

# Downtown Simcoe **SECONDARY PLAN** **2019**



**Norfolk**  
COUNTY

○ Robinson  
Administration  
Building

185 Robinson St., Suite 200 • Simcoe ON N3Y 5L6  
T: 519.426.5870 • F: 519.428.3069 • [norfolkcounty.ca](http://norfolkcounty.ca)

## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **Purpose and Effect:**

The purpose of the Secondary Plan is to create specific land use policies for the downtown central business district of Simcoe. Simcoe's downtown area, or Central Business District (CBD), is identified and designated within the Norfolk County Official Plan and accommodates the largest and most diverse concentration of central functions of the urban centre. The intent of the Simcoe Secondary Plan is to create a working document to facilitate growth opportunities that will promote and encourage revitalization the downtown core of the community.

### **Project area**

Downtown Simcoe is a large area comprising approximately 37 hectares of land. It stretches north to south from Union Street to Victoria Street, and east to west from the Lynn River to Queen Street. There is a mix of commercial, office and residential uses in primarily older buildings within the downtown area. There are also a number of vacant storefronts. The approximate residential population in the central business district is approximately 620 people.



### **History of Simcoe**

Simcoe was founded in 1795 by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe. Initially, the settlement consisted of two distinct areas, Birdtown, named by William Bird who arrived in the early 1800s and the Queensway which grew up around Aron Culver's sawmill and

grist mill in the 1820s. The post office opened in 1829. In 1837, the village became the seat of government of the then Talbot District. The settlement was far from any major roads and had little communication with areas outside of Brantford. At this time, a stone court house and jail had already been built. The courthouse was destroyed by fire in 1863 and rebuilt. Simcoe was incorporated as a town in 1878 and had its own Town council and mayor until December 31, 2000.

In 2001, the Town of Simcoe was amalgamated with the Township of Delhi, Township of Norfolk and the eastern portion of the City of Nanticoke to form Norfolk County, a single tier municipality. Simcoe now forms Ward 5 of Norfolk County and the main County Administration building with Council Chambers is located in Governor Simcoe Square in downtown Simcoe. The building fronts onto Colborne Street South and provides the major administrative functions of the municipality.

### **Main features to date**

Simcoe sits at the crossroads of Highway 24 and Highway 3. The downtown area is situated in the southerly portion of Town on Highway 24, or Norfolk Street as it is known through the core. The streets through the downtown are typically accessed via two way vehicular traffic, with two one way streets – Court Street and Lot Street, adjacent to the County Square.

### **Greenspace**

Downtown is limited to the east by the Lynn River and the Lynnwood Park, and Bowling Green, Grant Anderson and Wellington parks to the north. The parks provide wonderful greenspace bordering the core and provides attractive vistas. This Downtown park space provides relief from the density found in the core and balances the hardscape of the roads and buildings. It also provides space for community oriented events.

### **Heritage**

Downtown features a number of historically designated buildings that add to the cultural nature of the community including:

- Simcoe Market Square – Old Fire Hall Building
- Governor Simcoe Square and the Simcoe Public Library (former County Gaol)
- County Administration Building (Formerly the Courthouse)
- Governor Simcoe Square – former Registry Office
- Governor Simcoe Square – former Crown Attorney's Office
- Simcoe Mechanic Institute/Sheppard Building
- Post Office/Ventin Building
- Dr. John Wilson Block/Masonic Lodge

- Rob-Pond Manorome Building
- Eva Brook Donly Museum
- Duncan Campbell – Lynnwood Historical Site
- Sovereign/Murdoch Residence

### Retail Character

The Queensway has taken over much of the traditional retail growth in Simcoe and has seen the establishment of big box stores and large format retail including Walmart, Canadian Tire and the Real Canadian Superstore, as well as the relocation of some of the traditional downtown businesses such as jewellery stores, law offices and apparel.

While there has been some shift from the downtown, there continues to be long-standing key anchors who have stayed and invested in the downtown, including Roulston's Pharmacy, The Strand Movie Theater, Leon's, several law offices and the Norfolk Art Centre, as well as the establishment of new businesses, restaurants and specialty stores that offer a unique dining or retail experiences.

