

## Scope of the Issue

The Town of Prescott Official Plan (OP) Review presents an opportunity to enhance land use policies related to encouraging further economic development and vitality in the Town over the next 20 years. New and/or updated policies will be developed through the OP Review process to provide land use direction concerning the policy areas described below, many of which are also identified as integral aspects under the pillar of Economic Development in the Town's Strategic Plan (2020).

## Downtown Reinvigoration

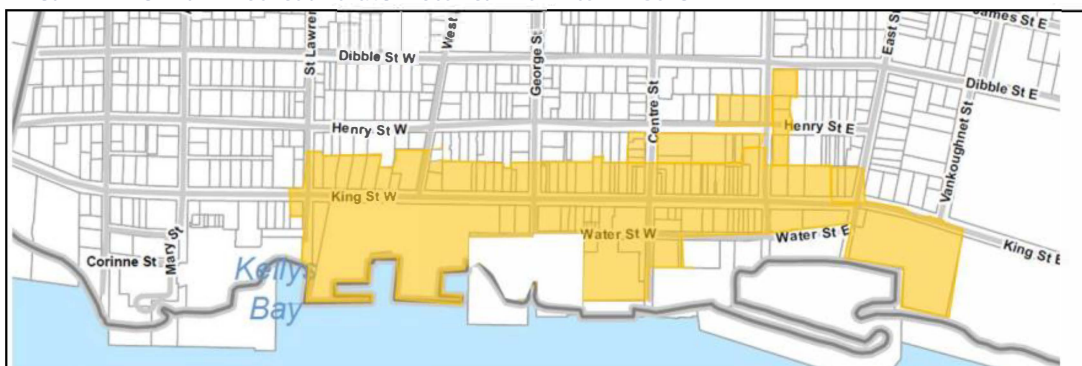
As expressed in the Town's Strategic Plan (2020), Downtown reinvigoration is a priority for the Town, to ensure that it remains the heart of Prescott providing a place for people to work, live, shop, and enjoy. The existing OP contains strong policies to encourage a broad range of commercial, institutional, and residential uses, as well as opportunities for mixed uses. The existing OP also recognizes the Downtown Core as the Town's focal point for tourism and culture and related uses, and supports the preservation and integration of heritage resources. The OP Review process should ensure that these policies are maintained and enhanced, to support and enable diversity and vitality in the Downtown Core, including through the Town's Community Improvement Plan.

The new OP should consider enhanced policies to encourage improved active transportation facilities within the Downtown Core and connecting it to other parts of the Town, to allow for alternative modes of transportation for residents and visitors, and improved linkages between existing and future historic, cultural, and commercial assets.

## Community Improvement Plan

The existing OP policies designate the entire Town of Prescott as a Community Improvement Policy Area and enable the designation of Community Improvement Project Areas, for which a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) can be prepared. The Town's existing Community Improvement Plan (2018) (CIP) is one of the Town's key economic development tools, and provides extensive opportunities to property owners to develop / redevelop their properties with the assistance of financial incentive programs in the form of grants, loans, and tax assistance. These programs are available within the following four (4) designated Community Improvement Project Areas: the RiverWalk Park District and the Historical Downtown Core; the Employment Area; Heritage Buildings; and Brownfields.

### Area 1 – RiverWalk District and the Historical Downtown Core



Over the last two (2) years, the Town has approved over \$200,000 in grants and \$200,000 in interest-free loans, resulting in total private investments of over \$9.6 million. The OP Review represents an opportunity to review the OP policies which enable the preparation of CIPs for specific areas, and ensure there are supportive policies in place that enable the Town to re-examine and/or expand the geographic areas where financial incentive programs may be available to further encourage private investment and public/private partnerships, to build on the CIP's success and grow its momentum.

