

# VARS Neighbourhood Plan



Neighbourhood Planning

Planification des quartiers

*Our City, Our Home! - Notre ville, notre quartier!*



*Dedicated to the memory of  
Denvil E. Brown*

*1926–2009*

*“We need to look at the next 10, 15, 20 years. We cannot stand still; we need to keep things moving.”*

Printed in Canada  
Print date: February 2010

Produced by  
City of Ottawa

---

# Contents

---

<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Outcomes of the NPI .....	2
Public participation process .....	2
Vars Community Continuity Committee (Vars CCC) members .....	3
<b>Introduction to neighbourhood planning .....</b>	<b>4</b>
What is a neighbourhood plan? .....	4
How does an NPI fit with other planning processes? .....	4
Why pilot the NPI process in Vars? .....	5
<b>Study area .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>History of Vars .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Place in the city .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Population profile of Vars .....	12
Mobility .....	13
Age structure .....	13
Ethnic diversity .....	14
Average family income .....	14
<b>History and heritage .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Conserving history .....	16
Vars heritage .....	16
Recommendations: Heritage .....	18
<b>Neighbourhood safety .....</b>	<b>19</b>
Rail and traffic safety .....	19
Residential care homes .....	19
Youth crimes .....	20
Partnering to address the issues .....	20
Recommendations: Neighbourhood safety .....	21
<b>Community services and facilities .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Community buildings .....	22
Recommendations: Community Access Centre .....	25
Recommendations: Schools .....	25
Recommendations: Day care .....	26
Recommendations: Seniors .....	27

Recommendations: Youth .....	27
Recommendations: Public health .....	28
Recommendations: Residential care homes .....	29
Recommendations: Post office .....	30
Recommendations: Library.....	31
<b>Emergency preparedness.....</b>	<b>32</b>
Recommendations: Emergency preparedness .....	33
<b>Parks and green space .....</b>	<b>34</b>
Alcide Trudeau Park and field house.....	34
Bearbrook Community Centre and Skateboard Park.....	35
Recommendations: Development .....	35
Trails .....	36
Recommendation 1: Trails.....	36
Recommendation 2: Trails.....	37
Recommendations: Future park development.....	37
Recommendations: Community gardens.....	38
Recommendations: Leisure and recreation programs .....	39
<b>Community sustainability and partnerships .....</b>	<b>40</b>
Recommendations: Sustainability .....	40
Recommendations: Partnerships .....	41
<b>Transportation and circulation.....</b>	<b>42</b>
Vars transportation network .....	42
Traffic volume.....	42
Traffic bylaw .....	43
Recommendations: Traffic volume .....	43
Pedestrian mobility and linkages.....	44
Recommendations: Pedestrian mobility and linkages.....	44
Speed reduction in school zones .....	46
Recommendations: Speed reduction in school zones .....	46
Light rail transit.....	46
Recommendations: Light rail transit (LRT) .....	46
Public transportation.....	47
Recommendations: Public transportation.....	47
Park and ride.....	48
Recommendations: Bus shelters .....	48
<b>Land use .....</b>	<b>49</b>
Building permits issued 2001–2006.....	51
New builds 1998–2008.....	51
Home ownership .....	54
Age of housing stock in Vars.....	54
Proportion of single and multiple unit dwellings in Vars .....	54
Recommendations: Residential development zoning.....	55
Recommendations: Industrial lands .....	55
Recommendations: Agriculture .....	57
Main Street designation.....	57

Recommendations: Main street designations .....	57
Recommendations: Rural village .....	58
<b>Economic development .....</b>	<b>59</b>
Recommendations: New ventures .....	59
Recommendations: Vars 417 Business Park.....	60
Recommendations: Business access.....	60
Signage .....	61
Recommendation 1: Signage.....	61
Recommendation 2: Signage.....	62
Recommendations: Equestrian signage.....	63
<b>Physical infrastructure .....</b>	<b>64</b>
Recommendations: Septic systems .....	64
Recommendations: Water .....	64
Recommendations: Fire station water system .....	65
Recommendations: Raisin South Nation Conservation Authority water source protection.....	65
Road system .....	66
Sidewalks.....	66
Recommendation 1: Roads and sidewalks .....	66
Recommendation 2: Roads and sidewalks .....	67
Telecommunications utilities .....	68
Recommendations: Telecommunications utilities .....	68
<b>Municipal services .....</b>	<b>69</b>
Firehall .....	69
Paramedic Services.....	69
Ottawa Police Service .....	70
Waste Management.....	70
Bylaw Services.....	70
Rural Affairs Office.....	70
<b>Neighbourhood plan implementation .....</b>	<b>71</b>
How to implement the plan.....	71
Finding .....	71
Recommendations.....	71
Justification.....	71
Staff input .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Appendix A: Crime statistics .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Appendix B: Alternate energy sources .....</b>	<b>73</b>
Solar thermal.....	73
Micro-wind turbines.....	73
District energy systems .....	73



---

## Executive summary

---

Vars is a rural village within the limits of the City of Ottawa located 25 km east of downtown Ottawa. Established in the 1880s, the vibrant village of Vars provided services to surrounding farms and the railway that ran through it. Today, the village and environs is a residential community of approximately 1400 residents. It is bordered by numerous operational farms, the Cumberland Forest, and wetlands. Approximately 1000 individuals live in the village proper. With limited employment opportunities within the community, most residents commute to Ottawa for work.

The Neighbourhood Planning Initiative (NPI) has been instrumental in developing a new vision for the community and directing where Vars and its surrounding community wants to be in 10 to 15 years time. The Vars Vision aims to create a vibrant, active, bilingual, rural, and sustainable community that is welcoming to all. In order of priority as determined by the community survey and meetings, Vars has a vision that aims to:

- Develop a Community Centre that meets the needs of the village.
- Install sidewalks on Rockdale Road and upgrade those on Buckland Road.
- Identify Rockdale Road as the main street of Vars and plan for the installation of sidewalks and lampposts to reflect this.
- Encourage new businesses in the village and the development of the industrial park through mechanisms such as reduced development fees.
- Reinvest all cash-in-lieu of parkland monies collected in Vars back into the acquisition of new parkland or to the improvement to current parkland in Vars.
- Commit to ongoing communication and cooperation with current residential care home managers and residents.
- Commit to the development of no new residential care homes in Vars and no expansion to those that currently exist.
- Limit residential growth in Vars to 10–20 new homes per year and prohibit subdivision expansion by large-scale developers.
- Develop currently unused land.
- Develop industrial parkland.
- Develop a seniors' residence.
- Increase OCTranspo service to Vars with additional midday and late evening runs.

- Develop a commuter rail corridor with a stop in Vars.
- Improve public transportation in Vars, and include a commitment to partner with Prescott-Russell politicians to create a commuter rail line to Vars.
- Be a community in which its residents can live, work, and play.
- Provide a supportive social structure for all in the community.
- Encourage residents to reduce their environmental impact.
- Preserve the best parts of the community for future generations.

### **Outcomes of the NPI**

Through the course of the two-year Neighbourhood Planning process, a number of significant outcomes were achieved prior to the final plan even going to Council for approval. These include:

- An improved relationship between the residential care home residents and the broader neighbourhood.
- The reinstatement of an active Vars Community Association.
- Agreement on a number of top priorities that need to be addressed in the community.
- An understanding of the difficulty of developing an entirely new community centre in the centre of Vars due to lack of funds and available land. This understanding has resulted in a refocus on making the existing facilities as useful and functional as possible for the community.

The Neighbourhood Planning process was long and intense, but it is anticipated that the rewards gleaned from undertaking the exercise will have a long-lasting and meaningful impact on Vars and the people who live there.

### **Public participation process**

Neighbourhood planning is about working closely and intensively in a neighbourhood in order to fully understand its history, its hopes, its strengths, and its needs. To ensure the creation and success of a neighbourhood plan, the neighbourhood needs to be open to working with City staff. Vars has been just such a neighbourhood!

Beginning in September 2007, with the launch of the first Neighbourhood Planning public meeting at the Bearbrook Community Centre, the people of Vars have been meeting with a wide range of City staff to share information and ideas. Together this group has developed an understanding and shared vision for community life in Vars.

Over the course of the project, Vars residents attended over 40 meetings. The process began with the development of a vision document, a community survey, and an agreed upon work plan that focused on issues identified by the group. Special events, including a village wagon tour, a community barbecue, a bean dinner, and a residential care home event brought out a broad cross-section of the community to learn and participate in the neighbourhood planning process.



A group of dedicated volunteers represented their friends, families, and neighbours by attending all meetings. Together they form the membership of the Vars NPI Community Continuity Committee—the Vars CCC. In early fall 2008, this group began drafting the Vars Neighbourhood Plan document. This document is the outcome of those efforts.

### **Vars Community Continuity Committee (Vars CCC) members**

- André Cyr
- Darlene Brown
- Denvil Brown
- Francine Portenier
- Gary Larocque
- Georgette Patenaude
- Guy Laporte
- Hélène Manning-Lemieux
- Jean Séguin
- Joanne Gravelle
- Joe Welton
- Julie Lacroix
- Nicolina Kingston
- Linda Ablack
- Louise Summers
- Luc Landry
- Manon Taylor
- Monique Belliveau
- Linda Payant
- Sue Burnett-Roy
- Irvin Sunstrum
- Ivan Tanner

---

## Introduction to neighbourhood planning

---

### What is a neighbourhood plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is three things. It is a **portrait** of a community at a specific moment in time—a clear-eyed assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. It is an **inventory** of a community’s hopes and fears—a wish list and a watch list. It is a **planning tool**—a statement of the community’s vision and its plan to get there.



A Neighbourhood Plan is the document that serves as a resource for the municipality to draw upon when making future decisions. It is the community-owned record of a collaborative process that brings together City experts with those who live and work in the study area. It provides up-to-the-minute information compiled specifically so that the City can offer meaningful support to residents as they continue working to improve their community.

A Neighbourhood Plan allows a community to imagine its future, examine present opportunities and constraints, and determine how to get from where it is to where it wants to be.

Neighbourhood planning assumes that people and communities can make a difference. It brings together the experts in a community—those who live there—with a municipality’s planners, engineers, and social policy advisors. The process allows the neighbourhood to identify and communicate a direction and to provide an engagement plan to get there.

The more specific a Neighbourhood Plan, the more value it has. Much material has been documented in this report in order to create a portrait of who lives in this neighbourhood and what they do here. Principles and recommendations are drawn from this information and from multiple meetings and community surveys. Concerns (both specific and general) have been documented, all of which serve to guide the City in planning future development and support services in a neighbourhood.

### How does an NPI fit with other planning processes?

The City conducts planning under the auspices of various regulations and through diverse exercises. These include processes such as the Corporate Strategic Plan, departmental strategic plans, the Official Plan, secondary plans, and individual Community Design Plans. In areas where Neighbourhood Plans are being undertaken, any existing initiatives and work plans must be coordinated and linked into the neighbourhood planning process. Neighbourhood planning,

however, does not replace other City planning processes. A neighbourhood plan must take into consideration all existing master plans capital, works projects, and policy planning documents.

In the case of the Vars Neighbourhood Plan, beyond basic maintenance, there are no existing plans or projects for City works in this community for the foreseeable future.

The first Neighbourhood Plan undertaken by the City in the neighbourhood of Hintonburg/Mechanicsville had two specific projects underway prior to the start of the process—a Community Design Plan (CDP) and a main corridor Road Reconstruction project. Vars, on the other hand, presented a *carte blanche* opportunity—one that allowed the City the opportunity to explore working this way in a neighbourhood that did not have specific prior commitments. It did, however, present an initial challenge of bringing all the partners to the table with no predetermined concepts of what the outcome would be.

The Vars Neighbourhood Plan document provides an overarching vision for the neighbourhood and identifies specific actions related to key areas of concern. It is a community-owned plan that the City recognizes, agrees to reference when conducting work or making decisions about Vars, and commits to support to the fullest extent possible.

#### **The international context**

Traditionally, public policy has been implemented through discrete jurisdictions, such as land use planning or social service delivery. Across Canada and internationally, however, there is growing interest in developing more sensitive approaches based on local knowledge and devised at the neighbourhood level. When successful, the resultant strategies cut across siloed sectors and coordinate disparate institutional domains in addressing the complexities inherent in neighbourhood-specific problems.

Thus, a Neighbourhood Plan addresses diverse subjects beyond land-use planning and takes into consideration transportation, infrastructure, the environment, social service delivery, and economic development. A common vision is created, goals are articulated, issues are identified, actions are prioritized, resources are assigned towards implementation, and success is monitored with evaluation criteria.

(For further information, see the *City of Ottawa's Best Practices in Neighbourhood Planning, Final Report, July 2005*.)

### **Why pilot the NPI process in Vars?**

The decision to undertake a Neighbourhood Planning Initiative (NPI) in Vars resulted from a series of conditions and factors. Firstly, Vars is a rural neighbourhood and the City was interested in discovering how Neighbourhood Planning would implement in that context. In comparison to an urban neighbourhood planning process, Vars presented the opportunity to identify what would need to be modified and what would remain the same.

In addition to being a rural neighbourhood, Vars is an eastern village with a Francophone history and presence. There is a sense among some residents that the City expends more planning energy in the western regions of the municipality, and that the eastern reaches are relatively neglected. Furthermore, the village of Vars is seen as a relatively stable and affluent community and one with which the City is not overly familiar. Residents are concerned that very few economic enterprises remain in this village. Many of the long-term businesses have closed leaving the village

with the question, “Can we retain our “village” identity; or are we evolving into a bedroom community to urban Ottawa?”

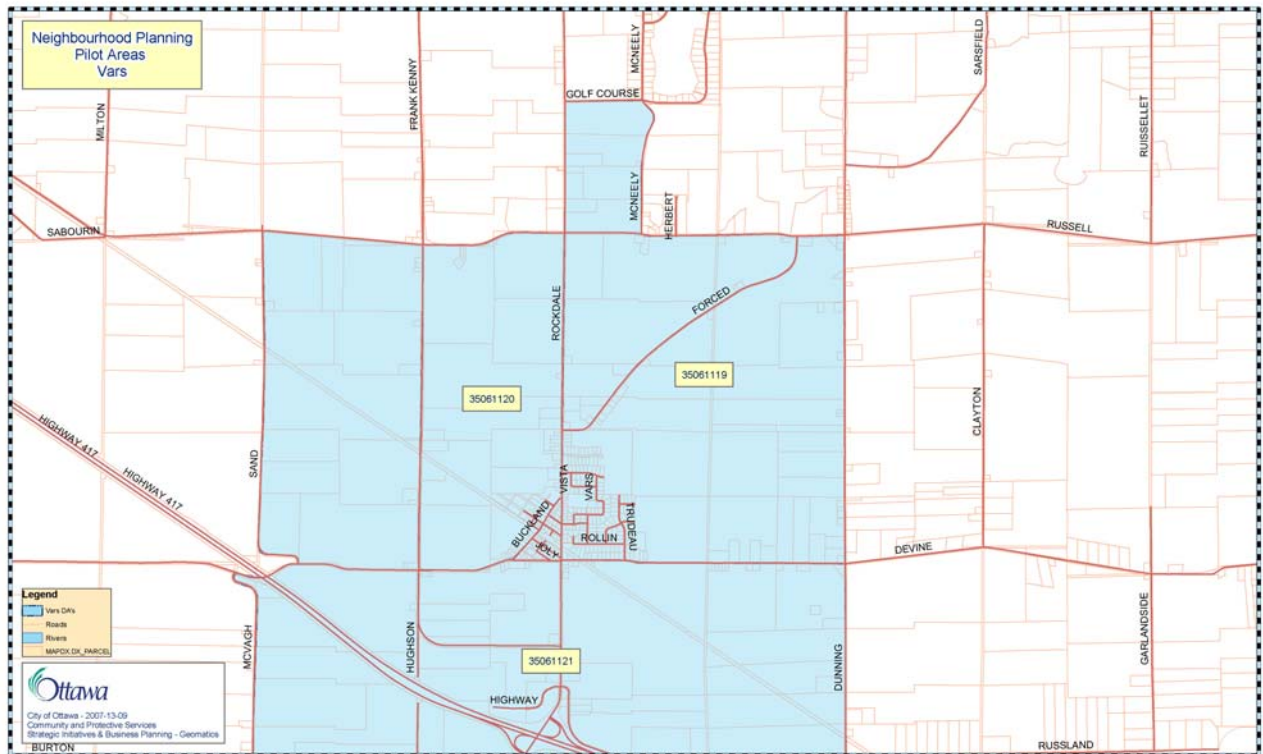
Vars presented an opportunity for the City to explore all of these issues, and to expand its understanding of its role in rural communities. In turn, the City offered the residents of Vars its undivided attention and support to develop its vision and direction for the future.

