

Information Report



Service Area	Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services
Date	Friday, September 11, 2020
Subject	York Road/Elizabeth Street land use study and urban design concept plan – Background Report

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This report provides background information about the study area so that all stakeholders, including Council, city staff and members of the public, have a common understanding of the existing conditions of the study area; outlines upcoming community engagement as well as future engagement opportunities; and highlights that the background report along with community engagement will inform the development of the land use study and urban design concept plan.

Key Findings

The Background Report (Attachment-1) outlines the history of the area and its current state of development to provide a foundational understanding of opportunities and constraints for future planning. This understanding will help inform recommendations for future land use designations and help to identify if there are additional opportunities for designated employment uses and residential intensification.

The Land Use Compatibility Study prepared by Dillon Consulting (Appendix A of the Background Report) emphasizes that the combination of existing industrial uses along with both road and rail transportation corridors pose constraints in terms of the noise and air quality in the area. These uses impact where sensitive land uses (such as residential) may be developed and redeveloped. In some instances, sensitive land uses may not be appropriate, or careful consideration of the best mitigation techniques must be given in order to provide good land use compatibility.

The heavy manufacturing uses that have historically occurred in this area also require an examination of the potential contamination of each site and appropriate studies to identify the best way to remediate each site when future site-specific development occurs.

Financial Implications

The York Road/Elizabeth Street land use study and urban design concept plan is funded through the approved capital budget, Capital Account PL0057 Community Improvement Plan/Community Planning Studies, for costs associated with consultant services and community engagement consultations.

Report

Details

Project Background

The York Road/Elizabeth Street land use study and urban design concept was initiated in January 2020 with report [IDE-2020-02](#). It will help develop a coordinated land use strategy for the study area and urban design concept plan that includes a built form and public realm framework. This project will coordinate with the strategic goals of higher order plans and policies such as the Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe as well as inform the municipal comprehensive review and Official Plan update.

The project has three main tasks: the background report, the land use study and the urban design concept. The background report is now complete. The intent is to produce a plan after engaging with stakeholders and residents that respects the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

The land use study will examine the entire study area and consider the following:

- The York Road, Victoria Street and Stevenson Street frontages;
- Transition between residential and non-residential uses;
- Appropriate land uses along the rail corridor;
- Identifying larger scale redevelopment and intensification opportunities;
- Defining the Employment Area for the plan area; and,
- Examining the mixed business and service commercial land use designations

The urban design concept plan will develop the following:

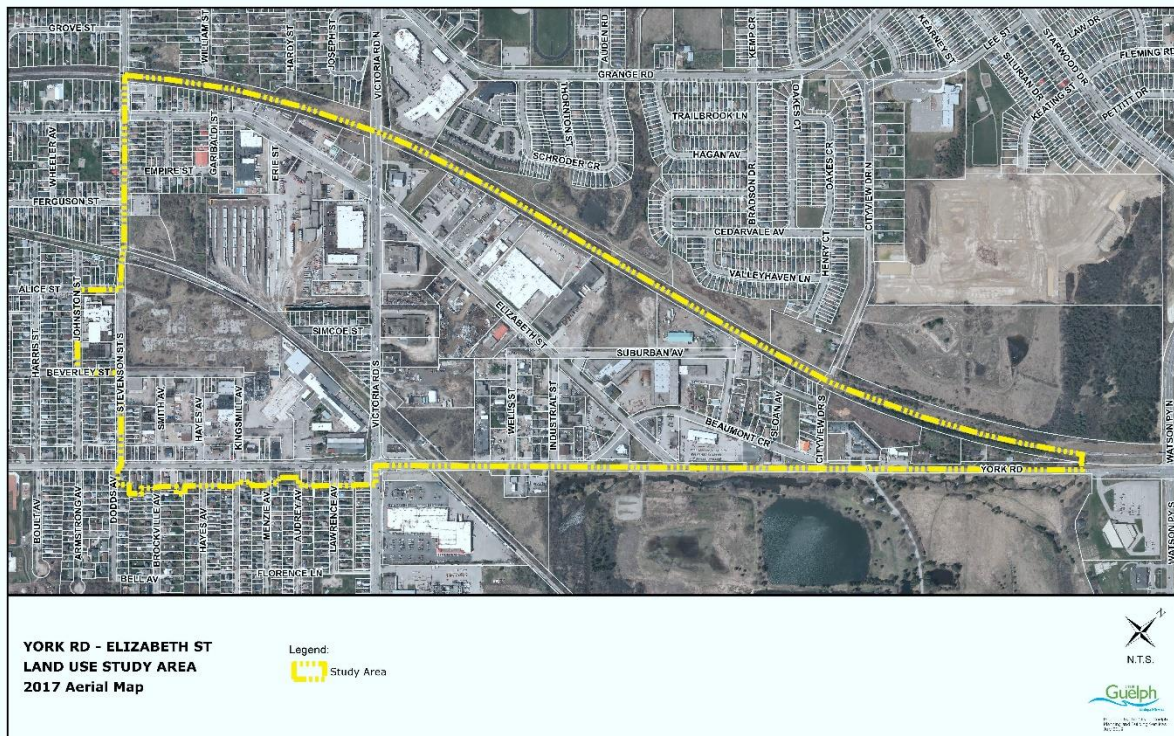
- Built form framework including addressing transitions;
- Public realm framework including conceptual street cross-sections; and,
- 3D model for the York Road, Victoria Street and Stevenson Street frontages

