



Subject: *Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy - Commercial Lands*
To: CAO for Planning Advisory Committee, April 16, 2024
Date Prepared: April 10, 2024
Related Motions: PAC23(59) and C23(383)
Prepared by: Debbie Uloth, Project Planner
Approved by: John Woodford, Director of Planning and Development

Summary

As part of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy, Planning staff have completed a review of commercial lands in the Uniacke area and have met with Economic and Business Development (EBD) staff to discuss future commercial development. This report includes recommendations for Planning Advisories consideration.

Financial Impact Statement

Planning staff has budgeted for the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy as part of the 2024/2025 Budget Cycle.

Recommendation

Include the recommendations outlined in the Uniacke Commercial Review report to be included in the draft Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy Report.

Recommended Motion

Planning Advisory Committee recommends that Council:

- *authorize staff to include the recommendations outlined in the Uniacke Commercial Review report in the draft Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy Report.*

Background

As part of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy, staff have undertaken a review of commercial lands in the Uniacke area. This review has included lands zoned Village Core (VC) Zone, Regional Commercial (RC) Zone, and Business Park (BP) Zone. Planning staff have also met with EBD staff to discuss the future of commercial development in the Uniacke area and to determine if any changes to commercial land uses may want to be considered as part of the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy.

VILLAGE CORE (VC) ZONED LANDS

The Village Core (VC) Zone is located on the land that has been the traditional centre of the community. Many of the properties are developed with commercial land uses or single unit dwellings. As with other traditional community centres in the corridor that are also zoned Village Core (VC), staff feel that as development pressure warrants many of the homes located in the VC Zone will be converted to other uses. One such instance is the church that was sold and is being converted into a veterinarian's office. As the population in the Uniacke area increases and demand for amenities increase, opportunities for redevelopment will be undertaken. However, redevelopment is market dependent. The increased value of homes makes it very difficult for redevelopment at this time but the market is likely to change in the future.

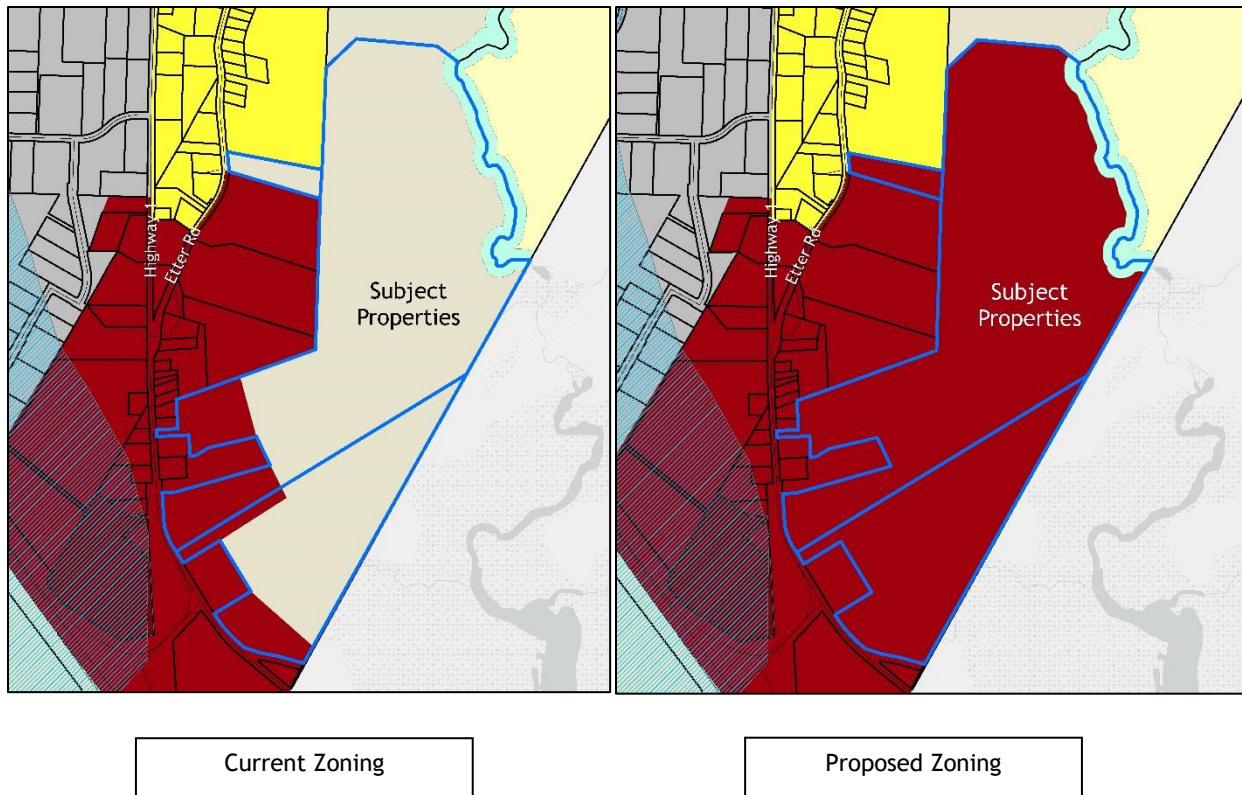
The Mount Uniacke village core contains lots that are undersized, making it difficult to obtain an approval for a septic system, which also makes it difficult to develop the lands. Other than consolidating these parcels with other lots, one opportunity is for the development of food truck related businesses. A development permit for a food truck can be issued as a temporary commercial use, for a season, on commercially zoned lands. Food trucks allow businesses to test the market without having to invest in a bricks and mortar building. The use could permit smaller parcels of land to be used without the need to build costly septic systems.

