

City of Cambridge

Official Plan Review

Urban Design Draft Policy Paper



May 2011

Please note that policy numbers and cross references are subject to change when the overall draft Official Plan is prepared

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1. Overview

This policy paper expands an existing section of the Official Plan into a new chapter to provide policy direction with respect to urban design and the development of urban design guidelines. The proposed policies in this chapter have been drafted in accordance with the Planning Act and the Planning and Conservation Land Statute Amendment Act (Bill 51, 2006), the Provincial Policy Statement (2005), the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006) and the Provincially approved Regional Official Plan (2011).

2. Rationale for Changes

These policies are proposed for the Official Plan to provide guidance to the development review process in terms of the standard and quality of design of our City. The City of Cambridge is forecasted to have a population of 173,000 by the year 2029 and 100,000 jobs. The urban area of Cambridge needs to be planned to accommodate this level of growth while preserving our natural features and agricultural areas from the pressure of development. Provincial policy directs a significant proportion of this growth to existing built-up areas in our community. Given this emphasis on intensification, redevelopment and compact urban form; urban design policies and guidelines are becoming increasingly important.

Planning Act

The Planning Act was amended through the Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act (Bill 51), 2006. The amendments provided municipalities with new authority for site plan control related to exterior architectural and sustainable design control.

Architectural/Exterior Design and Sustainable Design Control

Bill 51 amended Section 41 (Site Plan Control) of the Planning Act to permit municipalities to include requirements related to external building design details where it addresses sustainable design, character and appearance. The City of Cambridge Official Plan was updated in 2008 in accordance with Bill 51 through OPA 28. The new policies provided the City with the enabling framework to expand site plan control to include the review and approval of exterior building design including sustainable exterior design, sustainable design elements on boulevards and municipal right-of-ways, and the design of facilities for accessibility for persons with disabilities. OPA 28 will be incorporated into the Implementation chapter of the Official Plan. The proposed new Urban Design chapter will provide policy support for the review and approval of design elements.

Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) 2005

The PPS provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest for land use planning and development. The PPS sets out policy for the development of settlement areas including intensification and redevelopment and supports well-planned and well-designed sustainable communities. The Cambridge Official Plan must be consistent with the PPS.

Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

In 2006, the Ontario Government approved the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Growth Plan contains a set of policies for managing growth and development to the year 2031 within the Greater Golden Horseshoe which includes the Region of Waterloo.

The Growth Plan sets targets for:

- Density of new development within designated greenfield areas;
- Minimum amount of development through infill and intensification within the built up area of the City; and
- Density for Urban Growth Centres.

Achievement of these targets places a greater emphasis on higher density development and intensification which will introduce change into our community. New developments will need to be compatible with existing development. Urban design policies and guidelines, in association with height and density regulations, will be instrumental in achieving the intensification and density targets set out in the Growth Plan while maintaining the character and integrity of the built-up urban area.

Regional Official Plan

A new Regional Official Plan (ROP) was approved by the Province in 2011. The 2011 ROP contains policies that implement the Province's Places to Grow Growth Plan. The ROP's policies direct a greater share of new urban development toward existing communities and include density targets and policies for the built-up area, designated greenfield area and employment lands. The ROP also encourages area municipalities to develop urban design policies and guidelines to assist with the implementation of the urban area policies.

Note: Margin notes are included to indicate if a proposed policy is:

- Taken from the existing Official Plan; or
- New.

If the policy is from the existing Official Plan, the margin notes will indicate whether it has been revised or updated. The margin notes will also indicate the source for new policies only where the proposed policy is based on provincial, regional or municipal policies, documents or studies.

Since the Urban Design chapter is a proposed new chapter for the Official Plan many of the policies are new and there are no associated margin notes. These proposed policies are generally derived from current City practices related to design and/or based on a review of other municipalities urban design policies and guidelines.

3. Proposed Official Plan Policies

Chapter 5: Urban Design

The City of Cambridge is committed to a high standard of urban design. All *development* within the City is expected to demonstrate a high standard of urban design that supports the creation of a sense of place while respecting and enhancing our cultural and natural heritage and our unique identity.

