

Subject: Recommendation Report - Study to review Limiting Office Uses and the Introduction of New Uses on Main Street between Albert Street and Park Drive (File No. ZBA24.007)

Staff Report No. DS-058-24

**Department/
Commission:** Development Services Commission

Date: November 20, 2024

Recommendation:

- 1) That Council receive Staff report DS-058-24 as information from staff in response to Council direction from June 5, 2024 and that Council does not enact the proposed zoning by-law amendments as presented at the September 25, 2024 Public Meeting.

Report Highlights

- On June 5, 2024, Council passed a motion to direct Staff to research and study options for prohibiting office use in the first storey or at grade of a commercial or mixed-use building located within 10 metres of the public right-of-way, abutting Main Street within the area between Albert Street and Park Drive and that staff report back to Council with the appropriate recommended actions to these directions.
- It is Council’s strong desire to promote these areas as a pedestrian-friendly destination and vibrant commercial district that focuses on pedestrian-oriented uses at-grade.
- The objective of Council is to facilitate a vibrant and animated downtown where residents can actively explore, live, shop, work and play along downtown Main Street.
- On September 25, 2024, a statutory public meeting was held to solicit feedback and comments from Council and members of the public on the proposed zoning amendments in response to Council motion. Several

members of public were in attendance and spoke to Council and provided their feedback.

- Staff have considered public feedback and completed research and recommend that no changes be made to the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law at this time.
- Staff is of the opinion that Council's desire to revitalize Main Street can be achieved by coordination of other strategies and initiatives, including but not limited to the Comprehensive Zoning By-law Update, Main Street Reconstruction, Civic Square Expansion, Stouffville Streetscape Design Manual, initiatives from the Village of Stouffville Advisory Committee, and continued consultation and cooperation with the Town's Economic Development staff, community and stakeholders.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Report is to assess the merits of and make a recommendation respecting application for a Zoning By-law Amendment to limit at-grade Office Use permissions on Main Street between Albert Street and Park Drive.

2. Background

2.1. Council Motion - June 5, 2024

On June 5, 2024 Council passed a motion that *"staff be directed to research and study options for prohibiting office use in the first storey or at grade of a commercial or mixed use building located within 10 metres of the public right-of-way, abutting Main Street within the area between Albert Street and Park Drive"*

The area on Main Street subject to this motion is shown in '**Attachment 1 – Location Map**' as attached to this report.

Council motion from June 5, 2024, is attached as '**Attachment 2 – Council Member Motion**' to this report.

The objective of this motion is to explore opportunities to encourage desirable pedestrian-oriented uses at grade that invites residents and visitors to actively explore, live, shop, work, and play along downtown Main Street and encouraging people to experience it on foot or bicycle. It is the Council's vision that downtown Main Street becomes a vibrant and animated commercial destination that focuses on pedestrian-oriented uses at-grade.

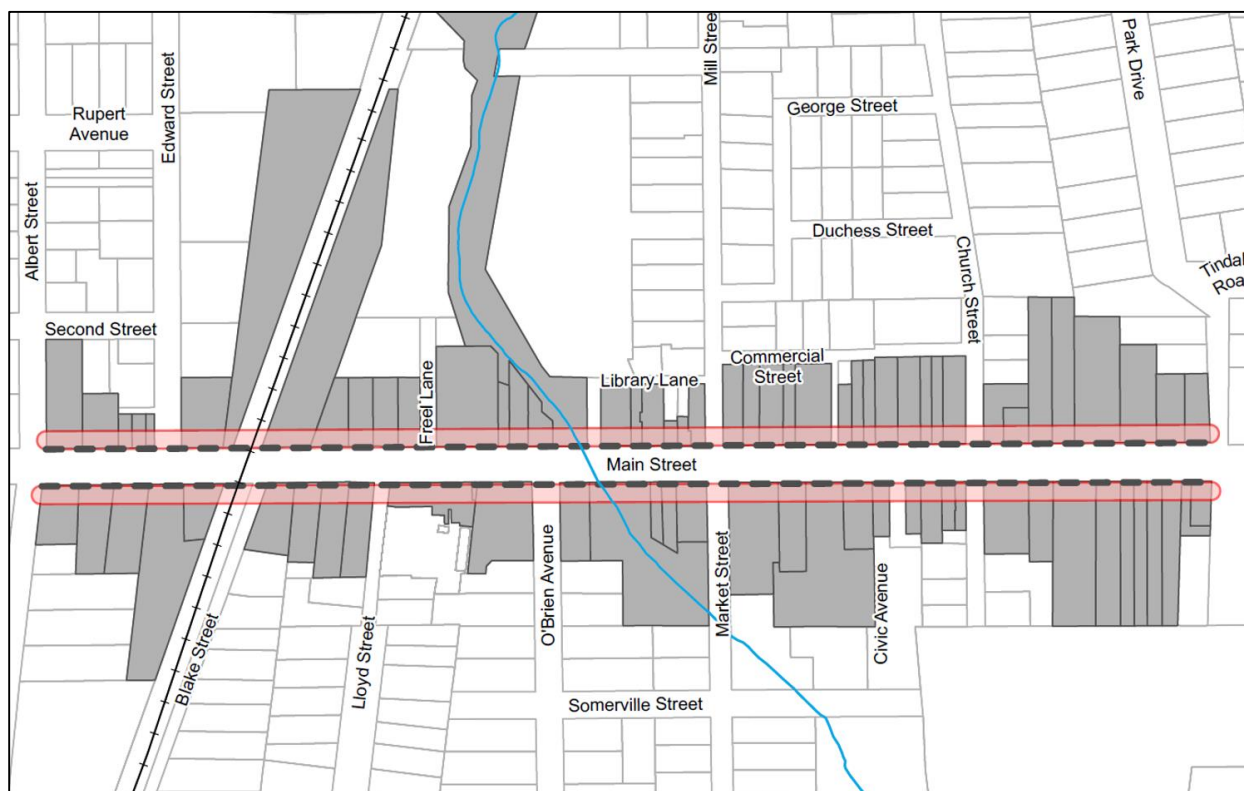
2.2. Area located between Albert Street and Park Drive along Main Street - “Subject Area”

The Subject Area includes properties with frontage on Main Street between Albert Street and Park Drive. This cross section is comprised of 79 properties (approximately 93 at-grade units).

The proposed ‘Office Use’ limitation would impact the subject area within the 10-metre setback from the Main Street right-of-way at grade (typically first storey/at grade).

