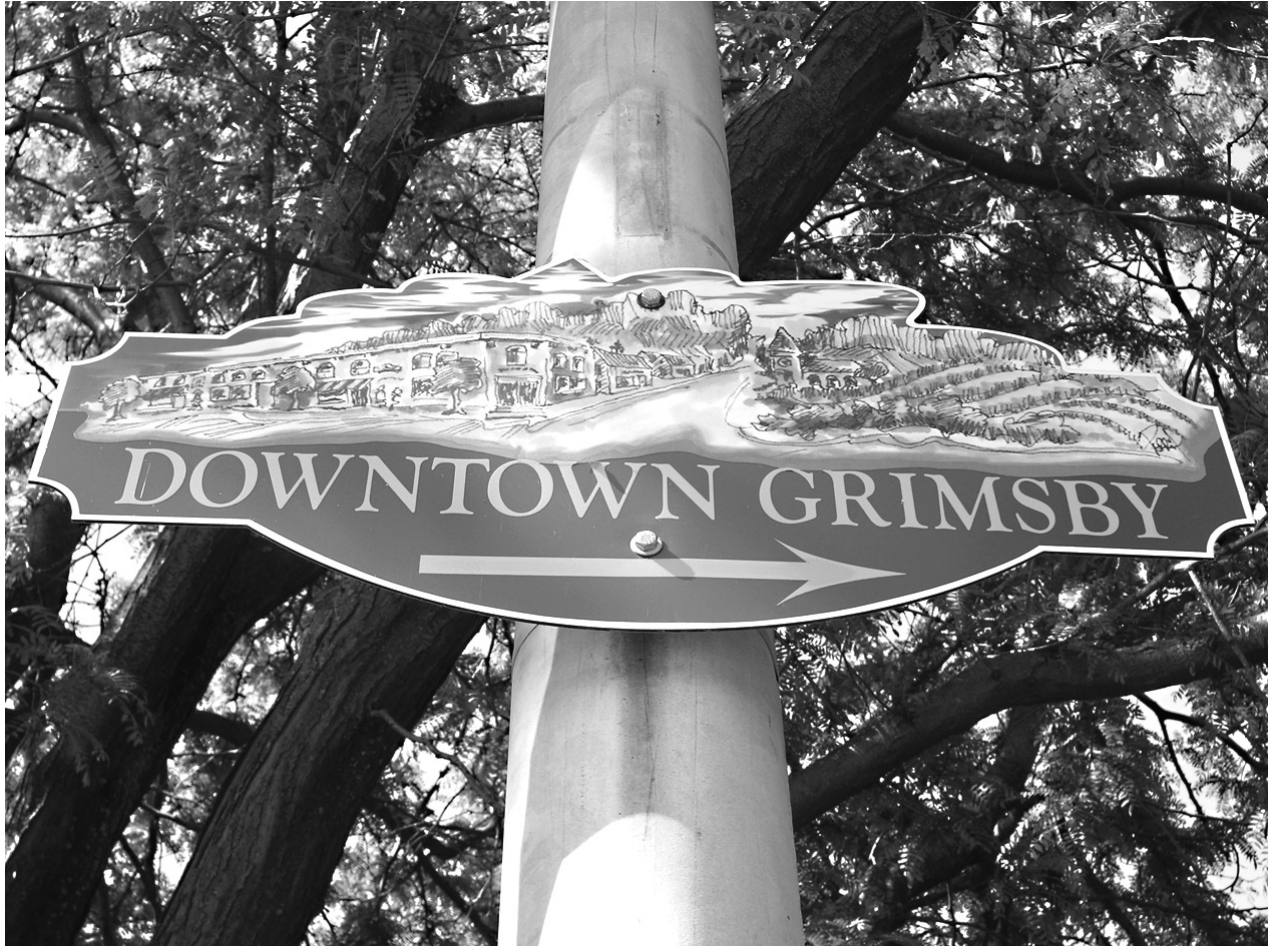


THE DOWNTOWN PROJECT:



A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

November 15, 2006



The Downtown Project was a joint initiative of the Grimsby Downtown Improvement Association (GDIA), the Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce (CofC) and the Grimsby Economic Development Advisory Committee (GEDAC).

The goal of the Downtown Project was to develop an Action Plan for the continued revitalization of the Grimsby Downtown core.

Over the past two years, the Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee hosted various town hall meetings, conducted surveys of stakeholders and held strategic planning sessions, and provided the information used to develop a workable Action Plan that will benefit not just the Grimsby downtown merchants but all the citizens of Grimsby.

This document is the result of these efforts.

It is a plan that provides a blueprint for future actions. Each of the various stakeholders must commit to shouldering their share of the burden if the revitalization of Grimsby Downtown is to be successful.

Respectively submitted

The Downtown Steering Committee

Mike Williscraft, Chair

Gerry Augustine

Garry Brown

Chris Hayden

Tony Quirk

Wendy Watt

Ray Wong



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Downtown Steering Committee consisted of:

Gerry Augustine- Grimsby Economic Development Advisory Committee
Garry Brown- Grimsby Downtown Improvement Association
Chris Hayden- Grimsby Economic Development Advisory Committee
Tony Quirk, Alderman- Town of Grimsby
Wendy Watt- Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce
Mike Williscraft, Chair- Grimsby Downtown Improvement Association
Ray Wong- Grimsby Downtown Improvement Association

In addition, we wish to thank:

Rene Perteet and Don Longfield for their invaluable contribution.

We would also be remiss if we did not thank the efforts of Janine Kilburn and Lynda Gourlay at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, for their guidance and assistance.

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The Grimsby Downtown Improvement Association
The Town of Grimsby
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The Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce
The Grimsby Lincoln News
The Town of Grimsby
The Grimsby Economic Development Advisory Committee

Action Plan prepared by:

Ronald M. Marini and Associates Inc.

Executive Summary

A Blueprint for Action

The Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee hosted a series of Town Hall meetings, conducted surveys of the downtown business community, shoppers and residents, and hosted a focus group strategy session.

Through this process, a vision for Downtown Grimsby emerged:

"In 20 years, Downtown Grimsby is the vibrant, attractive, clean, busy, inviting, safe, pedestrian friendly heart of our town. Our entire community has a vested interest in making it the destination people choose to shop, live, work, play and stay."

The Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee determined that the key to realizing this vision would be to develop an Action Plan that represented the aspirations and addressed the concerns of the all stakeholders, specifically the business community and residents of the downtown. At the same time, the Action Plan had to be attainable and realistic.

With these criteria forming the basis for the plan, The Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee formulated goals necessary to ensure the vision becomes reality.

