

Nodes and Corridors – Phase Two – Public Hearing

Presented To:	Planning Committee
Meeting Date:	June 24, 2024
Type:	Public Hearing
Prepared by:	Ed Landry Planning Services
Recommended by:	General Manager of Growth and Infrastructure
File Number:	701-6/22-03

Report Summary

This report provides a recommendation regarding the proposed Official Plan Amendment 119 regarding Phase 2 of the Nodes and Corridors Strategy be approved.

Resolution

THAT The City of Greater Sudbury approves Official Plan Amendment 119 and directs staff to prepare the necessary by-law, as outlined in the report entitled “Nodes and Corridors – Phase Two – Public Hearing” from the General Manager, Growth and Infrastructure, presented at the June 24, 2024 Planning Committee Meeting.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Climate Action Plans

The proposed official plan amendment (OPA) is consistent with Council’s Strategic Plan. Strategic objective 2.4 specifically seeks the completion of the nodes and corridors strategy to ensure investment that complements transit and active transportation strategies.

The proposed OPA would also meet the goals of the Climate Action Plans. Specifically, the amendment would help achieve compact, complete communities through infill developments, decreasing dwelling size through an increase in multi-family dwellings, and increasing building type mix (CEEP – Goal 1). The amendment would also help meet goals 7 and 8 of the CEEP, which are to increase transit mode share to 25% by 2050, and active mobility transportation mode share of 35% by 2050, respectively.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background

On August 14, 2023, staff presented a report on the proposed Phase 2 Nodes and Corridors Amendment

("OPA 119" – See Reference 1). The staff report contained several appendices, including the proposed land use designation changes, the OPA 119 text, and a redline version of the affected sections of the Official Plan. Staff also included a recap on recent studies and former commercial policy direction, current official plan designations, additional background to the nodes and corridors strategy and other considerations that formed part of the analysis.

The proposed amendment seeks to enable (i.e., not require) higher densities along the city's main arterials. The intent of the amendment is to capitalize on existing hard infrastructure (roads, pipes, etc.) and soft infrastructure (transit, snow removal, recreation, fire protection, etc.). Doing so allows the City to provide infrastructure and public service facilities in an effective and financially viable manner.

The amendment also seeks to enable a land use pattern that supports energy conservation and efficiency, an improved air quality, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Part of the vision of the nodes and corridors strategy is to help enable (i.e., not require) environments conducive to walking, biking, and public transit use.

Should the proposed changes come into effect, it will be up to the private sector and market conditions to respond via the development and redevelopment of properties along the corridors. These changes will occur over a significant amount of time, given the age, condition and state of the properties along the corridors.

Staff received direction in August 2023 to commence public consultation on the proposed draft OPA 119.

Public Consultation

The following public consultation opportunities have been offered:

- All relevant information was posted on an Over-To-You website (See Reference 2)
- An in-person open house was held at Tom Davies Square in the afternoon of March 20, 2024
- An online open house was held in the evening of March 21, 2024; a video of the presentation was subsequently posted on the Over-To-You Website
- Online survey was available with a commenting deadline of April 2, 2024
- The open houses were mentioned in online news sites and the City's social media platforms.

The following is a summary and analysis of public comments received. The feedback received was both within and outside the scope of the amendment.

Items Within Scope

Some of the comments received were within the scope of the proposed changes. These include:

- General support for the proposed changes
- Strong opposition and requests to not proceed at all with this initiative
- A request to redesignate all of Paris Street
- A request to leave high-density permissions in adjacent neighbourhoods
- Support for lower densities in the adjacent neighbourhoods
- Increasing current max density of 150 unit per hectare in R4 zoning along the corridors
- Requiring a minimum of 6 storeys along corridors
- Requiring bike storage and bike parking
- Ensuring quality of life is maintained along corridors (e.g., from traffic noise, pollution from exhausts, etc.)
- Establishing nodes and corridors framework within each neighbourhood
- Questions around the final number of phases of the nodes and corridors strategy
- A request to start focusing growth to Chelmsford instead.

