ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
MEMO

TO: Downtown Windsor Planning Study Steering Committee
FROM: Laura Diotte, Planner III, Special Projects
DATE: August 22, 2017
SUBJECT: Downtown Windsor Enhancement Strategy and Community Improvement Plan

Background

Council directed the Planning Division to initiate the Downtown Windsor Enhancement Plan and Community Improvement Plan in March 2015. The purpose of the study was to update the vision for Downtown Windsor and ensure development standards are current to guide future growth and development towards this vision. Council approved a Terms of Reference for the study, which includes:

- updating the vision for downtown;
- undertaking a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunity, threats) analysis;
- reviewing the current Official Plan policies and land use schedule, and the Zoning By-law provisions for downtown;
- determining where there is a need for a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and possible targeted incentive programs and urban design guidelines; and,
- reviewing the public realm and municipal involvement/investment downtown.

Staff have completed the plan and have prepared a draft report titled Downtown Windsor Enhancement Strategy and Community Improvement Plan. The strategy component of the draft plan makes recommendations for enhancements to downtown that meet the objectives of the plan. The Community Improvement Plan (CIP) component outlines financial incentive programs, and other community improvement initiatives as permitted by the Planning Act. The Draft Downtown Windsor Enhancement Strategy and Community Improvement Plan is attached for review.

Discussion

Draft Downtown Windsor Enhancement Strategy and Community Improvement Plan

Through the development of the plan the following objectives were drafted to guide the overall direction of the plan:

- To increase the number of people choosing to live in downtown Windsor by supporting the creation of range of desirable residential units and the amenities necessary to support day-to-day living in the downtown core;
- To increase the number of businesses and people working in downtown Windsor by encouraging investment in new and revitalized office space;
- Coordinating incentives and other municipal activities with the Economic Revitalization CIP in order to retain and create jobs in downtown Windsor and continue to diversify the local economy;
- Promote and encourage retail development that meets the needs of the people living, working and visiting downtown – destination retail will be encouraged;
- Encourage property improvements that contribute to a vibrant and healthy downtown core and authentic sense of place;
- Encourage the redevelopment of the City’s historic buildings resulting in the continued or renewed productivity of these properties in a manner that protects and honours their historical characteristics;
• Encourage and undertake improvements and enhancements to the Public Realm that portray an area that is vibrant and contribute to downtown’s “sense of place”;
• Improving the experience of living, visiting and working downtown by acknowledging that the little things matter, and that implementing small scale improvements or solutions can have a big impact;
• Provide financial incentive programs that are attractive to potential investors and corporate decision makers, but are balanced with expectations of City taxpayers and the City’s ability to fund the financial incentive programs;
• Facilitate the development of the downtown’s vacant buildings and land that have the potential for higher order uses;
• Attract investment based on the downtown’s strengths and competitive advantages; and,
• Support investment and development that results in an increase in property assessment and grows the non-residential municipal tax base over the long-term.

The plan provides a section dedicated to each different component of the downtown (place to live, place to work, place to shop, etc) and breaks down the study area into smaller geographic areas to discuss specific issues within each area. The study area is large and contains many different uses, build forms, streetscapes, and public spaces. Therefore, the study area is broken down into smaller areas that have been labeled Neighbourhoods and Districts to make this document more manageable, and easier to discuss issues and recommendations. The plan contains many recommendations for financial incentives for private land owners and tenants to meet the objectives and address issues identified in the plan.

The CIP component of the plan outlines the financial incentive programs that aim to implement many of the recommendations made throughout the plan. The financial incentives include: upper story residential conversion grant program, new residential development grant program, commercial/mixed use building facade improvement program, building/property improvement tax increment grant program, retail investment grant program, the little things matter community benefit grant program, neighbourhood residential micro grant program, and commercial alley enhancement program. Each program has a specific purpose and eligibility requirements, and is assigned specific grant calculation and payment requirements.

Approval Process

The Planning Act gives the municipality power to adopt a CIP for the purposes of:
• Providing grants or loans to owners, tenants and their assignees within the community improvement area to pay the whole or any part of identified eligible costs;
• Acquiring, holding, clearing, grading or otherwise preparing land for community improvement;
• Constructing, repairing, rehabilitating or improving buildings on municipal land;
• Selling, leasing or otherwise disposing of municipal land; and,
• Providing property tax assistance for environmental remediation purposes.

With these powers, the municipality has to meet statutory requirements under the Planning Act before a CIP can be adopted. The Planning Act requires that the municipality hold a Public Meeting to allow the public to make comments on the draft plan. A Public Meeting has been scheduled for September 11, 2017 at 4:30 at the PHEDSC meeting to consider the draft CIP and hear public comments. Staff will consider any public and stakeholder comments on the draft plan received before or at the Public Meeting. Staff will detail any proposed changes to the draft plan as a result of comments received at the Public Meeting.
At the Public Meeting the PHEDSC can make a recommendation to Council for adoption of the CIP. If Council adopts the CIP by By-law, a twenty day appeal period will follow, and provided no appeals are received, the CIP will be in force and effect after the twenty days.

**August 30, 2017 Steering Committee Meeting**

The Planning Division will presentation the Draft Downtown Windsor Enhancement Strategy and Community Improvement Plan to the Steering Committee at the August 30, 2017 meeting. The meeting will be used to discuss Steering Committee comments on the draft plan. Any changes to the draft plan as a result of comments will be presented to the PHEDSC at the Public Meeting.

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