GOAL 1: To Develop more residences in Downtown Grimsby

Creating a sense of place for the downtown requires the creation of a self-sustaining marketplace. Ensuring that downtown Grimsby remains a desirable place to live will require the creation of life-style specific accommodation.

GOAL 2: To have a Healthy Shopping District

Without a healthy retail mix of specialty shops, services and restaurants, the ability to create a sense of destination and a sense of place is diminished. To create a vibrant downtown, there must be a reason for people to want to visit and shop.

GOAL 3: To have downtown merchants speak with one voice

There must be a cohesive and unifying vision for the downtown that all merchants can accept and work towards. By creating a collective voice for the Downtown, the ability to move forward is greatly enhanced.

GOAL 4: To have a well-maintained and safe downtown

People need to feel that our Downtown core is attractive and safe. Without a plan and program to keep our downtown clean, the ability to attract new visitors and retain the existing clientele is lost.

GOAL 5: To have a Community Improvement Plan in the Official Plan

With a Community Improvement Plan entrenched in our Official Plan, the Town of Grimsby will demonstrate a commitment to downtown revitalization. The support of our municipal government is a prerequisite for attracting new businesses and developers willing to embrace our vision.

GOAL 6: To ensure the downtown is a capital priority for council

Significant infrastructure improvements will be required from both the local municipal government and the regional municipality, which ultimately has responsibility for our Main Street. Creating a long-term capital plan for the downtown will allow these governments to be proactive rather than reactive to the needs of our downtown.

GOAL 7: To improve way finding and downtown gateway signage

If the Downtown is to truly develop a sense of place and destination, how people get there is equally important as what they do when they arrive. Appropriate gateways and signage are critical in ensuring that the Downtown remains a place people choose to go.

While these goals are numbered, it should be made clear that each is considered an equal priority and are all required to ensure the realization of our vision.

Conclusions

The Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee has articulated a clear vision for the Downtown of Grimsby based on input from business owners, downtown shoppers and residents of Grimsby.

This vision makes it clear that, through downtown improvements, our downtown will be the place of choice for merchants, residents and shoppers alike.

The goals presented here form the blueprint and an action plan for advancing the community toward that vision.

Background

In 2002, the Town of Grimsby received an application to establish a large scale shopping centre at the town outskirts. The concern among many members of the Grimsby Downtown Improvement Association was that competition from the "big-box" retail format would lead to reduced usage of the Grimsby Downtown Business District, and ultimately diminish the vibrant, established business community.

A joint meeting of the Grimsby Downtown Improvement Association, the Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce and the Grimsby Economic Advisory Committee was held to discuss options.

It was decided that the best defence would be a good offence and an Action Plan was required to ensure that Downtown Grimsby remains the vibrant hub of retail activity in the town.

The Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee was formed to examine the Grimsby Downtown, begin researching options for revitalization, and present a plan of action to the Town and the Merchants.

At this time, Mike Williscraft, owner of The Grimsby Lincoln News was made aware of a project utilizing community newspapers as economic drivers for small and rural communities. This project ultimately led to the CARCI (Canadian Rural Communities Initiative) project to develop a Marketing plan for Niagara West.

Subsequent to that, a separate funding application was sent to the OSTAR (Ontario Small Town and Rural) Rural Economic Development Initiative to develop a Downtown Revitalization Action Plan for the Town of Grimsby.

The process was guided by a Steering Committee consisting of volunteers from the Grimsby Downtown Improvement Association (GDIA), the Grimsby Economic Development Advisory Committee (GEDAC) and the Grimsby and District Chamber of Commerce.

The Town of Grimsby, the Grimsby Downtown Improvement Association and the Niagara Economic Development Corporation provided additional funding.

Following the guidelines for Downtown Revitalization provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Steering Committee hosted a series of Town Hall meetings to establish a list of issues and challenges facing the downtown area.

The issues were identified and surveys were developed to garner public input required to prioritize the issues for all the key stakeholders: the public, business and shoppers.

Over a period of several months, with the help of volunteers of GEDAC and with support from the Grimsby Lincoln News, the surveys were conducted and the results tabulated.

The goal was to establish a priority list for the issues and to find commonalities between the stakeholders so that the final Action Plan would find support from everyone.

After the priorities were established and the commonalities were found, the Steering Committee engaged the services of Ron Marini and Associates to hold a strategic planning session with the committee members serving as a focus group. This session established the goals found in this document and provided the feedback for the various stakeholders.

Finally, the draft plan was circulated to the Town of Grimsby, the Grimsby Downtown Improvement Association and the Grimsby Economic Development Advisory Committee and received approval.

A Vision and Action Plan

The Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee has engaged in a process to create a new vision and implementing actions designed to achieve a revitalization of Grimsby's downtown.

This process is one which has its roots in the community, that is, it stems from 3 consultative town hall meetings as well as surveys of the various downtown stakeholders, specifically, shoppers, business owners and residents.

The consultation resulted in the following set of common priorities shared among all stakeholders: clean streets, personal service, vandalism free, safe environment, accessible, store hours, parking, pedestrian friendly and traffic flow. In addition, parks, people places and social atmosphere ranked high with shoppers and residents.

Upon completion of the consultation process and establishment of the priorities, it was necessary to move to the next phase of the undertaking, which resulted in the establishment of a vision for downtown, and the formation of goals, actions and initiatives to achieve the vision.

Because of its work of surveying the community and understanding priorities, the Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee was used as the focus group to establish the vision statement and to create the related goals and actions.

Using a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, various elements were identified and documented. An identified strength of the downtown was its small town atmosphere while limited retail assortment was seen as a weakness. Participants saw the built form within the downtown as an opportunity for future residential development while large format commercial development was seen as a threat to downtown commerce.

The group then developed the following vision statement for downtown Grimsby:

"In 20 years, Downtown Grimsby is the vibrant, attractive, clean, busy, inviting, safe, pedestrian friendly heart of our town. Our entire community has a vested interest in making it the destination people choose to shop, live, work, play and stay."

Subsequently, the group articulated a series of goals and associated actions with attributed responsibilities and time lines. One such goal was to create a healthy shopping district, with the implementing action being the undertaking of a

commercial needs assessment to develop a strategy to increase market share and move toward a commercial mix befitting the vision.

While the long-term vision was accompanied with short-term goals, it was clear that due to the various elements identified with different responsibilities, the Revitalization Steering Committee needed to develop program terms and other actions to help the implementing bodies in the undertaking of their respective tasks.

As a consequence, the committee, through this report, advocates the undertaking of a commercial assessment and action plan and for this purpose, detailed terms of reference have been provided to assist the Downtown Improvement Area in moving this matter forward.

