

Councillor Motion Re Undergrounding (OOECA April 11, 2013)

SUBJECT: Underground Wiring on West Side of Main Street from Immaculata High School to Clegg

REPORT RECOMMENDATION: The City of Ottawa fund and implement the undergrounding of utility wire in the three block section on the west side of Main Street of Old Ottawa East, from the south end of Immaculata High School to Clegg Street, as part of the Main Street Renewal Project.

BACKGROUND:

Overview

In the discussion below, the reasons for why the section of Main Street from Immaculata High School to Clegg Street is an exception to the City of Ottawa's Underground Wiring Policy (UWP) are presented. Of principal consideration is the demonstration that through planning documents developed during the same time period as the UWP, the City of Ottawa itself has set out the requirement for undergrounding in certain areas of Old Ottawa East Traditional Mainstreets. Furthermore, the City's development of the Secondary Plan for Old Ottawa East brought forward policy for this undergrounding after the adoption of the UWP, making it a City designed exception.

Planning Policy

In 2006 the City of Ottawa (City) approved the development of a Community Design Plan for Old Ottawa East (CDP) and the process evolved over the period from 2006 to 2011.

In 2009, Council approved Official Plan Amendment 76 (OPA No.76), making changes to various sections of the Official Plan. Modifications included - emphasis on setting and achieving intensification target; clarifying the purpose of the Community Design Plan is to implement the principles and policies of the Official Plan at the community scale; additional references to infrastructure and public utilities.

In October 2009, Council directed City staff (staff) to develop a formal policy for the burying overhead wire lines. (Ref No. AC S2009-ICS-CSS-0033 Report to Planning and Environment Committee (PEC) and Council dated September 15, 2009)

In April 2010, the CDP dated June 2010 and Old Ottawa East Secondary Plan (SP) documents were completed for consideration by the PEC on June 22, 2010. The documents included the Old Ottawa East Community Design Plan dated June, 2010, Official Plan Amendment Proposal (File No: D01-01-10-0002); and Zoning By-law Amendment Proposal – Old Ottawa East Secondary Plan (File No: D02-02-10-0006).

On June 9, 2010 the staff report concerning the CDP and SP was removed from the June 22nd PEC meeting agenda. This was due to a request for deferral from the Oblate Fathers and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. They requested a further opportunity to discuss the CDP and its implications for the future development of their property.

In April 2011, Council approved, as amended, the staff recommendation entitled Underground Wiring Policy (UWP) and directed that the undergrounding of overhead wires on City right-of-ways be undertaken only when the full cost of burial is paid for by the requesting party, or as otherwise approved by Council on a case-by-case basis. (Ref No. ACS2011-ICS-CSS-0003 Report to Planning Committee (PC) and Council dated March 21, 2011).

In August 2011, Council approved an amended CDP and SP dated August 2011. With no appeals received, the SP and Official Plan Amendment No. 92 (OPA No.92) have been in effect as of September 23, 2011. (Ref No. ACS2011-ICS-PGM-0115)

Actions to Date

In February 2012, the city gave notice of project commencement for functional, preliminary and detailed design for the renewal of Main Street and portions of Lees Avenue and Rideau River Drive. Citing the existing street infrastructure has reached the end of its life-cycle, the City identified the need for reconstruction. The notice indicated the scope of proposed work included the utility reconstruction as required and the project will result in solutions for below-ground infrastructure.

In October 2012, the public was welcomed to a Main Street Renewal Open House. The presentation indicated that despite the CDP priority for burying of overhead utility lines on the west side of Main Street, from Immaculata High School to Clegg Street, the UWP states “that the undergrounding of overhead wires on City right-of-ways be undertaken only when the full cost of burial is paid for by the requesting party, or as otherwise approved by Council on a case-by-case basis.” The presentation then indicates the scoping for the Main Street Renewal project has not provided for undergrounding, however, the Main Street Renewal Working Group is having a discussion on this matter in fall 2012.