The urban design policies in this Plan apply to all *development* within the City.

5.1 Objectives

Current OP 2.4 j
and 2.5 c with
minor wording
change

- a) To promote a high standard of urban design, including the use of guidelines, as a key factor in establishing attractive and well integrated *development* throughout the community;
- b) To ensure that *development* is sensitive to and reflective of the physical and functional identity and the heritage attributes of Cambridge;
- c) To achieve high quality design for the public and private realm;
- d) To allow for creativity in design expression while ensuring compatibility and quality of *development*;
- e) To ensure compatibility in scale, form, massing and height between new *development* and existing buildings;
- f) To create an attractive, accessible, safe and healthy built environment;
- g) To protect and enhance public views and vistas of natural and built features;
- h) To design our community at the pedestrian scale in support of fostering social interaction and active streetscapes;
- i) To enhance connectivity to allow for ease of travel throughout the city by multiple modes of transportation;
- j) To ensure that sustainable design features are incorporated into the built environment; and
- k) To integrate urban design into the *development* approval and decision making processes of the *City*.

Policies

5.2 Public Realm

1. The *City* will ensure that sustainable design and opportunities to enhance the quality of the public realm are addressed at the design stage for any municipal project such as parks and facilities, streets, sidewalks and trails, natural areas and municipal engineering projects.
2. Increased connection to the Grand River and its tributaries may be required through enhancements to the trail system including access stairs and ramps, additional connections and pedestrian bridges, where appropriate. This could be accomplished through either public or private *development* proposals.

New, from UW Core
Area UD Guidelines

5.3 Site Development and Buildings

1. *Development* will be:
 - a) *compatible* in terms of massing and scale with the existing streetscape;
 - b) integrated into the existing streetscape; and
 - c) provide appropriate transitions in height to adjacent buildings.
2. Buildings will be situated at or near the street edge to frame the street and will have consistent front yard setbacks with adjacent buildings.
3. Active facades will be required in the design and treatment of buildings at street edges and intersections and should include transparent windows and public building entrances facing the street. Blank building walls are discouraged along street frontages unless there is no other feasible alternative.
4. Building materials for *development* or site/building improvements within the Community Core Areas will be reflective of the local context.
5. Site layout shall incorporate pedestrian walkways and connections to encourage and enhance walkability and access. Pedestrian connections on site will connect directly with public sidewalks and transit stops unless there is no other feasible alternative.
6. Placement of outdoor lighting will prevent or minimize impacts on the night sky and adjacent properties. The impact of lighting will be reviewed through the site plan approval process.
7. Pedestrian scale lighting shall be provided to accent walkways, steps, ramps, building entrances, building parking facilities and transit stops.

8. Servicing, loading, waste storage areas and building utilities/mechanical equipment will be located internal to the building or to the rear of the building where possible and will be screened from view from adjacent streets.

5.4 Parking

1. Underground parking, internal parking or parking structures are encouraged where feasible. The design of parking structures should include active ground floor uses where appropriate.
2. The design and layout of surface parking will consider the following:
 - a) Location to the rear or side of the building;
 - b) Screening and buffering from public streets;
 - c) Landscape and pavement treatments to break up large parking areas;
 - d) Reducing conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles; and
 - e) Pedestrian oriented lighting.
3. Shared parking arrangements between adjacent uses and reduced parking requirements may be considered through the *development* review process.
4. Access driveways for commercial, industrial, institutional and higher density residential uses will be shared where possible to reduce traffic conflicts on adjacent streets.
5. Bicycle parking should be provided in close proximity to building entrances.

5.5 Signage

1. The design and placement of signage will complement the streetscape and the built form and will minimize visual clutter.
2. Signs will be incorporated into the architectural design of the building. Placement of signage will be assessed as part of the design of the building and where applicable, considered as part of a landscaping plan through site plan approval.
3. Overhead lighting of signage is required instead of backlit signage unless there is no feasible alternative.

