

Official Plan Review Discussion Paper #2 – Policy Directions



A Sound Future – Parry Sound 2044

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Town of Parry Sound is currently updating its Official Plan. The Official Plan establishes a long-term vision and strategy for the Town that recognizes the public interest to effectively manage change and is the primary tool for implementing the Town's goals and objectives in that regard.

The Official Plan contains policies on how land in the Town can be used and deals with a broad range of topics including:

- Where and how the municipality will manage and direct growth;
- Which lands should be protected from development and preserved for their natural character;
- What lands should be available for development and redevelopment and the general type of land uses allowed in those areas;
- What services like roads, water and sewer systems, and parks will be needed to support growth; and,
- How and where land can be subdivided.

The updated Official Plan will guide all land use planning and development in the Town of Parry Sound for the next 20 years. The updated Official Plan will form the foundation for decision makers in protecting the environment, and guiding future growth and development, public works, and capital investment. The decisions of Town Council must conform to the Official Plan.

1.1 Purpose of Discussion Paper

The purpose of this Discussion Paper is to:

- Provide an overview of the work that has been completed to date, as well as what we have heard and how that helps to inform the policy direction and updating the long-term vision of the Town.
- Identify the parts of the current Official Plan that need to be updated based on major themes/topic areas and concepts that have emerged through engagement efforts and review of legislative changes.¹
- Identify the parts of the current Official Plan that do not need to change in any major way.
- Provide an indication of overall structure and contents of the updated Official Plan.
- Outline areas that we are looking to seek feedback on.

¹ The Province of Ontario released the proposed new Provincial Planning Statement for comments on April 10, 2024. We will need to assess the policy impacts of this once the Province makes a decision. In the meantime, any reference to the PPS in this Discussion Paper refers to the current Provincial Policy Statement (2020). The proposed PPS will be reviewed and considered as we move ahead with policy writing.

2.0 Official Plan Update So Far

The Official Plan update is being undertaken in three (3) phases, over an approximately twelve (12) month period.

- Phase One, which included a thorough background research phase, and opportunities for gathering community input, is now complete.
- We are now in **Phase Two** which includes the preparation of this Policy Directions Discussion Paper and providing the opportunity for public feedback. A first draft of the Official Plan will be produced including updated mapping. The Draft Official Plan will be released for public review and the opportunity for providing comment. Phase Two will also include an Open House and Statutory Public Meeting where public comments will be received and considered as we look to finalize the updated document.
- Phase Three will conclude with the finalization and adoption of the updated Official Plan by Town Council.

We are currently in Phase Two as reflected in the image below.



3.0 Community Engagement and Discussion Paper #1

Throughout Phase One of the project, community engagement was an important focus to provide opportunities to learn from residents, property owners, the business community, public agencies, Council, Town staff, and other interested groups about what is important to them, their vision of the future of Parry Sound, and things that must be carefully managed as the Town continues to change.

3.1 “What We Have Heard” Discussion Paper

Discussion Paper #1 “What We Have Heard” was released in late February for public comment. The Discussion Paper provided a summary of the engagement efforts in Phase One of the Official Plan update. During this phase we asked about what you value most about the community, as well as what challenges the Town will face over the next number of years. Through the discussions and survey responses, various topics were explored including but not limited to housing, economic development, the waterfront and harbour areas, and redevelopment opportunities. The Discussion Paper #1 noted that we had heard three strong themes through the public engagement including:

- 1) The importance of the natural environment and natural setting of Parry Sound;
- 2) The challenges and opportunities relating to managing growth and development, and the changes that are starting to occur; and,
- 3) Finding a way to balance these to align with the future vision of the Town.

Discussion Paper #1 can be found on the Town’s website at <https://www.parrysound.ca/media/puqbl3jm/discussion-paper-1-february-26-2024.pdf>

Three vision statements were also drafted and a questionnaire was published on the Town’s website to provide the opportunity for commenting on the overall themes identified in Discussion Paper #1, as well as the draft Vision Statements.

The Draft Vision Statements outlined in the Discussion Paper #1 were:

- 1) "Parry Sound, a unique community with natural beauty, situated on the shores of Georgian Bay, maintains a small-town charm while offering all of the urban amenities and an affordable lifestyle, making it the envy of others."
- 2) "Balancing its natural beauty set on the shores of Georgian Bay while maintaining a small-town charm, Parry Sound offers an urban lifestyle with all of the amenities, with access to nature at your doorstep year-round."
- 3) "Parry Sound is a community like no other where its natural setting on the shores of Georgian Bay offers a stunning backdrop for a lifestyle where nature is all around, and the small-town character is maintained while offering all of the amenities of urban living."