During the fall of 2012 and to date, the Working Group has discussed differing points of view regarding applicable city policy; opportunities for hydro undergrounding savings in conjunction with imminent LRT undergrounding ; whether the built form of the Traditional Mainstreet (TM) is achievable with hydro poles in their existing positions; the effect hydro utility setbacks have on potential TM redevelopment; as well as, various Hydro Ottawa (HO) and Old Ottawa East Community Association (OOECA) undergrounding cost estimates.

To date, City staff has been steadfast in the position that the UWP is the applicable policy. The OOECA is steadfast in the position that the OPA No.92 is the applicable policy.

Staff has suggested “that a case must be identified and brought as a request to council (but not by the City staff or its consultants) if hydro burial is to be pursued”.

DISCUSSION:

There are a number of issues that must be taken into account. However it is very significant to recognize the OPA No. 76, UWP, CDP, SP and OPA No. 92 were refined and adopted, by staff and council, during the same time frame – 2009 to 2011. Staff and Council were well aware of these documents and related matters with respect to undergrounding and burial of overhead wires.

Official Plan

Staff recommended a June 2010 CDP, SP and OPA No.92, but these documents did not make any references to burial of overhead wires or undergrounding in any area of Old Ottawa East.

The substantive change, between the June 2010 and August 2011 CDP's and SP's, was with respect to a Demonstration Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments for the Oblate Fathers and Convent of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart properties, on the east side of Main Street between Springhurst and Clegg. The only other notable change, between the June 2010 and August 2011 CDP's, was the staff recommended and the council approved August 2011 CDP amended section 4.13 ***Capital Improvement Project Proposals*** by adding a new sentence ***Hydro burial - At the time of reconstruction of Main Street and Hawthorne Avenue within the area of the Traditional Mainstreet designation, the potential for burial of overhead hydro and telecommunication cables will be reviewed.***

Furthermore, the only other notable change, between the June 2010 and August 2011 SP's, is the staff recommended and council adopted policies to prioritize the burial of overhead wires in certain location of Old Ottawa East. Specifically, modifications were made in section ***10.3.1 Hawthorne Avenue- Colonel By Parkway to Main Street***, adding a new sentence ***6. Priority will be given to burial of overhead wires along this Traditional Mainstreet;*** and adding a new section ***10.3.5 West Side of Main Street Immaculata High School to Clegg*** and adding four sentences including ***2. Zone properties fronting on Main Street to Traditional Mainstreet (TM) as development proceeds in this precinct;*** and ***3. Prioritize the burial of overhead wires for this precinct due to the shallow lot depth. 2. Zone properties fronting on Main Street to Traditional Mainstreet (TM) as development proceeds in this precinct.***

The June 2009, OPA No. 76 proposal presented major changes to the Official Plan. The Preamble indicates: *"...Implementation of Intensification and Density Targets Existing zoning by-laws, community design plans, secondary plans will be reviewed to ensure that the targets can be met and development applications will be reviewed in light of the targets. Any necessary amendments will be carried out in consultation with the neighbourhood involved. The City will commit itself to supporting intensification in target areas through a commitment to good design in the public realm, setting priorities for municipal works, implementing a capacity management strategy and other efforts. As a priority, the City will lead discussions to look at all the technical, regulatory and design matters that will allow the intensification strategy to be successful..."*

The enacted OP Section 2.2.3 Managing Growth within the Urban Area was amended by OPA No. 76, in part, to state the following:

