

OXFORD COUNTY COMMERCIAL POLICY REVIEW

PLANNING MECHANISMS MODULE TWO



PREPARED BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1.0 INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.1 BACKGROUND..... | 1 |
| 1.2 CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT..... | 1 |
| 2.0 FACTORS AFFECTING RETAIL PLANNING..... | 3 |
| 2.1 BASIS FOR RETAIL POLICY PLANNING..... | 3 |
| 2.2 IMPACT AND THE PLANNING PROCESS..... | 3 |
| 2.3 IMPACT ON “PLANNED FUNCTION”..... | 4 |
| 2.4 RETAIL FUNCTION..... | 8 |
| 2.5 PROVINCIAL POLICY STATEMENT, 2005..... | 9 |
| 2.6 RETAIL TRENDS..... | 11 |
| 2.7 PLACE MAKING..... | 14 |
| 2.8 CONCLUSIONS..... | 15 |
| 3.0 FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS..... | 16 |
| 4.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK CRITIQUE..... | 19 |
| 4.1 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT..... | 19 |
| 4.1.1 <i>Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design</i> | 19 |
| 4.1.2 <i>Differences between Urban Centres</i> | 19 |
| 4.1.3 <i>Policy Opportunities and Challenges</i> | 20 |
| 4.1.4 <i>Recommended Policy Revisions</i> | 24 |
| 4.2 ENTREPRENEURIAL DISTRICT..... | 25 |
| 4.2.1 <i>Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design</i> | 25 |
| 4.2.2 <i>Differences between Urban Centres</i> | 26 |
| 4.2.3 <i>Policy Opportunities and Challenges</i> | 26 |
| 4.2.4 <i>Recommended Policy Revisions</i> | 28 |
| 4.3 REGIONAL COMMERCIAL NODE..... | 28 |
| 4.3.1 <i>Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design</i> | 28 |
| 4.3.2 <i>Policy Opportunities and Challenges</i> | 32 |
| 4.3.3 <i>Recommended Policy Revisions</i> | 34 |
| 4.4 SERVICE COMMERCIAL..... | 35 |
| 4.4.1 <i>Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design</i> | 35 |
| 4.4.2 <i>Differences between Urban Centres, and Serviced Villages</i> | 36 |
| 4.4.3 <i>Policy Opportunities and Challenges</i> | 37 |
| 4.4.4 <i>Recommended Policy Revisions</i> | 40 |
| 4.5 NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPPING AREA..... | 41 |
| 4.5.1 <i>Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design</i> | 41 |
| 4.5.2 <i>Policy Opportunities and Challenges</i> | 41 |
| 4.5.3 <i>Recommended Policy Revisions</i> | 43 |
| 4.6 CONVENIENCE COMMERCIAL & OTHER USES IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS..... | 44 |
| 4.6.1 <i>Intent and Function, and Permitted Uses</i> | 44 |
| 4.6.2 <i>Differences between Urban Centres</i> | 45 |
| 4.6.3 <i>Opportunities and Challenges</i> | 45 |
| 4.6.4 <i>Recommended Policy Revisions</i> | 46 |
| 4.7 VILLAGE CORE..... | 46 |
| 4.7.1 <i>Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design</i> | 46 |
| 4.7.2 <i>Opportunities and Challenges</i> | 47 |
| 4.7.3 <i>Recommended Policy Revisions</i> | 48 |
| 4.8 VILLAGES AND RURAL CLUSTERS..... | 49 |
| 4.8.1 <i>Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design</i> | 49 |
| 4.8.2 <i>Recommended Policy Revisions</i> | 49 |

| | | |
|------------|--|-----------|
| 4.9 | INDUSTRIAL DESIGNATIONS | 49 |
| 4.9.1 | <i>Business Parks</i> | 49 |
| 4.9.2 | <i>Industrial Areas</i> | 50 |
| 4.9.3 | <i>Rural Settlements</i> | 50 |
| 4.9.4 | <i>Recommended Policy Revisions</i> | 50 |
| 4.10 | GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE OFFICIAL PLAN..... | 50 |
| 5.0 | RETAIL SPACE DISTRIBUTION..... | 51 |
| 5.1 | QUANTUM OF SUPPLY..... | 51 |
| 5.2 | CONSIDERATION OF VACANT LANDS AND BUILDING SPACE | 54 |
| 5.2.1 | <i>Woodstock</i> | 54 |
| 5.2.2 | <i>Tillsonburg</i> | 57 |
| 5.2.3 | <i>Ingersoll</i> | 59 |
| 5.2.4 | <i>Serviced Villages</i> | 61 |
| 5.3 | CONSIDERATION OF GROWTH AREAS..... | 62 |
| 5.3.1 | <i>Woodstock</i> | 62 |
| 5.3.2 | <i>Tillsonburg</i> | 63 |
| 5.3.3 | <i>Ingersoll</i> | 64 |
| 5.3.4 | <i>Serviced Villages</i> | 65 |
| 6.0 | OTHER POLICY APPROACHES AND CONTROLS..... | 67 |
| 6.1 | PROTECTING AND INVIGORATING DOWNTOWNS..... | 67 |
| 6.1.1 | <i>What Local Municipalities Are Currently Doing</i> | 67 |
| 6.1.2 | <i>What Others Have Done</i> | 68 |
| 6.1.3 | <i>What More Could Be Done Here</i> | 68 |
| 6.2 | STUDY REQUIREMENTS | 69 |
| 7.0 | CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... | 74 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|----------|--|
| Figure 1 | Opportunities for Pedestrian Movement Improvements at Existing RCN Development |
| Figure 2 | Woodstock Growth Areas |
| Figure 3 | Tillsonburg Growth Areas |
| Figure 4 | Ingersoll Growth Areas |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---------|---|
| Table 1 | Proposed Distribution of Additional Land Requirements by Urban Centre and Rural Townships, 2031 |
| Table 2 | Woodstock Vacant Commercial Space and 2031 Space Distribution |
| Table 3 | Tillsonburg Vacant Commercial Space and 2031 Space Distribution |
| Table 4 | Ingersoll Vacant Commercial Space and 2031 Space Distribution |
| Table 5 | Vacant Commercial Space and 2031 Space Allocation in Serviced Villages |
| Table 6 | Population Growth of the Rural Townships |

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The County of Oxford is undertaking a Commercial Policy Review as input into its upcoming five year review of the Official Plan.

The County is faced with some significant challenges. It is anticipated to experience substantial population growth over the next 20 years; potentially as high as a 35% increase. However, in the short term, it is experiencing, along with the rest of Southern Ontario, a major stalling of the economy particularly in the manufacturing sector. Despite this short-term economic decline, it is also faced with ongoing interest and pressure for the designation of retail space in its urban centres.

Faced with these challenges, it is imperative for the County to continue to maintain commercial policy directives that remain relevant for the consumer, the industry and the County particularly as it relates to the proper planning and structure of its urban areas. As such, it is necessary to understand the future commercial needs of the County, the locational criteria and trends of the commercial industry, and the strengths and weaknesses of the current policy structure. It is also an opportune time to take stock of the County's current physical structure and seek opportunities to build upon and improve the existing built environment while capitalizing on current commercial demands and retail trends.

The County retained Sorensen Gravely Lowes Planning Associates Inc. in association with Robin Dee & Associates in 2008 to undertake the Commercial Policy Review. The study is separated into two interrelated modules. Module One looked at the inventory and characteristics of the retail industry in Oxford, reviewed the commercial policy structure, identified retail clusters based on the locations of existing commercial establishments, profiled the characteristics of the retail clusters, and forecasted growth in the retail industry over the next 22 years. Module Two (the subject of this report) establishes recommendations on retail space distribution, alternative policy approaches, structures and controls.

1.2 CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT

This report is comprised of five additional chapters:

- Chapter 2 – Factors Affecting Retail Planning discusses the basis for retail policy planning, retail trends, and policy implications;
- Chapter 3 - Feedback From Stakeholders, provides an overview of the comments received at the stakeholder workshops;
- Chapter 4 – Policy Framework Critique reviews the current commercial policy framework;
- Chapter 5 – Retail Space Distribution reviews the additional commercial space needs, and provides recommendations on where the additional space should be distributed;

- Chapter 6 – Other Policy Approaches and Controls focuses on strategies that protect and invigorate downtowns, and recommends study requirements for new developments; and
- Chapter 7 – Conclusions and Recommendations concludes this report.

2.0 FACTORS AFFECTING RETAIL PLANNING

2.1 BASIS FOR RETAIL POLICY PLANNING

The fundamental purpose of land use planning, under the Ontario planning process, is the appropriate allocation and distribution of land uses for future growth and change. In the words of *The Planning Act*, an official plan is to provide:

"guidance for the physical development of the municipality ... while having regard to relevant social, economic and environmental factors".

The essential proposition characterizing retail planning is that the planning process may, quite properly, constrain the supply of land for development of retail facilities in the marketplace but only for valid planning reasons founded in the public interest. This, in a number of respects, is atypical of the normal planning process for other land uses, where the objective is to plan for an abundance of land so that there is no artificial interference with supply.

However, it should be noted that recent changes to the *Provincial Policy Statement* and the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* both intend to restrict greenfield residential growth in the interests of promoting intensification. Although the *Growth Plan* is not applicable to Oxford County, it is illustrative that the planning process, in certain locations in Ontario, is designed to restrict and constrain land supply.

For retail land uses, the intent of planning should be to guide development in accordance with the public interest and Provincial policy, but not to intervene in the market place in ways that may restrict economic activity or regulate or interfere with normal business competition. In particular, as discussed later in this report, the Provincial Policy Statement specifies planning authorities to maintain and, where possible, enhance the vitality and viability of downtowns and mainstreets. Achieving this requirement may require the restriction of land supply for retail facilities among other possible efforts.

One aspect of the guidance to be provided by an Official Plan is to identify appropriate locations for retail land uses, recognizing the diverse characteristics and locational requirements of different types of retail facilities needed to meet the demands of the public for goods and services of all types.

2.2 IMPACT AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Ontario planning process for retail commercial land uses has traditionally involved inquiry into certain public interest questions regarding impact on the "planned function" of other commercial locations, especially downtown areas. Planning in Ontario has consistently placed emphasis on the protection of downtowns and in particular their planned function. It is

important, therefore, to assess the merits of any proposal with respect to public interest concerns such as "planned function".

However, in planning for the development of commercial facilities, it is important to recognize that this is a private sector activity in our economy. When decisions are made, whether to establish new commercial businesses, to expand or relocate those already existing, to restructure or re-merchandise, or to close a particular outlet or chain, these are essentially matters for business decision.

Business decisions are made in the context of the competitive market place, and are based on the perceptions and judgments of the responsible business person or investor with respect to levels of risk and return on investment, methods of operation, consumer preferences, and whatever other market factors are relevant.

The market forces which govern commercial activity are highly dynamic and subject to change as a result of population growth, changes in demographics and incomes, new or altered demands for goods and services, new formats for meeting those demands, and improved ways of competing for the patronage of businesses and consumers.

The planning process also influences this activity. It guides decisions with respect to physical development of commercial facilities by providing an appropriate allocation and distribution of land uses. For the allocation and distribution to be appropriate, it must be based on an understanding of the diverse needs for goods and services of all types.

It is accepted that in our free-enterprise economy, subject to appropriate land use planning guidance, decisions made in the market place will ultimately ensure the best service to the public. So long as the planning process seeks only to guide the market in a locational sense, then the planning of retail uses is not unlike that for other types of land use. However, retail land use planning as practiced in Ontario has often involved a quantitative limitation as well as locational limitations.

Until the recent focus on intensification and the premise of allocating population and employment under the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, there had been no examples in any other area of land use planning in Ontario where the planning process had the potential to quantitatively restrict the sector. Such quantitative restrictions have often been justified on the basis of protecting the "planned function" of other commercial areas. In such cases, the principle is that adverse planning impacts are of concern, while adverse business impacts are not.

2.3 IMPACT ON "PLANNED FUNCTION"

Under the Ontario planning process, the fundamental intent in the planning of commercial land uses is to guide commercial development in accordance with the public interest, but not to intervene in the market place in ways that may restrict economic activity or regulate or interfere with normal business competition.

For this reason, whenever concern is raised that a new or expanded commercial facility may result in adverse impact on another commercial area, it is necessary to be as clear as possible about the type and degree of adverse impacts, which are of concern to the planning process.

The potential adverse planning impacts, which are of concern, are those where, as a result of approval of new or expanded development, it is expected that the "planned function" of another commercial location would be jeopardized or destroyed. Such concerns are founded in the public interest.

Special Attention to Downtowns and Mainstreets

In the review of impact on planned function and public interest tests, downtowns and mainstreets typically receive special attention. This emanates in part from the Provincial Policy Statement direction to maintain the vitality and viability of downtowns and mainstreets (discussed latter in this section of the report), but also in recognition of the multifaceted role and function of a downtown. Downtowns often define the image and identity of the community; represent the historic core of the community; provide a sense of place; provide a centralized government, service and employment function in addition to the retail function; represent a significant public sector investment in infrastructure and streetscape improvements; and serve as a central socialization and meeting place.

Public Interest Tests

It is certainly true that, in cases where such severe planning impacts are the expected result, there will be very grave business impacts as well. However, the concern of the planning process is not for the merchant or landlord and the levels of sales or profits or losses. Rather the concern is for the public interests, which are affected by such questions as:

- Whether, on balance, the availability of goods and services required by the public will be significantly diminished as a consequence of the new facility and the anticipated adverse effects on existing facilities;
- Whether blighted conditions will be created, such as lack of adequate maintenance, significant prolonged vacancies, unsightliness or deterioration;
- Whether the ability of an area or centre to provide a service or function (which may be unrelated to retail sales) to the public is detrimentally impacted by the loss of a retail facility;
- Whether there are other affects detrimental to the public interest, such as impact on infrastructure or adverse municipal fiscal impact because of additional costs in blighted areas or loss of tax revenue;
- Whether the loss of retail function effects the ability to meet other municipal or Provincial objectives, such as the ability to promote and attract residential intensification;
- Whether the addition of new areas which reduces space in existing areas makes efficient use of existing infrastructure; and
- How the development will affect the ability to create a sense of place for residents and a positive image of the municipality.

These public interest tests must be considered both in the evaluation of new applications and in the establishment of the policy framework in the Official Plan. These tests are considered in the review and evaluation of the existing policy framework in Section 3 of this report.

Numerical Tests

The traditional means of determining whether there is impact on "planned function" sufficient to create a public interest concern has involved the study and analysis of the retail market effects of a proposed new facility and specifically an estimate of the extent and duration of sales losses. Such studies also identify the stores, if any, that would be expected to close as a direct result of the proposed development, and assess whether a similar store type could open or replace that retailer.

Even where store closures are expected to result from the introduction of the proposed development, however, that does not necessarily indicate a finding of unacceptable impact on planned function. As the Municipal Board noted in a very influential decision:

“The test that the Board has adopted is a stringent one. It is not enough that stores will close, as tragic as that may be to owners, workers and patrons. The test in planning terms is a public interest test based on whether there will be a deleterious impact on planned function, such as a significant diminution of service or potential for blight.”¹

While this statement by the Board may be true, such information must then be placed in a planning context and in a local context to determine if a closure represents an acceptable impact on the planning function of an area and on the public interest. A municipality must identify what constitutes “diminution of service” and “blight” and what is an acceptable level of “service diminution” and “blight”. Unfortunately, even a small level of blight in an urban area can have a detrimental impact that is difficult to reverse. It can lead to other retailers deciding to leave, patrons refusing to visit and a commensurate downward spiral of the vitality of a retail area. However, for a small retail node, a loss of service and blight and even complete closure may be acceptable as it can be replaced by alternative land uses. But in the context of a downtown or commercial core, loss of service and blight can have significant impacts on the image of a municipality, its walkability, and its quality of life and result in significant investments of time and money to reverse the trend. These matters are considered in our review of policy approaches and controls in Sections 4 and 6.

Other Tests

Retail market impact data is only one piece of information that must be considered in retail planning, and although diminution of service and potential for blight are key determinants of loss of planned function, there are additional determinants that are not solely based on a numerical analysis of impact to retail stores. Unfortunately, the other tests of impact on the planned function and public interest as listed previously are much more difficult to quantify and are often overlooked.

¹ Ontario Municipal Board Decision, City of Brampton Official Plan Amendment 208 and By-Law 211-91, December 22, 1993; excerpt from pages 96 & 97

For downtowns, the question is not simply whether the retail space is being replaced by other types of retail or services, the questions are whether the “vitality and viability” of the downtown is being maintained and where possible enhanced which is the test of the Provincial Policy Statement. It is pertinent to note that the previous quote from a decision of the Ontario Municipal Board predates the reference to “vitality and viability” in any of the various versions of the Provincial Policy Statements. Decisions of the Board must now also be consistent with this Provincial Policy Statement requirement.

In addition, whether the downtown can continue to act as the central place of the municipality is particularly important for towns and small cities; whether it continues to provide a sense of place and significance for the residents of the community; and whether other objectives such as intensification, transit supportability and reduced commuting can be achieved and furthered. These are all matters that are considered in the review of the existing policy framework in Section 4 and in the review of policy approaches and controls in Section 6.

Positive Impacts

In cases where analysis shows some potential for adverse impacts on the public interest concerns, these must of course then be weighed and balanced against any positive impacts of the proposed development.

In the usual land use planning vocabulary, the term "impact" has come to connote an adverse or negative effect. It must also be acknowledged, however, that positive impacts can result from planning decisions. Indeed, in the case of new commercial investments, the positive impacts can be of considerable importance. These may be very significant to stated or unstated planning goals of a municipality, and could involve a number of direct or indirect beneficial effects, including:

- Expanded range of choice available to consumers and businesses;
- Improved efficiency and competitiveness, resulting in lower prices and better service;
- Creation of additional employment;
- Recapture of outflow sales, and reduction in associated travel times and costs;
- Increased municipal tax revenue; and
- Potential spin-off effects of benefit to other economic activities or locations in the municipality.

Land Supply

Restriction in supply of commercial land, or of certain types of commercial land, could have the effect of limiting the size of the retail sector, and consequently of interfering in the competitive balance of the market or of certain components of it. If the result of such planning intervention is an artificially constrained supply of commercial space, below what the market would otherwise have provided, then not only would many of the positive impacts fail to materialize but also there would be real concern for adverse impacts due to inhibited competition and increased prices.

Contrarily, too much land supply can also have impacts. It can result in an overbuilding of retail space resulting in closure and vacancies in established commercial areas. It can also result in

lands remaining fallow for a long period when they could alternatively be more productively used for other land uses. As a result, there may be valid reasons why restriction of land supply is necessary, particularly as a short-term tool, in order to facilitate and realize other critical policy objectives. There are also valid reasons to phase the land supply in-line with population and, or income growth in the municipality.

Designating retail land supply in strategic locations can also be advantageous for a municipality and allows a municipality to be proactive in determining an appropriate distribution of retail space rather than being reactive to retail applications.

However, if the planning process is to be used not only to guide the location of commercial facilities but also to quantitatively restrict segments of the sector, an extremely careful balance of the potential positive and negative factors is required.

Determining the appropriate balance of land supply is one of the key matters that this study attempts to address as set out in Section 5.

Abuse of the Process

The situation remains, however, that the land use planning process applicable to expansion of the retail sector is susceptible to intervention by existing business interests. Objections to new retail proposals are usually expressed in terms of planning impacts and public interests but, when made by business competitors, almost always coexist with private interests in protecting the status quo and limiting new competition. This presents a challenge to the planning process, particularly because of its inherent potentials for creating long delays in the approval of new or expanded retail uses. Delay can accrue to the competitive advantage of an objector even when the eventual decision is approval. For these reasons, it is necessary to distinguish true planning impacts from those that, while presenting understandable private business concerns, fall short of creating a planning impact involving the public interest.

All of the matters discussed in this section must be considered in the establishment of a commercial policy structure in municipal official plans. The key component of the structure is establishing and describing the planned function of each commercial centre or area. This requires determining not only the role of the centre in the market place, but also its linkage to public infrastructure and service provision; its role in the provision of municipal services, facilities and culture; its role in the local economy and provision of jobs; its role in the structure of the municipality and its importance to the residents as a destination, meeting place and centre of their neighbourhood or community.

2.4 RETAIL FUNCTION

Despite assertions to the contrary, the retail industry itself, to a large degree, influences the distribution and location of retail space. This is due to three factors: one factor is competition. The number of similar retail stores in a market will be limited by the strength of the market.

The second factor is the market size required to support an individual retail store or product. Retail stores selling products and services that are needed on a relatively frequent basis can

generally be successful in a small confined market area, which includes among others convenience stores, laundry, coffee shops, fast food restaurants, food stores and delis. These stores can be located throughout a municipality and in residential neighbourhoods in close proximity to their market. These stores will usually locate with similar retail stores and services in a cluster or centre serving a local or neighbourhood function. Key amongst these stores is food shopping. It is the most frequent and regular type of shopping and is key to the attraction of some other types of retail and service uses that depend on the frequent and regular shopping trips generated by the food stores. Those stores selling more unique products or products purchased less often require a larger market area to survive. Such stores would locate in fewer locations and in areas where they can attract from a broader community or regional market.

The third factor is the actual locational requirements of individual retailers. Retailers will not locate in just any location in a municipality but will often have very specific requirements for store locations. These requirements include market size and distribution as discussed above, but also the demographics of the market, access and visibility to the market being served, and synergies with other retail stores in the centre. The access and visibility to the market differ depending on the market being served. Those that rely on the last minute decisions of drive by traffic (i.e. service stations, and fast food restaurants) require very visible locations, while those destination oriented stores, where patrons are traveling large distances to go specifically to that store, require accessible locations to regional transportation facilities, but not necessarily highly visible locations.

Nonetheless, the distribution of retail stores can largely be categorized depending upon the market they serve i.e. convenience/neighbourhood, community/sub-regional and regional, but within each of these categories, there are differences based on their accessibility and visibility requirements. As well, some stores, particularly those serving a local market, can also be found in community centres serving a different market and function.

Having consideration for this functional distribution of retail stores is of key importance in proactively identifying new retail nodes as well as in the overall policy framework of the County's Official Plan.

2.5 PROVINCIAL POLICY STATEMENT, 2005

A number of policy directions of the Provincial Policy Statement have relevance for retail planning. Some of the key objectives of the Provincial Policy Statement are those that seek to achieve denser urban areas that give priority to intensification, and that seek to link infrastructure availability and land use mix and densities.

Among the generally applicable Provincial Policies, Section 1.1.1 d) states that, *Healthy, livable and safe communities are sustained by accommodating an appropriate range and mix of residential, employment (including industrial, commercial and institutional uses), recreational and open space uses to meet long-term needs.*

The focus on intensification is set out in Section 1.1.3.3 which states that, *Planning authorities shall identify and promote opportunities for intensification and redevelopment where this can be*

accommodated taking into account existing building stock or areas, including brownfield sites, and the availability of suitable existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities required to accommodate projected needs.

Retail planning can influence intensification in a number of respects. Existing retail areas and developments, particularly those of a low-intensity or car-oriented nature, often provide potential sites for future intensification (redevelopment of greyfields, or opportunities for mixed use intensification). In addition, the maintenance of a healthy level of retail activity within existing built-up areas increases the attractiveness of those areas as places to live, and helps to support investments in higher density living by creating an urban fabric with safe, vibrant, walkable and attractive mainstreets and precincts.

The provincial policies also speak to creating more compact, mixed use areas in newly developing areas in Section 1.1.3.7: *New development taking place in designated growth areas should occur adjacent to the existing built-up area and shall have a compact form, mix of uses and densities that allow for the efficient use of land, infrastructure and public service facilities.*

This policy indicates support for design of new retail facilities to accommodate a mix of uses and retail developments that are compact in nature. This built form is different from the traditional suburban style shopping centres.

The policies also speak to the link between land uses and infrastructure in Section 1.6.2: *The use of existing infrastructure and public service facilities should be optimized, wherever feasible, before consideration is given to developing new infrastructure and public service facilities.*

Section 1.6.5.4 speaks to this issue with particular focus on linking land use patterns with the objective of minimizing vehicular trips: *A land use pattern, density and mix of uses should be promoted that minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and support the development of viable choices and plans for public transit and other alternative transportation modes, including commuter rail and bus.*

Retail uses are often a key transit destination, particularly for those segments of the population that do not have regular access to the use of a car. The retail distribution should take account of the varying needs of the population, for locally accessible goods and services and, in the case of major retail developments, locations that can be well-served by transit.