Within the downtown redevelopment is starting to occur with new construction happening at the former Malibu property, the former Norfolk Inn and the former LCBO Store. Through the *Win this Space* Revitalization initiative, a vacant space was renovated and an innovative business venture was established.

### Public Facilities

Public service facilities also provide a key function for the downtown and Simcoe is well serviced by the presence of the Simcoe Public Library, Talbot Gardens Arena, Ontario Early Years Centre, and the Simcoe Seniors Centre. These locations provide a variety of services and amenities to the community and both service the residents of the area and draw visitors into the core.

### The Opportunities and Challenges of Downtown Simcoe:

1. Anchor Streets: Downtown Simcoe has a strong road network that can provide a solid anchor to the core and creates a foundation. Norfolk Street is the main north-south access and could provide for a gateway. Peel Street provides an excellent vista to the Administration building and Argyle and Water Streets provide an important link to the east and the greenspace/trail system.
2. Large Area: The downtown area is extensive and encompasses approximately 35 hectares. This is a vast area to cover for downtown policies and incorporates a variety of land uses. The space is not well defined and lacks distinctive character.

3. **Downtown Identity:** The downtown identity has been lost over the years with the traditional retail components relocating along the Queensway. A number of the “mom-and-pop” operations have ceased with no clear direction to what could be supported. Store fronts have remained vacant for long periods of time. Norfolk Street has the potential to create a gateway to the downtown and provide a clear position within the community.
4. **Residential Opportunities:** While there are housing opportunities within the downtown core, the quality and composition in terms of variety of forms is lacking. People living in the core bring life to its streets and shops, creating activity and energy. A certain level of activity make people feel that a downtown is a safe and desirable place to be. However, the current residential population is under-represented and insufficient to generate urban excitement.
5. **Distinctive Architecture:** Architecture create a link to the past and provides character for a community. Architecture is the process and the product of planning, designing, and constructing buildings or any other structures. Strong architectural buildings, are often perceived as cultural symbols and as works of art. Downtown has a number of historic buildings that add to the appearance of downtown and create a personality and sense of place.
6. **Connections to Greenspace:** Lynnwood Park and Alligator Tug Park are located along the east of the downtown area, while Grant Anderson Park and Welling Park are found to the north. The parks provide connection with the Lynn Valley Trail and Lynnwood Clifton Trail, which allow for linkage to larger trail systems including the Norfolk Sunrise Trail, Delhi Rail Trail and the Waterford Heritage Trail. These linkages allow for great opportunities to feature downtown Simcoe as a cyclist stop and destination. The parks create key spaces for community events and attractive vistas.
7. **Building Condition:** The state of repair and building character for many of the older buildings is in need of maintenance. Many of the buildings are either vacant or in need to attention to return them to the grandeur once possessed. A greater pride of ownership and celebration of place needs to be engrained in the public.
8. **Cultural Celebration:** There are a number of historic buildings within the core, many designated and others that while they don't carry the designation have many features that can be highlighted.

9. Accessibility: Additionally, through public conversations there was a desire to have community gatherings spaces and improved accessibility. Many comments were received
10. Safety Concerns: For a downtown to be utilized to its full potential, people must feel safe. However, it is known that for a variety of reasons, there are concerns within the community and can extend to certain types of uses within the core or unfavorable activities. Integration of space and increasing positive actions will foster a more welcoming environment.

### **VISION:**

To transform the core into an active, safe and diverse destination for people, businesses and new investment. To create a downtown that is mixed in its character and function, is well integrated with surrounding communities and supports an authentic and unique identity.

### **THEMES:**

- 1) Celebrate our Community
- 2) Living Well – A residential focus
- 3) Economic Versatility
- 4) Connection with the Environment
- 5) Moving Around
- 6) Build Beautifully
- 7) Community Improvement
- 8) Partnerships

A successful downtown creates a positive image for the community and supports a strong tax base. A healthy downtown stimulates a healthy community.

Downtown Simcoe should be considered a destination within Norfolk County. There should be opportunities for residential, business, recreation and cultural events. However, at present the town lacks many of the facilities necessary to assert these opportunities. If downtown Simcoe is to become an important hub within the County, it needs to be competitive and establish itself as the place to be.

