



SMITHS FALLS

RISE AT THE FALLS

Report # 2023-116

To: Mayor and Council
From: Karl Grenke, Senior Planner
Date: September 21, 2023
Committee of the Whole Date: September 25, 2023
Title: Official Plan Update – Themes and Directions

- For Direction
- For Information
- For Adoption
- Attachments: 4 Pages

Recommendation:

THAT Council directs staff to develop a Request for Proposal for qualified consultants to undertake the update to the Town’s Official Plan that includes the following elements:

- **Hosting five theme-specific workshops relating to Downtown Revitalization, Housing, Sustainability, Community Spaces and Transportation;**
- **Incorporates Transportation Master Planning and Commercial Sector Analysis into the scope of this project;**
- **Plans for a 25 year growth horizon as envisioned in the Land Needs Study;**

AND THAT the Council provides direction to staff regarding the identification of Opportunity Areas into the scope of the Request for Proposal.

Purpose: To obtain Council’s direction as it relates to defining the scope of the Official Plan update project.

Background: On April 3rd, 2023, Council confirmed its intent to initiate an update to the Town’s Official Plan. The update of the Plan is necessary to effectively plan for future growth, incorporate and implement master plans approved by Council in the last term and align with current provincial planning direction.

On June 5th, 2023, Council approved a Land Needs Study that forecasted residential and non-residential growth over a 25-year planning horizon. The study concluded that the Town’s urban serviced area will need to expand to accommodate an anticipated 3,600 new residents by 2046. This report is a foundational piece to support the upcoming work.

On July 24th, 2023, the Senior Planner presented Report #2023-088, summarizing the results of a public consultation session that identified a vision for the Town of Smiths Falls in the future and ideas to help us get there.

In late August and early September, Planning staff met individually with department heads to identify key themes, priorities and ideas for the updated Official Plan. While Planning Services will lead the project, the Official Plan touches upon the operations of every department to some extent and has corporate-wide significance. The department and public consultation has crystallized five key themes, which staff recommend be workshopped in greater detail with the public and stakeholders.

At this stage, staff are seeking Council's concurrence on the identified themes as well as Council's direction on several other decisions that affect the scope of the Official Plan update.

Analysis and Options: The Planning Act requires that municipalities host open house and statutory public meetings prior to adopting an Official Plan. Consultation with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and housing is also necessary as the Town is a single-tier municipality and the Province will ensure that provincial interests are accommodated in the Plan. With that in mind, there is considerable flexibility for the Town in defining how it wants to proceed with an update, what subjects should be assessed and how we get to the deliverable. As the Plan presents a fundamental roadmap for the development of our community over the next 25 years, this report proposes a more meaningful and robust public consultation framework than the minimums prescribed by the Act.

The Official Plan update process began in earnest through the Land Needs study, which is a building block for this work. The Land Needs Study was prepared according to the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement, which set forward various criteria to help municipalities plan for growth. In the spring of 2023, the province released a new draft Provincial Policy Statement that changes many of these criteria. While the new PPS has not yet been finalized and while its implementation timeline is unknown, staff project that these key changes will remain as proposed and accordingly, in order to advance this project, we are assuming so. If this changes, Council will be advised, and the process can be re-calibrated accordingly.

Consultation Themes

Staff recommend that five theme specific workshops be scheduled in the coming months to assess and explore policy approaches and solutions to five broad themes that have been identified in public and department consultation. The themes assume that the Town will continue to grow, and that the question of *where* to grow will be answered through a separate technical process that evaluates alternatives. These themes help answer how we want the Town to grow, what we want to look like 25 years from now and how we want to plan. Each workshop would be facilitated, with the deliverable being ideas and feedback that can be incorporated into policy:

Downtown Revitalization

Sustaining our efforts to promote and support the downtown core as our social, cultural and economic heart, while finding ways to enhance its role as a destination.

Housing

Doing what we must to ensure that enough housing is available to all who need it, and that housing types meet the unique and changing needs of the community. Support inclusive and affordable housing as needed.

Sustainability

The Town is planned in a way that promotes environmental sustainability, reduces greenhouse gas emissions and is resilient to the impacts of a changing climate, including extreme weather events. Our definition and the Town's role will need to be clarified.