The 10-metre setback from the Main Street (Public Right-of-Way) is identified in red on **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1 – Map of Subject area



2.3. Statutory Public Meeting September 25, 2024

Pursuant to the motion Development Planning Staff completed initial research and initiated a Statutory Public Meeting on September 25, 2024 to share initial findings and considerations for zoning amendments, and to request feedback from the Council and community.

3. Analysis

3.1. Staff Research

Staff has completed research on the request to assist in informing a Staff Recommendation and Council decision making.

3.1.1 Breakdown of Present Office Uses in Downtown Stouffville

Most recent available information available to staff indicates that presently there are 93 unique at-grade units fronting Main Street between Albert Street and Park Drive within the subject area. Based on information available at the present time 27 units are being considered “Office Uses”.

The Zoning By-law defines both ‘Office Use’ and ‘Medical Office’ use. See section 3.4 below for the definitions. Staff note ‘Medical Office’ is considered a subcategory of the ‘Office Use’ definition (see underlined portion in the definition of Medical Office).

Table 1 below provides a full breakdown of the uses in the subject area.

Table 1

| Present Use/Status | Breakdown of Use |
|---|---|
| 27 Office Uses Total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 15 ‘Office Uses’ ● 12 ‘Medical Office’ Uses | Realty x 5, Insurance x 4, Wealth Management x 2, Accountant x 2, Law, Travel Agency. Health and Wellness Service Clinics with Varied Practitioners x 4, Dentist x 4, Chiropractor, Epilepsy Services, Physiotherapy, Ultrasound and X-Ray |
| 16 Services | Barber/Salon x 4, Tattoos x 2, Mail Service x 2, Gym x 2, Spa, Daycare, Dog Daycare, Dry Cleaner and Alterations, Cell Phone Repair, Registered Massage Therapist |
| 16 Retail Store Uses | Hearing Aids x 3, Cannabis and Accessories x 2, Home Goods/Décor x 2, Pharmacy, Butcher, Clothing, Fabric, Furniture, Glasses, Monument, Tiles, Florist |
| 18 Restaurants | Restaurants x 12, Café x 4, Bar, Bubble Tea Shop |
| 10 Vacant Units | Vacant Units x 10 |
| 6 Other Uses | Place of Worship, Senior Citizens Home, Single Detached Dwelling, Funeral Home, Veterinary Clinic, Financial Institution. |

3.1.2 Downtown Stouffville Historical Establishment of Use Trends

Using data sources and site visits Staff have collated the frequency when different uses have been established in Downtown Stouffville in **Table 2**. The top row of charts shows the established uses every five (5) years from 2005 to 2024. The bottom row further summarizes the data into 10-year groupings.

The charts show that over the past five years (2020 to 2024) as storefronts have turned over, there has been a down trend in the ratio of Office Uses and Medical Offices being established and a notable increase in the ratio of Restaurants and Services uses be established.

Table 2

| Uses Established Between 2005 to 2009 (5 Year Period) | | | Uses Established Between 2010 to 2014 (5 Year Period) | | | Uses Established Between 2015 to 2019 (5 Year Period) | | | Uses Established Between 2020 to 2024 (Most Recent 5 Year Period) | | |
|--|-------|---------|---|-------|---------|---|-------|---------|---|-------|---------|
| Use | Count | Ratio | Use | Count | Ratio | Use | Count | Ratio | Use | Count | Ratio |
| Medical | 1 | 9.09% | Medical | 2 | 18.18% | Medical | 3 | 20.00% | Medical | 2 | 9.09% |
| Office | 3 | 27.27% | Office | 3 | 27.27% | Office | 3 | 20.00% | Office | 1 | 4.55% |
| Other | 1 | 9.09% | Other | 0 | 0.00% | Other | 1 | 6.67% | Other | 1 | 4.55% |
| Restaurant | 2 | 18.18% | Restaurant | 2 | 18.18% | Restaurant | 2 | 13.33% | Restaurant | 10 | 45.45% |
| Retail | 2 | 18.18% | Retail | 2 | 18.18% | Retail | 4 | 26.67% | Retail | 2 | 9.09% |
| Service | 2 | 18.18% | Service | 2 | 18.18% | Service | 2 | 13.33% | Service | 6 | 27.27% |
| TOTAL | 11 | 100.00% | TOTAL | 11 | 100.00% | TOTAL | 15 | 100.00% | TOTAL | 22 | 100.00% |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Uses Established Between 2005 to 2014 (Prior 10 Years) | | | Uses Established Between 2015 to 2024 (Past 10 Years) | | | | | | | | |
| Use | Count | Ratio | Use | Count | Ratio | | | | | | |
| Medical | 3 | 13.64% | Medical | 5 | 13.51% | | | | | | |
| Office | 6 | 27.27% | Office | 4 | 10.81% | | | | | | |
| Other | 1 | 4.55% | Other | 2 | 5.41% | | | | | | |
| Restaurant | 4 | 18.18% | Restaurant | 12 | 32.43% | | | | | | |
| Retail | 4 | 18.18% | Retail | 6 | 16.22% | | | | | | |
| Service | 4 | 18.18% | Service | 8 | 21.62% | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 22 | 100.00% | TOTAL | 37 | 100.00% | | | | | | |

3.1.3 Comprehensive Internet Search

Staff have spent substantial time searching the internet for data and research papers that provided case studies or examples that showed that downtowns that restricted offices use as a result saw an influx pedestrian-oriented use occupancies and visitors. Staff could not locate studies that collected data on this topic or quantitatively concluded that prohibiting any uses resulted in revitalized and more active downtowns.

3.1.4 Downtown Revitalization Best Practices

Much of the research led Staff to Downtown Revitalization Strategies that offered opportunities for increase in pedestrian activity and vibrancy in downtowns. Staff would like to highlight key findings for consideration.

a. Healthy Downtown Use Mixes and Office Use Variables

Staff research found that a diverse mix of uses is an important component of a healthy downtown. All different uses bring unique but important variables to the long-term health and resilience of the downtown. Office uses often provide services that are more resilient to economic downturns (making for more stable tenants), generally provide more full-time local jobs, and during the typically slower weekly workday (9am-5pm) they provide a steady baseline of area activity, and employees and patrons that support local storefronts (stimulates the local economy) during these traditionally slower non-peak periods.

b. Vacancies and Restrictions

Research emphasized the importance of filling vacancies and presenting a continuous line of healthy, maintained and desirable businesses and storefronts to attract visitors. To fill vacancies, incubate creativity and opportunity, and allow a market-based economy to flourish reducing as many restrictions and regulations as possible was encouraged.

