

1 Project Overview

1.1 Introduction

At its meeting on February 9, 2015, City Council considered a report from the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner regarding the next steps in the Great Near Campus Neighbourhoods (GNCN) Strategy. Council passed a resolution that included the following direction:

*That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner, the following actions be taken with respect to housing concerns in North London ... the Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to prepare a Terms of Reference, in consultation with community stakeholders, for a review of the Great Near Campus Neighbourhood Strategy, focusing on the identification of next steps and actions to implement the Strategy and the successes and challenges in the Near Campus Neighbourhoods area.*

Terms of Reference have been prepared to undertake the review process for the update to the GNCN Strategy, and are presented in preliminary draft form to stakeholders in the GNCN for input. Community feedback is sought prior to the final draft being presented to Council for approval.

1.2 History

The GNCN Strategy was implemented in 2008 after significant internal review and public consultation. It included 10 strategic initiatives intended to “cumulatively create great near-campus neighbourhoods by closing the gap between the collective vision for our near campus neighbourhoods and the current state of affairs in these neighbourhoods.” The ten strategies were:

1. Welcome students as a vital part of our community
2. Provide for safe housing
3. Offer a higher level of public service to the community
4. Align expectations
5. Protect residential amenity
6. Provide alternatives to balance the mix
7. Create great places and spaces in our neighbourhoods
8. Invest in infrastructure
9. Level the playing field for landlords
10. Provide for affordable housing

The GNCN Strategy also included initiatives to achieve each strategy listed above and an implementation plan to ensure clear understanding of the role for each partner in the GNCN Strategy, create a timeline for the implementation of the various initiatives, and establish what resources would be required to achieve the GNCN Strategy objectives. Official Plan and Zoning

By-law Amendments were passed in 2012 to implement some aspects of the strategic initiatives. Given that several years have passed since the strategy was first implemented, it is appropriate to review the strategy and its implementation measures to assess how well the strategy has achieved its objectives. Further, a review is important to determine whether any changes or additions are needed to the GNCN Strategy to realize the best possible future for the GNCN. This review will analyze and update the GNCN Strategy to ensure it is still the best approach to achieve the goals and vision for the GNCN. The desired outcome of this review is an updated strategy (referred to herein as the GNCN Strategy-2.0) that appropriately responds to current planning issues facing the GNCN.

1.3 Purpose

The GNCN has been the subject of numerous planning studies and reports since the mid-1980s and continues to be a focal point of land use and other planning related discussions today. A thorough review of the GNCN took place from 2007-2012. It included the 2008 GNCN Strategy and 2012 amendments to the City of London Official Plan and Zoning By-law No. Z-1. In the years since a number of changes have occurred to the GNCN physical and policy context.

The purpose of the GNCN Strategy-2.0 is to examine the changing planning and neighbourhood contexts, review the effectiveness of the first GNCN Strategy and other initiatives that have been implemented, and determine if any new policies or processes are appropriate for the GNCN.

1.4 Objectives

Objectives of the GNCN Strategy-2.0 include:

- Determine whether the vision and goals for the GNCN listed in the Official Plan are representative of the community's current vision and goals;
- Evaluate the successfulness of each of the 10 strategies in the GNCN Strategy and the associated initiatives;
- Review the impacts of Official Plan policies and Zoning provisions for the GNCN on development trends;
- Analyze and evaluate changing trends in the GNCN since adoption of the Strategy;
- Develop new strategies and/or initiatives to fill any gaps found between the current vision and policies;
- Maintain working relationships between all partners in the GNCN, which includes the City of London, Western University, Fanshawe College, Police and Fire Services, and community members. Ensure there is collaboration in addressing the GNCN planning challenges; and
- Prepare and Implement any necessary revisions to the strategy, which may include additional amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law.

2 Planning Context

Through the planning work done for the GNCN, area specific policies were created in 2012 and added to the Official Plan. These policies were also implemented through updated zoning provisions. Below is a summary of the current planning context for the GNCN Strategy.

2.1 Official Plan Policies

The GNCN are subject to special provisions in the current Official Plan (1989) and in The London Plan (draft, 2014) that include specific policies for consideration whenever redevelopment is proposed, especially as it relates to intensification. Specific goals and vision are also provided that apply to all lands within the GNCN.