To assist in the formation of a recommended Task Force on Downtown Cleanliness and Safety, terms of reference have been developed to guide the Task Force and its initial set up. In addition, to assist in offering programs for inclusion in the recommended Community Improvement Plan for Downtown Grimsby to be developed by the Town, details of suggested incentives for downtown have been formulated and are included in this report.

This report recommends a housing incentive program to be known as “Homes in the Heart”, an interest free loan and attendant grant in order to realize new housing construction downtown.

Also recommended for inclusion in the Town’s Community Improvement Plan is a Downtown commercial property façade improvement grant to overcome the perceived weakness of tired building facades.

Finally, progress or lack thereof will signal to decision makers and stakeholders whether the vision is coming closer. We therefore recommend that the DIA and the Town measure activity and report annually as to how matters are progressing.

The Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee also has recognized that more needs to be done over the medium term. Within the next 3-5 years, it is appropriate that a Downtown Traffic Study be undertaken and the recommendations implemented and at the same time, the Town, with financial participation from the DIA should initiate and ultimately implement an Urban Streetscape Plan for Downtown Grimsby.

From a financial perspective, this report recommends that at the next review of the Town’s Development Charges By-law, the development charge be waived for all new housing created in the Downtown Community Improvement Project Area

and this could be an incentive also covered off in the Community Improvement Plan.

In addition, draft Provincial legislation known as Bill 51 is suggesting that upper levels of government will be able to participate in local community improvement plans. This presents an opportunity for the Town to seek out an additional funding source. However, the legislation must be amended and implementation measures developed before this will become feasible.

Finally, this report recommends a Capital Improvement Plan be created for Downtown Grimsby with the Director of Planning heading a multi-disciplinary guiding team. This plan should be reviewed annually and projects added as traffic studies and urban design plans are developed and approved.

This suite of initiatives and undertakings, coupled with the short term goals and action plans identified earlier, will create real positive change in Downtown Grimsby and will bring the Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee's vision for downtown tantalizingly closer to reality.

Subsequent to the development of the draft report on the downtown revitalization action plan, the Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee embarked on a program of further public consultation to allow the opportunity for public input on the Steering Committee's work and draft report. This program included a presentation to Grimsby Town Council on March 20, 2006, a Town Hall meeting on March 22, 2006 and a presentation to the DIA Board on March 30, 2006. The questions raised at these sessions are included in this report together with the appropriate responses. With the completion of the public consultation, it is now appropriate to finalize the report and to move it forward for endorsement and action.

Ron Marini and Associates Inc. wishes to thank Alderman Tony Quirk for his guidance and grace in working through this report. We also wish to thank the selfless folks who comprise the Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee who patiently gave direction and instruction in the preparation of this report and gave up so much of their own time to bring about this action plan.

But mostly we owe a debt of thanks to the people of Grimsby who took the time to participate in this process. Because you cared, you have created a plan that will yield benefits for generations to come.

Overview:

The Downtown Project is an effort to create a better downtown for the Town of Grimsby. Using a provincial OSTAR application as an incentive, the Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee has been undertaking surveys of shoppers, businesses and residents and conducting town hall meetings to capture the views of the public. With these tasks completed, it was time to take the information and to move it into the next phase by developing goals, strategies and initiatives to be incorporated into an Action Plan supported by all stakeholders. This report details the work of the Committee in undertaking the next phase.

The Exercise:

The Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee members served as the focus group due to their roles, experiences and participation to date in the Downtown Project. Facilitator Ron Marini assisted the group in the exercise.

It is important to note that prior to the undertaking of the exercise, certain ground rules for the meeting were discussed and agreed upon by all participants. One of the rules was that of consensus and that meant that ideas advanced and which are in this report were supported on a group majority basis.

As an initial step, committee members led by Town Alderman Tony Quirk revisited the common priorities for downtown identified by the surveys of downtown businesses, shoppers and residents.

These common priorities were as follows:

- Clean Streets
- Personal Service
- Vandalism Free
- Accessible
- Store Hours
- Traffic Flow
- Safe Environment
- Parking
- Pedestrian Friendly

For residents and shoppers; parks, people places and social atmosphere all were rated high.

SWOT Analysis:

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer Service• Friendly• Small town atmosphere• Store fronts on Main Street• Good parking• Easily accessible via vehicle• Mutually supportive business community• Safe• Heritage buildings being productively used• Variety of stores• Low vacancy• Media supported• Continues as the heart of the community• Central to the community along traffic routes• Unique destination shops• Customer loyalty to downtown• Special events e.g. Santa Claus Parade/ Moonlight Madness/ Festival at the Forty• Existing great image as active/ vibrant• Compact	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited retail assortment• Inconsistent store hours- operator driven including inconsistent days of operation• Prime retail space occupied by service-based businesses• Directional signage is lacking• Poor lighting in parking lots, walkways and certain store fronts• Underdeveloped opportunity for residential space• Public service levels• Inadequate accommodation for pedestrian crossings of Main Street• Downtown boundary not defined on the street• Overlapping of governmental jurisdictions on main downtown streets• Lack of brand• Tired building facades• Number of absentee landlords and retail operators who don't own property
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Built form can accommodate new housing• Geographic location• Niagara Gateway to be used to promote downtown• Large vacant commercial properties• Motivated stakeholders• Opportunity to integrate DIA members and enhance participation in DIA affairs• Increase the number of merchant participants in downtown special events• Heritage buildings	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Big box stores outside of the downtown• Grimsby downtown not a Regional priority resulting in inadequate levels of service• Growing late night rowdiness and vandalism• Availability of space to accommodate new business• Lack of public transit service to downtown• Increased truck traffic downtown due to Regional policy shifts

Vision Statement

Upon completion of the SWOT analysis, participants were asked to envision the downtown in 20 years' time and to identify the characteristics of what their vision entailed. Identified elements included among others, clean, well-groomed public parks and spaces and busy and thriving sidewalks.

Once the characteristics were listed, the group then used them to articulate the following vision statement:

"In 20 years, Downtown Grimsby is the vibrant, attractive, clean, busy, inviting, safe, pedestrian friendly heart of our town. Our entire community has a vested interest in making it the destination people choose to shop, live, work, play and stay."

Goals and Related Actions to Achieve the Vision Statement:

Members proceeded to identify the following goals as instrumental in moving toward achievement of their vision for downtown Grimsby. They then identified appropriate actions and responsibilities and timelines to achieve the goal.

