

Town of Fort Erie

Community & Development Services

Prepared for: Council-in-Committee
Agenda Date: November 21, 2005

Report No.: CDS-143-05
File No.: 350313

Subject:

BRIDGEBURG NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE AND APPOINTMENT OF COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP

Recommendations:

THAT Council approve the study area boundary of the Bridgeburg Neighbourhood Plan as shown on Appendix 1 attached to this report, and;

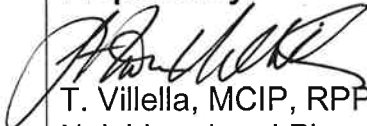
THAT Council approve the composition of the Community Focus Group as described in this report, and;

THAT this report be received for information purposes and forwarded to the Regional Municipality of Niagara Planning and Development Department.

List of Stakeholders:

The Town of Fort Erie
Bridgeburg Business Improvement Area
Residents of the Bridgeburg Community

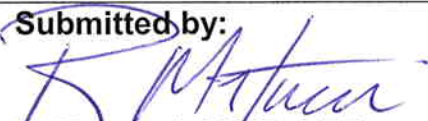
Prepared by:


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Neighbourhood Planner

Approved by:


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Submitted by:


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Interim Chief Administrative
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TV:gjf

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the status of the Bridgeburg Neighbourhood Plan, to seek Council's approval of the study area boundary and to appoint members of the Community Focus Group.

Background

By way of Report CDS-103-05-01 in October 2005, Council authorized Staff to begin the planning process for the Bridgeburg Neighbourhood Plan. Subsequently, Staff organized two Open Houses in order to bring the Neighbourhood Plan concept to the public, to receive feedback with respect to neighbourhood boundaries and key issues, and to solicit interest in serving on the Community Focus Group. The first Open House was held October 18, 2005 at Town Hall, and the second was held at the Fort Erie Public Library (Centennial Branch) on November 3, 2005. Both Open Houses included afternoon and evening sessions.

AnalysisBridgeburg Neighbourhood Plan Boundary

The Bridgeburg Neighbourhood, as originally envisioned, had as its southern boundary the CNR/CPR Rail Corridor. The lands south of this corridor were to be part of the Fort Erie Neighbourhood Plan. However, through consultation with the public and review of the historical boundary of the former Village of Bridgeburg, it was determined that the southern boundary should extend to Gilmore Road. This also has the benefit of providing a balanced amount of neighbourhood lands north and south of the Central Business District, and provides a neighbourhood population of about 3700 persons. This neighbourhood population is similar to the Crystal Beach Neighbourhood Plan area population, and therefore the scale of the project is more predictable.

The northern boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan is set at the existing Urban Area Boundary as shown on both the Town of Fort Erie Official Plan and the Regional Niagara Policy Plan (see Appendix 1). The eastern boundary is the Niagara River, and the western boundary is proposed to extend to Thompson Road. This provides a land area of approximately 1200 acres, and a good balance of residential, commercial, industrial and recreational lands. This defined neighbourhood exhibits many of the characteristics of a mature urban community including: aging housing stock, presence of brownfields, a commercial core area in need of revitalization, and underutilized neighbourhood lands, including waterfront lands. It therefore presents an opportunity to create an effective redevelopment and revitalization plan.

Results of the Open House Sessions – October 18 and November 3, 2005

Two Open Houses were held on October 18 and November 3, and each contained afternoon and evening sessions. Planning Staff were in attendance to explain the

Neighbourhood Plan process, and to solicit comments with respect to the key issues important to the community. In total, **46 persons** attended the Open House sessions, and **20 comment sheets** were submitted to Staff. The following represents a summary of the major issues identified:

- Lack of shopping/entertainment choices
- Too many absentee landlords
- Empty storefronts in the business district
- Need for youth programs/activities
- Concerns re: Ambassador Bridge proposal and its effect on the community
- Appearance of Horton CBI property, need a plan for re-use of lands
- Previous lack of a formal vision or plan, which can now be corrected
- More police presence required
- Need to develop the “Coal Docks” property at the foot of Jarvis Street
- Lack of property standards enforcement
- Lack of Town and Regional upkeep of public property
- Need to incorporate the Bridgeburg Station BIA Strategic Plan
- Need to improve Gilmore Rd (main neighbourhood entrance from QEW)
- Need to develop design standards for the central business area
- Need for Central Avenue to be improved (curbs, sidewalks, lighting, streetscape)

The above comments, as well as possible additional comments, will be further refined through the Community Focus Group meetings, including the SWOT analysis which will take place at the initial meeting.

