

Barnett Drive extension and gas bar proposal – Planning Considerations

Development Application details

A public notice sign for site modification was posted by the City of Ottawa in spring 2013. The application is to close a portion of Peter Harkness Lane from Regional Road 174 to Sparkle Street and to extend Barnett Drive approximately 130 metres to connect to Regional Road 174. The owner of the 4.5 hectares (approximately 11 acres) on 2725 Old Montreal Road wants to develop a gas bar, convenience store and drive-through coffee shop as the first phase of a commercial development for the Village. The business would be located on the southwest corner of the 174 and the Barnett Drive extension.

The proposal calls for a 3,200 square foot convenience store and coffee shop with an associated drive-through. In addition, the proposed building includes an 800 square foot apartment located on the second level. The gas bar would feature separate pumps all under one overhead canopy. A total of 13 parking spaces would be provided directly in front of the building along the north and west building elevations.

A public meeting on the proposed development was held in June 2013. Cumberland residents raised a number of issues, including the impact on Mr. Gas and S&S Foodliner (Haddad's store), disruption to the surrounding neighbourhood, and traffic flow and safety concerns along Regional Road 174. The developer's plan assumes the 174 will be widened to four lanes, but originally did not intend to pay for a traffic light at the new intersection. A further concern is that a drive through facility is incompatible with the character of an historic rural village like Cumberland.

On June 20, 2014, The City submitted its comments and public feedback to the developer. The application was on hold awaiting revised plans and reports from the developer. On October 1, 2015, the development application was reactivated and the City is reviewing the documents to determine whether their concerns have been met. There is no indication in the updated application that any revisions have been made in response to concerns raised by the public.

Zoning issues

When the issue first arose, residents raised the question of whether drive-through facilities were allowed in rural villages such as Cumberland.

A review of drive-through facilities was conducted as part of the updated Secondary Plan for Rural Villages in 2012. City planners determined that drive-through facilities are not compatible with the character of rural villages. Ultimately, drive-through facilities were not prohibited in the Official Plan, but are "generally not permitted in village core areas". Many cities have taken steps to restrict them because they do not contribute to pedestrian-friendly communities.

A comprehensive review of drive through facilities in Ottawa's 26 rural villages was completed in February 2012. (link: [Drive-through facilities in the Village context - City of Ottawa](http://ottawa.ca/.../ottawa/.../07%20-%20Doc%202%20Study%20DTF%...))

The report outlines community planning considerations for drive through facilities in rural communities. It reinforces that they are not appropriate in village core areas and should only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. Interestingly, there is no clear definition of "village core"

anywhere in the report, which notes that each of Ottawa's rural villages is unique and the core areas vary greatly in size and character. The only descriptions of village core are found on Page 20:

“Location of the core area within the Village:

Core areas are generally located at the intersection of two main roads. Larger core areas expand along one or both of these roads. Adequate access to and from a major road is a key design consideration in the development of a drive-through facility. Core areas are typically surrounded with low residential uses.”

Furthermore, the report states that village cores are constantly evolving:

“It is acknowledged that core areas evolve over time in response to increases and decreases in population and changing economic conditions. As such, the ensemble of buildings in the core area also evolve and change.”

Note: The Barnett Drive development is just outside the current village core boundary. A concern is whether the village core boundary is positioned for future growth in terms of both business and residential development. It is important to make sure that any development is consistent with the type of village residents said they wanted to create as outlined in the Cumberland Community Vision exercise (2008-2011).

City planners have stated that the development is outside the village core and is zoned Rural Commercial (RC12). Under this zoning a number of uses are allowed including a gas bar, restaurant, bar, day care, office, retail store, animal hospital, etc. The permitted uses allow drive-through facilities, as long as they are connected to restaurants, banks or gas stations.

Transportation Concerns

Cumberland residents raised concerns at the public meeting in June 2013 about the impact of this development on commuter traffic on the 174, disruption of the surrounding neighbourhood and traffic flow through the Village. Currently, an Environmental Assessment is under way reviewing improvements to Ottawa Road 174. At the most recent public meeting on the EA, it was announced that the preferred transportation solution is to widen the 174 to four lanes but that no changes are anticipated until 2031.