Community Spaces

That growth be accompanied by quality-of-life improvements that include open spaces and public land that provide opportunities for rest, recreation and gathering, all the while creating a sense of place.

Transportation and Connections

That neighbourhoods, commercial nodes and community spaces (existing and future) are easily connected to allow people using a variety of means to get around seamlessly.

While multiple theme-specific workshops are more labour intensive than single open house sessions, staff recommend this approach to encourage participation by interested stakeholders and achieve meaningful feedback through targeted, granular discussions.

While not proposed as a workshop theme, the department consultations also identified the need to ensure that the Town's growth is sustainable with the municipality's ability to provide quality of life, emergency and public works services, and that future decisions are reflective of that objective

Council's direction is requested to confirm alignment with the identified themes and descriptions. Council may wish to add themes or modify the proposed themes.

Growth Horizon

The 2020 Provincial Policy Statement requires municipalities to ensure sufficient land is available to plan for **up to** 25 years of growth. This formed the basis of the projections contained in the Land Needs Study, which were accepted by Council. The proposed PPS requires municipalities to ensure sufficient land is available to plan for **at least** 25 years of growth.

While Council has the ability (assuming final approval of the proposed PPS) to re-visit the timelines that informed the Land Needs projections, staff are of the view that the findings remain valid and appropriate to inform growth planning at this time. Other proposed changes to the PPS allow more flexibility to Council to plan for urban boundary adjustments, as well as re-assessing our current findings in the years to come.

Council's direction is requested to confirm the proposed growth horizon.

Supporting Technical Work

Department consultation and previous planning work has identified additional technical work that would support the broader OP update and inform policy and mapping decisions:

- Commercial Sector Analysis that updates previous Retail Market Analysis and rationalizes current commercial supply within targeted growth areas, including an updated assessment of the current vacancy and retail mix. This will also help inform mapping and policy decisions regarding the Town's commercial designations. The cost of this work is estimated at \$15,000.
- Incorporate the Transportation Master Plan into the scope of the Official Plan update. A Transportation Master Plan has been identified as an initiative in Council's new Strategic Plan, with a completion set for 2024. The Town's current Official Plan includes transportation related policies, as well as a road classification schedule that helps inform decisions on capital projects and development. A Transportation Master Plan helps the Town plan for growth and identify needs and opportunities to enhance the vehicular and active transportation network. The

Town's 2023 Capital budget has set aside \$175,000 for this work as a stand-alone item.

The Official Plan update process may identify additional supporting studies that are necessary to best meet the Town's needs. While the above two noted items can be done on their own, staff recommend they be built into the scope of the Official Plan update in order to leverage the synergies available and result in a more comprehensive and complete document.

Council's direction is requested for staff to accommodate the Commercial Sector Analysis and Transportation Master Plan within the scope of this project.

Opportunity Areas

The Land Needs Study identified the need for additional residential (37 ha/93 acres) and industrial (13 ha/32 acres) lands to accommodate projected growth over the next 25 years, and these would be implemented by re-designating new lands to accommodate residential or industrial/employment development.

Staff have identified several Opportunity Areas that are within the current Town limits and may be suitable to accommodate significant new development. These include lands that are within our current urban serviced boundary as well as development reserves and through this process, Council has the opportunity to highlight any areas in which they may wish to explore more detailed plans. Four potential Opportunity Areas are presented in this report (*See Appendix A for map and description*), however Council may choose to investigate different opportunity areas.

