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Town of Aurora
Committee of the Whole Report
No. PDS26-001

Subject: Community Planning Permit System and Official Plan Amendment
Downtown Community Planning Permit System
File Number: OPA-2025-08

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Department: Planning and Development Services

Date: January 13, 2026

Recommendation

1. That Report No. PDS26-001 be received; and
2. That Official Plan Amendment application OPA-2025-08 be approved to enable the Downtown Community Planning Permit System; and
3. That the draft Official Plan Amendment By-law (Attachment 1) and the draft Downtown Community Planning Permit System By-law (Attachment 2) be brought forward to a future Council meeting for enactment.

Executive Summary

This report seeks Council's approval of OPA-2025-08 and the Downtown Community Planning Permit System/By-law (the By-law).

- The Community Planning Permit System consolidates zoning, site plan, and minor variance applications into one streamlined approval process.
- The statutory Public Planning meeting for the Downtown Community Planning Permit System was held on October 29, 2025.
- The Downtown Community Planning Permit System has been developed based on the consultant recommended 'Alternative Development' concept, which will encourage growth in a sensible manner that promotes downtown revitalization.

Background

The Community Planning Permit System consolidates zoning, site plan, and minor variance applications into one streamlined approval process.

The Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) is a tool that consolidates Zoning, Site Plan, and Minor Variance applications into one streamlined review and approval process. This tool promotes efficiency in the planning process while also setting upfront expectations for the development of the area. The CPPS sets the development standards and requirements for the by-law area. Through the Downtown Community Planning Permit, the Town is proactively setting the criteria for development in the Downtown and positioning itself to responsibly manage future growth in the area.

On October 15, 2019, Council passed a motion directing staff to develop a CPP By-law. The motion recognized the Downtown core as a significant area in the Town and that the By-law could be used as a tool to streamline development approvals and promote collaborative and predictable community building, while also achieving the growth targets for the area and Promenade.

On January 14, 2025, staff prepared an information report at Committee of the Whole to provide Council and the public with information on the project and its initiation. Urban Strategies, a reputable planning and design firm, was retained to develop design options and development standards to inform the By-law.

The accompanying Official Plan Amendment will formally delineate the boundary of the By-law area in the Official Plan Schedules and recognize the lands as a special policy area subject to the development standards and administrative processes set by the implementing CPP By-law. The By-law will then become the primary tool setting the development standards for the area, replacing Zoning By-law 6000-17.

The statutory Public Planning meeting for the Downtown Community Planning Permit System was held on October 29, 2025, with the public generally being in favour of the proposed development standards.

An initial Open House for the By-law was held on June 19, 2025, with the public being generally supportive of the planned direction. In addition, a statutory Special Public Planning meeting was held on October 29, 2025, to receive comments from the public and Council regarding the development options for the By-law area and to direct staff to develop the By-law.

Feedback on the project from the Public Meeting was largely supportive. Key comments on the project have included a desire to have the Downtown CPPS incorporate progressive growth oriented policies by introducing greater densities based on current and future housing demands, support the protection of the downtown heritage façades through step-backs, and to promote mixed-use development and encourage walkability in the area as a means of revitalizing the Downtown. All of these suggestions received from the public have become fundamental principles built into the Downtown CPPS. Additional comments received are also provided below, including a summary on how they are addressed in the CPPS:

Table One: Comments Addressed

Comments	Addressed in the CPPS/By-law
Need to account for public parking and traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The required minimum parking rates for multi-unit residential buildings are lowered to encourage more walkability and decrease dependency on the private automobile.No driveways are permitted onto Yonge Street or Wellington Street to ease with traffic flow.If a development proposal involves any existing municipal parking spaces, the applicant(s) must enter into an agreement with the Town to secure and/or allocate public parking spaces within the proposed development.
Need to protect heritage façades	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Heritage Permit Application review process is required for any proposals involving designated heritage buildings.Any development involving a designated heritage buildings shall comply with the respective heritage designation by-law for the property.Architectural articulation and details and the pallet of materials and colours should be chosen to respond to the existing designated heritage buildings.10 metre step-backs are required above the 3rd and 5th storey to preserve heritage façades and the street-wall along Yonge Street.
Need to provide amenities and greenery/greenspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Multi-unit developments are encouraged to provide landscaped areas to support tree plantings, shrubs, flowers, grass, or other such vegetative elements.The Town can request that the applicant provide community benefits which include things like green roofs, community gardens, and/or other landscape amenities or sustainable design matters.