The Norfolk County Official Plan recognizes the important role of Downtown as an employment and retail base within the municipality. To this end, a number of initiatives are required to stimulate growth and development of the area.

### **1) Celebrate our Community**

- 1.1 Downtown Simcoe has many assets including a strong inventory of historic buildings, natural greenspace including the Lynn River and a number of parkland space. The buildings, road networks and open spaces provide a framework for the Downtown and create the opportunity for a unique and attractive character.
- 1.2 A successful downtown creates a positive image for the community and supports a strong tax base. A healthy downtown can promotes diversity and investment potential.
- 1.3 The County will endeavor to conserve significant heritage features and to work to increase the number of cultural heritage resources designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.
- 1.4 New development within the downtown should consider heritage features in design and incorporate significant architectural elements in construction where possible.
- 1.5 Public Art should be encouraged within the downtown and integrated into the design of buildings, streetscapes and open spaces.
- 1.6 The County will continue to assist with revitalization efforts and increase the number of public art projects within the Downtown.
- 1.7 The County will advocate for mural projects within the Downtown.
- 1.8 There are a number of alleys and laneways that exist in Downtown Simcoe and provide a key function for the local businesses and residential uses in terms of access and parking opportunities. However, the alleys and laneways have deteriorated over the years and are not being utilized to their full potential. There are concerns from a safety perspective.
- 1.9 The County shall encourage support for an alley enhancement program to facilitate redevelopment and revitalization opportunities to address the following:
  - i. Pedestrian linkages
  - ii. Improved lighting
  - iii. Celebrated entrances
  - iv. Potential business expansion opportunities, including patios and other similar open air functions
  - v. Long-term maintenance strategies and coordinated agreements
  - vi. Parking options

vii. Evaluation of Hard surface treatments

## **2) Living Well – A residential focus**

- 2.1 Successful downtowns contain residential components. Downtown residents generate and create demand for business and services. They provide informal surveillance and become important advocates for continued improvement. As a goal, a community should provide for infill opportunities and encourage strong space within the core. The County shall promote the following:
- i. Encourage a wide range of land uses and built forms.
  - ii. The County shall promote the development of diverse neighbourhoods in Downtown with a variety of housing choices, including units suitable for families and affordable housing.
  - iii. Ensure the built form of development contributes to attractive streetscapes and open spaces and supports an inviting, comfortable and active public realm.
  - iv. Ensure new development respects the character of downtown's historic fabric and the quality of life in surrounding neighbourhoods.
- 2.2 The County shall endeavor to facilitate all forms of residential growth and encourage higher density forms of housing.
- 2.3 Review of the land base and designations within the Downtown area to identify areas for intensification or development opportunities.
- 2.4 The following built form policies shall generally apply to downtown residential development
- i. Buildings shall be massed to minimize as much as is practical the extent and duration of shadows on parks, adjacent residential uses, other public open space, private amenity space and retail streets.
  - ii. Where buildings greater than 4 storeys are permitted, the portion of a building above fourth sixth storey shall be stepped back, generally greater than 2 metres from the edge of the building fronting a public street or park.
  - iii. All buildings should have detailed and well-articulated street level façades with high quality materials. Blank walls facing a street or public open space shall be avoided.
- 2.5 The County may investigate the opportunity for Residential Incentive Programme.

- 2.6 Affordable, supportive or transitional housing is an integral part of a community and it is important to the function of society to ensure access to safe, clean and affordable housing regardless of income or economic circumstances.
- 2.7 The Downtown provides many services that can be of benefit to those in need with amenities including retail, medical services, social services, financial institutions, access to food and recreation within close proximity and within walking distance. The relationship and symmetries that exist downtown should continue to be fostered and additional affordable housing encouraged to be located within the downtown area.
- 2.8 The County shall advocate for the development of affordable, supportive and transition housing units within the Downtown that respects and enhances the existing building fabric.
- 2.9 Affordable, supportive and transition housing shall be developed in a manner that is sustainable, accessible and available for a mixed-income.
- 2.10 Through development proposals in the Downtown, the County shall promote the inclusion of residential rental units.
- 2.11 Housing investments should support climate change initiatives and incorporate LEED design standards.
- 2.12 In creation of affordable, supportive and transition housing, the County encourages partnerships between the development community; interest and advocacy groups; various levels of government agencies; financial institutions and post-secondary institutions.
- 2.13 As noted in the introduction, the geographic coverage of the downtown is vast, which can lead to issues when attempting to apply policies to a certain area. While the Downtown is considered a district in itself, within that area there can be the identification of distinct nodes or neighbourhoods that could cater or attract specific uses.
- 2.14 The County shall review and explore the option of establishing Downtown Development Districts such as,
- Core – primary focus on retail, commercial, service uses.
  - Entertainment – identification of an area for restaurants and performance facilities