GOAL 1: To develop more residences in Downtown Grimsby

Action: Identify the opportunities for new housing in downtown Grimsby

Who: GEDAC

When: by September 1, 2006

Action: Identify and approach potential downtown developers and investors

Who: GEDAC

When: by December 31, 2006

Action: Review the town's zoning by-law to identify impediments to creating new downtown housing

Who: Town Planning Staff and GEDAC

When: by September 1, 2006

Action: Update and adopt the character study related to downtown

Who: Town Staff

When: by April 1, 2006

Action: Develop terms for an incentive program specifically to encourage downtown housing and waiver of Development Charges

Who: Ron Marini & Associates Inc and DRSC

When: by March 1, 2006

GOAL 2: To have a Healthy Shopping District

Action: Undertake a commercial assessment study with related action plan

Who: GDIA

When: by December 31, 2006

Action: Undertake a vacant space review including upper floors

Who: GDIA

When: by June 30, 2006

Action: Prepare terms of reference for the preparation of an urban streetscape plan for downtown

Who: GDIA, Town Planning and Public Works staff and Region

When: by December 31, 2006

GOAL 3: To have downtown merchants speak with one voice

Action: Hire an Executive Assistant for the DIA

Who: GDIA

When: by April 1, 2006

Action: Initiate communication to establish consistent store hours

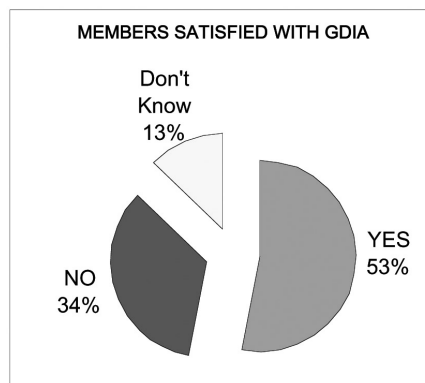
Who: GDIA and Executive Assistant

When: by September 30, 2006

Action: Strengthen dialogue between the DIA and Town Council

Who: Council representatives and DIA chair

When: to start May 1, 2006



GOAL 4: To have a Well-maintained and Safe Downtown

Action: Establish a Clean and Safe Task Force and terms of reference

Who: Town of Grimsby

When: by April 1, 2006

Action: Formulate a Beautification Plan

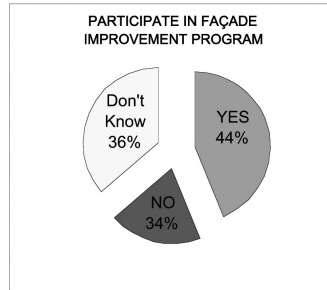
Who: GDIA

When: by March 31, 2006

Action: Develop terms for a Façade Improvement Program

Who: Ron Marini and Associates Inc

When: by March 31, 2006



GOAL 5: To have a Community Improvement Plan in the Official Plan

Action: Develop issues to be addressed in the plan

Who: DRSC and GEDAC

When: by March 31, 2006

Action: Issue request for quotations

Who: Town Planning Staff

When: by June 30, 2006

Action: Receive and adopt community improvement plan

Who: Council and Region/Province

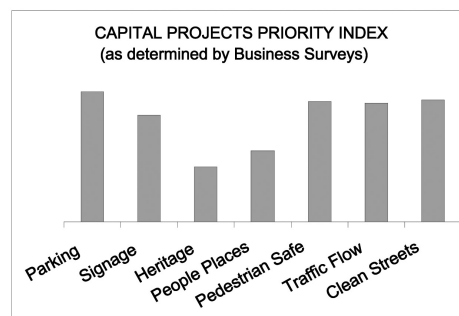
When: by December 31, 2006

GOAL 6: To ensure the Downtown is a Capital Priority for council

Action: Develop a 10 year capital improvement plan for downtown

Who: GDIA, Town and Region

When: by October 1, 2006



GOAL 7: To improve Way-finding and Downtown Gateway Signage

Action: Reconfigure existing signage

Who: GDIA

When: by March 31, 2006

Action: Install gateway signage

Who: GDIA and Town

When: throughout 2007/2008



Conclusions and Next Steps

There is clear vision for the Downtown of Grimsby that builds on the existing sense of place and its historic function. The vision makes it clear that through downtown improvements, downtown will be the place of choice. That is a laudable objective in a society where choice in the market place is central. The goals advance the community toward that vision.

This phase of the Downtown Project report has brought forward the various implementing elements to advance the vision for Downtown Grimsby.

From the work it is noted that a great deal of collaboration among various parties will be required to advance the agenda. The elements are both challenging and rewarding; however, the potential improvements represent significant initiatives for Downtown.

It is important that the Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee maintain stewardship of the revitalization agenda because of the different roles and priorities of the various parties.

This group has created the vision and is now armed with the strategy with attendant time lines to bring the vision to reality. Without their oversight, in light of other priorities, there is real danger this aggressive short to medium term action plan will falter.

We would see the group assessing progress each year and when the Town of Grimsby undertakes the preparation of a new Official Plan or an update that would be a most appropriate time to revisit the strategy and plan for further incremental plans of progress.

With the drafting of the action report, it was determined that the report should be vetted through further public consultation prior to production of the final report. The next section of the report addresses the public consultation.

The next step will be to formulate a detailed action plan for the short to medium term, 3-5 years, to get closer to achieving the vision. The action plan will be lead by the Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee.

Advancing the Vision

The previous section of this report offers a clear direction to improve the downtown of Grimsby. It would assist those charged with implementing the various actions if suggestions for direction could be given at this early stage in this effort.

Accordingly, this portion of the Downtown Project Report will focus on the development of specific terms of reference to move elements forward. In addition, we are mindful that the actions identified through the SWOT analysis and visioning exercise were for the most part, focused on the short term.

However, when the SWOT analysis is revisited, it is apparent that more needs to be addressed in the medium term, 3-5 years. Therefore, this section of the report will also identify medium term actions that, if implemented, will take the Town and its ratepayers closer to achieving the Committee's vision for Downtown Grimsby.

SHORT TERM ACTIONS

The plan includes 5 short-term initiatives that are a follow up to the goal setting and action plan arising from the visioning work done by the Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee earlier this year.

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS:

With identification of the short term actions by the Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee and the formulation of the foregoing initiatives to assist in creating results from the action plan, it is appropriate to address what needs to be done in the medium term.

This is necessary because the goals and related action plan are scheduled over the next 1-2 years. However, when reviewing the SWOT analysis, there is more that needs to be addressed in the medium term-say 3-5 years. The next section of the report addresses medium term actions that, if implemented, will take the Town and its ratepayers closer to achieving the Focus Group's vision for Downtown Grimsby. Accordingly, we are recommending the 5 medium term actions.