Need to consider appropriate transitions and shadowing effects of proposed developments on existing homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greatest heights are strategically located in areas that do not have adjacent residential uses.• Any variances to the established standards will be required to provide required justification, detailed analysis, and supporting studies.• Appropriate step-backs are incorporated on upper stories.
Need to clarify financial impacts, if any	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The <i>Planning Act</i> prevents the CPP By-law from charging Community Benefits Charges (since benefits are anticipated to be provided in-kind or as part of the direct development approval), however, in accordance with a municipal best practice review, the by-law has built in a “Community Levy” that mirrors the 4 per cent that is established from Community Benefits Charges ensuring that community benefits from development can be provided either in-kind or financially, giving the Town further flexibility.

Analysis

The Downtown Community Planning Permit System has been developed based on the consultant recommended ‘Alternative Development’ concept, which will encourage growth in a sensible manner that promotes downtown revitalization

The Downtown Urban Design Study prepared by Urban Strategies recommends several development standards for the By-law area. Comparing two development concepts, as-of-right development (drawn from the current Aurora Promenade Plan) and the alternative development, the study makes recommendations based on current urban design best practices.

Following the feedback provided from the various public engagement opportunities, the development policies of the By-law area draw from the alternative development concept. The By-law area will see increased step-backs, heights, and setbacks; the new standards are to make sure that the taller buildings introduced into the Downtown will have less impact on the pedestrian realm, the heritage building façades, and the street-wall of Yonge Street.

The passing of the By-law will designate the area as “Downtown Mixed-Use” or the “DMU” zone, setting the new design, development and land use policies dictating built form and a new review and approval process. In addition, establishing the DMU zone will repeal the existing zoning standards within the area. Within the DMU zone, development applications will be classified into three categories: Standard, Minor

Variation, and Major Variation. The table below outlines the differences in the three application categories:

Table Two: By-law Application Categories

	Application Category		
	Class One	Class Two	Class Three
Class Types	Standard Application	Minor Variation Application	Major Variation Application
Variations	Application meets all development standards of the Downtown CPPS by-law. No variation is required.	<p>Application generally meets the intent, standards, and provisions of the CPPS but may require a minor variation based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minor variation to the provisions outlined in the General Provisions Section and the Parking Section (E.g., variations in materiality). • A development standard variation that is within 10% of the defined Development Standards Section of the by-law (E.g., setbacks). Height is excluded. • Approval of a listed discretionary use, with supporting studies as required. 	<p>Application generally meets the intent, standards, and provisions of the CPPS but requires a major variation based on¹:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any development standard variation exceeding 10%, as identified in the Development Standards Section of the by-law. • Any increase in the maximum permitted building height. • Approval of additional uses not permitted under the list of permitted uses.

Approval Authority	Director of Planning and Development Services and/or delegate.	Director of Planning and Development Services and/or delegate (Note: There is a "referral to Council" policy which permits the escalation of Class 2 applications to Council review as needed).	Council.
Timeline	45 days.	45 days.	Requires a separate application and OPA approval process outside the 45 day approval timeline ² .
Notification Requirements	No notice required.	No notice required.	Staff to post notification on the Town website for public access. Notice shall be given by mail to residents within 120 metres of the subject lands. On-site signage shall be provided. Notice shall also be given by publishing in a newspaper.
Conditions	<p>A development agreement will be required.</p> <p>Other requirements may also be imposed as conditions of approval for any class (i.e. preparation of additional studies, or requirements to provide community benefits or to complete infrastructure improvements etc.).</p>		

^{1,2} There is a 5 year moratorium on any major amendment of the CPP By-law, which at the discretion of Council can be waived.

The categorization of applications into standard, minor, and major classes streamlines the review and approval timeline by reducing the need for applications to go to Council if it already aligns with the approved by-law policies and established vision for the area.

