

WHITBY INTENSIFICATION STRATEGY

Recommended Basis for Moving Forward

Presentation to Committee of the Whole - February 2, 2010



What is the Whitby Intensification Strategy?

Whitby's Intensification Strategy is intended to implement Section 2.3.2.6 of the Province's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, which states:

"All municipalities will develop and implement through their Official Plans and other supporting documents, a strategy and policies to phase in and achieve intensification and the intensification target."

Whitby's Intensification Strategy is intended to answer the following questions:

1. Which areas in Whitby are appropriate for intensification?
2. Which areas are not appropriate for intensification?
3. What form should intensification take in Whitby?

The Opportunity

- The current process provides the Town with a significant opportunity to establish the ground work for the continuing evolution of the Town into a complete community.
- This evolution has been accelerating in the last few years.
- The renewed focus on intensification in established built up areas means that key areas in the Town (the Downtowns, Port Whitby and the Centres and Corridors) will become a major focus for development and redevelopment over the next 25+ years.
- This renewed focus will be entirely consistent with the current overall land use vision and urban structure for the Town expressed in the Town's Official Plan.
- The Official Plan already anticipates that intensification will be directed to those parts of the Town that were the most suited and that limited redevelopment would occur within 'stable' residential areas.

The Opportunity (cont'd)

This renewed focus on intensification in the 'right places' will:

- increase the vibrancy of the urban area;
- bring new people in to support local businesses;
- create new jobs where people live;
- provide a broader range of housing choices for Whitby residents; and,
- improve the quality of the Town's streets and public spaces.

An opportunity also exists to establish a series of design rules and standards that will set the stage for the development of attractive projects and appealing neighbourhoods and destinations.

Why the need for a strategy?

- Both the Province and the Region of Durham require Whitby to accommodate a significant portion of future growth through intensification inside the already built-up area of Whitby, rather than on Greenfield lands at the edge of the built up area.
- ROPA 128 provides for the development of 34,375 new dwelling units in total in the Town between 2006 and 2031.
- Given that there were 37,260 dwelling units in Whitby in 2006, the effect of ROPA 128 is to almost double the number of dwelling units and population in the Town by 2031.
- Almost half of this development (14,488 new dwelling units) - will have to be accommodated in Whitby's existing built-up area (46% of the total number of units allocated).
- This is considered to be a 'minimum target'.

Why the need for a strategy?

- There is now a need for more certainty in the Official Plan on the form and type of intensification to be permitted and to clearly articulate where intensification is not expected or desired.
- The distribution and location of future intensification has to take into account the current land use context, the nature of adjacent land uses and the potential for creating vibrant, livable and appealing urban neighbourhoods.
- There is also a need for rules.
- The rules that are established have to be clear, reflect the current land use context and provide the basis for the development of viable projects that optimize and take advantage of existing infrastructure wherever possible.
- However, more than just policy is required - there is also a need for an infrastructure and financing strategy as well.

The Where

- Intensification is not a new land use idea - it has already been occurring in Whitby for years.
- The challenge now is to update the existing policy framework to ensure that the “right forms” of intensification to occur in the “right locations” .
- The existing Official Plan already encourages intensification within a number of areas in the Town, subject to criteria.
- In addition to allocating population growth, ROPA 128 also provides direction on where the majority of intensification should happen.
- It identifies Regional Centres, Regional Corridors and Waterfront Places and establishes minimum densities within these areas. These areas, and the corresponding densities, are fixed at the Regional level.

The Where (cont'd)

Six separate Intensification Areas have been identified for the Town:

- Downtown Whitby;
- Brock/Taunton;
- Baldwin/Winchester;
- Port Whitby/Whitby GO;
- Dundas East; and,
- Brock/Rossland.

Intensification Areas are also proposed along a number of major road corridors in the Town, including Dundas, Taunton, Brock/Baldwin, Victoria, Winchester and Columbus.