Staff Response and Recommendation

Paris Street Redesignation

No changes recommended to the Paris Street Redesignation. It has long been a City policy to “preserve and enhance” the “open space character and natural aesthetic environment of the Paris Street corridor, especially that section between Walford Road and York Street” (See Section 14.7 of the City’s Official Plan – Reference 3). In 1983, the Planning Department produced the Paris Corridor Land Use Study which noted that the street “is the one remaining major arterial road leading into the downtown which is comparatively free of highway and strip commercial development.” Staff also noted that the “general interest for development along this corridor has heightened with the realization of ‘Science North’ [...]. The opportunity is now present to make some rational decisions about the future of the Paris Street Corridor and thereby avoid the ‘spot rezoning’ approach to development and redevelopment.”

Zoning-Related Comments

i. Minimum Heights

Staff was directed by Council to look into minimum heights question as part of the rezoning work resulting from the LaSalle Boulevard Corridor Plan and Strategy in 2021 (See Reference 4 – Page 4). Staff noted that only the Downtown Commercial (C6 Zone) contains a minimum height in the City’s Zoning By-law (8 metres). The C2 and C3 zones currently have maximum height provisions of 15 metres and 8 metres, respectively. Staff did not recommend implementing a minimum building height or modifying maximum building heights at the time. No change is recommended.

ii. Increasing R4 Density Permissions

While the focus of this official plan amendment is to increase densities along the corridors, any changes to the zoning by-law would only be considered if the proposed changes to the official plan come into effect. No change is recommended.

iii. Requiring bike storage and bike parking

The City’s Official Plan currently emphasizes the need to create a safe and attractive cycling and pedestrian environment. The land use designations subject of this OPA (Secondary Community Nodes, Regional Corridors) encourage a cycling and pedestrian friendly built form. Actual minimum bicycle parking space requirements are captured in Section 5.8 of the City’s Zoning By-law. No change is recommended.

Quality of Life

The concept of ‘quality of life’ is mentioned throughout the City’s Official Plan, notably in Section 1.4 – Vision, as follows: “Greater Sudbury is a healthy and sustainable community which recognizes that the quality of life of our citizens is directly related to environmental, economic and social determinants. Land use choices ensure that the natural and built environment support an excellent quality of life for and health of residents. Greater Sudbury is a child-friendly city. Children are educated, live and work here.”

The Regional Corridors land use designation, for example, states that “special attention to sound urban design principles is essential. Siting buildings to create a sense of street enclosure, locating parking lots to the rear of buildings, screening service entrances and garbage storage, and effective landscaping can aesthetically enhance the appearance of Regional Corridors. In order to attract viable, high-quality development, emphasis will also be placed on creating a safe and attractive cycling and pedestrian environment, as well as convenient access to public transit and greenspace.”

No change is recommended in this regard.

Future Phases of the Nodes and Corridors Strategy

The Nodes and Corridors Strategy from 2016 envisaged an 8-year process whereby one corridor and one node would be studied per year, resulting in specific land use recommendations to help guide investment and intensification within the communities of Greater Sudbury (See Reference 5).

In 2020, Council directed staff to prepare a business case to “undertake the remaining phases of the Council-endorsed Nodes and Corridors Strategy in a single, comprehensive land use planning study” as part of the 2021 Budget. A business case was presented and was deferred to the 2022 and then the 2023 budget deliberations. Council did not approve funding for the remaining phases.

In the meantime, in 2022, staff advised that it would study the remaining corridors and return in 2023 with recommendations regarding new Official Plan designations along the corridors, using the policies introduced by the LaSalle Corridor Study Official Plan Amendment 102.

One resident’s suggestion to investigate a nodes and corridors strategy within individual neighbourhood (e.g., Kathleen Street and the Donovan) is interesting and could be considered as part of a future planning exercise. For example, emanating from the Economic Recovery Report from November, 2020, staff will soon be reviewing the C1 (Local Commercial) Zoning to see where opportunities exists to incorporate more commercial at the local neighbourhood level (See Reference 6 – Page 7).

