

Neighbourhood Workshop Notes

February 17 and 20, 2010

Introduction

This report outlines the input received from residents who participated in either one of the two Historic Neighbourhood Strategy, Neighbourhood Workshops held February 17 at the Southshore Centre and February 20 at the MacLaren Art Centre.

The workshops asked residents to explore their vision for the historic neighbourhoods and to share their thoughts about what the City is doing well or not doing well, and how to improve the liveability of this area as future growth is planned. These events were part of the second phase of public outreach in the development of the Historic Neighbourhoods Strategy.

Approximately 110 people took part in the hour-long workshops and based on the discussions, the following nine themes emerged.

My neighbourhood:

1. Celebrates its historic uniqueness

- Any new development must be sensitive to and protect the historic uniqueness of each of the historic neighbourhoods.
- A desire to recreate some of the history of the area that has been lost, for the benefit of future generations (e.g. Tannery, Opera House) was expressed.
- A Heritage Conservation Strategy / Plan must be put in place.

2. Has a strong sense of community and embraces diversity

- The way people move around the downtown core will be crucial to defining a sense of community. As this area continues to intensify, Barrie will need to define better traffic solutions for the historic neighbourhoods. Gridlock already exists in the downtown area. The transit system is therefore going to play a big part in improving movement throughout these neighbourhoods.
- Concern was expressed about the perception of safety in the downtown, largely due to the number of social service agencies present. Emerging from the discussion however was consensus around the idea that it is important that the historic neighbourhoods remain inclusive.
- Need quality public spaces and squares where residents can gather.
- Streetscapes and landscapes emphasize the unique character of a community and can support the sense of community - each neighbourhood should have a unique look and feel.



HISTORIC NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY

3. Is a safe and clean place to live and work

- In the City of Barrie, the perception that the downtown is not a safe place appears to be held by a number of people.
- Need to enforce existing by-laws for graffiti, noise, refuse etc. to ensure quick removal within neighbourhoods.
- Safe streets are busy streets thus it is important for people to be encouraged to use the downtown at all hours of the day and night.
- Some Dunlop Street stores and bars are a concern for many participants.
- Throughout the historic neighbourhoods wider sidewalks and dedicated bicycle lanes are needed to improve pedestrian connections and encourage more people to use alternative forms of mobility including biking and walking.

4. Adheres to good urban design standards

- Urban design standards, specific to the historic neighbourhoods, need to be developed and enforced for any new development in the area.
- The criteria for design standards needs to come from the residents themselves in conjunction with neighbourhood groups, associations and local facilities (such as area churches, walking groups and historic groups).

5. Balances the size and density of dwellings to ensure compatibility

- Within the existing residential pockets of low-rise dwellings, primarily found on local residential streets, additional dwellings should be complementary both in scale, size and design.
- Outside of existing residential pockets of low-rise dwellings, primarily found on local arterial roads and at intersections, medium density developments with excellent design such as the Roxborough residential building at Collier and Dundonald streets, should be encouraged.
- Not every neighbourhood is the same—distinctions exist. Some neighbourhoods will be able to accommodate additional growth through intensification better than others. For example, residential pockets found on local arterial roads in parts of Allandale and Queen's Park neighbourhoods are beautiful old residential areas that should be conserved, whereas large parts of Bradford Street and Essa Road could support and would indeed benefit from redevelopment.
- It is important to support a range of housing types to ensure everyone can afford to live in the historic neighbourhoods.



HISTORIC NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY

- Future intensification is more appropriate around significant corridors and intersections, such as Essa Road, Tiffin Street, Bradford Street and Anne Street.
- Significant corridors and intersections need to become more welcoming and energetic.
- Bradford Street could support medium density, mixed use buildings with access to and from the waterfront and the downtown for residents.
- Toronto Street is lovely but increasing commercial use may not be the best type of development for this street.
- Burton Avenue is a major arterial road however parts of it through the Allandale neighbourhood are defined by the historic residential character that is present, and this should be protected. Any future development along this part of Burton Ave. should reflect the historic residential nature.
- Redevelopment of Gowan Street is a concern in terms of the potential height of future buildings.

6. Is beautiful to be in and easy to manoeuvre through

- Property standards and zoning infractions need to be enforced.
- Graffiti and garbage need to be quickly removed from parks and public spaces.
- Rooming houses in the historic neighbourhoods are a concern because there is a perception that many owners do not continue to invest in the upkeep of the property.
- A program to install public art and other measures to beautify public spaces was suggested.
- It was suggested that naturalized park spaces such as Milligan's Pond be opened up and made to link into the waterfront trail system.
- Need to improve connectivity for people to go downtown and to the trail system around the Bay by foot or bicycle using the natural creeks, waterways and open spaces.
- Increase the number of safe bicycle routes by adding dedicated bike lanes throughout the area.
- The hub and spoke alignment of the transit system is becoming outdated. Need to begin the process of changing over to a grid system.



HISTORIC NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY

7. Is accessible to the waterfront and our downtown

- Protect access to and views of Kempenfelt Bay as this is why many people are attracted to Barrie and why many others choose to live in the historic neighbourhoods.
- Concern was raised with regard to the height of the condos built adjacent to the waterfront and its impact on current residents' views and potential access to the waterfront.

8. Supports a mix of services and amenities

- Concern was expressed regarding the lack of community anchors in the historic neighbourhoods. Anchors typically mentioned were schools, grocery store, drug store, performing arts theatre, and a permanent farmers' market.
- Until the city is able to attract boutique-type retailers to the area, it should stop the growth of bars in the downtown. There are enough entertainment businesses now.
- A performing arts centre would be a great anchor and bring in a lot of positive energy. A performing arts centre aligned with a sporting complex could be used to persuade more people to choose to live in the downtown and invest in commercial development.
- The Allandale Train Station will be a good anchor for the area but concern was expressed about the increase in traffic that it will yield.
- Implement year-round programming to show off Kempenfelt Bay. In particular, bring back skating on the bay and pond hockey.

9. Communicates well with City Hall and others

- People indicated they believe they have been forgotten by City Hall and therefore City Hall needs to better communicate with residents about what is going on in their neighbourhoods.
- People want to be heard and want to know what is going on before a development happens.
- Residents will have more influence over the future of their neighbourhoods if they come together and mobilize through community associations and other mechanisms however without the support from City Hall to provide information, it will not be successful.

