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TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
FROM:	JOHN M. FLEMING MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT:	URBAN REGENERATION ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION OUTREACH STRATEGY MEETING ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2015

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner, the report regarding the Urban Regeneration Engagement and Education Strategy **BE RECEIVED** for information and direction **BE GIVEN** to initiate the outreach strategy in the community.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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None

BACKGROUND

Council Direction

There were two Council resolutions which initiated the strategy. On April 16, 2013 Council received an enquiry from Councillor Bryant “as to how the public can input their opinion/comment with respect to infill/planning projects around the community which have the potential to significantly alter the nature of the neighbourhood but meet current by-law regulations and requirements such as zoning and site setbacks.” In response Council resolved:

16. That, the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner **BE REQUESTED** to report back at a future meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee with respect to infill and planning projects in established communities.....

The Councillor’s request, and subsequent Council resolution, came in response to the formation of a new section within the Planning Division, Urban Regeneration. Because planning applications regarding infill proposals often generate a high level of public interest, and because of the growing desire to make better use of existing infrastructure, the new section was formed to deal with potential changes in the built-up central portion of London.

On January 28, 2014 Council further resolved:

15. That, the following actions be taken with respect to Civic Administration’s procedures relating to infill:
- a) the Civic Administration **BE REQUESTED** to mitigate the public’s concerns by engaging area residents earlier in the process;

Agenda Item #	Page #

- b) *the Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to enhance the process; it being noted that the approach taken for greenfield initiatives and the approach taken for infill development should be different;*

Urban Regeneration Section

In March 2014 the Urban Regeneration Section was formed in Planning Services in part to address community engagement in intensification and redevelopment proposals. The area of focus is generally in the built area boundary defined in the Official Plan and is bounded by Fanshawe Park Road, Highbury Avenue, Wonderland Road, plus sections of Southdale, Bradley and Exeter Roads and the villages of Hyde Park, Lambeth and Bryon. The section deals with the following matters, most of which intersect with one another and with other services areas in the Corporation:

1. Downtown Planning;
2. Urban neighbourhoods;
3. Urban main streets;
4. Heritage conservation;
5. The creation and implementation of community improvement plans;
6. Outreach for infill and intensification proposals; and,
7. Neighbourhood and Business Improvement Area (BIA) Liaison.

When the Section was formed one of the identified primary duties was education/outreach to Councillors, Neighbourhood Associations, business organizations, industry groups and the general public.

The Strategy

This initiative is being done to create an awareness of the role served by the new Urban Regeneration Section, to identify its focus, and to contribute improvements in the ways Planning Services engages the public.

Community engagement and education will address work program matters such as City-initiated Official Plan and Zoning By-law reviews, community plans, area studies and Heritage Conservation District Studies. It is our goal to strive to cultivate consistent and frequent contact with community groups, business associations and industry groups (eg. London Development Institute (LDI), London/St.Thomas Real Estate Board, London Home Builders Association (LHBA)) in London. It is also our goal to better connect people with information. The strategy rests on the principle that engagement and education will be fostered in both directions, with staff listening as much or more than speaking.

In order to do this Planning staff need to:

1. Meet with members of the Urban League to identify community associations and identify matters of concern to them and potential ways to address concerns;
2. Meet with Business Associations and Industry Groups likewise to identify and address issues of concern;
3. Assign an Urban Regeneration Planner to each association or group to act as their consistent point of contact;
4. Strive to meet regularly, at least annually, with each community, business and industry group; and,
5. Make connections internally with City/Agency staff such as Utilities Co-ordinating Committee (UCC), Engineers (EA Process) and Neighbourhood Childrens Services who also do public outreach.

Agenda Item #	Page #

It is understood that planning staff assigned as a consistent contact to each group would act as a liaison offering information on planning matters, legislation, or Council direction rather than as an advocate for a particular position or viewpoint. Planners would be made available to meet at the group's option. These meetings could take the form of annual meetings, discussion of a topic of interest, comments on a major project in the area etc.

Complying with the Council direction noted earlier in this report, one area of particular emphasis will address where and how intensification proposals can achieve their best fit in local contexts and circumstances. In this regard, the strategy will aim towards establishing community expectations toward intensification proposals including planning policies and practices that can be used to achieve them. Although Urban Regeneration staff will not typically manage individual planning applications related to intensification, which is the purview of other sections in Planning Services and Development Compliance Services, it is anticipated Urban Regeneration staff will frequently participate in early community conversations related to specific applications. The nature of these conversations will be described in an upcoming separate report authored by the Current Planning Section of Planning Services.

Conclusion

The recommended action would implement Council direction to further engage community groups earlier in the consideration of City-initiated Urban Regeneration projects.

PREPARED BY:	SUBMITTED BY:
W.J. CHARLES PARKER, M.A. SENIOR PLANNER - URBAN REGENERATION	JIM YANCHULA, MCIP, RPP MANAGER, URBAN REGENERATION
RECOMMENDED BY:	
JOHN M. FLEMING, MCIP, RPP MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER	

February 9, 2015