- **Opportunity Area 1 - Ferrara and Ferguson area** consisting of vacant land that was originally designated to form part of a business park that was never fully developed. Most of this land is currently owned by the Town. In light of the significant commercial and residential development nearby, the Town has a unique opportunity to develop a comprehensive plan for the entire site, which may involve residential development.
- **Opportunity Area 2 - Cornelia and Mazie corridor** is a somewhat underutilized corridor at the northwest corner of the Town and forming a gateway from Highway 43. The Uptown Mixed Use designation that covers almost all of these lands (see Appendix "A") contemplates a wide variety of residential and non-residential uses, however much of this land is undeveloped and Council may wish to consider a more specific strategy for this area to define and support development.
- **Opportunity Area 3 - Lorne Street Extension lands** were re-designated to Residential as part of the 2014 Official Plan based on an assessment at the time that the Town was oversupplied in industrial land. The Plan also indicated that the lands were not needed for development and as such, a "development reserve" was imposed. With new industrial development since then, the 2022 Land Needs Study indicates that this situation has changed. The Official Plan update process will allow Council to plan for the ultimate development of these lands, likely in phases.
- **Opportunity Area 4** – Through its incorporation into the Town boundaries following the closure of the Rideau Regional Centre, successive planning documents envisioned the **Gallipeau Centre lands** as eventually redeveloping and becoming more incorporated into the fabric of the Town. As the frame lands (beyond a highway commercial area along Queen and the existing development envelope)

were not needed to support the Town's 2014 growth plans, a development reserve was also implemented. Through this exercise, and potentially in conjunction with a new developer, Council will have the opportunity to plan for the ultimate development of these lands, also likely in phases.

The Centre Street area of the downtown core is another opportunity area, where staff are in the process of procuring a consultant to undertake a master plan for the area. This master plan will propose a suite of policies and mapping that can be incorporated into this Plan.

An "Opportunity Area" is not a statutory planning term, but rather a working title used by staff to identify locations where opportunities may exist to undertake more detailed secondary planning strategies to spur development. While secondary planning strategies leading to secondary plans can occur outside the scope of the OP update, Council's direction is invited as to whether synergies can be explored as part of this process.

While the scope is subject to Council's direction, an area specific planning process could create a specific and implementable plan for a defined area through the following:

- Concept plans showing land use and densities – to inform area specific OP policies
- Detailed servicing studies assessing local and downstream capacity
- Detailed transportation planning
- Additional local public and stakeholder consultation
- Exploration of planning and economic development tools that may be available to promote development

Depending on the scope and complexity of a study area, a secondary plan can cost \$20-50,000 on its own. Planning for specific opportunity sites can occur at any time, however Council may wish to leverage the broader Official Plan update process to develop site specific policies for identified growth areas and ensure harmony between the visions, values and projections enshrined in the Official Plan and those incorporated in a site specific or secondary plan.

If so directed by Council, the RFP for this project can identify one or more Opportunity Area for special consideration.

Council's direction is requested on the following key questions:

- ***Does Council wish to build secondary plans or other area specific planning exercises into the scope of the Official Plan update at this time?***
- ***If so; which area(s) should be prioritized, and how?***

Request for Proposal

Staff will be seeking the services of a qualified consultant team to undertake the work outlined above and Council's direction regarding these items will inform the Request for Proposal document that outlines the scope of work for the project. Depending on the identified deliverables, the work will likely take 1-2 years to complete, and the lead consultant team (usually a multi-disciplinary planning team) will identify sub-consultants in their proposal.

Our expectation is that this will be a multi-phase project. The first phase will include detailed consultations, including the thematic workshops. Following this consultation and assessment of background work which will determine the overall range and nature of the

changes to the Plan, Council will be asked to finalize directions, including whether the implementing instrument (Official Plan) should be structured as an “Update” under Section 26 of the Planning Act or a new Official Plan. The level of effort and costs associated with either administrative approach are unlikely to be substantially different. This report generically references the project as an “Update”, however we recommend that Council keeps its options open as we undertake the more detailed engagement and policy development associated with this project.

Budget/Financial Implications: The 2023 Capital Budget has set aside \$90,000 to complete the Land Needs Study project and undertake the next steps of work on the Official Plan. A further capital budget allocation of \$175,000 is earmarked for the Transportation Master Plan.

Link to Strategic Plan:

Housing – Initiative #3 – Update the Official Plan

Transportation Networks – Initiative #2 – Develop a Transportation Master Plan

This report and the deliverable arising from the report addresses issues that are broadly pertinent to each priority area in the new Strategic Plan.