Among the inherent attributes of successful downtowns are the mixed-use nature of activities and the resulting opportunities for multi-purpose trips, whether by walking, transit or car. Downtowns can produce significant efficiencies in the number and length of vehicular trips. This efficiency, to a lesser extent, can also be achieved in non-downtown developments that have these mixed-use, intensive and transit-oriented characteristics. These areas are the preferable locations that can act as transit hubs.

Accordingly, the distribution of retail through a municipality should be such that the length of regular shopping trips (daily and weekly trips) can be minimized and where possible achieved by walking, cycling, transit or a multi-purpose vehicle trip. This suggests an appropriate

distribution of convenience and neighbourhood shopping facilities and the location of such retail space close to residential areas. Larger concentrations of more specialized shopping facilities in downtown locations and, where markets are of sufficient size, in other mixed-use nodes would help accomplish trip-making efficiencies and a better balance of transit usage.

Lastly the Policy Statement, in Section 1.7.1, provides specific focus on maintaining the vitality and viability of traditional retail areas and states that, *Long-term economic prosperity should be supported by: maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns and mainstreets.* This policy is a key consideration as discussed previously in the determination of an appropriate distribution and phasing of retail space within a municipality. However, the Provincial Policy Statement offers no direction on how vitality and viability are to be measured. It is up to each municipality to define and measure these terms. The discussion in Sections 4 and 6 attempts to address this matter.

These policy objectives and principles provide key direction on how the Province expects municipal land use decisions to be made. Objectives of compact form, mixing of land uses, intensification, linking urban uses with infrastructure, minimizing commuting and maintaining viability of downtowns and mainstreets are all matters to be considered in the distribution of retail space and are considered in the evaluation of the existing Policy framework in Section 4 of this report and the distribution of retail space in Section 5.

2.6 RETAIL TRENDS

This report will examine some of these trends in terms of their applicability to Oxford and their influence on retail space distribution.

Superstores

Superstores will inevitably be established in Oxford County although they may be in the lower size range. Loblaws has been opening up progressively larger stores under its various banners (particularly the Superstore) with an increasing range of non-grocery products, although the rate of this expansion and the depth of non-food items have waned in the past few years. Wal-Mart has also been quickly expanding their superstore format across Ontario.

These stores at 14,000 to 23,000 square metres (150,000 to 250,000 square feet) cater to a broad community and or regional market. As such, they should be directed to locations and nodes that are accessible to that trade area. However, as food shopping is the most regularly and frequently required shopping trip, it is still important to maintain conventional food shopping facilities within the residential neighbourhood and community fabric. In neighbourhood commercial centres, food stores typically range between 2,300 to



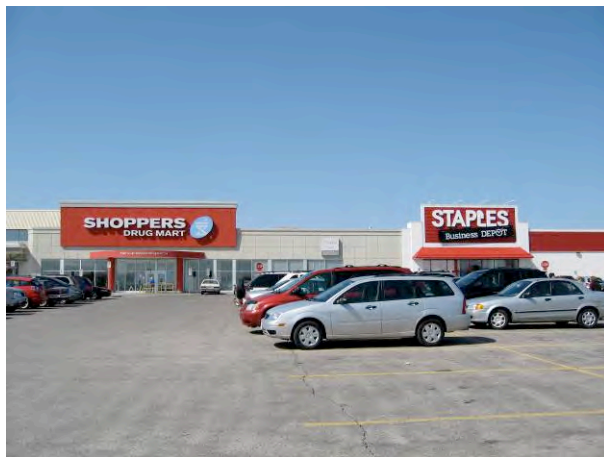
4,600 square metres (25,000 and 50,000 square feet). Maintaining neighbourhood scale food stores provides additional benefits including reduced auto travel and creating vibrant neighbourhood centres. As well, food shopping is a significant attractor of activity and patronage that is required by the other businesses in the centre. As such, it is important to ensure that the superstores do not usurp the function of the neighbourhood facilities. To compete however, neighbourhood commercial nodes will need to be well located and, perhaps, larger than neighbourhood centres of the past. The trend to increased lines of prepared foods in neighbourhood-oriented food stores may also keep them viable and differentiated from the superstores, as prepared food is a particularly frequent shopping item.

Warehouse Membership Clubs

Warehouse Membership Clubs continue to be a key element in Ontario retailing, although the retreat of Sam's Club from Ontario raises questions about the depth of this trend and whether it has reached its extent. Due to the size of such stores, they are largely limited to the larger urban centres and it is unlikely that a Costco will be located in Oxford County. However, as the Module 1 report indicated, there will continue to be outflow of retail dollars from Oxford County to Costco stores located in surrounding large urban centres.

Box stores

Big box stores and category killers are here to stay, but their size, product, price-point and locational characteristics are continually changing. They are no longer the stripped down, warehouse style discount outlet of the early 1990's. They provide a broad range of retail products, in a range of price-points. These larger stores improve efficiencies, and provide a broader choice of produce to the consumer. Many are still oriented to the discount market (Payless Shoes, Winners), but others cater to the higher end or specialty market such as Victoria's Secret and Williams-Sonoma. They also come in a range of store sizes from as low as 200 to 300 sq.m. (2,100 to 3,200 sq. ft.) for some fashion stores to as high as 14,000 sq.m. (150,000 sq. ft.) for a home improvement centre.



No longer just the purview of stand-alone stores or power centres, box stores are now common as out-boxes at a regional mall or on a main street location. In fact many of the box stores have developed a smaller module for urban main street locations. In some commercial centres, they have also become the anchor tenant, i.e., Home Depot, or Home Outfitters. The use of large box stores as anchor tenants in Ontario is likely to increase due to the lack of department store alternatives.

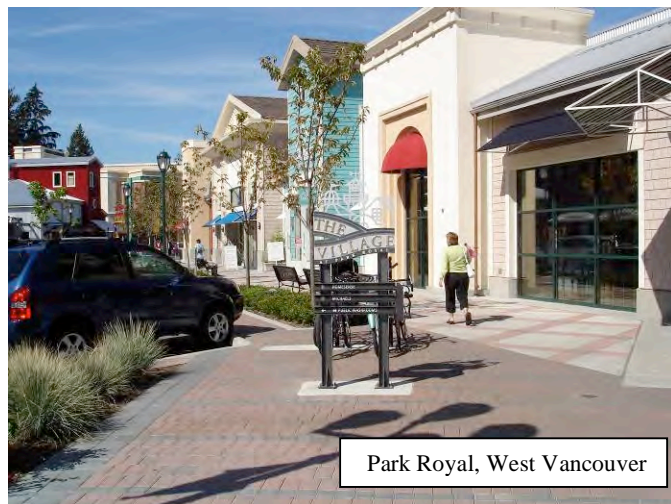
With respect to department stores, another key trend is the stand-alone department store rather than as part of a plaza or mall. Wal-Mart started this trend in Canada. Zellers has also recently been opening stand-alone stores in power centres. Sears is often located in power centres in the US but there are no examples of stand alone Sears stores in Ontario as of yet.

These trends are occurring and will continue to occur in Oxford County. The key consideration from a planning perspective is not to plan on a building module basis as this continues to change and evolve, but to focus on function. There is also a need to develop guidelines to address matters such as site access, internal site circulation (vehicular and pedestrian), and street relationship.

Lifestyle Retail...the new Downtowns

Lifestyle retail has become the most significant trend influencing retail space distribution in the US. Lifestyle centres are simply the creation of a traditional style retail main street in a new setting. In most cases, they are located in greenfield settings (Easton Town Centre in Columbus Ohio, Victoria Gardens in Rancho Cucamonga California), but in some cases they have entailed a redevelopment of a former mall or plaza (Mashpee Commons in Cape Cod Massachusetts, Mizner Park in Boca Raton Florida, Santana Row in San Jose California). Lifestyles centres began emerging in the mid to late 1990's and the trend continues to evolve much as previous built form trends evolved. Lifestyle centres are becoming larger multi-anchored centres, and a growing number of national chains prefer life-style and Main-Street type locations.

The life-style centre concept is beginning to emerge in Canada. The Village at Park Royal in West Vancouver, BC was the first lifestyle centre in Canada. Built as an expansion to the established Park Royal Shopping Centre, The Village at Park Royal is anchored by a two storey Home Depot. The Waterloo Square in downtown Waterloo was largely demolished and rebuilt with a small version of a lifestyle centre. The Don Mills Shopping Centre in Toronto was demolished and opened in the spring of 2009 as a full lifestyle centre, and in



Park Royal, West Vancouver

Barrie "Park Place", a combination lifestyle centre and power centre, was approved by the Ontario Municipal Board but has not started construction.

Lifestyle centres are unique in their focus on place-making as a key-element in the design of the centre. It is not just the amount and type of retail space that is important to the developers of these centres; the ambience and sense of place is as important or more important. Place-making is discussed in the next section of this report. The Official Plan needs to recognize the importance of the main street built form in terms of the ambience and sense of place it can offer and encourage its various built form elements in new and existing centres. Policy guidelines encouraging main-street retail elements and other built form guidelines will need to be established in the Official Plan.

Life-style centres in the US are geared predominantly to larger, highly affluent markets. In Ontario, we are likely to see such centres limited largely to the larger urban markets. More

importantly for Oxford County, many national chains have recognized the importance of main-street store locations whether it is in a new lifestyle centre or a traditional established downtown. These include such retailers as Shoppers Drug Mart, Sobey's Express, Metro, Second Cup, Coffee Culture, Canadian Tire, Best Buy, and The Gap.

The Internet

The internet is no doubt having a significant impact on retailing and is likely the biggest single trend of this decade. This is especially the case for the tech savvy age cohorts. We are now seeing the death of the music store and the video store as those formats are increasingly purchased on-line. Amazon.com has gone from an on-line bookseller to a virtual department store and one of the world's largest retailers.

Today, most national chains have web sites where purchases can be made. But the greatest use and impact of the internet has not been in on-line purchase but rather the education of the consumer. The consumer can compare product information and pricing from the comfort of their home rather than by visiting one or more stores. Often the consumer will make the purchase in person after educating himself or herself on-line. As a result, the consumer spends less time in the store comparing products, which leads to a greater level of mission shopping rather than comparison-shopping.

Retailers that will likely be most impacted by on-line purchases will be the discount big box retailer. For most people, apparel shopping will continue to require comparison-shopping where the consumer can try-on and look at the product prior to purchasing.

As well, there is another aspect to shopping that will never be replaced by the internet. That is the experience of shopping for the sake of shopping or "window shopping" as well as the desire of people to associate with other people and be seen with people. Downtowns, which provide the ambience and experience that people desire, will continue to be successful even with the trends towards shopping on the internet and in box stores.

2.7 PLACE MAKING

Key determinants of retail distribution include the size and characteristics of the market, the function the retail store serves in the market place and transportation accessibility. But the distribution of retailing can have much broader implications on urban structure than simply serving a market need. It creates nodes of activity, neighbourhood gathering spots, places to recreate, and a sense of place for residents. Retail nodes along with other community and government activities combine to become the downtowns of our Towns and Cities. The type of retail, the arrangement of retail space, the tenant mix, and the physical character of the retail area can have a defining influence on the image of an entire community. The character of the downtown immediately comes to mind when people refer to Dundas, Oakville, Stratford or Niagara on the Lake. However, retail areas can also create a negative image of a community due to blight or sprawling, uncoordinated arterial commercial uses.

Simply put, retail distribution is also about place-making. This aspect of commercial planning has been somewhat neglected in Ontario. Linking retail with place-making objectives is not

simply a planning cliché, developers in the US have seized on this as a means of attracting retailers and differentiating their location from the competition. In a country dominated by a suburban living population, US shopping centre developers have found a means to tap into the populace's desire for a different lifestyle experience and have substantially increased sales and rents as a result.

To create centres and main streets as urban places, the Official Plan will need to place as much emphasis on the urban design characteristics of a retail centre, strip or main street as the market aspects. Not every retail store need be or should be located in an image invoking centre; some space extensive users are better located in arterial commercial type locales either as stand alone entities or clustered in like use agglomerations (i.e. auto campuses).

However, linking retail distribution with place-making objectives can provide the municipality with stronger planning rationale for the priority of certain potential retail areas over others and can form a strong basis for a new Official Plan. This can be achieved through, pre-designation of certain sites, priority for the downtown and detailed design policies. Nonetheless, a successful retail centre is unlikely to materialize without consideration of market factors, accessibility requirements and current trends.

2.8 CONCLUSIONS

It will be important for the County to consider not one but all of these elements in making decisions on the distribution of and policy direction for retail areas. Incorporating such considerations into the Official Plan will provide the municipality with a means to proactively identify future retail clusters as well as to evaluate the appropriateness of applications for new or expanded retail designations and centres. The review and recommendations with respect to these matters are addressed through the remainder of the report.

3.0 FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS

3.1 MODULE 1 FEEDBACK

A series of stakeholders' workshops were held throughout the County in June 2009 to present the findings of the Module 1 report. In addition to a presentation of the Module 1 report, questions surrounding four specific topics were asked. The questions were:

1. What do you see as the key issues, including any local circumstances or specific local issues that need to be considered in this study?
2. Do you feel there are any major gaps in the commercial services currently provided in your community? If so, what are they? How important is it to reduce outflow of commercial dollars from your community?
3. What do you see as the future commercial role for the central area (downtown) in your community? What can be done to achieve or enhance this role?
4. How should the additional warranted space be distributed within the municipality? i.e., which existing commercial clusters? Any new areas?

The feedback obtained on the above matters is discussed below.

Key Issues

The health and vibrancy of the downtown was brought up in all of the workshops as a key issue. The stakeholders offered that there is a need to balance new retail within the downtown with other approvals. The downtowns are not only a potential tourism attraction, but the surrounding rural communities also depend on the downtowns of the Urban Centres for their shopping and entertainment needs. Stakeholders provided that while it is important to maintain specialty retailers in the downtown, it is also important to keep essential and/or day-to-day commercial amenities, such as banks and liquor stores in the Central Area. It was mentioned that the loss of banks in the Woodstock downtown is an issue. Also, there needs to be more gathering places in Woodstock's downtown that cater to all demographics, including youth.

Drawing more people to shop and live in the downtown was brought up as another major issue. The retirement subdivisions of Tillsonburg were mentioned, and more commercial services that cater to the demographic profile of these residents are needed to support the people who live in or near the downtown.

In Ingersoll, it was suggested that the introduction of a community college in the downtown would be helpful to increase the population and vibrancy of the downtown. In Woodstock, the residential spaces above stores were noted as a problem. In particular, because some landlords are not maintaining them and also renting to "bad tenants", who, it was perceived, affect the image of the downtown.

For Ingersoll and Woodstock, the high vacancy rate of the downtown was a major concern. For Woodstock, competing commercial establishments outside of the Central Area was mentioned as a problem, and in particular, it was suggested that the limit on minimum store size in the Regional Node should be maintained.

Gaps in Commercial Services

When asked what the stakeholders felt was missing in commercial services in their community, the discussion centred largely on what was missing in the downtown. In Tillsonburg, meeting the demands of the growing retirement population in and near the Central Area was noted. The stakeholders of the Tillsonburg area noted that more cultural activities, entertainment, and stores that cater to seniors are needed. In addition, medical and health services are also important to have in the Central Area.

Stakeholders from the Ingersoll area are looking for more specialty stores to add to their shopping options. Also, they pointed out that the Bell Street commercial cluster is an appropriate area for expansion. They also admitted that the Thames riverfront is a “jewel”, and agreed that more could be made of it.

Woodstock stakeholders would like to see more brand name stores, but also balanced with boutiques in the downtown. They saw opportunity for more grocery stores, office supply and services, and family apparel stores in the downtown.

Future Role of the Downtown

Stakeholders viewed the future role of downtowns as entertainment centres that hold unique characteristics, and provide a special shopping and entertainment environment. They viewed the downtown as an appropriate place for residential and commercial growth. However, stakeholders pointed out the importance of heritage preservation, and encouraged the provision of grants and other incentives to achieve that.

Distribution of Additional Warranted Space

The discussion on where additional warranted space should be distributed stayed focused on the Urban Centres. The stakeholders of Tillsonburg offered that the Tillson Avenue commercial cluster should be a major retail area, and that it is a better location for commercial growth than the Broadway cluster, or other clusters at the periphery of the Town. For Woodstock, it was pointed out that more retail is needed in the north end of the City, and that retail should go in the centre of a neighbourhood, within walking distance for local residents. For Tavistock, the steps to individual stores located in the downtown pose an accessibility problem for the seniors’ population, alluding that perhaps more commercial space should be provided closer to the residential area.

3.2 MODULE 2 FEEDBACK

A second series of stakeholders’ workshops were held throughout the County in December 2009 to present the preliminary findings of the Module 2 report.

Some of the feedback that was heard following the presentations and in subsequent written submissions included:

- General support for creating a new Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation in Ingersoll and Tillsonburg;
- Consideration be given to permitting banks and financial institutions and doctor's offices and clinics in Neighbourhood Shopping Areas in Ingersoll and Tillsonburg to serve the surrounding neighbourhoods.
- Concern with the amount of existing and approved space in the Dundas/Springbank cluster in the City of Woodstock, where a Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation is proposed;
- Concern regarding the continued restriction on freestanding food stores in the Regional Commercial Node;
- Desire to see existing zoning permissions in proposed Neighbourhood Shopping Areas maintained and recognized;
- Concern for limiting retail space within Industrial designations;
- Request that the size criteria for requiring a market study for lands designated service commercial in Ingersoll not be lowered;
- Suggestion that the lands at the Southwest corner of Clark Road and Harris Street in Ingersoll (Southside) be allocated "additional retail/service use and space permissions that would be consistent with the location and size of the property";
- Suggestion that this study incorporate the findings of the market study and peer review for the Sifton Properties Limited application in Ingersoll and that this study significantly underestimates the warranted demand for retail space in Ingersoll; and
- Concern with identifying a specific site for a Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation in southeast Ingersoll.

The oral and written feedback from the stakeholders was reviewed and considered in the finalization of this report. Where the consulting team was in agreement, changes were made in response to the feedback.

4.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK CRITIQUE

4.1 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

4.1.1 Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design

The Central Area of each Urban Centre is comprised of two sub-districts: the Central Business District (CBD), and the Entrepreneurial District. The CBD is intended to be the focal area for shopping, cultural amenities, entertainment, institutional, and administrative and business operations. Its function is to meet a diversity of needs. Accordingly, the range of permitted uses is broad including commercial, office, administrative, cultural, entertainment, recreational, institutional and open space. It is also intended for the CBD to become a more vibrant place during the day and night, partly through increasing the residential population living within the downtown. As such, medium and high density residential developments, converted dwellings, and residences above ground floor commercial space are permitted.

In addition to guiding the range of uses, the Official Plan also guides design of the CBD and ensures the CBD is a place that is attractive, and strives for cohesiveness and character fit through design. The CBD is to be an interesting and pleasant environment for pedestrians. The Vision for each CBD sets out that,

“New buildings and spaces will reflect a human scale of development, and will be guided by design guidelines which result in a significantly enhanced pedestrian environment.”

Each of the three Urban Centres contains a set of design policies in the Official Plan regarding accessibility, streetscaping, and signage. For example, for the CBD in Woodstock, the Official Plan refers to the City’s design guidelines and streetscape documents. Ingersoll and Tillsonburg do not have such documents, but their respective design policies strive to achieve the same design principles of accessibility, streetscaping, and signage control.

4.1.2 Differences between Urban Centres

The Official Plan states that the Woodstock CBD is intended to be the most intensive and functionally diverse and dominant business, cultural and administrative centre within the County. However, the range of permitted uses is the same as that permitted in the CBDs of Tillsonburg and Ingersoll. Although the Woodstock CBD does not set out prohibited uses, Tillsonburg and Ingersoll do. In Tillsonburg and Ingersoll, amusement arcades are not permitted on lands having frontage on the main corridor crossing through the CBD, i.e. Broadway in Tillsonburg and Thames Street in Ingersoll; adult entertainment parlours are prohibited; as well as commercial bingo parlours. These are minor differences.

As mentioned earlier, the Official Plan applies design policies, which vary among the Urban Centres. For Ingersoll and Tillsonburg, streetscaping policy provides that, “*Town Council may consider developing a Streetscape Master Plan...*” However, further direction on streetscape improvement is not provided. In comparison, for Woodstock, “*City Council will strive to*

implement the approved Streetscape Master Plan...” and provides further direction on the key components of the streetscape master plan such as:

- The provision of appropriate, integrated hard and soft landscape elements including tree planting and other vegetation, street furniture, lighting, public art and sidewalk treatments;
- Provision of safe, convenient and identifiable pedestrian crossings; and
- The establishment of visual focal points at key areas.

4.1.3 Policy Opportunities and Challenges

Planned Function and Maintaining Vitality and Viability

The Central Area Visions contained in the Official Plan for Woodstock (7.3.2.1), Tillsonburg (8.3.2.1) and Ingersoll (9.3.2.1) all appropriately set out the intent and function of the Central Area. In addition, each of the Urban Centre policies address the retail, residential and employment functions of the Central Area. These are all appropriate policies. However, additional reference to and direction on the Provincial Policy Statement reference requiring the maintenance and where possible enhancement of the viability and vitality of downtowns needs to be provided.

Vitality and viability of downtowns are maintained by ensuring a range and diversity of activities are present to attract people to the area both during the day and in the evening and by increasing the diversity and density of people active in the downtown. If buildings are occupied, but there is not a diversity of people on the street both in the day and evening, then the downtown will be less welcoming in those periods and the vitality of the street and its businesses may be affected. A range and diversity of activities includes retail shopping, government offices and services, personal services, restaurants, coffee shops, and bars, offices that provide employment, offices which provide a service to patrons and attract patrons to the downtown, and entertainment uses such as movie theatres, live theatres, bowling alleys, museums, galleries and studios, music and dance schools, and similar uses, that attract patrons to the downtown.

Viability and vitality of the downtown will be supported and enhanced by having a significant population within walking distance of the downtown.

The vitality and viability of a downtown, could be negatively affected by:

- The loss or significant decline of any one of these activities and functions previously mentioned;
- A high vacancy rate;
- Disrepair of buildings and the perception of decline;
- Crime;
- Declining income in the neighbourhoods surrounding the downtown; and
- Declining population in the neighbourhoods surrounding the downtown.

Conversely, enhancing the viability and vitality of a downtown requires addressing one or more of the above indicators in a positive manner.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that the vision and function policies be enhanced through a discussion of what constitutes vitality and viability, why it should be maintained and enhanced, and the indicators affecting viability and vitality. As well, the study requirements

discussed in Section 6 of this report should also address the indicators of viability and vitality as discussed above.

Retail Function and Range of Uses

In the paragraph on range of uses in Tillsonburg and Ingersoll (8.3.2.2.1 and 9.3.2.2.1 respectively), reference is made to the commercial core district and areas outside of the commercial core district. In Woodstock, the similar policy (7.3.2.2.3) references both the CBD and the downtown core district. The terminology ‘commercial core’ and ‘downtown core district’ are not used in the designations – CBD and Entrepreneurial District. Using terminology that reflects the designations in the Official Plan would be much clearer.

As well, the Tillsonburg policy limits uses “outside the commercial core district” through the zoning by-law. There is no such designation as “commercial core district”. It is presumed that this policy is referring to outside the “Central Area”. If it is, the uses outside of the Central Area are actually limited through the Official Plan. As such, the reference to “through zoning” should be deleted in the Tillsonburg policies, and both the Ingersoll and Tillsonburg policies revised to refer to the Central Area not the commercial core district.

The Ingersoll and Tillsonburg retail function also discusses the Central Area as the first priority for location of shopping area facilities that serve the primary trade area. This policy should be revised to clarify that it is the first priority for locating comparison goods shopping facilities, as these are a critical element in a downtown. However, destination retail stores can also play an important function in smaller urban areas such as Ingersoll and Tillsonburg by drawing patrons to the downtown. Such stores and services include beer and liquor stores, and grocery stores. The role of these stores



Ingersoll Central Area

in the retail function of the Central Area should be highlighted in the Official Plan. As well, it would be appropriate to clarify that convenience retail and food shopping should be distributed between the Central Area and Neighbourhood Shopping Areas, where warranted.

