



Report No.
PD-37-2025

File No.

Directed to: Mayor Joe Preston and Members of City Council

Meeting Date:
July 14, 2025

Department: Planning & Building Services

Authored By: Michelle Knieriem, Manager of Planning Services

Attachment
Railway Lands Area Secondary
Plan: Proposed Study Area &
Project Process

Subject: Railway Lands Area Secondary Plan: Proposed Study Area and Project Process

Recommendation:

THAT: Report PD-37-2025 relating to “Railway Lands Area Secondary Plan: Proposed Study Area and Project Process” be received for information;

THAT: Council direct Staff to undertake the Railway Lands Area Secondary Plan Study using the process generally outlined in the “Railway Lands Area Secondary Plan: Proposed Study Area and Project Process”; and further,

THAT: Council direct Staff to consider the use of a Community Planning Permit System for the Railway Lands Secondary Plan Area and report back to Council on the appropriateness of using this tool for the Area following the completion of the Railway Lands Area Secondary Plan Study.

Background:

In 2024, a portion of the Elgin County Railway Museum lands and a portion of the adjacent City-owned lands were sold to Doug Tarry Limited for development purposes, while ensuring certain desired community benefits, including trail and roadway connections, would be incorporated into any future development. At its meeting of December 4, 2023, City Council expressed their desire to keep the development of the Railway Lands moving in a timely fashion and directed that staff seek stakeholder/property owner interest in initiating a Secondary Plan for this area and to report back on their findings (Report PD-50-2023).

Doug Tarry Limited has approached the City about expediting the completion of the Railway Lands Secondary Plan through a study co-led by the City and a Privately-led Team. The Privately-led team would be led by Bousfields Inc. funded by Doug Tarry Limited, with cost recovery tools to be discussed through the Secondary Planning process. Other landowners would have an opportunity to fund the Privately-led team. Staff have worked with Doug Tarry Limited to explore this collaborative approach and have developed the proposed “Railway Lands Area Secondary Plan: Proposed Study Area and Project Process” to provide an overview of the study process. Should Council choose to proceed with this approach, staff are proposing to hold a meeting with landowners in the Study Area in Fall 2025, introducing the study and outlining opportunities for participation and engagement.

The proposed study process is outlined in the attached “Railway Lands Area Secondary Plan: Proposed Study Area and Project Process”. It is proposed to be divided into three phases, with a target completion of Spring, 2026. Phase 1 would involve background review and establishing the key principles, goals and objectives for the Secondary Plan. Phase 2 would involve the review of options, testing and selection of a preferred plan. Phase 3 would be the implementation phase including Council consideration of a City-initiated Official Plan Amendment to implement the Secondary Plan. There would be multiple opportunities for landowner and community engagement throughout the process and multiple reports to Council providing information and seeking direction. City Staff and the Privately-led team would collaborate throughout the study with City Staff taking the lead on public engagement and the Official Plan Amendment to implement the Secondary Plan.

Should Council direct staff to undertake the Railway Lands Area Secondary Plan Study using the process generally outlined in the “Railway Lands Area Secondary Plan: Proposed Study Area and Project Process”, a more detailed Terms of Reference will be brought to Council for endorsement.

The “Railway Lands Area Secondary Plan: Proposed Study Area and Project Process” includes preliminary discussion on the proposed Study Area. Staff will seek directions on the proposed Study Area when seeking Council endorsement of the Terms of Reference.

The City’s approved Housing Accelerator Fund Action Plan includes the implementation of a Community Planning Permit System to specific new development areas of the City (Report CMO-01-25). The Community Planning Permit System is a land-use planning tool that municipalities can use when planning for the future of their communities. It helps to streamline development by combining zoning, site plan and minor variance processes

into one application and approval process with shorter approval timelines. It is anticipated that following completion of the Railway Lands Area Secondary Plan, the Railway Lands Area may benefit from a Community Planning Permit System to help streamline development approvals. Before implementing a Community Planning Permit System for the Railway Lands Area, the Official Plan will need to be amended to include policies to allow a Community Planning Permit System to be used. Staff are in the process of initiating a separate Official Plan Amendment to add policies for a Community Planning Permit System framework to the Official Plan.

Strategic Priority:

Strategic Pillar: Excellence in All We Do - Priority #2: Thoughtful, Strategic, and Sustainable Community Growth

Financial Impact:

The study will be primarily funded by Doug Tarry Limited, and other interested landowners, with cost recovery tools to be discussed through the Secondary Plan process. The City may incur costs related to public engagement (i.e. facility rental, printing of materials), however these will be paid through the Planning Department budget.

Report Approval:

This report has been reviewed and approved by: Director of Planning and Building Services

All reports are reviewed and approved by the City Manager.