We thank those who took the time to review Discussion Paper #1 and provide comments on the themes identified as well as the Draft Vision Statements. This has been helpful as we move through the process and helped validate the information and messages we've heard.

Generally, there was consensus that the themes expressed through the comments received from the engagement efforts were captured. The Discussion Paper #1 was prepared at a high level, keeping in mind the themes that would influence the Town vision. This paper, Discussion Paper #2, will build upon the themes from Discussion Paper #1 and establish a land use concept and policy directions for the updated Official Plan.

In the comments received on the Draft Vision Statements, there was general consensus in removing the following words from the vision statements: "affordable lifestyle", "unique", "all of the amenities", any reference to "urban", "envy" and "at your doorstep".

There was general consensus in considering the inclusion of the following words or concepts to the updated vision statement: "historical", "sustainability", and "naturally beautiful". Additionally, it was suggested that the phrase "maintains a small-town charm and offers big-town amenities" could be used rather than referring to "the small-town charm and all of the amenities of urban living".

These comments reinforce the notion that Parry Sound is still a community that enjoys the small-town feel while starting to see the larger community amenities and benefits that come with growth and development. The following are just a few of the examples of comments received regarding the themes and Draft Vision Statements included in Discussion Paper #1.

"Preservation of the natural environment and restoration/rehabilitation of the built environment"

"Striking a balance is a good catch phrase."

"The key to unlocking prosperity for the Region is directly linked to that which is most valued by the community, its natural beauty."

"Ultimately, growth does not have to be at odds with the natural environment if it is in service of its sustainable enjoyment."

"Maintains a small-town charm and offers big-town amenities"

As identified in Discussion Paper #1, the process of updating an Official Plan provides an opportunity to refocus the vision of the future for the community. A Vision Statement expresses a future state of the Town through words that help to paint a picture, the same picture, in people's minds. It is important to note that this is different than setting Goals or Objectives that might express how and by what steps the Town wishes to take to get there.

The process of crafting an updated Vision Statement for the Official Plan will remain on-going as we progress through the Official Plan update project. The feedback received so far has helped in clarifying the main components of the future that are important and will become part of that vision. Given the feedback, there is a consideration being given to prepare a longer, more descriptive Vision rather than trying to boil it down to one sentence. This would allow the opportunity to include more aspects of what is important about the future picture of Parry Sound. A revised Vision Statement will be presented in the draft Official Plan for review and comment.

4.0 Policy Directions

The majority of this Discussion Paper is dedicated to outlining the parts of the current Official Plan that need to be updated and describing some new content being recommended to be added based on major themes/topic areas and concepts that have emerged through the engagement efforts. Additionally, based on a review of the Provincial legislation and plans, and the key policy changes and initiatives that have occurred since the last Town of Parry Sound Official Plan was prepared, there is a range of policy directions that should be considered and incorporated into the updated Official Plan. It is also recognized that there are some parts of the current Official Plan that do not require any substantive changes.

These policy directions have considered many of the topics raised during the public feedback, at the visioning sessions, in discussions with Council, Town staff and with staff from neighbouring municipalities.

While reviewing Discussion Paper #2, please keep in mind the following questions, answers to which can be provided through the form on the Town's website:

- Are there any concepts, ideas or policy directions that might be missing, or that we should consider adding? If so, please elaborate.
- Are there any policy directions that require further clarity? If so, please elaborate.
- Are there any policy directions that should not be included? If so, please provide reason as to why.

NEW – Community Structure

In trying to reflect an updated vision of the future of Parry Sound and ensure that the updated Official Plan is a document that Council, staff, and investors can rely upon for direction and decision making, we recommend that a Community Structure be established. The purpose of the Community Structure is to illustrate at a high level, where certain types of land uses and activities will be found and directed to over time, to help manage growth, protect the environment, and support economic prosperity. This new section of the Official Plan will include a new map along with policies that will help describe the overall structure and function of each area. A first Draft of the proposed Community Structure map is found as **Attachment 1** to this Discussion Paper. This Draft is meant to help illustrate the concept and assist in understanding the recommended approach.