One of the concerns raised by the City was who would pay for the traffic light at the new intersection of Barnett and the 174. The issue of further commuter delays created by an additional traffic light so close to the one at Cameron Street was not raised as a concern by the City.

On July 20, 2015, Councillor Blais signed the City of Ottawa Road Modification Agreement (RMA-2015-DRI-011) which proposes the following:

- Proposed extension of Barnett Drive from Old Montreal Road to Ottawa Road 174.
- Northbound right-turn lane on Barnett Drive extension.
- Northbound left-turn lane on Barnett Drive extension.
- Traffic signal at Ottawa Road 174 and Barnett Drive extension.
- Eastbound right-turn lane on Ottawa Road 174 at Barnett Drive.
- Westbound left-turn lane on Ottawa Road 174 at Barnett Drive.
- The proposed closure of Peter Harkness Lane at Ottawa Road 174 with a physical barrier.

“It must be emphasized that the following road modifications (see Attachment 2) are conceptual and intended only to illustrate the proposed function. The approval of any detailed design of the road modifications stemming from this report will be subject to the City’s detailed design review process.”

The document notes that the developer will pay all associated costs for the road modification.

“The total estimated cost for the proposed road modifications, which includes construction, engineering and contingencies, is \$650,000. There is no cost to the City for the proposed modifications listed in the previous sections estimated at \$650,000 (construction, engineering, and contingencies). S.Aggarwal must provide financial guarantees acceptable to the City of Ottawa to cover the above-noted roadwork. S.Aggarwal is required to fund all costs associated with the design and construction of the above-noted roadway modifications and will be required to provide financial guarantees, acceptable to the City of Ottawa, through the site plan agreement for the development sufficient to cover the estimated costs. “

The time frame for the road modifications is left to the developer to determine since this is considered a private matter:

“This is a privately funded project in which the property owner will establish the construction schedule. “

According to city planning staff, the developer’s time frame is expected to be within the next one to three years and is independent of any widening of the 174.

Community Planning Context – the Cumberland Vision Exercise

In the summer 2008, Cumberland Community Association and City of Ottawa begin discussions on community planning initiatives. In Nov. 2008, the first Village Visioning Workshop was held by a team of city planners led by David Atkinson and Cumberland residents. The process identified strengths, weaknesses and directions for future growth. Over the winter of 2009, city planning staff reviewed previous studies completed under the former City of Cumberland and amalgamated this information.

In June 2009 a follow-up community meeting was held to present draft community planning vision and priority themes relating to the long-term opportunities and aspirations for the Village of Cumberland.

Under the subsequent Village Plan Review in 2011, a presentation by City planners highlighted the following priorities and issues:

Village Core Discussion: increase residential growth
existing vacant land can accommodate 127 dwelling units and add up to 400 residents
discussion of drive through facilities in village core – should they be allowed?
discussion of village pathways and trail development – launch of the Community Trail project

December 7, 2011 Public Meeting Village Review
Adoption of Cumberland Village Vision Statement
Public Workshop Summary and Drive Through Project

City planners tell residents agree that drive-through facilities are not appropriate in Village Core areas and that they will be prohibited.

In February 2011, Updated Village Plans were included in the City's Official Plan.

It is important to note that Community Vision exercises are recognized in the Official Plan as the foundation for a formal community design plan, which is generally required when any significant development is proposed. The Barnett Drive gas bar/convenience store is identified as the first stage of a development project. Residents have requested information on what is planned for the rest of this 11 acre parcel, but this has not been provided.

Note: Since the City has classified this as a Site Plan Modification and not a business development project, the approval process relates only to the road expansion and not what will be constructed on the 11 acre parcel.

CCA has suggested creation of a working group on the Barnett Development, similar to the Cardinal Village working group. It has asked for an opportunity to work with the developer to make improvements that are more suited to the needs of the community (ie. a coffee shop or restaurant rather than a drive-through).

A meeting may take place in the future and interested residents are invited to work on the community planning project.