- Transition – recognition of more residential uses and with potential for reduced commercial requirements for commercial space at the street level.
- River corridor – encourage improved greenspace, festivals and outdoor cultural events.

### **3) Economic Versatility**

- 3.1 Downtown has the widest range of commercial and service related land use opportunities within Simcoe. There are a number of strong architectural buildings that have the chance for redevelopment and repurpose. It also has a strong base for office space and a number of unique and entrepreneurial type businesses. However, there is an apparent missing component of cultural elements within the core.
- 3.2 It is important to provide a balanced form within the core and create spaces that provide for a reason to be downtown. Office jobs and office space are essential in a downtown; but it is also key to have services for people to enjoy. Office space is a powerful asset for downtown businesses, creating lunchtime and after-work trade that can stretch out the business day, increase productivity and foster a buzz within a community. The presence of restaurants, cafes and bakeries provide people the chance to take in the surroundings and act as a draw to the downtown. These uses partner with event type space such as arenas, theaters, museums and auditoriums to create a symbiotic relationship.
- 3.3 A continued commitment to retail establishments with the Downtown core shall be promoted, and discouraged from relocating to the Queensway corridor.
- 3.4 The County will encourage Downtown Simcoe as a meeting destination with attention on:
- i. Space for business trade events, receptions and group functions,
  - ii. Accommodation for festivals and cultural events
  - iii. Opportunities for improved sport and recreation space
  - iv. Quality gathering space for social groups, clubs and associations.
- 3.5 The County will continue to market downtown and promote as a Shopping and Dining destination, with special interest on:
- i. Boutique shops
  - ii. Welcoming space for entrepreneurial opportunities
  - iii. Create a theme for the core/local context

- iv. Market Space
- v. Art marketing/historical connection: Eva Brook Donly; Norfolk Arts Centre

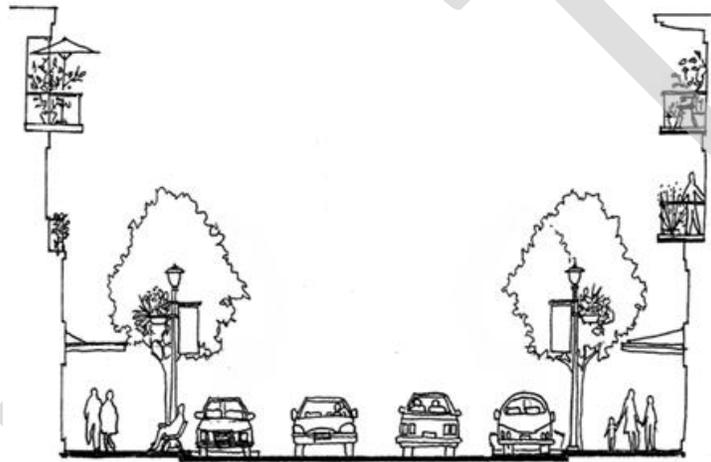
- 3.6 The County will advocate for relationships with post-secondary education facilities to locate downtown for the:
- i. Development of class room space within the downtown.
  - ii. Partnership between educational opportunities and local businesses (i.e. coop's and apprenticeships).
  - iii. Establishment of new and additional postsecondary facilities and trade schools.
  - iv. Creation of residential accommodation for students.
- 3.7 Major cultural facilities, tourist-oriented supportive uses, such as museums, rehearsal studios, incubator office space, art and design studios, gallery space and meeting rooms shall be encouraged to locate within the downtown.
- 3.8 The County will, through economic development initiatives, promote the Downtown as a focal point for private and public investments, as well as tourism, by encouraging events such as the Routes to Roots Film Festival, Christmas Panorama, Carnival Festival and other smaller events such as Christmas in July and Food Truck Fridays.
- 3.9 There is also an identified need through Tourism and Economic Development for additional hospitality uses and roofed accommodations within Norfolk County. Downtown Simcoe can serve to fulfill some of the demand and consideration to development applications of this nature should be advocated and actively fostered.
- 3.10 The County will continue to implement incentive programs to achieve economic growth through such measures as Community Improvement Plans targeted specifically at the downtown.
- 3.11 The Simcoe Farmers' Market is a long-standing cultural, tourist and commercial anchor destination in Simcoe. The market facility is located at the Fairgrounds, where it has been operating since 1981. It is operated year-round with thirty (30) plus vendors. Growing the capacity and partnership connections of the Farmers' Market with the Downtown by providing additional space or an alternative location is considered to support the economic development objectives of the Downtown and provide for fresh and local food opportunities within the core. The County will work with the Simcoe Farmers Market to explore opportunities for growth, organizational capacity and partnerships, and alternative locations in Downtown.

