

Memo



To: Town of Sussex Administration Committee
From: Jennifer Brown, Community Planner, Dillon Consulting
Stephen Stone, Community Planner, Dillon Consulting
Date: January 16, 2020
Subject: Town of Sussex Municipal Plan Review
Strategic Policy Directions: Policy Issue Identification and Priority Changes
Our File: File #19-9541

Dillon Consulting Limited (Dillon) is pleased to provide a strategic path forward to update Sussex's Municipal Plan. Meetings with Town Staff, stakeholders, and the general public generated directions for necessary changes and areas for new planning policies and initiatives. The areas determined to be of priority focus are:

- Housing
- Economic Development
- Population Growth
- Transportation
- Community Safety
- Climate Change Adaptation and Flood Mitigation

These policy areas and the recommended policy approach are described below. The information below does not represent an exhaustive list of changes or updates to the Municipal Plan but instead details the priority changes. Other updates will be made to modernize the language and formatting of the document. The Future Land Use Map will also be updated to ensure it is representative of any new policies or changes that have occurred since the Municipal Plan was adopted in 2009.

HOUSING			
What We Heard:	Affordable housing was determined to be a priority of the community. Affordable housing for seniors was of a particular concern as residents identified the desire to age in place with appropriate housing options available to move them through different phases of their life. Housing affordability was also a concern and high rents noted as a barrier to increased quality of life.		
Recommended Policy Approach		Municipal Plan	Zoning Bylaw
Affordable Housing Policy	The existing Municipal Plan does not provide policy direction for affordable housing. It is recommended a general approach to affordable housing be outlined through the creation of new policy in the Municipal Plan.	New Policy.	N/A

Seniors-Focused Affordable Housing Policy	There is existing policy in the Municipal Plan that speaks to the needs of seniors and the provision of seniors care facilities. There is a need to update the policy to include modern language and to strengthen the policy to align with the community's needs. Consideration will be given to appropriately locating Seniors facilities.	Update Policy.	N/A
Residential Land Use Designations	An analysis of existing residential land use designations (currently high, medium, low density) will be undertaken to determine if they appropriately classify existing development and if they are represented accurately on the Future Land Use Map.	Update policy. Update map.	Revise regulations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

What We Heard:	Residents and stakeholders were strong in communicating that economic development is important to the Town of Sussex's future. There was general consensus that the Town's Downtown was a vital component of business, population, and tourist attraction. The need to diversify the employment base and support new small business was heard repeatedly. Concerns were raised over the shift of businesses away from existing malls and the downtown to big-box-style developments. Questions were raised regarding how to maintain the vitality of the Town's historic downtown while also supporting business park style development along Highway 1. Residents were vocal in their support of existing festivals and events and identified the Town's potential to attract and host more events.		
Recommended Policy Approach		Municipal Plan	Zoning Bylaw
Economic Diversification	There are no existing policies within the Municipal Plan to encourage economic growth or employment diversification. Existing policies which speak to the Central Business District and business residential uses will be reviewed for alignment with the engagement results. New policy to encourage and support the downtown will be created. These policies will consider the Downtown Business Association's Strategic Plans. A review of the existing commercial land use designations will be undertaken to ensure they are	Update policy. New policy. Update map.	Revise regulations.

	representative of existing and intended land use.		
Business Retention and Attraction	Existing policies in the Municipal Plan speak to the attraction of industrial development. These policies will be expanded to include other types of commercial business development. New policy will be added to encourage business support and development.	Update policy. New policy.	N/A
Festivals and Events	There are no existing policies within the Municipal Plan which speak to festivals and events. New policy will be created to provide direction and to encourage new festivals and events in areas throughout the Town. New policy will be in line with the Town's special events policy.	New Policy.	Revise regulations.
Commercial Land Use Designations	An analysis of existing commercial land use designations (currently Central Business District, Highway, Shopping Mall, and Business Residential) will be undertaken to determine if they appropriately classify existing development and if they are represented accurately on the Future Land Use Map. It is proposed that a streamlining of these classifications be undertaken to allow for designations that speaks to mixed use in an effort provide flexibility in appropriate areas.	Update Policy. New Policy.	Revise regulations.

POPULATION GROWTH			
What We Heard:	Residents and stakeholders identified the necessity to grow the Town's population to ensure the long term health and prosperity of the community. Attraction and retention of families, newcomers, and youth were identified as priorities.		
Recommended Policy Approach		Municipal Plan	Zoning Bylaw
Retention and Attraction	There are no existing policies in the Municipal Plan which speak to retaining and attracting residents. New policies are proposed which align with the economic development policies that provide direction and encourage population growth.	New Policy.	N/A

Youth Retention	There are policies in the Municipal Plan which encourage the growth and development of higher education facilities within Sussex with the assumed intention of retaining youth. These policies will be updated to expand efforts to provide amenities targeted at a broader spectrum of youth.	Update Policy. New Policy.	N/A
Building an Inclusive Community	There are no existing policies in the Municipal Plan which speak to inclusion. New policy will be created to reflect the community's desire to build a welcoming and inclusive community and culture of acceptance.	New Policy.	N/A

TRANSPORTATION

What We Heard:	Transportation was a popular topic during engagement. Residents and stakeholders identified a wide variety of issues which directly affected their quality of life. As commercial developments become less centralized, transportation becomes more challenging particularly for vulnerable populations. There was substantial feedback given on the upkeep of roads and sidewalks, and particular focus on pedestrian accessibility, movement, and safety. There was a desire from residents to have the community adapt to its aging population while providing for modern approaches to active transportation.
-----------------------	---

Recommended Policy Approach		Municipal Plan	Zoning Bylaw
Right-of-Way Maintenance	There is existing policy in the Municipal Plan which defines each road classification and the intended design and function of the associated right-of-way. Policies will be updated to encourage the appropriate prioritization of maintenance for sidewalks and trails most used by the community. These policies will provide general direction for 5 and 10 year capital budget cycles.	Update policy.	N/A
Connectivity	There are no existing policies in the Municipal Plan which speak to providing thoughtful connection throughout the Town. New policies will propose building connectivity through existing and future trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes to popular destinations.	New policy.	Revise regulations.
Active Transportation	There are policies in the Municipal Plan which speak to the Town's intent to continue to	Update policy. New policy.	N/A

	develop a linear pathway system that links to important areas throughout the Town. These policies will be updated and new policies created to align with the community's desire to have appropriately scaled and well connected Active Transportation options throughout the Town.		
Pedestrian Safety	There are policies in the Municipal Plan which detail the importance of pedestrian areas. These policies will be updated to include the provision of appropriately located pedestrian crossings.	Update policy.	N/A
Transit Options	There are no policies in the Municipal Plan which speak to exploring different models of community transit. New policies are proposed to direct the exploration of community transit options.	New policy.	N/A

COMMUNITY SAFETY			
What We Heard:	There was substantial feedback regarding the perceived level of crime in the Town. Many residents spoke of increased crime specifically damage to public and private property. There were concerns raised over the increase in vacant properties and how to ensure they do not pose a danger to public safety.		
Recommended Policy Approach		Municipal Plan	Zoning Bylaw
Police Presence	There are policies in the Municipal Plan which encourage a Community Policing Program. These policies will be updated to include targeted action in support of the community's needs.	Update policy.	N/A
Vacant and Dangerous Buildings	There are no existing policies in the Municipal Plan that speak to the Town's approach to vacant and dangerous buildings. There are policies that address vacant lots as opportunities for green space. New policies will address the need for an overall approach and provide guidance for decisions and programs moving forward.	New policy.	N/A

CLIMATE CHANGE

What We Heard:	Residents and stakeholders identified the need to be prepared for increasing extreme weather events and specifically identified the Town's vulnerability to flooding.		
Recommended Policy Approach		Municipal Plan	Zoning Bylaw
Flood Plain	There are policies within the Municipal Plan that direct limited development on river banks however they are not reflective of current conditions. New policies will be introduced which are informed by the Town's Flood Study and upcoming Climate Change Adaptation Plan and will provide direction to limit risk to residents and the Town.	New policy.	Revise regulations.
Adaptation	There are currently no policies in the Municipal Plan specific to Climate Change Adaptation. The Town is in the process of adopting its Climate Change Adaptation Plan. New policies in line with the plan's recommendations will be introduced.	New policy.	Revise regulations.
Environmentally Focused Land Use Designations	An analysis of existing environmentally focused land use designations (currently Park, Agriculture, and Green Belt) will be undertaken to determine if they meet the changing needs of the Town. A new Environmental Protection land use designation is proposed to direct limited land use on existing flood plains and flood prone areas. An analysis of the Town will be undertaken to ensure environmentally sensitive lands, and lands that require specific projections like agricultural lands are appropriately designated on the Future Land Use Map. It is proposed that a streamlining of these classifications be undertaken to allow for designations that speaks to mixed use in an effort provide flexibility in appropriate areas.	Update policy. New policy. Update map.	Revise regulations.