SHORT TERM ACTIONS

I. Undertaking the Commercial Assessment with Related Action Plan:

This work is fundamental to address many of the elements identified through the SWOT analysis. To address the gaps in the current commercial mix downtown, how to position the downtown to grow its market in spite of threats from large format commercial development elsewhere in the Town and the Region, to create a marketing brand, and most importantly, to give the DIA tools that they can use to improve their business district, a commercial assessment and action plan are needed.

It is imperative that this work be a collaborative effort between the Town and DIA. The commercial assessment will make recommendations for actions and therefore, the Town and the DIA must be prepared to deliver on those things within each of their jurisdictions.

To move the commercial assessment toward reality, the following terms of reference are offered for consideration of the DIA

Objectives:

To study the commercial and business environment and tourism potential within Downtown Grimsby.

To recommend measures to assist in the continued economic health and to improve the commercial community within Downtown Grimsby.

To assess external factors that may affect the economic viability and recommend to the appropriate bodies (e.g. Town, DIA) measures to address these factors for the betterment of the Downtown.

To formulate recommendations in the form of action plans to the Town and the DIA designed to implement recommended and approved actions arising from the commercial assessments.

Tasks:

The area under study will be the Downtown Improvement Area.

The objective is to assess the existing nature and extent of demand for the goods and services downtown and to recommend relevant strategies both to maintain and increase such demand. The client will be Grimsby Downtown Improvement Association, however, the selected consultant will be required to attend a series of meetings with the partnering organizations and other stakeholders to ensure the work is relevant and addresses the concern of the implementing bodies.

It is critically important that the consultant ensure the work is tailored to reflect the needs and characteristics of Downtown Grimsby as well as the Town.

Task 1:

Examine the background work done and data collected to date related to the downtown. Sources will be the DIA Board of Management, Chamber of Commerce, Region of Niagara Economic Development Department and the Grimsby Economic Development Advisory Committee. This work will include previous studies, plans, and work programs that may affect the outcomes of the consultant's work.

As part of the background work, the consultant must communicate with external agencies and departments, especially the Planning Department of the Town of Grimsby.

The consultant will also undertake a review of similar studies done in other downtowns in Ontario. Finally, in view of external influences, the consultant shall identify similar situations to assist in understanding the effects of external changes to the Grimsby Downtown.

Task 2:

Assess the current mix of commercial uses and services within the downtown. This will include an inventory, identification and assessment of downtown's market area and the nature of the businesses. In addition, the consultant is to assess transportation and parking issues relative to their effects on the downtown.

Task 3:

The consultant will undertake a profile of the market area upon which downtown depends for customers. This will include assessments through Statistics Canada, (must use the latest published data), and the nature of the users' visits. E.g. through traffic, destination trips, etc.

Work should include economic and social profile of the Town.

Task 4:

Identify the businesses in the downtown together with all tax roll numbers and municipal addresses. The DIA and partnering groups, as part of their marketing efforts, will use this information.

Interview the various merchants and business people from the various downtown establishments. This will give the consultant an idea of the nature of the business, who are the customers and issues related to market share. Prepare a SWOT analysis of the downtown's business situation.

Task 5:

Undertake a consumer and household survey. Consultants to identify the area to be surveyed based on the objectives of this undertaking and their own experience. The assessment is to be sufficient to determine shopping patterns, reasons for shopping and visiting, and retail opportunities demanded in the future and retail deficiencies.

Task 6:

With the assembled information from the foregoing tasks, the consultant is to identify external elements that may influence the viability of the downtown. The consultant is to assess the potential effects and will recommend strategies to eliminate or reduce negative influences; conversely, the consultant is to recommend strategies to capitalize on positive attributes.

Task 7:

Action Plan-The consultant will produce an action plan for the downtown. The selected actions will accomplish the following:

- Develop a clear and realistic vision for the future of the downtown including needed programming and management functions.
- Identify commercial revitalization priorities depicting both public and private roles.
- Identify appropriate commercial mix strategy.
- Identify partners to implement the recommended action plan, including any Town or Regional actions such as by-laws, policies, and transportation issues requiring review so as to improve the business climate. All other partners' responsibilities under the action plan are to be included by the consultant. In addition, the consultant is to develop a critical path for action and a clear schedule how partners will progress.
- Develop specific recommendations to retain and enhance the vitality of current businesses.
- Recommend strategies for the short, medium and long term and related responsibilities.
- Other issues and technical assistance as considered by the DIA to be relevant for downtown.

Task 8:

Prepare a draft report for review by the DIA and implementing partners. Consultant is required to attend meetings to address findings.

Task 9:

Included in the price will be the cost for the consultant to visit with each of the respective downtown partner groups who have agreed to undertake the action plan arising from this work, at least 6 months and not more than 12 months after receipt of the final report by the DIA for the purpose of reviewing the progress of implementation, identifying obstacles and brainstorming how to overcome the obstacles.

Additional Issues:

The selected consultant must be prepared to attend a minimum of 6 meetings. There shall be at least one meeting with each of the partnering groups as well as meetings with relevant Aldermen and presentation of the final report to the DIA Board of Management.

Proposed Schedule:

Start May 1, 2006-Completion December 31, 2006.

Final Document:

Consultant to provide 25 copies and 1 computer disk copy of the final document

Budget:

Estimated at \$40,000.00

II. Establishing a Task Force Focused on Safety and Cleanliness Issues in Downtown Grimsby.

While the focus group identified many positive attributes relative to Downtown Grimsby, there was a view that attention had to be paid to issues related to late hours public safety perceptions and to the state of downtown maintenance.

In terms of the action plan, one of the group's earliest initiatives was to develop the above-described task force. The benefit of such an undertaking is that it will shine a light on downtown and identify what is being done now, what the shortcomings might be and how to redress such issues. It is to be emphasized that this is not an indictment that downtown is unsafe, but it is a concerted effort to flesh out what is working and what needs to be improved.

The notion of a Task Force is valid because it suggests an action orientation in addressing the issues identified by the focus group.

The following terms of reference are suggested for consideration in the establishment of the Task Force.

Mission:

To identify issues related to the perception of the cleanliness and security of Downtown Grimsby and to recommend appropriate action and strategies to rectify the perception.

Composition:

Two Aldermen, with one as the chair.
Two representatives from the Grimsby DIA
Two Citizens at large

Supporting Staff:

The Task Force will be provided support by relevant departments within the Town notably Public Works, Planning and Treasury departments. Due to the split of responsibilities, participation will be requested from Niagara Regional Police and Niagara Regional Public Works Department. Other departments as required may be called upon to assist the Task Force.