In addition to council meetings where the land use study and urban design concept plan are presented, opportunities for community engagement will occur at the following points in the project:

- An online survey to inform the development of the draft land use study (September/October 2020);
- Consultation on the draft land use study (Q4 2020/Q1 2021); and,
- Consultation on the draft urban design concepts being prepared (Q2/Q3 2021)

Description of the Study Area

The York Road/Elizabeth Street land use study area runs along York Road from Stevenson Street South (and captures part of Johnson Street), to Watson Parkway South, all bounded by the Metrolinx rail line to the north. The plan area also includes the south side of York Road between Stevenson Street and Victoria Road. While the IMICO lands (200 Beverley Street) are within the study area boundary, the Council approved vision for the IMICO lands will not be re-examined. Rather the ongoing Memorandum of Understanding process will continue to provide direction for that site and this study will have regard for the vision and that process.



The area has roots in textiles and manufacturing and has drawn a variety of different uses over the years that include manufacturing, commercial and residential. This diverse mix has largely developed over the years as the City of Guelph has continued to grow and has served a unique employment role in the east end of the City.

The density of people and jobs for the study area is approximately 20 people and jobs per hectare, which demonstrates the potential for additional development. However, when exploring future development and redevelopment, an understanding of the area's unique history, diverse natural environment, and the people and built form that create this community are essential to developing a strategy that leverages the collective strengths of the area to improve its distinct economic functions and livability for its residents.

Population and Housing

The total population for the study area is 550 people with half of the housing provided in single detached dwellings. The detached and semi-detached dwellings in the study area are typically less expensive than other areas in the city, which provides in-demand housing options at more affordable prices.

Employment

There are approximately 153 businesses located within the study area, providing approximately 1,282 jobs. Manufacturing provides a large number of jobs, however there are a variety of other small and diverse jobs dispersed throughout the area. This area appears to be operating as a type of incubator space for smaller businesses, as many small businesses with few employees were identified through the employment survey that staff undertook in early 2020.

Cultural Heritage

Some of the buildings in the area also have cultural and heritage significance to the City, which should be considered with any future development. The City's draft Cultural Heritage Action Plan has identified the residential neighbourhood "The Ward" (St. Patrick's Ward), west of Victoria Road, as a candidate cultural heritage landscape. The study area also contains properties documented within the City's Couling Inventory and few buildings on the Municipal Register of Cultural Heritage Properties. These properties are identified as being of historical interest for the City but are not currently designated.

Mobility

It is not surprising given the area's industrial legacy that key transportation routes remain prevalent in the area. There are several arterial roads in the area including York Road, Victoria Road, Stevenson Street and portions of Elizabeth Street.

Goods movement opportunities are provided in the area with the existing rail corridors (Guelph Junction Railway) as well as York Road, Victoria Road and the arterial portion of Elizabeth Street making up part of the City's permissive trucking routes. In addition, the Metrolinx and Guelph Junction Rail lines have shaped the historic development of the area.

The area has an incomplete network of sidewalks which are mainly limited to the residential areas. The bike facilities in the area are currently limited, with existing bike lanes on Stevenson Avenue extending north from York Road. There are also three bus routes that run through the area. The need to balance a diverse modal split that includes more frequent transit and active transportation options with goods movement is currently a challenge in this area.

The balance of transportation systems is an important consideration in this area. The City must grapple with meeting the needs for more multi-modal transportation options for residents while prioritizing freight/goods movement in the area, which are crucial to supporting employment uses.

Natural Heritage System

The natural features in the York Road/Elizabeth Street area will continue to be protected. The area contains a cultural woodland, significant valley lands and has significant floodways surrounding the two creeks, which in some instances prohibit development or have additional requirements to permit development. Development proposed adjacent to natural heritage features will be subject to the completion of an Environmental Impact Study to demonstrate that the proposed development will not negatively impact the natural feature or its function.

