



## Meeting Summary

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The Design Review Panel met virtually on **Thursday June 10<sup>th</sup> 2021** via WebEx.

### Panel Members Present:

**David Clusiau**, *Chair*

**Dayna Edwards**

**Joey Giaimo**

**Hoda Kameli**

**Jana Kelemen**

**Jennifer Mallard**

**Ted Watson**

### Staff Present:

**Anita Fabac**, Manager of Development Planning, Heritage and Design

**Shannon McKie**, Senior Project Manager, Urban Team

**Alissa Mahood**, Senior Project Manager, Community Planning

**Melanie Pham**, Senior Planner, Community Planning

**Victoria Cox**, Urban Designer, Urban Team

**Joe Buordolone**, Planning Technician I, Urban Team

### Others Present:

<b>Presentation #1 Waterdown Community Node Urban Design Guidelines</b>	<b>Nathan Flach</b> , Brook McIlroy <b>Tneshia Pages</b> , Brook McIlroy
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### Regrets:

**Jennifer Sisson** (Panel Member)

**Eldon Theodore** (Panel Member)

**Declaration of Interest:** None

## Schedule:

Start Time	Address	Type of Application	Applicant/ Agent	Planner
1:30 p.m.	<b>Urban Design Guidelines</b> Waterdown Community Node Secondary Plan	Urban Design Guidelines	Owner: City of Hamilton  Agent and Presentation: Brook McIlroy, Nathan Flach and Tneshia Pages	Melanie Pham, Senior Planner

## Summary of Comments:

**Note: The Design Review Panel is strictly an advisory body and makes recommendations to Planning Division staff. These comments should be reviewed in conjunction with all comments received by commenting agencies and should be discussed with Planning Division staff prior to resubmission.**

### Waterdown Community Node Secondary Plan Urban Design Guidelines

#### Development Proposal Overview

In 2018, the City initiated the Waterdown Community Node Secondary Plan Study. The purpose of the study is to develop a long term land use plan for the central area of Waterdown that will direct how future change and growth should be managed.

The study is comprised of 3 main parts, the development of the land use plan (the Secondary Plan), the development of a set of urban design guidelines which will support the land use plan and provide more detailed design direction for new development, and a cultural heritage review, which will provide recommendations for how to conserve the area's heritage.

The Secondary Plan will be adopted as part of the City's Official Plan and will require all Planning Act applications to be consistent with the Urban Design Guidelines. Feedback shall be used to prepare a final version of the guidelines for Council approval and may also inform concurrent Zoning By-law updates to create consistency between design directions and zoning standards.

The Urban Design Guidelines are intended to focus primarily on the Community Node, a smaller subset of the Secondary Plan area where a mix of uses and higher densities is anticipated. However, some basic design considerations are also noted for established historic neighbourhoods adjacent to the Community Node which contribute to the area's character. The defined node area is centred along two intersecting arterial roads: Hamilton Street which runs north-south and Dundas Street which runs east-west.

### Key Questions to the Panel from Planning Staff

1. Do the guidelines capture the essence of the two character areas?
2. Are there additional considerations that could be included to promote a unified character throughout the node?
3. Do the urban design guidelines provide suitable guidance to ensure that new development proposals are compatible with adjacent lands and promote high quality design in both the public and private realms?
4. Are there design considerations that have not been contemplated that would contribute to design excellence?

### Panel Comments and Recommendations

#### a) Vision and Essence of the Character Areas (Question 1)

- The panel noted that they had trouble seeing a larger vision is guiding the document and recommended a stronger vision from the outset. What is Waterdown in 20-30 years? There needs to be a higher-order, bold vision that drives the streets planning, the cycle paths, the transportation management plan, the green infrastructure, the parks connections. Those parts tell the story of the pattern of development and how you tie into that. The panel is looking for a clearer progression of where the guidelines are going and how the content helps you get there.
- The panel advised that the document should be more clear on what the attributes of the village character are, other than the historic buildings and the natural heritage. The panel noted that the essence of an area can be difficult to describe and capture and often means very different things to different people.
- The panel noted that the vision, as described, is focused closely on the feedback from the community and wondered if this limits the area to a more modest development potential than it could be. The panel questioned whether more wide-range possibilities for the future vision could be considered. A higher density might support a more fulsome public realm and development where for example the parking is not at-grade and not above-grade or inside buildings at grade.
- In terms of the diversion of biking paths from Dundas Street and the conversation around truck routes, there is a cognitive dissonance there with the idea of a village character.