The Community Structure will be an important early section of the updated Official Plan as it provides a foundation to help understand the rest of the Plan and serves as the main building blocks of the future. The Land Use Designations section of the updated Official Plan, which will follow this new section, will be where the details on specific permitted uses will be found and where further guidance will be provided on how to evaluate development proposals.

Recommendations

The following four (4) foundational elements are being proposed as the “building blocks” for the Community Structure:

1. Living Area
2. Economic/Mixed-Use Area
3. Central Commerce Area
4. Harbour Area

The **Living Area** will represent the areas where you will expect to find residential uses in all types and building formats, as well as supportive uses such as schools, day care facilities, small scale neighbourhood retail and parks and open space.

The **Economic/Mixed-Use Area** represents the areas where there are jobs (i.e. in either industrial, retail, commercial or institutional) or the prospect of encouraging jobs in those areas, and the opportunity to introduce other uses there such as residential and institutional, to encourage a mix of uses that are complementary to one another and help to create a more walkable environment.

The **Central Commerce Area** represents an area beyond the traditional downtown and commercial core of Town that recognizes there is opportunity to encourage more mixed-use and redevelopment both within the Town centre as well as on the edges that are physically and functionally connected to the core. The area contains the main street and adjacent areas that provide opportunities for retail, office, government and agency services to be situated in appropriate areas along with other uses such as residential and a reimagined market square.

The **Harbour Area** represents an area of public and private sector lands and future investment opportunities. This area could undergo the most significant transformation of any area in Town through redevelopment over the next 20 years and beyond. By identifying the Harbour Area as a key building block, policies will be prepared that will provide the Town Council and staff with the guidance to be able to evaluate development proposals and guide investment decisions.

The following are recommended policy directions for the new Community Structure section in the updated Official Plan.

- Create a new map (as seen **in Draft as Attachment 1**) in the Official Plan that will illustrate, at a high level, where certain types of land uses will be found, and new development of that type will be directed over time.
- Establish policies that will help guide growth and development, incorporating aspects of the Growth Management section that will be found in Section 2 of the updated Plan.
- Establish policies for the areas in Town that currently do not have piped municipal sewer and water services, that will describe the areas and how growth and development will be managed on those lands, including the possible need for future planning studies. This will also tie into other sections of the updated Official Plan.
- Establish policies for each of the key areas that provide a comprehensive policy framework for the planned function/role of each area. These policies are of a directional nature and help describe what you could expect to find in these areas, as follows:
 - Create policies for the planned function of the *Living Area* that will direct residential uses and associated uses that support the local population such as schools and day cares.
 - Create policies for the planned function of the *Economic/Mixed-Use Areas* that describe where certain types of commercial and employment uses will be directed to, outside of the downtown, and where other uses will be encouraged to be introduced over time to help create more walkable areas.
 - Create policies for the planned function of the *Central Commerce Area* to solidify its role as the main focal point of commerce for the Town and to encourage a mix of uses including residential that will strengthen the connection to the waterfront and Harbour Area and revitalize and strengthen the support of local businesses.
 - Create policies for the planned function of the *Harbour Area* and the mix of uses that will be promoted there. The waterfront will provide an inviting gathering space and a destination for tourism activities. Other policies will help guide the development and redevelopment of the Harbour Area lands, which have potential for residential, accommodation and other tourist attraction type uses.

- It is noted that the Town is currently in the early stages of creating a Waterfront Master Plan (WMP). The updated Official Plan will identify the role of the WMP and include policies that will speak to the further details of the Plan.
- It is further noted that the Province of Ontario recently announced that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry property situated on the west harbour lands will be vacated and there will be opportunity for the Town to potentially acquire the lands or at least have a major role in the determination of the redevelopment of the site which is an exciting opportunity to explore during the Official Plan update.

The policy directions described above, to introduce a new Community Structure to the Official Plan, are being recommended to provide the Town with a basis for guiding and directing growth and development. Without this overarching structure, the long-term vision of the Town as well as the policy guidance needed to assist in managing change over time is left unclear.

NEW – Land Use Designation Changes

Stemming from the Community Structure described above, there is a need to support the achievement of the long-term vision through updated and re-organized Land Use Designations and policies to guide growth, development and redevelopment. Overall, we have learned that the Town wants to be able to guide development and have policies in place that provide greater flexibility to help neighbourhoods evolve more naturally over time while helping to articulate what is desired and where certain land uses will be encouraged.

