

Chapter 12: Redevelopment and Revitalization

Goal: Redevelop properties that are vacant or underutilized and eliminate the presence of blighting influences such as debris and vehicle storage on residential lots and poorly maintained industrial properties.

Background

Dundas is a relatively old City. It was first settled in the 1850s. There are many older buildings in town. Property maintenance standards have also been lax. The number one response to the question about what people do not like about Dundas was that there are too many unsightly and unkempt properties.⁷ Residents specifically cited the storage of trailers, weeds, debris, billboards, junk properties, industrial areas that are dumps, and the ethanol plant as problems for the community.

There is a need for some revitalization and stronger property maintenance standards to accommodate modern day land uses and discourage blight and poor property maintenance.

There have been several obstacles to achieving this objective.

- There is no clear vision of what downtown could or should be. There are different ideas that people have, but there has been no consensus.
- The changing economy has made some buildings and businesses outdated, if not obsolete. Therefore, it has been hard to focus on what uses might be appropriate for downtown.
- The highway developments in Dundas and Northfield have become the focal point for new commercial activity in the region.
- The lack of visibility (from Highway 3) of downtown Dundas makes it difficult to attract new infill uses.
- There is no active EDA in Dundas to undertake the actions necessary to encourage redevelopment in downtown Dundas. There is not even an implementation or action committee to push for downtown development or redevelopment.
- The DNR has been a big obstacle because they will not participate in any restoration of the mill that would accommodate a private business.
- Funding for revitalization is in short supply.

⁷ Dundas Comprehensive Planning Committee meeting, June 17, 2002.

Objectives

Specific objectives and policies related to this goal are stated below.

Downtown

Objective: A revitalized downtown.

Policies:

RR 1 The City will establish a downtown revitalization plan committee to monitor the conditions in downtown and to recommend specific improvement actions based on the comprehensive plan.

RR 2 The City will form an Economic Development Authority to carry out the public steps necessary to facilitate redevelopment activities. This could include land acquisition, relocation assistance to the acquired property, and installation of public infrastructure to make the redevelopment feasible.

RR 3 The City will work with the DNR to achieve a plan for downtown and the riverfront that is acceptable to the DNR and City.

RR 4 The City will encourage the continuance of the existing eating and drinking establishments in the downtown area and the creation of new, quality establishments.

RR 5 The City will not attempt to encourage other kinds of retail uses in the downtown area unless they are related to the eating, drinking, entertainment, and recreation theme of the downtown area.

RR 6 The City will only approve new developments that enhance the historical and architectural character of the downtown area.

Mill Ruins

Objective: Preservation of the mill ruins.

Policies:

RR 7 The City supports the preservation of the mill ruins.

RR 8 The City will attempt to find funding to acquire the mill ruins and adjacent property so that it can be in public ownership and control.

RR 9 The City will work with the DNR to achieve a plan for downtown and the riverfront that is acceptable to the DNR and City.

RR 10 The City will clear vegetation and other obstacles in the vicinity of the mill so that it can be viewed and appreciated by the public.

Blighted Properties

Objective: Reduction of blight and unsightly properties.

Policies:

RR 11 The City recognizes that there are too many unsightly properties and that the City must pass and enforce new regulations to improve the appearance of all properties in the City.

RR 12 The City needs to monitor the effectiveness of its recently amended zoning code that addressed the issues of exterior building materials and outside storage of materials, vehicles and recreational equipment.

RR 13 The City will work with property owners to improve existing conditions.

RR 14 The City may acquire some properties in order to remove the offending blight.

RR 15 Those properties that have been identified for specific attention are shown on the Revitalization Emphasis map.

Underutilized and Vacant Properties

Objective: Development of underutilized or vacant parcels.

Policies:

RR 16 The City supports the eventual redevelopment of the parcels on the Revitalization Emphasis map.

RR 17 The City will communicate with the property owners of these parcels to inform them of the City's interest in eventually purchasing these properties or encouraging the property owner to sell them for development consistent with the specific objectives of the comprehensive plan.

RR 18 The City will explore acquiring the right of first refusal on acquisition of these properties in order to facilitate the orderly redevelopment of the property.

Implementation Directions/Actions

The City has a rather limited capacity to undertake renewal and revitalization efforts at this time because most of its projected commercial tax revenues are dedicated to paying off the tax increment bonds for its tax increment project until 2014. However, tax revenues from expected new housing units could provide a source of funds for redevelopment activities.

The City should appoint a **downtown revitalization committee** to be the advocate for improvements and revitalization. The committee should meet regularly and develop a program or list of improvements that it recommends for downtown. The comprehensive plan provides some initial ideas where redevelopment should occur.

An **Economic Development Authority** should also be established that will provide the legal mechanism for the City to engage in redevelopment activities for the purpose of improving the community's economic prosperity. Eventually the agency is going to have to do property acquisition, relocation, and public infrastructure improvements to facilitate redevelopment or subsidize a private developer who would undertake those activities. The EDA should develop a timeline for revitalization activities. The plan also calls for the agency to obtain the **right of first refusal** when targeted properties come up for sale. This will give the City the first opportunity to buy key properties so that they are not transferred to property owners who might make the redevelopment process more difficult. It allows the current property owners to continue to use the properties until the City has the financial resources to buy the properties.

The City should work with the **DNR** on riverfront improvements and seek financial assistance from them to make the improvements called for in the plan. This includes the purchase of the mill ruins area.

A key part of the revitalization strategy in Dundas is the upgrading of **building and zoning codes** related to exterior building materials and overall appearance. Outside storage also needs to be more tightly controlled. The revisions to the codes that will follow the adoption of the plan should address these issues.

Finally, the City needs to **enforce its existing ordinances** by targeting the worst instances of too many vehicles and general clutter, including logs, lumber, and construction related materials that are being stored on residential properties.

Insert Revitalization Emphasis map