Vars presented a neighbourhood that contained a balance of issues and assets along with changes in history. The City saw Vars as a neighbourhood that could teach them a great deal and that, in turn, could benefit from a collaborative community-based planning exercise.

## Study area

Vars is small village in eastern Ontario located within the municipal boundaries of the City of Ottawa. Figure 1 provides a map of the neighbourhood planning study area.

Figure 1: Vars neighbourhood planning study area



---

## History of Vars

---

One cannot fully understand the history of the Village of Vars without a brief examination of the factors that lead to its founding. In the mid 1800s Canada was a British Colony as Confederation was still a few years away. The small rowdy logging town of Bytown had not yet been named as Canada's capital. Logging was the major industry in Russell County and the recently established Cumberland Township (1800). Throughout the 1800s numerous Irish, Scottish, and English settlers joined the early French-Canadian population. The Ottawa River, which constituted the northern boundary of Cumberland Township, was the main transportation corridor. The Bear Brook bisected the lower part of the Township where Mr. Dunning established a sawmill.

A man named Henry Williamson made numerous trips between the dock at Cumberland, through Bear Brook, to points south. The trail, which he took cross-country eventually became a forced road. (If you look at a map today, you can still see part of his route—Forced Road, Buckland Road, and Forced Road in Russell). At this time, much of the land had been cleared and farms were established throughout the area. In 1881–1882, the Canada Atlantic Railway founded by the lumber baron, Mr. J. R. Booth, laid its tracks just south of the village



*Vars railroad station*

of Bearbrook. The Canada Atlantic was taken over by the Grand Trunk Railway, which evolved into the Canadian National Railway. Bearbrook Station was established at the junction of the “forced road” and the new railway to facilitate mail delivery to the area.

Once the post office was established, it was determined that a name change was prudent to avoid confusion with the village of Bearbrook. There are two stories that suggest the origins of the name Vars.

According to the English version, the village was named after four of the prominent early families—the McVeighs, Armstrongs, Ronans, and Smiths. The French version states that Abbé Guillaume, who had retired as the parish priest in Embrun, suggested the name Vars after a village named Vars located only a few miles away from a village named Embrun in the area of France where he came from.



It is entirely possible that both stories are correct. A retired priest would certainly have been a respected member of the community and would have had input into choosing a new name. If he had suggested naming the village after the four families, it would have been an excellent example of a win-win situation for all. Taken together, the two versions keep everyone happy.

Once the Village was established, it grew and prospered rapidly. Hotels, a station complete with a large siding, cattle yards, and storage sheds were built. Stores, tradesmen, machinery dealers, churches, a community hall, schools, a cheese factory, a bakery, and a bank all appeared in short order. At the turn of the last century the village had streetlights fuelled by acetylene. A sawmill was built that employed many in the area. Vars also sent many native sons overseas in both world wars and a cenotaph was built in their honour.



*St. Guillaume Roman Catholic Church*



*Lions Club War Memorial*

Vars is a child of the railroad. It was born because the railway crossed that piece of geography. As the railroad grew and prospered, so too did the village. The railroad had a “section” in Vars and it employed a number of men in the maintenance of the tracks and the right-of-way. Thanks to the railroad, Vars became a hub of commerce for the surrounding villages.

The few brief brushes that Vars has had with history have been a result of the railroad. These include “accidental” stops in the village by President Eisenhower, Governor General Viscount Alexander of Tunis, King George VI, Queen Elizabeth, and even Santa Claus who would arrive by helicopter then jump on a train full of kids to return to Ottawa to launch the Christmas season at Eaton’s. The world’s greatest bank swindler, Mr. Christmas Parmalee, was also captured in the Vars station.

As roads to the City of Ottawa improved and people not only from Vars, but also from Embrun, Russell, and Navan were able to commute to the city for jobs and to do their shopping, the importance of both the railroad and the Village diminished. The trains ceased to stop in the village and the station closed. (The station building eventually became the home of a museum in Cumberland.) The public school also closed and children were bussed to Navan. The many stores were reduced to two. (Today they are now more or less convenience stores.) The post office also closed, even though it was profitable. Of the churches, only the Anglican

Church and the Roman Catholic Church remain. The community centre was torn down to build a fire station. Through all this, Vars became a neglected corner of the Township of Cumberland and eventually of the City of Ottawa.

With the paving of Russell Road in the late 1960s and the construction of the Provincial Highway 417 in the mid-1970s, Vars became an easy commute for people who worked in the City. A municipal water system was installed in the 1980s and natural gas was brought to the village in the 1990s. Several new subdivisions have been built over the past couple of

decades bringing more people to the area. The local park, which had been purchased and built by a number of volunteers in the late sixties, is well used by the community.



*St. Andrew's Anglican Church*



*Tanner's General Store, 1931*

Unfortunately, once something has been lost it is hard to replace. Vars is very challenged to build a recreation centre to bind the community together. The City built a new fire station for the village and its meeting room is well used by the community.

Employment opportunities in the area are limited. The Russell Township industrial park, ADESA, Bergeron Bus Lines all offer limited employment. A considerable amount of interest has arisen over the past few years in, once again, making use of the railroad as an alternative to cars for commuting downtown. A history that has been intimately tied to the fortunes of the railroad, the village of Vars may once again find its future vastly influenced by street rail. If a park and ride were established in Vars and local busses fed into it, many more people would be attracted to the old Village core.

The return of coffee shops or small stores would give people a reason to visit. Indeed there is much potential for the future of Vars, and keeping this vision in mind, a vibrant and busy village may emerge.



---

## Place in the city

---

Vars is a village that might be missed if one isn't looking for it. Located approximately one kilometre off the 417 at the exit for Embrun and Vars, the village is an unassuming, sleepy, and pastoral collection of homes both old and new. The Village itself has two main streets running through it. Rockdale Road connects Vars to the 417 and Buckland Road traverses its older section. The Village itself can be circumvented entirely (the intent for truck traffic) by turning onto Frank Kenny Road. (See Figure 1 for a map of the Vars NPI study area.)

If one ventures into Vars, one finds that there are two distinct halves to the Village. To the east of Rockdale Road one finds housing stock that is of more recent construction. Much of the housing here has been built since the 1960s, including the less than 10-year-old Trudeau Meadows development, and the yet to be built Farista development. The eastern side of the Village, just off Rockdale Road, is the location of Alcide Trudeau Park, the largest park in the village. On any given summer evening, the park bustles with children on the play structure, shooting hoops, or playing T-ball and softball. In the winter, the community rink is the focal point of park activity.

The old village is found on the west side of Rockdale. Here much of the housing is over a century old. There are two general stores and one pizza place. The west side is the location of St. Guillaume School. The mainstreet is Buckland Road—a sidewalk and tree-lined street that still holds some of the feel of a village main street.

As one approaches Vars, one passes Joe Welton's dairy farm—a large operation that abuts the Village on its southern side. Coming off of the 417, passing Joe's and entering Vars village proper, there is no denying that you are in a rural village. Walking through the Village on a spring

### Vision: Place in the City

- Vars will rebuild the pride of the community and be an enviable location where people want to live.
- Vars will not encourage (rampant) economic development, but rather “planned,” progressive development.
- Vars will embellish and rejuvenate what is already here.
- Vars will support agricultural land remaining agricultural.
- Vars will encourage the protection of wetlands and forests.
- Vars will limit the new homes built, with growth not to exceed 10–20 homes per year, and built in a sustainable manner.
- Vars will remain an affordable community.
- Vars will maintain the peace and quiet of the community.
- Vars will promote “the pearl in the oyster” appeal of the community.
- Vars will continue to be family-oriented with strong family values.
- Vars will promote its distinctive rural appeal to attract visitors and residents.
- Vars will explore developing itself as an equine-friendly horse-focused community.

or summer evening and seeing the park activity, the kids playing on the road in front of their homes, and noticing how everyone takes a moment to wave to you as you walk by, you know that the village of Vars is not just a place to live, it is a lifestyle choice.

The residents of Vars greatly value its peaceful, family-oriented, and rural small town atmosphere. These are the qualities that make Vars special. It distinguishes itself with its strong sense of community and its connection to its natural environment. Its pastoral setting includes agriculture, forests, green spaces, and wetlands.

The Vars Vision is for a vibrant, active, rural, and sustainable community that is bilingual and welcoming to all. As a community Vars seeks to:

- Provide a supportive social structure for all in the community.
- Encourage residents to reduce their environmental impact.
- Be a “live, work, and play” community.
- Preserve the best parts of the community for future generations.



*Preserving its rural character*

In harmony with this vision, Vars wants to maintain the rural character of the village and its surroundings, and protect its natural beauty, while working to make the community more sustainable and self-reliant so that more people can live, work, and play within the community rather than commuting long distances to obtain these services. Vars also wants to ensure that the community welcomes and supports all who live here.

Its close proximity to Orleans and to Ottawa makes Vars a self-proclaimed “Pearl in the Oyster” for those seeking a community-minded, family-oriented, and affordable place to call home.

## Population profile of Vars

The population of Vars has grown slowly over the past 10 years. The current census data shows the population in 2006 to be 1,365. This is an increase of 190 individuals since 1996. Current City projections indicate a population of approximately 2000 by 2031. Table 1 provides an overview of population growth from 1996 to 2006.

**Table 1: Vars Population, 1996-2006**

Vars Neighbourhood Planning Data	Census Data 2001	Census Data 2006
<b>Population Growth</b>		
1996 Population	1,185	
2001 Population (Census)	1,219	
2005 Estimated Population	1,400	
2006 Population (Census)		1,365
2011 Projected Population	1,695	1,525
2021 Projected Population	2,175	1,825
2031 Projected Population		2,075

## Mobility

The Vars neighbourhood is a stable one. People who live here tend to stay here. 91% of residents have not moved in the last year and 65% have not moved in the last five years.

**Table 2: Population movement in the neighbourhood of Vars**

Vars Neighbourhood Planning Data	Census Data 2001	Census Data 2006
<b>Population movement</b>		
<b>% that has not moved in the last year</b>	91%	91.3%
% that has moved within the City of Ottawa	6%	5.5%
% that has moved from other countries	0%	0%
<b>% that has not moved in the last five years</b>	77%	65%
% that has moved within the City of Ottawa	12%	24.3%
% that has moved from other countries	0%	0%

## Age structure

The census reports a predominantly adult population in Vars although seniors comprise only 8% of the population. The small percentage of seniors residing in Vars may be closely related to the lack of services or housing in Vars to support aging in place. The census reports 380 youth and children in Vars (27%).

**Table 3: Projection for seniors**

Vars Neighbourhood Planning Data	Census Data 2001		Census Data 2006	
	Number	% Share	Number	% Share
<b>Age Demographics</b>				
Seniors (65+)	110	9%	115	8%
Adult (25-64)	735	59%	865	64%
Young Adult (20-24)	70	6%	60	4%
Youth (15-19)	80	6%	100	7%
Children (0-14)	255	20%	220	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1360</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Ethnic diversity

Vars is not an ethnically diverse population. There have been no self-identified visible minority reports in the past two census reports. Vars is a bilingual community that in 2001 reported a mother tongue split of 50% Francophone and 50% Anglophone. This split has shifted slightly, wherein the population's mother tongue in 2006 showed approximately 60% Francophone and 40% Anglophone.

**Table 4: Ethnic diversity**

Vars Neighbourhood Planning Data	Census Data 2001	Census Data 2006
<b>Visible minority</b>		
% of total population	0%	0%
<b>Mother tongue</b>		
% English	49.5%	58.6%
% French	48.6%	39.8%
% Dutch	0.9%	0%
% All other	0.9%	1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Average family income

In comparison to the city-wide data, Vars is a relatively affluent community with approximately 55% of households reporting incomes of over \$80,000. This is a significantly higher percentage than the City average of 46.9%. Average household incomes have increased between 2001 and 2006 and the number of people living below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) is decreasing.

**Table 5: Families and individuals living below LICO**

<b>Vars Neighbourhood Planning Data</b>	<b>Census Data 2001</b>		<b>Census Data 2006</b>
<b>Low income cut-off (LICO)</b>			
% of families below LICO	3.3%	Estimated from CT data	2.9%
% of individuals 15 years and over below LICO	6.6%	From DA data	4.4%

*CT = census tract**DA = dissemination area***Table 6: Family income**

<b>Vars Neighbourhood Planning Data</b>	<b>Census Data 2001</b>		<b>Census Data 2006</b>
<b>Family income</b>			
% over \$80,000	52.3%	Estimated from CT data	47.4
% under \$20,000	4.6%	Estimated from CT data	2.5
Average census family income	\$83,257		\$73,113
<b>Household income</b>			
% over \$80,000	46.9%	Estimated from CT data	54.5%
% under \$20,000	8.9%	Estimated from CT data	8.4%
Average household income	\$100,246		

*CT = census tract**DA = dissemination area*

In general, Vars is a bilingual, stable, and slowly growing community.

---

## History and heritage

---

### Conserving history

Heritage comprises three elements of history, which when interwoven identify individuals and communities. They are:

- **Material history.** The conservation and interpretation of physical objects and sites, artefacts, and documents. Examples of these in Vars include the cenotaph and the historical documents.
- **Natural history.** The conservation and interpretation of nature (for example, individual species of birds, fish, and trees, or entire ecosystems) and palaeontological sites (study of life in the geological past, for example, fossils). Vars is a pastoral setting with existing operating farms, forested areas, and wetlands—all of which need protection.
- **Human history.** The research, conservation, and interpretation of past human activities from the time of first human habitation to the present day. These activities include those in the social, cultural, political, and economic spheres, which create the historic background to individuals and communities.