Presently Downtown Stouffville has 10 vacancies. 5 of these vacancies have occurred in 2024. In staff's opinion, any restrictions of land uses may increase the challenges in filling these vacancies.

3.1.5 Downtown Stouffville Employment Insight

Staff have reviewed data sets from the York Region's 2022 Employment Survey (most recent available version). According to the data set there were approximately 624 employees in the study areas. Among those 330 are permanent full-time employees. Office uses represent 119 of the permanent full-time employees.

3.1.6 Review of Office Use Permissions Along Downtown Main Streets in Ontario Municipalities

Staff have evaluated the use permissions on twelve (12) character main streets in the GTA, comparable to Main Street Stouffville. The review included Unionville (Markham), Main Street (Markham), Kleinburg Village (Vaughan), Downtown Aurora, Downtown Newmarket, Downtown Port Perry, Downtown Uxbridge, Downtown Oakville, Port Credit (Mississauga), Downtown Milton, Downtown Cobourg and Downtown Orangeville.

Staff did not find examples of limitation on office use except in Unionville, Markham.

3.2. Other Considerations that May Influence Present and Future Stouffville Main Street Use Occupancies

There are number of variables that may serve as positive and negatives factors for attracting desired pedestrian-oriented uses in the downtown Stouffville.

a. Main Street Reconstruction

The Main Street reconstruction may discourage some desirable businesses from entering the market until the reconstruction is complete. Running a business during reconstruction of Main Street when scaffolding may be up and portions of the sidewalk could be closed, can be challenging temporarily until construction is underway, but in the long term this will be a tailwind as it will provide a more desirable streetscape that will entice businesses and attract visitors. Research on Main Street Revitalization outlined that safe, attractive, pedestrian-friendly Main Streets assist in creating a sense of place that effectively encourage pedestrian activity.

b. Civic Square Expansion

A larger civic square is expected to serve as a draw to the downtown for the community. This meeting point should synergize with existing and emerging cafes, take-out establishments, and the like. Research on Main Street Revitalization emphasized that creating a destination such as this is key variable in downtown revitalization.

c. Economic Cycle

Ontario is presently in a challenging economic cycle:

1. Interest rates, local property prices and rental prices are comparably high to the past making start up and reinvestment costs less obtainable for new businesses.
2. As result of inflation the community has less disposable income to spend on non-essential needs (i.e., restaurants, coffee, retail, etc.).
3. Since COVID-19 restaurants have had difficulty finding, retaining and paying higher sought wages. Further as result of less disposable patron income restaurants have had challenges succeeding.

As the economy normalizes it should assist in reducing the above difficulties.

d. Incoming Residential Growth will Support Viability of Storefronts

Businesses often conduct market studies to ensure necessary population is within the potential site catchment area to make the business case to open a business or storefront.

Based on active development applications, 915 dwellings are presently in the pipeline for development within a 15 minute walk or less to the heart of Downtown. Further to this there is significant incoming redevelopment potential and residential density being unlocked by the Edward Street reconstruction and its proximity to the Major Transit Station Area (i.e. Stouffville GO).

e. Change of Use – Parking Requirements

All new uses must comply with the Zoning By-law including Parking Requirements. Most properties have parking constraints and would require zoning relief from the Town or to pay Cash-in Lieu of Parking.

f. Evolving Traditional Business Practices

Work-from-home culture and online meetings have become increasingly common since COVID and existing dedicated office buildings have struggled to maintain 100% occupancy since. As a result, many traditional business office uses (which can be accomplished easily through digital means) have seen a decline in in-person meetings. As a result, using traditional brick-and-mortar spaces for Office uses may change over time. Staff opine that if societal trends continue many traditional business offices may 'naturally' transition to the work-from-home model or virtual models and/or smaller and less expensive office space that would meet their business demands. As a result, this would be a tailwind to produce opportunities for other uses to step in that require or invite in-person attendance.

g. Future Medical Offices

Staff note approval and construction of a four-storey dedicated medical office building is underway on Sam Miller Way immediately south of the Wal-Mart. This will provide doctor-ready units, amenities and synergies that staff believe may entice future medical practitioners to choose this location instead of Downtown Mainstreet.

3.3. Applicable Provincial and Regional Policies

This section will establish the current and relevant policy environment that forms part of the review of the proposed zoning amendments. The overview will include Provincial Plans and policies, York Region Official Plan, and the Town's current Official Plan and Secondary Plan.

3.3.1. Provincial Planning Statement 2024

As of October 20, 2024, Provincial Planning Statement 2024 is in effect. The new PPS 2024 provide a streamlined province-wide land use planning policy framework. The PPS 2024 replaces both the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019.

Section 2.4.2 of the PPS 2024 includes policy direction on development within the Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) and establishes minimum density targets for residents and jobs and encourages municipalities to promote development and intensification. The subject area is located within the Stouffville MTSA.

Section 2.8 of the PPS 2024 provides policy direction to municipalities on supporting a modern economy for municipalities. Municipalities are encouraged to promote economic development and competitiveness by providing opportunities for a diversified economic

base which support a wide range of economic activities and ancillary uses. The policies also encourage "... *intensification of employment uses and compatible, compact, mixed-use development to support the achievement of complete communities*".

Staff Comment: The PPS encourages a wide range of uses to stimulate the growth of jobs and to create complete communities. The PPS generally discourages prohibition and encourages an open market-based economy.

3.3.2. York Region Official Plan (2022)

The York Region Official Plan (ROP) provides new guidance on planning and development to support complete communities within the Region that shall be dense and walkable, where most amenities are in close proximity to infrastructure and services.

Section 2.3 states that complete communities are those that are designed to be accessible, dense and walkable, where most amenities are in close proximity and meet people's needs for daily living through their lifetime. Complete communities provide for a full range of uses including local community centres, schools, places of worship, greenspaces and other uses to increase greater human interaction and create a sense of community. Social services that provide for the needs of individuals and families should be provided to a range of ages, and basic needs for social supports should be provided in complete communities.

Staff Comment: The ROP speaks to the importance of building complete communities where amenities and social services needed for daily living are easily accessible and in close proximity. With this in mind staff believe protecting Medical Office permissions remains important.