Existing Policy:

- Current Official Plan
- Provincial Policy Statement 2020 and 2023 (Draft)
- Ontario Planning Act
- Council Strategic Plan 2023-2026

Consultations: Management Team; Dillon Consulting (Land Needs Study Consultants)

Attachments: Opportunity Areas #1-4 – Information Sheets

Notes/Action (space for Council Member’s notes):

Respectfully Submitted:

Original Copy Signed

Karl Grenke RPP, MCIP
Senior Planner

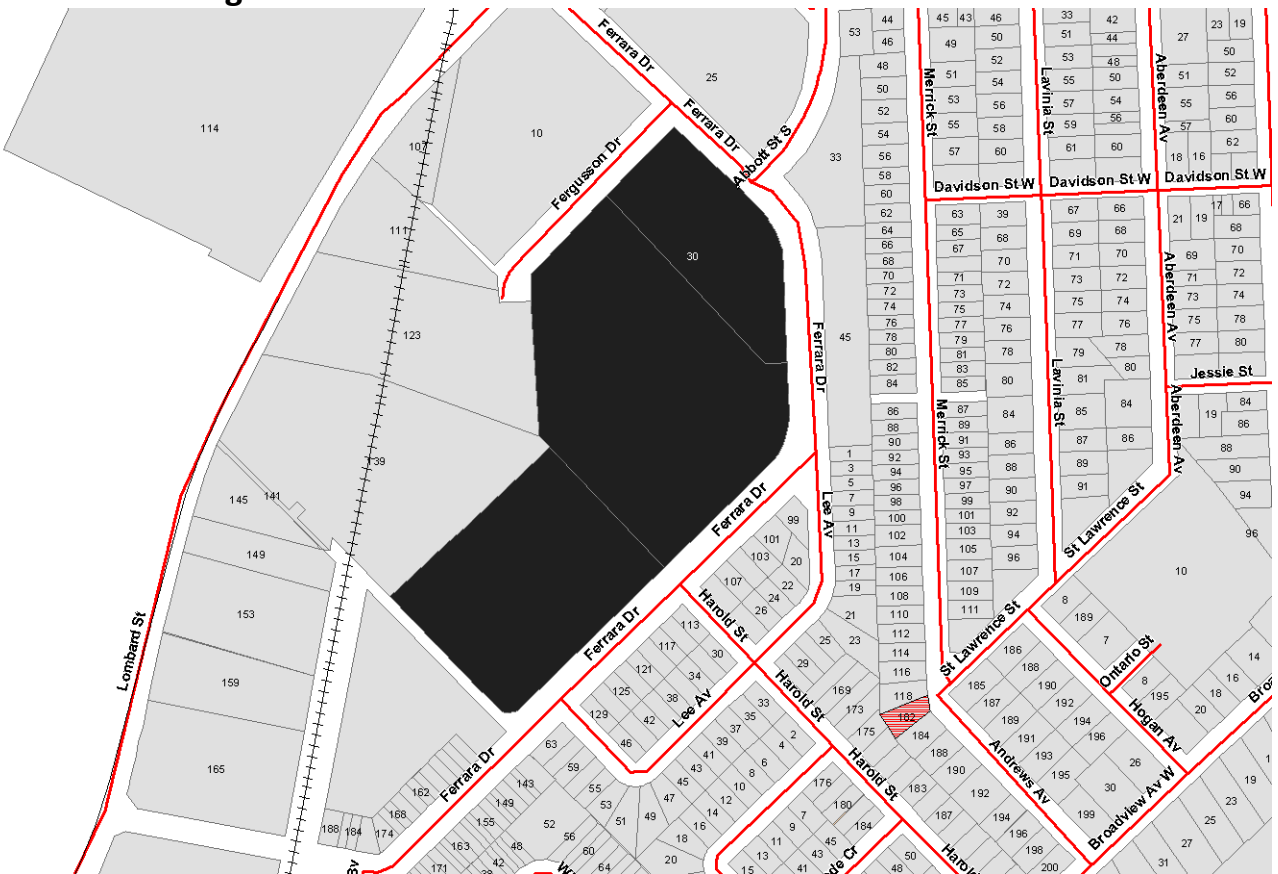
Approved for agenda by CAO:

Original Copy Signed

Malcolm Morris, CMO
Chief Administrative Officer

Potential Opportunity Area 1

Ferrara and Ferguson Area



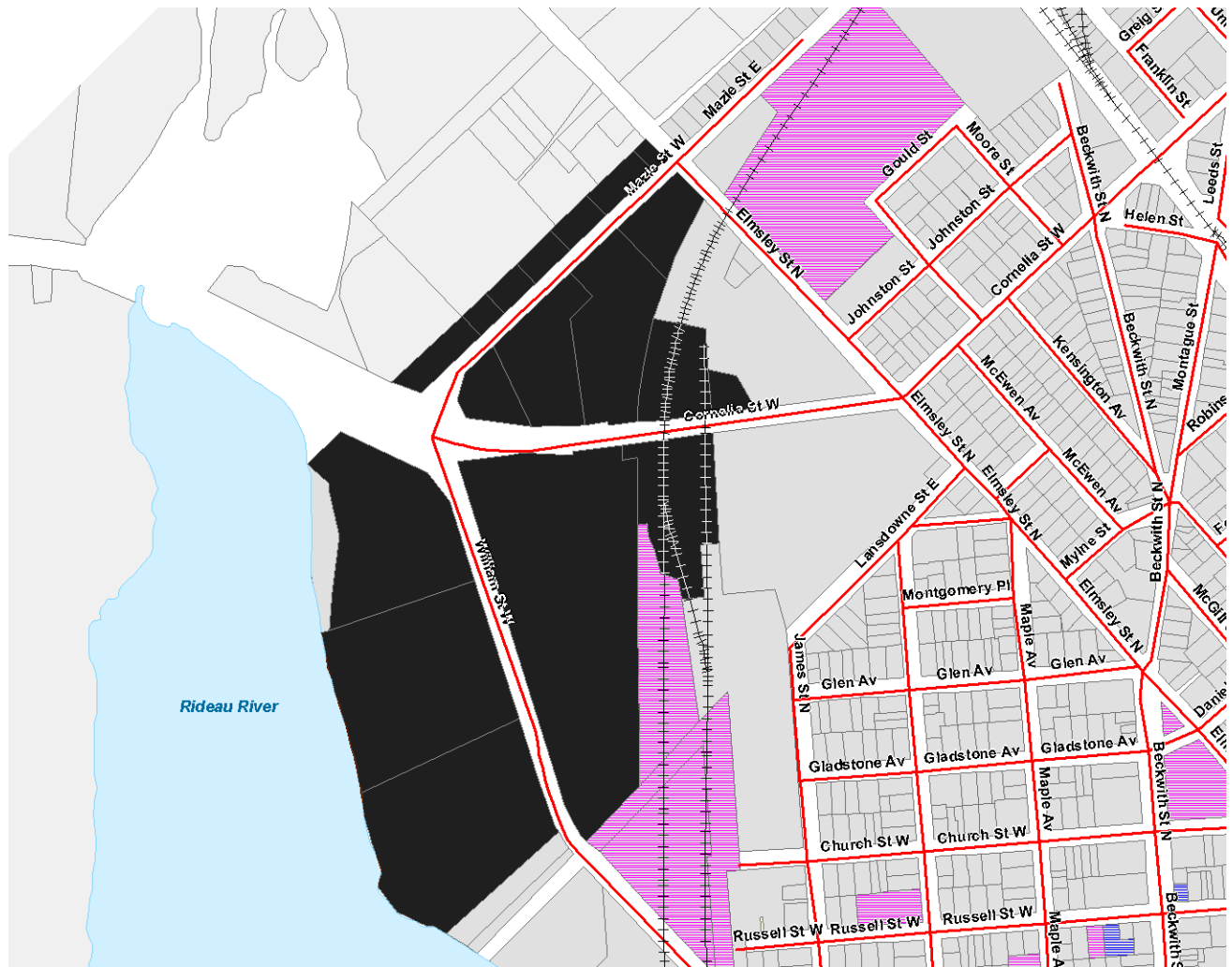
Total Area: 7.4 hectares (18.3 acres)

Current OP Designation: Neighbourhood Servicing Commercial and Corridor Commercial

Current Land Use: Vacant (Mostly forested)