### Vars heritage

The heritage of Vars includes its buildings, its natural setting, and its history as a rural village. If these elements are not recognized and valued, Vars risks losing the feel of the village along with its rich history. The City recently developed the *Design*

#### Vision: History and heritage

- Vars will promote its heritage.
- Vars will preserve its school and churches and maintain its rural character and natural environment.
- Vars will retain its built heritage by inspiring individual property owners to improve and maintain their properties.
- Vars will have a cenotaph of which it is proud.
- Vars will promote the return of a functioning train station to Vars.



*Vars cenotaph*



*Guidelines for Rural Villages.* This document contains a number of guidelines that speak to the importance of all aspects of village heritage.

In particular, the guidelines assert that it is important to:

- **Guideline 2.** Ensure new development respects the natural topography of land, and integrates landforms such as hills, terraces, cliffs, valleys, rocky outcrops, and watercourses. Avoid altering natural terrain to accommodate development.
- **Guideline 10.** Ensure prominent buildings, open spaces, public art, and other attractive features are developed at highly visible locations. Highly visible locations are corner sites that terminate roadways and sites that frame community gathering places. Height, massing and architectural elements, and landscaping should be used to create visual interest.
- **Guideline 12.** Identify, preserve, and revitalize community landmarks, focal points, and vistas to support village identity and sense of place.
- **Guideline 13.** Preserve and enhance historic resources such as heritage buildings and structures.
- **Guideline 14.** Refer to historic buildings in the village for architectural cues, as redevelopment occurs. Acknowledging the historic context of the village facilitates the integration of new development among existing buildings.
- **Guideline 15.** Adapt old buildings for new uses to preserve village history, landscape, and identity. Historic buildings and sites, no longer in use, should be rehabilitated to serve new purposes.
- **Guideline 16.** Adapt closed schools and churches for new purposes such as specialty schools, libraries, day cares, community centres, youth centres, and recreational centres. Closed schools and churches that are structurally appropriate, safe, and have the capacity for modification may be good candidates for adaptive reuse.
- **Guideline 17.** Ensure alterations, additions, and renovations made to historic buildings complement the scale and character of the original.
- **Guideline 18.** Consider using an historic palate with contemporary colours for new buildings developed in older areas and village cores. Historic colours can be rich, neutral tones inspired by the original colours found on old village homes and historical buildings.



*Memorial plaque at Alcide Trudeau Park*

The Vars Community Continuity Committee applauds and welcomes the new *City Design Guidelines for Rural Villages* and feels they are in keeping with their intent and desire to retain the heritage of their Village.

**Recommendations: Heritage**

Finding	Vars is a community rich in heritage of which its residents are very proud.
Recommendation	That the VCA Social Affairs subcommittee work with local property owners to encourage and protect heritage throughout the community.
Justification	To ensure that Vars retains the rural village environment valued by its residents, heritage elements must be protected.
Staff input	City staff in the Arts and Heritage branch are available to assist in the provision of information pertaining to heritage programs, designation policy, and related issues.



## Neighbourhood safety

The majority of residents report that they view Vars as a safe community. Many responding to recent surveys indicate that they have lived in the village of Vars all their lives and have always considered it to be safe. Some newcomers have stated that they specifically chose to move to Vars because they felt safety is higher here in a small rural village compared to the urban centre.

### Rail and traffic safety

The most commonly reported safety concern is railway safety. Given that the survey followed on a recent loss of life at the CN rail tracks, concerns with rail safety were foremost in people's minds. Recent deaths on the tracks concern residents, but concern was also expressed for the children of Vars who have been exposed to these incidents and subsequently frightened or traumatized.

#### Vision: Neighbourhood safety

- Vars will encourage safe mobility throughout the neighbourhood.
- Vars will improve park and pathway safety and security.
- Vars will emphasize and enhance Rockdale Road as the main street to promote safety and reduce speeding.
- Vars will continue community education on railroad safety.
- Vars will clearly demarcate village boundaries to promote the message "you are in a village."
- Vars will collaborate with residential care homes to ensure safety for all.
- Vars will work to maintain and improve safety in school areas.



*CN rail tracks in Vars*

### Residential care homes

The village of Vars has a proportionately high number of residential care home residents living in the neighbourhood. At the beginning of the neighbourhood planning process, concerns surfaced repeatedly regarding the three residential care homes operating in the village of Vars. There existed an uneasy relationship between some villagers and the residents. Residents expressed concerns with panhandling, vandalism, and loitering by residential care home residents.

Over the course of the project, the Community Continuity Committee (CCC) members discussed the issues among themselves and with the residential care homeowners. Thanks to the efforts of one dedicated CCC member, members of the community and residential home care residents worked together on a community clean up project. This activity proved to be a significant event bringing community members and the residential home care residents together to work on a joint initiative. The event culminated with a moving celebration at the school on a Saturday morning in November 2008.

Over the course of the past year, fears are abating for everyone, and while not all issues are resolved, the tone and direction is positive and relations are improving dramatically.

### Youth crimes

Youth crime and loitering are ongoing concerns in Vars. There have been reports of alleged drug trafficking and harassment of bystanders in Alcide Trudeau Park. Discussions with police officers about this situation suggest that while many know who the offenders are in the park, in a tight-knit community like this, most are reticent to report on their neighbours' kids.

The CCC feels that the community needs to take some responsibility and in particular, parents need to know what their children are doing. Furthermore, the Ottawa Police Service contend that they need to be informed of an issue in order to be able to act to remedy it. Reporting criminal activity is key. Overall, the crime statistics from the Ottawa Police Service reflect relatively few incidents of break and enter, and few incidents of assaults in Vars. (*See Appendix 1 for Crime Statistics.*)

### Partnering to address the issues

Moving forward, the community feels that its small size is an asset to addressing whatever problems it faces. Together, groups such as the Optimist Club and the Community Association have a role to play in providing athletic and social events for all community members. Furthermore, the community police officer clearly conveyed the message that she cannot act on incidents that are not reported. She strongly encourages residents to call when they have a concern or witness a questionable or concerning event.

At the beginning of the NPI project in Vars, the community association was not active in the village. At the initiative of the CCC, the Community Association has been reinstated and is once again active. Organizations like this go a long way to building community cohesion and safety for all.



*Vars Community Association initiatives*

**Recommendations: Neighbourhood safety**

Finding	Vars is a community that considers itself to be a safe one. Occasional issues have arisen such as, youth in the park, theft, railroad, and traffic concerns. However, the statistics support that it is a relatively safe community. Ottawa Police Services indicate that some activities may be under-reported.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That residents of Vars continue to be educated on the importance of reporting perceived criminal activity to the Ottawa Police and be provided with the appropriate contact information to do so.</li> <li>• That education pertaining to railway safety be disseminated regularly to schools and all residents.</li> </ul>
Justification	<p>By reporting activities to the Ottawa Police, the police are able to identify, target, and act on key problem areas.</p> <p>The CN rail line through Vars brings frequent high-speed trains through the centre of the Village in close proximity to the schools, residential care homes, and residences. Deaths on the railway tracks have occurred frequently in this village, and efforts need to be undertaken to prevent further deaths and injuries.</p>
Staff input	<p>Ottawa Police Services are available to assist with information from various information campaigns that they undertake, and other resources that are available such as the Train Safety books that are available for the community.</p> <p>The Community Officer encourages residents to report incidents so that they can be tracked.</p>

## Community services and facilities

Residents highly value the community facilities and services located in the village of Vars and in the surrounding area. The list of these services and facilities, however, is short. It includes:

- the Bearbrook Community Centre
- the Bookmobile service
- St. Guillaume School
- the cenotaph
- the Fire Station
- the field house in Trudeau Park

While these public facilities are much appreciated, the community recognizes that there are several additional community elements missing from its landscape.

### Community buildings

The primary village concern is the absence of a functional community centre. Given the geography of the area, the village of Vars is currently served by the Bearbrook Community Centre located at the corner of Forced Road and Devine Road. The facility is a one level square brick building that contains one large meeting room, a kitchen, and bathrooms. This is also the location of the skateboard park.

The use of this building is currently limited. Some feel its location is too far out of the village for people to access it easily; others feel with no programming happening at the centre, there is no reason to go there. A review of the past year's use of the centre indicates that it

#### Vision: Community services and facilities

- Vars will improve access to local fresh food and explore opportunities to introduce new stores in the village.
- Vars will promote Public Health access.
- Vars will explore opportunities to expand recreational activities in the community.
- Vars will explore the reintroduction of key community services, including for example pharmacy, post office, store fronts (video, natural health food store).
- Vars will enhance and empower the Vars Community Association and Optimist Club.
- Vars will explore opportunities to encourage day care options.
- Vars will explore housing and activity options for seniors in order to encourage them to stay in the community.



*Bearbrook Community Centre*

is primarily used for religious services, a monthly luncheon for a seniors group, weekly card games for seniors, and the occasional party or funeral reception. Proportionately, the main use of the building is for religious meetings. In the course of the past year, the rental fees on the building have totalled \$9,271.

Using the school for community space was also discussed. Currently, a very cooperative relationship exists between the school administrators and the community. Groups in Vars use the gymnasium most nights at low or no charge for sports activities, spaghetti dinners, movies, volleyball, and other community events. It is, however, also used by groups from other



*Using school space for community activities*

neighbouring communities, which cuts into its availability for residents of Vars. Unfortunately, data of actual usage was not available over the summer months.

The Alcide Trudeau Park field house contains a couple of change rooms, a small office, and kitchen facilities. This building is used predominantly in the winter when the skating rink is in use. Other uses of this facility include Canada Day celebrations, a ball tournament in the summer, and occasional meetings of the softball league organizers. There were only 11 days booked in the last calendar year for these activities.

Much discussion ensues at the Community Continuity Committee (CCC) about the current situation and potential approaches to improve the situation. Many on the CCC are adamant that a new community centre within the village proper is required. Others feel a retrofit of the current community centre is a necessary compromise. City staff input suggests that building a new community centre is not warranted and that funding for such a facility from the City is not available in the foreseeable future.

A meeting of the CCC focused on the community building issue and a number of issues and options were discussed. The overwhelming consensus determined that Vars needs a functional community centre that meets the needs of its community. Such a facility is viewed as critical to the revitalization and ongoing sustainability of the community spirit of Vars. There is a strong feeling that the Bearbrook Community Centre is not currently meeting the needs due to its distance from the core, the lack of programming offered there, the absence of a gymnasium, or some combination of factors.

The CCC concludes that more study is needed to identify the best and most effective approach to meeting the need. Admirably, the group feels strongly that they want to make the best and most sustainable decision. They also feel they need a better understanding of what is lacking and what is needed. The CCC has expressed that first and foremost they are committed to getting it right, and not misdirecting City or community resources, be it money or energy.



The CCC has determined that the prudent course is to ask the City to undertake—through the Neighbourhood Planning group—a comprehensive survey and assessment of the community needs. There is a need to develop a definitive understanding of what kind of programming and facilities this community lacks and desires. A number of options are all viewed as possible approaches. These include:

- Renovate the Bearbrook Community Centre.
- Build a small community centre in Alcide Trudeau Park where the current field house and pavilion are located.
- Purchase land and build a new facility.
- Work on a 3P type arrangement with the school board.
- Add a gymnasium to the fire hall for community use.

Paramount to any of these options is funding. While the City might be able to contribute to a retrofit option, all the others would likely require some creative thinking about funding. The CCC agrees that the introduction of a levy is one route, unless new infrastructure funding or some other source opens up. However, the CCC understands that beyond their relatively small membership, there may be very little appetite in the broader community for a tax levy. Again, the VCA would like a commitment from the City to work with them to survey and assess what the broader community wants and is willing to support.



*Alcide Trudeau Park field house*

Very characteristic of this community, all involved in the CCC share a strong commitment and willingness to do the work necessary to ensure that they make the right decision for the entire community.

The following sections focus on the current facilities and identify those that the residents of Vars would like to see in their community in the future, including recommendations for:

- Community Centre
- Schools
- Day care
- Seniors
- Youth
- Public health
- Residential care homes

- Post office
- Library

### Recommendations: Community Access Centre

Finding	Vars has no access to functional community centre space. There are limited activities and opportunities for children and youth.
Recommendation	That work be undertaken jointly between the Vars Community Association and the City Neighbourhood Planning staff to determine how to best ensure that the neighbourhood of Vars has an accessible and properly equipped community centre—ideally closer to the village centre.
Justification	<p>The Bearbrook Community Centre is relatively far from the greater village area and facilities are not equipped to accommodate indoor sports and other activities. Although currently available to the community, the local school’s gymnasium is fully booked throughout the week with various sports and community activities. With a change in management or policy, access to this space could be denied. With a community centre available and easily accessible, the village could promote more activities for the community such as dance, music, art, and drama.</p> <p>The Alcide Trudeau Park field house serves an important function by providing changerooms for the skating rink, bathrooms for softball, and kitchen facilities for special events, but it does not have useable community meeting space.</p>
Staff input	Currently there are no plans to build a new facility in the village of Vars. The City’s <i>Facility Needs Policy</i> does not point to the development of a new community centre for Vars. Bearbrook Community Centre is intended to service the community of Vars, and if it is not meeting the needs, that can be explored.

### Recommendations: Schools

Finding	St. Guillaume school is a key element to maintaining youth development and community unity, irrespective of language spoken.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the community maintain its support for the promotion, development, and physical betterment of the St. Guillaume School.</li> <li>• That the school continue to provide affordable space in its facility for community events and programs after school and on weekends.</li> </ul>
Justification	The school is the heart of any village. As witnessed in our neighbouring villages of Sarsfield, Carlsbad Springs, and Cumberland, the dwindling enrolment and eventual closing of their local schools caused these villages to lose their sense of community. Without the school facilities, our youth would simply disperse without a sense of belonging within the community.

Staff input St. Guillaume school has been a very accommodating facility in relation to providing space for community events and recreation programs. It is anticipated that this positive relationship will continue. A reciprocal agreement is in place with school boards and the City to facilitate this.

**Recommendations: Day care**

Finding There is limited available day care service in Vars through both the school program and private providers.

Recommendation That the community work with the school program to explore the expansion of the preschool child care program, including increased flexibility of hours to accommodate parents travelling lengthy distances to and from Vars.

Justification There is a great economic opportunity to expand day care services using either an expanded school facility or through the use of other facilities (such as the Bearbrook Community Centre). These would not only service the community, but also attract outsiders who require reliable service in a safe and rural environment.

Staff input The School Board needs to determine space availability in the school for the expansion of childcare. If space is available, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services is the channel through which one obtains a licence for a preschool program. The Day Nurseries Act might necessitate renovations to space to accommodate preschool children.

It is helpful to locate a childcare agency willing to provide the service. The cost of such a program includes rent, salaries, renovations, outdoor play area, learning equipment and equipment such as a dishwasher, fridge, and stove. It is prudent to aim that any new program begins in September of a given year.

Barriers to be aware of include:

- no fee subsidy dollars available at the present time
- no capital funding available for 2009 nor anticipated in 2010

Any capital funding, when available, is issued to non-profit childcare agencies that have been in operation for at least two years. A potential opportunity to watch is the recently announced introduction of full-day learning for 4- and 5-year-olds in Ontario beginning in 2010.



