City of Belleville

Emerging Policy Issues

Technical Brief to Support the Official Plan Update

August 2019
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1.0 Overview

A number of emerging policy needs have been identified to support the ongoing review of the City of Belleville’s Official Plan (2002). This technical brief provides a summary of the recommendations for the plan update based on a review of best practices on the following topic areas:

- **Intensification** - How will Belleville guide intensification to the right areas?
- **Mixed Use** - Where is mixed use development most appropriate in Belleville and what is the policy framework to encourage it?
- **Housing** - How can Belleville’s housing policies better support the development of appropriate range of housing, including affordable housing, into the future?
- **City Centre** - How can city centre policies be bolstered to support the development of a lively downtown and economic hub?
- **Open Space** - How can Belleville’s open space policies help to preserve existing, and develop new, access to the waterfront?

2.0 Intensification

The purpose of intensification is to support the efficient use of land and existing infrastructure. The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) defines intensification as the development of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists through:

- **redevelopment, including the reuse of brownfield sites**;
- **the development of vacant and/or underutilized lots within previously developed areas**;
- **infill development**; and
- **the expansion or conversion of existing buildings**.

Staff have indicated that the City’s current policies for intensification are unclear and create interpretation challenges. Currently, intensification is mentioned for the first time in Section 3 – Land Use Policies, where a general development policy is included to indicate that intensification (in the form of the development of vacant or under-developed land) will support the character and function of the City Centre. The intensification of these sites are intended to have reasonable flexibility to avoid discouraging investment in the City Centre.

Additionally, neighbourhood and site-specific considerations are also included in the plan, such as:

- **Bayview Mall/Dundas Street East Corridor (Section 3.9.3):** Plan suggests that the employment and retail focused area should be strengthened through the consolidation and intensification of existing land uses.
- **City Centre Planning Area – (Section 4.6):** This section provides detail about what intensification in downtown should look like based on the City Centre Intensification Plan (RFA, 2012). The
section also identifies a schedule of opportunity sites and intensification targets for the area – currently set at 1280 dwelling units.

While intensification is addressed in reference to the above-noted geographies, what is lacking is an overarching statement at the outset of the plan.

**Recommendation 1:** Address intensification earlier in the OP, in Section 2, which provides the City’s vision statement. Providing an earlier discussion on intensification will provide an overall indication of what intensification means for Belleville, setting the framework for the rest of the plan. The discussion will be integrated with a new “Housing” section under 2.2 – Interpretation of the Vision Statement, which is discussed further in the report. This section will provide an indication of how intensification will be accommodated, for example:

- The City Centre is expected to accommodate a range of types of intensification, such as mid or high-rise buildings, infill, adaptive reuse and redevelopment, and live-work buildings;
- Arterial roadways/corridors present opportunities to accommodate intensification similar to the City Centre, decreasing in intensity further from the City Centre; and
- Other intensification will be accommodated on key opportunity sites and at low densities throughout the City to further support the efficient use of land and infrastructure.

### 2.1 Additional Intensification Areas

The 2019 Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) has indicated that the City Centre should be the primary means to accommodate the residential intensification target of 20% (660 units) by 2038. The City Centre is where intensification activity will be concentrated to contribute to the long-term vibrancy of the downtown area, which is further supported by studies such as the Downtown Master Plan (Office for Urbanism, 2006) and the City Centre Intensification Plan (RFA Planning Consultants Inc., 2012). Intensification policies for the City Centre were added to the Official Plan through an amendment in 2012.

**Recommendation 2:** Update intensification targets based on the 2019 MCR, in particular noting geographies where there are optimal opportunities for the targets to be achieved.¹

While the City Centre represents the best location to accommodate most residential and non-residential intensification, there are opportunities for supplementary intensification in other areas of the City to further support the efficient use of land and infrastructure. Additional policies should be added to enable and encourage intensification in these areas. Through internal staff discussions, the City produced working maps of potential areas to direct the supplemental intensification. These maps were

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¹The ZBL review is expected to include a review of the permitted densities in the intensification areas, and where. Through the review, it will also be important to ensure the terminology and use of the terms intensification and infill are consistent with the PPS.
reviewed alongside existing intensification policies to identify areas where the municipality can best accommodate and encourage intensification to achieve intensification targets. The sites that align with the PPS’s definition of intensification and best practices, and represent the best opportunities to accommodate intensification outside of the City Centre are identified in Appendix A.

**Recommendation 3:** Include a map of Additional Intensification Areas as a schedule in the updated OP. This will provide the City with the appropriate flexibility to guide the majority of intensification to the City Centre, but to consider it in additional areas where it can be appropriately accommodated.