Focusing Growth to Chelmsford (or other community) Instead

No change recommended. The City of Greater Sudbury has a robust policy framework that allows for many forms of development in various locations across the city. For example, higher densities are promoted where there are municipal water and sewer services (e.g., subdivisions in Valley East, Walden, Sudbury, Chelmsford, etc.). In rural areas where there are no municipal water and sewer services, larger lot sizes are required (and therefore at a lower density) to allow for private wells and septic systems.

Items Outside Scope

Some comments received were outside the scope of the official plan amendment. These include:

- Spending more on/fixing existing infrastructure instead/consider existing assets (including parks, arenas, etc.)
- Building more affordable housing; focus on homelessness
- Improving services to outlying areas, including transit
- Allowing more severances in the agricultural areas
- Hiring more police; focusing on high crime rates instead
- Building more roundabouts
- Concern over existing and increasing taxation levels
- Moving the rail away from Downtown Sudbury
- Addressing traffic concerns on residential streets connecting corridors/eliminating cut-through traffic between corridors;
- Mobility rights and surveillance
- Consultation process

While these submissions are considered outside of the direct scope of the amendment, many of these concerns are addressed in the upcoming analysis. For example, promoting efficient development and land use patterns allows the City to spend more on fixing existing infrastructure (e.g., by not having to build new roads or new infrastructure beyond the designated growth areas).

Resulting Draft Proposed Official Plan Amendment 119

Given the scope and nature of the comments received, there were no changes to the draft OPA that was presented in August, 2023.

Policy & Regulatory Framework

OPA 119 is subject to the following policy and regulatory framework:

- The Planning Act
- 2020 Provincial Policy Statement
- 2011 Growth Plan for Northern Ontario
- Official Plan for the City of Greater Sudbury, 2006
- Zoning By-law 2010-100Z

The Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statements and geographically specific Provincial Plans, along with municipal Official Plans, provide a policy framework for planning and development in the Province. This framework is implemented through a range of land use controls such as zoning by-laws, plans of subdivision and site plans.

The Planning Act

The Planning Act is provincial legislation that sets out the rules for land use planning in Ontario. On April 10, 2024, the Provincial Government introduced Bill 185 (*Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024*) to the Ontario legislature. “As part of the bill and the broader Spring 2024 Red Tape Reduction Package, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is proposing a suite of legislative, regulatory and policy initiatives. This includes initiatives to:

- build homes cheaper and faster
- prioritize infrastructure for housing projects that are ready to go
- improve consultation processes and provide greater certainty once a decision is made; and,
- build more types of homes for more people” (See Reference 7)

As of this writing, it is unknown when the new legislation and regulations will come into effect, and how it will impact the proposed OPA 119. Staff will continue to monitor Bill 185 and will provide an update to Planning Committee and Council under separate cover.

Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

Municipalities in the Province of Ontario are required under Section 3 of the Planning Act to ensure that advice and decisions affecting planning matters are consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS).

The proposed official plan amendment (OPA) is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS, See Reference 8). Specifically, the proposed OPA is consistent with:

- Policy 1.1.1 a) b) e) and f);
- Policy 1.1.3.2 a) b) c) e) f);
- Policy 1.1.3.3;
- Policy 1.1.3.4;
- Policy 1.6.7.4;
- Policy 1.7.1 a) b) d), e); and,
- Policy 1.8 a) b) c) e);
- Policy 3.1.2

Taken together, these policies seek to: promote efficient development and land use patterns to sustain the financial well-being of the City; accommodate a range of uses; improve accessibility and encourage active transportation and transit; make an efficient use of infrastructure; minimize negative impacts to air quality and climate change; support long-term economic prosperity; and protect public health and safety.