3.3.3. Town Official Plan, 2024 – Adopted by Council May 2024

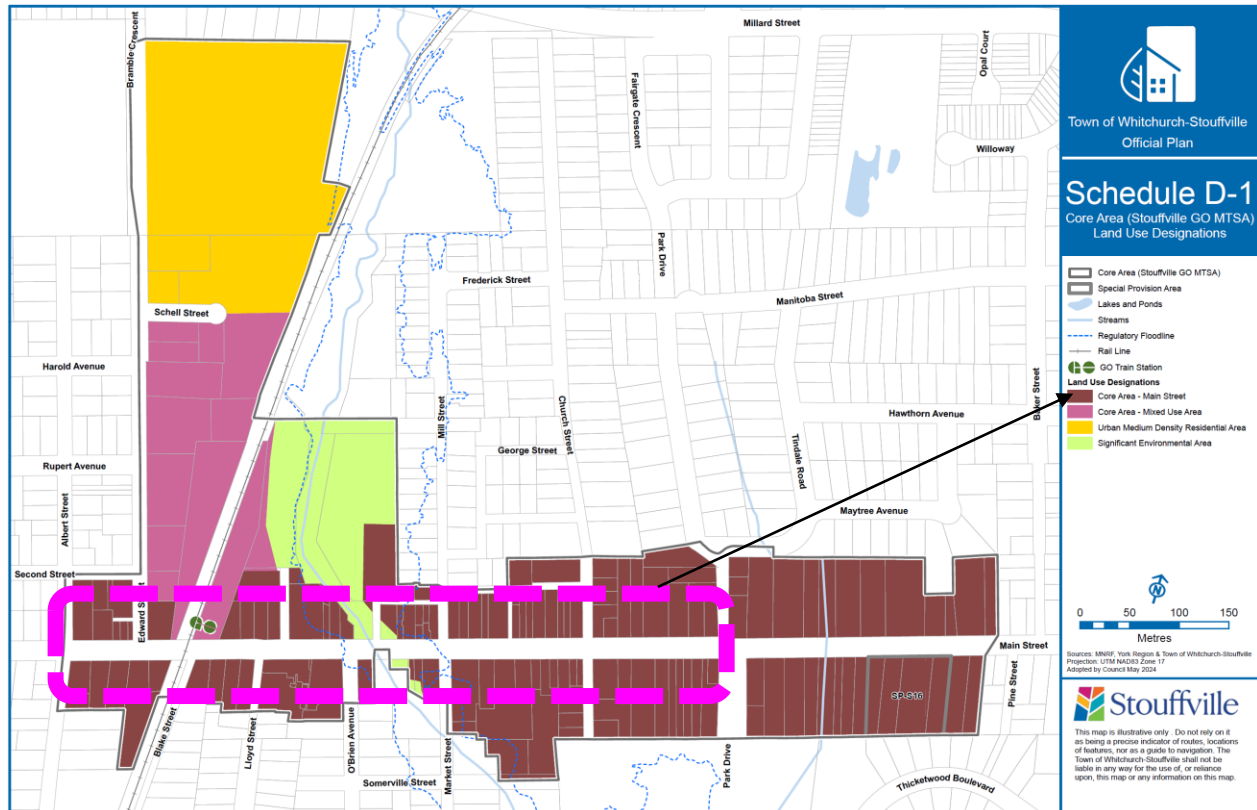
The Town's New Official Plan 2024, adopted by Council in May 2024, is not yet in force and effect, as it is still subject to approval by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The subject area is located within the Stouffville GO Major Transit Station Area [MTSA] (Core Area) and designated as follows:

- Core Area – Main Street; and
- Core Area – Mixed Use

The lands fronting Main Street, located between Albert Street and Park Drive are primarily designated Core Area – Main Street as shown on Schedule D-1 (See **Figure 2** the subject area bounded by pink dashed line). The GO station and lands abutting Edward Street are designated Core Area – Mixed Use, as such, this designation is less applicable to the development of office uses that are located within 10 metres of Main Street.

Figure 2 - Schedule D-1 – Core Area (Stouffville GO MTSA Land Use Designations)



The Stouffville GO MTSA (Core Area) is intended to serve as a focal point for promoting a mix of uses, along with community services through appropriate redevelopment and expansion. This includes evolving as a notable commercial district, where there is a strong residential community, fully integrated with entertainment and cultural facilities, offices, and restaurants that compliment and support a host of smaller scale retail and personal service commercial uses.

The Core Area – Main Street designation permits a broad mix of uses, including mid-rise buildings in the form of apartments and mixed-use buildings, restaurants, retail and personal service commercial uses, personal services uses, professional and medical offices, financial establishments, recreation and entertainment uses, and institutional and cultural use.

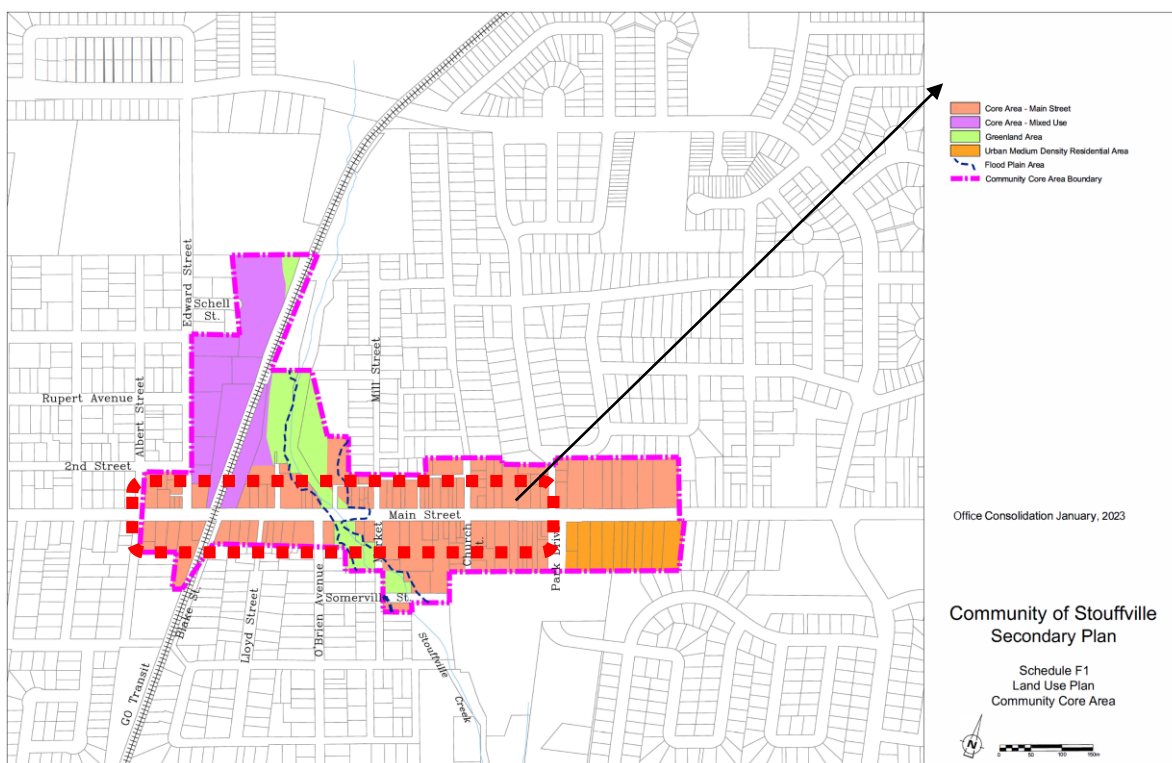
While professional and medical offices are permitted, standalone office uses are explicitly prohibited within buildings that have frontage on Main Street, in the new Official Plan. This includes buildings where the sole use is for offices. The intent of this prohibition is to require the development of mixed-use buildings along Main Street, where residential and office uses may be permitted above the ground floor with high activity uses that animate the streetscape.