Examples:



REGIONAL COMMERCIAL (RC) ZONED LANDS

There are several Regional Commercial (RC) Zoned lots available for new commercial development or have the potential to be further developed. Regional Commercial (RC) Zoned lands are located near the interchange for Highway 101 and Highway 1 and offer good connections to the Highway system. Further expansion of the Regional Commercial (RC) Zone, to the east, would allow for the potential for a new road to be constructed and additional lands to be developed. The maps on the following page show the current Regional Commercial (RC) Zone boundaries and the second map shows the proposed expansion of the Regional Commercial (RC) Zone.



Staff also recommend that a Required Future Transportation Connections Map be developed for the Uniacke area and be added to Appendix D of the Subdivision Bylaw. A connection should be added to the map showing a possible road connection starting at Highway 1 through the newly proposed Regional Commercial (RC) Zoned lands and connecting back to Highway 1. A future background paper on transportation will contain a proposed connection.

BUSINESS PARK (BP) ZONED LANDS

The Uniacke Business Park is full. Lands owned by the Municipality have been subdivided and sold. There are a limited number of properties in private ownership that are zoned Business Park (BP) that could be further developed and possibly subdivided to create smaller lots. Expansion of the Uniacke Business Park is difficult due to constraints such as Highway 101, Highway 1, and the location of nearby residential development.

As the population in the Uniacke and Lakelands areas increase, there may be a future need for a new interchange to be located in the Lakelands/Ardoise area. If a new interchange is identified as a future project by Nova Scotia Public Works, staff recommend working with West Hants and the province to determine the best location for the interchange so that both Municipalities could benefit from the new connection.

UNIACKE LAND USE SURVEY - COMMERCIAL LANDS

As part of the Uniacke Land Use Survey residents were asked what type of amenities they would like to see in their community. Although respondents were happy with Eddy's Variety and Withrow's Farm Market they indicated that they would like to have a larger grocery store in the Uniacke area. Although the Municipality cannot direct businesses to be located in the Mount Uniacke area we can ensure that there is appropriate zoning in place to allow for grocery stores to be constructed. The Regional Commercial (RC) Zone allows for a wide variety of commercial uses, including grocery stores and other retail uses. Therefore, there is land that is appropriately zoned in the Mount Uniacke area. The Village Core (VC) Zone also permits smaller retail uses.

Daycares (home-based and general) were the most requested amenities identified in the survey. The East Hants Official Community Plan permits daycares in nearly every zone. Home-based daycares can be located as a

home-based business in every residential zone, in the Rural Use (RU) Zone, and in the Village Core (VC) Zone in the Uniacke area. Commercial daycare centres are permitted to be located in the Village Core (VC) Zone, Regional Commercial (RC) Zone, and Business Park (BP) Zone. Therefore, appropriately zoned land is available and a daycare can be located nearly anywhere within the Uniacke area. Once again, the Municipality cannot direct daycare operators to open in the Uniacke area.

Restaurants are another amenity that survey respondents would like to see additional options for. Residents identified restaurant-related uses such as cafes, bakeries, and pubs as needed amenities for the community. All three of the commercial zones that staff have identified permit full and limited-service restaurants. Therefore, appropriately zoned land is available in the community for restaurant-related land uses. Respondents also indicated that they would rather have locally owned and operated business than large chain restaurants and take-out food locations, though the Municipality cannot issue permits based on ownership type or location.

Mount Uniacke and the surrounding area has land that is appropriately zoned for the above noted uses. However, East Hants cannot control market demand for the land or control if the businesses are locally driven or from outside Mount Uniacke or the province. Demand for commercial land will continue to be market driven and the commercial amenities identified by respondents in the Uniacke Land Use Survey will only be developed when the market is ready.

Recommendations:

Below is a complete list of recommendations from the commercial report for the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy. Staff recommend that they be given authorization to include the recommendations in the final document for the Uniacke Secondary Planning Strategy:

- Extend the Regional Commercial (RC) Designation and Zone by changing the land use designation and zone of PIDs 45289311, 45337714, and 45141207 to the Regional Commercial (RC) Designation and Zone.
- Create a Required Future Transportation Connections Map for Mount Uniacke and include the new map Under Appendix D of the Subdivision Bylaw.
- On the new Mount Uniacke Required Future Transportation Connections Map add a road connection through the Regional Commercial (RC) Zone lands that would allow for the additional development opportunities.

Attachments