- 3.12 Mobile Food Establishments are a growing industry in the service industry, and should be encouraged to be located within the commercial core subject to the following provisions:
- i. On public roads (with a mobile vending permit)
  - ii. Private property and commercial parking lots with the permission of the owner in areas that allow food trucks
  - iii. 30 linear metres from an open and operating restaurant
  - iv. No more than two food trucks per block
  - v. Maximum of five hours at any one time

#### **4) Connection with the Environment**

- 4.1 Greenspace and opportunities for connections with the environment are important items for humans and add to supporting long-term prosperity of a community. Greenspace, parks and the Lynn River attract tourists and commerce, accommodates cultural and recreational activities and provides an important environmental balance to the buildings and hard surface treatments.
- 4.2 To create a supporting framework for public spaces and the environment, the following intents shall be undertaken:
- i. Ensure existing and future Downtown residents have access to parkland and community facilities that meet their recreational needs.
  - ii. Improve physical and visual access to the river for all Downtown users.
  - iii. Establish appropriate and new settings for civic gatherings and cultural events.
  - iv. Increase opportunities for informal gatherings Downtown and the enjoyment of leisure activities.
  - v. Protect cultural heritage resources through the use of the Ontario Heritage Act and other planning tools
- 4.3 Generally, all streets Downtown shall have sidewalks and street trees on both sides and lighting appropriate for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. In considering a streetscape manual for the public realm, the following shall be addressed:
- i. Coordinated street furnishings, which include benches, bike racks, bollards, refuse bins, transit locations, banners and special lighting;
  - ii. Appropriate areas are identified for outdoor patios, pedestrian movement and furnishings;
  - iii. Street and pedestrian-scale lighting;

- iv. The design and construction standards for paving that is durable, urban and sustainable;
- v. Accessibility requirements;
- vi. Street trees, including standards for street tree planting that help ensure their long term survival;
- vii. The location of electrical and telecommunication cabling and above ground utility infrastructure so that their location and design contributes to an attractive public realm;
- viii. The installation of public art within streetscapes; and,
- ix. Appropriate cross-sections for key Downtown Streets is integrated and reflect parking needs and requirements.



- 4.4 The County shall identify locations, sizes and configurations of existing and the potential for future parks and urban squares.
- 4.5 The alignments of trails shall be reviewed to ensure appropriate spaces are being maintained and locations for potential civic, cultural or community uses are identified for potential resources. The County will encourage, where appropriate, pedestrian links and open space to be maintained.
- 4.6 In addition to identified open spaces, other parks and urban squares may be developed Downtown without amendment to this Plan.
- 4.7 Given their location Downtown, the mix of uses surrounding them and the intense use they are expected to experience, new parks and urban squares should be designed as community and cultural hubs, serving multiple purposes and accommodating programmed and non-programmed activities.

