
TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: HISTORIC NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: J. TAYLOR, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING SERVICES, EXT. 4485

SUBMITTED BY: J. TAYLOR, M.C.I.P., R.P.P., MBA
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GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: R. FORWARD, MBA, M.Sc., P. ENG.
GENERAL MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE, DEVELOPMENT & CULTURE

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: JON M. BABULIC, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That the work program and costing related to the Historic Neighbourhood Strategy as contained in staff report PLN061-08 be considered as a Program Change in the Planning Services Department's 2009 work program and be referred to General Committee for consideration of the City's 2009 Business Plan and Operating Budget.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

2. On June 23rd, 2008 Council adopted resolution 08-G-339 as follows:

08-G-339 CORE NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY

WHEREAS residents should determine the future of their neighbourhoods;

AND WHEREAS Barrie's older residential neighbourhoods face unique challenges such as aging infrastructure, changing facilities needs, and various social issues;

AND WHEREAS transitions in land use in some areas are changing the character of these neighbourhoods;

AND WHEREAS Provincial policy requires intensification within our built boundary;

AND WHEREAS active citizen participation in planning is critical to ensure that "The People are the City";

AND WHEREAS this core neighbourhood strategy represents a new program delivery;

NOW THEREFORE the Council of The Corporation of the City of Barrie resolves as follows:

1. That staff in the Planning Services Department prepare a Core Neighbourhoods Strategy to address the unique needs of older neighbourhoods in the City of Barrie.
2. That the process be driven by public consultation and involvement.

3. That a working group be formed, with the majority of the group being comprised of residents, and including interested Ward Councillors and staff from the Planning Services Department, to determine the boundaries of the Core Neighbourhoods Strategy and a work program for preparing the Strategy, during the summer of 2008.
 4. That the work program involve extensive public consultation throughout the process and examine the full range of neighbourhood needs, including protecting community heritage, security, safety, infrastructure renewal, facility needs, culture, managing land use, affordable housing, property standards, and sustainable development.
 5. That the work program, the resources required to implement the work program, and the delineation of the Core Neighbourhood boundaries, be presented to General Committee for approval by September 2008.
 6. That resources, including consultant time, staff time, and general expenses, estimated in the amount of \$15,000, be allocated from Contingency Account 01-13-1520. (Item for Discussion, 6.1) (File: P00)
3. Subsequent to the passage of this resolution the City retained Ron Marini and Associates Inc. and together with City staff and Councillor Lehman, formed a working group of 15 area residents of varying backgrounds to develop the boundaries of the neighbourhoods and the referenced work program. During the course of that exercise it was concluded that the name of the Study should be the Historic rather than Core Neighbourhoods, being more reflective of the evolution of these areas, which gives rise to many of their characteristics and transitional land use planning, property and social issues.
 4. Planning staff are reporting on the HNS at this time, having considered the opportunity for phasing of the Study and associated resources as part of the overall Departmental and Divisional work programs and program change forms, to be considered on their merits as part of the City's 2009 and 2010 Operating Budget.
 5. During the summer there were meetings held with the working group, facilitated by Ron Marini on July 21st and August 19th. These meetings and follow up resulted in the determination of the general neighbourhoods as illustrated on Appendix 1 of this report, as well as the work program attached as Appendix 2.