12. To promote compact, mixed-use development and achieve the density targets, the City will:

- a. Lead discussions with all internal and external stakeholders (including school boards and public utilities) with a view to addressing technical, regulatory and design matters in a way that will allow the City's intensification strategy to be successful;**
- b. Investigate financial incentives for residential development within mixed-use projects;**
- c. Strategically review the use of municipally-owned lands, except land zoned for environmental or leisure uses;...**
- h. Focus the delivery and coordination of enhanced pedestrian environments in and around the City's design priority areas identified in S.2.5.1 of this Plan;**
- i. Establish minimum building heights in the Zoning By-law within Mixed-use Centres, Town Centres and Mainstreets as community design plans are completed for these areas;**
- j. Implement the coordinated delivery of Transportation Demand Management measures as described in S.2.3.1 of this Plan;**
- k. Identify the target areas as a priority for the provision of increased public transit service;**
- l. Implement a capacity management strategy to evaluate the condition and capacity of piped infrastructure in the areas targeted for intensification and set priorities for improving capacity. Development Charges should cover the portion of the cost of infrastructure improvement that is required to support intensification;**
- m. When carrying out community design plans set priorities and funding sources for the delivery of public facilities such as community centres, parks and various municipal programs that may be required to support intensification;**
- n. Will consider the achievement of minimum intensification targets on Arterial Mainstreets to represent a longer-term potential, and those Arterial Mainstreets located inside the Greenbelt will be considered to have priority for municipal upgrades over those outside the Greenbelt. On Arterial Mainstreets, carry out measures to enhance the pedestrian environment and public realm, such as tree planting, improved sidewalks, and other streetscape improvements, as well as traffic calming measures to help transform these streets from wide, automobile-oriented streets, to urban avenues that exhibit more liveable conditions;**
- o. For all housing forms, the City will support alternative municipal infrastructure and development standards (such as reduced road right-of-way width, utility**

trenching requirements and reduced parking standards in areas serviced by public transit) in the context of a subdivision application.

The enacted OP **Section 2.5.1, Compatibility and Community Design**, was amended by OPA No. 76, in part, by adding the following text as a new 'Principle' to define quality public and private spaces through development:

“Design should reduce the visual impact of infrastructure, public utilities, or street furniture by clustering or grouping them where possible, whether located within the public right-of-way or on private property. [Amendment #76, OMB File #PL100206, August 18, 2011

The enacted OP Section 3.1 Generally Permitted Uses was amended by OPA No. 76, in part, to replace Policies 9 and 10 to state the following:

Public Utilities and Municipal Services [Amendment #96, February 22, 2012]

9. A public utility is a public body or private corporation, together with its associated physical infrastructure, that provides services to the public such as hydro, natural gas, communication/telecommunication and cable, but does not include the provision of municipal services. Municipal services are services provided by the City of Ottawa including roads, transit, water, wastewater, drainage, and stormwater management. Wireless Communication Facilities are addressed in policy 12 below. [Amendment #76, OMB File # PL100206, November 25, 2011]

10. Public utility facilities and Municipal Services that are authorized under the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act may be permitted in all land-use designations of this Plan. Other public utilities and municipal services and facilities are permitted in all land-use... [Amendment #76, OMB File # PL100206, November 25, 2011

In context of the above, it is logical and reasonable the staff recommendation to amend the 2010 OPA No. 92 was to make it unambiguous that City policy is to ***“Prioritize the burial of overhead wires for this precinct (West Side of Main Street Immaculata High School to Clegg) due to the shallow lot depth and Zone properties fronting on Main Street to Traditional Mainstreet (TM) as development proceeds in this precinct”***. Clearly in August 2011, with full knowledge of the April 2011 UWP, staff saw fit to recommend and council saw fit to adopt the 2011 OPA No.92 policy to prioritize hydro burial in these certain OOE TM locations.

Main Street Renewal

Further to previous staff and council policy considerations, members of the OOE Community Association - Main Street Renewal Project Working Group summarize considerations pertaining the undergrounding of Overhead Utilities along Main Street as follows:

Unique Aspects of Main Street in regards to Undergrounding of Overhead Utilities

1. Traditional Mainstreet and Design Priority Designation:

This street is designated as a Traditional Mainstreet (TM) in the City of Ottawa Official Plan. This special designation encourages redevelopment and a high standard of urban design as a Design Priority Area. Given the benefits that undergrounding would bring and the synergies available for cost savings, Main Street is a prime candidate for undergrounding investment.

2. Old Ottawa East Secondary Plan (SP) and Community Design Plan (CDP) identifies distinctive reasons for Policy to Prioritize Undergrounding:

The SP and CDP were approved by City of Ottawa Council in August 2011. The Secondary Plan was adopted on September 23, 2011 as Amendment No. 92 (OPA No. 92) to the City of Ottawa Official Plan. Both the SP and CDP state for the West Side of Main Street – Immaculata High School to Clegg, “Prioritize the burial of overhead wires for this precinct due to the shallow lot depth”. This TM precinct is unusual in that the residential streets to the west are parallel to Main Street (unlike Bank Street, Elgin and Wellington where the prevailing side streets pattern is perpendicular to the TM) and the lot depth is only 30 metres.

3. Hydro Utility Setbacks and Land Use Efficiency:

There are several properties along the west side of Main Street that are currently underutilized. Redevelopment is encouraged and in accordance with the direction of the SP, OPA No.92 and the TM zoning. Given the requirement for a 5m separation between overhead electrical lines and new buildings, and given the close proximity of the lines to the street lot line, the buildings would need to be set back further than the required setback and upper floor step back established in the OPA No. 92 TM7 Zoning By-law No. 2011-308. This will curtail the ability to efficiently redevelop the properties which are shallow in depth to begin with. Undergrounding would “free up” lost development capacity and provide a stimulus to redevelop existing vacant or underutilized properties in accordance with the CDP and SP. This will in turn support municipal property tax revenue growth for the city and result in other economic development benefits.(Note: Further 3 storey development, such as the new 164 Main Street building, in West Side of Main Street – Immaculata High School to Clegg precinct should be discouraged.)

4. Opportunity to Save Money Due to Construction Coordination:

There is an immediate opportunity to reduce costs by having the undergrounding process completed during the design and construction activities of the Main Street Renewal project, as opposed to completing the undergrounding as a separate project.

5. The Street Has Already Been Undergrounded and there is an Opportunity to Complete the Undergrounding:

Wires have previously been undergrounded along the majority of Main Street east side from Clegg Street to Echo Drive. There is an opportunity to underground the west side and complete the process.

6. Reduction in Community Disruption:

There is an opportunity to complete the undergrounding at the same time as the street reconstruction, thus consolidating and reducing the impact to residents, businesses, institutions, and service providers along the street.

7. New Street Cross-Section and Cost of Shifting Poles:

It is inevitable that the selected street cross-section will result in the existing poles being located in an inappropriate location (such as in the middle of a widened sidewalk). In that case, the poles will need to be shifted laterally (towards the street centreline and away from buildings). Undergrounding will result in the elimination of several utility poles (that have wide concrete bases and that are often located at street corner locations that obstruct crosswalks) and in turn will result an unencumbered sidewalk and/or fewer encumbrances in the furnishing/tree planting zone along the west side of Main Street. The costs of undergrounding should net off the cost of new poles (existing hydro poles have reached their end of life) and cost of wiring relocations.

8. Ottawa Light Rail Transit (OLRT) Power Supply:

There is a requirement to provide a new/augmented undergrounded power supply to service OLRT. Hydro Ottawa has advised an OLRT underground route will be installed from the Riverdale Substation running north parallel to Main Street and then running along the west side of Main Street from Clegg to Greenfield. There is a cost saving opportunity to “piggy back” the undergrounding of the existing overhead service on Main Street in the same trenches as the OLRT duct bank system.

9. Cost - Benefit Evaluation of Undergrounding versus Overhead Lines

A number of street design options are presently being discussed. It is quite likely the final design will have technical reasons requiring undergrounding of lines. Although based on financial costs and benefits only the undergrounding of lines cannot be justified, an evaluation including sustainable benefits will result in a unique cost-benefit analysis for this Traditional Mainstreet. If ever there will be a basis for undergrounding, Main Street is the one to evaluate.

