



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Planning Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	March 19, 2019
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Imagining New Communities Public Open Houses (November 2018) (PED19055) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not Applicable.

INFORMATION

This Report provides an overview of recent consultation undertaken by the Planning Division through a series of public open houses held on November 13, 20, and 22, 2018. The open houses were held to engage and educate residents about the planning process in the City, inform residents of projects the City is working on related to residential growth, and act as a forum for residents to share ideas on ways to develop great communities, share views on important parts of neighbourhood planning, and provide feedback on their preferences for residential developments.

In engaging with the public through a series of open houses, staff gained valuable feedback that will inform the next stages of ongoing planning projects. This report documents the input, feedback, and suggestions received from the public, forming a formal record of the public participation, and describes how staff intend to make use of the feedback to inform important planning projects on a go forward basis.

1.0 Background

The City's Planning Division is engaged in a number of comprehensive planning projects related to residential development and future residential growth. The projects

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range from high level, long-term growth planning, down to the “on the ground” planning of land uses and the built form through zoning.

In anticipation of future growth, the City is working on several projects related to residential growth. They are:

- GRIDS 2 and the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) – a long-term growth strategy;
- Planning for new communities through secondary planning such as the Elfrida Growth Area Study; and,
- Residential Zoning Project - creating new residential zones in the urban area of Hamilton.

To achieve growth forecasts and density targets, future growth is planned to occur within new communities as well as integrated into existing communities through intensification, infilling, and redevelopment. In consideration of future growth forecasts and density targets, and to ensure comprehensive complete communities are developed, new communities will be planned to achieve higher densities than they have in the past. As new communities are planned, and growth is also integrated into existing areas, residential zoning can help implement plans for new and existing communities.

Given the varied, but interrelated nature of these projects, staff undertook a series of public open houses titled “Imagining New Communities”, to educate and inform the public about the planning process at the City: from long-term planning and secondary / neighbourhood planning, to implementation tools like zoning. The open houses also gave an opportunity for the public to provide feedback about the neighbourhood and street they live on and their preferences for elements of residential design.

The following provides a brief description of these current planning projects:

1.1 GRIDS 2 and the Municipal Comprehensive Review

The City is undertaking a strategy on accommodating population and employment growth within the City to the year 2041 through the Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy (GRIDS 2). The first GRIDS Report was approved in 2006 and looked at population and employment growth and allocation to the year 2031. The GRIDS 2 long term growth strategy will provide an update and identify a preferred growth option to accommodate forecasted population and employment growth to the year 2041. This has an overall impact on the Infrastructure Master Plans and Development Charges By-law.

Related to the GRIDS 2 growth strategy is the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) which must be undertaken prior to an Official Plan review. The MCR is a requirement of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), and must be completed prior to bringing the City's Official Plans into conformity with these Provincial Plans and prior to any expansion of the urban boundary.

1.2 Elfrida Growth Area Study (EGAS)

The Elfrida Growth Area was previously identified through the GRIDS strategy adopted in 2006, as the preferred area to accommodate future growth to the year 2031. The EGAS was initiated in 2016 to fulfil the requirements for an urban boundary expansion. The Study will include the development of a land use plan and associated policies for the Elfrida area that manages impacts to the natural heritage system and surrounding agricultural lands, while providing opportunities for future growth and development in the area.

1.3 Residential Zoning

The Residential Zoning project has recently been initiated to introduce new residential zones in the urban area and associated zoning regulations to Comprehensive Zoning By-law No. 05-200. The residential zones represent the final phase of the project to consolidate the Zoning By-laws of the former municipalities into one comprehensive Zoning By-law for the entire City, and will implement the policies of the Urban Hamilton Official Plan to create consistent residential zones across the urban area of Hamilton.

2.0 Public Consultations

The three public open houses held in November 2018 were intended to engage and educate residents about the planning process in the City. The engagement process also sought feedback on how residents view their own community and consider the most important issues planning staff need to address. Residents were engaged to learn more about:

- The projects the City is working on related to residential growth;
- Different types of housing that may be found in a community;
- Visualizing density based on different housing types;
- How to plan for complete communities (neighbourhood planning); and,
- How zoning can contribute to making great communities.

Three drop-in open houses were held, each consisting of an afternoon and evening session, at the following locations. As noted, the open houses were well attended.

Location	Attendance
David Braley Health Sciences Centre Tuesday, November 13, 2018	64
The Ancaster Fairgrounds Tuesday, November 20, 2018	44
Heritage Green Baptist Church Thursday, November 22, 2018	45

At each open house, a series of information panels were on display which gave attendees an opportunity to learn about projects the City is working on that are related to residential growth, to share ideas on ways to develop a great community, and to share likes and insights on important parts of neighbourhood planning to inform City projects going forward (See Appendix “A” to Report PED19055).

