Consultation Summary
Waterdown Node Secondary Plan

Event: Focus Group Meeting #3
Location: Virtual Meeting held via Webex
Date: July 6, 2020
Time: 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm
Participants: 14 (7 Stakeholder/Residents and 7 Staff/Consultants)

Event Description
The Focus Group meeting consisted of two presentations. The first was a Staff presentation on the draft vision, principles, objectives, and land use options for the Secondary Plan Study. This was followed by a presentation on urban design guidelines by the City’s Urban Design Consultant, Brook McIlroy Urban Design Consultants. A copy of the presentation material was provided to participants by email in advance of the meeting. A feedback form was also provided to ensure the opportunity for participants to share any additional comments following the meeting. The presentations were followed by a Q&A and discussion period.

What We Heard
Secondary Plan Discussion
Following the presentation, the facilitator led a discussion on the following questions:
1. Does the vision capture the themes that we’ve discussed in previous meetings?
2. Do you think that there should be any changes to the principles and objectives that have been outlined?
3. Do you think the Node Boundary shows that lands that should be in the node?
4. Which option for pedestrian focus streets do you prefer and why?
5. Which option for height requirements do you prefer and why?
6. Do you have any comments on the land use plan?

Comments noted through the discussion:

Vision as presented is very good. Quite like it. It touches on most of the things that we’ve discussed in the previous meetings.

Think that most of it is there. Going back to October meeting people want the core to be 3 storeys and to be rejuvenated as a historic place. Understand that buildings have to work.

Agree with vision. It did state all the items that were in the previous meetings. The principles also hit all the right points: supporting businesses, improving transportation, making sure that heritage is protected.
Draft vision and principles capture and are consistent with the spirit of previous consultation sessions.

The vision is good. There are so many options and choices, nothing is cut in stone yet, but some parts look really good. The big challenge is trying to create a nice streetscape when you have big trucks travelling through the downtown at 60km per hour. Don’t know how you can create a nice atmosphere without a by-pass to move that truck traffic somewhere else.

With some of these, staff are not far off track. The problem is with the Brandon House in Ancaster situation where the historic building got torn down. That is a serious issue we have to look at here.

Pedestrian focus along Dundas is essential. Height restrictions are imperative in that same area. There are a lot of heritage buildings in that area. The C5 zoning promotes building up, so that would result in demolitions. Need to try to preserve the old core as it is with respectful infill.

Along Hamilton Street, there are bigger lots. Building up there is fine. But for the core from Hamilton Street to Mill Street along Dundas it is imperative to keep to the 2-3 storey limit.

Having walked the area and done activities in the core, I can attest that walking Hamilton Street, especially with children is exhausting. Would definitely pick option 2 for the pedestrian focus street area. That is probably the maximum if you want people to stay within that area. Wouldn’t be against going bigger than that, but if you want to keep people in that area and make it more of a community feeling, wouldn’t go much further.

Agree with height restrictions in certain area. Don’t want very tall buildings.

People want a historic core and a place where they can walk around, and it becomes the centre of the community. The C5 zoning doesn’t take that into consideration.

Think that most of the objectives are achievable. Planning staff are moving in the right direction.

You have to remember that Waterdown doesn’t have public transit. Places downtown need parking until you have a really good public transit system.

If you look at downtown Oakville, it is one of the most beautiful communities. There are all kinds of beautiful historic buildings in the downtown there and there are buildings that are 4 or 5 storeys there and they are very nice. You need people as well to make an area work, you don’t have vibrant businesses if you don’t have people in walking distance. Three, four or five storeys could be integrated into a historic façade at the back.
Don’t like the look of large buildings going into a historical area unless they are historical looking.

Have walked in that area. I can’t walk with children along Dundas. Unless we plan for the calming of that Dundas area first, don’t see that area working as a pedestrian focus area. Would love to see it though. Agree that pedestrian focus area should be at least option 2.

We have a real disconnect in the two areas of the core. We have the convenience-based businesses on one side and the historic district on the other side. Trying to connect them there is a real void or disconnect in the middle, and no clear pedestrian pattern to get from one area to another. It feels like 2 distinct characters. Dundas Street/Hamilton Street corner is the centre of the core, but right now it is a void in the core. It is not necessarily a reasonable walk from one end to the other.

The park is also a centre of the community. If we are talking about trying to align a path to encourage people to be able to walk to park and businesses, then I would go with option 3.

There are smart ways to develop and places where it doesn’t make sense to increase the density, but our businesses depend on people. 60-65% of our businesses are service businesses. We need people to support those. I think that the height on Hamilton Street is necessary to support the business community. Also think that trying to have guidelines for development on both parts (of the core), so that even though Hamilton Street is a distinct character, it would be nice to see some elements carry through so there is some more continuity between the 2 sides. Needs to be some context of the core there, even if we are developing larger buildings.