Reporting:

The Task Force will be established by April 1, 2006. It is expected to report findings by September 30, 2006 in order that budget implications can be addressed as part of the municipal budget preparation for the 2007 budget year.

Key Activities:

- Determine the geographic boundary
- Identify the issues/problem statement
- Identify the existing level of service, e.g. police service, public works frequency of street sweeping, trash removal, hours spent maintaining plantings etc.
- Identify the desired level of service, e.g. think of an event when all agreed downtown was looking its best. Then ask various service delivery agents what they spent to make it that way.
- Identify alternative solutions to meet desired level of service
- Identify costs to implement the alternative solutions
- Develop a short-term plan of action by July of 2006
- Develop a long-term plan of action by September 30, 2006
- Identify budget implications for 2007
- Administrative support and reporting protocol relative to standing committee jurisdiction is to be determined. Based on the recommended arrangement, the Task Force would not require a separate budget

III. Establishing an Incentive Program to Promote Downtown Housing:

Incentives by municipalities to private property owners are prohibited by provincial legislation unless the property is within a Community Improvement Project Area and included within a Community Improvement Plan approved by the Province.

Therefore, until such a plan for the downtown of Grimsby is developed by the Town and approved by the Province, this incentive program cannot be implemented.

However, as the focus group has identified the need for the preparation of a community improvement plan, early identification of possible programs will aid in the community improvement plan's preparation.

From the work of the focus group, there is a clear desire to take advantage of Downtown Grimsby's atmosphere and potential as a host for exciting housing opportunities. Not only is such a strategy sustainable due to the existence of a plethora of public services and facilities, it is a strategy aligned with recently released Provincial Policy Statements and with Places to Grow legislation.

We are suggesting the Town of Grimsby consider an incentive program to encourage the construction of new dwelling units, the building of infill housing and the upgrading of existing housing units to minimum municipal and code standards in Downtown Grimsby.

To be known as the "Homes in the Heart" program, we propose Town-sponsored interest free loans with attendant grants. Our reasoning is that with an interest-free loan, risk is shared with the lending institution thereby making financing in the downtown more feasible. Because the Town needs to have the funds secured, it will be necessary to execute second mortgages secured through the appropriate loan vehicles.

The issuance of a grant to the successful applicant will assist in the payment of the requisite legal fees to prepare and register the mortgage instrument. For reasons of sustainability, we recommend that a loan program be established rather than a housing grant.

We offer the following suggestions for a housing incentive program, but the specific details need to be tailored to the Town's preferences, namely Treasury and Legal staff, who would create the rules upon which the program will operate.

- Eligible properties with the Central Core Area as identified in the Grimsby Official Plan
- Maximum loan amount for each dwelling unit
- Maximum loan amount for each municipal address
- Interest rate at 0%
- Duration of loan, maximum of 5 years, unless sooner through default.
- Loan secured by a second mortgage prior to any advance of funds
- Town to establish insurance requirements
- 25% equity in project during all times of the municipal loan. Town to determine what is acceptable equity. Prior to advance of funds, an appraisal report from a qualified appraiser as to value of property shall be submitted in a form satisfactory to the Town
- First loan advance upon 60% completion as defined by project architect or quantity surveyor, said loan to represent 60% of commitment. Subsequent proportionate loan advances at 80% completion; and final advance upon completion with appropriate holdback.
- Repayment of loan commences one year upon completion of construction and will consist of annual amounts of 10% of loan in 12 equal monthly payments with payment of balance outstanding at the end of the 5-year term of the loan.
- Upon sale of property, outstanding loan is due
- If units are in a plan of condominium and units are sold, then upon each sale, the loan amount plus 25% shall be paid back to the Town until the entire loan has been repaid
- Establish an administration fee to assist in the staff costs to administer the program
- Realty taxes must be paid in full and maintained throughout the duration of development and the term of the loan.
- Town to require that borrower pay all cost associated with the loan including appraisals, preparation of loan agreement and registration. Town to determine requisite costs.
- Time lines to be established for issuance of building permits and construction start
- Proposal must be accordance with Official Plan policies, zoning standards, engineering and site planning standards, and where special urban design provisions are adopted by Town Council, said proposal must adhere to the principles to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning. Where the building is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, local Heritage Committee to be sought for recommendations prior to municipal council making a decision. The Town reserves the right to ensure heritage elements are preserved where buildings are of heritage significance but are not formally designated.

It is suggested that the program be applied to a specific time period, depending on take up rate, availability of funding and availability of redevelopment opportunity.

Financing of the program could be through the Council establishing a budget to pay the interest on a given amount of money Council wishes to use; the source of the money to be lent could be reserves or a line of credit.

This would be an operating budget account. Due to timing of the preparation of the Community Improvement Plan, the funding would need to be established in the 2007 operating budget with the first project proposals sometime in 2008.

IV. Establishing a Façade Improvement Program for the DIA

Program Description:

The Grimsby Downtown Commercial Façade Improvement Program is to provide financial assistance for commercial property owners or authorized tenants within the DIA to improve the external appearance of the business premises.

The program is a matching grant to a maximum amount where council through a façade grant application has approved investment.

Once again, the Province must approve a community improvement plan containing the outline of the program before Council can offer same.

Eligible Improvements:

- Storefront repair and replacement. Rear or flankage not eligible unless special circumstances require that façade as a public entranceway. A review committee which committee shall comprise municipal staff such as Planning, Building and Treasury will make such decisions.
- New or additional lighting, including upgrading existing fixtures, on the exterior of the façade and within the storefront area normally associated with the display area
- Improvements to doors, cornices and parapets
- Awning replacement and or additions
- Brick repair and or pointing
- Painting and façade treatments
- Installation or improvement to signage
- Architectural or design fees up to \$500.00 are eligible and will form part of the calculation of the total grant awarded upon completion of construction
- While interior improvements are ineligible, where the interior improvement is related to display windows and entrance areas, up to \$700.00 of the total grant may be allocated to such areas. The review committee to determine the eligible areas

Eligibility Requirements:

- Property owners and tenants authorized by said owners
- Taxes current and in good standing
- Work cannot have commenced prior to Council's approval. Pre-inspection by building inspector required for all applications to be presented to council
- Grant will only be available to uses permitted within the zoning by-law. Legal non-conforming uses will be ineligible, but a legal non-conforming

property that is legal non-conforming by virtue of failure to meet a regulation may be considered by the review committee for approval

Program Terms:

Property owners and authorized tenants must apply during the annual/semi-annual application period.