Important inputs into the cost-benefit evaluation include:

- Initial investment costs of undergrounding lines versus overhead line relocation in combination with Main Street Renewal works.
- Cost savings for concurrent ORLT duct bank installations.
- Cost savings for concurrent electrical utility infrastructure installations to service future development on institutional lands.
- Intensification redevelopment value due to the removal of safety set back requirements for overhead lines and the increase in development area that can effectively be built up.
- Aesthetic value to residents and non-residents of underground versus overhead lines.
- Operation and maintenance savings resulting from underground lines versus overhead lines.

- Reliability value of the underground versus overhead lines.

DISPOSITION:

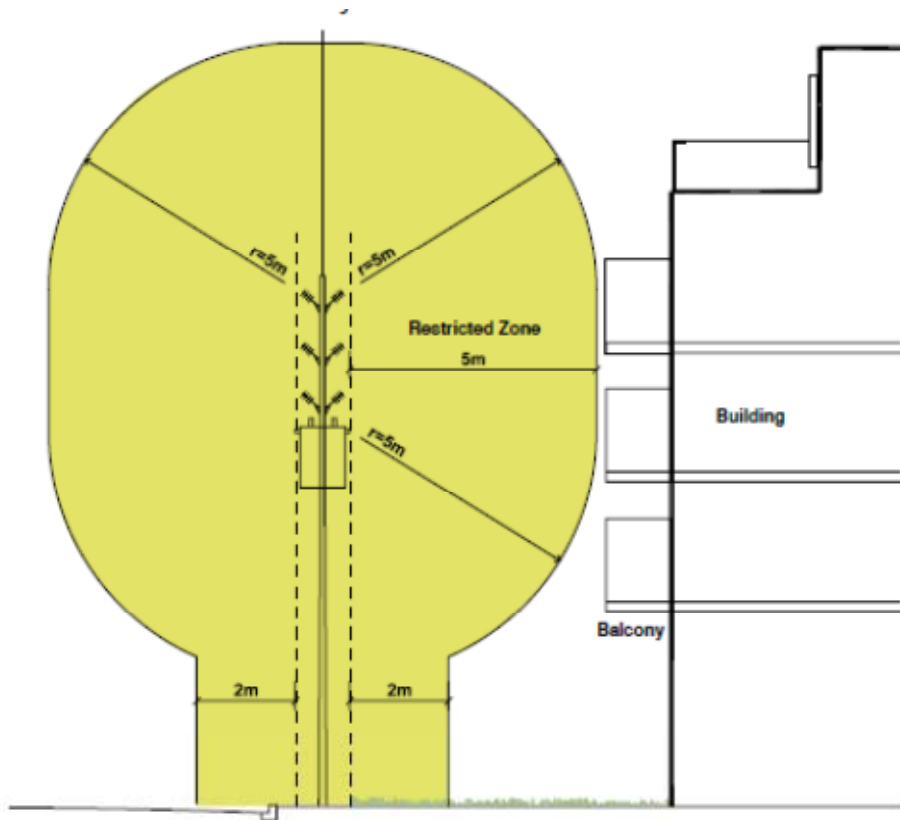
Subject to approval of this report, Council will direct Staff to:

- 1. Understand, as far as the UWP is concerned, the City of Ottawa is “the requesting party” and the full cost of burial on the West Side of Main Street from Immaculata High School to Clegg will be paid for by the City of Ottawa.**
- 2. Understand the provision of utility infrastructure and capacity for future development is part of the Main Street Renewal Project.**
- 3. Urgently work with Hydro Ottawa and telecommunication companies to identify potential and cost efficient underground utility corridors for hydro and telecommunication cables, as well as possible locations for surface transformer bases and equipment, for the West Side of Main Street from Immaculata High School to Clegg.**
- 4. Provide a report to Council on or before May 8, 2013.**
- 5. Understand time is of the essence.**

End

Illustrations:





The electric utility's overhead restricted zone clearance requirements have implications on building setbacks.