ANALYSIS

6. The Historic Neighbourhood Strategy is a unique approach to planning in Barrie and the ability of the City and its service partners to affect or influence the built and functional form, delivery of services and social fabric of these areas. The Planning Services Department has prepared or overseen the preparation of 12 secondary plans since the City's expansion in the mid 1980's. These served as the guiding land use and policy documents under which green field development has occurred over the past 20 years, designed to accommodate some 100,000 people.
7. More recently the City has undertaken Community Improvement Plans under the Planning Act related to established areas in the City Centre (*The Next Wave* in the City's historic downtown, *The Allandale CIP* and *The Georgian College Neighbourhood Strategy*). These have been largely related to land use planning and development and revitalization, including associated financial incentives. The *Georgian College Neighbourhood Strategy* in conjunction with the work of the Town and Gown Committee began the process of broadened the land use planning implications by introducing a more comprehensive approach to addressing the opportunities and constraints of student housing.
8. Barrie's older neighbourhoods, those constructed before 1950, have unique needs that differentiate them from those planned and developed more recently. Under the Province's Places to Grow Plan, Barrie has been designated as an Urban Growth Centre, with the City Centre identified as a focus for residential and employment intensification. This will result in development pressures and transitional land use issues in the City's historic neighbourhoods, built when the City's population was less than 13,000.
9. The circumstances and needs of Barrie's older neighbourhoods require other than a traditional land use planning approach. Rather, an approach is required that is based on direct and ongoing input and feedback from those who are most familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of these neighbourhoods. It is prudent and timely to initiate such a program to avoid having to react to the anticipated development pressures and issues after the fact.
10. Direct and ongoing participation by the constituent stakeholders in developing a strategic plan for their neighbourhoods offers the benefits of ownership and accountability. Stakeholders bring a sense of community pride to identifying and naming their neighbourhoods. Great neighbourhoods often have names reflective of their history or character. Many people relate to their neighbourhoods as their place of identity, for example, "old Allandale".
11. While the approach of planning for communities in a more holistic and all encompassing fashion is new to Barrie, with few examples in the Canadian context, there are numerous examples of community based and outreach planning programs in the United States. American cities, particularly the signature municipalities of the State are often provided with financial assistance from the federal and state governments that would be the envy of their Canadian counterparts.
12. This has historically resulted in the ability of American cities and their academic community to fund the human resources to develop community based plans and implement these plans through infrastructure and program funding. While Canadian cities including Barrie may not have access to such funding from senior levels of government, we can benefit from this experience.
13. The City of Seattle, Washington recently evaluated the City's experience over the last 10 years with its neighbourhood planning and implementation process for 38 different neighbourhood plans. In March 2008, the Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington hosted a forum on neighbourhood planning in Seattle as part of its Civic Engagement in the 21st Century Project.

14. Forum participants were invited to the event and represented a cross-section of stakeholders in neighbourhood planning. Those who attended consisted of more than 90 Seattle-area residents, community leaders, academic professionals, elected officials, and city personnel.
15. Among the themes reported on were the issues of a City-Led vs. Neighbourhood-Led Process.
16. Included in the findings on who should lead the process:

“The question of who should drive the planning process was discussed. The majority of participants said neighbourhood planning should be a process driven primarily by the neighbourhoods and voiced concerns about centralizing the process....The main fear in having a centralized city-led process was that it could overlook the need for dynamic and tailored plans that would preserve the distinct characteristics, charm and spirit of individual neighbourhoods.....Despite their concerns over a centralized city-led approach, participants did acknowledge guidance would still be needed from the city using a neighbourhood-led approach. Participants said the city should provide guidelines that need to be met as a starting point for neighbourhoods to develop their own plans.”

17. The Urban Land Institute based in Washington D.C. is a non-profit organization with more than 26,000 members in 80 countries, representing the entire spectrum of land use and development disciplines. One of its land use policy forums held in September 2004 focused on the neighbourhood planning practices in Chicago, San Jose, and Austin. In its Community Catalyst Report entitled *“Involving the Community in Neighbourhood Planning”* the participants reached a consensus on the following set of principles and practices for effective neighbourhood planning:

In summary form:

1. Start with Community Building

- *Identify and understand the neighbourhood's demographic and cultural influences.*
- *Involve residents, businesses, civic groups, and institutions early on.*
- *Establish trust and treat people with respect.*
- *Know who is affected by but not represented in the collaborative process and provide them with a voice.*
- *Do not be distracted by people who oppose any change.*
- *Obtain frequent feedback.*

2. Foster Leadership

- *Appoint a local entity to champion the planning effort.*
- *Decide on responsibility for each neighbourhood goal.*

3. Plan for Implementation

- *Build in certainty, clarity, and predictability.*
- *Set short and long term goals and establish milestones.*
- *Do not set the community's sights too low.*

- *Energize the long-term vision with short-term successes.*
- *Establish priorities.*
- *Learn from what other communities have done.*
- *Keep the plan flexible enough to capture opportunity.*
- *Create a sustainable planning and implementation process.*

4. Take advantage of Available Tools and Resources

- *Offer hospitality.*
- *Use visual aids.*
- *Map the neighbourhood's assets.*
- *Put together a toolbox of best practices.*

5. Be Financially Realistic

- *Know how much things cost and how much money is available.*
- *Be creative at filling in gaps in financing.*
- *Involve developers in the process.*

6. Communicate the Planning Process Effectively

- *Market neighbourhood planning.*
- *Deliver tangible results early on.*
- *Be honest about what the planning process can and cannot achieve.*

7. Make Neighbourhood's "Social" Capital Grow

- *Know the city's political culture and structure.*
- *Engage community decision makers in the planning process.*
- *Engage corporate and civic leaders in the planning process.*
- *Engage public officials in the planning process.*

18. The philosophy behind the Historic Neighbourhood Strategy is that it be public-driven involving a Steering Committee, supported by cross-departmental inputs, and assessments, in developing recommended infrastructure and programs.
19. Key issues to be evaluated and the Department responsible for the delivery of services include:
- a) Community Change - Intensification, transitional land use pressures. (*Planning Services*).