Staff Comment: Office Uses are amongst the listed use permission in the ‘Core Area – Main Street.’ The new OP mirrors Council’s desire for a vibrant streetscape. Future re-development applications will require future buildings including an Office Use be mixed use. As a result, every new Office Use should be balanced with new storefront retail uses. Staff will be able to leverage policies to locate the Office Use above grade or at the rear of the first floor.

3.3.4. In-Effect Current Official Plan, 2004 (January 2023 Office Consolidation)

The New Adopted Official Plan policy framework is generally consistent with the current Official Plan, 2004 (2023 Office Consolidation), currently in force an effect. The lands fronting Main Street are primarily designated Core Area – Main Street as shown on Schedule F-1. The subject area is bounded by red dashed line in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 - Schedule F1 Land Use Plan Community Core Area



The Core Area - Main Street designation recognizes the existing community core as a major focal point for commercial and community uses and provides for its enhancement, including some redevelopment and expansion, and the opportunity for a range of residential uses.

Permitted uses within the designation include retail and service commercial uses, offices, mixed uses, institutional and residential uses. New development and redevelopment shall reinforce the Core Area character as a pedestrian shopping area in a traditional setting and pedestrian traffic generating activities, particularly retail and service

commercial uses and institutional should generally be located at grade level. Office and/or residential uses located above the ground floor.

Staff Comment: Office Uses are amongst the listed use permission in the ‘Core Area – Main Street.’ The in-effect OP mirrors Council’s desire for a vibrant streetscape. Future re-development applications will encourage new Office Uses above grade or at the rear of the first floor.

3.4. Town’s Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2010-001-ZO and Proposed Zoning Amendment

3.4.1. Current Zoning and permitted uses in the Subject Area

Majority of the properties located within the subject area are primarily zoned Commercial Residential Mixed - Community Core Area (CM1). The Commercial Residential Mixed - Community Core Area (CM1) zone permits a wide range of uses including the ‘Office’ use as displayed below in Table 2.

Table 2

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Animal Grooming Centre | Group Home |
| Apartment Building | Hotel |
| Assembly Hall | Library |
| Business Services | Long Term Care Facility |
| Club | Office |
| Combined Live Work Use | Park |
| Connected Live Work Use | Personal Service Establishment |
| Commercial Recreation Use | Place of Amusement |
| Commercial School | Place of Worship |
| Convenience Store | Restaurant |
| Day Care Centre | Retail Store |
| Dry Cleaning Establishment | School |
| Dwelling Above a Commercial Use | Senior Citizens Home |
| Financial Institution | Service Establishment |
| Fitness and Recreation Facilities | Studio |
| Funeral Home | Veterinary Clinic |

The Zoning By-law defines both ‘Office Use’ and ‘Medical Office’ use, see section 3.3.2 below. Staff note ‘Medical Office’ is considered a subcategory of the ‘Office Use’ definition (see underlined portion of Medical Office definition).

3.5. Proposed Zoning By-law Amendments at the Statutory meeting September 25, 2024

Under the present scope of this study as directed by Council and proposed amendments, the use limitation applies to both new ‘Office Uses’ and ‘Medical Office.’

Town's Zoning By-law, defines both uses as follows:

Office Use: *a building or part of a building designed, intended or used for the practice of a profession, the carrying on of a business, the conduct of public administration, or, where not conducted on the same site, the administration of an industry. Offices shall not include retail sales, industrial uses, financial institutions, places of amusement or places of assembly.*

- Examples of 'Office Uses' may include but are not limited to real estate, insurance, wealth management, accounting, law, and travel agency (when operating as the principal use on the property).

Medical Office: *a premise, office or part of an office designed, intended, or used for the practice of medicine by a medical practitioner and/or drugless practitioner, and may include medical laboratories and ancillary pharmacies and shall not include unrelated retail sales. (2020-060-ZO)*

- Examples of 'Medical Office' uses may include but are not limited to health and wellness service clinics with varied practitioners, dentistry, chiropractic, physiotherapy, ultrasound and x-ray services (when operating as the principal use on the property).

3.5.1. Proposed Draft Zoning Amendments based on Council Motion

Staff have carefully reviewed the Council motion *to prohibit Office Use in the first storey or at grade of a commercial or mixed-use building located within 10 metres of the public right-of-way, abutting Main Street.*

The existing setbacks of buildings vary from property to property along Main Street, and the intended limitation of Office Use for up to 10 metre from Main Street, may cause challenges with the intended implementation and interpretation of the setback from Main Street. Should Council pursue the motion, staff is of the opinion that the setback to Main Street for the purpose of limitation of Office Use, should be measured on a standard basis and therefore staff propose that the 10-metre setback be established from the front wall of the building/structure abutting Main Street (public Right-of-Way).