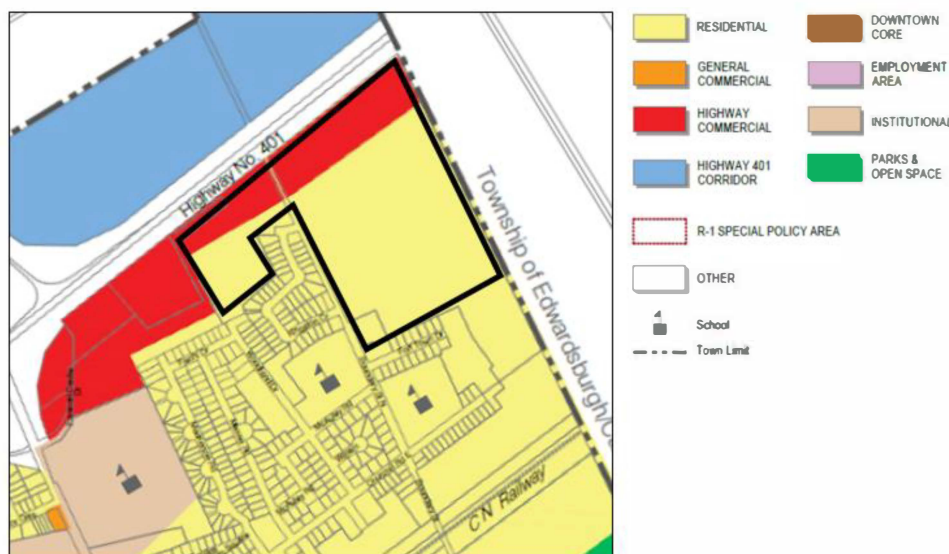
## Commercial Lodgings and Accommodations Attraction and Readiness

The Town has identified that the community would benefit from increased development of commercial lodgings and accommodation in specific areas, such as within proximity to the Highway 401 corridor and the waterfront. Attracting these uses would help support increased tourism potential, but also requires leveraging the Town's existing tourism and recreational assets to encourage the travelling public to visit and stay in Prescott. The OP Review should include a review of land use designations and policies in key areas where commercial lodgings and accommodations could be located, to ensure these uses are permitted and lands are designated appropriately.

## Highway 401 Industrial / Commercial Uses

The Town of Prescott is strategically located on the St. Lawrence River and within close proximity to the Canada-U.S. International Border and the interchange of provincial Highways 401 and 417 connecting the metropolitan centres of Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa. This location creates a key opportunity for the Town to attract industrial and commercial uses around the Highway 401 interchange, where significant vacant lands are available for future development. Specific vacant areas should be reviewed as part of the OP review, to ensure they are designated for appropriate future land uses, as illustrated in the figure below.

Vacant area east of Independent Grocer and South of Highway 401 (black outline) – Existing OP Designations



## Recreation, Tourism & Wayfinding

The Town offers a variety of existing recreation and tourism opportunities, including, but not limited to, a historic Downtown, extensive publicly accessible waterfront and related trails, numerous parks and greenspaces, playgrounds, community facilities, and Fort Wellington. The OP Review presents an opportunity to encourage supporting infrastructure and amenities which would provide for improved active transportation and wayfinding to better connect existing recreation and tourism assets.

## Provincial Policy Direction

### Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The following policies are some of the key directions regarding economic development for Ontario municipalities in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS):

- A coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive approach should be used for economic development strategies across municipal boundaries (Policy 1.2.1);
- Planning authorities shall promote economic development and competitiveness by: (a) providing an appropriate mix and range of employment, institutional, and broader mixed uses; (b) maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for employment uses; (c) identifying strategic sites for investment, and addressing potential barriers to investment; and (d) encouraging compact, mixed-use development that incorporates compatible employment uses (Policy 1.3.1);
- At the time of an Official Plan Review, planning authorities should assess designated employment areas to ensure appropriate designations are in place, and that appropriate separation and mitigation between industrial and manufacturing uses and sensitive land uses is provided (Policy 1.3.2.2); and
- Long-term economic prosperity should be supported by: (a) promoting opportunities for economic development; (b) encouraging residential uses and providing the necessary housing supply and range of housing options for a diverse workforce; (d) maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns and mainstreets; and (e) encouraging a sense of place, by promoting well-designed built form and cultural planning (Policy 1.7.1).

## Existing Town Official Plan Policies

The Town's existing Official Plan (Approved 2006, Updated 2018) ("existing OP") includes several guiding principles related to economic development, including ensuring growth and development occur through economically viable land use development patterns; supporting the development of commercial, institutional, and industrial opportunities; and striving to improve the Downtown core while protecting and enhancing historical and cultural amenities.