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- b) Infrastructure renewal – (*Engineering, Operations*).
 - c) Recreational facilities and programs – (*Leisure, Transit and Facilities*).
 - d) Culture – (*Culture*).
 - e) Crime and Security – (*Barrie Police Services*).
 - f) Property Standards and problem properties – (*Building Services*).
 - g) Heritage Preservation – (*Planning, Heritage Barrie, Building Services*).
 - h) Social Services – (*County of Simcoe, Social Planning Council*).
20. The outcome would be a Strategy for the historic neighbourhoods which includes a Plan and Implementation Matrix, identifying both short-term and long-term goals and projects, together with the lead department or agency and anticipated costs.
21. Certain of the issues would be common to all of the neighbourhoods together with required implementation measures. There may be issues related to a specific neighbourhood that require a more tailored approach. The work program calls for one overall Plan and Strategy, with consideration of the specific needs of a constituent neighbourhood as a “chapter” within the overall document. Included in the Plan and Strategy would be:
- a) Community Vision and Identity.
 - b) Community Needs and Opportunities.
 - c) Community Priorities.
 - d) Delivery Strategy.
22. Public consultation and communication are an integral component of the HNS, involving a survey component by a consultant retained by the City. Georgian College will be approached to discuss providing this service through their research centre.
23. The role of the Steering Committee would be to lead the process and undertake some of the work. Community members have indicated their willingness to conduct many of the tasks associated with the Strategy themselves, reducing the burden on City staff and consultants. More importantly, this will ensure that the process is truly community-led. The HNS is envisioned as a product of the community, not of staff or consultants.
24. In line with this, community members themselves may be asked to present the findings and draft strategy to General Committee/Council once the process is complete. It is also envisioned that open meetings would be held in the neighbourhoods to ensure the widest possible public participation.
25. The process envisaged to develop an historic neighbourhood strategy is a departure from the City’s more traditional focus on land use planning. Engaging the community from the inception of this initiative, developing the work program, and functioning as a working committee through to the presentation of the final strategy to Council is however consistent with the strategic priority of *Ensuring Proactive Communications with the Public and Increased Opportunity for Citizen Engagement*. Planning and program decisions will benefit from having the Strategy as a reference document.
26. It also offers the opportunity to learn from this experience and potentially to expand the program into other City neighbourhoods in the future. In a few years the Secondary Plans developed in the mid 1980’s will be 25 years old. There may be an opportunity to use this community led approach

in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of these area plans, going forward, in terms of expectations and opportunities for the City to deliver its services to the public.

27. Engaging stakeholders in the development of a strategy for their neighbourhoods will provide Council with on the ground, and ongoing input into the difficult decision making associated with the City's budget process. A Strategic Plan enables the City to develop action items that can be achieved within current budgets over the short term, and to guide future Councils in delivering longer term action items, with an understanding of their impact on the City's Capital and Operating budgets. To the extent there is any future funding available from senior levels of government, articulating community values and plans may benefit the City of Barrie in competing for those funds.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

28. There are no environmental matters related to the recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES

29. There are two alternatives available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1

General Committee could maintain the existing land use policy and program delivery to the historic neighbourhood, unless otherwise amended by other ongoing studies or assessments.

This alternative is not recommended as it would not pro-actively address the development pressures and transitional land use issues in the area.

Alternative #2

General Committee could alter the proposed recommendation by directing that the study to be undertaken and funded in its entirety within the 2009 work program and budget.

This alternative is not recommended as the costs of undertaking the work within 2009 would require greater overall funding to retain a consultant and Contract Planner, given the Planning Services Department's focus on bringing its policy documents into conformity with Places to Grow and implementing the Site Plan Process Mapping action items in the first half of 2009.