**Recommendation 4:** Develop separate intensification policies to correspond to the map of Additional Intensification Areas, which support context-appropriate intensification.

**Recommendation 5:** In areas identified for intensification, where minimum densities may be prescribed through the forthcoming process of consolidating / updating the ZBL, a planning justification should be required in support of an OPA and ZBA where a development is proposed which does not meet the minimum density. A policy to this effect should be added to Section 8 - Implementation, as well as a reference to this policy in other sections that reference intensification.

**Recommendation 6:** To encourage the development of areas targeted for intensification, a policy should be included that prioritizes intensification corridors for community improvement planning (CIP) to enable financial incentives.

**Recommendation 7:** Include a policy that encourages the consolidation of small lots in intensification areas to create parcels of a size and configuration appropriate for redevelopment.

Areas which could support a smaller scale of intensification than what is permitted in the City Centre (e.g. low-midrise buildings) are not indicated on a site-by-site bases on the schedule map. These sites include non-residential intensification opportunities such as commercial plazas, industrial sites, or vacant school sites, which may be converted to or redeveloped for residential use or other non-residential uses, depending on their size, location, and redevelopment potential.

**Recommendation 8:** Include general policies for which support the intensification of sites that are not identified on a map but are consistent with the PPS’s definition of intensification, meet the principles of the OP, and are aligned with the City’s intensification targets. This will provide flexibility to consider sites which are ideally suited for intensification but do not warrant identification on a schedule map (e.g. vacant school sites).
2.2 Compatibility

The current OP does little to address the compatibility of proposed developments. With exception to the Corbyville area, where dwellings should be compatible with the Corby design theme, and proposed increases to building heights in the City Centre, the OP generally only considers compatibility in terms of land uses. In regards to intensification specifically, the Plan generally supports housing intensification and infill development where it is compatible, and provides examples of the types of developments, but does not indicate how compatibility is to be determined. The plan also indicates that the impact of intensification on the character of existing neighbourhoods should be considered.

**Recommendation 9:** To ensure that intensification is compatible, an enabling policy should be included in the OP to encourage the development of Intensification Design Guidelines to provide guidance to developers, city staff and Council in consideration of proposals. The design guidelines should be developed in consultation with the public. Additionally, it is recommended that intensification areas be subject to site plan control to ensure appropriate control over building massing and design, the relationship to surrounding land uses, site access, landscaping and grading, servicing, etc.

2.3 Mature Residential Neighbourhoods

The current OP does not make reference to mature residential neighbourhoods. Intensification should be restricted to the identified intensification areas (Recommendation 3) to protect the City of Belleville’s mature neighbourhoods from disruptive intensification. In this capacity, areas that are already developed and not identified for intensification will be considered mature residential neighbourhoods. Alternatively, the City may wish to pursue studies to delineate mature residential neighbourhoods as character areas to be established through zoning tools.

In mature residential neighbourhoods, small scale residential density increases may be considered when the scale and character of the proposed development can be appropriately incorporated into the neighbourhood. This will require consideration of the massing, scale, and height, through the ZBL, as well as the architecture styles, roof types, landscaping, etc. through design guidelines.

**Recommendation 10:** Currently, infill is encouraged in existing neighbourhoods, provided that it does not detract from the character of the neighbourhood (3.10.2.h). We recommend that the City strengthen this policy indicating the City’s desire to maintain the character of mature neighbourhoods, which would apply to both new and expanded dwellings. A control provision is recommended to be included in the OP indicating that applications must conform to any future Intensification Design Guidelines applicable to the mature neighbourhoods.

**Recommendation 11:** Include a policy to encourage gentle intensification that is sympathetic to neighbourhood character and consider requiring site plan approval for low density housing forms to ensure that a proposed development is sympathetic to the existing, mature neighbourhood.
Where significant intensification is proposed near mature neighbourhoods, it is important to ensure their character is maintained. Appropriate intensification of these sites will depend on a design which is sensitive to the character of the neighbourhood. The form of intensification in these areas should generally be low rise, and provide adequate transitions to higher density approaching intensification corridors at the periphery of the mature neighbourhoods.

**Recommendation 12:** OP policy to indicate that intensification adjacent to mature neighbourhoods must conform to the neighbourhood character. The Intensification Design Guidelines, and the review of the ZBL should also include consideration for these transition areas at the neighbourhood level.