- 4.8 Low Impact Development (LID) measures will be encouraged and included where feasible to minimize stormwater run-off and recharge groundwater systems, including rainwater harvesting and reuse systems, bio-swales or water features, infiltration measures, permeable paving materials and green roofs.

## **5) Moving Around**

- 5.1 In successful downtowns, there are many ways to arrive and move around, including vehicular, public transit, walking and cycling. Streets serve multiple functions. Public transit plays a critical role in supporting employment and higher density residential uses. Although multiple modes of transportation will be facilitated, movement within Downtown will focus on walking to ensure the creation of an attractive, high-quality urban environment.
- 5.2 Urban standards that emphasize the efficient use of land and infrastructure and support a pedestrian-oriented environment and high-quality urban design shall be applied to the engineering and design of transportation infrastructure in Downtown.
- 5.3 Street hierarchy is a key component to getting around a community and to moving people. Downtown Simcoe has a strong road structure with clear paths of movement. Norfolk Street provides the main north-south thoroughfare through the downtown, while Robinson Street provides the east-west link. The network was established on a grid pattern and local streets are easily accessed and provide a continuous connection through the area.
- 5.4 In the design of public right of ways, the County will balance the provision of a safe, functional and attractive pedestrian-oriented environment with an acceptable level of vehicular traffic. The municipality may consider a level of service which reflects the constraints of the right-of-ways Downtown, in return for a more pedestrian oriented environment and achievement of urban design objectives along its roads. To achieve this environment, the County may utilize a variety of techniques, depending on the function of the road, including alternative engineering standards.
- 5.5 The County may consider the need for, where appropriate, bicycle facilities, loading facilities, transit priority measures, on-street parking and other infrastructure needs, including street trees. These issues will be considered in a holistic manner to create a final design which is sensitive to the Downtown.
- 5.6 The County shall investigate the potential of creating additional pedestrian oriented space and improved opportunity for foot-traffic through the closure of roads. Closing

roads to vehicular travel and creating courtyard or public space in that realm can generate a greater sense of community and ownership of the area.

- 5.7 Parking is readily available throughout the downtown with all streets having on-street parking. The municipality also has multiple parking lots available within the downtown core that serve a wide area. There are available parking lots on Kent Street (3); Pond Street; Culver and Argyle streets; Court Street. The County will continue to monitor parking and development pressures to assess if additional parking lots are required.
- 5.8 Development within Downtown does not require parking as per the Norfolk County Zoning By-law 1-Z 2014 Parking Provisions, however, for new residential proposals, the creation of some on-site parking is encouraged.
- 5.9 The County, in consultation with Downtown business owners and other stakeholders, may consider a Downtown Parking Strategy that considers at a minimum:
- i. an assessment of the current supply of parking and opportunities to improve the distribution of parking;
  - ii. the existing and projected future demand for parking Downtown for commercial, employment, institutional and entertainment uses, in the context of economic development objectives;
  - iii. existing and future opportunities for shared parking that maximizes the use of facilities;
  - iv. a cash-in-lieu of parking policy for new commercial development that reduces the requirement for on-site parking and supports the development of shared public parking facilities;
  - v. an assessment of on-street parking policies, including angled parking;
  - vi. appropriate minimum and maximum parking standards including the provision of required parking off-site;
  - vii. a long-term strategy to ensure an adequate supply of public parking across Downtown and which is aligned with economic development initiatives; and,
  - viii. parking management solutions, demand side solutions and optimization of existing parking stock.
- 5.10 The downtown core is relatively easy to access via cycling and walking. All roads are serviced by sidewalks on both sides, and there is a trail system that links through Lynnwood Park that connects beyond to larger regional trail networks. However, the

area could be better serviced by improved sidewalk construction and the opportunity for bike stations to serve the traveling public.

5.11 Simcoe is serviced by RIDE Norfolk, which is a partner operation between Haldimand-Norfolk REACH; Haldimand-Norfolk Social Services, Workforce: Planning Board of Grand Erie; Sand Plans Community Development Fund and Norfolk District Business Development Corporation. The service currently operates Monday to Friday from 8:00am – 6:00pm, with routes to Simcoe, Courtland, Delhi, Langton, Waterford, Port Dover, Walsh, St. Williams, Port Rowan, Port Ryerse, Vittoria and Turkey Point dependent on the day. There is no weekend or statutory holiday service. There are 3 stops for the service within downtown with those locations being:

- Metcalfe Street South (near West Street)
- Kent Street South (near Robinson Street)
- Court Street (adjacent to the County Administration Building).

