



Looking into city's future

Ray Martin, Times Staff

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With the aid of some high tech gadgetry, municipal officials are getting a future look at the city's skyline as it incorporates Ontario's Places to Grow Strategy into the official plan.

Cambridge is in the midst of updating its plan, which is a tool used by planners to shape the community in years to come. In revising the plan, city staff have to incorporate not only the goals and objectives of the municipality, but reflect those of Waterloo Region and the province.

Rewriting the plan started more than a year ago. One study was completed to determine how Cambridge can meet its guidelines, which seeks to slow the continuation of urban sprawl by intensifying development within urban centres. Part of the idea is to make better use of each city's expensive network of water and sewer lines by increasing the amount of housing along existing streets.

City planners have come up with five areas that could be likely candidates for intensification.

"Intensification isn't going to happen in every existing neighbourhood," said planning commissioner Janet Babcock.

"It will happen in areas where the uses are changing."

Babcock said intensification will not mean high-rise apartment buildings sprouting out of the pavement across the city.

"In the 1960s, intensification meant high-rise apartment towers, but that isn't the case any more," she said.

"Our latest study shows people our goals for intensification can be achieved in a three, four or five-storey building, but it has to fit in with what is already there."

Babcock said there would likely be even bigger buildings outside the core areas, but again they will need to fit in with the community.

"What is appropriate in one area may not be appropriate in another," Babcock said, noting that while a high rise development is no longer appropriate in a core area, it would be suitable on Hespeler Road or other developing areas of the city.



Looking into city's future. What planners are hoping to see in the future. *Ray Martin, Times Staff*

Even then, the city would look at the scale, height and massing of the proposed building to try and get the best fit for the surrounding area.

The city hired The Planning Partnership Inc. to undertake a \$20,000 study, which would look at where intensification could take place in Cambridge, what it might look like, and examine the impact it might have to help give a clear vision for new forms of development.

At a recent council meeting, Rick Merrill, a senior planner with The Planning Partnership, unveiled three demonstration models which focused on how intensification could take place on vacant properties in the Preston core, Hespeler Road and in Hespeler.

In Preston, vacant lots at the corner of King and Dolph street were modelled. Merrill said the property was selected because it is an area in transition at the gateway to Preston core, which has the potential for mixed use.

The Preston model envisioned a five- to six-storey building with seven to nine units of commercial space at ground level and apartments on the upper floors. A second, three-storey building would house about 20 units, where people would work on the ground floor and live in apartments above their shops.

Although the corner building would be six storeys high, it would be set back above the third floor to better fit in with the existing neighbourhood.

On Hespeler Road, planners remodeled the northeast corner of the Can-Amara Parkway intersection north to include the former Cambridge Chrysler dealership. Merrill noted that the site is in an area of transition, on a major arterial road, with the Dumfries Conservation Area and Chaplin Family YMCA across the street, Wedges N' Woods golf centre right next door and the Cambridge Centre just down the street.

In this case, a mix of housing is being suggested that would include six, 14-storey apartment buildings lining Hespeler Road and the Can-Amara Parkway, with a series of three-storey townhouses at the centre of the property. The project, like any large housing development, would probably be built in stages over time and would be home to 1,500 people.

The third demonstration model was at the corner of Queen Street and Goebel Avenue in Hespeler on the lands once occupied by Challenger Motor Freight. Again, it is an area in transition and is a gateway for the community, with Zehrs, the new Shoppers Drug Mart and LCBO in close proximity – along with schools, Weaver Park and walking trails nearby.

In this case, planners suggested the site be filled with medium density housing, including three-storey townhouses, mixed commercial/residential units, a big box retail store and apartment buildings with more than six storeys. As many as 750 people might live in this type of a development.

Babcock said the recently expanded city tax incentive grant (TIG) program will also help in seeing contaminated industrial sites find new use.

"The TIG program is really going to help get these sites cleaned up and redeveloped," said Babcock.

Merrill's report will be used as a tool by the planning department to help people understand how intensification is going to work in Cambridge in the coming years.

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