**Recommendations: Seniors**

Finding	As of 2006, approximately 8% of the current population of Vars are people over the age of 65, and another 13% will be over 65 years of age within 10 years. Vars is one of the few communities without the benefits of a residence for seniors. Historically, three homes were available for seniors, but these have since been converted to accommodate special care citizens.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● That the introduction of a seniors' residential facility be explored.</li> <li>● That developers be encouraged to build a seniors' residence in the village centre.</li> <li>● That an assessment of the size requirements, future demographic demands, and site possibilities for a Long Term Care and retirement facility be undertaken.</li> </ul>
Justification	As the population grows older, residents want to continue living in Vars through the assistance of a seniors' residence facility. Such a facility would also generate income to Vars through job creation and the development of other small supportive businesses.
Staff input	Staff connected the CCC with Jamie Burr, a specialist in the area of Seniors Housing, currently working under contract with the United Way. Mr. Burr attended a meeting and provided the CCC with background information pertaining to policies and processes to introduce a new seniors' home into a community. Mr. Burr has made himself available to continue to support and provide information as required.

**Recommendations: Youth**

Finding	While there are currently a few programs for youth in the community (connected primarily with sports activities), these are limited and seasonal.
Recommendation	That programming for youth is introduced in Vars.
Justification	There is a need to establish a youth committee, possibly through the Vars Community Association, with whom, through regular consultation by way of talk groups and surveys, the desires and concerns of the youth could be heard and actions be taken to provide services and activities for them as their needs require.
Staff input	Services for youth need to be considered within the context of the broader intent to survey the community to assess the recreational programming needs of Vars.

**Recommendations: Public health**

Finding	There are no primary care health facilities in Vars; an issue that is a deterrent to the well-being of children and seniors.
Recommendation	Vars will promote public health access. Nursing and pharmacy services will be invited to establish in the community to support young families and seniors, especially those with limited access to transportation.
Justification	Seniors who have limited support and transportation would benefit by better access to health care. This would encourage regular visits with a health care provider and lead to better health. Information about other senior services could also be provided to those in need who are unaware of homecare services for which they might qualify. As there is limited economic benefit to establish such operations in Vars at this time, a city or provincial public health program, as a rural pilot project initiative, would facilitate the support for a seniors' residence as well as create a few local jobs and potential economic spin-offs.
Staff input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public Health Nurse—Monique Traversy has been a regular contributor at all Vars meetings. She has been instrumental in bringing information to the community, and advocating for the introduction of new programs. There is a possibility of introducing an Early Years Centre site in Vars.</li><li>• The Rural Health Program has offered, in partnership with Paramedic Services and the Vars Fire Prevention Educator, free CPR and AED training in the fall and spring.</li><li>• Twice a year, in fall and in spring, with the help of community partners in the villages of Cumberland, Navan, Sarsfield, and Vars well water testing is offered so that residents can drop off their well water samples in their own community.</li><li>• The Public Health Nurse offers workshops on different health topics and plays a role of advocacy to facilitate access to health services to the rural community. Some planning has been done with the Royal Ottawa Hospital to offer workshops and health-related activities to the residents of the three domiciliary homes in the village. The rural public health nurse has also worked with le rendez-vous des aînés francophones for the last three years organising a Health Fair in November for francophone seniors in the area.</li><li>• The rural public health nurse is presently involved with the Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre to explore the possibility of having an Early Years Centre at St-Guillaume school to support rural parents in the community (Best Start Program). St-Guillaume school also has a school-age program public health nurse who has offered the Changing Me Program to grade 4 and grade 5. Classes were also given to grade 7 and grade 8 on healthy relationships and STI.</li></ul>

- Staff input
- An annual Flu Clinic is offered for rural residents at heritage Public School in Navan.
  - The concept of bringing a pharmacy and medical services to Vars is admirable, although of course these services are market driven and require an adequate population base to support.

**Recommendations: Residential care homes**

Finding There are three residential care homes in Vars. The village currently has the highest ratio of residential care home clients to village residents of any neighbourhood in the city, which at this time presents challenges.

- Recommendation
- That residential care home management take a more responsive role in supervising and supporting their residents and encouraging good neighbourhood behaviour and that provincial and municipal governments, facilitated through VCA subcommittee, ensure that there will not be any expansion of residential care home facilities in the greater Vars community.
  - That support (working with the City and the Ministry) be provided to the residential care home clients regarding job training, employment, recreation, transportation, law enforcement, and public health services.
  - That an on-going committee be formed through the Vars Community Association to facilitate and maintain ongoing communication and dialogue between residents of Vars and the residential care home managers.
  - That the City support the limiting of new residential care facilities in Vars. As a village of approximately 800 residents with a landmass of approximately 2800 hectares, the portion of land use for residential facilities is very high. While Vars fully welcomes and supports the current facilities in its village, it is of the opinion that there is a limit to the number of such facilities one small village can support. In particular the Village is in need of seniors housing, and would like to ensure that introduction of any future residential facilities be exclusively for the housing of seniors.
  - To ensure the diversity of land uses in Vars, and the ability for all residents to age in place, the village requests the approval of a moratorium on new residential care facilities unless specifically identified to serve persons over the age of 65.

Justification On-going communication and problem-solving are key to maintaining a harmonious environment for all. The Social Affairs subcommittee will work with residential care home management to ensure continued communications.

Staff input The Community Continuity Committee (CCC) met with Joan McGirr from Residential Care Coordinator and Mark Spas (Province of Ontario LTC Support Services) who provided information about differing levels of programming offered in Homes for Special Care versus City-subsidized program. Those residents in City-subsidized programs do not receive the same

Staff input level of support for programming.

Feedback from the community has been that the operators have provided information about their homes and have encouraged community members to contact them with any concerns. Joan and Mark support the idea of an on-going dialogue between the operator and the community. The expansion of group homes is based on need that is normally identified by the community, the different levels of government, and agencies involved. There does not appear to be a need for any further expansion in Vars.

City staff provided useful information related to the differing guidelines, bylaws, and regulations that pertain to various forms of supportive and residential living facilities. While the three large group homes in Vars are often referenced as group homes, they are in fact Residential Care Homes. As such, they are not subject to distance between regulations that apply to institutional group homes. The number of residential care facilities that serve a special needs population in Vars is high, and it may warrant a consideration of the area in a way similar to the study undertaken in Sandy Hill. There are situations in which there may be a rationale for capping the number of residential homes in a community, and such a direction would need Council approval.

**Recommendations: Post office**

Finding While there is a pick-up service in Vars for parcel deliveries, since the closing of its Post Office the community has had to travel to Navan or Embrum to conduct its postal business.

Recommendation That the VCA Economic Development Committee investigate the reopening of a village postal outlet.

Justification The former Vars Post Office was situated where the current postal super box now sits. Its closing has had a detrimental effect on customers who must now travel 16 km for postal counter services. The local store currently provides stamp sales and certain parcel pick-up, but does not have the room to expand to serve a growing community. Reinstitution of a Post Office would allow those who do not have access to adequate or regular transportation to have postal services.

Staff input Canada Post indicates that it does not usually build new post offices anymore. A new postal outlet would only be developed in an existing business in an area where demand is clearly identified. A willing business would need to be identified. If a demand is identified (in conjunction with Canada Post) and a location also identified, this could be explored. The main difficulty at this point is to make the proper connections at Canada Post and have them assess the community to determine whether there is a need for a Postal Outlet. It is unclear how much this would cost or how long it would take to implement, and it may be necessary to make the connections at the proper political levels to move this forward. (Minister John Baird is responsible for Canada Post.)

**Recommendations: Library**

**Finding** The community receives weekly visits from the City Bookmobile. Village residents have requested a more permanent structure with expanded services.

**Recommendation** That the Ottawa Public Library undertake a study of the use of the Bookmobile and other library services to ensure that the needs of the community are met. Future considerations should include a possible introduction of a permanent library site in Vars.

**Justification** The space could also be used as educational facilities for continuing education programs, youth and adult seminars, senior activities, group resident activities, health care, and Internet access for example.

**Staff input** The last Ottawa Public Library (OPL) Facility Growth Planning Study was done in November 2006, but it did not address rural growth issues. However, OPL has plans to develop a Master Facilities Plan, which would provide the Library with a framework to guide future development for a 10–20 year period. This plan would look at both urban and rural needs. The MFP would be in place sometime in 2010.

Prior to determining whether a library should be built in Vars or any location, there needs to be a confirmation of growth and a requirement to build a facility. Moreover, capital funding must be secured along with operating dollars for a new facility. Further consideration should also be given regarding the appropriate service delivery mechanism (for example, Bookmobile service or a kiosk) to address community needs. It should be noted that OPL is reviewing its Bookmobile service and is also considering other ways in which to address service requirements. For instance, a pilot program for a Kiosk was recently unveiled for Hunt Club.

---

## Emergency preparedness

---

Emergencies happen. Possible emergencies for which Vars residents should be prepared include:

- Power outages
- Severe winter storms
- Earthquakes
- Heat emergencies
- Infectious disease outbreaks
- Contamination of the water supply
- Hazardous chemical releases

### Vision: Emergency preparedness

- Vars will better prepare people for emergencies.
- Vars will disseminate information from the Office of Emergency Management to its community members.
- Vars will establish and maintain emergency and disaster relief.



*Vars Fire Hall*

The better-prepared people are for an emergency, the better the City can respond and support them during an emergency. The City offers “Are You Ready,” a program that uses a grassroots network of community leaders, agencies, and individuals to help deliver emergency preparedness workshops. These workshops raise resident awareness on how to prepare for an emergency. City emergency preparedness experts train the volunteers for the workshops.

The program’s objectives are to educate the community on emergency planning, to raise awareness on how to prepare for an emergency, and to increase individual self-reliance in times of emergency.

The Office of Emergency Management provides materials on emergency preparedness and offers workshops for community groups. A briefing was provided to the Community Continuity Committee (CCC) and the VCA has committed to disseminate information it receives. Further information is available at the City’s Office of Emergency Management.

**Recommendations: Emergency preparedness**

Finding	The community has not yet undertaken an education process to encourage residents to prepare their households and businesses for possible emergencies.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the Ottawa Office of Emergency Preparedness distribute materials to all Vars households.</li> <li>• That the VCA promote emergency preparedness to all residents using mechanisms such as the community website and meeting agendas.</li> <li>• That the residential care home facilities each have in place and practice an emergency preparedness plan.</li> <li>• That the farming community include in their emergency preparedness planning consideration of their unique position as it relates to livestock safety and food production.</li> </ul>
Justification	The City is encouraging all residents and communities to be prepared.
Staff input	<p>While the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is responsible for promoting and educating residents and businesses on the importance of emergency preparedness, it is the responsibility of every resident and business to get prepared and to design and exercise their own plans. OEM can offer suggestions; it is then contingent on individual residents and organizations to do their own planning. The domiciliary hostels are included in the Public Health Pandemic Plan and are on the emergency list for all health-related situations.</p> <p>The OEM Plan states the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CPS –To be discussed with provincial and federal government</li> <li>• PTE – Assist in locating areas and farms for livestock relocation</li> <li>• PWS – Responsible for providing vehicles</li> </ul> <p>The Rural Affairs Office is available to assist with any communications, community outreach, and liaison activities that may be required to support residents of Vars in learning about and preparing for emergencies.</p>

## Parks and green space

As a rural community, Vars is surrounded by green space of which most is agrarian lands. The two park areas that serve Vars are Alcide Trudeau Park (field house) and Bearbrook Community Centre with a skateboard park. The Trudeau Park, with baseball diamonds, a new playground, and a winter rink is used extensively. The Bearbrook Community Centre is used less frequently due to its more remote location.

Residents value both facilities, yet a number of potential improvements have been identified. Furthermore, as detailed in the next sections, the community feels strongly that neither facility meets the community need at the present time.

### Vision: Parks and green space

- Vars will promote healthy, active living, and lifestyles.
- Vars will explore opportunity for community garden lots.
- Vars will improve and maintain a cenotaph.
- Vars will explore options for more park space in the village.
- Vars will work to reduce its carbon footprint.
- Vars will make efforts to become a sustainable community.

### Alcide Trudeau Park and field house

Alcide Trudeau Park is a centrally located park space off Rockdale Road, in the middle of Vars. This park serves as a recreation hub for the community and contains two ball diamonds, an outdoor skating rink, basketball hoops, a play structure, and a field house.

The field house was heavily damaged by a fire in 2007 and, as a result, was renovated in 2008. It contains a kitchen, washroom, small office space, and change rooms. The field house is operated by the Vars Community Association, and is used year-round. Alcide Trudeau Park has no potential for expansion given it is surrounded by housing. Some



*Alcide Trudeau Park*

residents living along the perimeter of the park have expressed concern with youth activity in the park, as well as noise and light pollution from the baseball diamond in the summer.



## Bearbrook Community Centre and Skateboard Park

The Bearbrook Community Centre is located at the corner of Forced Road and Russell Road, approximately two kilometres north of the village of Vars and as such, it is not a facility to which residents can walk. During the week the facility's parking lot serves as a Park and Ride. Weekdays the community centre is used regularly by seniors groups for meetings and card clubs.

In 2005 a skateboard park was built in the southern corner of the parking lot. The initial location for this skateboard park was Alcide Trudeau Park, but it was determined that Trudeau Park was not appropriate given the limited space in the park and concerns expressed by residents living in close proximity to it who felt that excessive noise and other behaviour might result.



*Skateboard Park at Bearbrook Community Centre*

Its placement out at the Bearbrook Community Centre means that the skateboard park is not used as much as it might be in a more central location in the village. Youth using the park are usually driven by parents, some of whom wait on site with others who leave and return.

### Recommendations: Development and Wetlands

Finding	With the development of new housing projects in the core village, there is fear that the community will be deprived of the green space that it is used to. While agricultural land is still being used for that purpose, there are concerns that the surrounding wetlands could be endangered and are unprotected.
Recommendation	It is recommended that the growth of new homes be limited to no more than 150 dwellings over the next 10 years and that the building be done on a gradual basis and that the preservation of our wetlands and that the developments of any agricultural land be taken into consideration.
Justification	Residents are cognizant of the reality that whenever the core of the village expands, the surrounding land is also deprived of its natural scene and fauna. Development must be sensitive to the natural environment.

Staff input	<p>The Rural Affairs Office believes Vars could benefit from a Community Design Plan (CDP), through the Policy Development &amp; Urban Design (PDUD) branch. A CDP exercise would look at these elements in a cohesive manner instead of addressing them separately.</p> <p><i>PDUD comment:</i> The wetland within the village boundaries is unevaluated. Evaluation would require the permission of the landowners. If the wetland is not provincially significant, it is unlikely that it can be preserved. Wetland evaluation would require study to support any development application on these lands. On land that is actively farmed, environmental features have already been substantially modified.</p>
-------------	--

## Trails

The *Rural Design Guidelines* support the direction for the development of trails as follows:

- **Guideline 40.** Ensure the pedestrian and cycling network is continuous and connects to the village core and village destinations. Protect connections that can be filled-in over time as development and redevelopment permits, and ensure existing connections are not closed or disconnected.
- **Guideline 41.** Connect and integrate natural areas such as lakes, rivers, wetlands, and storm water management ponds into the pedestrian and cycling network. Where possible, include opportunities for passive recreation such as hiking trails and seating areas.
- **Guideline 42.** Design trails and pathways to match the aesthetics and function of their surrounding space.
- **Guideline 43.** Retain healthy mature trees, hedgerows, and historic forests and incorporate them into development, park space, and community designs.