The current Official Plan identifies eight (8) broad Land Use Designations with some additional sub-designations. The purpose of this section of the Discussion Paper is to describe the recommended approach which is to reduce the overall number of Land Use Designations and simplify the policy framework. This approach supports the goals of the Community Structure, such that each Land Use Designation will be made broader, describe the permitted uses, allow flexibility in the scale of development with appropriate policy guidance, reflect and respond to current market conditions, be able to respond to changing circumstances over time, and lend itself to provide opportunities to encourage a more complete community by offering a greater mix of uses and activities throughout Town.

Recommendations

The following provides a summary of the existing Land Use Designations and structure in the current Official Plan and describes the recommended updates/changes. It is important to note that changes in neighbourhoods and areas that would result in having different land use designations than what the current Official Plan describes, will take place gradually over time.

The current Official Plan has three (3) Urban Residential Designations that specifically identify where low, medium and high density residential development can occur. The recommendation is to create One (1) Residential Designation that will encourage housing broadly and allow for flexibility in considering proposals for higher density forms of housing based on specific criteria that will be outlined in the policies under the Land Use Designation (i.e. ensuring the site is an appropriate size and location for the proposed development to prevent a situation of over development).

Similarly for Commercial Uses, the current Official Plan has six (6) designations for commercial uses including Central Business District, District Commercial, Highway/Service Commercial, Waterfront Commercial, Marine and Resort Residential, and the Joseph Street Mixed Use Area. The recommendation is to establish a more simplified approach to commercial land uses through a reduction in the number of Land Use Designations. The designations and related policies would describe their roles for greater clarity and provide additional guidance on permitted uses, what the Town will consider when dealing with development and redevelopment proposals, and support the economic growth of commercial activities in Town. It is noted that the permissions that are currently provided for in the current Official Plan for the Marine and Resort Residential Designation which is found in the east Harbour area will carry forward and be reflected in the appropriate land use designation in the Harbour Area.

The current Official Plan also includes the “Joseph Street Mixed Use Area” within the Commercial designations. Based on the desire to encourage live-work opportunities and a more walkable community, it is recommended that a more comprehensive Mixed-Use Designation be created. This will provide opportunities for uses beyond a traditional commercial focus, which can be used in other areas where this may be appropriate, in addition to the Joseph Street area. Mixed-Use means areas where residential, retail/commercial, office and institutional uses can all be found and work well together creating a more walkable environment. For example, through the updated policies, we want to encourage more walkable areas such as in the core area/downtown and other areas where there are existing jobs, by encouraging a full range of uses to be located there including things that are currently lacking in these areas such as grocery stores or other services.

The remaining designations in the current Official Plan include Industrial, Open Space, Environmentally Sensitive, Special Development Area and Rural Residential designations. The policies in these designations will be updated to ensure there is conformity with Provincial policies and align with the updated Vision and purpose of each designation, however there are no major recommended changes in approach to these designations.

The following are additional recommended policy directions that will apply to all the Land Use Designations in the updated Official Plan:

- Establish a set of Land Use Designations to implement the recommended points above and align with the Community Structure.
- Establish the Goals and Objectives of each proposed Designation by incorporating the Guiding Principles listed in Section 2 of the current Official Plan into the appropriate Land Use Designation.
- List and describe permitted uses and accessory uses for each Land Use Designation to ensure there are development policies applicable for each type of use.
- Establish development policies appropriate for each Designation that provide the necessary guidance for dealing with land use applications. This may include direction with respect to form-based development types.
- Where appropriate, include policy directions to provide guidance for development applications seeking to redesignate from one designation to another (i.e. things that would require an Official Plan Amendment application) as well as policy direction for the consideration of Zoning By-law Amendments to change land uses or increase density.
- Provide direction on how to manage adjacency considerations especially for redevelopment proposals. This would include things such as transition areas and buffers to existing lower density areas and sensitive land uses and direction for Environmental Assessments on how to assess compatibility considerations when considering sensitive land uses.

UPDATE - Regional Context

The Town of Parry Sound is the regional economic hub serving West Parry Sound. The Town provides the infrastructure essential to the provision of education, social, healthcare and business services to the area. The fiscal burden of providing this infrastructure is entirely born by the residents and businesses of the Town of Parry Sound. This was identified as an issue through the engagement efforts to date.