Potential Brownfields

Given the historical heavy manufacturing uses that have existed in this area, an examination of the past potential contamination of each site and appropriate studies to identify the best way to remediate each site may be required for future site specific development especially when redeveloping to a more sensitive use. This will be undertaken in accordance with the City's [Guidelines for Development of Contaminated or Potentially Contaminated Sites](#).

Land Use Compatibility

Dillon Consulting was retained by the City to undertake a Land Use Compatibility study for the York Road/Elizabeth Street study area. The purpose of the study was to determine if the introduction of more sensitive land uses including residential and/or mixed-use development would be possible while protecting existing employment uses in this area.

The Land Use Compatibility Study (Appendix A of Attachment-1) forms part of the Background Report and provides the following:

- An overview of the Study Area and the applicable planning context;
- A summary of the applicable guidelines, regulations, and planning documents applicable to assessing land use compatibility within the Study Area for nuisance contaminants (i.e. odour, dust, noise, and vibration);
- An evaluation of the industrial uses within the Study Area and their impact on the potential introduction of sensitive land uses to the Study Area; and,
- A framework for further technical studies to further evaluate compatibility between existing industrial uses and individual proposed sensitive land uses.

The Land Use Compatibility Study identifies that most of the lands in the study area are within the Minimum Recommended Setback Distance of at least one industry. Where sensitive land uses are proposed within the Potential Area of Influence or Minimum Recommended Setback Distance of an industrial use, technical studies are required by Guideline D-6 to demonstrate that compatibility between the land uses can be demonstrated. Guideline D-6 specifically addresses the requirements for studies for noise, vibration, dust, and odour.

Overall, the Land Use Compatibility Study emphasizes that the combination of existing industrial uses along with road and rail transportation corridors pose constraints in terms of the noise and air quality in the area. These uses impact where sensitive land uses (such as residential) may be developed and redeveloped. In some instances, sensitive land uses may not be appropriate, or careful consideration to the best mitigation techniques must be adhered to in order to provide good land use compatibility.

Background Study Conclusion

The York Road/Elizabeth Street Background Report highlights the range of land uses that exist in the area and the importance of recognizing how these uses impact one another. The density of the study area is approximately 20 people and jobs per hectare which, in part, demonstrates that the existing conditions of the York Road/Elizabeth Street area provide opportunities for additional investment and intensification in this area. As land use changes and opportunities for investment and intensification are explored, they should be balanced with the diverse residential, employment, transportation, cultural and natural heritage aspects of this area. Any future development or redevelopment must acknowledge the existing area's function and sense of place within Guelph.

The Background Study will inform the land use study

As this area continues to be studied and recommendations for future land use designations are made and urban design concept plans are developed, understanding the area's current context is essential. The York Road/Elizabeth

Street Background Report was prepared so that Council, city staff and members of the public would have the same base information regarding the study area. Beginning with the same base information will allow all stakeholders to provide informed input into the draft land use study. The Background Report is now available to the public prior to the first round of public engagement beginning in September 2020. This background information and upcoming community engagement will inform the land use study.

Project Next Steps

Q3/Q4 2020 – Community Engagement to inform the land use study

Q4 2020-Q1 2021 – Develop the land use study for the area

Q2/Q3 2021 – Develop the urban design concept for the study area

Financial Implications

The York Road/Elizabeth Street land use study and urban design concept plan is funded through the approved capital budget, Capital Account PL0057 Community Improvement Plan/Community Planning Studies, for costs associated with consultant services and community engagement consultations.

Consultations

To inform the Background Report and Land Use Compatibility Study consultation has occurred with staff from the following City departments and service areas:

- Business Development and Enterprise Services
- Engineering and Transportation Services
- Guelph Junction Railway

Consultation with the community is part of the next phases of the project in order to inform both the land use study and the urban design concept for the York Road/Elizabeth Street Study Area.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The York Road/Elizabeth Street land use study and urban design concept plan will support the City's existing policies and guidelines and align with the following priorities within Guelph's Strategic Plan:

- Powering our future – This study will support a healthy economy.
- Navigating our future – The study will consider transportation connectivity, safety and improving connections to workplaces in Guelph.
- Building our future – By prioritizing policy work that supports the development of new assets this study will respond to Guelph's growing and changing social, economic and environmental needs.

Attachments

Attachment-1 York Road/Elizabeth Street Background Report

Departmental Approval

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