With increasing height, need to focus on affordability. This is missing from the principles/objectives and it needs to be captured there. If all you are putting in is expensive condos, then you are still not bringing young people and diversified populations into the community.

**Urban Design Guideline Discussion**

Following the presentation, the facilitator led a discussion on the following questions:

1. Do you think it is appropriate that we’ve moved to distinguishing between the 2 areas (the Hamilton-Dundas area and the Waterdown Village area)? Does that capture the 2 defining character areas in the node?
2. Have we missed anything in the vision or the document structure or the key directions that we should be capturing in the guidelines?

Comments noted through the discussion:

The challenges that we face on the Hamilton Street corridor are extreme. In the Dundas village, we are not doing too badly. We have excellent examples of heritage buildings on Dundas that anchor the Village and these set the stage for what we do.
The theoretical part of the presentation I agree with 100%. The biggest concern is over time, as the individual problems are presented, what compromises will be made that deviate from the conceptual plan. This question can’t be answered right now. On the Hamilton corridor, I am thinking of the development proposal for the seniors building beside the park – they had some big problems with their initial design. We need to continue with discussions and community involvement to make sure we end up with something terrific instead of something we regret later.

The concept is marvelous. Need to be guidelines set that we adhere to. Residence built on Main Street is an abomination for the streetscape on Main Street. If we don’t have concrete plans that mitigate those kinds of developments, I fear what will occur.

I agree with the direction that these concepts are going. I also agree that we have two different character areas but would like to see them blend seamlessly. Even though we are treating them differently, would still like to see some continuity. Even though heights and lot uses are different, should still feel like one village.

I love the treescapes and like having trees when walking downtown. When you come around the corner should not be something totally different. The Area has to have a flow when you are coming around the corner. Walking and biking connections should be the same between the two areas.

Streetscapes and photos and conceptual ideas are fantastic. Just cautious about how many compromises get made down the road.

You have to allow for modern building materials. You can’t say everything has to be old. Have to have some degree of modernism allowed. Have to be open-minded. There is a way to integrate these things appropriately.

I love the 2 different looks but are they seamless. Hamilton side drawings have sort of a high traffic feel which is realistic. Dundas looks like there is still traffic but lesser.

I think that we don’t have to say that everything needs to be made of brick, or everything has to have modern glass doors. We don’t need to be that specific and need to allow flexibility in materials.

I do agree with what has been presented so far. It is going in the right direction. In general, the concept is pretty good. The pictures don’t really reflect Hamilton Street, but it is on the right track.

People want to see the Village look like a village and greater range of materials is acceptable on Hamilton Street.

Appreciate the work that has been done with community involvement. I am an advocate of heritage. With the core, would need to consolidate lots or go into residential area to get the larger 6 storey development which would demolish the heritage. Hamilton Street is a
different version of the downtown, with massive lots. Could put massive developments all along there.

I think that the focus on lower key and trying to keep heritage along Dundas Street is fantastic. There is always an issue about traffic. It is hard to feel like a heritage community when you have so much traffic going through, but the overall feel of this is a huge step in the right direction. Keep Dundas to a small-town, heritage feel. There are lots of opportunities to develop properties on Hamilton Street. Most of them have large parking lots.

Other Comments and Feedback Noted

Additional comments noted include the following:

The C5 Zoning conflicts with the heritage district. Mill Street Heritage Plan says there is a 3 storey limit, but the zoning says you can go to 6 to 8. This is contradictory, and the city needs to look at changing this.

A question was raised about expanding the Heritage District to Main St. Will this be discussed at the next meeting on heritage?

Response by Staff: ASI is evaluating the Main Street area as a potential Cultural Heritage Landscape. The expansion of the Heritage District is outside of our scope. We are doing the built inventory and cultural heritage review which will provide for different options for how to protect these resources.

Question about the density in the node. Presentation says that the density is higher than surrounding areas but it appears to be quite low.

Response by Staff: The density is a two-part calculation of both residents and jobs in the area. The jobs generated by the area are greater than the number of people living in the area and this number takes that into account.

Have been told that all residential zoning is going to be reassessed in residential areas. We want to preserve that area. There were some lots purchased and massive single-detached development put in that is not compatible. Lots being purchased for larger developments is a big concern.

Upcoming Consultation

The next Focus Group Meeting is planned for July 16, 2020 to provide an update on the Cultural Heritage Review. A further meeting will also be scheduled to present the recommendations for the Transportation Management Study when these are available. Public information meetings would likely be held fall 2020 and would be conducted virtually.