To support these principles, the existing OP includes General Commercial, Highway Commercial, Downtown Core, Employment Area, and Highway 401 Corridor land use designations where employment-generating uses and activity would be focused. Growth and development in each land use designation is directed through a series of policies which establish permitted uses and densities,

provide guidance for intensification, and address compatibility with adjacent land uses, among other matters.

## Input from Community and Economic Development Surveys

Two surveys were held from October 9 to 30, 2020 to collect feedback from the community on policy issues to be addressed as part of the Town's OP Review:

- A Public Survey, open to all community members, which received 159 responses; and
- A more targeted Economic Development Survey, issued by invitation to 18 representatives from relevant agencies, interest groups, and local business owners.

Further, a follow-up virtual meeting was held with the Economic Development participants on November 10, 2020, to review their comments and facilitate discussion. The following sections provide a summary of key feedback provided by respondents, organized under key economic development policy issues.

### Downtown Reinvigoration

#### Permitted Uses:

- 92% of Public Survey respondents and 97% of Economic Development Survey respondents support a broad mix of uses (e.g. retail, office, personal and professional services, residential, institutional, tourism-related, entertainment) and mixed-use buildings in the Downtown Core land use designation.
  - In the Public Survey, the most popular land uses which should be located in the Downtown Core included restaurants and patios (92%); specialty retail stores (88%); personal services (77%); mixed-use buildings (74%); tourism-related uses (73%); and arts and entertainment uses (70%).
  - In the Economic Development Survey, the most popular land uses which should be located in the Downtown Core included restaurants and patios (100%); tourism-related services (100%); specialty retail stores (93%); personal services (93%); arts and entertainment uses (93%); mixed-use buildings (93%); and professional and public service offices (87%).
- During the follow-up meeting, Economic Development participants discussed the need for specific uses Downtown, including a boutique-scale grocery store, as well as additional businesses offering locally produced or sourced products. The opportunity to establish a stronger Farmers' Market Downtown was also supported.
  - A local business owner reported that customers at their Inn have reported choosing Prescott as a "safecation" destination during the COVID-19 pandemic, with food being a particular draw.
  - Participants also agreed that there is a need for Downtown residential uses to support commercial uses, like boutiques and restaurants.

## Community Improvement Plan

### Community Improvement Project Area Boundaries:

- Nearly half of the Public Survey respondents identified that they do not think the current boundary for the RiverWalk District and the Historic Downtown Core Community Improvement Project Area encompasses all areas where financial incentive programs should be available Downtown (17%), or they are not sure (31%). Fifteen (15) respondents suggested that the Community Improvement Project Area extend to all of King Street, and many respondents specifically identified the area should be extended west to the municipal boundary, and north to include businesses south of the railway.
- Over half of the Economic Development Survey respondents identified that they do not think the current boundary for the RiverWalk District and the Historic Downtown Core Community Improvement Project Area encompasses all areas where financial incentive programs should be available Downtown (35%), or they are not sure (26%). Several respondents supported designating the entire Town as a Community Improvement Project Area, to maximize potential uptake of the CIP.

## Commercial Lodgings and Accommodations Attraction and Readiness

### Desire for Commercial Lodgings and Accommodations:

- 72% of Public Survey respondents and 100% of the Economic Development Survey respondents would like to see more commercial lodging and accommodations in the Town.
  - 73% of Public Survey respondents would like to see more boutique hotels / inns; 59% would like to see bed and breakfasts; 30% would like to see motels; 28% would like to see large hotels; and 23% are supportive of short-term private rental accommodations, such as AirBnB.
  - 93% of Economic Development Survey respondents would like to see more boutique hotels / inns; 73% would like to see bed and breakfasts; 60% support large hotels; 33% support motels; and 27% selected short-term private rental accommodations.

### Attraction Strategies:

- Suggestions for initiatives the Town can undertake to be competitive and attract this type of developments included ensuring there are other attractions and entertainment available to draw visitors and support commercial hotel stays; leverage existing tourism assets and host more festivals; offer financial incentives; and capitalize on future developments, such as the planned waterpark development in Augusta.

