

COUNCIL REPORT FORM



To	Mayor and Council & Colin Smith, Chief Administrative Officer Town of Riverview	Item
From	Kirk Brewer Planner	Meeting Date
Date	February 1, 2024	
Subject	Municipal Plan and Zoning By-law Review	
Length of presentation (if applicable)	10-15 minutes	

ISSUE

The *Community Planning Act* requires that communities commence a review of their municipal plan at least once every ten years (s. 32(1)) to ensure the plan remains effective and in line with development trends and community vision. Riverview’s current municipal plan and zoning by-law were last updated in late 2013. Staff have been engaged in preparing background studies over the past year to inform the plan review. The process is now entering the public-facing portion including the formation of a plan review committee and public consultation. Staff is seeking a motion of Council to adopt the Plan Review Terms of Reference to officially start the review process.

DISCUSSION

The current municipal plan and zoning by-law have been in effect since October 2013, and have responded well to development over most of their lifespan. Many aspects of the plan and zoning by-law continue to reflect the needs of residents and development community and do not require major updates. However, some trends have changed dramatically, particularly since 2020, and the timing of the legislated ten-year review aligns well with the need to update the by-laws to ensure they align with the Town’s long-term vision as it relates to unprecedented regional population growth.

The Greater Moncton region is currently among the fastest growing in the country, and Riverview is experiencing the effects of the population boom. The Town’s population increased by 7.45% over the period 2011-2021 and is projected to grow another 10% by 2031. At the same time, the region is seeing large demographic shifts in terms of housing needs. Older segments of the population are in the process of downsizing out of their family homes and into smaller units, younger generations are marrying later and having fewer children, and segments of the new immigrant population are living in large households with members of their extended family. Rising mortgage rates and the increased cost of building supplies and have pushed the cost of single-unit dwellings beyond the reach of many home-seekers.

All these factors are combining to challenge the status quo as it relates to housing in Riverview, which has traditionally been a lower-density community with home ownership rates higher than the regional average. As single-unit home sales decrease due to high prices, the demand for rental units is increasing. Permit data shows there has been an increase in requests for in-law suites and denser forms of housing such as rowhouses and apartment buildings in recent years. The most recent (October 2022) CMHC data shows that Riverview has the lowest vacancy rate in the region, with only 0.2% of rental units vacant. Despite a record number of units built over the past four years, demand continues to outpace supply, which is putting upward pressure on rental prices. While home ownership remains strong in Riverview, results of the Housing Needs Assessment survey show that most respondents (82%) acknowledge that housing affordability is a major issue facing the Town, and 62% of respondents recognize the need for more rental housing.

With increased development pressure for denser housing types, the plan review must evaluate how development applications are processed to ensure efficient approval times. Currently, all townhouse and multi-unit applications must go through the Planning Advisory Committee for

conditional approval, which adds an additional step to developments that are already permitted by existing zoning. Developers see this process as creating uncertainty in the approval process, which ultimately slows down construction schedules. There are calls from the development community, as well as government departments at all levels, to streamline development and speed up approval times to respond to the housing crisis. Part of the plan review will focus on Town processes in relation to other planning departments in the Southeast region to ensure Riverview is creating a level playing field for development.

An additional consideration is whether the Town's regulations for multi-unit buildings reflect best practices throughout the region. Currently, height is limited to four storeys throughout most of the Town, which is not in line with current development trends. The development community is actively pushing for increased height and density to respond to the population boom and the demand for more rental units. However, recent rezoning requests have indicated that Town residents frequently oppose increased density near established neighbourhoods. The review process will be heavily focused on housing needs and determining the proper mix of height and density to respond to development pressures while maintaining the Town's character.

In addition to shifts in housing trends, the Town has initiated certain projects that have changed the development landscape in East Riverview since the last plan update. Mill Creek Nature Park is now a major regional draw, and the construction of Bridgedale Boulevard has opened a swath of new land for development between Gunningsville Boulevard and Runneymeade Road. The new recreational complex is expected to entice demand along Bridgedale Boulevard once constructed.

While the Bridgedale corridor offers enormous potential to absorb future growth, it comes with challenges associated with wetlands, connectivity to adjacent neighbourhoods, and a handful of property owners who will need to coordinate to achieve a cohesive development pattern across multiple properties. The municipal plan will need to reflect recent infrastructure investments and update the vision for the area to align with the Mill Creek Nature Park master plan and incorporate environmental studies on the area's wetland system.

MUNICIPAL PLAN

A municipal plan is a Town's vision for how it wants to develop and grow. The plan lays out policies in various areas related to housing, commercial development, industry, the environment, and climate change, among others, to direct growth over approximately a 10-year period. The *Community Planning Act* provides the legal parameters for what must be considered by a municipal plan, and the process by which it must be adopted. The province has also recently (2023) implemented a *Statement of Public Interest Regulation* which covers policy areas including settlement patterns, agriculture, climate change, flood areas, and natural resources. The municipal plan will also need to conform to this regulation.

The plan review process will be guided by Planning staff and the Plan Review Committee appointed by the mayor. The process will include regular meetings with the Committee and Town staff, targeted stakeholder consultation, and public open houses. The Committee will provide recommendations on policy and zoning changes before the plan goes through the official legal adoption process.

ZONING BY-LAW

The zoning by-law is the regulation by which the Town implements its vision through specific development standards. The by-law controls permitted land uses according to zones, and regulates building heights, setbacks, design guidelines for building form and materials, parking and landscaping standards, fences, signs, and a range of other aspects. Updates to plan policies will be reflected in amendments to zoning provisions. The review process may also result in changes to the zoning map.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

Each Town department director will be contacted separately to ensure the municipal plan aligns with each department's long-term goals and master plans. Additionally, the development review committee (Corporate, Economic Development, Parks, Engineering and Works, Fire and Rescue) will have the opportunity to provide input throughout the review process.

CONCLUSION

The municipal plan and zoning by-law are important tools through which Council sets its vision for growth and development for the next decade. The review process will seek input from

Council, Town staff, the Municipal Plan Review Committee, Planning Advisory Committee, specific stakeholder groups, and the public at large before following the legal adoption process.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council approve the Plan Review Terms of Reference dated January 12, 2024 in order to commence the official plan review process.

CONSIDERATIONS

Financial N/A

Environmental N/A

Public Consultation Public consultation will include open houses, surveys, targeted stakeholder engagement, public presentation to Council, and a public hearing prior to adoption

- Attachments**
- Presentation
 - Plan Review Terms of Reference



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