5.6 Views and Vistas

1. Preserving and enhancing views of church spires, landmark buildings and structures and natural features from strategically located viewpoints will be encouraged.
2. Prominent sites with high visibility and those sites that terminate a view will be required to meet a higher standard of design.
3. The City may develop an inventory of specific protected views and vistas to guide the *development* approval process.
4. Views to natural or cultural heritage elements within the vicinity of the Speed and Grand Rivers and within the Community Core Areas will be protected from negative impacts. *Development* proposals that are considered by the *City* to be located within the views of natural or cultural heritage elements will be required to submit a views analysis to the satisfaction of the *City*. Alterations to the *development* proposal may be required to protect or enhance the view to existing natural or cultural heritage elements.

5.7 Gateways

1. Key intersections within the city may be identified as gateways into the city or into specific areas of the city. Entrances to the community core areas will be treated as gateways.
2. Distinctive design forms including prominent building form and landscaping will be required at identified gateways. Design requirements for gateways will be identified through the *development* review process.

5.8 Accessibility / Universal Design

1. *Development* will be consistent with the standards and regulations of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Ontario Building Code.
2. Barrier-free features will be well-integrated within the function and design of sites and continuous barrier-free access will be provided to buildings and features from public sidewalks and parking areas.
3. New municipal buildings and facilities and modifications to existing municipal buildings and facilities will be designed in accordance with the Facility Accessibility Design Standard as adopted by City Council and will ensure accessibility to all, regardless of limitations.

5.9 Safety

1. Site development will incorporate the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to ensure that new *developments* are designed to address safe living and working environments and prevent potential hazardous situations through the:
 - a) provision of adequate opportunities for natural surveillance of outdoor spaces;
 - b) avoidance of the creation of secluded areas;
 - c) clear demarcation of access and egress areas; and
 - d) appropriate placement and use of lighting.

5.10 Sustainable Design

1. Energy efficiency and sustainability is encouraged in site, building and neighbourhood design through the use of conservation and renewable energy systems, design and practices.
2. The integration of green building technologies, *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)* principles, or other recognized environmental standards in site and building design is encouraged. Financial incentives may be used in accordance with the policies in Section 9.14 may be used for *sustainable* development/projects.

5.11 Transit Oriented Development

1. *Development* located within a 500 metre radius of a rapid transit station or along a higher frequency transit route will be planned and designed based on the principles of *Transit Oriented Development* and will address the following:
 - a) Compact urban form and a mix of medium and high density uses are encouraged along arterial roads, transit routes and within walking distance of transit station areas to encourage transit use and reduce travelling distances.
 - b) To provide a safe environment for pedestrians and encourage pedestrian activity:
 - i) continuous sidewalks are encouraged along both sides of the street;
 - ii) a mix of land uses and a variety of services and amenities will be provided at grade; and
 - iii) pedestrian linkages between transit routes and the interior of neighbourhoods will be encouraged.
 - c) A high quality public realm is promoted to enhance the identity of the area and create gathering points.

500 metre radius used in Growth Plan definition of Major Transit Station Area and by York Region in their Official Plan.

ROP uses 600 to 800 metres

Calgary uses 400 to 600 metres

Based on ROP
2.D.2

- d) Access to the transit station will be provided from various modes of transportation including consideration of pedestrian, bicycle parking, and where applicable, passenger transfer and commuter pick-up/drop off areas.

ROP 2.D.10

- 2. *Development* applications that do not fully meet the *Transit Oriented Development* policies in the ROP, may be permitted provided the owner/applicant demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the *City* and *Region*, that the proposed *development* is designed in such a way that subsequent phases or infilling would meet the *Transit Oriented Development* provisions.