FINANCIAL

30. The budget for the work program identified in Appendix 2 would involve retaining a consultant with experience or via a sub-consultant, in facilitating community outreach programs including the design and conducting of a survey. Development of a communications strategy would be a major component of the study. The cost for the consultant would be \$40,000 in 2009, commencing in May 2009 and an additional \$40,000 in 2010 leading to the deliverable of the Historic Neighbourhood Strategy in June 2010.
31. Additionally, there is the need to retain a Contract Planner that will be the dedicated resource for the co-ordination of the multi-departmental inputs, assessment of infrastructure and program needs, recommendations for the Implementation Plan and costing. The Contract Planner would also serve as the organizer and secretary to the Steering Committee meetings. The cost of the Contract Planner would be \$50,000 in 2009 for the period from May to December 2009 and an additional \$40,000 for the period from January to June 2010 to the deliverable of the Strategy and Implementation Plan.

LINKAGE TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

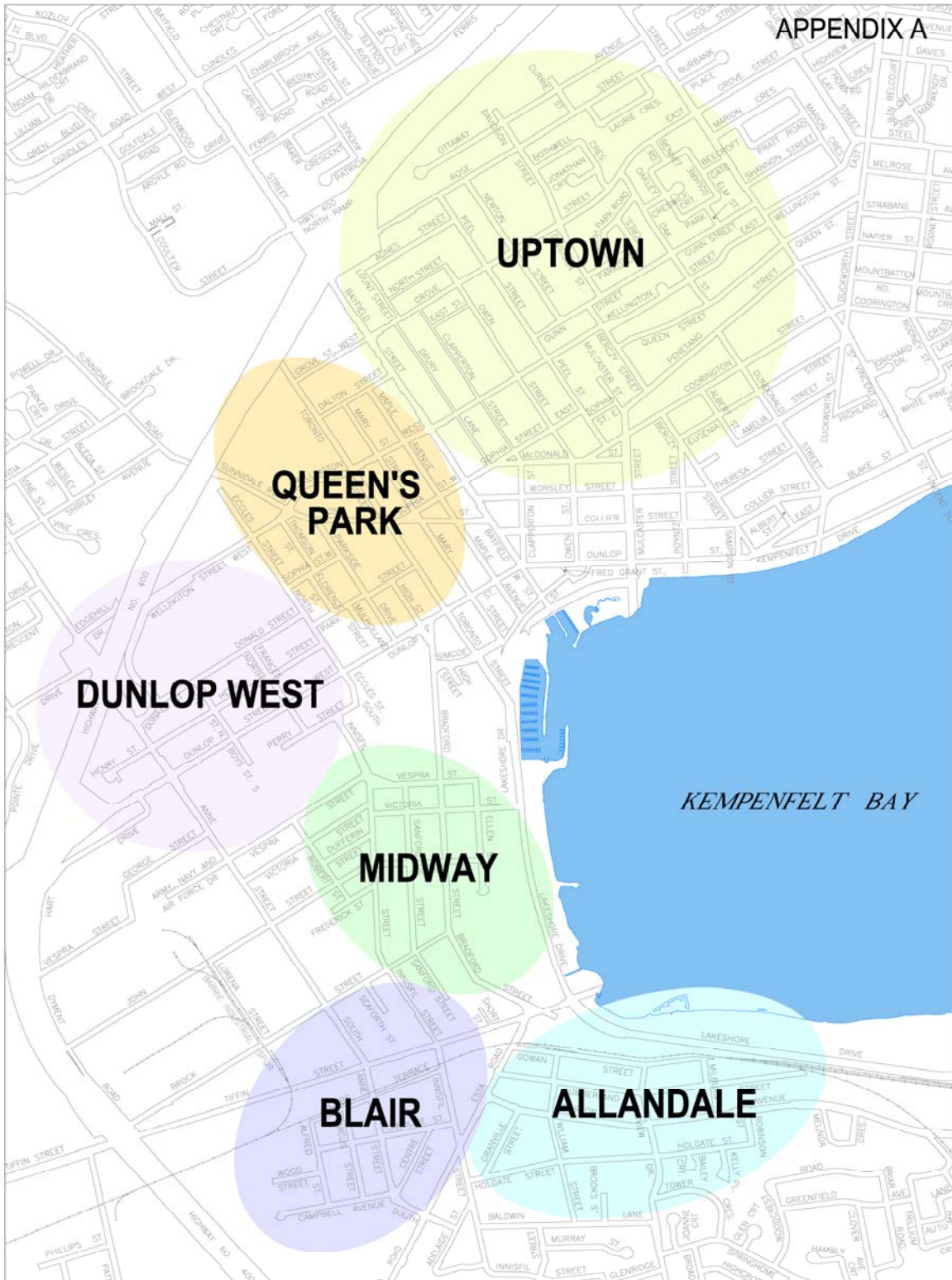
32. The Historic Neighbourhood Strategy is well aligned with City Council's Strategic Priorities:

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|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Attract, Retain and Expand Business for Barrie | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Implement revitalization plans for the City Centre |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Ensure a Balanced Approach to Growth Management | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Ensure Proactive Communications with the public and increased opportunities for Citizen Engagement |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Increase fiscal responsibility to ensure controlled spending and best value for tax dollars | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Enhance Public Spaces throughout the City |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Initiate an Infrastructure Renewal Program to prioritize rehabilitation and repair of roads, pipes and other City assets | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Encourage Culture as an Economic Driver |

Attachment: Appendix 1 – Historical Neighbourhood Map
Appendix 2 – Work Program and Budget

APPENDIX 1

Historical Neighbourhood Map



APPENDIX 2

Work Program and Budget

Based on the input from the working group, the drivers for this suggested work program are based on the following steps:

- ❖ Document
- ❖ Dreams/Dreads
- ❖ Design
- ❖ Deliver

Task #1: PROJECT INITIATION (Seek Confirmation of Neighbourhoods):

This task is done in order to ensure the areas of study are clearly understood. To this end, the initial task will involve community outreach and communications to identify the boundaries and names of the neighbourhoods, and recruit involvement of the public in the process.

The retaining of a communications/community relations firm with a strong and proven record in community engagement must be the initial undertaking, as their strategy for community engagement and outreach will affect the work program. The selected firm will work with relevant City staff to craft the communication strategy and the effective means for community outreach.

The consultant will deliver a program of community outreach that identifies the various communication steps and methods to advise the public at a very wide level of this undertaking and to invite their participation. The consultant will create a work program that includes as an initial phase, the attending of neighbourhood meetings and seeking feedback on neighbourhood issues and concerns which in turn would input to Task #2 of this work program.

Important in this work program phase will be the use of such tools as internet tools and resources; use of councillor communication vehicles; hard copy material at places of public assembly, e.g. community centres and the library; use of business organizations to deliver the message of the undertaking and engagement; newsletters for neighbourhood or community groups; classroom projects to allow students to participate and spread the word to their families and relatives.

The subsequent phase of the outreach strategy must then be to address the media both at local and other levels, especially as this undertaking is innovative in the context of planning in Ontario. The media campaign is to be designed to capture the public's interest. To increase interest, it is suggested that schools initiate an artists' competition designed to illustrate the children's' future ideal neighbourhood. Council can stir interest by recognizing early successes. Ownership is the desired outcome and this will translate into significant public interest and support for and the success of this program. The vision is the cornerstone upon which the strategy will be built.

In line with the strategy developed by the communications/community relations firm, the project initiation will comprise the following which builds on the community outreach methods defined by the working group over the 2 meetings this past summer. The project consultant will:

- ❖ Communicate project internally and recruit City staff participation;
- ❖ Communicate to the broader community;
- ❖ Prepare updates via newsletter to community groups;
- ❖ Participate in Neighbourhood meetings lead by Neighbourhood Committee member(s) (Committee membership to be sought by Council before launch of the work program);

- ❖ Introduce the program to neighbourhood schools (listing already provided);
- ❖ Ensure that updates and communications are available on line, through a dedicated web site, and a blog site for input;
- ❖ Provide update to councillors for inclusion in Councillors' newsletter and web site.

In addition, the project consultant will work with the parties to finalize the map of neighbourhood areas and ensure that the neighbourhoods are identified with appropriate names.

Estimated time line is 2 months. The Steering Committee is then to be convened to confirm neighbourhoods and then go forward.

Task #2: Document the Existing Situation:

This task is done in order to ensure all understand what the situation is on the ground and what is committed for the foreseeable future. This creates understanding, certainty, and eliminates non-productive discussion. Documenting creates the basis for informed discussion.

The task involves documenting what projects and developments are underway; what is scheduled; what is coming in the foreseeable future; e.g. school closures, major new developments, capital improvements, etc. and what needs to be fixed. All of this is related to the identified neighbourhoods.