5.12 The community would benefit from additional transit opportunities including additional stops and greater schedule frequency and efforts should be undertaken to strengthen the viability of the system.

5.13 The presence of fast-moving vehicular traffic is strongly discouraged through the Downtown.

5.14 The County encourages the development of alternate transportation methods including, but not limited to, transit, carpooling or car sharing programs, social bike sharing systems and ridematching.

## **6) Build Beautifully**

6.1 Many of Simcoe's buildings feature the International style of architecture; typical of the period between 1920 and 1950 while residential buildings from the 1850s use the Gothic Revival style of architecture. New development and redevelopment must take the heritage into consideration during construction and preserve the architectural history of the community.

6.2 Downtown Simcoe should contain a range of uses, including office, retail, institutional, entertainment and residential, and shall:

- i. Promote design excellence.

- ii. Encourage a wide range of land uses and built forms.
  - iii. Promote the development of diverse neighbourhoods in Downtown with a variety of housing choices, including units suitable for families, empty-nesters, and affordable housing
  - iv. Initiate Urban Design Criteria to guide construction, including building and street signage.
  - v. Establish street level lighting that nurtures a sense of safety
  - vi. Endorse the creation Public Art.
- 6.3 In the core of downtown, buildings must be mixed-use, with active commercial uses on the ground floor and other uses on upper floors.
- 6.4 As part of the Implementation Strategy for the Downtown Secondary Plan, the County, in collaboration with Heritage and Culture, may undertake a Heritage Conservation Analysis for the historic Downtown core to:
- i. identify additional properties for individual designation pursuant to the provisions of Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, with a priority placed on cultural heritage resources on key historic streets in the historic Downtown core.
  - ii. identify heritage character areas within the Downtown Secondary Plan area that have the potential to be Heritage Conservation District(s) pursuant to the provisions of Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act.
- 6.5 The County may also take additional steps to conserve the cultural heritage resources within the Secondary Plan area, including:
- i. integration of Cultural Heritage Landscape features into the public realm or other public facilities where feasible and appropriate;
  - ii. implement, where appropriate, standards through the Zoning By-law that further support the conservation of the heritage character of downtown by creating heritage districts
- 6.6 Public art is considered an important element of Downtown's public realm, adding beauty and interest to streetscapes as well as parks, other open spaces and buildings.
- i. The integration of public art in significant private developments shall be encouraged.
  - ii. Significant public projects, including but not limited to streetscape improvements, new public buildings and new open spaces, shall include or provide for a public art element.

- 6.7 The County shall establish clear wayfinding and visual signage towards and through Downtown. Signage shall be chosen that is simple, clear and legible.
- 6.8 The County shall prepare a Downtown Public Art Strategy that:
- i. identifies appropriate locations downtown for public art installations;
  - ii. identifies streetscape elements, such as paving, and street furnishings, that should incorporate public art;
  - iii. establishes policies and guidelines for public art contributions from developers of private lands; and
  - iv. considers grants or other incentives to encourage public art projects by local artists.
- 6.9 The following additional built form policies shall apply to all areas of the Downtown:
- i. Generally, buildings shall be oriented towards and have their main entrance on a street or open space.
  - ii. Long buildings shall break up the visual impact of their mass with evenly spaced vertical recesses or other architectural articulation and/or changes in material.
  - iii. Generally balconies shall be recessed and/or integrated into the design of the building façade where appropriate so as not to encroach on municipal sidewalks.
  - iv. Residential pick-up and drop-off areas and loading areas should be located on secondary or local streets and/or laneways, and not on primary streets.
  - v. All buildings downtown should be finished with high quality, enduring materials, such as stone, brick and glass. Materials that do not age well, including stucco, vinyl, exterior insulation finishing system (EIFS) and highly reflective glass, shall be discouraged.
- 6.10 There are properties within downtown Simcoe that have been vacant for an extended period of time or that have been identified as a site for potential redevelopment, including but not limited to the following:
- i) Vacant property: 176 Robinson Street (Robinson Street and Metcalf Street South).
  - ii) Vacant Property: 154 Robinson Street Robinson Street and Head Street South).
  - iii) Vacant property: 42 Colborne Street North (Young Street and Colborne Street).
  - iv) Vacant property: 66 Norfolk Street South (Norfolk Street South).

