



THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

OFFICE OF THE CAO

Mission Statement: As stewards of the Town of Amherstburg, we strive to improve the quality of life of all residents through the delivery of effective, efficient, and affordable services.

Author's Name: Bill Tetler	Report Date: September 3, 2024
Author's Phone: 519 736 0012 ext. 2251	Date to Council: November 25, 2024
Author's E-mail: btetler@amherstburg.ca	Resolution #: 202106140-203

To: Mayor and Members of Town Council

Subject: Agent of Change/Vacant Building Registry

1. RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that:

1. The report dated October 3, 2024 regarding the Use of Agent of Change/Vacant Building Registry **BE RECEIVED and FILED** for information.

2. BACKGROUND:

In June 2021, Council passed a resolution to have Administration draft an Agent of Change by-law.

Agent of Change: The "Agent of Change" concept is an emerging policy framework designed to address the impact of new development on existing properties and neighborhoods. The principle recognizes that property owners and developers who invest in enhancing or redeveloping properties can significantly contribute to community revitalization and economic growth. By incorporating this concept into zoning bylaws, municipalities can provide a supportive environment for responsible development while balancing the needs of existing property owners. The goal is to encourage positive transformation and investment in urban areas, ensuring that new developments align with community goals and zoning objectives.

Vacant Building Registry: The Vacant Building Registry, when implemented for tax purposes, serves as a crucial tool for managing properties that are unoccupied or underutilized. By requiring property owners to register vacant buildings, municipalities can track and assess these properties more effectively. This registry helps identify properties that may be subject to different tax rates or penalties due to their status.

Both the Agent of Change concept and the Vacant Building Registry represent strategic approaches to urban management, focusing on fostering development and ensuring the upkeep of properties to enhance community well-being and growth.

3. DISCUSSION:

The Town's Planning Division is undertaking an update of the Town's Zoning By-law. Dillon Consulting has been retained to conduct the review and will incorporate researching the "agent of change" concept as a potential addition to the town's zoning bylaw. This concept aims to recognize and support property owners and developers who make improvements or undertake redevelopment projects within our community.

The agent of change principle is designed to address and balance the impact of new development on existing properties and neighborhoods. It helps ensure that those who invest in enhancing or transforming properties are encouraged, while also managing the effects on the surrounding area in a fair and transparent manner.

As the Town explores this concept, the Town is considering how it can be integrated into our Zoning By-law to promote responsible and beneficial development. This includes evaluating how it might affect current zoning practices and what adjustments might be necessary to align with the town's goals for growth and preservation.

On February 7th, 2024 the 2024 Tax Policy Recommendations were approved by Essex County Council. Following the Administration's recommendation, the County has approved the immediate removal of several property tax discounts. These include the Commercial Excess Land Discount, Industrial Vacant Land Discount, Industrial Excess Land Discount, and Large Industrial Vacant Land Discount. These discounts, which were previously applied to specific property categories, are no longer available. This change aims to align property tax policies with current fiscal strategies and ensure a more equitable distribution of the tax burden across different property types. Due to the removal of this tax status the Town is no longer able to identify vacant commercial and industrial properties.

4. RISK ANALYSIS:

There is little to no risk to having the Agent of Change concept explored as part of the current OPA and ZBA review.

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

6. CONSULTATIONS:

Dr. Chris Aspila, Manager of Planning Services
Melissa Osborne, Director, Development and Building Services/Deputy CAO

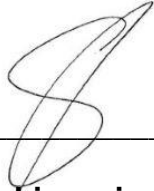
7. CORPORATE STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

Vision: Preserving our past while forging our future.

<i>Amherstburg Community Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026</i>	
<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 1 Deliver Trusted & Accountable Local Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Improve trust between council and staff, and residents, by strengthening governance and internal accountability structures. <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver transparent and efficient financial management. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase effective communication and engagement with residents. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop our staff team, resources, and workplace culture. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to deliver strong core municipal services. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure Amherstburg is an inclusive accessible and welcoming community committed to reconciliation. 	<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 3 Encourage Local Economic Prosperity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage development of commercial and industrial lands. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to promote local tourism industry, especially overnight accommodation. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to facilitate downtown development for residents and visitors. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to leverage partnership opportunities with other provincial, federal, and local governments, agencies, and organizations.
<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 2 Invest in Community Amenities and Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain safe, reliable and accessible municipal infrastructure and facilities. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase access to recreation opportunities for all ages. <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize and execute plans for town-owned lands (e.g. Duffy’s site, Belle Vue) <input type="checkbox"/> Create public access to water and waterfront <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize opportunities to reduce environmental impacts of Town operations and increase Town resilience to climate change. 	<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 4 Shape Growth Aligned with Local Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Define and communicate a vision for the Town’s future and identity. <input type="checkbox"/> Promote and plan for green and “climate change ready” development. <input type="checkbox"/> Review and implement policies that promote greater access to diverse housing. <input type="checkbox"/> Protect the Town’s historic sites and heritage. <input type="checkbox"/> Preserve the Town’s greenspaces, agricultural lands, and natural environment.

8. CONCLUSION:

Dillion Consulting has been retained to complete the review of the Town's Zoning By-law update and has been tasked with incorporating the concept of agent of change into its research. The County of Essex on February 7, 2024 immediately removed the various property tax discounts including the Commercial Excess Land Discount, Industrial Vacant Land Discount, Industrial Excess Land Discount, and Large Industrial Vacant Land discount, previously applied to specific categories, effective immediately. As a result, the Town now has no mechanism to accurately identify these properties.



Bill Tetler
Manager, Licensing & Enforcement

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Agent of Change - Vacant Building Report.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Oct 17, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Tracy Prince



Valerie Critchley



Kevin Fox