More specifically, the following is suggested information that should be collected for the neighbourhoods in question:

- ❖ Socio-economic profile of the areas of concern;
- ❖ Demographic profile;
- ❖ Statistics Canada census information comparisons over last 3 census in order to understand what is happening in the neighbourhoods;
- ❖ Capital works plan and budget – City of Barrie and school boards;
- ❖ Status of all municipal plans/policy initiatives that may have a bearing on the neighbourhoods in question;
- ❖ Major new developments planned, in view of the concern to identify land use concerns;;
- ❖ Police Crime statistics for the areas of concern;
- ❖ Property standards enforcement statistics and zoning enforcement statistics;
- ❖ Parking violation data;
- ❖ Traffic counts on major neighbourhood streets;
- ❖ Collision data on major neighbourhood streets;
- ❖ Fire code enforcement issues;
- ❖ Property value information from Real Estate Board to track values, value changes, areas where assistance programs may be of benefit;
- ❖ Selected information from Social Services of Simcoe County and other agencies providing assisted living sites;

Major development pressures/issues affecting areas of concern, including Provincial Growth Plans

- ❖ Infrastructure condition audit (in progress);
- ❖ Intensification Strategy (in progress);
- ❖ Zoning map;

- ❖ Community Improvement Plans (CIP's if applicable);
- ❖ Recreation Facilities Master Plan;
- ❖ Parks Master Plan;
- ❖ Cultural Plan;
- ❖ Heritage mapping/inventory;
- ❖ Other areas of neighbourhood concern or interest;
- ❖ Photo Survey/Gallery particularly by residents so they might show what is a problem or suggest appropriate solutions from other examples.

Estimated time line is 3 – 4 months. Summarize the above as a “Profile of the Neighbourhood Today”.

Task #3: Review the Document Report:

This task involves putting the findings of Task 2 with the Neighbourhood Committees to share detailed findings, to incorporate new research, and to clarify findings. The Committee is to use the document phase as a base of knowledge that will then allow them to go forward.

Once the Committee has vetted the document, it should be posted on the web site and sent out in relevant newsletters and via blast emails. Invite comments if additional information is required to establish a clear understanding of neighbourhoods' situation.

Estimated time line is 2 months to meet, discuss, clarify, distribute and then return with final document.

Task #4: Dream/Dread:

This task involves the development of a vision for each neighbourhood. This is the “Dream”. It would also be informed by a clear statement of what we don't want to happen (the “Dread”). It should have the benefit of the input from the Neighbourhood Committee, but should be largely derived from public input through a variety of communications. Available public input avenues would include surveys, website consultation, newsletters, and a public meeting(s). This step would involve a significant involvement from communication personnel, both in-house and consulting.

The vision for each neighbourhood is the central aspect of the process and would be driven entirely by the residents. The information collected and the collective dreams and aspirations of the community for their neighbourhood would be encapsulated in a vision for their future. The estimated time frame for this phase is 2 months.

Task #5: Design - How We Achieve Our Vision For Our Neighbourhood:

This phase will focus on what needs to be done, what needs to stop, and what needs to change in the respective neighbourhoods, to achieve the vision. What City programs need to change, expand, or be eliminated? What are the most important capital projects? Where should intensification be encouraged, and where is it not appropriate? A list of actions will be developed with the Committee as well as possible solutions. This list would then be presented to the public for their views.

This phase should be done by the Committee and through a statistically relevant survey. The services of a group such as the Georgian College Research Unit may be retained to work with staff to develop a statistically relevant survey. The survey will be structured to elicit issues, concerns and solutions from the public concerning their neighbourhoods. Outreach could be via the individual committee members within their respective neighbourhoods.

The results from the survey and the input from the Committee will result in a series of actions that then demand the formulation of an action plan. What is important is that the action plans show clearly achievable outcomes and a strategy for longer term issues.

Suggested Action Plan Strategy with Priorities:

As a first step, the HNS would include an immediate action plan of easy to do minor improvements. More difficult action items and projects involving major improvements will require developing a plan for longer term action, centred on:

- ❖ What will be done?
- ❖ By whom?
- ❖ When?
- ❖ Performance Indicators (How will we know we have been successful?)

The estimated time frame for this task is 3 to 4 months. This would lead to a June 2010 final Historical Neighbourhood Strategy, in order to give the Committee and members of the public the opportunity to review and comment on drafts of the visions being considered, and time for revisions.

Task #6: Deliver the Actions Identified/Monitor/Adjust:

This is the provision of works, capital budgets, operating budget and participation of partners to deliver on the action plan over an agreed time period.

Estimated Budget:

Consultant:

- i. \$40,000 in 2009
- ii. \$40,000 in 2010

Contract Planner:

- i. \$50,000 in 2009
- ii. \$40,000 in 2010

Estimated Time Frame:

It is estimated that this work program will be initiated as part of the 2009 City of Barrie budget. Consequently, the start time is May 2009 with completion of the strategy in June 2010 in time for budget submissions starting in 2011.