### Recommendation 1: Trails

Finding	Vars lacks useable (not water filled) walking trails and equestrian trails.
Recommendation	That it be determined what areas could be available for walking and equestrian trails and then design a trail plan and investigate cost. Look at what maintenance the trails would require and the options for achieving this (for example volunteers and access fees).
Justification	<p>As part of promoting Vars as a place to visit and a place with a healthy active living lifestyle, trails can have numerous uses, such walking, biking, cross-country skiing, and horse riding. This would enhance the local lifestyle and make Vars a more attractive place to visit and spend time.</p> <p>Horse trail riding is part of this lifestyle. Designation of riding and multi-activity trails would not only be an enhancement for the current equestrian community and other outdoor enthusiasts, but would also help draw others out to explore and enjoy the area, which in turn would help to stimulate business. The vicinity is home to a number of equestrian facilities</p>

Justification	and Vars sees a potential to build on this to make the village an equestrian-focused community.
Staff input	Design & Construction will gladly provide technical input and cost estimating support to the projects once they are identified; however, determining the requirement and location for new trails or pathways is not a responsibility of Design & Construction.  <i>Rural Affairs Comment:</i> The Rural Affairs Office is looking at developing a funding program to support rural pathways. It is in its very early stages of development, but once things are ready for publication, the Vars Community Association will be advised.

### **Recommendation 2: Trails**

Finding	Vars is situated amidst some attractive, diverse, and open green spaces, but there currently exists no easy or linked access to these resources.
Recommendation	That trails and pathways be designed to match the aesthetics and function of their surrounding space, such as walking trails linking other communities (for example, around storm pond (4 acres) on Devine Road or on old road allowances (Frank Kenny to Sand road). Non-motorized bike and cross-country skiing could also use the trail.
Justification	Vars needs to capitalize and maximize its setting. This will help attract visitors to the village, and will also provide a richer experience for residents.
Staff input	The City has established standards for all of our new pathway or trail installations. All new work would be coordinated with existing conditions and the City's installation standards.  <i>Rural Affairs Comment:</i> The Rural Affairs Office is looking at developing a funding program to support rural pathways. It is in the very early stages of development, but once things are ready for publication, the VCA will be advised.

### **Recommendations: Future park development**

Finding	The community uses its central park, Alcide Trudeau Park, to the fullest. The space allocated to the park is somewhat limited and prevents any expansion for new facilities.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended that Vars expand its inventory of park facilities within the village core by ensuring that any new homes built by developers include park space and that the City's "cash in lieu" option not be available for this village. A new park location could also serve as the site of a new community centre.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That City staff undertake a longer range park plan and develop a plan for the type of parks and facilities needed to fulfill the requirements of Vars and the surrounding communities at the present time and in the future.</li> </ul>
Justification	Through this initiative, the community has requested additional park items such as a splash pad, tennis courts, and a wading pool. There is no room for expansion at the Alcide Trudeau Park facilities. The Bearbrook Community Centre is seldom used due to its distant location from the core of the village and the lack of sports facilities available. For instance, with the acquisition of core parkland, the skateboard park currently located at the Bearbrook Community Centre could be moved to a more accessible location.
Staff input	<p>The amount of parkland to be secured through development is prescribed by the Parkland Dedication By-law. The City will continue to seek the maximum in this community. Acquisition of land is dependent on sufficient funds generated through Cash-in-lieu in the Vars area.</p> <p><i>Comment from Rural Affairs:</i> Vars could benefit from a Community Design Plan (CDP) through the Policy Development &amp; Urban Design branch. A CDP exercise would take a look at these elements in a cohesive manner, rather than address them separately.</p>

### **Recommendations: Community gardens**

Finding	The development and use of community gardens would support local products and enhance community spirit and pride.
Recommendation	That agricultural land be sought to invite village core residents to grow their own products on a small scale for personal use or to support the development of a community market.
Justification	Programs could include residential care home residents. The program would encourage the sale and consumption of local produce and develop community pride.
Staff input	<p>It would be up to the community to find willing landowners that would allow village residents to use their land for this purpose. This “community gardening” concept is one that is used in urban Ottawa. The City does assist with funding some Community Garden arrangements, primarily in urban Ottawa, through Just Food (<a href="http://www.justfood.ca">www.justfood.ca</a>).</p> <p>Just Food would be a good resource to assist in establishing such an undertaking in the Vars area. The main barrier is finding a landowner willing to participate in such an arrangement. The cost of the initiative would be up to the landowner in question. Direct city involvement with such an initiative would be minimal. If a community farmers’ market were ever to be established, the Rural Affairs Office could potentially offer some</p>

Staff input financial assistance through the Rural Association Partnership Program and assist with Vars with organizing meeting and learning from other established farmers' markets in other parts of Ottawa.

**Recommendations: Leisure and recreation programs**

Finding The Optimist Club sponsors some recreational activities, but these are limited and do not meet the needs of all in the community.

Recommendation That the number and scope of community activities be increased and that the community centre be used to the fullest benefit of the community.

Justification The Bearbrook Community Centre, with its remote location, is under-utilized and provides limited benefit to the community. Accessible programs available in the village core would benefit all.

Staff input This item has been put forward at the City for serious consideration for funding in the 2010 capital budget. Since this expansion must be funded through the Strategic Initiatives envelope (as opposed to Development charges new growth or renewal), the Financial Unit has been notified of this intent, identifying Bearbrook as a new item and priority outside of our LRFP and Infrastructure listing of projects. Operating budget pressure must also be considered.

---

## Community sustainability and partnerships

---

Vars is a rural village surrounded by agricultural lands, significant woodlands, a small creek that flows into Bear Brook, and wetlands within the Cumberland Forest. In line with the City of Ottawa's Official Plan, Vars undertakes to identify and protect these natural features and work to enhance them. These areas will be protected from development, since these areas perform the functions of cleaning our air and waters of pollutants and of providing habitat for wildlife and plants. These areas, if carefully protected, can also provide recreational and conservation areas for the people of Vars to enjoy as part of a healthy active lifestyle.

### Vision: Community sustainability and partnerships

- Vars will encourage an environmentally-friendly community using renewable energies and resources.

### Recommendations: Sustainability

Finding	Vars has very few renewable energy resources.
Recommendation	That renewable energy resources be explored for inclusion in the built form development plan.
Justification	To keep Vars on track to becoming an increasingly environmentally conscious society, geared towards a more energy efficient, eco-friendly lifestyle, which in turn would make Vars an ideal place to live.
Staff input	Possible renewable energy resources include wind, solar, and geothermal. In a rural setting, barriers should be minimal and opportunities can be investigated on a site-specific basis by interested property owners. The zoning by-law already accommodates solar panels and provincial regulations under the Green Energy Act may remove all municipal authority to regulate renewable sources under the Planning Act. The City is just embarking on a community energy plan that will try to address these types of questions city-wide in conjunction with the Choosing our Future project. <i>See Appendix B for information about alternative forms of energy.</i>

**Recommendations: Partnerships**

Finding	Vars seems to be developing in isolation from other surrounding communities. Some surrounding communities are striving for development or in some cases are developing too quickly. Vars aims to keep its growth slow and steady, yet it feels it should be connected to neighbourhood communities to ensure that their plans are dove-tailing and also to bring a united front in everyone's effort to ensure economic vibrancy.
Recommendation	That the Vars Community Association take an active role in seeking partnerships with surrounding communities in order to explore joint ventures for community activities, the well-being of youth and seniors, and the economic growth of the village.
Justification	By itself, Vars is limited to what it can do to support its residents and its economic development.
Staff input	CASAVA was an initiative, which took this approach. It may be possible to consider establishing an on-going committee to keep this partnership going.



---

## Transportation and circulation

---

### Vars transportation network

Transportation and pedestrian circulation in Vars includes some current challenges. These challenges include:

- Rockdale and Buckland Roads and Rockdale and Devine/Farwell Roads where there is a high-density traffic zone for pedestrians and vehicles
- Uneven and differing road surfaces throughout the village (asphalt, cement with stones and dirt)

#### Vision: Transportation and circulation

- Vars will promote walking within the community and to other surrounding communities.
- Vars will work to reinstate a functioning rail station in the Village.
- Vars will encourage better connection by public transit to Orleans and downtown Ottawa.

The road network is easy to drive, but more challenging for pedestrians due to a lack of proper sidewalks and lighting. This is true for people using their bicycles within and outside the neighbourhood. In addition, due to village development, there is also an increasing number of commuters using the 417 creating traffic issues at the on and off ramps every work day.

Road classifications are created according to the flow and volume of traffic that the road network facilitates. The road classifications in Vars are largely local, with one minor arterial and three major arterials. With the exception of Buckland Road, which is classified as minor arterial, and the major arterial classifications associated Rockdale Road, Devine Road, and Frank Kenny Road, local streets make up the highest proportion of the road network in Vars.

### Traffic volume

Traffic volume in Vars has shown an increase on Rockdale Road between 1992 and 1999. Rockdale Road carries the bulk of traffic in and out of Vars. Due to the increase in traffic, Frank Kenny Road was resurfaced for heavier traffic usage. According to traffic reports conducted by the Infrastructure Services Municipal Engineering branch, increases have been observed along Rockdale Road and the 417 intersection. The increase validates concerns raised by residents regarding traffic safety at the main intersections for commuters and local residents.

## Traffic bylaw

The City of Ottawa Traffic By-law, administered by the Infrastructure Services Department, outlines regulations that govern traffic throughout the city. Transportation routes are clearly defined by the *City of Ottawa Truck Route Map*. Truck routes are defined according to vehicle weight and, in the instance of Vars, portions of the road network, including Frank Kenny, are designed to carry heavy vehicle traffic in order to serve the nearby industrial areas.

Ensuring vehicle weights are within the regulations is important, but does not go far enough to address other concerns related to pedestrian safety and school zoning. Residents have asked that improved traffic flow also be considered at the 417 access. As the development of surrounding neighbourhoods continues, there is a growing need for improvements. Possibilities include a traffic controller device such as lights, a reconfiguration of the on/off ramps, or building another ramp going East on the North side.

### Recommendations: Traffic volume

Finding	High-density car traffic in morning and evening with commuters to work taking the 417 West.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the Ministry of Transportation be approached by the Vars Community Association to explore the addition of an on-ramp on the north side of the 417 going West or lights at the existing on/off ramp to control oncoming traffic.</li> <li>• That the Vars Community Association explore the introduction of a “Virtu-car” site for Vars.</li> </ul>
Justification	To facilitate flow of traffic during peak hours and increase driving safety.
Staff input	MTO has 2007 traffic counts at the Rockdale Road interchange. Turning movement counts at the City show that the south side intersection is significantly busier than the north side intersection. The north side intersection does not meet the Ministry criteria for traffic signal installation (and is not close to meeting the criteria in the foreseeable future). The Traffic Section is expecting to obtain turning movement counts at this interchange again this year. Given that this interchange is outside the core area, discussions about who would maintain and operate traffic signals is deferred until such time as the signals were into the design process.

## Pedestrian mobility and linkages

Specific steps are needed to address access and safety issues for pedestrians. Access issues include improving accessibility to neighbourhood amenities and creating linkages between parks and open spaces. Recommended improvements include:

- Providing proper sidewalks and lighting.
- Developing sidewalks on both sides of the streets for main streets, village cores, and areas with high pedestrian traffic to promote walking. Sidewalks on both sides of the main streets would improve safety, ease, and convenience as well as promote walking to community amenities.
- Ensuring that the pedestrian network is continuous and connects to village destinations. Access between adjacent villages ensures safe and convenient pedestrian movement within the communities.
- Developing crosswalks in high traffic areas or contrasting paving or pressed concrete to make them visually different from the street to improve safety.
- Creating a connection and integrations of natural areas such as wetlands into a pedestrian network much like those found in areas of Ottawa such as Kanata and Riverside South. Where storm water management ponds are required, link the ponds to the pedestrian network and include opportunities for passive recreation such as hiking trails and seating areas. By doing this, the wealth of beautiful natural spaces in Vars would be accessible for all to enjoy.

The following guideline in the *Rural Design Guidelines* supports these recommended improvements:

- **Guideline 37.** Consider providing on-street parking along mainstreets and in the village core to calm traffic, lower vehicle speeds, and create a more walkable village atmosphere.

### Recommendations: Pedestrian mobility and linkages

Finding	It is difficult to walk within the village boundaries and to reach other communities by foot (or bike).
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop sidewalks on both sides of the streets for main streets, village cores, and areas with high pedestrian traffic to promote walking access. Sidewalks on both sides of the street facilitate safe, easy, and convenient pedestrian travel to community amenities. Develop crosswalks in high traffic areas with contrasting paving or pressed concrete to make them visually different from the street.</li><li>• Ensure new development is permeable and provides multiple connections for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers. Provide direct pedestrian connections between adjacent uses within villages to ensure safe and convenient pedestrian movement within Vars and to other communities.</li></ul>

Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the pedestrian network is continuous and connects to village destinations. Protect for ideal or planned connections that can be filled-in over time as development and redevelopment permits.</li> <li>• Connect and integrate natural areas such as creeks and wetlands into the pedestrian network. Where storm water management ponds are required, link the ponds to the pedestrian network, and include opportunities for passive recreation such as hiking trails and seating areas.</li> </ul>
Justification	To promote a healthy active lifestyle and safety of pedestrians.
Staff input	<p>Planners should always be on the lookout for logical walking or cycling routes within communities by multiuse pathway stubs. This would be in addition to the streets and sidewalks and often allow a person to take a short cut between streets. Planners should be looking at local walking or cycling destinations between and within these residential communities that do not necessarily follow the street grid or pattern. Often this might entail protecting linear strips of land between residential lots identified in subdivision plans or even better, at the CDP level. Residents should be able to walk (with sidewalks on both sides of the street except for local streets) or ride comfortably (for many people this means a bike lane) on all streets, but should also have additional links that motorists cannot use.</p> <p>The recently completed Pedestrian Plan introduces a methodology—the Pedestrian Improvement Process. This methodology proactively examines communities at the neighbourhood level to refine the pedestrian facilities that will be necessary or desirable in a particular community to support the walking transportation mode and accommodate the needs of pedestrians of all ages and abilities based on a logical analysis of pedestrian origins, routes, destinations, and attractions. It examines the relationship between route and neighbouring land use, and aims to understand the needs of the user groups. Ottawa’s Pedestrian Plan was approved by Council. The following links to the staff report:</p> <p><a href="http://www.ottawa.ca/calendar/ottawa/citycouncil/occ/2009/06-24/trc/ACS2009-ICS-PGM-0065.htm">http://www.ottawa.ca/calendar/ottawa/citycouncil/occ/2009/06-24/trc/ACS2009-ICS-PGM-0065.htm</a>.</p> <p>The focus of the Pedestrian Improvement Process (PIP) is to connect the community to key pedestrian destinations—mainly transit, schools, public facilities, and retail, commercial, and employment centres. The process is to be applied equally to both existing and planned neighbourhoods and developments. With approval of the Pedestrian Plan at Council, it is intended that the PIP be applied to all planning processes. This process is new and staff propose to undertake a pilot (2010) to test and further refine the methodology and process. You may wish to apply the principles introduced in this process to your neighbourhood planning process as a starting point to assist you in determining what facilities may be appropriate.</p>

## Speed reduction in school zones

The central location of the French language elementary school in the Vars village requires that nearby children walking to the school cross the main Rockdale Road and also walk along Buckland Road where there is a higher traffic flow. There have been reports of cars going too fast or not stopping for children at school crossing locations. A stop sign was erected with a crosswalk path on the main street; unfortunately, there are still some vehicles not stopping. Speed bumps or flashing lights should be investigated to increase safety of the children as well as other pedestrians crossing the main street at peak hours.