Potential Opportunity Area 2

Mazie and Cornelia Corridor



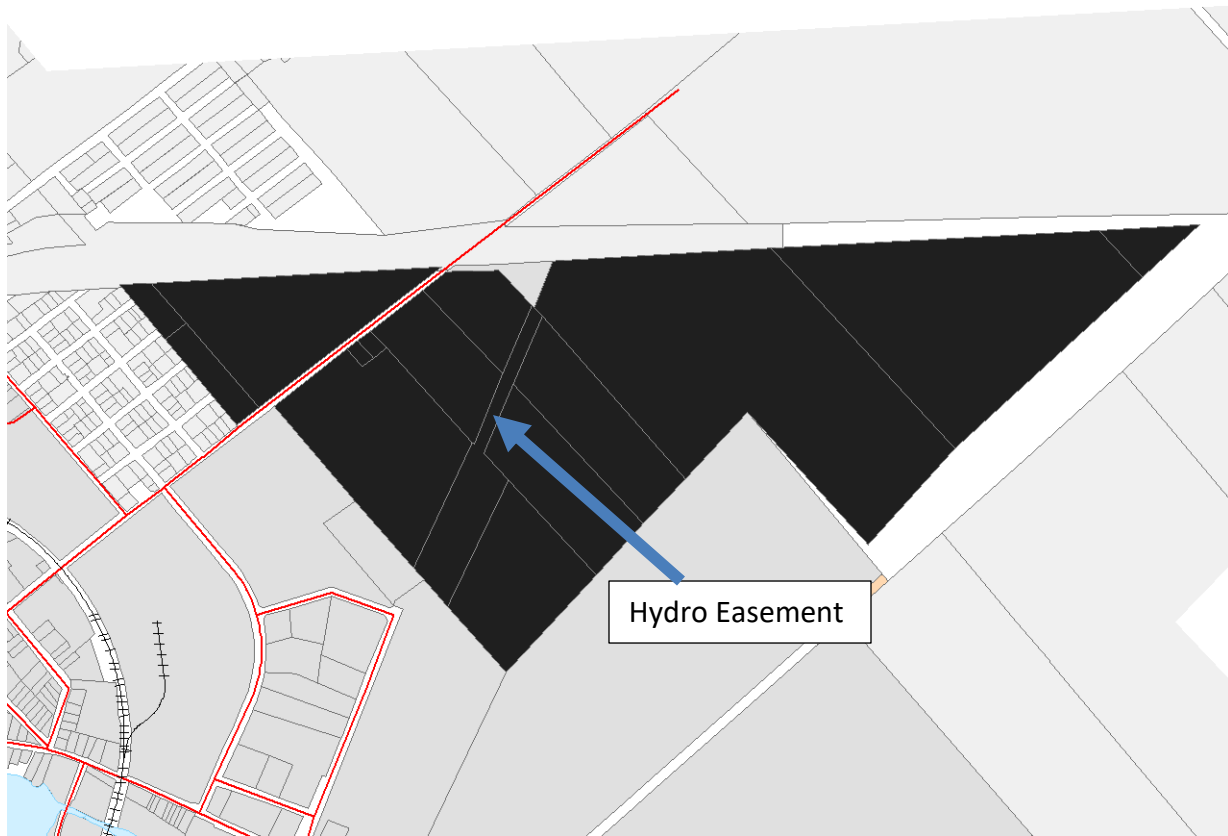
Total Area: 22.5 hectares (55.6 acres)

Current OP Designation: Uptown Mixed Use (small area Open Space)

Current Land Use: Mix of vacant parcels, industrial properties (business park), commercial and residential uses.