New based on
OPPI/MAH
Healthy
Communities
handbook

5.12 Healthy and Liveable Communities

- 1. The design of our built environment will promote *sustainable*, healthy, active living through:
 - a) Well-connected and maintained streets, paths and trails that are able to safely accommodate different modes of transportation;
 - b) Safe, accessible, aesthetically pleasing, well-serviced and inclusive neighbourhoods and employment areas;
 - c) Resilient natural environments that support wildlife and their habitat and are better connected to residential areas; and
 - d) Walkable neighbourhoods that offer a mix of uses and range and variety of housing types with convenient access to public transit.
- 2. The *City* will support the integration of pedestrian and cycling facilities into existing and new development areas.

ROP 3.B.3

New, taken from
Arts and Culture
Master Plan

5.13 Public Art

- 1. The *City's* Arts and Culture Master Plan will be implemented to promote public art and to assess and acquire works of art for placement on City owned property.
- 2. Public art is encouraged throughout the city and development proponents are encouraged to incorporate art into site design.

Implementation

5.14 Urban Design Guidelines

Updated 4.4.1

- 1. The importance of urban design to the quality of the built environment is recognized and promoted by the *City*. In order to provide guidance to the development process in terms of achieving a high standard of design and meeting the urban design objectives and policies of this

Plan, the *City* will prepare and adopt urban design guidelines which address the following:

- a) site design, building placement, and exterior building design details;
- b) height, density, scale and massing;
- c) safety;
- d) accessibility;
- e) compact urban form in the interests of such matters as pedestrian scale, neighborhood identity and the efficient use of energy, land and *infrastructure*;
- f) integration, conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage system and *cultural heritage resources*;
- g) identification of protected views and vistas;
- h) linkages, including pedestrian, cycling, vehicular, rail, transit and those involving the natural environment, both within and outside of the *development*;
- i) architectural and landscape materials use and design;
- j) the public realm;
- k) *sustainable* public and private services and facilities;
- l) flexible standards for redevelopment and infilling, such as parking requirements, road allowance widths, tree planting in boulevards, and street lighting;
- m) transit oriented development standards; and
- n) any other matters as identified by the *City*.

m) is new
based on ROP
2.D.7

New;
Hemson Recommended
Design Guidelines for
UGC.
ROP recommends them
for Reurb Corridors,
Transit Stations &
Greenfield

2. Urban design guidelines may be developed for the city as a whole and /or for specific areas such as:
 - a) The *Urban Growth Centre* and Community Core Areas;
 - b) *Reurbanization Corridors*;
 - c) *Major Transit Station Areas*;
 - d) *Designated greenfield areas* (e.g. new subdivisions);
 - e) Residential, Commercial and Employment areas; or
 - f) Heritage Districts and Heritage Character Areas.

5.15 Urban Design Studies

1. *Development* proponents may be required to submit an urban design study to the satisfaction of the *City* that addresses:
 - a) How the proposal meets the objectives and policies of this Plan;
 - b) How the proposal fits within any Council approved urban design guidelines that apply to the site and/or its area;

- c) Proposed and alternative built forms, massing, and building materials with a minimum of 3 concepts to be submitted unless otherwise specified;
 - d) Integration of the proposal into the surrounding streetscape and its relation to surrounding buildings demonstrated through visual representation;
 - e) Access to sunlight for the site and adjacent properties through shadow impact studies;
 - f) Landscaping plan including the integration of existing trees and vegetation into the site design and integration with natural features and trails;
 - g) Utilities servicing plan; and
 - h) Any other requirements as identified through the *development* application process and/or site plan control.
2. A *development* proponent may be required to undertake a comprehensive urban design study which includes lands adjacent to and within the vicinity of the proposed *development* site. The comprehensive urban design study will address the elements outlined in Policy 5.15.1.
 3. The study area for urban design studies will be determined by the *City* in consultation with the *development* proponent.

5.16 Urban Design Review

The City may engage a qualified professional or establish a Design Peer Review Panel to provide independent professional advice on design matters as part of the planning approval process. If a Design Peer Review Panel is established, the panel's membership and review criteria will be set out in a Council adopted Terms of Reference.

4. Glossary

Please see separate glossary.

5. Mapping Updates

None

6. Policies Proposed to be Deleted

None