Applications will not be accepted outside of the periods advertised for the request for applications.

Properties are to be identified by deed and by municipal address to identify multiple and separate commercial units with ground floor frontages.

Commercial use must be in conformity with the relevant zoning by-law.

Performance measurement to be applied to the payment of the grants.

Eligible elements to be funded will be specifically identified.

Two separate estimates of work to be provided by licensed contractors other than the owner. Grant to be prepared based on the lowest estimate.

Property grant application to be approved by Town Council with the amount of the grant specified.

Grant up to a maximum matching amount e.g. up to \$5000.00 per application on a matching basis.

Work to be completed with one year of Council's approval, but extensions by Town staff may be given for a maximum of 90 days if conditions warrant such an extension.

The Town of Grimsby will employ appropriate expertise in the review and approval of the application as may be required to determine the validity of the work proposed and the estimates of the work proposed.

In this connection, a review committee comprising appropriate municipal staff will be established who will request the services of a municipal building inspector or other advisor.

Recommended Budget:

Capital budget of \$100,000 annually.

Letter of Understanding:

A detailed Letter of Understanding will be executed between the Town and the approved property owner/authorized tenant and shall be returned to the appropriate agent of the Town if a grant request is approved and before any disbursement of funding under the terms of the program.

Payment of the Grant:

Once Town Council has approved the grant application with the specified amount of grant, the successful applicants will be notified in writing. Once the letter of understanding has been signed by the applicant, the work done to the satisfaction of a municipal building inspector, and invoices have been received by the Town that the trades have been paid (proof is copies of invoices with stamped paid), confirmation that all taxes are paid current and compliance with all terms and conditions of the program, then payment will be disbursed by cheque.

Unused Portion of the Grant:

Unused portions of the grant remain the property of the Town of Grimsby.

The Town of Grimsby may also withhold any portion of the grant above the final construction costs if the final construction costs differ from the estimates provided with the application.

The Town requests that proper accounting practices be used in relation to the payment of invoices for improvements and works conducted under the terms of the grant.

Administration of the Program (for staff use only):

Budget-ensure a capital budget to fund the program for the next calendar year is submitted. A grant is easily administered as can be seen above, but the budget needs to be replenished each year.

Application Timing:

Applications should only be handled once or at most twice a year. This way staff can plan for the event and arrange work schedules accordingly. Establish a deadline for receipt of applications, co-ordinate deadline with any Heritage grant program so they are dealt with at the same time.

With the timing for the preparation of the Community Improvement Plan, the capital budget for this undertaking would be Q4/07 with the first round of applications in 2008.

Promotion:

Ensure application forms are updated annually with deadline date and update Town and DIA web sites. Notify DIA of the deadline, in writing. Include electronic copy of the application in communication. Host an information session for prospective applicants to ask questions-at least 45 days before the application deadline.

V. Measure Activity:

All parties interested in Grimsby's downtown health need to understand how things are progressing, and, indeed, if there is any progress at all.

Consequently, we recommend that downtown activity be measured and reported annually to council and to the DIA.

The DIA Executive Assistant with the participation of Town staff can do this. Using updated annual information on vacant space, building permit tracking and capital expenditures for Town and Regional projects, the DIA and the Town Council can be annually apprised of activity downtown.

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS:

I. Downtown Traffic Study:

Traffic flow is a major concern of those commenting at three town hall meetings and previously conducted stakeholders' surveys. In addition, the surveys and town hall meetings identified safety and a pedestrian friendly downtown as priorities. These sentiments give strong argument that the time is appropriate to undertake a downtown traffic study along with the Region of Niagara.

We would expect that the traffic study would look at opportunities to direct traffic, to change operations and most importantly, address how downtown can improve on its friendliness to pedestrians.

This last issue is extremely relevant if we wish to improve what happens on the sidewalk, how parking will be accommodated; how to give pedestrians comfort as they go about their business downtown.

The terms of our engagement did not include the preparation of terms of reference for such a study, but the study must be more than a traffic count, it must take a comprehensive view of flow, truck routes, turn movements, on street parking and the notion of the introduction of meters, and the opportunity to create wider sidewalks and pedestrian refuges.

Agencies would include the Region of Niagara, Town Public Works and Planning Departments, representatives from the Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee and the Downtown Improvement Area.

In terms of time line and being mindful of other undertakings, the study team should be assembled in Q3/06 with a mandate to prepare the terms and budget for 2007 budget at both the Region and Town with the selection of the consultant following budget approval, Q2/07. Completion of the comprehensive study should be Q4/07 and concomitantly, there should be a budget item included in the relevant capital budgets for initial implementing work in Q2/08.

Estimated Budget: \$100,000.00

II. Urban Streetscape Plan for Downtown Grimsby:

Having a clear understanding of what the public space should look like is very important if we are to move towards the vision and if monies are to flow in a meaningful and effective way.

The outcomes from the traffic study will be the triggering mechanism to undertake the necessary public space improvements over the medium term.

Consequently, we recommend that the Urban Streetscape Plan run slightly behind the timing of the traffic study, but should start while the traffic study is underway, not once it is completed.

Such a streetscape plan is envisioned to encompass layout of sidewalks and pedestrian refuges, opportunities for traffic calming, street plantings and street furnishings, all built on the theme or brand developed by the Commercial Assessment Consultant.

The plan must address street lighting, alley and parking lots and their lighting and should include prominent gateway features at all significant entrances to downtown as well as enhanced way finding signage.

This plan should be led by the Grimsby Planning Department with financial assistance from the DIA, as they will principally receive the benefits of the plan's implementation. In addition, the Region may also be approached for participation and funding.

From a timeline perspective, a budget submission should be made in Q4/06 for 2007 budget approval.

Estimated Budget: \$100,000.

Following the budget submission, a technical steering committee should be assembled in Q2/07 with terms of reference prepared and consultant hired by Q3/07. As the final work must await the outcomes from the traffic study, completion of the plan would be Q2/08.

It is expected that the Council would then endorse the plan and improvements would also require Regional approval. Accordingly, we would postulate that a capital improvement plan could be undertaken in the months leading up to capital budget submissions for 2009.

Therefore Q4/08 should be the goal for the submission of a capital improvement plan with attendant multi year budget plan for submission to Town Council. As

budgets were approved, then the physical improvements to implement the plan would follow.

A further outcome from the streetscape work should be rules for signs complementary to the brand. For this to work, the Executive Assistant of the DIA will need to build consensus on rules for downtown signs which then can be presented to council with a request that the rules be formulated into a sign by-law under the Provincial Municipal Act.