The Central Areas also play an important service commercial and office function. Such functions should be protected and maintained in the Official Plan particularly for offices, full service restaurants, entertainment, banks and financial institutions and doctors’ offices and clinics as these uses attract employees and / or patrons to the downtown. As the urban centres mature, consideration could be given to also permitting banks and financial institutions and doctors’ offices and clinics in Neighbourhood Shopping Areas to serve the surrounding neighbourhoods. Such consideration should be given to Woodstock at this time.



Tillsonburg Central Area

Impact Assessment

The Official Plan provides policies requiring assessment of impact on the downtown and ability to accommodate the proposed use in the downtown. These policies are contained under ‘Retail Function’ (7.3.2.2.3, 8.3.2.2.2 and 9.3.2.2.1), but impact to a downtown may not exclusively be limited to just impact on the downtown’s retail function but could affect other functions. These policies get lost in this section and should be located in a separate section called Impact Assessment. It may also be beneficial and much clearer to combine all of the impact assessment study requirements in the Service Commercial and Shopping Area policy sections (i.e. 7.3.3.2, 8.3.3.1 and 9.3.3.1) into one impact assessment section under the commercial policy section.

Section 6 discusses appropriate study requirements for impact assessments.

Design

There is an opportunity for additional policy guidance in the Official Plan on streetscape and built form design. A Streetscape or Downtown Master Plan can provide the municipalities with an excellent tool to guide the design matters arising with development proposals as well as public improvements. Such a plan should be undertaken for the Ingersoll and Tillsonburg downtowns, and reviewed and updated as necessary for Woodstock. A Downtown Master Plan could provide a long term guideline for municipal, BIA and private sector initiatives addressing such issues as:

- Streetscape improvements addressing road, sidewalk, landscaping, on-street parking and other public realm elements;
- Public square improvements;
- Parking areas and additions;
- Façade improvements;
- Built form design guidelines;
- Areas of potential intensification for increased commercial, residential and mixed use; and
- Surrounding residential streetscape improvements.

In addition to a guidance document, policies are also needed in the Official Plan to provide strong direction on key streetscape and built form design considerations.

Design policies can address such matters as establishing minimum building heights (e.g., two stories); requiring buildings to be built up to the streetline; restricting parking and driveways or lanes between the buildings and the street; allowing for and encouraging pedestrian-oriented and pedestrian-scaled perpendicular signage; and allowing for outdoor cafes to encroach on municipal sidewalks where the width permits.



Maintaining a Compact and Vibrant Downtown

The CBD is intended to be a “people place”, and a place where people can stroll and window-shop. A distance that pedestrians can stroll from end-to-end and remain entertained is limited. Most successful main streets are generally within a range of 400 to 600 metres (1,300 feet to 2,000 feet) in length.

The Woodstock CBD is quite long at approximately 1,550 metres (5,000 feet), only a portion of which is of primary pedestrian interest. Very different characteristics apply to other stretches of Dundas Street. The most vibrant component of Downtown runs from Wellington Street to Light Street, characterized with specialized local shops in older building stock. This stretch of Dundas Street is narrow, being 2-lanes wide plus on-street parking. In comparison, the east and west ends of the CBD are less pedestrian friendly; are interspersed with vacant storefronts, have quieter pedestrian activity, and much of Dundas Street in these areas has a wider 4-lane cross-section.



In comparison, Tillsonburg’s CBD spans approximately 800 metres (2,600 feet) along Broadway. The northern portion from Bridge Street to Oxford Street maintains a vibrant level of pedestrian activity while the portion south of Oxford Street is less vibrant.

Ingersoll’s CBD extends approximately 980 metres (3,200 feet) along Thames Street from Bell Street to just south of King Street, including the break by the Thames River and two railway tracks. However, between the railway tracks and Bell Street, Thames Street takes on a less pedestrian oriented character. The more traditional main street south of the railway track extends approximately 500 metres (1,600 feet).

There are a number of possible solutions to address these challenges. In all three downtown’s, consideration should be given to:

- Focus revitalization and streetscape investment in a core portion of the downtown;
- Apply design solutions such as gateways to distinguish different segments of the CBD to create interest throughout the length of the CBD; and
- Provide for and encourage a broader range of uses at the ends of the CBD, particularly in the form of residential intensification.

These solutions could be accommodated by introducing policies to identify a central “pedestrian predominant” portion of the Downtown and accompanying policies where the main street retail function is centred. Outside of the ‘pedestrian predominant’ area larger retail uses, residential intensification and other land uses could be directed. In such areas, stand alone residential uses

could also be considered. This is similar to policies within the Official Plan, which restrict freestanding residential development in a certain segment of the CBDs; however, the ‘pedestrian predominant’ policies provide greater design direction, as discussed above, for new uses within the area.

In Woodstock, the ‘pedestrian predominant’ area could extend from Wellington Street to Light Street; and in Tillsonburg, from Bridge Street to Oxford Street and in Ingersoll from the railway tracks to approximately one half block south of King Street.

Expansions to the Central Area

All three Urban Centres have a policy section addressing expansions to the Central Area (7.3.2.4, 8.3.2.4 and 9.3.2.4), and all three policy sections are virtually the same. The criteria for evaluating such expansions are appropriate, but considering the level of vacancy in the downtown, additional criteria should be considered, such as the level of vacancy in the Central Area, and opportunities to accommodate the proposal within the current boundaries of the Central Area.

Enhancing Vitality through Increased Population

In addition to maintaining a compact downtown, and an attractive sense of place, a key component to the vitality and vibrancy of the downtown is ensuring a substantial residential population within walking distance of the downtown.

For Ingersoll, the Central Area Vision of the Official Plan anticipates the introduction of residential development within and near the Central Area. Section 9.3.2.2.3 also provides for and accommodates residential intensification in the Central Area. Similar policies are provided in Tillsonburg in 8.3.2.2.3 and in Woodstock in Section 7.3.2.2.2. All of these policies are appropriate and should be maintained.

4.1.4 Recommended Policy Revisions

- Expand on the vision and function policies to address vitality and viability as discussed in Section 4.1.3.
- Replace the terms ‘commercial core’ and ‘commercial core district’ with CBD.
- Clarify in the retail function section that the Central Area will be the first priority for comparison goods shopping facilities, banks/financial institutions, full service restaurants, entertainment and key destination retailers.
- Also clarify in the retail function section that convenience retail and food shopping should be distributed between the Central Area and Neighbourhood Shopping Areas where warranted.
- Introduce more detailed design policies on streetscape, open space, and view corridors including such matters as:
 - Requiring buildings to be located up to the street with at grade entrances;
 - Introducing signage policies to protect the historical character of the downtown;
 - Prohibiting parking, driveways or lanes between the buildings and the street;

- Introducing a minimum height of two stories;
 - Permitting pedestrian-oriented and pedestrian-scaled perpendicular signage; and
 - Permitting outdoor cafes to encroach on municipal sidewalks where the width permits.
- Establish pedestrian predominant policies, in collaboration with the above design policies, which identify which portions of the CBD should be reserved for and focused on main street retail uses and which areas should permit larger stand alone retail, offices and residential intensification.
 - Introduce policies for gateways, which seek to establish a gateway element at the entrance to the CBD and at the entrance to the pedestrian predominant areas.

4.2 ENTREPRENEURIAL DISTRICT

4.2.1 Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design

The Entrepreneurial District forms the second sub-district within the downtowns / Central Areas. Compared to the CBD, it's function is less retail-oriented, and more focused on the provision of other commercial services. In Tillsonburg and Ingersoll, retail uses are prohibited, except in association with small-scale business uses.

Permitted Uses

Greater inter-mingling of commercial services with residential uses is encouraged in the Entrepreneurial District. This is apparent in the more scoped nature of the uses permitted, in comparison to the general uses permitted in the CBD. The Entrepreneurial Districts of Woodstock, Tillsonburg, and Ingersoll all permit the following uses:

- Residential uses;
- Rooming, boarding and lodging houses and special needs housing;
- Commercial uses including office conversions, personal services, business supply and services, repair and service shops for small appliances, clinics, studios and galleries and commercial schools; and
- Accessory residential units to a commercial, institutional, or business use.

Other uses are also permitted, but vary between the three Urban Centres. Additional permitted uses in Woodstock include:

- Businesses including cottage industry and associated retail, distribution, fabrication and assembly uses, indoor storage within wholly enclosed buildings and computer and electronic data-process uses; and
- Neighbourhood serving uses.

Additional permitted uses in Tillsonburg are:

- Small-scale business uses including home based businesses and associated retail, limited distribution and assembly uses and computer and electronic data processing uses; and
- Minor institutional uses.

In Ingersoll, additional permitted uses are:

- Small-scale industrial uses including traditional cottage industry and associated retail, studios and galleries, limited distribution, fabrication and assembly uses and computer and electronic data processing uses; and
- Minor institutional uses.

The Entrepreneurial District of Woodstock does not list “minor institutional uses” as a permitted use, like in Tillsonburg and Ingersoll. However, institutional uses are permitted under the guise of “neighbourhood serving uses”, which is a permitted use. As such, schools, and churches are also permitted in the Woodstock Entrepreneurial District.

Some of the terminology used in the list of permitted uses is dated and should be updated. For example the term “computer and electronic data processing” should be updated to current terminology such as “office” or “administration”.

Design

In terms of built form, it is clear in the Official Plan that new forms of development, or new commercial establishments should not disrupt the existing built form character. In all three Urban Centres, new uses are intended to locate in existing buildings to preserve and maintain the residential character of the Entrepreneurial District.

4.2.2 Differences between Urban Centres

The Entrepreneurial District serves the same function in all three Urban Centres. The Entrepreneurial Districts of Tillsonburg and Ingersoll function largely as an office and commercial services area, leaving retail uses to the CBD. The Entrepreneurial District of Woodstock, however, permits “neighbourhood serving uses”, which may include “convenience shopping facilities”. Neighbourhood serving uses, as described in section 7.2.3.3 of the Official Plan, are uses that are complementary to, or support the surrounding residential area. With the CBD so close to the surrounding residential areas and considering the high vacancy within the CBD, there is no need to also permit retail uses within the Entrepreneurial uses other than those related to a gallery or cottage industry. Currently, only two retail uses exist within the Entrepreneurial District in Woodstock - the Allen Building Centre and Corner Farm market. Removal of “convenience shopping facilities” from the range of permitted uses should be considered, so that retail uses are concentrated in the CBD. This could be done simply by permitting “neighbourhood serving uses as set out in the policies of Section 7.2.3.3 but excluding convenience shopping facilities”. The Allen Building Centre and Corner Farm market could either become legal non-conforming uses or recognized through site-specific permission.



4.2.3 Policy Opportunities and Challenges

Range of Uses

As discussed above, the range of uses within the Entrepreneurial District is for the most part appropriate and fulfilling the planned function of these areas.

However, permitting “small-scale industrial uses”, “indoor storage” and “limited distribution, fabrication and assembly uses” may dissuade some prestige office uses from wanting to locate in the District. Use of the terms cottage industry, home based business, artist studio and gallery would likely permit the range of uses envisioned while giving the impression of a more prestige location. Definitions of these uses could then describe the full extent of the uses including associated distribution, fabrication and assembly. Service shops for small appliances are also not in keeping with the character envisioned for the Entrepreneurial District and should be directed to the Service Commercial designation.

Design and Place Making

The current policies for all three Urban Centres are comprehensive with regards to ensuring character compatibility with the existing built form. Existing policies related to design are focused at the individual site level of detail, and address such matters as scale, density, parking and driveways, signage and lighting – items that are to be addressed during site plan design. There is an opportunity to provide design related policies that will affect the public realm, such as streetscape design. Such proposed policy changes are set out for the CBD, and similar policies are equally applicable in the Entrepreneurial District.

Protecting Adjacent Residential Areas

Most successful downtowns have vibrant, well established, and desirable residential neighbourhoods surrounding them. It is the people who live in those neighbourhoods who contribute, in large measure, to the success of a downtown. Protecting, maintaining and improving the surrounding residential character and stability are essential to the success of a downtown.

It is also desirable to encourage residential intensification near a downtown to increase the population and market surrounding the downtown. These two objectives must be balanced to ensure that stable residential areas are maintained and enhanced while promoting intensification in appropriate locations.

These two objectives must also be balanced with the benefits of permitting and encouraging offices and service commercial uses in the area surrounding the downtown core or CBD. This balancing can be done by limiting the extent of the Entrepreneurial District, so that it is relatively confined to the areas immediately adjacent to the Central Business District for offices and service commercial uses and by ensuring that it does not intrude into predominantly stable residential areas. This will



Woodstock Central Area

also direct commercial uses in a more concentrated area. The Entrepreneurial District boundary, however, should also encompass logical intensification sites surrounding the CBD.

4.2.4 Recommended Policy Revisions

- The same design policies recommended for the CBD would be equally applicable for the Entrepreneurial District. Those design policies relate to the relationship of the building to the street, the location of parking areas and driveways, and signage restrictions and could strengthen current policy that strives to maintain the existing low-scale and residential character of the Entrepreneurial District.
- Remove “small-scale industrial uses”, “indoor storage” and “limited distribution, fabrication and assembly uses” from the range of permitted uses and add “cottage industries” in all three Entrepreneurial District designations.
- Particular to Woodstock, remove “neighbourhood serving uses” from the range of permitted uses and, instead, specifically allow for appropriate ‘minor institutional uses’.
- Remove “service shops for small appliances” from the range of permitted uses.
- Ensure that the Entrepreneurial District boundaries are balanced with providing for office and service commercial space and intensification opportunities while protecting predominantly stable residential areas.
- Review and update the terminology of the permitted uses.

4.3 REGIONAL COMMERCIAL NODE

4.3.1 Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design

Function

The Regional Commercial Node (RCN) designation is found only in Woodstock, although an overall policy framework for the designation is set out in Section 5 of the Official Plan. The policies in Section 5 are intended to set out the overall intent, scale and range of permitted uses in the RCN and criteria and study requirements for evaluating applications to create new or expanded RCNs. More detailed policies applicable to the RCN are contained under Shopping Areas in Section 7.3.3.

The function of the RCN is to act as a major activity centre providing for a wide range of commercial uses that meet specialized service and comparison-shopping needs serving a trade area population of approximately 50,000 people.

Regional Commercial Nodes are not intended to accommodate the wide range of functions or the intensive scale of development permitted within the Central Business Districts, as set out in Section 5.4.2 of the Official Plan. In reality though, through loss of retail uses in the Central Business District and through site specific permissions in the RCN, the RCN in south Woodstock does accommodate a wide range of retail functions that are broader than that of the Woodstock

Central Business District. This extent of retail can diminish the role and function of the Central Business District as a central place and reduce its importance and attraction to the residents of the municipality. The impact of new retail space, therefore, can be much broader than just an impact on retail function. Although the Central Areas cannot as easily accommodate the large retail floor plates of the Regional Commercial Nodes, those large and small retail floor plates do compete for the same retail dollar. This circumstance needs to be recognized in the Official Plan and carefully managed through restrictions on retail permission, through minimum floor areas for individual retail uses outside the Central Area, through market impact studies and by considering the implications of the vacancy rates in the Central Area.

The thorough list of required studies in Section 5.4.3 for the establishment of new RCNs, the expansion of an existing designation, or the addition of new space greater than 1,858 square metres (20,000 square feet) in an existing RCN designation are intended to provide the County and local municipalities with the relevant information that will enable the policies to be effectively applied. This will enhance the ability of the County and local municipalities to mitigate possible negative impacts of additional RCN space on the commercial health of the Central Areas. To provide additional protection, the County may want to consider prohibiting changes to certain policies, including those on prohibited uses (discussed in the next section) and minimum floor areas, through site specific amendments, and only consider such changes at the time of the comprehensive five year review of the Official Plan.

Permitted Uses

The permitted uses in the RCN are wide ranging and include retail and service outlets, grocery and food stores, medical and dental offices and clinics, financial offices, convenience commercial uses, restaurants, home and auto supply stores, and commercial recreation uses.

The Official Plan requires site specific Official Plan policies and zoning for development proposals greater than 1,858 square metres (20,000 square feet) of floor space. These site specific policies may restrict the range of uses permitted, the maximum amount of retail space, and the minimum and maximum size of individual stores.

In Woodstock, the policies of Section 7.3.3 Shopping Areas include additional policies with respect to Regional Commercial Nodes. The permitted uses additionally include pharmacies and personal services. As well, large footprint uses such as retail warehouses, and large specialty superstores are permitted through site-specific zoning.

The Woodstock specific policies also contain an extensive section on study requirements for new and expanded RCNs. These policies are discussed and evaluated in Section 5 of this report.

Based on the requirement in Section 5.4 of the Official Plan for site specific policies and zoning to implement approvals for RCNs, Section 7.3.3 contains four site specific amendments approved by OPAs 44, 45, 76, 102, and 84. The site-specific amendments and policies apply to specific sites within the RCN in Woodstock.

Site specific policy 7.3.3.4.2 (OPA 44) appears to affect the entirety of the designated area in the vicinity of Norwich Avenue and Juliana Drive. This is confusing for the reader as it is an

additional policy to that in 7.3.3.1 and affects the entirety of the designation, but it is part of the site specific policies. Even more confusing, Schedule W-1 refers to this designation as “Regional Commercial Node Development”, but that terminology is not used anywhere in the text of the policies. It would be much clearer to the reader if the policies of Section 7.3.3.4.2 were incorporated into the general RCN policies in Section 7.3.3, instead of being treated as a site-specific policy. As well, it would be clearer if the name of the designation on Schedule W-1 reflected the Official Plan text.

Policy 7.3.3.4.2 prohibits financial offices, professional offices and government offices. It also requires Official Plan Amendments for developments greater than 1,858 square metres (20,000 square feet). It establishes a minimum gross commercial leasable floor area for a non-department store (DSTM) use at 325 square metres (3,500 square feet).

Site specific Policy 7.3.3.4.3 applies to the northeast corner of Norwich Avenue and Juliana Drive, the Smart Centres site. This area is delineated on Schedule W-1 as a ‘Regional Commercial Node’ with cross-hatching. This site-specific policy prohibits a freestanding grocery store or super market; retail outlet for wine, beer and liquor; financial office; professional office; and government office uses. It also sets out a maximum gross leasable floor area of 27,870 square metres (300,000 square feet), with additional restrictions for department stores, at a maximum floor area of 12,077 square metres (130,000 square feet); and for non-department store DSTM uses, at a maximum of 6,505 square metres (70,000 square feet). Also, the minimum gross commercial leasable floor area for non-department store DSTM mimics that of 7.3.3.4.2.

Site-specific policy 7.3.3.4.3 was subsequently amended through OPA 120, which permitted expansion of the existing Wal-mart store to accommodate a food store component. This allowed Wal-mart to expand its food department by 4,200 square metres (45,000 square feet).

Sites specific policy 7.3.3.4.6 (OPA 76 and 102) applies to 510 Norwich Avenue and permits a visitor information centre and sets out the maximum gross floor area for a hotel in addition to the other permitted uses of 7.3.3.4.2.

Site specific policy 7.3.3.4.7 (OPA 84) applies to the northeast corner of Norwich Avenue and Montclair Drive and mimics many of the provisions of 7.3.3.4.2 with additional restrictions on the overall gross floor area at 3,720 square metres (40,000 sq. ft.) and permission of retail outlets for wine, beer and liquor and a small grocery store not exceeding 1,858 square metres (20,000 sq. ft.).

Three additional site specific Official Plan Amendments have recently been approved through OPA 115, 118 and 121.

Site-specific policy 7.3.3.4.8 (OPA 115) applies to the lands situated on the east side of Norwich Avenue between Parkinson Road and Montclair Drive, north of the Smart Centres site. This site specific policy permits a maximum floor area of 7,500 square metres (80,730 square feet). Within this limitation, non-department store (DSTM) uses, which may include a drug store, are permitted up to 2,800 square metres (30,140 square feet); other service and personal care-

oriented uses are permitted up to 929 square metres (10,000 square feet); and a grocery store use is permitted up to 4,180 square metres (45,000 square feet). As well, a bank / financial institution is permitted, but financial offices, professional offices, and government offices are explicitly prohibited.

Site-specific policy 7.3.3.4.8(a) (OPA 121) applies to the same lands as site-specific policy 7.3.3.4.8 (OPA 115) and permits the establishment of a bank on the subject lands, up to a maximum floor area of 511 square metres (5,500 square feet).

Site specific policy 7.3.3.4.9 (OPA 118, as amended through the OMB) applies to the lands on the south side of Juliana Drive adjacent to Highway 401, east of Norwich Avenue, south of the Smart Centres site. It establishes a maximum floor area of 30,200 square metres (325,000 square feet). The policy specifies that the approved commercial development is to be implemented in two phases. Phase 1 shall consist of a maximum of approximately 18,580 square metres (200,000 square feet); Phase 2 shall consist of a maximum of approximately 11,612 square metres (125,000 square feet). Furthermore, the development of Phase 2 shall not be permitted to proceed until January 1, 2011. Proposed for Phase 1 is 15,330 square metres (165,000 square feet) of specialty retail (i.e. Department store-type merchandise), of which up to 13,000 square metres (140,000 square feet) can be contained within a department store. Within Phase 1, the minimum gross leasable commercial floor area for a DSTM is 325 square metres (3,500 square feet), however, not less than 9,290 square metres (100,000 square feet) of DSTM uses shall be less than 696 square metres (7,500 square feet) per DSTM use. Phase 2 would consist of non-department store DSTM uses. Similar to other site-specific policies, financial offices, professional offices, and government offices are prohibited, as well as grocery store or supermarket uses.

The policies for the RCN generally provide an appropriate policy framework, which set out the function of the RCN and restrictions to minimize impact on the downtown/CBD. The restrictions on certain uses and minimum and maximum restrictions on floor area are also appropriate policy restrictions. However, there are some areas of improvement to the function and permitted uses as discussed in the next section. As well, further discussion and critique of study requirements is addressed in Section 5 of this report. The next section also discusses a consistent approach to some of the use limitations.

One area of improvement could be to simplify the relationship between 7.3.3 and 7.3.3.4.2. The details in Section 7.3.3.4.2 are really not site specific provisions but provisions that apply to all of the RCN in Woodstock. It would be much clearer if the policies of Section 7.3.3 and 7.3.3.4.2 for RCN were amalgamated. Some of this overlapping detail seems to emanate from Section 5.4.2, which requires site specific Official Plan policies for development greater than 1,858 square metres (20,000 square feet). The recording of the site specific policies, however, could be clarified and simplified possibly through a tabular recording of maximum floor area and listing of which provisions differ from the policies of Section 5.4 and 7.3.3 / 7.3.3.4.2. This could greatly simplify the policies of 7.3.3.

Design

Current policies regarding design are comprehensive. Policies relating to built-form and design address community integration, street presence, pedestrian movement, on-site transit access, landscaping, bicycle parking areas, screening of storage areas, lighting, the location of loading bays and service areas, access and accessibility.

However, the reality of what has been built does not properly “accommodate pedestrian movement within the site” as required by the policies. Sidewalks are discontinuous, do not connect to buildings or the street sidewalks and they don’t properly minimize vehicular – pedestrian conflict points as required by the policies. **Figure 1** provides an illustration of where sidewalks are discontinuous. More detailed policies are evidently required to ensure proper pedestrian sidewalks are provided through such sites and to provide for an arrangement of buildings in the site that encourages and facilitates walking.

Under landscaping policies, additional policies could also be added to require large parking lots to be broken up by landscaping.

Although the development along Norwich Avenue has resulted in an appropriate built form presence along the street by directing the smaller retail boxes up to the street, very few of these buildings are actually connected to the street through pedestrian walkways and a number of the buildings are separated from the street by drive through lanes.

4.3.2 Policy Opportunities and Challenges

Function and Scale

The policies setting out the intended function of the RCN are appropriate and comprehensive, however, there are no policies discussing the scale of the RCN other than Section 7.3.3.1 which says the RCN is intended to serve a trade area population of approximately 50,000 people. To differentiate between the Neighbourhood Shopping Areas, the policies for the RCN should specify that the function of the RCN is to provide retail facilities that serve the entirety of the residents of the urban area as well as a large portion of the surrounding County and accommodate department stores and / or other large retail stores that serve a broad community or regional market area.