In the 2012 Official Plan Amendment a new vision was established for the GNCN. The intent of all subsequent policies was to close the gap and make the vision reality. The primary focus of this review is to determine to what level the vision is being realized. The vision states that:

Near-Campus Neighbourhoods will:

- i) *be diverse and inclusive from many different perspectives;*
- ii) *be occupied by a balanced mix of long-term and short-term residents;*
- iii) *provide for a strong sense of social connectedness amongst neighbours;*
- iv) *exude vibrancy, culture, creativity, interest and dynamism;*
- v) *be planned to protect residential amenity and character;*
- vi) *offer a strong sense of identity;*
- vii) *engender respect for the neighbourhood and all those that live in it;*
- viii) *provide for reasonable quiet enjoyment of private property;*
- ix) *provide for reasonable entertainment, expression and diverse activities on private property;*
- x) *cherish, conserve and protect heritage resources;*
- xi) *provide for safe, varied, and affordable housing opportunities;*
- xii) *help to recruit the best and brightest students, staff and faculty;*
- xiii) *allow residents to enjoy unique culture, entertainment and recreation opportunities relating to higher education institutions (Section 5.3.13.3)*

Official Plan policies intended to achieve the vision above include direction for where to locate intensification, special considerations for minor variance and consent applications, new policies to protect the character of established neighbourhoods designated “Low Density Residential”, policies for the protection of cultural heritage resources, and new urban design policies.

Through previous public engagement conducted as part of *ReThink London*, some residents have indicated a concern with the matter described in point ii) of the vision for the GNCN quoted above. The policy states that the GNCN will “*be occupied by a balanced mix of long-term and short-term residents.*” In some neighbourhoods it appears that the balance may have tipped towards a higher proportion of short-term residents, or students. Families have been displaced both for social and economic reasons. The social aspect is that some residents are not happy living in neighbourhoods primarily occupied by students, and economically some residents find the neighbourhood overpriced for family living, as property values are derived from the income

potential of student dwellings. This can inflate the cost of homes in some parts of the GNCN and puts them out of reach of certain families. Measures to maintain the balance and achieve the other aspects of the vision for the GNCN will be considered in the GNCN Strategy-2.0. Other areas of concern with the GNCN vision will be determined through consultation with GNCN stakeholders.

2.2 Zoning Provisions

With the 2012 amendment to the Official Plan was an update to Zoning By-law No. Z-1 to implement the new policies. Specific updates to the Zoning By-law were:

- Addition of a three bedroom per unit maximum to various dwelling types within the GNCN including apartment building, converted dwelling, duplex dwelling, fourplex dwelling, semi-detached dwelling, stacked townhouse, street townhouse, townhouse, and triplex dwelling;
- Removal of the exception for a 3.0m interior side setback, to strengthen the criteria for establishment of mutual driveways;
- Include access driveways, aisles, driveways, and parking spaces in the calculation of “Parking Area Coverage”; and
- Establishing minimum landscaped area requirement.

The effectiveness of the 2012 zoning amendments will be considered in the policy review and preparations of the GNCN Strategy-2.0.

2.3 Other Implementation Tools & Considerations

While the amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law were significant components of the original GNCN Strategy, other initiatives were also essential to the overall success of the strategy. These initiatives undertaken by the City of London or other partners in the GNCN that will also be reviewed for their effectiveness on achieving the GNCN vision include:

- Prohibition on secondary suites in the GNCN (proposed)
- Rental unit licensing by-law
- Housing mediation service
- Proactive by-law enforcement
- Development of new on-campus housing

In addition to the review of London initiatives, regard will also be given to recent rulings affecting all near campus neighbourhoods in Ontario. Specifically, the recent decision from the Ontario Superior Court of Justice regarding the definitions of a “Dwelling Unit” and a “Lodging House” has prompted some discussion for the London context. A Council resolution on June 10, 2014 included that:

*the Civic Administration **BE REQUESTED** to report to the appropriate Standing Committee with respect to the correlation between Lodging Houses and R-1 Zoning prior to the conclusion of the current term of Council; it being noted that a home, rented to more than three unrelated people, none of whom is the owner,*

and whose only common bond is the need for shared temporary rental accommodation is considered a Class 2 Lodging House and therefore not a permitted use in an R-1 Zone single detached dwelling.

Notwithstanding that Section 35 of the *Planning Act* prohibits any zoning regulation that restricts occupancy of a building on the basis of relationship; the GNCN Strategy-2.0 will include a review of the possible interpretation of student rental dwellings as “Lodging Houses” under Zoning By-law No. Z-1. This will include an analysis of implementation challenges if student accommodations are interpreted as constituting lodging houses per the zoning definition.

3 Work Plan

The primary objective of these Terms of Reference is to establish a work plan that will set the direction for the GNCN Strategy-2.0 and help to achieve a desirable outcome for the GNCN. The proposed work plan includes three phases.