### 2.4 Second Units

In areas that are not identified for intensification, low density intensification (infill), in the form of second units must be permitted, in accordance with the PPS and the Affordable Housing Act (2011). Second units within existing dwellings or in existing accessory buildings contribute to the accommodation of simple increases in intensification, which increase housing density with insignificant physical alterations.

**Recommendation 13:** OP policy should be included to permit second units in all single detached, semi-detached, townhouses and ancillary structures, as of right, subject to the availability of servicing, parking, consideration for built form, and meeting building and fire code standards. The City may wish to develop a registry to track residences which contain secondary units.

**Recommendation 14:** OP policy to indicate that second units must conform to the character of the primary dwelling and the surrounding neighbourhood.

### 2.5 Additional Relevant Policy Recommendations:

Additional policy recommendations described in the 2019 Municipal Comprehensive Review include:
- The inclusion of OP policy for fast-tracking the development of site plan control applications for intensification sites (i.e. giving these sites preferential treatment for processing over greenfield development applications).
- The inclusion of OP policy prioritizing infrastructure upgrades in prime intensification areas where infrastructure is a constraint to facilitate development of intensification sites.

### 3.0 Mixed Use

Mixed use development is intended to support live/work opportunities, contributing to the creation of liveable and resilient communities. Currently, mixed use is currently discussed in reference to intensification of specific geographies, and in the conversion of upper floors to residential above commercial developments (see Box 1). City staff have indicated that these references to mixed use...
developments are unclear, and there is a desire for further clarification in the updated OP to simplify interpretation.

**Specific Geographies Referencing Mixed Use Development:**
- City Centre - Residential may be permitted in mixed use developments; Surface parking along the Moira River identified for mixed use development.
- The Flats - Referred to as a mixed use district.
- East Gate - Referred to a small mixed use district.
- The Harbour - Supports reuse of industrial sites for mixed use projects.

**Support for Residential Above Non-Residential:**
- Downtown - Mixed use development should provide for non-residential uses at street level with residential uses directed to upper floors.
- Housing Intensification - Supports conversion of upper floors above commercial for residential use.

Box 1: Mixed Use

**Recommendation 15:** A forward looking mixed use section should be added to the front end of the OP (Section 2) to set the framework for mixed use zoning in Belleville and provide further guidance for the forthcoming update / consolidation of the ZBL. Providing an overarching vision for the purpose of mixed use development will aid with interpretation of the policies.

**Recommendation 16:** OP policy should provide greater flexibility for the location of residential uses within mixed use developments (e.g. permit residential behind non-residential, not just above), however it should also discourage existing main floor commercial uses from transitioning to entirely residential use.

**Recommendation 17:** OP policy should support mixed use development beyond the specific geographies currently identified where it will strengthen the City’s urban fabric (e.g. along arterial areas identified for intensification; former commercial or industrial sites undergoing redevelopment) and where it can be appropriately accommodated (e.g. servicing, access, appropriate built form).

### 3.1 Additional Relevant Policy Recommendations:

Additional policy recommendations described in the 2019 Municipal Comprehensive Review include:
- Inclusion of OP policy to promote mixed-use development that incorporates commercial land uses in appropriate locations to contribute to the urban fabric of the community and increase access to services; this would benefit from the identification of opportunity areas that may consist of underutilized properties and/or greenfield/developing commercial areas.
4.0 Housing

While sections 1 and 2 of this report both address certain aspects of housing, there has also been an identified need to provide a better overall framework for housing in the OP. Currently, the vision for Belleville (Section 2) indicates that:

- The City will continue to support a wide array of housing types (2.2.1 Future of the City of Belleville);
- The City will provide a range of housing opportunities located primarily in the urban serviced area, but additional limited residential development will be permitted in hamlets and traditional rural areas (2.2.4 Settlement Patterns); and
- The well-being of residents will depend on the effective delivery of affordable and well maintained housing for people of all ages, financial capacity and levels of independence (2.2.9 Social Needs).

Additionally, as previously indicated, the OP is supportive of the development of a range of housing types and forms of tenure (Section 3.10). While this guiding vision provides some direction, it would be beneficial to address housing more directly.

**Recommendation 18:** To set the framework for housing in Belleville, and to aid in the interpretation of policies, it is recommended that the Interpretation of the Vision Statement (Section 2.2) be revised to include a new section that provides a forward looking narrative for housing at the outset of the plan. This will provide a succinct message that summarizes the existing guidance currently situated throughout the plan to aid in interpretation.

4.1 Affordable Housing

The addition of second unit policies and other housing intensification will contribute to the City’s ongoing efforts to increase its supply of affordable housing units. To further alleviate housing issues, Council has identified the creation of a Housing CIP as a mechanism to further encourage the provision of affordable housing units.