Certain policies from the Zoning By-law 6000-17 were carried over to the CPPS, including the permitted uses. Most permitted uses in the Downtown today will continue to be either a permitted use or a discretionary use under the By-law. The permitted and discretionary uses in the By-law area are listed below:

Table Three: Permitted and Discretionary Uses in the DMU Zone

Uses	DMU Permitted Use	DMU Discretionary Use ¹
Accessory Use	X	
Additional Dwelling Units	X	
Art Gallery	X	
Bed and Breakfast	X	
Clinic	X	
Club	X	
Commercial Schools		X
Dry-Cleaning Establishment		X
Dry-Cleaning Distribution Centre and Depot		X
Dwelling Units (singles)		X
Dwelling Units, Apartment Building	X	
Dwelling Units, Mixed-use Building	X	
Dwelling Units, Townhouses ²	X	
Financial Institutions	X	
Fitness Centre	X	
Hospital		X
Hotel	X	
Laundromat		X
Library, Public	X	
Long-Term Care Facility	X	
Museum	X	
Offices	X	
Personal Service Shop	X	
Pet Services	X	
Place of Entertainment	X	
Place of Worship	X	
Private Park	X	
Public Parking	X	
Restaurants	X	
Retail Stores	X	
Retirement Home	X	
School, Post-Secondary		X

Service Shops	X	
Studios	X	
Veterinarian Clinic	X	

¹ Permitted uses are those considered permitted as of right, whereas discretionary uses are those that the Approval Authority can consider as part of a Class 2 variation application.

² Townhouse dwellings are only permitted on Temperance Street, Victoria Street, and internal laneways.

Other policies from Zoning By-law 6000-17 act as the foundation for the Downtown CPPS, including policies on maneuvering spaces, parking space specifications, and accessory building and structures. Taking these Zoning By-law provisions as a starting point, necessary modifications were made to ensure that they aligned with the long-term goals and visions for the Downtown.

With the vision of creating a Downtown that is vibrant, the proposed reduction in the minimum residential parking rate for apartments buildings is a necessary change to achieve the vision laid out in the Official Plan for the Downtown as a place to live, shop, work, and play without reliance on the private automobile. The minimum parking rate policy in the by-law is intended to increase pedestrian porosity in the area leading to a higher foot-traffic and pedestrian activity. In addition, this policy aligns with the Province of Ontario's direction on reduction of parking in strategic growth areas like the Major Transit Station Area. The table below outlines the proposed minimum parking rates:

Table Four: Minimum Parking Rate in the DMU Zone

Use	Minimum Parking Rate
Residential Requirement for a Dwelling Unit in an Apartment Building or a Mixed-use Building	None
Residential Requirement for a Dwelling Unit in a Townhouse	1.0 for each Townhouse unit
Residential Requirements for any Additional Residential Unit (ARU's in townhouses)	1.0 for each additional residential unit, tandem parking permitted.
Requirement for Long-term Care Home, Group Home, Supportive Housing, Retirement Home, or a Hospice Care Home/Facility	0.5 for each dwelling unit, as a general visitor rate
Requirement for all non-residential uses	3.5 for each 100 square meters of gross floor area
Electric Vehicle Parking Requirement for a Dwelling Unit in an Apartment Building or a Mixed-use Building	A minimum of 20 per cent of the total number of parking spaces provided must be Level 3 Electric Vehicle Parking ready, if parking spaces are provided.

Electric Vehicle Parking Requirement for all non-residential uses	A minimum of 10 per cent of total number of required parking spaces provided must be Level 3 Electric Vehicle Parking ready.
Visitor Parking Requirement for a Dwelling Unit in an Apartment Building or a Mixed-use Building	A minimum of 5 per cent of the total number of parking spaces provided or 0.1 per unit if no parking is provided for residents.

It is necessary for the By-law to be forward-looking. This is why there is a reduction in multi-unit residential minimum parking requirements and also new minimum requirements for electric vehicle parking. The By-law needs to provide enough flexibility for it to be up to date with the future needs and development landscape of the Town.

Advisory Committee Review

The Downtown Urban Design Study was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Committee on October 6, 2025. The Committee was supportive of the vision and plan for the area, recognizing that the By-law allows for an opportunity to revitalize the Downtown, while stressing the importance of protecting the heritage façades and character of the area. The Committee noted that although the alternative development concept introduced greater height, because the height was complemented through increased step-backs, the built form produced through this concept actually better enhanced the heritage façades along Yonge Street.