Permitted Uses

Section 7.3.3.4.2 and the other site-specific policies prohibit financial, professional and government offices and, on the Smart Centres site, also prohibit wine, beer and liquor outlets and freestanding grocery stores. It is recommended that the prohibition on financial institutions and offices remain and be added to the general provisions, and not just the site-specific provisions in order to ensure the ongoing viability and vitality of the CBD and Entrepreneurial District as well as protect the planned function of Neighbourhood Shopping Areas. The limitations on wine, beer, liquor and grocery should continue, but as the urban centres mature and reach a sufficient size to support new facilities in addition to those in the CBD, consideration could be given to also permitting additional wine, beer and liquor stores in the RCN or in Neighbourhood Shopping Areas to serve the surrounding neighbourhoods. In addition, further limitations on the permitted uses, which could help strengthen the function of the Central Area, would include a prohibition on entertainment uses within the RCN.

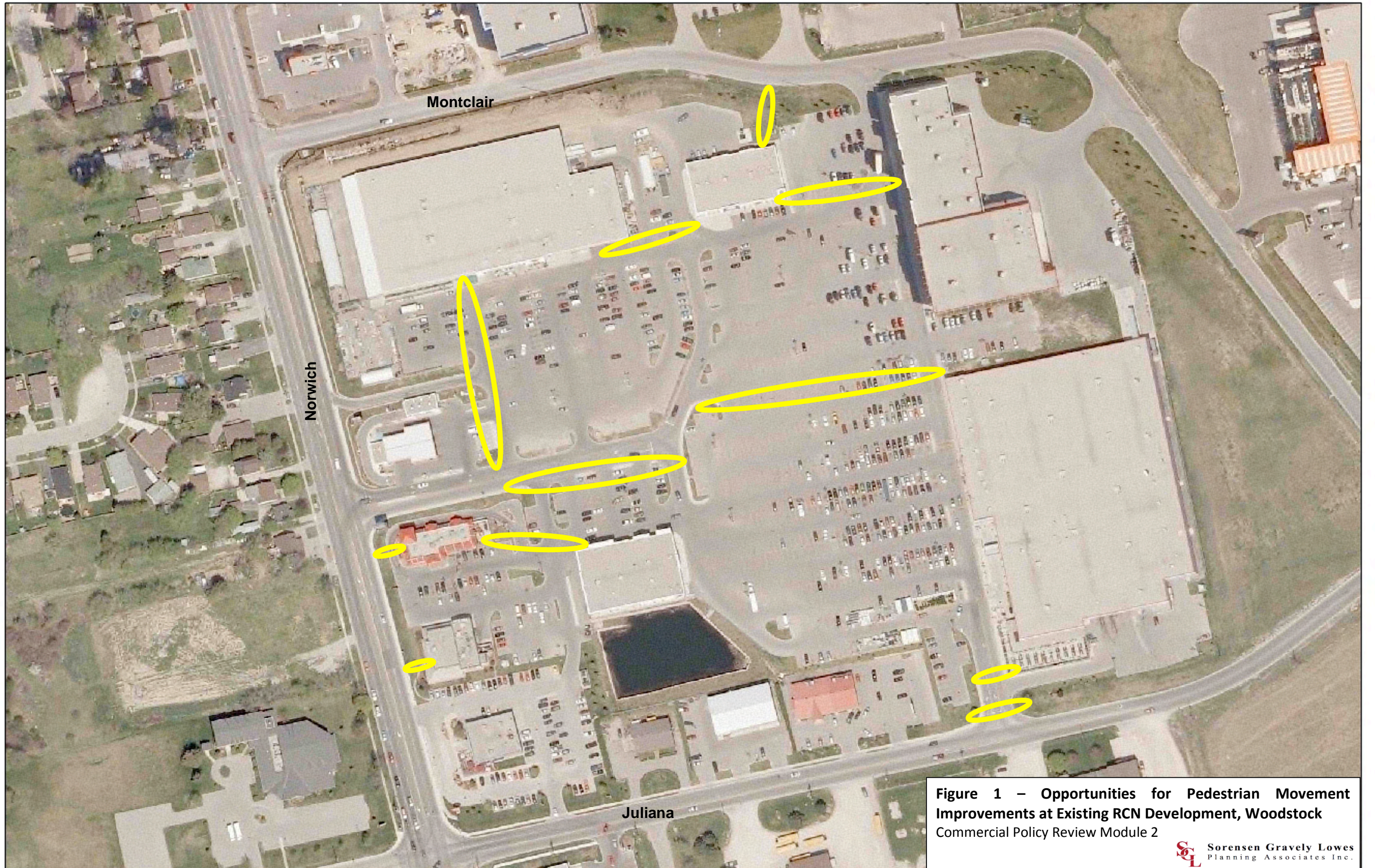


Figure 1 – Opportunities for Pedestrian Movement Improvements at Existing RCN Development, Woodstock
Commercial Policy Review Module 2

Minimum Floor Area

The site-specific policy on minimum floor area for small retail uses has generally been found to be appropriate in other municipalities in Ontario, as it directs the smaller retail uses to the downtown/CBD. However, this should not be seen as the only necessary consideration for protecting the downtown/CBD. The larger stores still compete for the same retail dollar, and many national chains are opening larger box stores in order to have a presence in the big box power centres. As a result, the limitation may not be successful in directing many national chains to the downtown/CBD, but it will direct some and it will direct the local retailers, who tend to be smaller, to the downtown/CBD. It is recommended that the restriction on minimum floor area in the RCN remain and be added to the general policies applicable to all RCN designated lands. However, the minimum size restriction should be reviewed at each future five year review of the Official Plan, to determine if changes are necessary to achieve the desired priority for CBD retailing. As well, the County and the local municipalities should not rely simply on size restrictions and market studies when evaluating the appropriateness of an application, but also consider the vacancy rate in the evaluation as discussed in Section 6 of this report.

Place Making and Design

The large scale of the developments intended in the RCN designation can greatly affect the character and pedestrian environment of the area. As guidance for future new uses, particular attention should be paid to the integration of RCN uses with the surrounding community, and in particular, facilitation of pedestrian porosity through the site and connecting with the surrounding pedestrian network. Currently, policies tend to focus on buffering these uses from surrounding neighbourhoods and lack consideration for pedestrians.

Current site plan design policies are thorough, but they have not led to a connected or comfortable pedestrian network in the existing RCN. Further policy direction should be added regarding the creation of internal patterns of pedestrian walkways and blocks that improve pedestrian circulation and comfort to, from, and within the retail area. Policies should require buildings to be connected to the street and other buildings by continuous sidewalks and where crossing vehicular lanes with patterned pavement. Policies could also be required to break up large parking areas with walkways and landscaping.

As well, the current RCN is located at an entranceway to the City, and the aesthetic impact it can have at this gateway location should be considered. For example, in addition to current landscaping requirements, stronger emphasis is needed to require the pedestrian entrance of smaller stores to face the street and be connected to the street, while encouraging larger stores to locate to the rear of the site and be oriented to the interior of the site.

Impact

The Official Plan provides detailed and appropriate policies, which balance the market need for additional retail space with the protection of the function of the Central Area. Current requirements for Official Plan Amendment, rezonings and concurrent retail market impact studies help to protect the CBD and other shopping areas within the trade area. However, additional policies could be added to not only ensure that the function of the CBD is not

impacted, but also to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of the viability and vitality of the CBDs, as is required by the Provincial Policy Statement, including consideration for relieving the high vacancies in the CBDs. Means to measure and achieve this are discussed in Section 6.

Policy Lay-out

In addition to the proposed amalgamation of the RCN policies of Section 7.3.3 and 7.3.3.4.2, consideration should be given to simplifying the overall policies for “Shopping Areas” in 7.3.3. The Shopping Area policies of 7.3.3 include policies for the RCN designation, the Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation and convenience commercial facilities that are not designated on Schedule W-1. The policies and retail hierarchy would be easier to follow if these separate designations were set out in separate policy sections.

4.3.3 Recommended Policy Revisions

- Amalgamate Sections 7.3.3 and 7.3.3.4.2 into one policy section separate from the policies on Neighbourhood Shopping Areas and Convenience Commercial facilities.
- Consider revising and simplifying the way the site specific policies are recorded, possibly in a tabular form that identifies the maximum floor area and the differences from the parent policies in Sections 5.4 and 7.3.3.
- Clarify that the function of an RCN is to provide retail facilities that serve the entirety of the residents of the urban area as well as a large portion of the surrounding County, and accommodate department stores and / or other retail stores that serve a broad community or regional market area.
- Maintain the prohibition on financial institutions and professional and government offices and include those in the amalgamated general policies in Section 7.
- Add entertainment type uses as a prohibited use.
- The site-specific policy on minimum floor area for small retail uses should be maintained and added to the RCN general provisions.
- Specify that policies on prohibited uses and minimum floor area are not intended to be revised on a site specific bases and will only be consider for review and refinement through a comprehensive five year review of the Official Plan.
- Provide strong policy direction on creating a pedestrian-friendly and accessible site design, through the provision of dedicated pedestrian pathways through a parking lot to connect the retail stores to the public streets/sidewalks and building entrances.
- In new developments, require integration with the surrounding street and sidewalk network, by aligning access points with existing streets to facilitate pedestrian connections to and from the RCN.

- To create a strong street presence, specifically require larger stores to locate in the interior of the commercial block, and direct smaller stores or stores with multiple pedestrian entrances to locate along the street frontage and face the public road. This will be applicable largely to new development.
- Mitigate the visual impact of large parking areas through landscaping and sidewalks that break up the parking areas into smaller parking courts.

4.4 SERVICE COMMERCIAL

4.4.1 Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design

Service Commercial designated areas are found in the Urban Centres and the Serviced Villages. These areas are intended to accommodate commercial uses that would not be appropriate for Central Areas or Village Cores due to site area, access, exposure requirements, or incompatibility with nearby residential areas. Typically, Service Commercial uses generate high traffic volumes, and cater to the drive-by trade.

Service Commercial areas are for uses that cater primarily to the needs of the traveling public and which generate customers from passing traffic. These areas are also intended to accommodate service commercial uses that draw patrons from a wide area. These areas are not intended to accommodate retail activities that are typically characteristic of a Central Area and are not intended to directly compete with the Central Area.

Accordingly, a wide range of auto-oriented uses are permitted, including commercial recreational establishments, automotive service stations, car wash facilities, hotels, car dealerships, building supply outlets, furniture stores and home furnishings, convenience commercial uses, personal and business services, restaurants, other uses which require large areas for on-site storage of goods or vehicles and other types of commercial uses that offer a service to the traveling public, business and industry. In addition, retail food stores, recreation and entertainment uses are permitted.



Bell St., Ingersoll

Minor institutional uses are permitted as an ancillary use in Woodstock, Tillsonburg, and the Rural Settlements, but not in Ingersoll.

The Official Plan recognizes that many of the Service Commercial areas are located within proximity to residential areas, and as such, indicates that the range of uses may be restricted to avoid nuisance effects and to minimize traffic disruption, as well as requiring close attention to

site planning. Official Plan policies also prevent the creation of strip commercial areas. For example, commercial establishments are encouraged to locate in nodes or clusters of uses, comprised of integrated forms of development with shared access points and parking facilities.

4.4.2 Differences between Urban Centres, and Serviced Villages

Urban Centres

The Service Commercial designation in both Tillsonburg and Ingersoll permits a broader range of uses catering to the surrounding residents. In Tillsonburg, the Service Commercial designation may also permit uses that serve the day-to-day needs of adjacent residential neighbourhoods.

In Ingersoll, “community shopping areas” are permitted within the Service Commercial designation. These areas are intended to offer a range of goods and services, which cater to the convenience shopping and service needs of community residents and the traveling public. These uses are directed to locate immediately adjacent to Highway 401, and contain between 930 square metres (10,000 square feet) and 4,656 square metres (50,000 square feet) of floor area. There are no other policies or definitions that explain the intended range of uses for “community shopping areas”.

The Towns of Tillsonburg and Ingersoll provide scale-related policies and study requirements, but Woodstock and the Rural Settlements do not. These policies set out a specific size range for uses within the Service Commercial designation of between 325 and 4,645 square metres (3,500 and 50,000 square feet) in floor area; developments less than 325 square metres (3,500 square feet) of floor area are encouraged to locate in the Central Area and are discouraged in the Service Commercial designation. As well, severances are discouraged in Tillsonburg until the cumulative impacts on the Central Area can be reviewed.

The policies also require retail impact studies for development proposals for any development between 1,860 and 4,645 square metres (20,000 and 50,000 square feet) in Tillsonburg in order to assess the impact on the planned function of the Central Area. These impact studies are also to evaluate the potential to locate in the Central Area as a first priority. For Ingersoll, these requirements apply to any developments above 4,645 square metres (50,000 square feet).

As well, the Tillsonburg policies call for a major review of the commercial policies of the Tillsonburg trade area and require an Official Plan Amendment for any application greater than 4,645 square metres (50,000 square feet) and list specific studies required for Official Plan Amendments. Ingersoll also requires an Official Plan Amendment for any development greater than 4,645 square metres (50,000 square feet).

Serviced Villages

Generally, the Service Commercial policies for Serviced Villages do not differ much from those for the Urban Centres except that retail food



stores are not a permitted use while personal services are a permitted use. In addition, no scale limitations are placed on service commercial uses in the Serviced Villages. However, specific direction is given to encourage infill and consolidation of existing designated areas, prior to expansion or establishment of new areas.

The Village Core policies also direct most commercial activities to locate in the Village Core unless it can be justified that a location in the Village Core is not feasible. As the intent of the designation is to accommodate uses catering to the traveling public and those that require large sites, it may also be appropriate to include the Urban Centre policy on prohibiting individual retail uses smaller than 325 square metres (3,500 square feet), to direct those uses to the Village Cores.

4.4.3 Policy Opportunities and Challenges

Function and Related Permitted Uses

The intent of Service Commercial designated areas is largely to accommodate commercial uses that would not be suitable in the Central Area and that cater primarily to drive by traffic. This is a typical land use category used by many municipalities to differentiate those uses that are rarely found within downtowns and neighbourhoods, and are normally located on individual sites in arterial road locations. These designations are given a variety of names such as arterial commercial, highway commercial, corridor commercial and service commercial but they are all managing a similar range of uses and a similar function.

The Oxford County Official Plan provides, in limited situations, a broader range of uses. This includes retail food stores. Additionally, in Tillsonburg's case, it includes uses that serve the day-to-day needs of adjacent residential neighbourhoods; and in Ingersoll's case, it includes "community shopping areas". This range of uses is serving a different function – that of a neighbourhood commercial centre, or as described in the Oxford County Official Plan, a "Neighbourhood Shopping Area". These centres are generally planned in locations that can serve one or more residential neighbourhoods and are equally accessible for pedestrians and auto users.

Due to this differing function, and due to the large areas of vacant designated Service Commercial areas, which may not be well suited for such uses, it would be desirable to remove the uses noted above from the Service Commercial policies and instead create a separate Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation. This recommendation, including identification of appropriate locations and range of permitted uses for such designations, is discussed further in Section 4.5.

In Ingersoll, if the intent of the "community shopping area" terminology is to provide a broader range of retail uses adjacent to Highway 401, then a specific designation that sets out the permitted uses and the appropriate land use controls should be considered in the Official Plan. This would give the municipality a much stronger hand in controlling the nature, form and extent of development in that area.

Other Permitted Uses

Offices and financial institutions are not listed as a permitted use in the Service Commercial designation but are permitted in the implementing zoning by-law. In line with the recommendations in the RCN to limit such uses and direct them to the Central Areas and to Neighbourhood Shopping Areas (financial institutions in Woodstock only), it is recommended that the zoning by-law provisions be brought in line with the Official Plan.

Similarly, the discussion on the RCN designation recommended directing entertainment uses to the Central Areas in line with their intended function. This rationale equally applies to Service Commercial designations and as such entertainment uses should be restricted from this designation while permitting recreational and fitness uses.

Permitted Uses in Serviced Villages

The range of permitted uses in Serviced Villages is generally appropriate and reflects the service commercial function as discussed above with some exceptions.

The above discussion on food stores and neighbourhood serving uses in the Service Commercial designation in Urban Centres is equally applicable to the Serviced Villages. Such stores should be directed to the Village Cores and not be a permitted use in the Service Commercial designation. In most Villages, such stores will be relatively small, relatively easy to accommodate in the Village Cores, and would be an important entity to ensure the vitality and viability of the Village Cores.



Personal services are normally small local businesses that do not cater to the traveling public or require large sites. These uses should more appropriately be directed to the Village Cores.

In addition, due to the relatively small size of the Serviced Villages, convenience commercial uses should also be directed to the Village Cores and not permitted in the Service Commercial areas except as an accessory use to a gas station.

Lastly the permitted use, “automated teller machines or kiosks” should be removed, as ATMs in most cases are an accessory use, and are too specific a use to be included in an Official Plan.

Size Limitations and Study Requirements

The policies in Tillsonburg and Ingersoll discourage uses less than 325 square metres (3,500 square feet) of floor area. This is an appropriate scale related policy, but it should be clarified to apply only to retail stores and to simply indicate that retail stores below this floor area threshold are to be directed to the Central Area. This policy should also be added to the Woodstock Service Commercial policy section.

The policies for Serviced Villages also do not contain market study requirements or the minimum floor area requirement. These same requirements and thresholds should also be considered for the Serviced Villages.

Another challenge is the differing market study requirements among the urban areas, with Woodstock not requiring a market study, Tillsonburg requiring a market study for any development over 1,860 square metres (20,000 square feet), and Ingersoll requiring a market study for any development over 4,645 square metres (50,000 square feet). A consistent threshold should be considered. As well, due to the large areas of vacant designated service commercial lands, it is particularly important to require market studies for new retail uses. These market study thresholds need to be compared to the RCN designation where a market study is required for a new space greater than 1,860 square metres (20,000 square feet). As such, it is recommended that a consistent threshold of 1,860 square metres (20,000 square feet) be used for market studies.

Despite these requirements, some service commercial uses are simply not appropriate in the Central Areas and, therefore, should not be required to undertake a market study. These uses include auto service, parts and sales, furniture stores, and building supply and home improvement centres.

Severances and Piece-mealing

Tillsonburg has a policy to discourage severances until the cumulative impacts of the development can be assessed (in 8.3.3.1). This arose due to a concern that some landowners may attempt to sever their properties to get around the requirement for market studies for developments over 1,858 square metres (20,000 square feet). In comparison, Ingersoll has a policy (in 9.3.3.1) that requires the cumulative retail and service commercial impacts on multiple sites to be considered. This is a preferred approach to that of Tillsonburg. However, Ingersoll's policy uses 4,645 square metres (50,000 square feet) as the trigger. This trigger should be 1,858 square metres (20,000 square feet) in line with the market study requirement. Ingersoll's policy also states that the Town may review the cumulative impact. This should be changed to a "shall" policy and the onus should be on the proponent not the municipality.

This proposed policy framework should also be addressed as part of the broader impact assessment policy discussed in Section 6 of this report.

Land Supply and Expansions and New Service Commercial Areas

The policies in Sections 7.3.4.2, 8.3.3.3 and 9.3.3.3 contain policy guidance on expansion and designation of service commercial areas. The substantial supply of designated service commercial lands, as discussed and quantified in Section 5 of this report, raises other challenges. First any applications for additional service commercial designations will only exacerbate the over supply, and second local municipalities currently have little ability to direct which service commercial lands should be developed and are therefore left in a position of planning from a reactive position rather than a proactive position of identifying appropriate locations in advance of applications. In response, it is recommended that the policies that direct new development to occur through infilling and consolidation prior to establishment or expansion into new areas

should be strengthened to prohibit new service commercial areas unless tests of land supply are met.

As such, it is recommended that the reference to new development occurring through “infilling and consolidation of existing designated areas” prior to expanding or establishing new areas, should be changed to “infilling and development on vacant or underutilized Service Commercial designated lands” prior to expanding or establishing new areas. As well, the policies should be revised to explicitly prohibit expansions until a study has documented the supply of vacant or underutilized designated service commercial lands and demonstrated that there are no opportunities through development on vacant or underutilized service commercial lands.

In addition, the municipalities should consider prioritizing the existing vacant service commercial designated areas and directing new growth to the priority areas.

Design

Service Commercial areas are typically located in high traffic areas with high visibility and located along major arterial roads. Although Service Commercial areas cater more to vehicular traffic, than to pedestrian traffic, the highly visible location of these areas is a basis for stronger façade and design direction. Design policies that encourage landscaping, screen parking areas through a vegetation strip, orientate loading bays so that they are not visible from the street or adjacent residential areas, and improve street presence should be introduced for both the Urban Centres and the Serviced Villages.

4.4.4 Recommended Policy Revisions

- Neighbourhood commercial type uses should be focused in a separate Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation. Grocery stores, personal services and other uses catering to the day-to-day needs of adjacent residential neighbourhoods should be removed from the list of permitted uses in the Service Commercial Area designation.
- Specify that offices, financial institutions and entertainment are not permitted uses.
- In the service commercial policies of the Serviced Villages remove retail food stores, personal services, ATMs and convenience commercial from the list of permitted uses. Convenience commercial could remain permitted as an accessory use to a gas station.
- Refine the policies to direct retail stores less than 325 square metres (3,500 square feet) to the Central Areas and add this policy to the Woodstock policy section.
- Introduce a consistent threshold of 1,860 square metres (20,000 square feet) for requiring market studies in the three Urban Centres.
- Market study requirements and minimum floor area requirements should also be added to the policies of the Serviced Villages, similar to that recommended for the Urban Centres.
- Remove the minimum floor area and market study requirements for automobile sales, service and parts, industrial equipment sales and service, farm equipment sales and service,

agricultural supplies, fast food restaurants, contractor suppliers, furniture stores, and building supply and home improvement centres.

- Revise the Tillsonburg policy on piecemeal severances to be similar to the Ingersoll policy on cumulative impact of multiple sites. In addition, the study should be required of the proponent not the municipality and the trigger for the study should be lowered to 1,858 square metres (20,000 square feet).
- Introduce design policies related to façade, landscaping, and relation to the street in the policies under both the Urban Centres and Serviced Villages.
- Require applications for new or expanded Service Commercial designations to demonstrate that there are no opportunities through development on existing vacant or underutilized Service Commercial designated sites, prior to expansion or establishment of new areas in Urban Centres and Serviced Villages.
- Prioritize vacant Service Commercial Areas to identify which areas in each municipality should be developed first, with phasing policies applied to the other areas and sites.

4.5 NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPPING AREA

4.5.1 *Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design*

The Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation is exclusively used in the City of Woodstock. This designation is found in predominantly residential areas on or near a major road for convenient accessibility. Neighbourhood Shopping Areas are intended to provide for the daily or weekly convenience shopping and service needs of nearby residents. Some of the permitted uses are gas bars, financial institutions, grocery stores, personal services, medical and dental clinics and offices, drug stores, small scale service oriented offices and hardware stores.

The maximum size of a Neighbourhood Shopping Area is 4,645 square metres (50,000 square feet) of floor area.

New Neighbourhood Shopping Area developments are subject to the same site plan control measures as those applied to the RCN designation in Woodstock.

4.5.2 *Policy Opportunities and Challenges*

This is an appropriate designation and is established to serve a defined retail function. Additional retail areas designated for this purpose would be appropriate in growing residential areas and where they do not impact the function of the Central Areas.

Function

As discussed under the Service Commercial designation, consideration should be given to adding this designation to the commercial hierarchy in both Tillsonburg and Ingersoll in order to provide for grocery stores and other neighbourhood serving uses. In smaller centres, such as the Serviced Villages, downtowns provide this function as they are within close walking and driving

distance of the majority of residents. As urban areas get larger, there is typically a need for additional neighbourhood serving uses located in neighbourhoods distant from the downtown, to augment rather than replace facilities located within the downtown. All three of the Urban Centres are large enough to support at least one or two Neighbourhood Shopping Areas, and in fact, they currently do. In Ingersoll and Tillsonburg, these areas are currently located in Service Commercial designations.

Uses

The range of permitted uses contained within the Woodstock policies for Neighbourhood Shopping Areas are appropriate and should be applied County wide. However, in Ingersoll and Tillsonburg banks / financial services, medical and dental clinics and beer, liquor and wine stores play an important function in attracting patrons to the Central Area. In these two Urban Centres, these uses should be restricted to the Central Area and not permitted in the Neighbourhood Shopping Area designations.

Stakeholder submissions received on the draft report requested that the proposed restrictions not be enacted in Ingersoll and Tillsonburg. As is indicated above and in Section 4.1.3 of this report, in smaller urban areas such as Ingersoll and Tillsonburg, these uses play an important function by drawing patrons to the downtown. As the urban centres mature, consideration could be given, at each future 5 year review of the Official Plan, as to whether the market is sufficient in size to permit these uses in Neighbourhood Shopping Areas, in addition to the CBD.

Location

Consideration should be given to identifying appropriate locations for such designations including those areas that currently meet the function of this designation. Neighbourhood Shopping Areas should be centrally located within a neighbourhood or conveniently situated between a number of neighbourhoods. These centres should be located relatively distant from other Neighbourhood Shopping Areas and from downtowns/CBDs, as these locations also provide a neighbourhood serving function. Although, there is no standard for an appropriate distance separation, they should also be situated to be within walking distance of a substantial portion of the surrounding neighbourhood(s), but also conveniently accessible by vehicle. This criterion would suggest a catchment area of approximately 800 to 1,000 metres surrounding the Neighbourhood Shopping Area. As well, they should be situated in a highly accessible location to the surrounding neighbourhood(s) along a major road and preferably at the intersection of two major roads one of which leads directly into the residential neighbourhood. The Neighbourhood Shopping Areas should be designed and configured to create a comfortable pedestrian environment along the street and promote walkability from the surrounding residential areas while mitigating the impact of parking lots and lighting on surrounding residential homes.

Appropriate locations could include a portion of the Dundas / Springbank Cluster in Woodstock, the northern portion of the Broadway Cluster north of North Street and the southern portion of the Tillson Avenue Cluster in Tillsonburg; and the Hurley's Independent Grocer grocery store in Ingersoll, all of which are currently designated Service Commercial and contain existing neighbourhood serving uses. These areas meet the criteria discussed above. There may also be a need for additional Neighbourhood Shopping Areas to meet the needs of growing residential

areas. The matter of where and how many new Neighbourhood Shopping Areas should be designated is discussed in Section 5 of this report.

Scale

The maximum size requirement for a Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation in Woodstock is relatively small at 4,645 square metres (50,000 square feet) of floor area. With the increasing size of grocery stores and pharmacies, the maximum size should be increased, possibly to 7,500 square metres (80,730 square feet) to accommodate the trend to larger grocery stores. Nonetheless, a commercial location needs assessment (as set out in Section 6.2), in combination with a market study, should be required prior to designating new Neighbourhood Shopping Areas or expanding existing centres. Such studies shall identify the appropriate maximum floor area, which may well be less than the maximum size indicated above, as well as the appropriate location and distribution of the Neighbourhood Shopping Areas to promote walkability and ensure all parts of the urban centres are appropriately served.



Woodstock – Sobey's Plaza

Although the floor area maximum is meant to be a cap, it should not be treated as the defining element of a Neighbourhood Shopping Area, or as a cap never to be exceeded. Neighbourhood Shopping Areas larger than this size can still exist and function as a Neighbourhood Shopping Area, due to a large grocery store or due to a larger concentration of neighbourhood serving uses. It is only when a centre contains stores having a regional draw, such as a department store, that the centre should be treated as a Regional Commercial Node (RCN). The floor area cap, however, can serve as an appropriate control to ensure that centres larger than the cap are evaluated and considered in the context of impact on the Central Areas, impact on other Neighbourhood Shopping Areas and the appropriate distribution of such centres within the Urban Centre.

Terminology

The Official Plan refers to this designation in two different ways. Section 7.3.3.1, and other parts of the Official Plan text in Section 7, refer to this designation as Neighbourhood Shopping Area. However, Schedule W-1 refers to this designation as Neighbourhood Shopping Centre. It's suggested that Schedule W-1 be changed to be in-line with the Official Plan policy.

4.5.3 Recommended Policy Revisions

- Consider redesignating Service Commercial areas that are currently providing a neighbourhood shopping function, and which are located in close proximity to existing and anticipated future residential areas to the Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation. These designations should be largely limited to the existing developed properties.

- Clarify that the Neighbourhood Shopping Area designations in Tillsonburg and Ingersoll do not permit banks / financial services, medical and dental clinics and beer, liquor and wine stores and these uses shall be directed to the Central Area.
- Consider adding new Neighbourhood Shopping Areas to growing residential areas, based on the analysis in Section 5 of this report.
- Consider increasing the maximum size of Neighbourhood Shopping Areas in all three urban centres to 7,500 square metres (80,730 square feet), but require a commercial location needs assessment and market study to establish an appropriate maximum size up to this limit.
- Clarify in the text and maps that the appropriate terminology of the designation is Neighbourhood Shopping Area.

4.6 CONVENIENCE COMMERCIAL & OTHER USES IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

4.6.1 Intent and Function, and Permitted Uses

Convenience Commercial

Convenience Commercial areas are found in Woodstock, Ingersoll, and Tillsonburg. Convenience Commercial uses are not delineated on the land use schedules, but are permitted in the Residential Area designation in the three Large Urban Centres, subject to a zoning by-law amendment and meeting specific locational criteria.

The intent of Convenience Commercial areas is to provide services and amenities complementary to residential areas. In the Woodstock policies, Section 7.3.3.1 introduces Convenience Commercial facilities and directs that they be established according to the Neighbourhood Serving Uses in the Residential Areas policy section (Section 7.2.3.3).

Similarly the Tillsonburg policies in Section 8.3.4 direct the reader to the neighbourhood serving uses policies in Residential Areas (Sections 8.2.3.3). Ingersoll does not specifically address Convenience Commercial areas within the commercial policy sections, but does contain policies governing such uses in Section 9.2.3.3, which include “community support services...providing everyday goods and services”

Within the residential policies, Sections 7.2.3.4, 8.2.3.3 and 9.2.3.3 include convenience shopping facilities as one of the “neighbourhood serving uses” permitted in Residential Areas. However, it should be noted that only Woodstock and Tillsonburg specifically mention convenience shopping facilities. Ingersoll policies identify “community support services which primarily serve a local residential neighbourhood by providing everyday goods and services”. This could be interpreted to be convenience shopping facilities.

Locational criteria

The residential policies also provide appropriate guidance on criteria for evaluating neighbourhood serving uses including convenience shopping facilities and appropriate locational considerations evaluating the acceptability for such uses.

Other Non-Residential Uses

The policies for other Non-Residential uses in Residential Areas permit small-scale offices and health care facilities in Woodstock and health care offices and clinics in Tillsonburg. No such policies apply to Ingersoll.

4.6.2 Differences between Urban Centres***Size Limitations***

Although the intent and permitted uses are the same between the three Urban Centres, the maximum allowable size varies. In Woodstock, Convenience Commercial facilities shall be no more than 930 square metres (10,000 square feet) gross leasable commercial floor area. In Tillsonburg, the maximum size is 372 square metres (4,000 square feet). No size limit is specified for Ingersoll.

Terminology

Woodstock policies refer to ‘convenience shopping facilities’ in both its commercial and residential policy sections. Tillsonburg refers to ‘neighbourhood commercial uses’ in its commercial policy Section (8.3.4) but as ‘convenience shopping facilities’ in the corresponding residential policy Section (8.2.3.3). Ingersoll does not use either of these terms but permits “community support services which primarily serve a local residential neighbourhood by providing everyday goods and services”. A standard terminology should be used throughout the policies such as “convenience commercial uses” or “convenience commercial goods and services” which clarify that it could include both goods, i.e., a convenience store, or services, i.e. a laundromat.

4.6.3 Opportunities and Challenges***Function and Designation***

The convenience commercial uses are permitted in the Residential Area designations subject to rezoning. This is an appropriate policy framework that allows for small convenience commercial use to be located within walking distance to residents. The policies could specify that these types of uses will also be identified through secondary planning exercises.

Permitted Uses

Small-scale offices, clinics and health care offices should be directed to the CBD and Entrepreneurial Districts to help maintain the vitality and viability of the downtowns. Home occupation policies, however, should continue to permit offices as home occupations within the Residential Area.

Size Limitations

The maximum allowed gross floor area should be consistent amongst the Urban Centres with an appropriate size limitation being 930 square metres (10,000 square feet). This larger size limit permits small convenience plazas as well as individual stores. If there is concern regarding large individual units being unintentionally allowed under this maximum size, the County could institute a maximum individual store size as well as an overall size limitation. A maximum individual store size in the 300 square metre (3,230 square feet) range would be appropriate as that is generally the maximum size of convenience stores.

Design

The policies for convenience commercial facilities include no policies on urban design. Such policies should direct buildings up to the street with parking at the side or rear of the property. The primary pedestrian entrance should also face the street along with substantial fenestration to present a strong street presence.

4.6.4 Recommended Policy Revisions

- The policies should be revised to clarify that the convenience commercial facilities are identified through zoning amendments and through secondary planning exercises where applicable.
- Offices, clinics and health care offices should be removed as permitted uses and directed to the CBD and Entrepreneurial District, with clinics and health care offices also permitted in the Neighbourhood Shopping Areas in Woodstock.
- 930 square metres (10,000 square feet) is an appropriate maximum floor area limit, and should be consistent among the three Urban Centres. The policies should also indicate that the intent is for larger stores and centres to be directed to Central Areas and Neighbourhood Shopping Areas.
- Design policies should be added to the relevant residential policy section addressing convenience commercial uses.
- A standard terminology of convenience commercial uses or convenience commercial goods and services should be used throughout.

4.7 VILLAGE CORE

4.7.1 Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design

Village Cores are located in the Serviced Villages of Drumbo, Embro, Innerkip, Norwich, Plattsville, Mount Elgin, Tavistock, and Thamesford. The Village Core represents a relatively compact area of predominantly commercial uses, which have historically functioned as a downtown shopping district. Similar to the role of the CBD in the Urban Centres, the role of Village Core areas is to function as the central business and cultural and entertainment area serving both the village residents, and residents of the surrounding rural area. As such, a full range of uses is permitted, including retail, office, administrative, cultural, entertainment,

recreational, institutional, and cottage industry uses. The current policy framework is appropriate.

Site plan design direction is provided in the Official Plan relating to building orientation, location of parking areas and driveways, signage, and lighting.

4.7.2 Opportunities and Challenges

Permitted Uses

The Official Plan currently permits residential uses in the Village Core. It also permits an Area Council to restrict residential uses from the front portion of a building at street level in an area characterized by a) street-related pedestrian traffic and b) an established cluster of businesses or institutions.

Because of the small scale of a number of the Serviced Villages, permitting residential uses in the Village Core is appropriate as an interim measure when the market cannot support full occupation of all buildings for commercial uses. The policy allowing for more restrictive limitations by Area Council provides an appropriate balance.

The overall permitted uses are quite broad, but appear to be silent on service commercial uses such as personal services, entertainment, and restaurants. These uses should be added to the permitted uses.

Design

Current Official Plan policy provides site plan design direction. However, since the Village Core is to function as the commercial hub and cultural and entertainment centre, there is opportunity for more place-making design policies. New policies could be introduced related to streetscape design, orientation of buildings, orientation of lighting to reduce impact on residential areas, and enhancement of the pedestrian realm, not unlike those proposed to be applied to the Central Areas of the Urban Centres.



Land Supply

Some of the Village Cores have an extensive area designated for commercial use, but only a small portion is occupied by such uses. This situation exists in Plattsville, Embro and Innerkip. In such cases, the remainder of the Village Cores, outside of the focal commercial areas, are being used largely for residential purposes. There is a need and opportunity to provide policy direction to maintain Village Cores as compact areas. New retail uses should be encouraged to cluster in the vicinity of other commercial uses to create a focal point and to maintain compact and walkable areas. Containing the Village Core in a more compact form will encourage pedestrian activity. The remaining areas of the Village Cores could permit increased residential intensification. Alternatively, the area municipalities could choose to contract the extent of the

Village Cores, particularly where it is unlikely that commercial uses can be attracted, and redesignate such portions for residential use.

Expansion Policies

The policies for expansion of Village Cores currently contained in the Official Plan should be revised to address the land supply issue. In particular, an additional policy should be added to encourage infill and consolidation within the Village Cores and to require any expansions to consider the supply of lands designated for Village Core use, but not currently used for commercial purposes.

As well, the policies at this point do not discuss need or impact. Similar to that for other commercial areas, a market study should be required for any official plan amendment that is proposing uses greater than 1,858 square metres (20,000 square feet). As well, any official plan amendment for commercial uses should be required to submit a commercial location needs assessment which addresses the matter of vitality and viability of the Village Cores, as discussed in the CBD section of this report.



Through Traffic

Some of the Serviced Villages experience considerable traffic through the Village Cores, both automobile and truck traffic. Much of this traffic is through traffic. Traffic in itself is not necessarily detrimental to a downtown or commercial core unless access is becoming difficult. The problem for downtowns is normally the speed of the traffic. Permitting on-street parking, reducing lane widths, providing sidewalk ‘bump-outs’ at intersections and bringing buildings close to the property line are all tools that can be used to slow down traffic through a downtown. The most detrimental actions to a downtown are initiatives to move traffic faster.

4.7.3 Recommended Policy Revisions

- Expand the range of permitted uses to include service commercial uses such as personal services, entertainment, and restaurants.
- Introduce streetscape and design policies, similar to those proposed for the CBD designation of the Urban Areas.
- Incorporate policies to encourage and direct new commercial uses to be clustered in the vicinity of other existing commercial uses.
- Introduce policies to encourage infill and consolidation within the Village Cores, and to consider, prior to expanding a Village Core, existing designated Village Core lands that are not being used for commercial purposes.

- Any applications proposing an official plan amendment for retail space in excess of 1,858 square metres (20,000 square feet) should be required to submit a market impact study and any official plan amendment for commercial uses should be required to submit a commercial locational needs assessment which addresses the viability and vitality of Village Cores, as discussed under the CBD section of this report.
- Introduce streetscape polices to slow down and mitigate through traffic.

4.8 VILLAGES AND RURAL CLUSTERS

4.8.1 Intent and Function, Permitted Uses, and Design

Commercial uses within Villages and Rural Clusters are intended to serve the settlement area and the surrounding agricultural area, or the traveling public. They are intended to be small scale, and suitable on private services. However, the use of the term retail is quite broad. It could be clarified by specifying, “to meet the convenience needs of the settlement area and surrounding agricultural area” or by specifying convenience commercial or convenience retail as the permitted use.

There is little design guidance provided, but site plan design guidance is provided to mitigate adverse impact on surrounding residential areas. Site plan criteria related to the location of access points, lighting, buffering, the retention of vegetation, and drainage are provided. These criteria appear appropriate, but additional policies should be added to encourage buildings to be oriented to the street and for landscaped buffering adjacent to parking areas.

4.8.2 Recommended Policy Revisions

- Specify that retail is intended to be convenience commercial/retail or is intended to meet the convenience needs of the settlement area and surrounding agricultural area.
- Additional design policies should be added to encourage buildings to be oriented to the street line and landscaped strips provided adjacent to parking areas.

4.9 INDUSTRIAL DESIGNATIONS

4.9.1 Business Parks

The policies for Business Parks in Woodstock permit ancillary retail sales not exceeding 50% of the gross leasable area of a permitted use. This ancillary permission is quite high and is normally in the range of 10 to 20 percent.

In addition, the designation permits as ancillary uses restaurants, medical or dental office and clinics, financial institutions and commercial recreational facilities. This report recommends that financial institutions and medical offices/clinics be directed to the Central Area or in Woodstock to the Neighbourhood Shopping Areas as well as the Central Area. As such, these uses should be removed from the Business Park designation. As well, considering the significant designated vacant lands in the Service Commercial designation and the vacancies in the Central Area, restaurants should also be removed from the Business Park designation.

Some stakeholders raised concern for existing restaurants in the Business Park and Industrial designations. These existing uses could either become legal non-conforming uses, be recognized through site specific zoning or, if a cluster is apparent, redesignated to a Service Commercial designation.

4.9.2 Industrial Areas

The Traditional Industrial Area designation in Woodstock and the Industrial Area designation in Tillsonburg and Ingersoll also permit restaurants as an ancillary use. For the same rationale as documented for Business Parks, restaurants should be removed as an ancillary use in these designations.

4.9.3 Rural Settlements

The policies for Rural Settlements permit service commercial uses in Industrial Designations. Service commercial uses should be directed to the service commercial designations of the Serviced Villages in order to cluster such uses, provide certainty to the landowners and to meet the employment conversion policies of the Planning Act and Provincial Policy Statement.

4.9.4 Recommended Policy Revisions

- Reduce the ancillary retail sales cap to a maximum of 10 percent of the gross leasable area of the permitted use rather than 50%.
- Remove restaurants, financial institutions and medical and dental office/ clinics from the Business Park designation in Woodstock.
- Remove restaurants from the Traditional Industrial Area designation and the Industrial Area designations.
- Remove the policies permitting service commercial uses in the Industrial designations in the Rural Settlements.

4.10 GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE OFFICIAL PLAN

As a general comment regarding the Official Plan, there is opportunity to improve the layout of the commercial policies. Grouping all policies related to each designation together could set out the designations more succinctly. In particular, the policies for the Shopping Areas in Woodstock could be divided up so that there are separate policy sections for Regional Commercial Nodes, Neighbourhood Shopping Areas and Convenience Commercial areas.

As well, the policies that apply to more than one designation, such as those pertaining to retail impact and planning justification, can be grouped into a general policies section within each urban centre chapter.

A final minor point, the metric numbers contained in the Official Plan have been created through a straight conversion of the imperial numbers. As such, they are not rounded off and can give a sense of precision that is not intended. Rounding the numbers up or down would not affect the intent of the policies.

5.0 RETAIL SPACE DISTRIBUTION

5.1 QUANTUM OF SUPPLY

Methodology

Module 1 of this study forecasted the amount of additional retail and service space likely warranted from 2008 through 2031 based on the population forecast, income levels and the inflow and outflow of retail dollars in the County. The study then determined how the warranted additional retail and service space should be distributed amongst the three Urban Centres and the Rural Settlements. It was found that 50% should be distributed to Woodstock, 25% to Tillsonburg, 15% to Ingersoll, and 10% to the Rural Settlements.

The space distribution was based on the 2031 County population of 150,000 as set out in the Scenario A analysis.

This distribution was arrived at by considering the sources of the residential retail sales potentials accruing in each Urban Centre and the Rural Settlements in each retail category plus the additional services space projected in each municipality. The sources of the residual retail sales potentials include:

- Those arising locally in each area as a result of population growth and real increases in per capita expenditures;
- A portion of the local residuals generated in the Rural Settlement calculations is allocated to the three Urban Centres individually recognizing that residents in the Rural Settlements will continue to look to the Urban Centres to meet the major portion of their retail needs; and
- A share of the inflow sales to the County is allocated to each Urban Centre and the Rural Settlements.

Some stakeholders have questioned the relatively low assignment of 15% of the additional retail/service space identified for the County to Ingersoll compared to 50% to Woodstock and 25% to Tillsonburg. Woodstock is clearly the dominant central place in the County, with more population than Ingersoll and Tillsonburg combined. Moreover the population growth from 2008 to 2031 projected for Woodstock is 45% greater than the combined growth projected for Ingersoll and Tillsonburg.

Ingersoll is currently the smallest of the three Large Urban Centres. Furthermore, the growth projected for Ingersoll is the lowest of the three Large Urban Centres. Of more significance however is Ingersoll's geographic context; it is only 15 kilometres from Woodstock and 20 kilometres from London, and as such operates under the direct influence of these larger centres. This circumstance will not change over the forecast period. By contrast, Tillsonburg is further and sufficiently removed from Woodstock such that it already has captured the attention of three of the Non Food large format retail chains found in Woodstock (The Wal-Mart in Norfolk Mall

is essentially an integral part of the Tillsonburg retail structure, and Zellers and Canadian Tire in the Downtown).

For all the above reasons, we believe that the relative distributions of additional County retail/service space demand we have set out above and in **Table 1** for Woodstock, Ingersoll and Tillsonburg reflect the realities of the market place.

Limitations of the Residual Analysis

The forecasts in Table 1 estimate the retail space that will be needed by 2031 based on population and income growth over the next 22 years, and do not mean that the entirety of these retail spaces are needed now. Forecasts are also subject to change and refinement as economic and socio-demographic factors change and generally have greater potential for variation in the medium and long term. Indeed, an important objective of the commercial policy review exercise is to determine whether there is any pressing and immediate need within the next 5 years to designate additional lands for retail/service purposes. The forecasts beyond the next 5 years, to the horizon year 2031, serve simply to provide an initial glimpse of the medium and longer term future additional retail/service space needs. These medium and longer term forecasts are not cast in stone and will require periodic updating to reflect changing underlying market conditions.

It is also important to note that this is a residual analysis identifying what could be accommodated in 2031 with no sales transfers from existing stores based on 2008 sales. It is recognized that additional space could be accommodated beyond that identified in the residual analysis by transferring sales from existing stores to new stores. However, this level of analysis cannot be done at an Official Plan review scale. It can only be done on an application basis when the size, location and tenant mix that reflect market realities are known. Additional space based on sales transfers should only be justified at the time of application based on an acceptable impact analysis. The key consideration in evaluating the affect of sales transfer is whether the planned function of the various commercial areas in the market will be impacted and, for the Central Areas, whether the viability and the vitality in these areas can be maintained and enhanced. After evaluating these matters, it may be that, because of expected impacts, an application that incorporates sales transfers may need to be modified as to its size, timing, tenant mix, or a combination thereof. It should be noted, however, that, depending on the sales performance of existing stores, site specific market analyses may warrant substantially more space than is currently forecasted by this study.

Detailed Distribution and Space Needs

The forecast additional warranted space was then converted to a land needs figure for each retail service category. The land needs estimate can then be used to determine if sufficient lands are currently designated to accommodate the forecast warranted space needs of the County.

Of the additional lands required to accommodate the warranted retail space, the greatest amounts of land are needed for Other Non-Food Store Retail (NFSR) (9 hectares or 23 acres), Supermarkets (6 hectares or 15 acres), Department Stores (5 hectares or 13 acres), Specialty Stores (4.5 hectares or 11 acres), Other Services (4 hectares or 9 acres), and Eating/Drinking

Table 1a

OXFORD COUNTY
PROPOSED DISTRIBUTION OF ADDITIONAL LAND REQUIREMENTS
BY URBAN CENTRE AND RURAL TOWNSHIPS
2031

| Retail/Service category | Woodstock | | | Ingersoll | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------------|------------|----------------|--------------|------------|
| | Distribution % | Space Sq.Ft. | Land Acres | Distribution % | Space Sq.Ft. | Land Acres |
| Supermarkets | 11.2% | 74,444 | 6.33 | 17.1% | 33,875 | 2.88 |
| Grocery/Other Food Stores | 0.5% | 3,015 | 0.26 | 0.7% | 1,372 | 0.12 |
| TOTAL FOOD | 11.7% | 77,459 | 6.59 | 17.7% | 35,247 | 3.00 |
| Department Stores | 15.6% | 103,097 | 8.77 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.00 |
| Specialty Stores | 12.1% | 79,873 | 6.79 | 7.4% | 14,730 | 1.25 |
| Pharmacy and Personal Care Stores | 3.7% | 24,785 | 2.11 | 5.3% | 10,472 | 0.89 |
| Other NFSR | 14.3% | 94,401 | 8.03 | 33.0% | 65,531 | 5.57 |
| TOTAL NON FOOD | 45.6% | 302,157 | 25.69 | 45.7% | 90,734 | 7.71 |
| Liquor/Beer/Wine | 1.7% | 11,416 | 0.97 | 2.6% | 5,121 | 0.44 |
| TOTAL RETAIL | 59.1% | 391,032 | 33.25 | 66.0% | 131,101 | 11.15 |
| Eating/Drinking | 5.0% | 33,095 | 2.81 | 6.6% | 13,176 | 1.12 |
| Personal Services | 2.9% | 18,999 | 1.62 | 2.9% | 5,734 | 0.49 |
| Finance/Insurance/Real Estate | 7.4% | 48,908 | 4.16 | 4.3% | 8,446 | 0.72 |
| Medical/Dental/Health Services | 4.8% | 31,984 | 2.72 | 5.0% | 9,875 | 0.84 |
| Business Services | 1.7% | 10,961 | 0.93 | 1.0% | 1,912 | 0.16 |
| Entertainment | 6.6% | 43,899 | 3.73 | 1.8% | 3,549 | 0.30 |
| Other Services | 6.2% | 41,094 | 3.49 | 7.4% | 14,627 | 1.24 |
| Miscellaneous Office | 6.4% | 42,229 | 3.59 | 5.2% | 10,240 | 0.87 |
| TOTAL SERVICES | 40.9% | 271,168 | 23.06 | 34.0% | 67,559 | 5.74 |
| TOTAL RETAIL/SERVICES | 100.0% | 662,200 | 56.31 | 100.0% | 198,660 | 16.89 |

Source: RDA estimates.

Total Oxford County Space and Acreage from Table 16. Split by Urban Centre and Rural Townships from Table 17.

Table 1b

OXFORD COUNTY
PROPOSED DISTRIBUTION OF ADDITIONAL LAND REQUIREMENTS
BY URBAN CENTRE AND RURAL TOWNSHIPS
2031

| Retail/Service category | Tillsonburg | | | Rural Townships | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| | Distribution % | Space Sq.Ft. | Land Acres | Distribution % | Space Sq.Ft. | Land Acres |
| Supermarkets | 14.6% | 48,374 | 4.11 | 11.3% | 14,920 | 1.27 |
| Grocery/Other Food Stores | 0.6% | 1,959 | 0.17 | 0.5% | 604 | 0.05 |
| TOTAL FOOD | 15.2% | 50,333 | 4.28 | 11.7% | 15,524 | 1.32 |
| Department Stores | 14.6% | 48,195 | 4.10 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.00 |
| Specialty Stores | 8.7% | 28,793 | 2.45 | 5.1% | 6,768 | 0.58 |
| Pharmacy and Personal Care Stores | 4.7% | 15,618 | 1.33 | 3.2% | 4,199 | 0.36 |
| Other NFSR | 21.7% | 71,764 | 6.10 | 31.6% | 41,825 | 3.56 |
| TOTAL NON FOOD | 49.6% | 164,369 | 13.98 | 39.9% | 52,791 | 4.49 |
| Liquor/Beer/Wine | 2.1% | 6,820 | 0.58 | 2.6% | 3,398 | 0.29 |
| TOTAL RETAIL | 66.9% | 221,522 | 18.84 | 54.1% | 71,713 | 6.10 |
| Eating/Drinking | 7.8% | 25,986 | 2.21 | 12.9% | 17,057 | 1.45 |
| Personal Services | 2.6% | 8,682 | 0.74 | 3.7% | 4,886 | 0.42 |
| Finance/Insurance/Real Estate | 5.7% | 18,934 | 1.61 | 6.0% | 7,941 | 0.68 |
| Medical/Dental/Health Services | 4.3% | 14,241 | 1.21 | 2.6% | 3,473 | 0.30 |
| Business Services | 0.5% | 1,773 | 0.15 | 5.0% | 6,655 | 0.57 |
| Entertainment | 2.0% | 6,556 | 0.56 | 0.6% | 768 | 0.07 |
| Other Services | 9.8% | 32,514 | 2.76 | 14.4% | 19,080 | 1.62 |
| Miscellaneous Office | 0.3% | 892 | 0.08 | 0.7% | 867 | 0.07 |
| TOTAL SERVICES | 33.1% | 109,578 | 9.32 | 45.9% | 60,727 | 5.16 |
| TOTAL RETAIL/SERVICES | 100.0% | 331,100 | 28.15 | 100.0% | 132,440 | 11.26 |

Source: RDA estimates.

Total Oxford County Space and Acreage from Table 16. Split by Urban Centre and Rural Townships from Table 17.

Table 1c

OXFORD COUNTY
PROPOSED DISTRIBUTION OF ADDITIONAL LAND REQUIREMENTS
BY URBAN CENTRE AND RURAL TOWNSHIPS

| Retail/Service category | TOTAL OXFORD | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------------|------------|
| | Distribution % | Space Sq.Ft. | Land Acres |
| Supermarkets | 13.0% | 171,613 | 14.59 |
| Grocery/Other Food Stores | 0.5% | 6,951 | 0.59 |
| TOTAL FOOD | 13.5% | 178,563 | 15.18 |
| Department Stores | 11.4% | 151,292 | 12.86 |
| Specialty Stores | 9.8% | 130,163 | 11.07 |
| Pharmacy and Personal Care Stores | 4.2% | 55,074 | 4.68 |
| Other NFSR | 20.7% | 273,521 | 23.26 |
| TOTAL NON FOOD | 46.1% | 610,051 | 51.87 |
| Liquor/Beer/Wine | 2.0% | 26,754 | 2.27 |
| TOTAL RETAIL | 61.6% | 815,368 | 69.33 |
| Eating/Drinking | 6.7% | 89,314 | 7.59 |
| Personal Services | 2.9% | 38,301 | 3.26 |
| Finance/Insurance/Real Estate | 6.4% | 84,229 | 7.16 |
| Medical/Dental/Health Services | 4.5% | 59,573 | 5.07 |
| Business Services | 1.6% | 21,301 | 1.81 |
| Entertainment | 4.1% | 54,772 | 4.66 |
| Other Services | 8.1% | 107,315 | 9.12 |
| Miscellaneous Office | 4.1% | 54,228 | 4.61 |
| TOTAL SERVICES | 38.4% | 509,032 | 43.28 |
| TOTAL RETAIL/SERVICES | 100.0% | 1,324,400 | 112.61 |

Source: RDA estimates.

Total Oxford County Space and Acreage from Table 16. Split by Urban Centre and Rural Townships from Table 17.

Establishments (3 hectares or 8 acres), for the County as a whole (**Table 1**).² **Table 1** provides a further breakdown of the land requirements by distributing the forecast space needs between the three Urban Centres and the serviced Rural Settlements.

It should be noted that the additional space requirements in Table 1 are based on total space requirements from the residual analysis. Table 1 has not taken account of current unbuilt approvals or applications. The implications of these approvals are addressed through the detailed distribution analysis later in this section.

The breakdown in terms of additional space requirements and anticipated land area requirements is set out in Table 1. Some individual retail users, however, are relatively large and require a certain threshold of needed space before they can be established. As such, the proposed allocations for supermarkets and departments stores are specifically discussed as examples.

In terms of the distribution of supermarket space, it is proposed that 6,900 square metres (74,500 square feet) of additional supermarket space be distributed to Woodstock, which means the need for likely two additional supermarkets; 3,200 square metres (34,000 square feet) be distributed to Ingersoll, equating to one supermarket; and 4,500 square metres (48,000 square feet) be distributed to Tillsonburg, which could equate to between one or two supermarkets; the Rural Townships would have approximately 1,400 square metres (15,500 square feet) of combined supermarket and grocery/other food store space, which would likely appear in the form of existing grocery store or supermarket expansions, and / or the addition of one or two small food markets.

In terms of future department store space, an additional 9,600 square metres (103,000 square feet) is distributed to Woodstock, which equates to one new department store; no department store space is distributed to Ingersoll; and 4,500 square metres (48,000 square feet) is distributed to Tillsonburg.

Because of the short distance of separation between Ingersoll and Woodstock there would appear to be no rational economic justification to expect either Zellers or Walmart to cannibalize the sales they draw from the Ingersoll market area (which is a wholly contained subset of the Woodstock trade area) by setting up a satellite large format store in Ingersoll with all the duplicate costs that would entail. The cost/benefit analysis of such a scenario is, in our opinion, certain to be negative for decades to come. As for the possibility of a third department store tenant some time in the future showing interest in the County market, the location of first choice will inevitably be Woodstock.

The Tillsonburg allocation is not significant enough to warrant the opening of a new department store and is likely to be accommodated as an expansion to an existing store, i.e. expansion of the

² The Other Non-Food Store Retail (NFSR) may include farmer's supply store, general merchandise retail such as the Giant Tiger and dollar stores, home and auto supply stores (i.e. Home Hardware, Home Building Centre, Canadian Tire), building and outdoor home supply, sporting goods, hobby, music and book stores, miscellaneous store retailers i.e. pet and pet supply, florist, and party store. Other Services may include specialty services including veterinary services, funeral homes, auto-oriented services, graphic design offices, and weight loss centres.

Wal-mart at Norfolk Mall in Norfolk County. It is pertinent to note that First Capital Holdings has recently applied to amend the Official Plan and Zoning By-law to increase the gross floor area cap to allow for a redeveloped Wal-Mart at the Norfolk Mall, which will replace the existing 5,400 square metre (58,000 square feet) store with one that is proposed to be double the size, of 11,000 square metres (120,000 square feet) an increase of 5,600 square metres which is slightly larger than the residual analysis shows is needed by 2031. A portion of the proposed addition is for a grocery component. The adjacent Zehrs supermarket in the Norfolk Mall already has approval for an expansion. The combined food store expansions could have significant implications for the distribution of food store shopping in the Town of Tillsonburg.

Section 6 discusses possible new policies to address the review and comment on applications at the Norfolk Mall.

5.2 CONSIDERATION OF VACANT LANDS AND BUILDING SPACE

Table 1 provides the forecasted additional commercial land needs by 2031 by retail/service category. The forecast commercial land needs under each retail/service category were then distributed to each commercial land use designation according to the permitted uses allowed in each designation, while also recognizing the potential for new Neighbourhood Shopping Area designations in the three Urban Centres. This distribution is set out in Tables 2 through 5.

5.2.1 Woodstock

There is a significant amount of potential commercial space (a combination of vacant designated land, vacant space within existing buildings, and recently approved commercial space) available on lands within the CBD (17,600 square metres or 189,000 square feet), on lands designated RCN (46,400 square metres or 500,000 square feet), and on Service Commercial designated lands (109,000 square metres or 1.17 million square feet).

Table 2 summarizes the current supply and potential distribution of future retail and service commercial space, including office space. Such space is documented by designation (column 1) and by commercial cluster (column 2), as documented in the Module 1 report. The potential vacant commercial space on vacant lands is set out in column 3 and the current vacant built space in column 4. Recently approved space is documented in column 5. The total available space on vacant properties, vacant buildings, and recently approved space (total of columns 3, 4, and 5) is set out in column 6. The proposed 2031 space distribution to each of Woodstock's commercial designations, are set out in column 7. Based on this analysis, the current vacant lands and vacancies in existing buildings will be able to absorb all of the future required space, as discussed in further detail below. It should be noted, however, that a detailed analysis of the quality of the vacant built space or the attributes of the vacant designated lands, in terms of environmental or physical constraints, has not been undertaken as part of this study.

CBD Space Distribution

Approximately 11,200 square metres (120,500 square feet) of forecast additional space is distributed to the CBD in the form of specialty food stores, specialty stores (i.e. apparel, and

jewellery stores, etc.), other Non-Food Store Retail (NFSR)³, and eating/drinking space in an effort to occupy existing vacant space. The resultant vacancy rate for the CBD would decline to 7%. This would permit the ability to occupy street related retail space in the core area of the CBD as well as accommodate larger box stores on the periphery.

Entrepreneurial District Space Distribution

Some of the future space needs for finance/insurance/real estate, medical/dental/health services, business services, other services, and miscellaneous office were anticipated to be accommodated in the Entrepreneurial District. The anticipated future space (approximately 2,600 square metres, or 28,000 square feet) exceeds the amount of current available space. However, the Entrepreneurial District is a mixed-use area, where it is expected that new uses will locate in converted dwellings. Although it is recommended previously that portions of the Entrepreneurial District could be reduced and designated residential, there will still be enough lands and buildings to accommodate the allocated space.

RCN Space Distribution

Approximately 26,700 square metres (290,000 square feet) of the forecasted commercial space is distributed to the RCN in the form of additional department store space, supermarket space, specialty stores and NFSR, as well as new restaurant space and service space, all of which could be accommodated on existing vacant lands. However, three commercial development proposals were recently approved, amounting to approximately 38,000 square metres (400,000 square feet) of additional retail space:

- 30,000 square metres (325,000 square feet) of large format retail on the east side of Norwich Avenue, between Juliana Drive and Highway 401 (by Hermina Developments);
- 4,200 square metres (45,000 square feet) retail at 415 Norwich Avenue, north of Montclair Drive (by Starbank Development); and
- 3,400 square metres (37,000 square feet) expansion of the existing Wal-mart for food retail.

This additional space, beyond what has been forecasted, means that there will either be substantial reduction in sales performances at existing retailers, or the retail space that is proposed on these approved sites will not materialize, or a combination of both.

³ Other NFSR includes building supply stores, outdoor home supply stores, other general merchandise stores and selected automotive stores including Canadian Tire stores.

Table 2. Woodstock Vacant Commercial Space and 2031 Space Distribution

| Land Use Designation | Location | Potential Building Space on Vacant Land* (net sq.ft.) | Vacant Building Space (sq.ft.) | Approved But Unbuilt Space (sq.ft.) | Total Available Space (sq.ft.) | Distribution of Future Space (sq.ft.) | Vacancy Rate |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| CBD | Central Area Cluster | 13,660 | 175,000 | 0 | 188,660 | 120,500 | 7.1% |
| Entrepreneurial District | Central Area Cluster | 0 | 22,900 | 0 | 22,900 | 28,300 | |
| RCN | Norwich Regional Cluster | 92,700 | 0 | 407,000 | 499,700 | 287,650 | |
| Service Commercial | Dundas East Cluster | 682,680 | 0 | 0 | 682,680 | | |
| | Dundas/ Ingersoll/ Main Cluster | 85,150 | 15,000 | 0 | 100,150 | | |
| | Dundas/ Springbank Cluster | 48,530 | 12,200 | 76,700 | 137,430 | | |
| | Mill Street Cluster | 253,430 | 0 | 0 | 253,430 | | |
| | Total | 1,069,800 | 27,200 | 76,700 | 1,173,700 | 123,850 | |
| Neighbourhood | NEW CLUSTERS | 35,300 | 0 | 25,000 | 60,300 | 101,900 | |
| TOTAL | | 1,211,450 | 225,100 | 508,700 | 1,945,250 | 662,200 | |

* Calculated assuming 27% coverage.

Neighbourhood Shopping Area Space Distribution

Half of the future supermarket and grocery/other food stores space is proposed to be directed to Neighbourhood Shopping Areas as well as other uses that support the Neighbourhood Shopping Areas function such as pharmacy and personal care stores, liquor/beer/wine retail, personal services, and some professional and health services. There is very little vacant Neighbourhood Shopping Area designated lands in Woodstock. As a result, new areas will need to be designated either through the redesignation of vacant Service Commercial designated lands, or the designation of additional lands in new residential growth areas as shown on **(Figure 7)**. In total, approximately 9,500 square metres (102,000 square feet) of future required space is distributed to Neighbourhood Shopping Areas, which will likely equate to two new sites to be designated. However, four commercial development proposals were either recently approved, or are currently in circulation at the County to provide for additional neighbourhood commercial and/or food store uses, amounting to an additional 7,100 square metres (77,000 square feet) of food retail and 9,600 square metres (100,000 square feet) of additional convenience commercial retail and service uses. These proposals include:

- 7,100 square metres (77,000 square feet) expansion to an existing Loblaws store for food retail, located at 969 Dundas (the north-west corner of Dundas and Springbank) (by Loblaw Properties) (approved);

- 2,300 square metres (25,000 square feet) of neighbourhood commercial uses, of which 900 square metres (10,000 square feet) are committed for retail uses, located west of Highway 59, north of the Thames River and south of Oxford Road 17, as part of the Sally Creek subdivision (approved);
- 929 square metres (10,000 square feet) for pharmacy at 1185 Devonshire (between Lansdowne and County Road 4) (by Forecast/Woodstock Devonshire) (appealed to the OMB); and
- 5,800 square metres (63,000 square feet) of neighbourhood commercial uses also on Devonshire, between Lansdowne and Highway 4 (by Lunor Group) (in circulation).

An additional 1.2 hectares (3 acres) have been approved for neighbourhood commercial uses, as part of the North Woodstock Secondary Plan, located north of the Pittock Conservation Area, on the east side of Pittock Park Road. This area could provide for approximately 2,800 square metres (30,000 square feet) of additional commercial space.

Service Commercial Space Distribution

Approximately 11,500 square metres (124,000 square feet) of future required space for specialty stores⁴, eating/drinking establishments, entertainment⁵, business services, and other services could be accommodated in Service Commercial Areas all on existing vacant designated lands. Even accounting for redesignation of some Service Commercial lands to Neighbourhood Shopping Area, there is no need for the designation of additional Service Commercial lands.

5.2.2 Tillsonburg

Substantial vacant lands and vacant space in existing buildings exist in the CBD (7,250 square metres or 78,000 square feet), Entrepreneurial District (2,200 square metres or 24,000 square feet), and Service Commercial Area designations (54,400 square metres or 586,000 square feet) (**Table 3**). As discussed previously for Woodstock, a detailed analysis of the quality of the vacant built space or the attributes of the vacant designated lands has not been undertaken as part of this study.

CBD Space Distribution

Approximately 4,400 square metres (47,400 square feet) of forecast additional space is distributed to the CBD in the categories of other food stores (i.e. health food stores, bakeries, cheese shops), specialty stores (i.e. clothing and accessories), pharmacy, other NFSR (i.e. general merchandise stores, florist, gift and novelty shops), restaurants, personal services (i.e. hair salon, laundromat, pet care, weight loss centre), finance/insurance/real estate and other services (i.e. printers/photocopying service, veterinary services). Most future entertainment is also directed to the CBD to help draw in patrons during the evenings and weekends.

⁴ Specialty Stores as categorized in Table 1 include clothing stores, shoe stores, clothing accessories, jewellery stores, home electronics and appliance stores, computer and software stores, furniture stores, and home furnishings stores. It is assumed that a portion of the projected demand for Specialty Stores will locate in Service Commercial Areas, but only those that fall under the permitted uses, such as appliance and furniture stores.

⁵ Entertainment facilities include movie theatre/cinema, live theatre, amusement arcade, billiard hall, sports arena/stadium, casino, fitness and recreational sports centre, and bowling alley. It is assumed that a portion of the Entertainment land needs will locate in Service Commercial Areas, but only those that fall under the permitted uses such as fitness and recreational sports centre, and bowling alley.

Miscellaneous office space could be accommodated in the CBD in the upper levels of existing buildings. The potential future space that could be directed to the CBD would significantly improve the vacancy rate with the resulting vacancy rate approaching 5%. In addition, it is recognized that there is additional redevelopment potential in the downtown, beyond that available in existing vacant space.

Entrepreneurial District Space Distribution

In support of its intended function as the focal area for office, administration, and personal service space, it is assumed that a portion of finance/insurance/real estate, medical/dental/health services, business services (i.e. professional services, and car rental establishments) and miscellaneous offices will locate in the Entrepreneurial District, with the remainder being located in the CBD. As such, nearly 1,400 square metres (15,500 square feet) of additional space is distributed to the Entrepreneurial District where approximately 2,200 square metres (24,000 square feet) is currently vacant.

Service Commercial Space Distribution

Not unlike Woodstock, Tillsonburg also has a significant amount of vacant Service Commercial designated lands. It is proposed that a portion of the eating/drinking space, personal services, business services and other services be accommodated in the Service Commercial Areas. In total, approximately 10,600 square metres (114,500 square feet) of additional space is distributed to the vacant Service Commercial areas. After accounting for future required space, and the potential redesignation of some of the space to a Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation, a significant amount of vacant designated Service Commercial lands would still remain available. As such, no additional Service Commercial areas need to be designated.

Neighbourhood Shopping Area Space Distribution

It is recommended that the Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation be introduced to the commercial hierarchy, by redesignating existing areas developed with supermarkets and neighbourhood serving uses. These areas, along with potentially new areas, could absorb future supermarket and grocery store/other food store space, and other commercial establishments that meet local residents' day-to-day needs, amounting to 9,800 square metres (105,500 square feet) of space. This space could be distributed to a new Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation and/or to the Service Commercial areas that are recommended to be redesignated to Neighbourhood Shopping Areas. Potential locations are further discussed in Section 5.3.

Department Store Space

It was determined that roughly 4,500 square metres (48,000 square feet) of additional department store space will be warranted in Tillsonburg to meet demand by 2031 (see **Table 3**). However, the 4,500 square metres is not enough to warrant a new major full-line department store, nor will the projected 2031 population of Tillsonburg be high enough to support an additional department store. The additional required space will likely materialize as an expansion to the existing Walmart, as discussed earlier, for which there is a current application. The allocation of the future department store demand is recognized in **Table 3** below, as "Other Area".

Table 3. Tillsonburg Vacant Commercial Space and 2031 Space Distribution

| Land Use Designation | Location | Potential Building Space on Vacant Land* (net sq.ft.) | Vacant Building Space (sq.ft.) | Total Available Space (sq.ft.) | Distribution of Future Space (sq.ft.) | Vacancy Rate |
|--|------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| CBD | Central Area Cluster | 2,910 | 75,200 | 78,110 | 47,400 | 4.6% |
| Entrepreneurial District | Central Area Cluster | 23,830 | 0 | 23,830 | 15,500 | |
| Service Commercial | Broadway Cluster | 323,760 | 9,100 | 332,860 | | |
| | Simcoe Street Cluster | 100,560 | 4,000 | 104,560 | | |
| | Tillson Avenue Cluster | 64,230 | 6,200 | 70,430 | | |
| | Vienna Road Cluster | 77,890 | | 77,890 | | |
| | Total | 566,430 | 19,300 | 585,730 | 114,500 | |
| Neighbourhood | NEW CLUSTERS | 0 | 0 | 0 | 105,500 | |
| Location permitting a department store | OTHER AREA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 48,200 | |
| TOTAL | | 593,180 | 94,500 | 687,680 | 331,100 | |

* Calculated assuming 27% coverage.

5.2.3 Ingersoll

Compared to Woodstock and Tillsonburg, Ingersoll has the least amount of vacant commercial space. Vacant lands and space in existing buildings are found in the CBD (7,100 square metres or 76,000 square feet) and in Service Commercial areas (43,000 square metres or 465,000 square feet) (Table 4). As discussed previously, a detailed analysis of the quality of the vacant built space or the attributes of the vacant designated lands has not been undertaken as part of this study.

CBD Space Distribution

Nearly 4,000 square metres (43,700 square feet) of forecast additional space is distributed to the CBD in the categories of specialty stores (i.e. clothing and jewellery, and bridal store), liquor/beer/wine retail, eating/drinking, personal services (i.e. beauty salon, tanning salon, coin-operated laundry), entertainment, and miscellaneous office. The resulting vacancy rate would be approximately 6%, assuming no new commercial space is created. However, additional commercial space could be created through redevelopment of some of the lands along the Thames River.

Entrepreneurial District Space Distribution

Similar to the Entrepreneurial Districts of Woodstock and Tillsonburg, it would be fitting to accommodate a portion of future required space for personal services, financial/insurance/real estate services, medical/dental/health services, business services, other services, and miscellaneous office in the Entrepreneurial District. As such, some 1,300 square metres (14,000 square feet) of additional space are anticipated to be needed.

Service Commercial Space Distribution

Approximately 6,500 square metres (70,000 square feet) of forecast additional space could be accommodated in the Service Commercial areas in the categories of specialty stores⁶, eating/drinking, business services (i.e. photocopying service), and other services. A substantial amount of vacant Service Commercial space remains available, even after the allocation of new space and the proposed redesignation of some of the existing developed areas to the Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation. Of particular note is the amount of available designated space in the Harris Street Cluster, amounting to some 37,000 square metres (400,000 square feet), represented primarily by one parcel. It may be an appropriate location to accommodate some of the Service Commercial space allocation identified in Table 4 due to the sites location and visibility from Harris Street and Highway 401. However, the vacant property on the south side of Clark Road currently has access issues that will need to be resolved. As well, a large portion of the site would also be ideally suited to a range of other employment uses. Nonetheless, due to the Clark Road site's size and other vacant parcels, there is no apparent need at this time for the designation of additional Service Commercial space, provided that appropriate access to the Clark Road site for such uses can be achieved.

It should be noted that an application was recently submitted for lands located immediately west of the Harris Street Cluster, north of Clarke Road. The proposed development application requests to redesignate Residential lands to Service Commercial. The purpose is to allow for a total of 18,500 square metres (200,000 square feet) of retail and commercial services. In particular, 4,600 square metres (50,000 square feet) is proposed for an anchor tenant which could be either a home and auto supply, home improvement, or department store; 3,200 square metres (35,000 square feet) of supermarket; and 10,700 square metres (115,000 square feet) of ancillary retail and service commercial space. Much of this proposed space is to accommodate a broader range of uses than this study recommends for the Service Commercial Designation. This application is proposing a range of uses, which would more appropriately fit into a Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation or, if the proposed department store can be justified, a Regional Commercial Node.

Neighbourhood Shopping Area Space Distribution

The proposed new Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation is proposed to accommodate retail space in the supermarket, grocery/other food stores, and other neighbourhood serving retail categories, amounting to approximately 6,600 square metres (71,000 square feet) of forecast space.

⁶ See note 3.

Table 4. Ingersoll Vacant Commercial Space and 2031 Space Distribution

| Land Use Designation | Location | Potential Building Space on Vacant Land* (net sq.ft.) | Vacant Building Space (sq.ft.) | Total Available Space (sq.ft.) | Distribution of Future Space (sq.ft.) | Vacancy Rate |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| CBD | Central Area Cluster | 0 | 76,200 | 76,200 | 43,700 | 6.0% |
| Entrepreneurial District | Central Area Cluster | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14,200 | |
| Service Commercial | Bell Street Cluster | 18,900 | 1,500 | 20,400 | | |
| | Culloden Road Cluster | 46,200 | 0 | 46,200 | | |
| | Harris Street Cluster | 398,200 | 0 | 398,200 | | |
| | Total | 463,300 | 1,500 | 464,800 | 69,600 | |
| Neighbourhood | NEW CLUSTERS | 0 | 0 | 0 | 71,000 | |
| TOTAL | | 463,300 | 77,700 | 541,000 | 198,500 | |

* Calculated assuming 27% coverage.

5.2.4 Serviced Villages

Approximately 12,300 square metres (132,000 square feet) of additional commercial space will be needed in the Serviced Villages by 2031 (**Table 1**). It is anticipated that the majority of the space required will be directed to the Village Cores. However, only 5,300 square metres (57,000 square feet) of unoccupied space is currently available in Village Cores (**Table 5**). Since much of the designated commercial space in many of the Village Cores is occupied by residential uses, there is likely an opportunity to convert some of that space to commercial when the need and opportunity exists.

For the Service Commercial designations, a similar situation exists as that in the Urban Centres; there are more than sufficient designated and vacant service commercial lands to meet the required space. In villages with excess service commercial lands, consideration could be given to other potential uses for some of these lands such as agri-businesses and minor institutions including churches.

Table 5. Vacant Commercial Space and 2031 Space Allocation in Serviced Villages

| Land Use Designation | Potential Building Space on Vacant Land* (net sq.ft.) | Vacant Building Space (sq.ft.) | Total Available Space (sq.ft.) | Distribution of Future Space (sq.ft.) |
|----------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Service Commercial | 158,400 | 4,000 | 162,400 | 50,700 |
| Village Core | 34,300 | 22,400 | 56,700 | 81,700 |
| Total | 192,700 | 26,400 | 219,100 | 132,400 |

* Calculated assuming 27% coverage.

5.3 CONSIDERATION OF GROWTH AREAS

In determining where additional forecast retail space should be distributed, consideration has also been given to the future residential growth areas in the three Urban Centres. Growth areas are considered to be areas that are currently subject to a circulated plan of subdivision, or are the subject of a draft approved, or registered plan of subdivision but which are not yet fully built. Also considered are designated Residential Areas that are currently vacant and are not part of a draft or registered plan of subdivision, as well as designated Future Urban Growth Areas.

5.3.1 Woodstock

There are three major growth areas in the City, as illustrated on **Figure 2**:

- 1) In the northwestern area of the City, surrounding the intersection of Highway No.59 and Pittock Park Road, north of the CPR rail and the North Woodstock Secondary Plan area, which is located east of Pittock Park Road;
- 2) In the northeastern area of the City, northeast of Devonshire and Lansdowne Avenues; and
- 3) In the southwestern area of the City, generally at Mill Street, north of Juliana Drive.

The majority of the registered and draft plans are located in the northwestern part of the City and as such, the majority of residential growth will occur in this area. However, there is currently little in the way of neighbourhood commercial type establishments that service this area. Most recently, 2,300 square metres (25,000 square feet) of convenience commercial uses was approved, in association with the Villages of Sally Creek Inc., a residential development, and 1.2 hectares (3 acres) have also been designated for neighbourhood commercial uses within the North Woodstock Secondary Plan area. These clusters in combination with the expansion to the Loblaws in the proposed Dundas/Springbank Neighbourhood Shopping Area would absorb nearly all of the Neighbourhood Shopping Area space allocation.

The north-eastern growth area is closer to the Sobeys and Springbank Plaza commercial clusters. These commercial clusters could meet the day-to-day commercial needs of the north-eastern growth area, although depending on the size of the residential growth, an additional Neighbourhood Shopping Area could be designated in this area. Within this area there are two active applications proposing commercial development, one of which has been appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board. Forecast (Woodstock Devonshire) proposes 929 square metres (10,000 square feet) of commercial space at 1185 Devonshire Road. This application has been appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board. In addition, the Lunor Group has an application in the area on the south side of Devonshire Road for 5,850 square metres (63,000 square feet) of neighbourhood commercial space.

Near the third growth area located in the south-western area of the City is a Future Urban Growth Area adjacent to the Woodstock boundary, but located in South-West Oxford, as shown on Schedule C-3 of the Official Plan and on **Figure 2**. This area is intended to accommodate low density residential uses (policy 4.2.2.6 of the Official Plan). This growth area is well connected to the RCN, via Juliana Drive. It's expected that most of the residents from this area would drive to the RCN for their shopping needs.

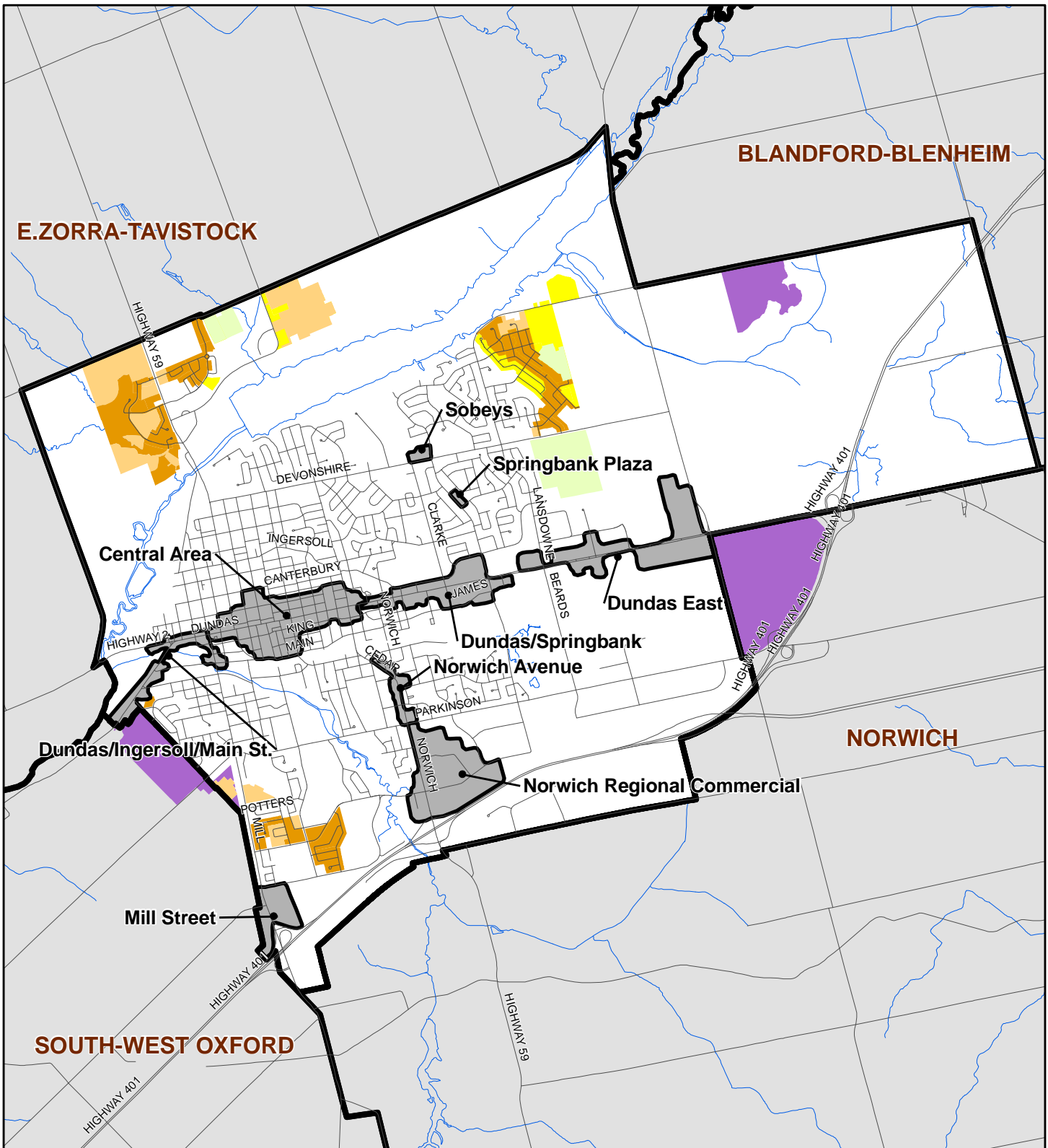


Figure 2 - Woodstock Growth Areas

Commercial Policy Review - Module 2



- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Municipal Boundaries | Residential Plan of Subdivision Status In Circulation |
| Commercial Clusters | Draft Approved |
| Vacant Residential Designated Lands | Registered (Not Fully Built) |
| Future Urban Growth Area | |
| Watercourses | |

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Revised

As previously noted in Section 4.5.2, a primary location for redesignation of Service Commercial lands to Neighbourhood Shopping Area are the lands already developed for such use in the Springbank/Dundas area, such as the lands between Springbank and Clarke, north of the railway (see **Figure 3**). A Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation in this area would recognize the existing neighbourhood shopping type establishments, such as Loblaws, the Beer Store, and pharmacy. Within this cluster, Loblaws has been approved for a 7,125 square metre (76,700 square foot) expansion to its food store. Although this expansion, along with existing occupied space in the area, would be much larger than recommended for a Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation, it is not out of the range typically associated in southern Ontario with commercial nodes serving a neighbourhood function. The range of uses within this area, even with Loblaws's expansion, would not serve a regional function and would not be considered a Regional Commercial Node.

5.3.2 Tillsonburg

The majority of the new growth (registered, draft approved, and circulated plans of subdivision) is located on the west side of Broadway (see **Figure 3**). The commercial establishments in the CBD can service the residents on the west side of Broadway, who are located south of Concession Street although some parts of the neighbourhood are getting to be a distance from the CBD for convenience commercial needs.

Significant growth will also occur in the northern sector of the Town, on both sides of Broadway. On the west side of Broadway, in addition to the registered plans that are not yet built, additional growth will stem from the vacant residential designated area, and on lands currently subject to a plan of subdivision application located at the southwest corner of Quarter Town Line and North Street (see **Figure 3**). As well, vacant residential designated lands exist east of Broadway, north of North Street, and a large area is designated Future Urban Growth Area located northeast of the CPR rail at Concession Street (in South-West Oxford) (see **Figure 3**). This Future Urban Growth Area is also intended to accommodate residential uses. However, based on the current population forecasts, this area would not likely be required for growth during the current planning period.

The Broadway Commercial Cluster located near the northern municipal boundary could service the residents north of Concession Street. However, this cluster is entirely designated Service Commercial. There will be a need to accommodate neighbourhood commercial establishments in this area. As such, it is recommended that a portion of the Broadway Cluster north of North Street be considered for redesignation to a Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation, as required to accommodate future need, in line with population growth.

The southern portion of the Tillson Avenue Commercial Cluster could also be considered for a Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation. The new Neighbourhood Shopping Area would meet the day-to-day shopping and commercial service needs of residents to the north, and those located east of Tillson Avenue, including the Future Urban Growth Area, and provide commercial amenities within walking or cycling distance from future and existing neighbourhoods. The Neighbourhood Shopping Area could include some of the existing designated and built lands south of the railway such as the beer store and the plaza. Although in

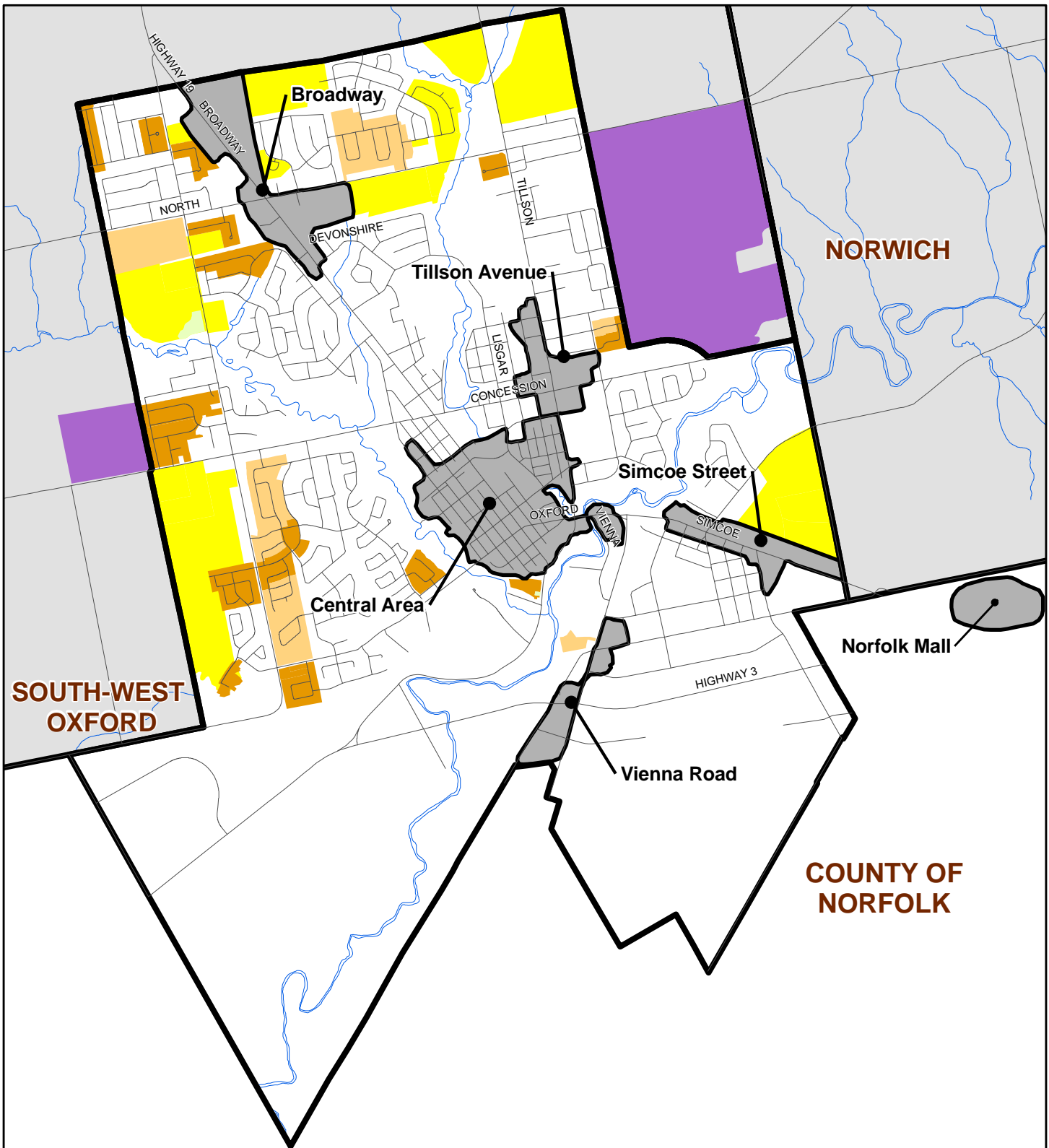


Figure 3 - Tillsonburg Growth Areas

Commercial Policy Review - Module 2



- | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Municipal Boundaries | | Residential Plan of Subdivision Status |
| | Commercial Clusters | | In Circulation |
| | Vacant Residential Designated Lands | | Draft Approved |
| | Future Urban Growth Area | | Registered (Not Fully Built) |
| | Watercourses | | |

Sorensen Gravely Lowes
Planning Associates Inc.

December 2009
Revised

relatively close proximity to the CBD, the new Neighbourhood Shopping Area is intended to meet the day-to-day needs of local residents, but would not offer the breadth of retail, and professional services that the CBD offers.

A new location in the vicinity of Quarter Town Line south of Concession Street to serve the south-western residential neighbourhoods may also be appropriate, but that would leave little additional space to be accommodated in the Broadway and Tillson areas, based on the proposed distribution of retail space in Section 5.2.2.

5.3.3 *Ingersoll*

The majority of growth is occurring in the eastern end of the Town, south of Charles Street. Some growth is also occurring in the northwestern part of the Town, near the intersection of Bell and Ingersoll Streets (see **Figure 4**). In addition, there are some Residential designated lands that are currently vacant, and are not subject to any applications, mostly near the Clarke Road and Plank Line intersection, plus a small area at the northwestern corner of Ingersoll and King Streets (See **Figure 4**).

The Official Plan has identified three areas surrounding the municipality as Future Urban Growth Areas, all which are intended for a mix of Industrial, Business, and Service Commercial uses. One Future Urban Growth Area is located along Bell Street, adjacent to the municipal border in Zorra; the second area is located adjacent to the southwestern municipal border in South-West Oxford and is occupied by CAMI automotive; and the third area is located adjacent to the eastern municipal border also in South-West Oxford (see **Figure 4**).

There already exists a Service Commercial strip (the Bell Street Cluster) that could service the north-western area of the Town. However, this cluster is entirely designated Service Commercial, and few vacant parcels exist. As well, much of the residential area has already developed. Additional convenience commercial uses, which are permitted in the Residential designation, may be appropriate in this area.

Although the residential growth area to the east is well connected to the Central Area, via King and Canterbury Streets, there is likely still a need to provide for additional neighbourhood commercial uses in the southeasterly area of Town, in the vicinity of the Harris Street Commercial Cluster. Given the current excess in supply of Service Commercial designated lands and the fact the Official Plan already identifies that area for uses catering to the convenience and service needs of community residents, along with existing zoning⁷ the existing Service Commercial designated lands would seem a reasonable location for a Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation. However, the existing Service Commercial designated lands have access constraints that may diminish their potential for commercial purposes. An application for a commercial development on the north side of Clark Road has also been submitted by Sifton Properties Limited. Additional planning analysis, beyond that provided in this study, is required

⁷ The existing zoning permits all the uses of the HC zone, as well as an automotive and household supplies retail store, a business or professional office, a drug store, a dry cleaning establishment, a health club, a personal service shop, a photographic studio, and a supermarket/food store.

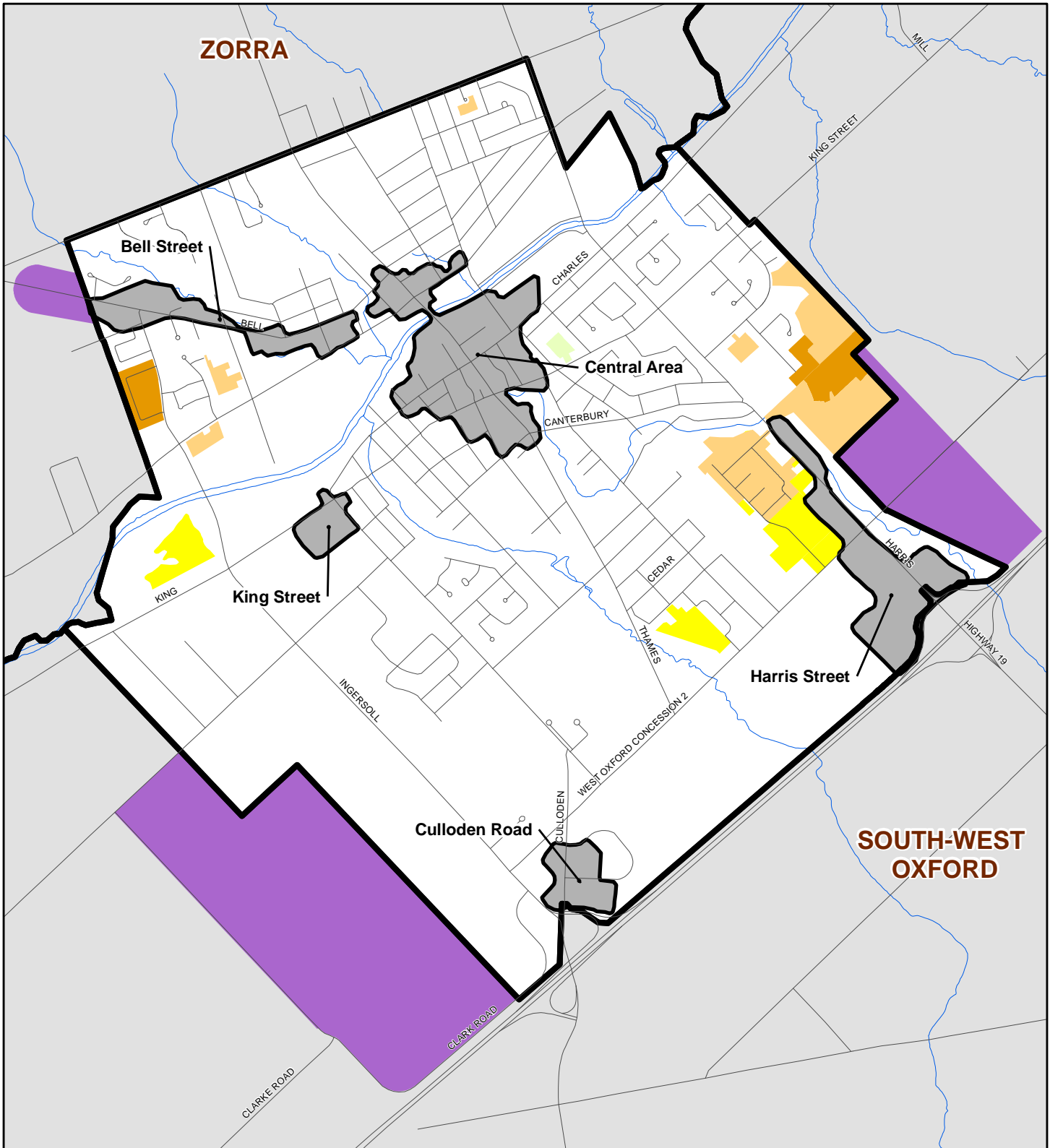










Figure 4 - Ingersoll Growth Areas

Commercial Policy Review - Module 2



- | | |
|---|--|
|  Municipal Boundaries | Residential Plan of Subdivision Status |
|  Commercial Clusters |  In Circulation |
|  Vacant Residential Designated Lands |  Draft Approved |
|  Future Urban Growth Area |  Registered (Not Fully Built) |
|  Watercourses | |

 Sorensen Gravely Lowes
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December 2009
Revised

to determine the most appropriate location for a Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation in this area.

Although it is important to maintain a healthy, competitive supply of commercial designated lands, similar to the need to maintain a healthy supply of residential and industrial lands, it is also important that an oversupply of designated and zoned commercial lands are not created which, if all built out, could have a significant negative impact on the planned function and on the viability and vitality of the downtown. Policies on phasing may need to be considered as is discussed in Section 6 of this report.