### Recommendations: Speed reduction in school zones

Finding	There is significant high-speed traffic on the main street (Rockdale Road) and near the elementary school (Buckland Road).
Recommendation	That the City consult with the community to explore traffic calming measures such as, curb and median extensions, pedestrian refuges, raised crosswalks, and speed bumps in village cores and along main streets. Explore addition of barriers to protect pedestrians (for example, natural landscaping or decorative fencing).
Justification	To increase safety of pedestrians, beautify the road limits when driving through the Village, and to reduce the vibration created by high-speed traffic.
Staff input	This is supported in the <i>Rural Village Design Guidelines</i> currently being drafted in consultation with residents.

## Light rail transit

As a way to decrease the flow of cars going through the village or accessing the 417 East, residents of Vars support the reintroduction of a rail station in the Village. A rail station in the village, as is found in the nearby communities of Casselman and Alexandria, could be an option.

### Recommendations: Light rail transit (LRT)

Finding	Vars will work to reinstate a functioning rail station in the Village.
Recommendation	That a commuter train to city and public transit be explored.
Justification	To follow the other Villages in the surroundings for promoting commuter trains (such as, Casselman and Alexandria).
Staff input	Currently there are stops in Casselman (only two trains per day) and Alexandria (six trains per day). Further information has been requested from VIA on the process for obtaining a stop in Vars.

## Public transportation

Currently OC Transpo provides three morning runs at 6:11, 6:41, and 7:11 a.m. and three evening runs at 15:35, 16:10 and 17:10 p.m. The committee and residents suggest that there be more runs at peak hours and during noon and evening hours to accommodate shift workers and students. Minimally, the noon hour bus should do a back and forth drive for incoming and outgoing residents.

Statistics provided by OCTranspo indicate that there are three runs at peak hours finding 60 to 75 passengers per run. An upgrade has been made to adjust the bus size due to an increase in use by neighbouring communities Embrun and Russell. The existing Park and Ride is managed by the Prescott-Russell Township as a carpool area for other existing bus lines in partnership with OC Transpo. The 417 Bus line subsidizes for Prescott-Russell residents. A review is requested to analyze and adjust runs to respond to the needs of residents. The Vars Community Association is willing to do a survey to provide statistics for OC Transpo to best respond to requirements.

### Recommendations: Public transportation

Finding	Vars will encourage better connection by public transit to Orleans and downtown Ottawa.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That a review of public transportation needs be undertaken by OC Transpo.</li> <li>• That frequency of bus runs be increased, with the possible addition of noon hour and late evening buses.</li> </ul>
Justification	To promote use of public transportation within the Village boundaries for off peak workers and students.
Staff input	Unfortunately, currently there exists no funding source to support midday or evening trial services at this time. Previous experience with off-peak services to rural communities was not successful. The introduction of trial service to Vars in the midday or in the evening would introduce budgetary pressures to the transit system overall with no currently available funding source. Since we have had previous experience showing that such services would not meet the minimum financial performance standards, at this time there are no plans to introduce a trial midday or evening service within the currently budgeted resources. (2008)

## Park and ride

The existing Park and Ride managed by Prescott-Russell Township on the other side of the 417 is used to the maximum. The Community Continuity Committee recommends that another area should be appointed, further from the 417 and closer to the village for residents.

The safety of the public transportation users is also at risk. Currently those waiting for the bus must wait on the roadside without any sidewalk and lighting. Bus shelters in the neighbourhood installed at strategic places are necessary.



*Russell Park and Ride*

### Recommendations: Bus shelters

Finding	No protection against nature and high-density traffic on the main street and other high traffic areas in the Village for public transit users.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That OC Transpo explore the introduction of a second park and ride lot closer to the village.</li> <li>• That shelters be installed at strategic locations in Vars.</li> </ul>
Justification	To facilitate users waiting for the bus and to protect them from high-density traffic on side roads.
Staff input	Awaiting comment.



## Land use

The Vars neighbourhood for which this plan applies is a geographic region of approximately 2800 hectares, the vast majority of which is agricultural land. Very little land is used for commercial purposes and approximately 6% is used for residential purposes. *See Figures 2 and 3 for land use maps.*

Residents of Vars are very attached and proud of its agrarian roots and the rural feel of the village of Vars. In discussions and in the survey returns, the pride and strong sense of identity residents have as a rural community is striking. Feedback has been punctuated with comments such as:

- *“Want it to remain a farming community but should it grow, have a village character, not yet formed. Hopefully this plan will help.”*
- *“We are surrounded by farmland that must be protected.”*
- *“Vars is a rural community that I have come to love over that past 10 years. I do not want to see box stores or other chain stores being brought into the community. I can go to Orleans for that.”*

### Vision: Land use

- Vars will promote the preservation of a significant portion of the agricultural land.
- Vars will work to encourage a significant increase in parkland and recreational space for residents.
- Vars will beautify its roadways and village.
- Vars will define Rockdale Road as the new main street with character.
- Vars will encourage the building of sustainable housing with varying prices to cater to all income levels.

**Table 7: Physical land use diversity**

Vars Neighbourhood Planning Data	Census Data 2001		Census Data 2006	
	Area (Ha)	% Share	Area (Ha)	% Share
Physical diversity				
2005 land use				
Commercial	28	1.0%	28	1.0%
Residential	173	6.1%	173	6.1%
Park/Recreation Land	6	0.2%	6	0.2%
Institutional	4	0.1%	4	0.1%
Other (mainly agricultural)	2,606	92.5%	2,0606	92.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,816</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,816</b>	<b>100%</b>

The population of Vars appears content with the land use proportions as they currently exist, with the exception of too little commercial usage and a disproportionately high number of residential care facilities for adults. Vars residents desire a few more small-scale business enterprises and services, and would like to see the introduction of a seniors' housing facility to allow aging in place.

The CCC support the following *Rural Design Guidelines* that relate to development and land use:

- **Guideline 5.** Establish a variety of lot sizes in residential developments. Creating a mix of lot sizes promotes a range in dwelling types and, in turn, creates housing options for residents. Explore innovative servicing methods where lot sizes may be restricted by servicing capabilities.
- **Guideline 6.** Develop a mix of housing designs along neighbourhood blocks to avoid a mass produced or “cookie cutter” appearance.
- **Guideline 7.** Concentrate a mix of uses within the village core—commercial, residential, recreational and institutional. Locating uses within walking distance of each other strengthens community interaction and viability. The development of “big-box” stores on the periphery of the village or just outside the village boundaries is discouraged.
- **Guideline 8.** Focus multi-unit residential housing in, or very close to, village cores to create an active pedestrian environment where residents can support a mix of uses and activities. Historic building in the village core should not be demolished in favour of developing multi-unit residential housing. Vacant lots or underutilized buildings may offer good opportunities for residential infill or residential conversion.
- **Guideline 28.** Develop lively frontages along main streets to support pedestrian activity. Lively, active frontages may be characterised by a human-scale, reduced building setbacks, visible entries, wide sidewalks, highly transparent facades, patios, and varied decorative paving.
- **Guideline 32.** Encourage the use of awnings, seasonal plantings, or signage in storefront design along main streets to add visual interest to streetscape.
- **Guideline 34.** Provide consistent, human-scaled, decorative street lighting along village mainstreets to create a distinct character, to animate the area, and to minimize glare.



*New development in Vars*

## Building permits issued 2001–2006

Vars is currently growing at a rate of approximately 12 new units per year. This is a rate that is acceptable to the community and agreed upon as an optimal rate to maintain for the next 10 years.

**Table 8: Building permit statistics**

Vars Neighbourhood Planning Data		2001–2005	2001–2007
<b>Residential building permits</b>			
New units	New units 2001–2005	64	86
<b>Non-residential building permits</b>			
Square feet of additions/new construction	Square feet of additions and new construction 2001–2005	0	32,685

**Table 9: Building permit values in Vars**

Land use	2006	2007
Institutional	\$1,700,000	
Residential	\$657,550	\$1,421,445
Farm		\$405,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,357,550</b>	<b>\$1,826,445</b>

## New builds 1998–2008

Vars continues to be a community comprised primarily of single-family housing. It is a family-oriented community. Since 1998, over 95% of all new builds have been single-family homes.

**Table 10: Statistics of new builds in Vars**

Type of construction	Number	Units
New builds—single family detached	110	110
New build—semi detached	1	2
New build—apartment (converted mixed use)	1	2
New build—in-law suite	1	1
Subtotal new builds		115
Demolition	-2	-2
<b>Total</b>		<b>113</b>

Figure 2: Land use policy map

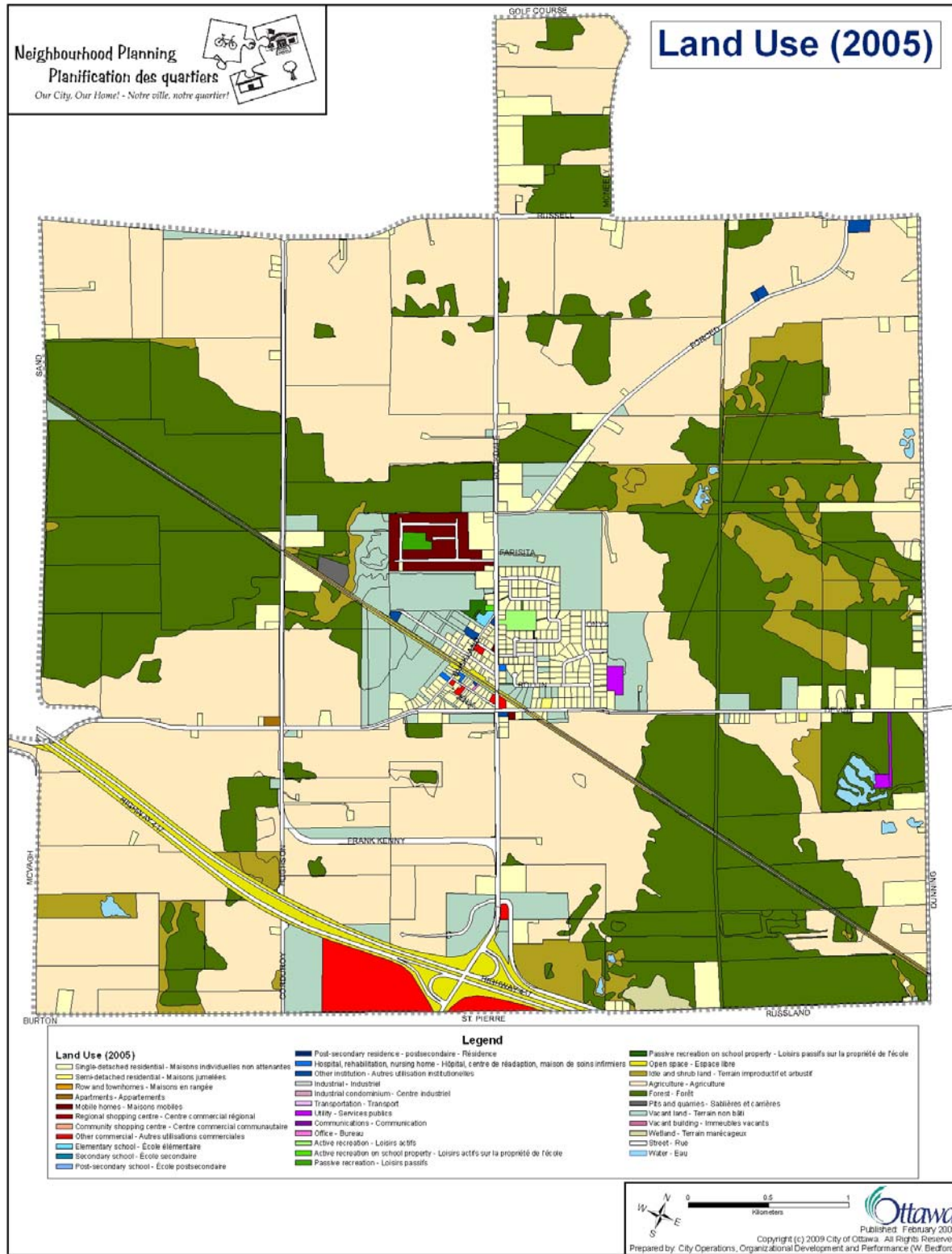
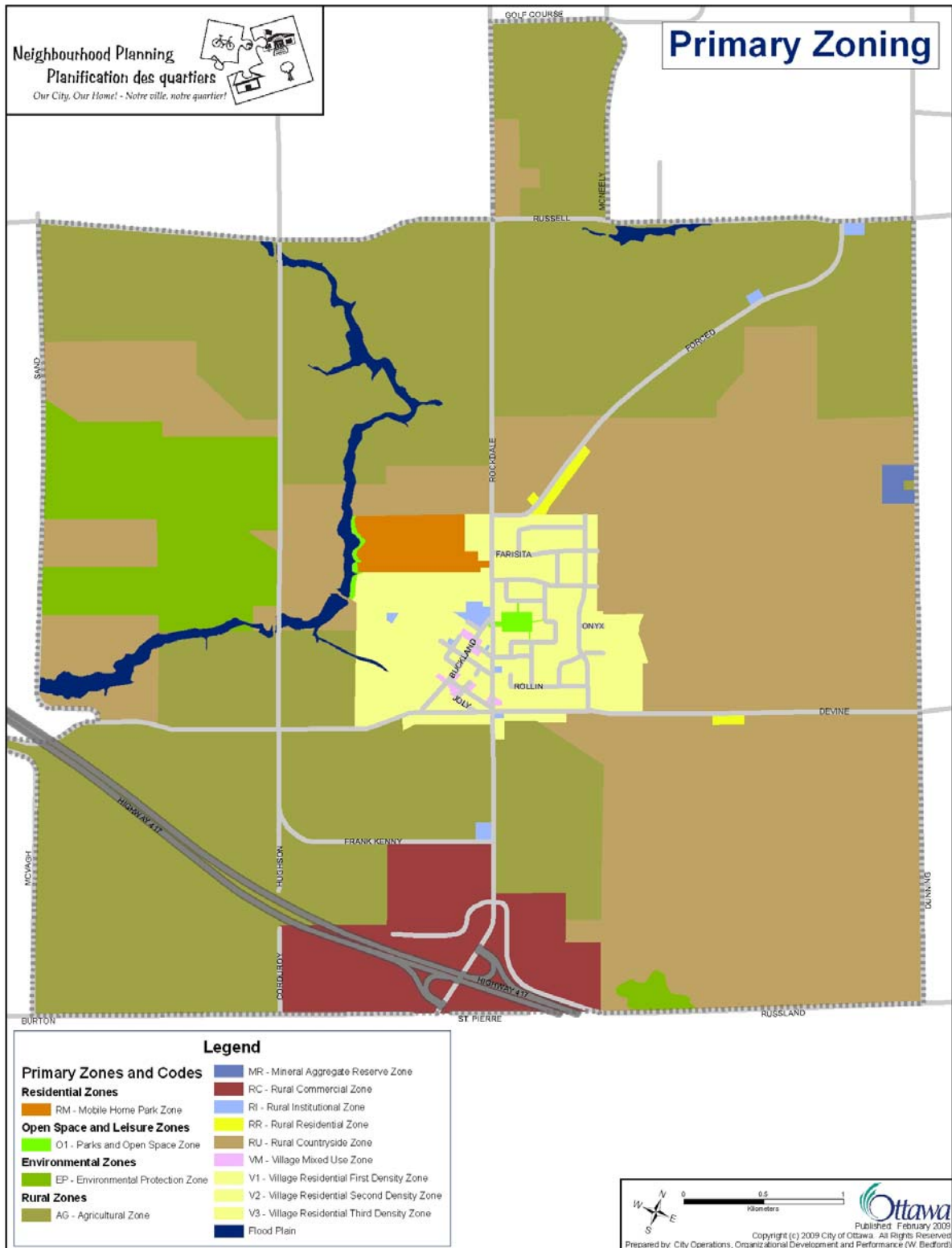


Figure 3: Primary land use map





## Home ownership

As a community comprised of 475 private residential dwellings, the vast majority (88%) of Vars residents own their homes. Only a small proportion of Vars residents rent their homes. However, if including the special care facilities, the number of renters increases significantly.