The Where (cont'd)

- Not all locations within these Intensification Areas are appropriate for intensification, since they are the site of a range of established uses and stable neighbourhoods.
- On this basis, an analysis was undertaken to identify sites within these Intensification Areas that have potential for intensification over the next 25 years.
- Parcels of land that met a series of criteria relating to size and lot coverage were identified as “potential intensification sites” within these Intensification Areas.
- Individual sites outside of the Intensification Areas and outside of the Corridors were also identified.
- Lands that were designated for employment purposes by the Region of Durham Official Plan were considered to not be available for future residential or mixed use intensification.

The Where (cont'd)

- Parcels of land totaling 345 hectares were identified inside Intensification Areas, plus an additional 75 to 100 hectares in various individual parcels outside of Intensification Areas.
- After applying the minimum density requirements of ROPA 128, it is estimated that a population of about 58,000 people could be accommodated on these parcels, at a minimum.
- This population would be accommodated within about 26,000 housing units, which is more than the minimum 14,488 units that have been allocated to the Town by ROPA 128.
- To meet the Region of Durham's minimum density requirements, the majority of these units will be in medium density or high-density housing forms, such as townhouses and apartments.

The Where (cont'd)

- The above determination of intensification potential was based on an analysis of potentially viable sites for intensification.
- Some of these sites may not be developed in the short to medium terms, or even before 2031, for any number of reasons.
- However, the potential does exist for intensification to occur on sites within identified Intensification Areas or on other sites that have not been specifically identified as part of our analysis.
- Examples in this regard include the conversion of properties that are currently used for institutional purposes to residential use and the assembly of properties in areas that would be suitable for intensification.
- **CONCLUSION** - Given the capacity that exists, there is more than enough land within Whitby's Built Boundary and designated for residential purposes in the Durham Official Plan for residential intensification.

Establishing the Context

- At the present time, there are about 110,000 people living within the Town's built boundary.
- This means that the population within the built boundary could potentially increase by about 50% based on the analysis described above.
- For comparison purposes, the number of people living within this same area has increased by 12,000 between 1986 and 2006.
- This means that there is a need for context and a set of well articulated rules.

Establishing the Context (cont'd)

The appropriate form, type and density of development for each Intensification Area were determined through the consideration of a number of factors:

- planned function minimum density for the area as per ROPA 128;
- nature of the existing land uses;
- sizes and shapes of the parcels of land;
- effect of development on historical and heritage buildings;
- nature and location of adjacent land uses and the impacts of new development on these uses;
- nature and type of transit that exists now and in the future;
- implications of new development on traffic patterns and the provision of infrastructure;
- presence of parkland, schools and other community facilities; and,
- viability of intensification, from an economic perspective.

Establishing the Context (cont'd)

- Protecting the heritage and character of the two downtown areas (Whitby and Brooklin) is a key component of the overall intensification strategy.
- On the basis of the analysis completed, buildings with higher heights are proposed to be permitted in locations within Intensification Areas where:
 - 1 the impacts on primarily low density residential neighbourhoods are expected to be minimal to non-existent;
 - 2 parcel sizes are generally larger, which lend themselves to larger comprehensively planned developments with limited to no land assembly required;
 - 3 higher buildings will assist in establishing a focal point in an area, and/or;
 - 4 the lands are in close proximity to major arterial roads that offer, now or in the future, higher levels of public transit service.

Overall Built Form Vision

- The current Official Plan already establishes rules for height and density throughout the Town in a number of Secondary Plans.
- The location for higher density development in the Town is also already established by Map 1 of the Official Plan, which is the Town's Structure Plan.
- However, each Secondary Plan was prepared at different times and in the absence of a Town - wide built form context.
- Given that most people focus on building heights, instead of density, an overall built form vision has been prepared for consideration.

But First...

- Our recommendations are not intended to imply that every site is, or should be permitted to be the site of taller buildings.
- In addition, there may be circumstances where higher heights could be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- On this basis, each site will need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine the appropriate height.
- Factors to consider are many, and include the location of the property, the nature of adjacent land uses and the implications of the proposal on views.
- Comprehensive planning may be required in some areas to establish design parameters on how development on the multiple sites should be planned, from a building location, orientation, massing and height perspective.