5.3.4 Serviced Villages

The population growth of the Rural Townships, between 2006 to 2031, totals 10,000 people. Within the Rural Townships, it's expected that most of the forecast growth will occur in the Serviced Villages. The largest share of population growth is forecast to occur in the Townships of Norwich (2,800 people) and Zorra (2,700 people) (see **Table 6**). Within Zorra, most of its growth is expected to occur in Thamesford, because it is closer to an Urban Centre (Ingersoll) and London, than Embro. In total, approximately 4,700 square metres (50,800 square feet) are allocated to Service Commercial designated lands, and 7,600 square metres (81,700 square feet) are allocated to the Village Cores.

The additional population growth in Thamesford should help to invigorate the Village Core, which has significant vacant buildings, as well as utilize some of the vacant Service Commercial lands, which together amount to almost 11,400 square metres (122,400 square feet) of available commercial space (**Table 6**).

Norwich is forecast to receive 28% of the population growth for the Rural Townships. Norwich also has the second greatest amount of vacant commercial space (3,600 square metres or 38,400 square feet). As with Thamesford, the commercial needs of the additional population in Norwich is expected to absorb the currently vacant commercial space.

East Zorra-Tavistock and Blandford-Blenheim are each forecast to receive 16% of the population growth for Rural Townships (see Table 6). It's anticipated that most of the projected growth in East Zorra-Tavistock will be focused in Tavistock. Some 4,500 square metres (48,660 square feet) of space is available in Tavistock, while there is no commercial space available in Innerkip. Of the forecast population growth for Blandford-Blenheim, it is anticipated that the growth will be evenly shared between Plattsville and Drumbo. Plattsville has roughly 3,200 square metres (35,000 square feet) of total available space, while no space is available in Drumbo.

South-West Oxford is forecast to receive 13% of the projected population growth for the Rural Townships. In Mt. Elgin some 1,800 square metres (19,500 square feet) of space is available.

Table 6. Population Growth of the Rural Townships

| Rural Township | Population Growth 2006 - 2031 | % Growth | Serviced Villages in Township | Total Available Space (sq.ft.) |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------|--|---|
| Blandford-Blenheim | 1,600 | 16% | Plattsville Drumbo | 34,903 0 |
| East Zorra-Tavistock | 1,600 | 16% | Tavistock Innerkip | 48,660 0 |
| Norwich | 2,800 | 28% | Norwich | 38,434 |
| South-West Oxford | 1,300 | 13% | Mount Elgin | 19,472 |
| Zorra | 2,700 | 27% | Embros Thamesford | 0 122,422 |
| Total | 10,000 | 100% | | 263,900 |

Source: Commercial Policy Review: Module 1, Appendix A, Table 1.

6.0 OTHER POLICY APPROACHES AND CONTROLS

6.1 PROTECTING AND INVIGORATING DOWNTOWNS

Many Southern Ontario municipalities are placing greater emphasis on the revitalization of their downtowns. The reasons for investment and revitalization efforts are varied, but it is often to promote socio-economic development, encourage a competitive and diversified economy, enhance the sense of place in the community and create self-reliant communities.

6.1.1 *What Local Municipalities Are Currently Doing*

The three Urban Centres have implemented a number of strategies to improve their respective Downtowns, including the waiving of development charges for Central Areas. Woodstock and Tillsonburg both have Downtown Community Improvement Plans (CIP), while Ingersoll has a Downtown Revitalization Plan. The Urban Centres have implemented a number of financial incentives under these Plans in order to stimulate investment in their downtowns, including Downtown Façade Improvement Programs.

The *Woodstock Downtown CIP* (2004) contains a number of strategies and initiatives ranging from economic incentives, joint public-private programs, flexibility in regulations such as parking requirements, to image and identity improvements. Some of the many initiatives include encouraging the creation of residential units within or near the Downtown, restricting large scale administrative and office uses outside of the downtown through zoning, ensuring that more comparison shopping type establishments are directed to the downtown, signage improvements, and encouraging more sidewalk cafes. Woodstock also has downtown and commercial area design guidelines, and a *Streetscape Master Plan* to help achieve image and identity improvements. These latter initiatives are rather dated, however, the City is currently in the process of undertaking an update to their Downtown Design Guidelines.

The *Tillsonburg Downtown Area Community Improvement Plan* (2006) consists of a variety of incentives for redevelopment projects including an Assessment Rebate Program, a Building Permit/Development Charges Rebate Program, an Application and Permit Fees Grant, a Façade Improvement Program, and an Upper Level Residential Improvement Program. These incentives are intended to stimulate and assist new development, redevelopment and rehabilitation of vacant, underutilized or deteriorated properties; encourage exterior renovations that are in keeping with the historical/heritage characteristics of the building; encourage retention and reuse of existing building stock through renovation and/or redevelopment of residential or commercial space in existing buildings; and encourage the creation of new residential units.

Ingersoll has not adopted a downtown CIP, but the Town, the BIA, the Chamber of Commerce and the Oxford Small Business Support Centre have partnered to create the *Ingersoll Downtown*

Revitalization Strategy (2004). The *Strategy* sets out in detail goals, objectives, and strategies for the short and medium term. Some of the strategies are to improve the diversity and number of specialty retail and food/entertainment operations, adopt building improvement guidelines and associated incentive fund, façade improvements along Thames Street, a signage program, streetscape improvements that will respect the historic built heritage, and a more integrated pedestrian walkway to link the downtown with the surrounding open space. The Town plans to update the downtown revitalization plan in 2009.

Currently there are no financial incentive programs or improvement strategies for the Village Cores.

6.1.2 What Others Have Done

Other municipalities use a similar combination of incentives. Some municipalities have also introduced innovative one-time grants. The Cities of Kitchener and Cambridge have offered one-time grants to local universities to locate schools in their downtown. Some have used Brownfield incentives to turn old industrial sites into new residential developments. Municipalities have also land-banked property in their downtown and made lands available to private sector partners for residential developments.

London has recently introduced a unique financial incentive program associated with their Downtown CIP. London introduced a number of financial incentives in the late 1990's to encourage the revitalization and renewal of the Downtown. The financial programs introduced, at that time, were similar to those of the downtown CIP's of Oxford County. However, despite the financial incentives provided, many of the buildings on Dundas Street, the "main street" of the Downtown, remained derelict. It was recognized that the successful revitalization of the Downtown is particularly dependent on the successful revitalization of Dundas Street. As such, an enhanced program of financial incentives was introduced in 2008 specifically targeted to Dundas Street in the Downtown. The focused area is referred to as a "Targeted Incentive Zone" within the Downtown CIP area. Seven financial incentive programs were made available for the Targeted Incentive Zone. In particular, the Tax Holiday Grant Program is intended to entice targeted uses to fill up the vacant and underutilized street level spaces within the Dundas Street corridor by providing a grant for a portion of the municipal property taxes paid. The value of the grant is to be calculated as the percentage of the total building area actively occupied by the ground level targeted use. Specific targeted uses and non-targeted uses include retail stores, supermarkets, hotels, art galleries, bake shops, churches, day care centres, dry cleaning and laundry depots, hotels, service offices, medical/dental offices, schools, restaurants, and theatres and cinemas. Some non-targeted uses are clinics, commercial recreation establishments, and service trades.

6.1.3 What More Could Be Done Here

The Woodstock and Tillsonburg CIP's provides a financial incentive program to encourage the creation of accessory residential dwelling units through the rehabilitation, renovation or addition to existing buildings. Ingersoll also has the goal of increasing the residential population in their downtown. There is an opportunity to encourage more residential intensification within the Central Areas, especially at the eastern and western ends of the Woodstock Central Business District and in the Entrepreneurial designated areas in each of the Urban Centres. Increasing the

residential population in the immediate vicinity of downtowns is a key tool in ensuring the vibrancy of the downtown. Streamlining the administrative process through pre-designating and pre-zoning sites for residential intensification can encourage investors, as well as other financial incentives as discussed previously. However, it is important that the surrounding neighbourhoods are an attractive place to live, and improving the desirability of adjacent residential areas can result in substantial benefits to the CBDs. As such, streetscape, landscaping and façade improvements in the surrounding residential neighbourhoods can be just as important as improvements along the main retail street. Simply increasing the density of street trees can have a dramatic improvement in the character of a residential area.

Enticing university campuses to the downtown may not be realistic at this point in time for the three Urban Centres, but the area municipalities could attract satellite college campuses to the Central Areas or other institutional or community facilities which could increase the day and night population of the downtown, and increase expenditures within the downtown. The second and third floor spaces above the main streets of Towns and small cities are often touted as an ideal location to achieve residential intensification. While this is correct, for smaller urban centres, even if high quality residential space is created, it may well be viewed as less desirable than other readily available alternatives. The promotion of this space for residential use should be balanced with consideration of promoting this space for offices and institutions.

Lastly, a specific incentive program geared towards enticing specific uses to the ground floor space of buildings within key areas of the CBD and Village Cores, similar to London's Tax Holiday Grant Program, could help encourage specific uses locate in these areas.

6.2 STUDY REQUIREMENTS

Primary Concern is Impact on the Central Area

The Oxford County Official Plan provides for appropriate study requirements in most instances. The requirement for market studies and Official Plan Amendments for new and expanded retail developments outside of the Central Area, including in the RCN designation and the Service Commercial Area designation, generally provides for an appropriate control mechanism. The most significant concern to be addressed by market studies is impact on the downtowns / CBDs.

This concern is particularly acute with the current high vacancies in the CBDs of the three Urban Centres, and especially when considering the large supply of vacant service commercial lands and the amount of designated and approved lands within the RCN designation. Although it is appropriate to have a competitive supply of lands, the substantial quantum of vacant lands in the three Urban Centres raises the potential for impact if the timing and amount of development on vacant lands is not properly restricted in line with appropriate commercial planning controls.

Consistent Approach Needed

Although the general intent of the policies in each of the designations is similar, i.e. concern for impact on the planned function of the downtown, the policy approaches and statements vary as to what impact is being assessed and in what circumstances.

Therefore, a consistent approach should be taken across all designations including the Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation and the Service Commercial Area designation. It is recommended that this include a separate impact assessment section in the Official Plan policies for each of the Large Urban Centres that is applicable to all commercial designations.

Under this approach, the impact assessment policies contained under 'Retail Function' (7.3.2.2.3, 8.3.2.2.2 and 9.3.2.2.1) would be combined with the impact assessment study requirements in the Service Commercial and Shopping Area policy sections (i.e. 7.3.3.2, 8.3.3.1 and 9.3.3.1) into one impact assessment policy section under the Economic Development and Employment Areas policy section.

Addressing Vacancy Rate

Another matter that must be considered is the high vacancy rate of the downtown and whether there are other mechanisms to address the high vacancy rate. As discussed in Section 6.1 of this report, municipal incentives could be used, but that action by itself is unlikely to achieve the desired long-term results.

Another mechanism is to build in the consideration of vacancy rate in the review of new applications. The City of Windsor has recommended that approach in its recently completed *Commercial Land Use Policy Review 2008*. That study recommended that additional commercial designations or expansions not be approved until an appropriate retail vacancy rate in the downtown and the main street areas had been reached. However, the study did not identify what an appropriate vacancy rate would be. Another recommendation was to relate new commercial approvals to future population growth, so as to not prematurely approve more space than what would be in demand.

The Oxford Official Plan includes, in a number of locations, direction to consider the ability to locate proposed retail uses within the Central Area. Although this is an appropriate direction, the policy and study requirements could be broadened to include considering the vacancy rate in the Central Area.

Supply and Phasing of Commercial Lands

As indicated previously, it is important to maintain a healthy, competitive supply of commercial designated lands. It is also not the objective of this study or the Official Plan to limit competition. However, there is increasing recognition in the Province that limits need to be placed on the quantum of lands designated for residential and employment use in order to achieve Provincial objectives of compact urban form, walkability and support for transit. Similarly, municipalities need to ensure that there is not an over designation of commercial lands such that Provincial objectives on intensification, walkability and vitality and viability of downtowns are negatively affected. Municipalities must therefore carefully monitor the balance between a competitive supply and over designation and zoning of commercial lands.

This can be achieved in part through the requirements for market studies for developments greater than 1,860 square metres (20,000 square feet) of commercial space and an Official Plan Amendment for developments greater than 4,645 square metres (50,000 square feet) of commercial space.

Policies on phasing may also need to be considered for lands that have been zoned. It is not reasonable to approve zoning on a site, based on demonstrated market need, and then have the landowner delay implementation while denying other sites the ability to develop due to a potential oversupply. Conditional zoning, as introduced into the Planning Act, would be helpful in this regard, but until the Province passes the required regulations implementing this Planning Act provision, conditional zoning cannot be used. Other tools include use of holding provisions or withholding final enactment of the by-law until site plan approval is given.

Maintaining and Enhancing Vitality and Viability

As discussed in Section 2 of this report, the PPS requires municipalities to maintain and where possible enhance the vitality and viability of downtowns and mainstreets. The implications of this policy are discussed in Section 4.1.3 of this report and indicators of vitality and viability are identified. This matter has not been fully addressed in the current study requirements of the Official Plan.

Planned Function

Impact on planned function is a critical issue as discussed in Section 2.3. The current policies reference in a number of locations the “impact on the planned retail function” of the Central Area. However, the planned function of the Central Areas encompasses more than just retail and loss of retail space can have a broader impact than just impact on the downtown’s retail function. It could affect its function as a meeting place and people place, its function as the perceived centre/core of the municipality, and its function as the municipal service centre. Healthy retail and service commercial functions are also a critical element in maintaining and enhancing the attractiveness of central areas and adjacent parts of a community for residential development and intensification.

Responding to Applications at the Norfolk Mall

The Norfolk Mall site is located immediately outside the municipal boundaries of the County of Oxford and the Town of Tillsonburg. It acts as a regional commercial node and thereby has a significant influence on the retail shopping patterns of Tillsonburg residents. Changes to the Norfolk Mall can have significant impact on the commercial structure of the Town of Tillsonburg. The County Official Plan should include a policy, which states that the County and Town will review any application for expansion of the Norfolk Mall in a similar fashion to an application within their municipal boundaries. The Official Plan should further indicate that such review will consider the impact on the planned function of existing designated retail areas, the vitality and viability of the Tillsonburg downtown and on the ability to provide an appropriate distribution of retail space throughout the Town.

Recommended Assessment Approach

A consistent commercial study approach should include the requirement for a commercial location needs assessment that addresses more than just a retail market study. The policy approach for a commercial location needs assessment should address the following matters:

- A commercial location needs assessment be required for:
 - i) Establishment of a new commercial designation;
 - ii) Expansion of an existing commercial designation;
 - iii) Change in a commercial designation from one commercial designation to another; and
 - iv) The development of commercial facilities within an existing designation greater than 1858 square metres (20,000 square feet)
- As part of the commercial location needs assessment, a retail market impact study shall be required above a threshold 1,860 square metres (20,000 square feet) of retail space on a site or on multiple adjacent sites.
- An Official Plan amendment would be required for matters i) through iii) above as well as for an application within an existing designation totaling more than 4,645 square metres (50,000 square feet) of commercial space.
- The commercial location needs assessment should demonstrate, through a detailed planning analysis of available built and vacant space in the Central Area in comparison to the proposed uses and tenants, that the new retail and service commercial uses cannot be appropriately accommodated in the downtown.
- The commercial location needs assessment should demonstrate that the proposed space and uses will not have an impact on the planned function of the Central Area and demonstrate that the vitality and viability of the Central Areas and Village Cores are maintained and enhanced by:
 - Assessing the impact on existing retail and service commercial space in the Central Area;
 - Assessing the range and diversity of activities within the Central Area and Village Cores and recommending means to ensure that key activities of shopping, personal services, restaurants, offices and entertainment remain;
 - Assessing the vacancy rate and demonstrate how the vacancy rate of the Central Area can achieve and maintain a vacancy rate for main floor uses in the range of 5 to 8 percent;
 - Assessing the ability of the Central Area to continue providing key retail services such as comparison goods shopping; beer, liquor and wine and convenience and neighbourhood serving retail space including grocery shopping and pharmacies;
 - Assessing the current perception of the Central Area, factors affecting the perception, whether that perception could be affected by the proposal and how the perception can be enhanced;
 - The ability of the Central Area to maintain its planned function as a central meeting place, service centre and destination for the municipality as a whole;
 - The ability of the Central Area to attract residential intensification through an appropriate range of shopping, entertainment, restaurant and service commercial uses; and
 - Identifying additional recommendations to enhance the vitality and viability of the Central Area and Village Cores.

- For new Neighbourhood Shopping Area designations, the commercial location needs assessment should also assess the appropriate maximum size of the designation and the appropriate location and distribution of Neighbourhood Shopping Areas to promote walkability and ensure all parts of the urban centres are appropriately served.
- The retail market impact study component of the location needs assessment should also address impact to the planned function of other existing built designations.
- The retail market impact study should also be required to consider the potential cumulative impacts that could result from development on existing commercially designated but unbuilt sites as well as the impact on the ability of vacant commercially designated sites to be developed for retail uses within the planning period. The area of consideration should include the full Trade Area within the boundaries of the County of Oxford.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The County has a distinct hierarchy of commercial areas throughout the Urban Centres and Serviced Villages, including Central Business Districts (CBDs), Entrepreneurial Districts, Regional Commercial Node, Service Commercial Areas, Neighbourhood Shopping Areas, Convenience Commercial, and Village Cores. The Central Business District and Entrepreneurial District in the Urban Centres, and the Village Core in the Serviced Villages are intended as the focal areas for retail and commercial services.

Section 2.0 of this report describes the current retail planning emphasis in Ontario, which is to provide for long-term growth in efficient and compact urban forms, while also maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns and mainstreets. This emphasis supports municipal policies that protect the planned function of such commercial areas and avoid undue adverse impact on that planned function. A number of different policy approaches have evolved to protect the planned function of commercial areas, including requiring detailed market impact studies for new developments. In particular, the assessment of adverse impact on planned function revolves around the protection of the Central Area (CBD and Entrepreneurial District) as the primary commercial area of the Urban Centre.

The Module 1 report forecast a total population of approximately 150,000 people in the County by the year 2031. In-line with this growth forecast, it is projected that by 2031, some 120,000 square metres (1.3 million square feet) of additional commercial space will be needed. In comparison, currently vacant commercial designated lands and vacancies in existing buildings in the Urban Centres and the Serviced Villages amount to 310,000 square metres (3.3 million square feet) of available space. Development specific market impacts studies may show that additional new retail space is warranted based on sales transfers; however, even with sales transfers, the County has a large oversupply of designated commercial lands.

A portion of this new space will gravitate to those vacant buildings and lots in the Urban Centres and Serviced Villages to serve the local population, and that of surrounding rural communities. The County has an abundant supply of vacant commercial designated lands, and could absorb all of the future required space on these vacant designated lands. As well, there are several opportunities for intensification and redevelopment within the Central Areas and Village Cores that could add to the current supply over the course of the next 20 years. However, of particular concern is the differential between currently available Service Commercial designated lands and the amount of future required space for true service commercial uses.

The Service Commercial designation focuses on uses that cater primarily to the needs of the traveling public and which generate customers from passing traffic, but permits a very broad range of uses, ranging from auto-oriented serving uses, to uses that cater to the convenience and day-to-day needs of the local neighbourhood. At the same time, the intended function of the Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation is to serve the day-to-day needs of the surrounding neighbourhoods. As a result, the large supply of Service Commercial designated lands, limits

the effectiveness of commercial planning to most appropriately locate facilities to meet the local and neighbourhood needs of the population. Because of the large areas of vacant service commercial designated lands, the local municipalities are left in a position of planning from a reactive position, rather than a proactive position of identifying appropriate locations in advance of applications.

To that end, it is suggested that the range of uses permitted on Service Commercial lands be scoped to better serve its planned function. A preferred approach would be to establish a Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation in all of the Urban Centres, which would permit food retail and convenience commercial uses that serve the surrounding residential neighbourhoods, and limit Service Commercial Areas to those uses primarily catering to the needs of the traveling public.

Within the Service Commercial designation offices, financial institutions and entertainment uses should also not be permitted. Within the Serviced Villages retail food stores, personal services and convenience commercial uses should be removed from the list of permitted uses. Convenience commercial could remain permitted as an accessory use to a gas station.

It is also recommended in the Service Commercial designation that a consistent threshold of 1,860 square metres (20,000 square feet) should be required for market studies in the three Urban Centres and the Serviced Villages, but the minimum floor area and market study requirements not be required for automobile sales, service and parts, industrial equipment sales and service, farm equipment sales and service, agricultural supplies, fast food restaurants, contractor suppliers, furniture stores, and building supply and home improvement centres.

Current retail locations providing food retail and other neighbourhood serving uses could be redesignated to a Neighbourhood Shopping Area, while new Neighbourhood Shopping Areas could also be considered in close proximity to residential growth areas, where warranted. Given the current oversupply of Service Commercial land, these new areas could be accommodated through the redesignation of currently vacant Service Commercial designated lands that are located in close proximity to growing residential areas, where appropriate.

The Neighbourhood Shopping Area designation is, therefore, recommended to be established in all three Urban Centres. The range of uses should be slightly different among the Urban Centres with Neighbourhood Shopping Areas in Ingersoll and Tillsonburg not permitted to contain banks / financial services, medical and dental clinics or beer, liquor and wine stores. The floor area cap for Neighbourhood Shopping Areas should be increased to 7,500 square metres (80,730 square feet).

It is recommended that the Central Area remain the focal shopping area in Urban Centres. There are a number of key determinants of the success of main street areas. These include image, tenant mix, surrounding market size and affluence, accessibility, promotion and competition. Maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the Central Area should also involve attention to prospects for increasing the resident population within and near the CBD, by stabilizing and improving the image of the surrounding residential neighbourhoods through streetscape improvements and other investments, and by encouraging residential or mixed-use

infill on vacant or derelict properties or underutilized sites, especially at the periphery of the Central Area, including within the Entrepreneurial District designation. The local municipalities should be encouraged to give priority to these areas for facilitating greater levels of infill and intensification, which can increase the size of the market area population. Targeting residential intensification and infill within walking distance (a range of 400 to 800 metres) of main streets in the CBDs can have a beneficial influence on the success and vibrancy of the Central Areas.

For the Village Cores, it is recommended that the policies clarify that service commercial uses including personal services, entertainment and restaurants are a permitted use. It is also recommended that commercial uses be encouraged to cluster in the vicinity of other existing commercial uses in order to create a defined street presence and that streetscape and design policies be introduced. Official plan amendment applications proposing new commercial uses should first consider the opportunity to locate on current designated but unused Village Core lands, and should be required to submit a market study for retail space in excess of 1,858 square metres (20,000 square feet) along with a commercial location needs assessment which addresses the viability and vitality of Village Cores.

For the Regional Commercial Node (RCN) policies, it is recommended that the function of the RCN be clarified that it provides retail facilities to serve the entirety of the residents of the urban area as well as a large portion of the surrounding rural area and accommodate department stores and / or other retail stores that serve a broad community or regional market area. It is also recommended that the prohibition on banks and financial institutions and professional and government offices remain and that entertainment uses also be added as a prohibited use. As well, the Official Plan should specify that certain policies on prohibited uses and minimum floor area are not intended to be revised on a site specific basis and should only be considered for review and refinement at the time of the five year review of the Official Plan.

In the Business Park and Industrial designations, the cap on ancillary retail sales should be reduced to 10 percent of the gross leaseable area of the industrial use. As well, restaurants and medical and dental offices/clinics should be removed as a permitted use from the Business Park, Industrial and Traditional Industrial Area designations and directed to the commercial designations where they are permitted.

A number of design and place-making policies can be introduced to strengthen the municipality's ability to achieve pedestrian-oriented and aesthetically pleasing shopping areas. Such policies are applicable not only to main street areas of the CBD, but also to Village Cores, Service Commercial Areas, Neighbourhood Shopping Areas, and RCN areas. There is opportunity to create shopping areas at all levels of the commercial hierarchy that promote walkability and support the creation of healthy communities.

Lastly, it is recommended that the County develop a consistent approach to market study requirements contained in one section within the commercial policy framework pertaining to each of the Urban Centres and the Serviced Villages in the Official Plan. This policy approach should set out the requirements for assessing impact on planned function, vacancy rate within the Central Areas and the means to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the Central Areas and Village Cores.