#### b) Additional Character Considerations (Question 2)

- The panel noted that it is important to highlight the importance of the historic commercial character area in the guidelines and how it came out of the public process

- The panel stated that the heritage character is crucial to the essence of Waterdown and is of high value so it would be beneficial if the guidelines pushed to retain and enhance it even a little bit more.
- The panel suggested providing some best practice examples of what other places have done along arterials particular for the Hamilton-Dundas character area.
- The panel noted that on the east end of the historic character area there is break in the urban development at the bridge over Grindstone Creek where a link to nature and possibly to the escarpment could be reinforced in the guidelines. I.e. Is there a park or feature that could be at the end of that street that connects with the escarpment in some way or form and marks the eastern node or gateway into the heritage area?
- The panel recommended having language in the guidelines about not encouraging gas stations at the corner of Hamilton and Dundas Streets, which is an important intersection node for the future vision.
- The panel recommended that if the heritage district is the main character defining aspect of the village then perhaps it should be extended to the intersection of Hamilton and Dundas the most important node/intersection within the community.
- The panel observed that the success of the community is linked to the future development of the large shopping plaza site at Hamilton and Dundas Streets. The guidelines should consider providing more direction for this site including a larger more aspirational concept/vision showing how that site could develop with greater density and qualities that would create a node that draws you from the historic character area to Hamilton Street. The shops at Don mills was given as an example of a strong vision by one of the panelists
- On page 29 the panel recommended adding paving to the consistent palate of public realm elements.
- The panel also stated that extending quality material to the Hamilton-Dundas character area is important to blend and complement the historic area.

**c) Compatibility and Design (Question 3)**

- The panel noted that the document should be clear about expectations for the compatibility of contemporary buildings with heritage resources. It was recommended that additional illustrations be provided to ensure that the intention in this area was more clearly communicated. The need for review of new buildings in the heritage area as development comes forward also needs to be clear.
- The panel noted that the applicant should be cautious about the impacts of the angular plane and step-back requirements and should look at these further. For example step backs at around 4, 5 or 6 storeys (noted on pg. 62) seemed unnecessarily onerous and environmental efficiencies may also be more difficult to achieve with step backs.
- The panel felt that the example lot developments were well done, but the approaches between the character areas were too similar. The heritage area has a distinct quality different from the Hamilton-Dundas character area.

- The Hamilton-Dundas area has room for hidden surface parking which is fine and needed but the guide should promote opportunities in the historic area to prioritize the pedestrian, one way being to eliminate surface parking and create interior blocks with a pedestrian focused public realm.
- The panel noted that they would like to see the guidelines that speak to protecting established neighbourhoods balanced with guidelines or strategies about equity, diversity and inclusivity. That lens needs to be applied to urban design in the document. A photo shown of a bench with a dividing line was used as an example of hostile architecture that does not promote the equity, diversity and inclusivity lens.
- The panel would prefer to see more details about active transportation in the guidelines, and some suggestions about protected bus stops, pedestrian connections, and how pedestrian connections and bicycle paths will work together, along with supporting illustrations.
- The panel noted that the sidewalk width along the heritage character area seems to vary because of the road patterns and suggested that the guidelines provide direction for a consistent sidewalk edge and pedestrian pathway. It would be beneficial to make that commitment now with the intention of changing the truck route and pulling the bike activity back to Dundas Street in the future.

#### **d) General Comments**

- The panel recommended more illustrations, examples and imagery, and descriptions of what it is in that imagery that is achieving the goals being set out, to clarify the intent of the guidelines.
- More imagery was suggested to illustrate the concept of complimentary development that does not mimic existing heritage buildings.
- The panel suggested that a demonstration plan for the whole node would be very helpful, instead of just with specific example lots, to show all the linkages and connections.
- The panel suggested doing the demonstration plan in 3D to test the guidelines and look at the modelling from the street level point of view.
- The panel recommended that it might be helpful for staff to consider expanding the Heritage Conservation District to include areas identified as the historic character area in the Urban Design guidelines. An expanded boundary would provide further protection to preserve the heritage intactness of this part of the neighbourhood. It will support the identified community node and assist in ensuring that the right type of development happens in the area.
- The panel suggested avoiding wording such as encouraged and discouraged in the guidelines.

## **Summary**

The panel appreciated the directions provided in the draft urban design guidelines and the presentations provided by staff and the consultant. The panel remarked that the guidelines provided some good language for future developers and staff regarding compatibility and complementary design and improvements to the public realm and will help improve the Hamilton Street corridor. However, the panel felt that an overall vision should be more clearly articulated, and once articulated the supporting the details of the document could be more clearly linked to this long-term vision. Also, the document could better communicate the village character essence of the area which is centered on the historic character area, and how that guides the directions for the rest of the node.

**Meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.**