Potential Opportunity Area 3

Lorne Street Extension Development Reserve



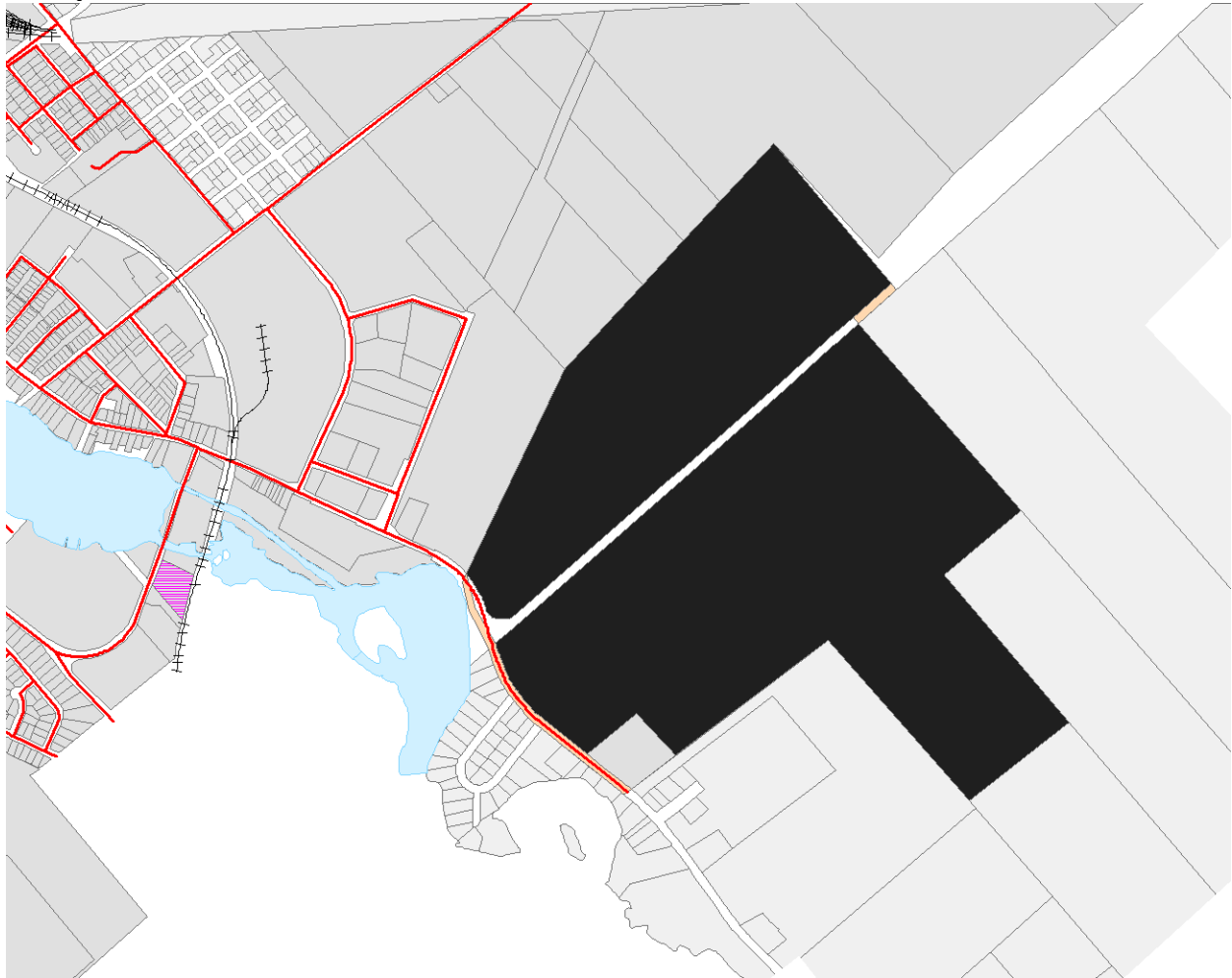
Total Area: 111 hectares (275 acres)

Current OP Designation: Residential (Development Reserve)

Current Land Use: Rural landscape including low density residential and agricultural uses. Partially forested. Bisected by 500 kV hydro lines.

Potential Opportunity Area 4

Gallipeau Centre and Frame Lands



Total Area: 139 hectares (343 acres)

Current OP Designation: Gallipeau Centre Mixed Use (existing built up area), Corridor Commercial (part of Queen St. frontage) and Gallipeau Centre Mixed Use Development Reserve (frame lands)

Current Land Use: Gallipeau Centre complex at centre of property. Remainder is vacant and mix of woodlands, wetlands and fields.