3.1 Phase One – Review current conditions

An understanding of the current conditions in the GNCN is essential to evaluating the effectiveness of the GNCN Strategy. The focus of Phase One will be to review the success to date by quantifying neighbourhood changes as much as possible. Specific items to include in Phase One are:

- Consult with community stakeholders during the preparation of Terms of Reference to ensure that community values and goals are included in the work plan;
- Review existing policies and initiatives;
- Review existing neighbourhood conditions;
- Review changes to neighbourhood conditions since 2008 and 2012 initiatives were implemented. Some measures that were applied in a presentation to Planning Committee on November 10, 2008 will be re-examined to find whether any changes have occurred. These may include:
 - tenant vs owner occupied units
 - number and nature of by-law complaints
 - infill and intensification development
 - balance between short and long term residents
- Consider the “gaps” identified in 2008 between the GNCN vision and reality, and review where progress has been made;
- Review ongoing by-law enforcement issues;
- Review of other municipal approaches to near campus neighbourhoods planning and best practices; and
- Review OMB/Court decisions related to near campus neighbourhoods.

3.2 Phase Two – Review 2008 GNCN Strategy

The second phase will include a detailed analysis of the ten strategies and the supporting strategic initiatives in the original GNCN Strategy. This will include a detailed, point-by-point

review of each part that will look at whether an initiative was implemented, what effect it had, and what changes should be made in the future. Tasks to be completed in Phase Two include:

- Review the vision for the GNCN as outlined in the 2012 Official Plan Amendment, determine whether it reflects current community values;
- Review of boundary of GNCN, does it accurately depict the neighbourhoods in London that are affected by near campus neighbourhood issues as a result of their proximity to Western University and/or Fanshawe College?
- Complete a thorough review of the GNCN Strategy (10 Strategies and supporting initiatives) to determine if/how each strategy/initiative was implemented.
 - Table to be prepared listing each strategy and initiative, the method of implementation, observed outcomes, and a rating of the level of success.
- Review roles of other agencies and groups – Identify successful partnerships and areas for improvement.
- Facilitate meetings with stakeholders as required to present findings and receive comments regarding the state of the GNCN and effectiveness of the GNCN Strategy.
- Identify other strategies and practices not included in GNCN Strategy and discuss possibility of implementing them in 2.0, as a result of the best practices review in Phase One.
- Consider overall changes to the neighbourhood since the implementation of the GNCN Strategy and identify successes and failures of the strategy.

3.3 Phase Three – Preparation of GNCN Strategy-2.0

The information gained through Phases One and Two will be used to determine what new policies or other initiatives are needed to achieve the vision for the GNCN. The following tasks will be completed in Phase Three.

- Look into new trends in the GNCN and determine if new strategies/initiatives are required. Some recent issues for consideration may include:
 - *Shift* and rapid transit development
 - Dwelling Unit and Lodging House definition considerations
 - New initiatives included in The London Plan;
- Determine what Strategies/Initiatives should be maintained, eliminated, or added in the GNCN Strategy-2.0;
- Identify short, medium, and long term objectives to be achieved through the strategy update;
- Identify potential areas for intensification in the GNCN, to be included in potential future secondary plans;
- Review options for implementation of new ideas described in Phases One & Two;
- Facilitate a public information meeting/open house to present draft policies/initiatives and solicit comments from the public regarding the state of the GNCN and effectiveness of the GNCN Strategy; and
- Prepare the final GNCN Strategy-2.0 for presentation to City Council.

4 Consultation

A key component to the preparation process for GNCN Strategy-2.0 is submission of ideas, suggestions, and feedback from stakeholders and partners in the GNCN. To ensure that the process is fair and representative of the community's values, the preparation of these Terms of Reference also includes a public consultation component. The future work to be done on the GNCN Strategy-2.0 requires even more input from the public for the review process to be successful. Identified stakeholders who will be approached to participate in the GNCN Strategy-2.0 include:

- City of London;
- Western University;
- Fanshawe College;
- London Police Service ;
- London Fire Department;
- Various resident groups, such as ratepayer and community associations; and
- All residents of the GNCN.

The preparation process of the GNCN Strategy-2.0 will include the following opportunities for public consultation.

- Public consultation meeting to review preliminary Terms of Reference prepared by staff,
- Public participation meeting before the Planning and Environment Committee to approve Terms of Reference,
- Individual meetings with stakeholders in Phase Two to discuss issues with the GNCN Strategy,
- Public information meeting and/or open house in Phase Three to discuss directions for the GNCN Strategy-2.0,
- Public participation meeting before the Planning and Environment Committee to discuss GNCN Strategy-2.0 draft, and
- Public participation meeting before the Planning and Environment Committee to discuss final GNCN Strategy-2.0 for adoption

Other meetings may also be coordinated with stakeholders in the GNCN at other times throughout the process. Written comments are also welcomed by planning staff to be submitted at any time during the study process.

5 Deliverables

Deliverables to be prepared as part of the GNCN Strategy-2.0 include:

- Updated Great Near Campus Neighbourhoods Strategy (see Appendix 1 to November 10, 2008 report)
- Updated Implementation Plan (see Appendix 2 to November 10, 2008 report)
- Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment (if required)
- Report to Planning and Environment Committee