Elements of the Built Form Vision

- Both Downtown Whitby and Baldwin/Winchester should be planned to accommodate buildings that have a minimum height of two to three storeys and a maximum height of six storeys.
- This means that the current height provisions in the existing Official Plan would be maintained in these two areas.
- Exceptions may be considered in certain locations, if the parcel is large enough and impacts on adjacent land uses are minimized.
- This recommendation recognizes the existing built form and the heritage and character of the two Downtown areas.

Elements of the Built Form Vision (cont'd)

- The Brock/Taunton, Dundas East and Brock/Rossland Intensification Areas are very similar and should be planned to have buildings that have a minimum height of three storeys and a maximum height of about 16 to 18 storeys.
- In the case of the Brock/Taunton and Dundas East Intensification Areas, this recommendation reflects the size of the Intensification Area, the large parcels of land that are available for intensification and the location of these intensification areas at the intersection of two major arterial roads.
- With Brock/Rossland, this recommendation reflects and is intended to build upon the strong institutional presence and the significant number of jobs that exist in a number of government buildings in the area.

Elements of the Built Form Vision (cont'd)

- The Port Whitby/Whitby GO Station Intensification Area has a significant amount of potential for intensification.
- The opportunity exists in this area to take advantage of the area's high profile location near Lake Ontario, the GO Station, Highway 401 and a number of recreational open space and recreational amenities and health care and health care related uses.
- It is recommended that the maximum height be between 12 and 18 storeys, subject to criteria.
- However, there is also a need for a series of well articulated rules on where tall buildings can be located and what their bulk and massing will be, to preserve views of Lake Ontario and from Lake Ontario.
- There is also a need to ensure that a full range of uses are developed and that the highest standards of architectural design are applied to establish what will long be a major focal point of the Region of Durham and the eastern Greater Toronto Area.

Elements of the Built Form Vision (cont'd)

- For Regional Corridors that are not within Intensification Areas, these areas should be planned to have minimum building heights of two storeys and maximum building heights of six to eight storeys to reflect and respect the nature of adjacent land uses.
- Exceptions may be granted on a case by case basis depending on the land use context.
- There are a number of other intensification sites that have potential and building heights on each should reflect the land use context in the area.

The Details

This presentation only highlights at the very high level what we are recommending. The report provides a considerable amount of detail on:

- The location of each Intensification Area;
- The factors considered in developing a long term vision;
- What the long term vision for each area should be;
- The recommended densities of development and the minimum and maximum building heights for each with recommendations on where taller buildings should be directed;
- How the public realm should be upgraded in some circumstances; and,
- The built form objectives for each area.

The Details (cont'd)

The report also makes a number of recommendations on:

- The criteria that should be applied when intensification applications are considered in the future;
- The amount of intensification that should be planned for each Intensification Area in terms of people and jobs;
- The Official Plan policy framework that should be applied to stable residential neighbourhoods;
- The factors to consider in the design of roads where intensification is expected; and,
- The types of incentives that could be considered by the Town to encourage intensification in the right places.

Next Steps

The next step in the process involves seeking the views of the public and the preparation of a draft Official Plan Amendment (OPA). The OPA will:

- 1 Include the Built Boundary established by the Province of Ontario in the Official Plan;
- 2 Identify the six Intensification Areas within the Town, and appropriate corridors, within which most of the anticipated intensification would be focussed;
- 3 Include policies within the Official Plan that are intended to provide the basis for accommodating a minimum of 14,448 intensification units in the Town by 2031;
- 4 Include criteria and a set of urban design policies in the Official Plan that are intended to provide the basis for the consideration of intensification proposals; and,
- 5 Include policies in the Official Plan that are intended to restrict intensification or carefully control intensification in parts of the Town that are not within identified Intensification Areas or corridors.

Questions?

- The current process provides the Town with a significant opportunity to establish the ground work for the continuing evolution of the Town into a complete community.
- An opportunity also exists to establish a series of design rules and standards that will set the stage for the development of attractive projects and appealing neighbourhoods and destinations.

The long term strategy being recommended is intended to provide the Town with the basis for seizing this opportunity.