The timing for same would be at the call of the DIA Board of Management, but certainly not until the Commercial Assessment and the Urban Streetscape Plan have been finalized.

III. Revisit the Development Charges By-law:

As noted in the Action Plan from the focus group under Goal 1, "Develop more residences downtown", a waiver of downtown development charges was identified.

As Development Charge By-laws were only recently adopted, the required review of the Town of the adequacy of their Development Charges would be the appropriate time to suggest the waiver of development charges applicable to any new residences built in the downtown, whether or not the project is taking advantage of any housing incentive program of the Town.

In our experience, the waiver of the Development Charge is a significant financial incentive to build new housing.

Accordingly, upon the next review of the Town's Development Charge By-law that the charge applicable to new housing downtown be waived.

IV. Potential Regional Participation in Community Improvement:

As this report is formulated, the Province of Ontario is considering amendments to the Planning Act, known as Bill 51.

One of the initiatives found in Bill 51 is the possibility of the upper levels of government assisting in local community improvement.

By the time the legislation is finally approved and roles and participation by the Region determined, it will likely be beyond the short-term time span of the Downtown Project.

Therefore, we have identified the possibility of Regional participation at the invitation of the Town of Grimsby Council in community improvement initiatives to be a medium term element.

This is a good opportunity for the Town to partner with the Region to move the action plan forward, possibly at an enhanced rate with the availability of a funding partner.

V. Undertake a Capital Improvement Plan with Attendant Costs:

This is a fundamental undertaking if the downtown is to move toward the agreed vision. A multi-disciplinary staff group should be convened with the Director of Planning in the lead.

The team would identify capital improvements for the downtown over the next few years and then prioritize projects to be brought to council for capital budget funding the subsequent year.

As the Downtown Traffic Study and Urban Streetscape Plan are approved, the committee would then assimilate new projects into the capital improvement plan and establish priority projects for funding.

It is required that the effort be done annually to ensure the appropriate priorities are moving forward to council's consideration.

The added benefit is that councillors will have a clear understanding of where money is being spent downtown and how priorities are driving the recommendations.

That allows councillors to understand where and when projects might be moving forward to implementation. We recommend the committee be established in Q2/06 with the initial capital plan and budget ready by Q4/06 whereby priority projects can be presented to council for budgets in 2007 and subsequent implementation. This is to be an ongoing initiative into the medium term and beyond.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

Public Consultation on the Report of the Revitalization Committee

The Grimsby Downtown Revitalization Steering Committee continued its involvement of the community in the downtown strategic plan by holding a series of meetings where various stakeholders and the public would have an opportunity to comment and provide input into the draft action plan.

These included a presentation to Town Council on March 20, 2006; a Town Hall meeting for the public on March 22, 2006; and a meeting with the DIA Board on March 30, 2006.

This section reports on the comments made at these various meetings and provides appropriate responses.

Town Council Meeting:

After the presentation by the Steering Committee Chair, the members of Grimsby Town Council asked clarifying questions. The Mayor noted that he and the Town Planner had held preliminary consultations with the Region relative to the preparation of the Community Improvement Plan and that the Region was willing to participate and assist, including with financing.

One question was posed relative to costs. The Steering Committee notes that the budgets for the various elements have been identified as near a possible in the action plan.

However, it is acknowledged that as matters become firmer, the relevant participants will develop updated budget numbers. A good example is the capital improvement plan for downtown that is one of the recommended actions.

The group preparing the plan will develop associated costs and will be in a position to identify same as they present their capital budget requests to Town and Regional Councils in the normal fashion.

DIA Board Meeting:

The Board asked clarifying questions related to implementation such as programs to assist the downtown and were provided with appropriate information. The Board supported the action plan.

Town Hall Meeting:

The meeting was well attended and many excellent questions and comments were submitted. The following are the questions with responses.

Question: What are the limits for Downtown?

Answer:

The downtown is as defined in the Town's Official Plan. It is acknowledged to be smaller than the boundaries of the DIA, but the basis for the action plan arises from the designations in the Town's Official Plan. As indicated in the report, the action plan is for the short to medium term and once the Town's Official Plan review is conducted within the medium term, it will be possible for a larger area to be designated and participate in incentives and programs, if warranted.

Question: Why are you moving forward in advance of the Traffic Study?

Answer:

The traffic study need not precede the initiation of renewal activities. We acknowledge that the traffic issues must be addressed but there are immediate actions that can proceed such as a study of the commercial environment and initiation of a community improvement plan. There is a desire to initiate change and get things moving and with the fullness of time, the traffic issue will be fully addressed, but the more immediate actions can and should proceed in line with the timetable laid out in the action plan.

Question: What about transit?

Answer:

Transit will of course be part of the transportation plan, but the study should follow on the heels of the extension of the South Service Road. That timing will align with the action plan's timing of the preparation of the traffic study.

Question: What is meant by a Streetscape Plan?

Answer:

This is a vision with identified elements illustrating how the major streets should be improved when it is time to reconstruct services or implement the transportation study's recommendations. The streetscape plan illustrates what happens in the space between building faces on both sides of the street and would include pedestrian improvements, lighting and landscaping, and would suggest furnishings consistent with the theme and brand for downtown which will come out of the commercial assessment. Signage, way finding and gateways would also be streetscape components.

Question: How can the streets downtown be made safer for bicyclists?

Answer:

In the medium term, this would be an issue for the transportation study, but in the shorter term, this is an issue that could be an early agenda item for discussion at the Clean and Safe Task Force which is part of the downtown action plan.

Question: Is Livingston Avenue in front of Canadian Tire two lanes or one?

Answer:

From Paton Street west to Kerman Ave. there is a yellow line down the centre, but the travelled portion is wide enough for two vehicles and motorists are passing on the right as a consequence. This is the type of issue that can be immediately addressed with the Clean and Safe Task Force.

Question: As the Capital Budget is prepared, will a cost benefit analysis be done?

Answer:

Because the capital budget will be part of a multi year capital improvement plan, the process of prioritizing projects and recommending that they go through to council must involve a benefits assessment.

Question: What about Tourism?

Answer:

Tourism is part of the strategy as it is one of the elements to be addressed in the Commercial Assessment. See the terms of reference for the commercial assessment found in this report as to how tourism will be addressed.

Question: Why doesn't the action plan address environmental stewardship?

Answer:

This initiative to revitalize downtown Grimsby is environmentally responsible and sustainable. We want to increase housing to reduce the need to use farmlands, we want to reuse existing services through residential intensification and by focussing on other forms of transportation other than the automobile, we are making downtown a leading example of environmental stewardship and sustainable development.