## Highway 401 Industrial / Commercial Uses

### Permitted Uses:

- Regarding the types of industrial and commercial uses that Public Survey respondents would like to see on lands adjacent to Highway 401, 73% would like to see light industrial uses; 72%



support big-box retail; 66% would like to see large-format grocery stores; and 56% support automobile vehicles sales.

- 50% of Economic Development Survey respondents suggested all types of industrial and commercial uses; 29% identified only commercial uses, such as tourism-related uses and retail; and 14% suggested industrial, warehousing, and logistics uses. 29% of respondents suggested any uses should be environmentally-friendly.
- At the follow-up meeting with Economic Development Survey participants, there was broad support for less emphasis on segregation of uses in the Town's employment areas, and the potential to permit retail / food take out components for businesses which are located in the Town's industrial park that current zoning does not permit.

### Vacant Lands:

- Regarding the large vacant area located east of the Independent Grocer and south of Highway 401, the majority of respondents suggested that commercial uses are most appropriate abutting the highway, and that residential is appropriate further south, with a buffer of greenspace / wood area in between to minimize land use conflicts. Several respondents suggested that a recreation /leisure / fitness centre would be beneficial.
- Economic Development Survey respondents suggested focusing more residential uses within the large vacant area, and directing commercial uses north of Highway 401, or promoting mixed uses with significant retention of greenspace.

### Recreation, Tourism & Wayfinding

#### Tourism Assets:

- Regarding key tourism assets in the Town that should be promoted, 80% of Public Survey respondents identified Fort Wellington; 74% chose the Central Waterfront; 73% selected Sandra S. Lawn Harbour and Marina; 71% identified RiverWalk Park, 67% selected Kinsmen Amphitheatre; and 65% supported the Historic Downtown.
- 86% of Economic Development Survey respondents identified that Fort Wellington should be promoted; 71% selected the Heritage River Trail and RiverWalk Park; and 64% identified the Historic Downtown, Central Waterfront, Kinsmen Amphitheatre, Sandra S. Lawn Harbour and Marina, and Shakespeare's Gardens.
- Several Public Survey respondents were not aware of some of the tourism assets listed in the survey, and identified the need for better promotion. Multiple respondents identified that all tourism assets should be promoted as a package, with one respondent specifically suggesting working with neighbouring St. Lawrence River municipalities to create a linked tourism zone from Upper Canada Village to Kingston based on a driving tour.
- Several Public and Economic Development Survey respondents suggested that the Coast Guard building and diving opportunities should be promoted as tourism assets.



- At the follow-up meeting with Economic Development Survey participants, discussions included the need for more seasonal events, restaurants, and arts and entertainment uses to help bolster tourism.

### Active Transportation Facilities:

- Public Survey and Economic Survey respondents identified the waterfront, along Highway 2, along Edward Street, and throughout Downtown as the key locations where improved active transportation facilities are desired, such as dedicated paved cycling lanes or pathways. Respondents pointed to the need for connectivity between key commercial and recreational assets in the Town. One respondent specifically identified the need for facilities for motorized modes, like scooters and wheelchairs.
- One Economic Survey respondent suggests a seasonal trolley that would act as a public transportation mode throughout the Town (e.g. Marina / Water St.; Edward St.; grocery store; community facilities) with a guide providing historic and tourism information; this was reiterated at the follow-up meeting with the Town noting the key takeaway was the need for active transportation connections between areas in the Town.
- During the follow-up meeting with Economic Development Survey respondents, there was discussion around a potential Active Transportation Study to address opportunities for active transportation facilities and infrastructure, such as walking and cycling paths that would offer connectivity between recreational and tourism assets.

### Wayfinding:

- Public Survey and Economic Survey participants generally agreed that additional signs along Highway 401 and at the interchange into Prescott would be beneficial to direct the travelling public into Prescott to explore the Town's assets, attractions, and businesses.
- Several respondents noted that the number of signs in the Town is adequate, but that signs should be clearer and more directional to specific community amenities and facilities, and Downtown businesses.
- Some respondents suggested that the Town could offer a comprehensive Town guide, as well as pamphlets with self-guided walking tours.



## Official Plan Review – Policy Recommendations

### Downtown Reinvigoration

**Recommendation 1:** Include OP policies which emphasize encouraging a broad range of permitted uses and mixed-use buildings in the Downtown Core, such as integrating retail / commercial uses and office spaces on mainstreets with residential uses on upper storeys, and supporting increased cultural and tourism assets, such as arts / entertainment uses. The current OP already includes strong policy direction in this respect.