Community Focus Group

The Community Focus Group is a key component of Plan preparation. Through this format, community members have an opportunity to be an integral part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, assisting Staff in its preparation and bringing neighbourhood concerns to the attention of Staff and Council. In keeping with the model established by the Crystal Beach Neighbourhood Plan, Staff recommends that the Focus group be comprised of ten (10) persons, representing a broad range of interests (i.e. BIA representation, major landholders, residents, community groups).

Group “A” - Neighbourhood Residents – Staff will select four (4) members from those persons indicating an interest in participating, representing diversity in neighbourhood location and level of commitment/availability for meetings

Group “B” - Bridgeburg Station Downtown BIA - The Bridgeburg Station Downtown BIA will select three (3) persons of their own choosing from their membership.

Group “C” - Other Community Interests – Staff recommends three (3) persons be assigned from this group, representing diverse community interests. For Council's information, the following three persons in this category have expressed an interest in participating:

Dale Hiron	<i>Executive Director – Fort Erie Youth Centre</i>
Ron Rienas	<i>Peace Bridge Authority (property owner-Coal Docks & Mentholatum Bldg)</i>
Dave Gillis	<i>Niagara Parks Commission – Planner</i>

To support the Community Focus Group, the following municipal Staff members will be assigned to the project:

Tom Vilella *Neighbourhood Planner*
David Heyworth *Senior Policy Planner*
Member to be determined *Infrastructure Services Dept.*

As well, the Mayor, the Ward Councillor and the Interim CAO will be invited to participate in the meetings.

Next Steps

Upon Council appointment of the Community Focus Group members, the Neighbourhood Plan process will begin in earnest. In order for the identified issues and themes to be fully explored, it will be necessary to provide detailed background information that provides a point of reference, including demographics, land use trends, and service levels for the Neighbourhood Plan area. To that end, detailed analyses will be conducted by Staff, including:

- growth and land needs assessments
- servicing standards and infrastructure requirements
- parklands assessment
- environmental area impacts
- possible economic impact studies for key neighbourhood focal point(s)

Staff has developed the following tentative work program as a guide for this project:

DATE	ACTION ITEM	STATUS
Oct 3, 2005	Council adopts CDS-103-01-05 authorizing commencement of the Bridgeburg Neighbourhood Plan Program	COMPLETED
Late November 2005	Community Focus Group (CFG) members chosen	PLANNED
Mid December 2005	First meeting of the CFG, SWOT Analysis Session conducted, Vision Statement developed, Key Issues Matrix developed	"
December 2005 - January 2006	Staff prepares demographic background information and mapping for neighbourhood, develops draft background report and first draft of Land Use Plan	"
February 2006	Second Meeting of CFG, Background Report and Draft Land Use Plan presented to Group	"
Late February 2006	First Public Open House	"
March 2006	Third meeting of CFG, group formally adopts the Background Report and the Key Elements of the Neighbourhood Plan	"
Late March 2006	Staff develops final Land Use Plan proposal, additional mapping, and Policy Document based on public comments received and CFG input	"
April 2006	Second Public Open House	"
Late April 2006	Agency Circulation of Neighbourhood Plan – 21 day commenting period	"
Early May 2006	Staff finalized Plan, CFG endorses Final Plan	"
Late May 2006	Public Meeting before Town Council <i>Council adopts Neighbourhood Plan by resolution</i>	"

Financial/Staffing Implications

As per the recommendations of Report CDS-103-05, Council has approved the secondment of the Planning Officer to the position of Neighbourhood Planner and the subsequent backfilling to October 2006. The estimated final resource allocation for the Plan is \$45,000.

Policies Affecting Recommendation(s)Provincial Legislation

The Planning Act and the Provincial Policy Statement support the development of Neighbourhood Plans. The Provincial Policy Statement notes that municipalities must have regard to the maintenance and development of communities that promote the "efficient, cost effective, development of land use patterns". This is best achieved through the completion of a Neighbourhood Plan exercise.

Municipal Planning Documents

The Town's Official Plan also identifies the need for the completion of Neighbourhood Plans (referred to as Secondary Plans) as a means of implementing the goals and policies of the Official Plan through a more detailed planning approach. Neighbourhood Plans are considered Council policy upon adoption by resolution. Neighbourhood Plans are also part of the "Shovel Ready" program as they represent a proactive approach addressing development issues in advance of a developer's arrival.