**Table 11: Statistics of home ownership in Vars**

Total number of occupied private dwellings	Number
Owned	420
Rented	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>
% rented	11.6%
% owned	88.4%

## Age of housing stock in Vars

One-fifth of Vars residences predate 1946. Approximately half of the private dwelling units in Vars were constructed pre-1970; another quarter were constructed from 1970 to 1990; and a final quarter were constructed from 1990 to present.

**Table 12: Statistics of age of housing stock in Vars**

Period of construction	Number of dwellings
Before 1946	90
1946–1960	50
1961–1970	80
1971–1980	80
1981–1985	35
1986–1990	25
1991–1995	10
1996–2000	25
2001–2006	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>

## Proportion of single and multiple unit dwellings in Vars

Most residential units in Vars are single detached.

**Table 13: Dwelling Type in Vars**

Type of dwelling	Number
Single-detached house	440
Semi-detached house	5
Row house	0
Apartment, duplex	5
Apartment, five stories or more	0
Apartment, fewer than five stories	15
Other single-attached house	0
Movable dwelling	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>

**Recommendations: Residential development zoning**

Finding	Current vacant land that is available for building on Rockdale Road does not allow village residents to achieve its planning goals for the future because it currently does not have commercial zoning.
Recommendation	That rezoning occur along Rockdale Road to promote its vision of small local businesses (such as a bakery, café, market, butcher, small grocery store, or gift shop), while maintaining to the fullest degree the agricultural land in Vars.
Justification	To become a more self-sufficient community by developing small local businesses in the highest traffic areas of the community to help sustain those businesses.
Staff input	Indicates that Vars could probably benefit from a Community Design Plan (CDP), through the Policy Development & Urban Design. A CDP exercise would look at a look of these elements in a cohesive manner, instead of addressing them separately.

**Recommendations: Industrial lands**

Finding	<p>Current vacant land located in the 417 Business Park (located on Frank Kenny Road between Devine and Rockdale) is not being developed. At present there are no buildings on it, and it is being leased for crops. The current price of the land within the 417 business park development is \$100,000 per acre.</p> <p>The owner indicates he has priced it high because he does not want to divide it into small parcels. The CCC, through one of its members, approached the owner of the land and indicated to him that ideally they would like to see the development of commercial store fronts with “unique character.” In turn, the owner expressed interested in obtaining documents from the CCC and Vars Community Association to assist him in defining</p>
---------	---



Finding	this. Furthermore, the owner is open to hearing from any potential “leasers” of store fronts so that he can share this vision with potential developers. Potential leaser concepts include a bakery/deli, café, gift shop, and restaurant.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That a consultative process be undertaken to review lands in and around Vars in order to develop a plan for the village and determine potential areas for growth.</li> <li>• That a design process for the 417 commercial Business Park land be undertaken in the community, as was suggested by the landowner. This plan would outline the “look and feel” of a new business park and would be provided to the current owner.</li> </ul>
Justification	<p>Further meetings would assist to determine which land will be available to meet the vision of the CCC as set forth in our development plan for Vars. If things do not change, business will continue to grow in Limoges, while Vars stagnates.</p> <p>To encourage sustainable business here instead of, or in addition to, the surrounding communities of Limoges, Russell, and Embrun.</p> <p>Providing a business development vision document with potential businesses to land owners who have an interest in developing in this area.</p> <p>Together with the City’s assistance, Vars can develop a business development vision to encourage businesses to come to Vars while also communicating clearly what kind of business is desired.</p>
Staff input	<p>Community Design Plans are typically growth driven for areas experiencing growth pressures as a result of market interest, or for areas where the Official Plan has identified a need for future growth and has expanded a boundary through a comprehensive review process. The introduction of a CDP in Vars over a year ago determined that there was neither of the two scenarios present.</p> <p>One is currently underway for the village of Richmond, and they are also in the beginning stages of looking at the village of Cumberland. Timeline would depend on resources being available to undertake such a review. However, if this is for the industrial lands only, then that would be something else altogether. Economic Development could assist in the CDP process to create a look and feel for the business park, should such an exercise be undertaken at some future point.</p>

**Recommendations: Agriculture**

Finding	Vars has only commercial growers. Although a rural community, there is no increased access to agrarian products.
Recommendation	That the Agricultural subcommittee work with local agricultural landowners to encourage the use of vacant or abandoned agricultural land for small grower operations to sell locally (for example, fresh produce or livestock).
Justification	The community has shown continued interest in having fresh seasonal and affordable produce and local livestock available locally, adding to the healthy, active living lifestyle desired by residents of Vars. This will also give those passing through the community a reason to stop if they know they can purchase fresh local products. Vars wants to promote local business.
Staff input	Just Food is working with many local landowners and “wannabe” farmers on this very issue and could potentially assist with this initiative.

**Main Street designation**

A grant project has been awarded to Vars to allow for the improvement of the main street corridor. To this end, heritage streetlights and sidewalk treatments have been installed along Buckland Road. Unfortunately, many residents feel that this was an error and that Rockland Road, not Buckland, is the natural and logical mainstreet. As the functional main street, residents would like to see it outfitted accordingly.

**Recommendations: Main street designations**

Finding	The current designated main street (Buckland) is not in the right location and Buckland Road cannot promote or sustain new business development.
Recommendation	That Rockdale Road be defined as the new Main Street of Vars. Upgrade and install additional lighting on Rockdale Road using the same or similar theme that currently exists on Buckland Road
Justification	New development has expanded east of the original village. Rockdale Road has become the natural main street of the community and has the potential to sustain year-round businesses.
Staff input	Rural Affairs indicates that this again is something a Community Design Plan should address.

**Recommendations: Rural village**

Finding	Vars has a small rural community feel, which is valued by the residents; however, some feel that it would be nice to have some upgrades to make it more attractive.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Begin creating and documenting our vision for guidelines and reference for future developers. A starting point for this is the new <i>City Rural Design Guidelines</i>, which the Vars community supports.</li><li>• Open a competition for submission of different ideas, plans, and proposals for the areas selected for development (such as, sidewalks, commercial development, and recreational centre).</li></ul>
Justification	To maintain and build a unique, attractive look for Vars that gives it character and appeal.
Staff input	Great idea for VCA to take on.

## Economic development

At one point in time, Vars was a vibrant rural economic hub with a variety of businesses. It was an important landing on the rail line between Ottawa and Montreal. With the elimination of the rail station and the introduction of the 417, the number of businesses in Vars has constantly declined. The residents of Vars would like to see this trend reversed.



*Attracting businesses to Vars*

### Vision: Economic development

- Vars will encourage business development of new local businesses to promote employment and provide services for all residents.
- Vars will discourage larger franchises in order to maintain a small town rural atmosphere.
- Vars will work to educate the City of Ottawa to recognize that a small community has different business needs (for example, tax base) and requires more flexible adherence to plans (such as curbs and parking spots).
- Vars will encourage appropriate service availability to Industrial Park in order to encourage business development.
- Vars will encourage enough local businesses to be able to live and work in community.

### Recommendations: New ventures

Finding	Vars does not have an attraction to draw outside visitors.
Recommendation	Explore possible attraction ventures for Vars or harness some of the flow to the Limoges water park by offering additional attractions (for example, mini golf, go carts, tennis, a petting zoo, or a motel with a spa). An idea currently promoted is that of Vars as an equestrian centre.
Justification	Vars wants to increase outside traffic to spend time and money in their community to help sustain business.
Staff input	Branding a village with a unique attraction such as equine-focused activities is a good strategy to draw visitors and put a village on the map.

**Recommendations: Vars 417 Business Park**

Finding	Business development is not happening at the Vars/417 Business Park. All the business development is happening at the Russell/417 Business Park. There are not any amenities available at or close to the business park.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• That in bringing water hook up to fire station, the extension of water service to the industrial park area be included. This will assist in facilitating development of this land.</li><li>• That the VCA Economic Development subcommittee meet with the Business park landowner or his representative to share with them the Vision of the Vars community to inspire a beneficial direction of growth.</li></ul>
Justification	Village residents want to have the opportunity to live, work, play, and shop in their community.
Staff input	<p>The current understanding is that the Fire Station and Business Park are outside the Public Service Area (PSA), and that the PSA would have to be extended in order to accommodate the extension of municipal water services. The lead for the PSA extension would be Planning.</p> <p>Once these lands are identified in the PSA, a project to design the municipal system extension could be undertaken in order to service the Fire Station and Business Park. Planning had a cost estimate of about \$340,000 for the connection to the water system. The water main connection would have to be made near the intersection of Rockdale and Devine Roads. Drinking Water Services can confirm there is capacity within the municipal system for this extension.</p>

**Recommendations: Business access**

Finding	In order for business to thrive, there needs to be a sufficient market. Vars needs more than the resident population to sustain businesses. This new business development needs to be unique as well as strategically placed to draw more than just the resident population. The established flow of daily traffic is going to and from Orleans on Frank Kenny Road or Limoges by way of Russland Road or along Rockdale Road. Convenient accessibility must be considered necessary if we are to draw these potential customers. A traffic study was done in 2005. The average traffic was 22,000 cars per day.
Recommendation	That a new traffic study be undertaken to discover the current and projected traffic data—in particular, accounting for the development of a year-round water and snowtubing park in Limoges.
Justification	Vars residents would like to have local access to purchase goods and local employment for students.

Staff input	Need to get an understanding of the characteristics of the clientele traveling to the Limoges water park—where they are coming from and their length of stay (such as day trips). We could work with a survey company to compile this information, or we could work with the owners of the water park to undertake a licence plate survey. Once clientele needs are understood, we also need to determine what other local attractions exist or are planned that would fulfill existing needs. We could undertake a needs assessment to determine gaps. If there is potential, we need to then understand if Vars is the ideal place to accommodate such an attraction. Cost and time commitments are unclear at this point
-------------	---

## Signage

Increasing the profile of the Village is a relatively simple improvement that would have an immediate positive impact on the future economic success of the Village. New and improved signage is a good start.

The guidelines that address signage in the *Rural Village Design Guidelines* include:

- **Guideline 1.** Define community entry points such as major entranceways. Entry point features should reflect village character and may include elements such as landscaping, lighting, public art, and signage.
- **Guideline 33.** Ensure signage is made of high-quality, durable materials that complement the architectural surroundings. Sign illumination should be task-oriented and avoid glare or light spillover toward adjacent land uses.



*Community signs in Vars*

### Recommendation 1: Signage

Finding	Vars does not have attractive village identification signs on Rockdale Road and Devine Road. It also does not have business or pedestrian signage.
Recommendation	That the Vars Community Association work with Rural Affairs to explore way-finding and village identification signage.
Justification	To be able to inform people of where they are, where we are and how to get here.
Staff input	Rural Affairs is aware of the request and is committed to following through on the introduction of new signage in the village of Vars.

## Recommendation 2: Signage

Finding	<p>Vars lacks an efficient and expedient way to promote and inform residents of village activities. Existing signage is unattractive and does not convey the information in both languages. Vars itself is split approximately 50/50 English and French residents.</p> <p>The current signage that promotes village activities requires better maintenance and a more attractive and updated look.</p>
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a process within the community for maintaining, enhancing, and updating communication of events. Also develop a process between the Fire Department and the Community Association for the update and removal the information on the signage in front of the Fire Station.</li> <li>• Explore styles and cost for new signs.</li> <li>• That the VCA catalogue currently existing business signs and discuss with the business owners future possibilities for promoting businesses.</li> </ul>
Justification	<p>Vars community event information signage by Rockdale and Buckland Roads needs to be updated and made more attractive, It should also be under consideration for replacement.</p> <p>The current signs are considered unattractive.</p> <p>Too often the Fire Station signage information is not current.</p> <p>Vars is working toward having a community centre located in the core and having more sustainable businesses.</p> <p>In order to stimulate current community interest, ongoing business, and future community programs and business, Vars wants to make itself more visually attractive in order to help draw more attention to it. Attractive and up-to-date signage can assist in improving the image of Vars and attract more people to the Village.</p>
Staff input	<p><b>Way Finding.</b> Rural Affairs staff will meet with the Vars Community Association in the near future to discuss way-finding and village identification signage options for the village and surrounding areas. There are many different programs that could potentially assist them. Some information on rural signage is available at:</p> <p><a href="http://ottawa.ca/residents/rural_connections/business/rural_signage_prg/community_business/index_en.html">http://ottawa.ca/residents/rural_connections/business/rural_signage_prg/community_business/index_en.html</a>.</p> <p>Once a sign design is complete, it can take a couple of months to get it installed. The costs would be borne by the City and there would be no costs to the VCA. Costs of signs depend on the size, number, and type. The Rural Affairs Office has acted on behalf of many community associations as the liaison with the City sign shop to get appropriate</p>



## Staff input

signage installed.

**Firestation Sign.** The sign at Station 73 was designed primarily for the use of the Fire Department to promote fire safety issues. A policy could be developed to allow the Community Association to use the sign to promote “special events.” The Fire Department would need to maintain control over the sign and would have final say as to what messages are displayed and when and the Fire department messages would take priority. The Sector Chief would act as the Fire Department contact and would approve all messages. All messages would need to be bilingual according to City policy.

*Rural Affairs Comment:* Part of the Rural Signage program is a Community Sign that has a space for displaying events.

**Business signage.** It is up to individual business owners to decide to change onsite signage on private property. Business owners are required to obtain a permit for signage on their property and would need to apply if they wished to install new or additional signage. (There are some exceptions—a farm-based business does not require a permit for example.) Information on sign permits are available at: [http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/building\\_code/15\\_1\\_1\\_en.html](http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/building_code/15_1_1_en.html)

Generally speaking, “off-premises” signage is not permitted, unless it is in a billboard zone. For example, an insurance company with an advertising sign in a farmers’ field would be contrary to the by-law. If the Community Association wanted to look into having certain illegal signs removed, the Rural Affairs Office could assist with getting the appropriate staff from by-law services involved.