**Recommendation 19:** Include enabling policy for a Housing CIP to target the development of affordable housing in all forms, including medium and high density residential development within the City.
Providing parking spaces costs developers money, which in turn drives up housing costs. One way to reduce this barrier to the provision of affordable housing is to reduce minimum parking requirements. By lowering the cost of construction and increasing the amount of buildable space, developers are able to pass those savings on to future homeowners or tenants. Many municipalities across North America have turned to this approach in recent years as it has the added benefit of not incurring future cost obligations for the City, in the way that other financial incentives might. The reduction of parking requirements, in addition to the financial incentives that the City intends to provide through the Housing CIP, also means that affordable housing developers can stretch subsidies further.

**Recommendation 20:** Include policy that directs parking requirements to be reduced in the ZBL for multiple unit dwellings, and significantly reduced for developments near high frequency transit.

**Recommendation 21:** Include policy that encourages the Committee of Adjustment to approve variances to parking requirements for proposed affordable housing developments which include access to amenities like transit, car sharing, and/or bicycle facilities.

Additionally, as per section 1.4.3.a) of the PPS, the City is required to identify affordable housing targets separate from its intensification targets. This target is based on four tables which relate directly to the PPS’s definition of affordable housing, and can be requested by the City from the Housing Policy Branch of the Ministry of Housing.

**Recommendation 22:** Request the affordable housing tables from the Ministry in order to determine the target for inclusion in the updated OP.

### 4.2 Boarding / Rooming Houses

Boarding houses, also known as rooming houses or multi-tenant houses, play an important role in providing low-cost housing. The PPS also identifies rooming houses as a way to achieve residential intensification. Section 7.15.4 of the OP supports their (“boarding houses”) provision in commercial areas and mixed use neighbourhoods, and Section 7.15.3 directs Council to ensure sufficient lands are zoned for a variety of housing types including rooming and lodging houses to encourage the creation of affordable housing. Staff have indicated that the existing references have proven to be an interpretation challenge, and that existing zoning restricts the use to R4 and R6 zones.

**Recommendation 23:** Include a statement in the new OP section on Housing (see Recommendation 15) about the critical role that this housing form plays in the provision of affordable housing for the City of Belleville.

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2 See [www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1269.aspx](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1269.aspx) for further detail, or contact: housing.research@ontario.ca
**Recommendation 24:** To ease interpretation, choose one term to define this form of shared accommodation (e.g. boarding, rooming, multi-tenant) and carry that forward into the ZBL where it will be defined in greater detail as shared accommodations that include a house, apartment or building where three or more people pay individual rent and share a kitchen and/or washroom.

Note that the ZBL should also establish the specific requirements for rooming houses with respect to parking, open space, access and minimum floor space. The ZBL should also include mechanisms to ensure compatibility with the surrounding neighbourhood character, and ensure there are no exclusionary zoning practices included (e.g. separation distances).

**Recommendation 25:** Establish a Municipal Licensing By-law and Rooming House Registry to ensure minimum health and safety standards are met. To incentivize registration, the City may choose to provide a benefit to landlords of rooming houses, using the registration as a mechanism to share information about changes in legislation, and government grants and loans for repairs / upgrades.

**Recommendation 26:** Revise OP policy 7.15.4 to support the establishment of boarding houses in neighbourhoods of mixed land use, and removing the reference to commercial areas. The City may also choose to extend permission to establish licensed and registered rooming houses to residential neighbourhoods, where the dwelling will be in character with the surrounding neighbourhood (e.g. indistinguishable from other residences).

### 4.3 Additional Relevant Policy Recommendations:

Additional policy recommendations described in the 2019 Municipal Comprehensive Review include:

- The OP should incorporate the residential urban and rural housing growth target which identifies that approximately 90-95% of City-wide housing growth over the forecast period should occur in the urban area.
- OP policy prioritizing infrastructure upgrades in prime intensification areas where infrastructure is a constraint to facilitate development of intensification sites.

### 5.0 City Centre Policies

The City has indicated that the existing City Centre policies (Section 4.6) were designed to provide maximum flexibility for development, however, the interpretation of the policies has proven difficult and staff require additional direction regarding proposed low density developments in the City Centre area.

**Recommendation 27:** Improve clarity surrounding the incorporation of residential dwellings into the City Centre. Link to the policy providing flexibility for how residential is incorporated as long as the overall intent of mixed use is achieved (See recommendations 12 and 13).
Recommendation 28: Provide greater clarity on what is expected of development in the City Centre to provide guidance for the review of the ZBL. For example, policies should indicate that:

- Retail uses on the ground floor are intended to add activity to the street;
- Higher rise built form should be consistent with surrounding buildings, with upper storeys of buildings incrementally set back to reduce shadowing; and
- Buildings should be close to the street edge to frame public streets.