It is the intent of Council motion to limit Office uses that do not generate foot traffic. Medical Office use falls under the jurisdiction of Office Use under the current Zoning By-law provisions. Staff consider that the Medical Office Use be exempted from the prohibition as Medical Office uses typically generate foot traffic and pedestrian activity and provides an essential service to the community which require brick and mortar locations. As part of creation of a viable and complete community, staff is of the opinion that the Medical Office Use be exempted from any limitation and be permitted under the current zoning permissions, to continue to allow for more opportunities and greater flexibility to be established as per the needs and demands of the community.

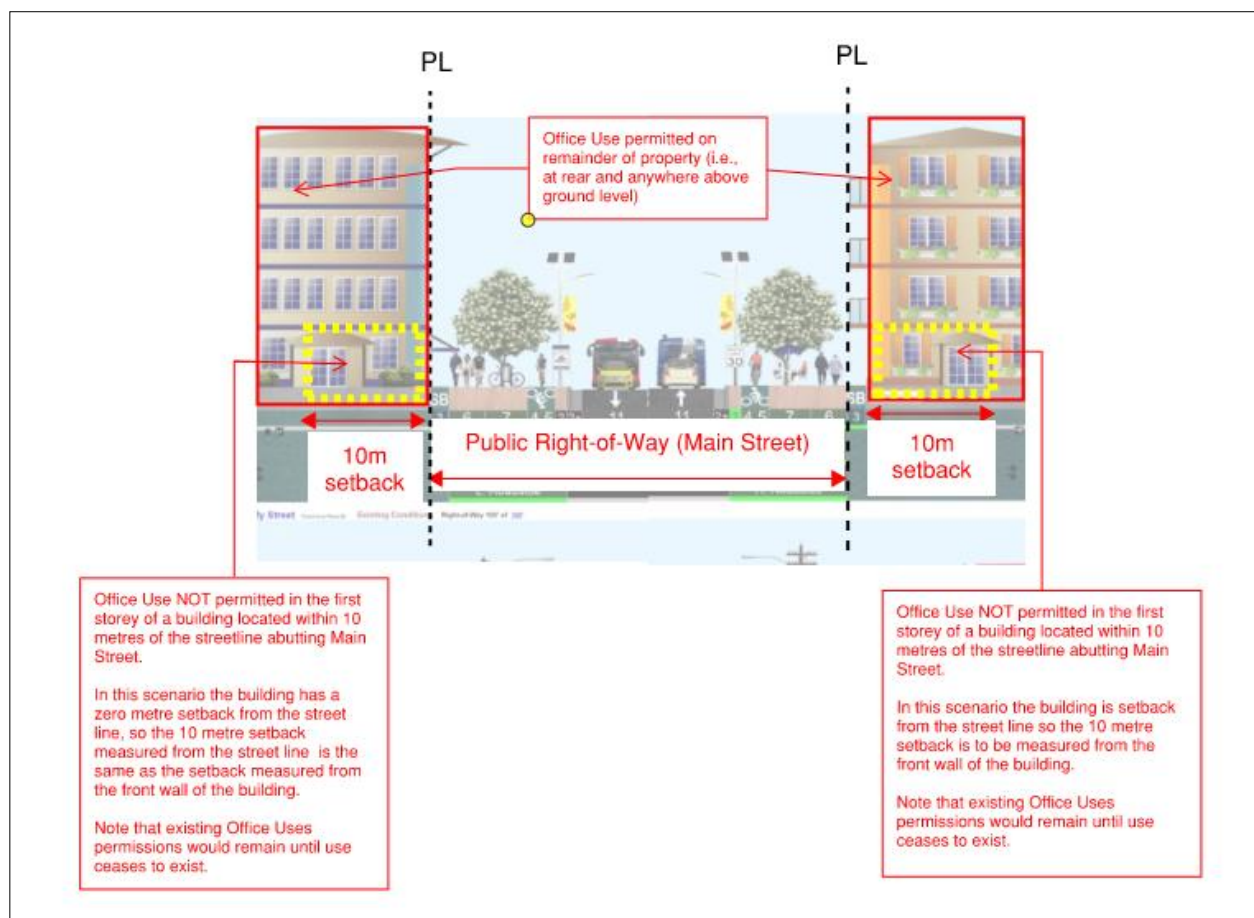
To carry out the intent of Council's motion staff propose the following draft zoning amendments should Council vote to implement Office Use limitations.

“New ‘Office Uses’ shall be prohibited within the ground floor of a building fronting onto Main Street, within the area located between Albert Street and Park Drive along Main Street as follows:

- i) 10 metres set back from the front wall of the main building or structure and shall have a clearly defined separation of uses.*
- ii) Medical Office use will be exempt from this prohibition.”*

See **Figure 4** below to visually illustrate the proposed office prohibition and limitation.

Figure 4 - Cross section outlining proposed zoning amendment and the subject area



It is important to note that should the proposed draft zoning amendment be approved by Council, ‘Office Uses’ would remain permitted beyond the 10 metre setback from the front wall of the building abutting Main Street, on the ground floor only (i.e., generally the rear of the building) and anywhere on the second floor or above, as visually illustrated in **Figure 4** above.

3.6. Other Zoning Amendments being considered by Staff

In addition to the proposed zoning amendments related to limitation and prohibition of Office Use, at the Public Meeting staff explored (1) introducing new pedestrian-oriented uses, (2) reducing parking rates for desired use, and (3) permitting businesses as-of-right encroachment onto the right-of-way (sidewalk fronting the store) for the purpose of animating the streetscape with items such as street furniture, sale racks, and decorations.

Staff believe investigation of such changes will require greater investigation and public consultation. As such, staff intend to explore these changes as part of the 2025 Comprehensive Zoning By-law Review Project, Stouffville Streetscape Design Manual and other initiatives related to Downtown Revitalization.

4. Internal Departments, Agency and Public Comments

This section provides a summary of the public agency comments and correspondence received as of the date of submitting this report for inclusion in the September 3, 2024, public meeting agenda.

4.1. Agency and Departments Comments

At the time of writing this report the following Agency or Department comments have been received and indicated no comment: York Region, Enbridge Gas, Fire and Emergency Services, and the Toronto Region Conservation Authority.

The below Department/Agencies shared comments for consideration:

Economic Development

Economic Development is supportive of the Councillor Motion. Comments are as follows:

- There is a significant opportunity to improve the vibrancy of Stouffville's Historic Downtown. It is the unique "Mom and Pop" restaurants, bakeries, ice cream shops and specialty retail stores that drive foot traffic to Historic Downtowns.
- Downtown Stouffville can and will be a top destination of choice for residents and all who visit when the optimal mix of businesses is achieved. We know from inquiries on available properties for sale Downtown that multigenerational, high foot traffic businesses want to enter Stouffville.
- A more vibrant Downtown creates: an elevated quality of life for residents and their families, an atmosphere of a thriving community, additional jobs a sense of community and unity.

Policy Planning

Policy Planning has indicated that limiting 'Office Uses' on the ground floor is the general intent of the Official Plan. High activity uses that animate the streetscape, such as

commercial, retail and restaurant uses should be on the ground floor, while office uses should be accommodated above, as they are not considered high activity uses that animate the street.

Policy Planning Staff do not believe that Office Uses should be limited at this time due to assorted local variables and market factors and encourages implementing incentives to stimulate desired uses first. With this in mind Policy Staff note a Downtown Community Improvement Plan is presently being considered by staff.

Other Departments

In addition to this Planning has consulted and had on-going discussions on matters related to this project with Policy Planning, Development Engineering, Public Works, and By-law Enforcement. These discussions have informed this report and findings will support future coordination of initiatives related to the Downtown Revitalization.

4.2. Comments from the Public

Staff have received numerous inquiries from residents and business owners located within the subject area. At the time of writing this report the following comments, concerns and questions have been shared with Staff.

1. To date staff have formerly received positions from 20 business owners, property owners and representatives (“stakeholders”).
 - a. 16 stakeholders believe that the ‘Office Use’ change is too restrictive.
 - b. Three (3) stakeholders were supportive and noted that there too many offices and duplication of types of office businesses and are of the opinion that this has reduced foot traffic in the downtown area.
 - c. One (1) stakeholder being a business owner was neutral/no concern.
2. Residents are concerned that existing ‘Office Uses’ will be evicted if approved.
 - a. Staff Note: All legally existing ‘Office Uses’ will maintain the permission until the use ceases.
3. Residents have sought clarity on to how ‘Office Use’ is defined. Residents would like clarity on the scope and what specific businesses are captured under the Office Use definition.
 - a. Further to this there is concern and unclarity that ‘Medical Office’ uses are included in the scope of ‘Office Use.’ Residents encourage further notice / touch points with property owners to ensure residents and potentially impacted businesses are fully informed.

4. Residents want clarity on how and where the 10 metres distance measured from the public right-of-way.
5. Residents are seeking clarity as why change is being proposed now and what does it solve?
6. Residents are questioning why 'Office Uses' are being targeted but other uses are not also included in this prohibition.
7. Business believe Office Uses and Medical Offices uses do generate foot traffic and further to this their staff and patrons frequent/support local retail and restaurants during the day.
8. Residents believe if Offices Uses are eliminated the downtown may become a ghost town during the week and only be occupied in evening and weekends.
9. Residents believe that not all existing downtown buildings are conducive to become retail or restaurants.
10. Residents are concerned that if approved, it becomes riskier to try changing use from Office should new use not succeed.
11. Residents are concerned that if approved this may result in more building vacancies.
12. Residents believe loss of use permission may impact property value and make units more challenging to lease.
13. Residents would like to an anchor use or other initiatives such as popup business programs, low interest renovations, and providing incentives to encourage a mixture of businesses to encourage nearby storefront to change uses prior to succumbing to use limiting measures.
14. Residents believe lack of parking and transportation options are connected to the lack of downtown activity.

4.3. Online Community Survey

Staff asked the community what uses and changes they would like to see Downtown. Staff received 123 responses. The majority of participants shared that active pedestrian-oriented uses are desired by the community. As displayed in the **Table 3** below there is significant community desire for increased retail, restaurants, experiential uses / activities, beverage establishments, grocery stores, and youth-oriented uses.

This information and data should serve as a wake-up call to both the Town and store owners as to the types of uses and changes that are desired and have an active patron base in waiting. This information will be shared with applicable departments and can be levered by Economic Development to help draw the uses most desired by the community.

This information will help inform use and regulation changes when the Town completes the incoming Comprehensive Zoning By-law Review Project.

Table 3

| Downtown Community Desired Use Survey Results | | |
|--|--------------|---|
| Desired Use | Tally | Breakdown of Specified Uses When Detailed |
| Retail | 266 | 22 x Boutiques, 17 x Bookstore, 11 x Clothing, 9 x Shoes, 8 x Gift Store, 6 x Housewares, 7 x Market (i.e., indoor or farmer market), 5 x Games/Toys, 5 x Thrift/Vintage Shop/Consignment, 4 x Pop Up Shops, 3 x Chocolatier, 3 x Convenience Store, 3 x Refillery, 3 x Ladies Wear, 2 x Men's Wear, 2 x Antique, 2 x Arts and Crafts, 2 x Candy, Discount Store, Drugstore, Educational Toy/Book, Fabric, Florist, Hobby Shop, Jewellery, Kids Store, Photography, Paint, Puzzle, Stationary, Co-location of uses, Outdoor Equipment |
| Restaurant | 134 | 13 x Ice Cream/Yogurt/Gelato, 12 x Coffee Shop, 12 x Café, 9 x Patio, 7 x Dessert Shop, 7 x Fast Serve Takeout (i.e., snack, smoothie, bubble tea), 6 x Tea Room, 3 x Sandwich Shop, 2 x Not Chain, 4 x Upscale, 2 x Authentic Ethnic Cuisine, 2 x Affordable, 2 x Family Friendly, 2 x Breakfast Cafes, 2 x Themed Café (i.e., Video Game, Stuffed Animals), 2 x Open Late / Early, Diner, Vegan, |
| Experiential Use / Activities | 65 | 12 x Bowling, 8 x Board Game Café, 8 x Small Movie Theatre, 7 x Arcade, 7 x Craft Your Own (Pottery, Glass Blowing, Painting), 5 x Escape Room, 3 x Pool Hall, 2 x Axe Throwing, 2 x Darts, Mini Golf, Climbing, Night Club |
| Beverage Establishments | 42 | 20 x Brewery, 11 x Pub/Bar, 5 x Cidery, 4 x Wine Bar, Winery, Cocktail Bar |
| Grocery | 31 | 9 x Small Grocer, 2 x Specialty Food, 2 x Deli/Cheese Shop, Fruit and Vegetable Market, Organic Food Store |
| Bakery | 19 | 2 x French Bakery, 2 x Chinese Bakery, Italian Bakery |
| Other | 16 | 4 x Art Gallery, 3 x Bank, 2 x Personal Services, 2 x Professional Services, Boutique Hotel, Dog Day Care, Job Centre, Library, Co-Working Space |
| Youth Oriented Uses | 14 | 3 x Kids Play Café, 2 x Teen Lounge / Youth Club, After School Program, Drop-in Kids Centre, Kid Art Space |
| Fitness | 4 | Pilates, Yoga Studio, Dance Studio |

4.4. Basis of Recommendation

In consideration of the above information and feedback received from the public, staff is of the opinion that the limitation of Office Uses at this time is not supportable, given the current market conditions and ongoing initiatives in the downtown.

