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## Local News

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## Painting a prettier picture

Posted By WAYNE CAMPBELL , TRIBUNE STAFF

Posted 2 days ago

A vision of tree-lined, pedestrian friendly Pelham St. and Canboro Rd. emerged from a three-evening workshop on the downtowns of Fonhill and Fenwick this week.

The Planning Partnership, consultants hired by the town to prepare urban design guidelines, held the sessions at the town hall in Fonhill on Tuesday and Old Pelham Town Hall in Ridgeville Wednesday and Thursday.

In a wrap-up session on Thursday night, consultant Harold Madi summarized what he called a rough draft of the workshops with residents and consultations with local planners, business people, engineers and other stakeholders.

He said his team was thrilled to know that what they will suggest for streetscapes in their final report in September will have some immediate effects.

"It's not often we see things happen that quickly," he said about design guidelines that often take up to 10 years to implement bit by bit.

The town is about use infrastructure money from the federal and provincial governments to reconstruct Pelham St. between Board St. north of Regional Rd. 20 and College St. to the south.

In general, Pelham residents use downtown for shopping and live near it, Madi said. Residents want to protect parks and open spaces but want to discourage fast traffic and development of box stores.

Seven big views came out of the rough draft of the vision be developed in a formal report coming from the consultants in the fall, Madi said.

Pelham has "two really distinct downtowns" -- Fenwick having an informal "village" character and Fonhill a larger, more urban "town" character with more traffic.

"That will mean different rules for streetscapes," Madi said.

A second strategy involved the way Pelham St. and Canboro Rd. are laid out.

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Traffic is moving too quickly and "it's a matter of way the streets are designed," he said.

"Narrowing the roadway and widening the sidewalks will slow down traffic," he said. It will also provide opportunities for patios as well as pedestrians, he added.

Peter Heyblom, one of the consultants, outlined wider sidewalks along Pelham St., parking spaces and trees planted with "pavers" to allow water infiltration and root spread. This would narrow traffic lanes to two smaller ones.

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After power lines are buried, trees could grow to provide shade and atmosphere for more than the usual seven years.

At the Pelham St. intersection with Regional Rd. 20, he suggested a smaller corner with a "reduced curb radius" for pedestrians.

"It could be a place where things happen, not just a place where cars turn," he said.

Madi expected the development of Rice Rd. to Quaker Rd. will take trucks off Pelham St. and draw traffic running between Pelham and Welland.

For Pelham Town Square, now is the time to complete change.

"It's a great space. But all the stuff around it doesn't make sense" such as the backs of buildings.

"(With) some minor moves you can change the look of the Town Square."

For example, he recommends connecting Church Hill directly with Pelham town square. It would require the town buying a couple of properties to open up a through road. It would remove congestion at the present turn off Pelham St. into the square, he said.

Nick Poulos of Paulos and Chung, a consultant studying traffic patterns in downtown Fonthill, said completing the extension of Church Hill would require a traffic signals to ease the entering and leaving.

Parking is not the problem people imagine, he said. There are 720 off-street parking spaces and 550 more when you include church and school parking.

Paulos also suggested completing laneways behind houses lining Regional Rd. 20 to take driveways off the main road.

For Fenwick the consultants suggested making the flagpole at Maple St. and Canboro Rd. a gathering place by redesigning the corner.

They suggested putting a new library on the current site of the fire hall and the new fire hall on Welland Rd.

At the corner of Welland and Canboro Rds. they see an opportunity to make a gathering place by converting parking spaces on the triangle where the roads meet.

They see an opportunity to make Baxter Lane, with its school converted to an apartment building, distinct by using brick or cobblestone paving.

Canboro Rd. anchored by Fonthill and Fenwick, presents a great opportunity to promote tourism, said Madi.

With its rolling hills, orchards on each side and impressive homes, it could be promoted for cycling, marathons, agritourism and a form of cultural heritage.

The consultants' final report will outline guidelines for signage on buildings that could tie in with a community development plan the town is putting together.

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