Recommendation 29: Add policy to encourage commercial uses on main streets and key corridors, but also provide flexibility to accommodate other spaces which may also activate the street, e.g. flexible workspaces, institutional uses.

Recommendation 30: Add policy to discourage the conversion of existing ground floor non-residential uses to residential use.

Recommendation 31: Clearly indicate the approach to interpreting a hierarchy of policies to ensure clarity if any policy conflicts arise (e.g. where neighbourhood-level policies are in place, they take precedence over City-wide policies).

Recommendation 32: The low, medium, and high densities assumed in the MCR to determine the unit potential on vacant designated land should be included as minimum target densities in the Official Plan.

5.1 Additional Relevant Policy Recommendations:

Additional policy recommendations described in the 2019 Municipal Comprehensive Review include:

- Add OP policy for a Community Improvement Plan to offer financial incentives that will help stimulate development of intensification sites. The built boundary or sub-area(s) could be defined as the CIP area; one sub-area of focus could be the City Centre where intensification is concentrated.

6.0 Open Space

Lands designated as Open Space (OS) on Schedule B of the Official Plan include areas located along the Bay of Quinte, some small pockets throughout the downtown area of the City and along the Moira River. Many of these areas are not municipally owned:

- Kinsmen Park (corner of Newberry Street and Dundas St E);
- The corner of Dussek Street and Stanley Street;
- The park area along the Moira River on Cannifton Road, across from Memorial Park, which is City owned (waterfront);
- Parkland along the Moira River between McFarland Drive and Byron Street (waterfront);
- Parkland between College Street East and the railway line along the Moira River (waterfront); and
- Riverside Park West, and the Memorial Gardens (waterfront).

It is not expected that the City acquire the privately-owned open spaces identified in the OP schedule. However, it is recommended that the City develop an Open Space Master Plan (OSMP) to determine the overall approach to parks, trails and open space in the City, which may include consideration for the future acquisition of lands. Subsequent to the OSMP, an OPA should be undertaken to incorporate the outcomes. City staff have also indicated the intent to develop a waterfront master plan (WFMP).

**Recommendation 33:** Add policy clarifying that the City does not intend to acquire the privately-owned open spaces identified in the OP schedule.

**Recommendation 34:** Add a policy noting that the City might develop an Open Space Master Plan (OSMP) to determine the overall approach to parks, trails and open space in the City, and may implement certain recommendations of the OSMP through an Official Plan Amendment.

**Recommendation 35:** In order to minimize potential negative impacts in the interim, policy should be included to protect public open spaces from intensive development and uses not compatible with an open space environment.

**Recommendation 36:** City staff have also indicated the intent to develop a Waterfront Master Plan (WFMP). The OP update should include an enabling policy to support the development of a WFMP that will encourage greater public use, access and enjoyment of the waterfront, while also supporting the development of privately owned waterfront lands where public access can be maintained or enhanced.

### 7.0 Conclusion

As the City’s OP review is ongoing, this has provided an opportune time to consider the policy issues identified in this technical brief which were not included in the original scope of review. The recommendations provided throughout the report are intended for consideration by City staff and any agreed-upon recommendations will be included in the preparation of the Draft Official Plan which will be presented to the public for input in the fall.
Appendix A

Additional Intensification Areas
Figure 1
Additional Intensification Areas

LEGEND
- ADDITIONAL INTENSIFICATION AREAS

OFFICIAL PLAN SCHEDULE B
- CITY CENTRE
- COMMERCIAL LAND USE
- COMMUNITY FACILITY
- ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
- INDUSTRIAL LAND USE
- MINERAL AGGREGATE
- OPEN SPACE
- RESIDENTIAL LAND USE
- RURAL LAND USE
- WATERBODY
- WATERCOURSE
- ROAD
- ARTERIAL
- COLLECTOR
- PROVINCIAL HIGHWAY

MAP DRAWING INFORMATION:
ESRI Basemaps, City of Belleville, MNRF (2019), Canvec (2018)

MAP CREATED BY: RBB
MAP CHECKED BY: MB
MAP PROJECTION: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N

FILE LOCATION: A:\2019\199902 Belleville Official Plan Update Services\MXD\199902 Figure 1 - Belleville OP - Additional Intensification Areas.mxd

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Bay of Quinte