Gathering the Committee's feedback on protecting the heritage buildings, the By-law also incorporates policies on heritage protection. The By-law explicitly states that nothing in the by-law will waive the requirement of and need for a heritage permit application for any alterations of a designated heritage building within the by-law area. This policy ensures that any development that occurs involving designated heritage buildings will be required to go through the heritage permit process and be reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Committee.

Additionally, the Downtown CPPS was reviewed by the Aurora Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) on June 10, 2025. Feedback from AEDC was positive, with the AEDC recognizing that the Downtown CPPS can be an instrument to revitalize the Downtown in a manner that supports economic development, tourism, employment, and place-making.

Legal Considerations

The attached draft Official Plan Amendment By-law and the CPPS By-law are being provided for reference and may require further updates and formatting adjustments. If

this report is endorsed by Council as requested, updated versions of the by-laws will be brought forward for passage at a future Council meeting as required. The CPPS By-law will also repeal the application of the Town's Zoning By-law with respect to the downtown area that will become subject to the new CPPS By-law.

The Community Planning Permit System and Official Plan Amendment are pursuant to the provisions of the *Planning Act* and *O. Reg. 173/16: Community Planning Permits*. All owners within the By-law area would be entitled to appeal the By-law to the OLT within 20 days of a Notice of Passing being issued. There is also a 5-year moratorium on amendments being made to the By-law once it is passed (unless an amendment is otherwise supported by Council). Once a CPPS By-law is in place, only the applicant can appeal a decision made on its application no later than 20 days after the day notice of the decision is given. The applicant also has the right to appeal if no decision is made on its application within 45 days.

Financial Implications

In accordance with the *Planning Act*, Community Benefit Charges are not applicable within the By-law area, as the By-law can be used as an alternative tool for municipalities to secure community benefits directly.

Despite this, a review of municipal best practices determined that some municipalities with Community Planning Permit By-laws have incorporated Community Charges/Contributions in the amount of four per cent of the value of the land that is subject to any development with five or more storeys and 10 or more residential units. This By-law follows suit and sets out a requirement for a "Community Levy" of four per cent, which is also in line with Town's Community Benefit Charge By-law. This is a charge to developers specifically.

Development Charges would also still be applicable to any development within the by-law area as per the Development Charges By-law, and appropriate fees for each class of development under the By-law will be incorporated into the Town's Fee By-law.

Communications Considerations

Notification regarding this report has been shared with all interested parties. Town staff will notify residents and landowners of the Downtown CPPS By-law area and interested parties of any future Council decisions through mail and/or email, as well as updates through the Downtown Community Planning Permit By-law Engage Aurora page.

Climate Change Considerations

The By-law introduces reductions in minimum parking requirements for multi-unit residential buildings and sets new requirements for allocating parking spaces for electric vehicles. This can lead to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutant emissions from motor vehicles and encourage future residents to take public transportation and/or active transportation.

Furthermore, developments within the By-law area are expected to provide community benefits, as identified by the Town. These community benefits can include items like green roofs, sustainable design initiatives or other landscape elements, which help combat the impacts of climate change.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Downtown Community Planning Permit System supports the strategic plan goal of supporting an exceptional quality of life for all through satisfying requirements of strengthening the fabric of our community through downtown revitalization.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. That Council provide direction.

Conclusions

The proposed Downtown Community Planning Permit System positions the Town proactively in terms of setting the vision and framework for downtown growth and revitalization. The development and design standards in the proposed by-law build off the alternative development concept from the Downtown Urban Design Study to create a public realm that is pedestrian friendly and sensitive to the heritage façades while introducing sensible growth in the area.

Attachments

- Attachment 1 – Draft Official Plan Amendment By-law
- Attachment 2 – Draft Downtown Community Planning Permit System By-law
- Attachment 3 – Location Map
- Attachment 4 – Downtown Urban Design Study

Previous Reports

PDS25-001, January 14, 2025; and
PDS25-103, October 29, 2025.

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on December 11, 2025

Approvals

Approved by Marco Ramunno, Director, Planning and Development Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer