

Three projects under way

# Town's focus in 2007 is on the future

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Staff Writer

Planning the future will be front and centre for the Town of Halton Hills in 2007.

The Town is working on three projects focused on shaping the future of this community.

First, council recently confirmed a corporate affairs committee decision to proceed with the development of a new Town Strategic Plan.

Second, council approved the hiring of two consultant companies to seek out government funding to initiate a Community Improvement Plan (CIP).

Third, between January 29 and February 16, a random phone survey of residents will be done asking for opinions on the future of recreation in this town. A draft report of the Recreation and Parks Department's Strategic Action Plan— not to be confused with the Strategic Plan— will be presented to the public at two meetings in April.

The town-wide Strategic Plan will set the community's priorities up to 2031. It must respond to new issues such as the Province's Places to Grow requirement to take more population and developers, pressures to expand the urban boundaries. Council has hired Performance Concepts Consulting Ltd. to lead the process, which will include public input.

The Town will also seek out alternative funding for its other strategic project, Community Improvement Plan.

"It's a very major program," said Chief Administrative Officer Dennis Perlin. "... to reinvigorate the various brownfields, underutilized sites, agricultural areas and the downtowns."

The Town has hired Marshall Macklin Monaghan Ltd. and RCI Consulting for \$47,000 to seek out more funding from other levels of government and other sources to finance the CIP process. Council did set aside \$50,000 in the 2007 capital budget to hire these consultants— half

of which will be financed by a provincial government grants that the consultants themselves will have to seek out to be paid.

Phase 1 involves finding funding to develop an overall CIP strategy that would guide specific CIPs in the future, such as the redevelopment of the Georgetown GO lands or the Maple Leaf (Beardmore) lands in Acton. Also included in the 2007 capital plan was \$120,000 for a Georgetown GO station area secondary plan.

In future phases, the town-wide CIP will create strategies on potential infill development, residential and business intensification, affordable housing, improvements to Acton and Georgetown water and wastewater services, downtown redevelopment, and improvements to farm businesses and rural area.

Perlin said CIPs are being successfully used in other Ontario communities by generating significant amounts of investment from the private sector in both business and residential areas.

"In terms of brownfields, we have some significant sites in various parts of the town that are dirty, that have soil issues (contaminated), and need to be cleaned up," said Perlin. "One needs to develop an appropriate strategy and there are certain tools that the Province makes available under the Planning Act that can only be taken advantage of by having a CIP."

In an argument against using town staff to lead the CIP, he said those plans are "put together by people whose whole lives are about dealing with putting these strategies together with investment plans that would attract the private sector to take a site that is dirty and make it happen."

Mayor Rick Bonnette noted this could be a way to keep Acton vibrant (through intensification, infill and brownfield cleanup) while the expansion of that community is locked by the Greenbelt legislation.

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**DENNIS PERLIN**

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