2.1 Interactive Panels

One of the main objectives of the public open houses was to engage attendees in a series of interactive activities to help them learn more about urban planning and to obtain feedback to inform the projects staff are presently undertaking. Residents who were unable to attend could also view the interactive panels through a dedicated website and could participate by completing an online comment form.

One goal of the interactive panels was to seek feedback through a Visual Preference Survey (VPS). This type of survey is one of many engagement tools to seek a participant’s preference for certain aspects of a residential development by presenting a series of photos based on real life examples. The feedback can assist staff when considering what regulations to include as part of the new residential zones. As shown on Panels 13 – 15, attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED19055, each panel presented a series of images which focused on a particular element of residential development (e.g. how the building interacts with the street). The public was asked to rank each photo based on their preference.

A second aspect of the interactive panels was to seek attendees’ feedback on their likes and dislikes about the street they live on. Elements that can influence how one feels about their neighbourhood and the street they live on can include:

- The types and overall look of the houses and other buildings;
- Landscaping;
- Outdoor spaces – yards, balconies, porches, and patios;
- Meeting places, parks, and trails;
- Streets and parking; and,
- Sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transit.

Participants were asked to provide their comments by completing a label and posting it on the display panel, or by completing a comment form in hard copy or online. Discussion of the feedback received is found in Section 3.0 of this Report.

2.2 Interactive Lego Challenge

As a component of the open houses and a final way to engage the public, an interactive Lego challenge was set up alongside the interactive panels, with the public encouraged to challenge themselves to design a new community. The Lego set came with a map of a fictitious “up and coming” community which included natural heritage features i.e. forests and river, existing arterial roads, and buildable land. Pre-cut streets and pre-assembled dwelling types made of Lego pieces allowed participants to be challenged to build their own version of a community that met general population and employment density targets, and could accommodate parks, community facilities, and schools.

This hands-on exercise was intended to complement the panel information presented on complete community development, density and what density looks like, and the specific density targets that the City is planning for.

3.0 Feedback Results

The results of the Visual Preference Survey have been illustrated in Appendix “B” to Report PED19055. The results have been summarized by open house date, with the combined results from the three open houses summarized at the end of the document. Preferences for the various elements of residential design that were presented varied between open houses, with some of the open house results showing distinct preference for one element of built form and design over another. The combined results show trends toward certain elements of built form and its interaction with the street:

- For townhouse developments, a preference for parking that is predominantly located at the rear, in the form of communal parking or personal garages, and a preference for direct access to the dwelling from the main street, instead of dwellings with backyards facing the street.
- For apartment buildings, while results were more mixed, there was a greater preference for buildings that have some degree of setback from the street to allow for landscaping, rather than buildings that are located right at the street.

All of the feedback obtained through the Visual Preference Survey will be valuable to staff as regulations are considered for the new residential zones.

Responses to questions posed to the public about where they live, and their likes and dislikes about the street they live on, are summarized in Appendix “C” to Report PED19055. A total of 48 comments were received from the three open houses. A

range of comments were provided from residents who reside in diverse locations across the City. While varied, there were some consistent responses received, which were:

What are one or two things about the street you live on that you like?

- Mature trees;
- Walkability;
- Presence of sidewalks; and,
- Proximity to amenities.

What are one or two things about the street you live on that you don't like?

- Traffic;
- Vehicle speed and safety concerns;
- Lack of trees; and,
- Lack of sidewalks.

These comments are valuable in informing staff of the elements that residents identify as having the greatest influence on how they feel about their street, their neighbourhood, and their community, and can inform secondary planning and the planning for complete communities, as well as provide direction to staff for those elements of residential development that can be regulated through zoning and considered for the new residential zones.

General comments received from the public that are not specific to the content of the open houses have also been summarized (see Appendix "D" to Report PED19055).

3.1 Media Interest

The "Imagining New Communities" public open houses generated media attention, with articles appearing in a number of the community newspapers, The Hamilton Spectator, and the Toronto Star, as well as a news segment on CHCH News. A number of reporters were in attendance at the open houses, which gave staff an opportunity to engage in in-depth conversations about these important topics of planning for future growth and new communities, density, and zoning. The media discussion generated by the open houses assisted in informing the greater public about these City planning projects, and was hopefully able to spur important discussions around future residential growth in the City.

4.0 Next Steps

The feedback received from the public open houses, as documented in Appendix "B", "C", and "D" to Report PED19055, will be posted on the Residential Zoning project

webpage at www.hamilton.ca/ResidentialZoning. The dedicated project webpage will be regularly updated as the Residential Zoning project moves forward.

As discussed, the feedback received at the open houses will not only inform the planning of new communities through secondary planning work, but will also inform the Residential Zoning project, as staff develop regulations for the residential zones in the urban area and evaluate elements of built form, its interaction with the street, parking, and other aspects of residential development that can be regulated through the zoning by-law.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

- Appendix "A" - Open House Display Panels
- Appendix "B" - Visual Preference Survey Results
- Appendix "C" - Summary of Comments Received
- Appendix "D" - Summary of General Comments Received

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