While staff do believe there is an oversaturation and duplication of certain office uses in the Downtown and that subject area would benefit from a more diverse mix of vibrant uses, staff do not believe limiting Office Uses is the appropriate approach at this juncture for the following reasons:

1. Staff could not locate data or studies that quantitatively concluded that prohibiting any uses resulted in revitalized and more active downtowns.
2. Local use establishment data displays a decline in emerging Office Use occupancies and potential market correction resulting in an increase in Restaurant and Service Uses over the past 5 years.
3. Presently Downtown Stouffville has ten (10) vacancies. Five (5) of these vacancies have occurred in 2024. Any land use restrictions may increase the challenge in occupying these vacancies.
4. As described below staff is of the opinion there are a number of tailwinds and initiatives discussed in the below section which staff are optimistic will assist with the objective of revitalizing Downtown.

4.5. Next Steps and other initiatives

Despite staff recommendations, this has been a very worthwhile exercise as it has placed a spotlight on the objective of Downtown Revitalization and uncovered that there is strong community and stakeholder interest in making this objective a reality. This should be seen as a reinvigorated starting point to ensure the Town has a coordinated plan and strategy moving forward to ensure the key objectives of a bustling pedestrian oriented Main Street remains in focus.

Below staff outline the various number of tailwinds and initiatives that will lead toward the objective of the Council Motion:

1. Community Survey

As discussed above staff received 123 responses from the community survey. The majority of participants shared that active pedestrian-oriented uses are desired by the community. This information will be shared with Economic Development to help draw the uses most desired by the community and to inform use and regulation changes when the Town completes the forthcoming Comprehensive Zoning By-law Review Project.

2. Town Comprehensive Zoning By-law Review and Update

Staff can use this scheduled activity to enact many of the desired uses identified by staff and received through the survey. Staff can additionally use this process to further examine regulations and provisions to further reduce red tape and incentivize desired uses and changes.

3. Main Street Reconstruction and Stouffville Streetscape Design Manual

Planning Staff and Public Works will coordinate these two (2) projects to ensure the design of an attractive and functional streetscape with a sense of place that entices pedestrian activity.

4. Streetscape Animation and Encroachment

Planning Staff understands that Public Works presently has arrangements with the Chamber of Commerce to enable storefronts to encroach onto the right-of-way for the purpose of enabling street furniture and decorations. Through the above projects staff will work with Public Works and Economic Development to formalize a future turnkey process and communicate the present opportunity with business owners to take advantage of.

5. Civic Square Expansion

Planning Staff opine that the civic square expansion will create a meeting destination that will draw pedestrians Downtown and encourage owners of nearby businesses to convert to pedestrian-oriented uses to benefit from the synergy.

6. Incoming Residential Growth

Staff is of the opinion the anticipated 915 dwellings in the development activity pipeline and other future development sparked in the area by the Edward Street reconstruction and its proximity to the Major Transit Station Area (i.e. Stouffville GO) will provide necessary mass of population needed to support and entice the creation of active pedestrian-oriented use.

7. Village of Stouffville Advisory Committee

Recently the Village of Stouffville Advisory Committee was formed. This committee will provide a further mechanism to consult and work with stakeholders and the community on future initiatives.

8. Downtown Community Improvement Program (CIP)

Planning Department has plans to initiate a Downtown CIP that through consultation is intended to assist in overcoming identified challenges.

9. Stouffville Village Small Business Challenge

The Town has initiated a contest with a prize of up to \$50,000 for the winner to open a storefront in the heart of Stouffville. This challenge is designed to ignite the entrepreneurial spirit, support local businesses, and revitalize the Stouffville Village.

10. Continued Consultation with the Community, Business Owners and Stakeholder Groups

Staff are pleased to see the interest the community has shown in Downtown and will continue to reach out and seek feedback from the community, business owners and stakeholder groups.

11. Other initiatives

Staff will continue to explore opportunities and best practices for revitalization of the downtown Main Street which may not be captured above.

5. Options:

Option A (Recommended)

Status Quo – That Council receive Staff report DS-058-24 as information from staff in response to Council direction from June 5, 2024 and that Council does not enact the proposed zoning by-law amendments as presented at the September 25, 2024 Public Meeting and that Council direct staff to continue Office Use and Medical Office permissions as presently permitted in Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2010-001-ZO.

Option B

Limit Office Use Permissions within Subject Lands - That Council direct staff to amend Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2010-001-ZO to limit Office Use permissions as described in Section 3.5.1 within the Subject Lands and bring forward a zoning by-law to amend the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law.

Option C

Limit both Office Use and Medical Office Permissions within Subject Lands - That Council direct staff to amend Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2010-001-ZO to limit *both* Office Use and Medical Office permissions as described in Section 3.5.1 within the Subject Lands.

6. Financial Implications:

None

7. Broader Intergovernmental Impacts and/or Considerations:

See Section 3.4 (Applicable Provincial and Regional Policies).

8. Communication:

- Statutory notification requirements completed in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act.
- Information website created on Town Website.
- Social media campaign and survey to seek further community feedback.
- Council Agenda circulated to interested parties in advance of Council Hearing.
- Notice of Decision to be circulated as per requirements of the Planning Act.

9. Alignment with Strategic Plan

1. A Town that Grows
A Town that grows in support of complete communities
2. A Healthy and Greener Town
Increase Offerings and Opportunities for Active Living
3. An Engaging Town
Increase Community Engagement & Outreach
4. A Safer Town
Make Our Community Safer

10. Attachments

1. Attachment No. 1 – Location Map
2. Attachment No. 2 – Council Member Motion

11. Related Reports

[Report No. DS-045-24, dated September 25, 2024, titled “Study to review Limiting Office Uses and the Introduction of New Uses on Main Street between Albert Street and Park Drive \(File No. ZBA24.007\)”](#)

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