Comments from Relevant Departments/Community and Corporate Partners

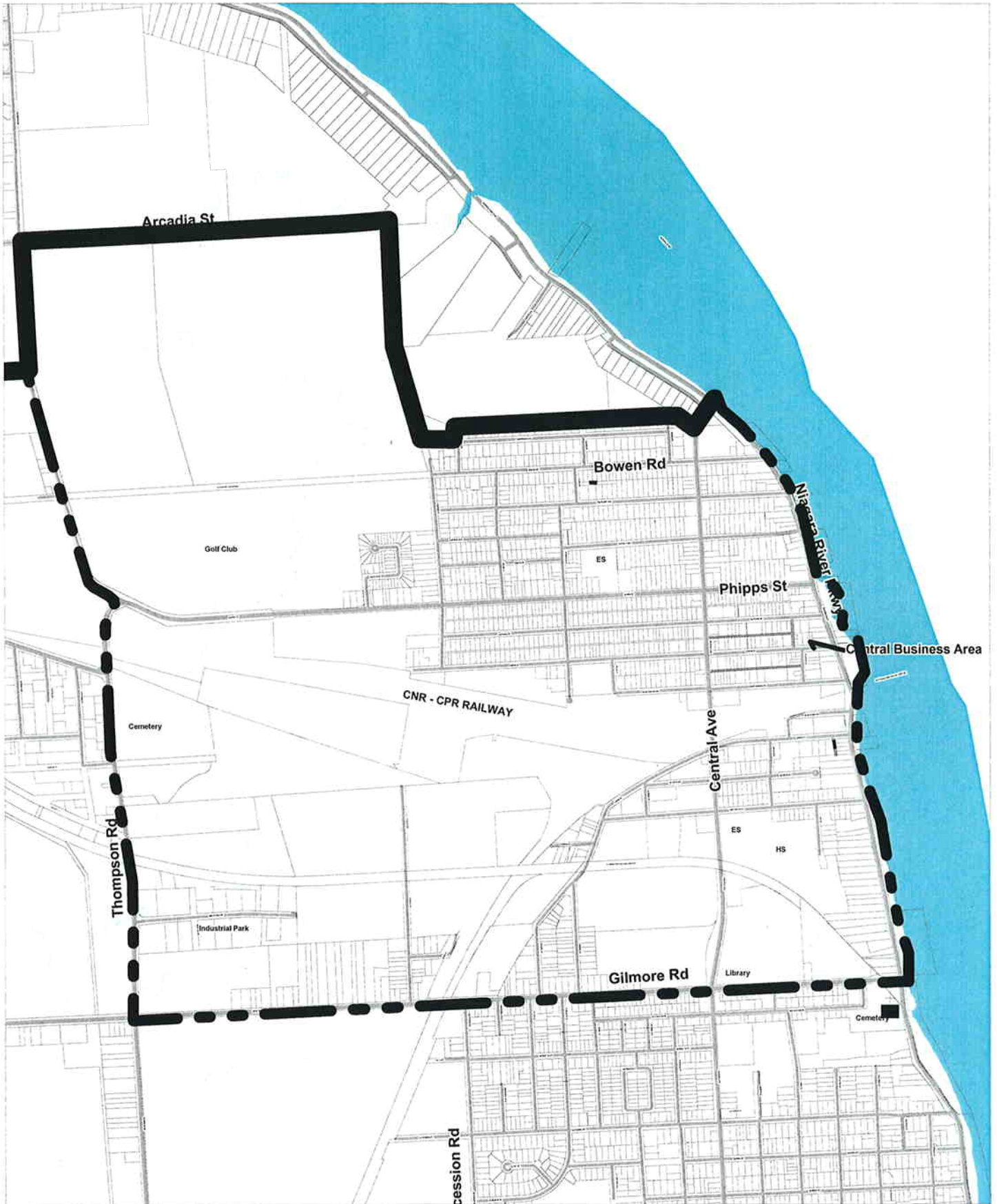
None.

Alternatives

None offered

Attachments

Appendix 1 – Proposed Neighbourhood Plan boundary



**Bridgeburg Neighbourhood Plan
Proposed Neighbourhood Boundary**

 PROPOSED LIMIT OF BRIDGEBURG NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

 EXISTING URBAN AREA BOUNDARY