- v) Vacant property: 95 Norfolk Street South (Norfolk Street South and Water Street).
- vi) Redevelopment potential: 62 Pond Street.
- vii) Redevelopment potential: 56 Norfolk Street South (Norfolk Street South and Peel Street)
- viii) Redevelopment potential: 70 Water Street (Water Street and Culver Street).
- ix) Redevelopment potential: 89 Pond Street (Norfolk County lands).
- x) Redevelopment potential: 41 Norfolk Street South (former Norfolk Hotel).
- xi) Redevelopment potential: 12 Peel Street (former Westbrook building).
- xii) Redevelopment potential: 16-20 Robinson Street (Odd Fellows Building).

The County shall endeavor to work with the properties and developers and seek innovative opportunities to facilitate growth.

## **7) Community Improvement Program**

- 7.1 Downtown is subject to the Norfolk County Community Improvement Plan. Periodically, the County shall review the CIP and consider additional tools and/or programs intended to assist in implementing this Secondary Plan.
- 7.2 The County may consider revising the CIP Program to only assist downtown areas or be amended to focus on façade and/or general small business assistance.
- 7.3 The CIP will continue to be supported by the municipality.

## **8) Partnerships**

- 8.1 There are many opportunities for the County to work with private landowners, developers, institutions, the downtown business community, including the Downtown Simcoe BIA, Simcoe Chamber of Commerce, Venture Norfolk and other similar business associations, and other groups to implement key elements of the Secondary Plan.
- 8.2 The following are strategic partnership initiatives the County should actively pursue:
  - i. Redevelopment/Establishment of a community facility
  - ii. Redevelopment of existing public parking lots;
  - iii. Landscaping and street beautification.

- iv. Establishment of Urban Design Standards and Sign criteria;
- v. Development of a facility for a post-secondary faculties and/or residential opportunities;
- vi. Development of a Business Incubator, in partnership with organizations such as the Venture Norfolk, Simcoe BIA and Simcoe Chamber of Commerce.
- vii. New annual/seasonal festivals or special events, in partnership with the Downtown business community, including the Downtown Simcoe BIA, and local cultural organizations; and
- viii. Downtown Marketing & Tourism Strategy, Materials and Activities, in partnership with the Downtown business community, including the Downtown Simcoe BIA.

8.3 The County will continue to foster and encourage revitalization of downtown Simcoe to provide opportunities for all forms of users, while working to mitigate the potential negative impacts of gentrification.

## 9) **Action Plan**

### Short Term (1-5 years)

- Landscape improvement. Maintenance of street tree plantings and parkettes
- Sign design criteria
- Revise the CIP Program to focus on downtown properties and façade improvements
- Establishment of post-secondary residential units
- Review the feasibility of creating neighbourhood districts as part of the Plan.
- Facilitate the creation of community event space
- Increase public art in the downtown
- Initiate conversations for the expansion of the Farmer's Market in downtown Simcoe
- Enhance public accessibility through sidewalk improvements
- Foster Cultural Opportunities
- Investigate Mobile Food vendor policy

### Medium (6-10 years)

- Downtown greening opportunities through the establishment of Green Infrastructure criteria
- Establish Urban Design Guidelines
- Residential intensification through specific policy requirements.

- Reduce the lands designated at Downtown – make the policy framework more reflective of the functional core.
- Consider road closures to create more pedestrian oriented space.
- Prepare a Downtown Parking Strategy
- Downtown Marketing and Tourism Strategy

#### Long-Term (10 years +)

- Attraction of additional post-secondary institutions
- Investigate the potential to designate heritage conservation districts
- Establish a trails study to improve trail connections and increase the network
- Create a Public Art Strategy
- Develop a Transit Plan
- Review of Secondary Plan Policies

DRAFT