three days in early June the future images of downtown Fonthill and Fenwick will come into focus.

The Planning Partnership, a consulting firm preparing downtown design guidelines, will hold a public meeting Tuesday, June 9, at Old Pelham Town Hall in Ridgeville, to outline its findings so far.

The following two days, the firm will continue with stakeholder discussions at the old town hall.

"We're still working on the details of the meeting," said planner and project leader Harold Madi in a telephone interview from his Toronto office. "It will probably start at 6:30 p.m."

At the end of the process, he said he will give the town a check list and strategies to follow for a makeover of the downtowns of Fonthill and Fenwick.

It will be something a community improvement plan can use as guidelines for revamping private and public buildings and spaces. It will include suggestions for lighting, signage, storefronts, sidewalk patterns, roadways, colours and other details.

The town through its beautification committee is developing a community improvement plan that will encourage property owners through assessment adjustments and grant incentives to upgrade the look of their properties.

The town can use the guidelines from The Planning Partnership when it designs street reconstruction. An overhaul of Pelham St. is expected to begin in the next few months now that it has received federal and provincial infrastructure grants. The town also has applications for federal government grants for work in Fenwick.

This work will involve replacing sewer and waterlines, burying overhead wires, changing sidewalks and the roadway.

"Both communities have unique opportunities and unique constraints," said Madi.

Successful downtowns encourage foot traffic, he said. People park and go from shop to shop rather than just drive to one place.

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Fast-moving traffic along Pelham St. makes downtown Fonthill unfriendly to pedestrians says a consultant preparing downtown design guidelines for Fonthill and Fenwick. A public meeting is planned for Tuesday, June 9, at Old Pelham Town Hall in Ridgeville to discuss designs.

WAYNE CAMPBELL Staff Photo

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Fonthill particularly along Pelham St. "is hostile to pedestrians," he said.

The speed of cars and trucks is too fast, it needs ways to slow them down, he added.

Fonthill has a pleasant town square, he said, but it has a visual problem with businesses that face both Pelham St. and the square.

"They actually have two fronts," he said, suggesting they need to improve the entrances on the town square.

Fenwick he called quite a distinct community from Fonthill. It has a strong village feel but does need to dress up its central area.

"With respect to the flagpole for example, you can make it the centre of celebration," he said.

Some traffic calming may also be necessary in Fenwick, but it is not as serious as in Fonthill, he said.

During the three days next month, he sees a chance to sit down with residents and stakeholders "to hammer out ideas" as the planners build their check list and strategies to implement changes.

"You want to work together to raise the bar on design for the downtowns," Madi said. "You want to provide a direction to the quality of change that will make the downtowns a destination not only for residents but visitors as well."

Gary Accursi, chair of the downtown beatification committee, said downtown design guidelines "will give us directions and standards."

They can be used by existing business owners and owners of new businesses in setting up signage and facades before they apply for grants and other programs under the community improvement plan.

"It will dovetail into the CIP," he said.

A draft report on the community improvement plan is in the hands of town staff and the beautification committee, he said. It will come to town council's general committee in mid-June.

The downtown design guidelines are expected to be complete by September.

Meanwhile, planning for reconstruction of Pelham St. is underway with tendering expected in the fall.

"We hope to see shovels in the ground by the end of the year," he said about downtown Fonthill.

With a little luck, if Build Canada applications are accepted by the federal government for downtown Fenwick, work there could soon follow.

"We're excited," said Accursi. "Revitalization is starting to come. It will make a fine difference in the town. It will improve things for existing businesses and attract new businesses.

"We will see it all start to snowball."

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