## Community Improvement Plan

**Recommendation 2:** Ensure that Community Improvement policies in the OP address all matters of community improvement under the Planning Act which are permitted to be included as potential financial incentive programs in a Community Improvement Plan, including those matters which may not be currently addressed in the programs available through the Town's existing CIP.

**Recommendation 3:** Maintain the existing OP policy which designates the entire Town of Prescott as a Community Improvement Policy Area under Section 28 of the Planning Act, where a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) can apply, with the intent to enable designation of specific Community Improvement Project Area(s). Specific Community Improvement Project Areas do not have to be identified in the Official Plan, and are determined at the time of preparing a CIP.

**Recommendation 4:** Within the Community Improvement Plan (and outside the OP Review process), consider expanding the RiverWalk District and Downtown Core Project Area boundary to enable all commercially-zoned properties located south of the CN Railway corridor to be eligible for potential financial incentive programs.

**Recommendation 5:** Within the Community Improvement Plan (and outside the OP Review process), consider expanding the Employment Project Area boundary to encompass all industrially-zoned and commercially-zoned lands north and south of Highway 401, including those lands abutting the CN Railway corridor.

**Recommendation 6:** Within the Community Improvement Plan (and outside the OP Review process), consider designating additional Community Improvement Project Areas, such as an Uptown Project Area, to capture commercially-zoned properties which may fall outside the other existing Community Improvement Project Areas.

## Commercial Lodgings and Accommodations Attraction and Readiness

**Recommendation 7:** Ensure that the potential for commercial lodging and accommodation uses is supported through appropriate OP land use designations and corresponding policies for permitted uses, such as adjacent to the Highway 401 corridor.

## Highway 401 Industrial / Commercial Uses

**Recommendation 8:** Maintain the Highway 401 Corridor designation which enables a range of commercial and industrial employment uses, and provide direction for the appropriate zoning of these properties as part of the future Zoning By-law Review.

**Recommendation 9:** Ensure the OP contains policies to address the need for transition between employment uses and sensitive land uses (i.e. residential, institutional) to ensure land use compatibility and mitigation of potential nuisances related to light pollution, noise, odour, and traffic impacts, in keeping with PPS Policy 1.3.2.2.

**Recommendation 10:** Consider adding OP policies regarding the coordination and co-location of infrastructure for areas north of Highway 401 and for development that may be located on the border



with neighbouring municipalities, to assist in addressing potential barriers to investment in keeping with PPS Policy 1.3.1.

**Recommendation 11:** With respect to the large vacant area, designate the lands for commercial / mixed uses closest to the Highway and existing commercial uses, if sufficient commercial lands are not available in other areas near Highway 401. Residential uses should be located further to the south as an extension of existing residential areas, with significant greenspace / natural areas retained and acting as a buffer between land uses.

**Recommendation 12:** Consider permitting more flexibility in permitted land uses within industrial areas, such as allowing for other compatible uses or accessory uses to an industrial use (e.g. food wholesaler), to enable broader uses to locate in industrial areas (e.g. retail / food take out accessory uses), in keeping with PPS Policy 1.3.2.2 regarding land use compatibility in employment areas.

**Recommendation 13:** Consider including an OP policy for the future completion of an engineering study to determine the feasibility of extending municipal water and sewer services to properties north of Highway 401, to facilitate future industrial and commercial development, and assist in addressing potential barriers to investment in keeping with PPS Policy 1.3.1.

## Recreation, Tourism & Wayfinding

**Recommendation 14:** Consider including an OP policy for the future completion of a tourism asset and activity inventory / strategy, to support maximizing existing tourism assets and local / regional partnerships.

**Recommendation 15:** Consider including an OP policy for the future completion of an Active Transportation Study for the Town, to identify the types and locations of active transportation facilities and infrastructure that may be needed to support a healthy and age-friendly community, and to provide connectivity between recreational and tourism assets.

**Recommendation 16:** Considering including OP policies to support working with neighbouring municipalities on a potential regional bus service, or other transportation modes such as water-based connections to neighbouring tourism assets.