### Recommendations: Equestrian signage

## Finding

Currently Vars lacks promotional signage for equestrian and other activities.

## Recommendation

That a multi-use and equestrian trail system (including current and new trails) be indicated with posted directional signage.

## Justification

Proper directional signage and trail signage is necessary to accomplish this in order for people to make proper use of the trails.

## Staff input

*Rural Affairs Comment:* With respect to determining where equestrian trails would be designated, that is something that the community would have to lead along with property owners of the land in question. As for directional signage, if there are equestrian trails that are created and roadside signs are required to direct the public to the trail locations, Rural Affairs could assist with that. If they mean signage on private property along the actual trails themselves, then it would be up to the trail property owner to erect the necessary signage along the trail path.

---

## Physical infrastructure

---

With a long rural history, the village of Vars has some aging infrastructure. Vars residents have private septic systems on their properties. A municipal communal water system was installed in the 1980s, and a natural gas system introduced in the 1990s.

### Vision: Physical infrastructure

- Vars will promote improvement to water quality and availability.
- Vars will encourage exploration of options for future maintenance of residential sewer and septic systems.

### Recommendations: Septic systems

Finding	Many village residents have aging septic systems, which are expensive to replace.
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That information be provided to residents of Vars on aging septic systems.</li> <li>• That residents receive information pertaining to any government grants available for septic system repair, replacement, or enhancement.</li> </ul>
Justification	Vars properties have private septic systems, and aging septic systems are an on-going concern to residents.
Staff input	<p><i>Rural Affairs Comment:</i> The Rural Connections website has information and links on septic systems (<a href="http://www.ottawa.ca/rural">www.ottawa.ca/rural</a>). There is information on grants for septic system replacement at the following: <a href="http://ottawa.ca/residents/waterwaste/surface/cleanwater/index_en.html">http://ottawa.ca/residents/waterwaste/surface/cleanwater/index_en.html</a></p> <p><i>Wastewater Branch comment:</i> Septic systems are a provincial responsibility. Information requests on septic systems are referred to the local MOE district office.</p>

### Recommendations: Water

Finding	At times the odour and colour of the water discourages consumption.
Recommendation	That it be arranged to have specialists in the field investigate the unusual odour and colour of the local water.
Justification	Vars residents want good water quality and piece of mind.
Staff input	Drinking Water Services would be pleased to assist in this matter. We

Staff input would need the locations of the homes that are experiencing these issues so that we can determine and confirm the safety of the drinking water. Conducting water tests for individual homes upon request is part of our normal service delivery.

### **Recommendations: Fire station water system**

Finding There is no city water at the fire station on Rockdale Road. They have no potab;e water, and are required to truck in water for use in the station (although they can only drink bottled water at the station).

Recommendation That the City work to ensure that water services are extended to the Vars Fire Station.

Justification By working together to achieve the goal of getting city water to the Fire Station, we will not only fulfill an important necessity for the station, but we will also bring the water access that much closer to the business park. This in turn will make development more attractive and realistic to potential developers. It seems irrational that the two City services (fire and water) are not connected in this community.

Staff input Drinking Water Services would be pleased to assist in this matter. We would need the locations of the homes that are experiencing these issues so that we can determine and confirm the safety of the drinking water. Conducting water tests for individual homes upon request is part of our normal service delivery.

### **Recommendations: Raisin South Nation Conservation Authority water source protection**

Finding Representatives from the Raisin South Nation Conservation Authority presented to the group and explained that a Source Protection Plan is being undertaken for completion in 2012, as well as the Vars-Winchester Esker Study. Vars residents have an increasing awareness of the need to protect their water supply and maintain its safety.

Recommendation

- That Vars residents are kept informed of water programs such as the Raisin South Nation Conservation Authority Study and the Vars-Winchester Esker Study.
- <http://www.yourdrinkingwater.ca/en.html>
- <http://www.eskerstudy.com/hydrobd/eskerone.html>

Justification Water and its safety is a concern across the province. Vars residents have expressed on-going interest in ensuring that their water supply continues to be safe and plentiful.

Staff input Contact made with Raisin Nation with commitment to keep the VCA informed.

## Road system

Review of the road system in Vars pointed to a number of concerns. The current main street is identified as Buckland Road, whereas the opinion in the community indicates that Rockdale Road should be the main road through the village.

Residents also expressed concern that with the extension of Frank Kenny Road, most traffic now bypasses the village altogether. The improvement and increased profiling of Rockdale Road as the main street could help draw more traffic into the village and encourage business development.

## Sidewalks

Very little of the older portion of Vars includes sidewalks. Most glaringly absent are sidewalks along Rockdale Road. In order to increase safety and improve the feel of the community, it is essential that sidewalks be included on Rockdale Road.

The guidelines in the *Rural Village Design Guidelines* that address sidewalks include:

- **Guideline 30.** Develop generous sidewalks on both sides of the streets for main street, village core, and areas with high pedestrian traffic (for example, near schools) to promote walking. Sidewalks on both sides of the street facilitate safe, easy, and convenient pedestrian travel to community amenities. Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate maintenance vehicles and snow storage.
- **Guideline 31.** Develop crosswalks along main streets with contrasting paving and or impressed concrete to make them visually different from the street.
- **Guideline 36.** In consultation with the community, incorporate traffic calming measures such as curb and median extensions, pedestrian refuges, and raised crosswalks in village cores and along main streets.

### Recommendation 1: Roads and sidewalks

Finding	Some roads have been in poor condition for a long time.
Recommendation	That Buckland Road, between Alcide Road and Rockdale Road be repaired to fix uneven pavement and water drainage issues. That the 417 off ramp at Buckland Road be repaved.
Justification	Both areas have been in disrepair for a long period of time, and residents would like this remedied to improve safety and drainage.
Staff input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Asset Management ISCS comment:</i> Buckland Road from Devine Road to Rockdale Road (755 m) is in overall fair condition and is not on the three-year resurfacing list. Sidewalks are also in overall fair to good condition. There are a few spot repairs that could be undertaken. Deficiencies include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-block paving stone crosswalks</li> <li>• Pavers have settled</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Staff input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concrete curb borders are starting to break up</li> <li>• Cracked and heaved sidewalk panels</li> <li>• Discontinuous and not of sufficient length that we would program under the Sidewalk Reconstruction program and Utility pole locations: some located within road limits, others located in the middle of the sidewalk..</li> <li>• Drainage in Vars is primarily provided by roadside ditches and culverts.</li> <li>• Drainage is to be maintained through maintenance activities carried out by our Public Works Department.</li> </ul> <p>In summary, regarding roads and sidewalks, the matter has been brought to the attention of the Area Manager for Roads for spot repairs of paving stone and sidewalks and general maintenance until we can get there with our resurfacing program.</p>
-------------	--

### **Recommendation 2: Roads and sidewalks**

Finding	No sidewalks currently exist on Rockdale Road. This is a safety concern for residents.
Recommendation	That sidewalks be installed on Rockdale Road.
Justification	Rockdale is an important road in the Village. It separates much of the village's residential housing from the older commercial area of the village. It also runs between the school and the park—two major features. Consequently this is a road that many residents walk on and cross. Sidewalks will improve safety and can help direct pedestrian traffic and crossing points.
Staff input	The Ottawa Pedestrian Plan contains the proposed pedestrian network. If you reference Schedule 14a you can see that, as a minimum, there is a sidewalk required on Rockdale between Devine and Horizon. The Ottawa Pedestrian Plan also introduces a network refinement methodology to assist those undertaking neighbourhood planning initiatives, community design plans, and subdivision plans to assess where sidewalks and pathways should be implemented, beyond the very basic network, to support pedestrian connectivity within any community. Once staff have undertaken a rough cut at determining where facilities may be situated, the plan can be reviewed by ISCS Transportation Branch and input can be provided. Regarding the Federal Stimulus funding project, there are no new sidewalks in Vars that will be supported through that funding.

## Telecommunications utilities

### Recommendations: Telecommunications utilities

Finding	<p>Bell Canada is Ontario’s principal telecommunications infrastructure provider. The Bell Canada Act, a federal statute, requires that Bell manage and operate most of the trunk telecommunications system in Ontario. Bell is also responsible for the infrastructure that supports most 911 emergency services in the Province. The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) and the <i>Places to Grow</i> document both strongly support the integrated planning of communities, including telecommunications infrastructure. The PPS specifically requires that “planning for infrastructure and public service facilities shall be integrated with planning for growth so that these are available to meet current and projected needs” (Section 1.6.1).</p>
Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended that the City ensure that adequate utility networks are established to serve the anticipated development and that they can be phased in a way that is cost-effective and efficient.</li> <li>• It is recommended that all future telecommunication utilities introduced in Vars be clustered, grouped, or incorporated within streetscape features (where feasible) to minimize visual impact and determine appropriate locations for larger, aboveground equipment and cluster sites.</li> </ul>
Justification	<p>The Vars community would like to build upon their rural nature and provide opportunities to “live, work, and play” including encouraging development in the 417 Business Park area. One of the key elements to this vision is the availability of the appropriate services, including utilities such as telecommunications, to attract businesses.</p> <p>It is critical to understand the complexity of expanding and enhancing existing utility networks. All types of growth and development place demands on the telecommunications network and its associated support infrastructure. Beyond simply extending fibre or copper cable, growth and development can precipitate the need for reinforcement and replacement of the support infrastructure. Reinforcement and replacement of the telecommunications network can represent an extensive and costly undertaking, which needs to be managed to avoid disruption of public services such as Emergency 911.</p>
Staff input	<p>City staff and Bell Canada staff were consulted and are in agreement with these recommendations.</p>

---

## Municipal services

---

This section provides a summary of municipal services in Vars and comments from residents regarding the level of service for the following:

- Firehall
- Paramedic Services
- Ottawa Police Service
- Waste Management
- Bylaw Services
- Rural Affairs Office

### Firehall

A new firehall was built in 2006. The building located at the corner of Frank Kenny Road and Rockdale Road is a modern and attractive building, but it is challenged by the lack of potable water. During construction, a series of wells were dug on the property, but none drew water. Efforts to extend the infrastructure from the village centre were not successfully negotiated. As a result, the station has found itself in the position of having water trucked in and stored in an onsite tank. In order to ensure the water is potable, a state of the art filtration system has been installed. The Public Health branch of the City have not approved this system, so there is currently no potable water on site and bottled water is used by all at the fire station (*see the section "Physical infrastructure."*).

During the course of the Neighbourhood Planning Initiative, most meetings were held at the firehall. The building includes a very attractive and functional multipurpose room and kitchen area. The Ottawa Fire Services were extremely accommodating in allowing the NPI group access to their facilities throughout the neighbourhood planning process.

### Paramedic Services

Residents of Vars are served by the Paramedic Post located in Navan. According to recent survey input, residents of Vars are pleased with the service they receive.

### **Ottawa Police Service**

The village of Vars is serviced by a Community Police Officer who operates out of the Tenth Line Road police station. This Officer is active in the community and provides a point of contact for all resident concerns. Although more enforcement is desired, residents have been educated on the need to report crimes in order to have them appropriately identified and monitored.

### **Waste Management**

Vars residents, when surveyed, report high satisfaction with garbage removal and recycling services in Vars.

### **Bylaw Services**

Some concern has been expressed by community residents about the lack of property maintenance at some Vars properties. Increased by-law enforcement is desired; however, like Police Services, it is important that residents report any by-law concerns in order to have them recorded and monitored.

### **Rural Affairs Office**

The City's Rural Affairs office has been involved in the neighbourhood planning process at Vars, and in particular have committed to assisting in the addition of new signage in the community. Information regarding rural-related issues and events is now flowing regularly between the Rural Affairs office, the Vars Community Association, and the CCC.



---

## Neighbourhood plan implementation

---

### How to implement the plan

Now that the neighbourhood planning process in Vars is complete, the next steps involve the implementation of this neighbourhood plan. The following sections provide recommendations on how to implement this plan.

### Finding

The recommendations presented in this report constitute the vision and action plan for the village of Vars. This document was developed collaboratively by the residents of Vars and City staff through a multitude of meetings, discussions, surveys, consultations, and open houses.

### Recommendations

- That the Vars Community Association in partnership with the City maintain the role of the Community Continuity Committee as a subcommittee of the Community Association to help coordinate the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- That the Vars Community Association Neighbourhood Plan subcommittee report annually along with City staff to City Council on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan implementation in Vars.

### Justification

As only the second of two City of Ottawa Neighbourhood Plan projects, the ultimate test of the success of this pilot will be the implementation. Having invested a large amount of volunteer time and energy into the process of developing this neighbourhood plan, it is the expectation of the community that the City will make a commitment to ensure it is referenced regularly.

Furthermore, over the next 20 years, when the City considers changes, improvements, maintenance, and development in Vars, the community hopes that its staff will reference this document and endeavour to work in Vars in such a way as to support this community's vision of the future.

## Appendix A: Crime statistics

<b>Vars</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
B&E residential property	8	4	1	2	1	1	3	5	1
B&E non res.prop/commercial	1	1	1	4	1	4	4	0	0
<b>Total - B&amp;E</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
Assault level 1	0	2	1	1	1	2	0	0	3
Assault partner level 1	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0
Assault cause bodily harm	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
Assault with weaponcbh	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0
Sex assault	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Sex assault under 16	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Assault aggravated partner	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Assault obstr/resist peace off	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assault police	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assault w/weapon-cbhpartner	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
<b>Total - assault</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>All offences - Vars</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>153</b>
Population	1210	1219	1264	1309	1354	1400			
Rate/1000									
B&E	7.44	4.10	1.58	4.58	1.48	3.57			
<b>Assault</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>4.92</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>6.65</b>	<b>3.57</b>			

---

## Appendix B: Alternate energy sources

---

### Solar thermal

Solar thermal energy involves using solar domestic hot water to meet hot water and heating demands. It is a form of renewable energy that is relatively economic for a homeowner or small business. In addition, there are some financial incentives from other levels of government for using this type of energy source. Information is available at <http://www.gosolarontario.ca/>.

Retrofitting existing houses can be a challenge as you need to add some plumbing, but it is quite feasible. A rough costing is \$4000 per household. Solar is not as economically attractive due to its long pay-back, but the Province has just introduced a Feed-in Tariff (FIT) program, which will “buy-back” kW generated through roof-top solar at the rate of 80 cents per kW hour.

### Micro-wind turbines

Micro-wind turbines are also relatively expensive. Geothermal heating and cooling can be a very effective form of alternative or renewable energy in a village environment, but it does come at a high up-front cost of about \$25,000. There are around \$9,000 in government grants available.

### District energy systems

There are also district energy systems where multiple buildings could feed off one renewable energy system. <http://www.dlsc.ca/index.htm>.

It may be possible to do a community energy plan at the village level that explores the potential of each of these technologies, but there are few models to go from in terms of what that would cost. It would involve:

- A current energy profile of the community
- Rough estimate of the potential to replace the energy use with renewables
- An assessment of the best potential opportunities
- An implementation strategy