Proposed Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

The Province's proposed (2024) Provincial Planning Statement (released on April 10, 2024 – See Reference 9) supports this Nodes and Corridors approach to land use planning. The proposed Statement encourages planning authorities to identify and focus growth and development in Strategic Growth Areas (which is defined as including settlement areas, nodes and corridors) to support the achievement of complete communities, a range and mix of housing options, intensification and more-mixed used development. It also encourages the prioritization of investments in infrastructure and public service facilities to support these strategic growth areas.

Growth Plan for Northern Ontario

The proposed OPA conforms to and does not conflict with the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, 2011 (GPNO – See Reference 10). Specifically, the GPNO identifies Greater Sudbury as containing Strategic Core Areas. Strategic Core Areas are defined by the GPNO as “delineated medium-to-high density areas [...] that are priority areas for long-term revitalization, intensification, and investment. These areas may consist of downtown areas, and other key nodes and significant corridors.” The corridors subject to this amendment were identified as most of the City's key nodes and significant corridors as part of the City's Nodes and Corridors Strategy.

Per Section 4.4.2 of the GPNO, Greater Sudbury is encouraged to plan for these areas “to function as vibrant, walkable, mixed-use districts that can: a) attract employment uses and clusters, including office and retail; b) accommodate higher densities; c) provide a broad range of amenities accessible to residents and visitors including vibrant streetscapes, shopping, entertainment, transportation connections, lodging, and educational, health, social, and cultural services.” The proposed OPA strengthens the City's Official Plan in this regard by refocusing the City's system of corridors to meet the stated goals of the GPNO.

Official Plan for the City of Greater Sudbury

With Official Plan Amendment No 102, the City introduced new land use designations to the City's Official Plan, including 'Secondary Community Nodes' and 'Regional Corridors'. The proposed land use schedule changes make use of the framework introduced by OPA 102 (See Reference 3).

Zoning By-law 2010-100Z

The proposal would not amend the City's zoning by-law at this time. Should the proposed OPA be adopted, staff would return at a subsequent date with proposed next steps related to the zoning by-law.

Report Summary

This report has presented the comments received as part of the public consultation on the proposed Amendment 119 to the City's Official Plan, along with staff analysis and response. No changes are proposed to the draft OPA 119 that was presented in August, 2023 and as a result, staff recommends that the City adopt the amendment as presented in August, 2023.

Resources Cited

1. “Nodes and Corridors Strategy – Draft Official Plan Amendment“, report presented at the August 14, 2023 Planning Committee Meeting
<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=50826702-7bba-4f41-91cc-144a82f9b6bc&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English&Item=27&Tab=attachments>
2. “Nodes and Corridors Strategy – Phase 2” Over To You Website
<https://overtoyou.greatersudbury.ca/nodes-and-corridors-strategy-phase-2>
3. City of Greater Sudbury Official Plan
<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/reports-studies-policies-and-plans/official-plan/>
4. “LaSalle Boulevard Corridor Plan and Strategy – Proposed By-Law Amendment” Public Hearing Report presented at the May 10, 2021 Planning Committee Meeting
<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=39871>
5. “Nodes and Corridors Strategy (2016)”
<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/do-business/planning-and-development/planning-and-development/nodes-and-corridors-strategy/nodes-and-corridors-strategy-2016/>
6. “Economic Recovery Action Items”, Manager’s Report presented at the November 17, 2020 Finance and Administration Committee Meeting
<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?documentid=38651>
7. “Bill 185 – the Proposed Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024 – Housing Initiatives”
<https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-8365>
8. Provincial Policy Statement, 2020
<https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-provincial-policy-statement-2020-accessible-final-en-2020-02-14.pdf>
9. Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (Draft)
[https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2024-04/Proposed%20Provincial%20Planning%20Statement,%20April%2010,%202024%20-%20EN%20\(2\).pdf](https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2024-04/Proposed%20Provincial%20Planning%20Statement,%20April%2010,%202024%20-%20EN%20(2).pdf)
10. Growth Plan for Northern Ontario
<https://www.ontario.ca/document/growth-plan-northern-ontario>