Ways of working with neighbouring municipalities to share the “load”, while maintaining the Town’s unique identity as the regional economic hub of West Parry Sound should continue to be investigated. As part of the engagement efforts, and in recognition of the Town’s role within the broader regional context and with a desire for regional cooperation and collaboration, the Town hosted a workshop with senior staff from the West Parry Sound Area municipalities to discuss the Town’s Official Plan update.

The current Provincial Policy Statement identifies areas that municipalities should work to cooperate on for services whose benefit crosses municipal boundaries such as transportation routes, economic development, education, and health services. The current Official Plan notes at a very high level that Parry Sound is the economic service and employment hub for the surrounding areas. Policies will be updated in this section of the Official Plan to encourage continued regional cooperation and coordination while respecting the need to ensure there are no long-term adverse impacts on the financial sustainability of the Town.

UPDATE - Housing Strategy

A lack of housing options and supply, as well as affordability were identified as major concerns in the Town through the Phase One engagement efforts. Enhancing the housing policies in the updated Official Plan to be more permissive is being recommended as it will help to encourage a greater diversity of housing types and options across broader areas presenting an opportunity to bolster housing supply, addressing the needs of both current and future residents. Furthermore, it is generally understood that an increase in housing supply will assist in providing more affordable housing options.

The following are recommended policy directions for the Housing Strategy in the updated Official Plan:

- Review and update the existing housing policies in the current Official Plan to complement the Community Structure as well as the new Residential designation and other designations as appropriate. This will include a description of the type of housing that will be promoted across the Living Area and other areas to encourage more supply and mixed-use

developments. As mentioned above under Land Use Designations, certain types of supportive uses such as childcare and small-scale commercial uses will be allowed as of right in neighbourhoods to encourage more complete and walkable areas.

- Review and incorporate housing policies and legislative direction from the *Planning Act* and current Provincial Policy Statement to ensure conformity and consistency.
 - Since the current Official Plan was approved, the *Planning Act* has been amended to establish a requirement that official plans contain policies that authorize additional residential units. The policies will be updated to reflect permissions for Additional Residential Units based on *Planning Act* changes and servicing considerations.
 - Update the affordable housing policies in the current Official Plan based on changes to Provincial legislation as well as consider policy incentives to encourage and promote affordable housing projects within Town. For example, include a target of affordable housing units to be provided in multi-unit developments and an overall Town- wide target. Policies will include legislative permissions for the Town to work with developers to encourage more affordable housing units and off-set with increased density or community benefits contributions.
- Review existing “Bed and Breakfast Accommodation” policies in the current Official Plan and consider the need for policies related to short term rentals.
- Bring all housing-related policies from other sections of the current Official Plan together under this section including the guiding principles and objectives to achieve a more user-friendly document.

NEW - Age-Friendly Community Design

Through the engagement efforts, it was noted that with an aging population, there is a need for greater support for seniors through aging in place. Additionally, we heard about the change taking place with younger people and families looking to move to Parry Sound. As new concepts in community design, land use planning and policy making emerge, it is not surprising that the current Official Plan does not contain policy guidance regarding healthy community design and age-friendly communities.

The current Provincial Policy Statement builds on the notion of healthy, active communities and age-friendly community design as part of a complete community’s focus for growth and development. Access to public spaces and providing a full

range and equitable distribution of public spaces is encouraged.

The following are recommended policy directions for Age-Friendly Community Design and incorporating healthy community considerations into the Official Plan and development proposals:

- A policy framework should be added to the updated Official Plan requiring new developments to consider age-friendly design approaches including active aging, aging in place, and healthy aging. This will be further supported by the approach being recommended for the updated land use designations and community structure to encourage more mixed-use and supportive uses into areas across Town making neighbourhoods more walkable and accessible.
- Healthy community design policies, specifically addressing growth management, access to trails and parks should be incorporated into the relevant sections of the updated Official Plan.

NEW – Climate Change

As noted in Discussion Paper #1, climate change is a reality in Parry Sound and like any other municipality, the Town must prepare for the changes that are occurring.

The current Town Official Plan does not reference climate change. The updated Official Plan will include new policies which acknowledge climate change and the potential for increased risk associated with natural hazards as a result.

The current Provincial Policy Statement identifies that healthy, liveable and safe communities are, in part, sustained by preparing for the regional and local impacts of a changing climate. On this basis, the current Provincial Policy Statement directs municipalities to support energy conservation and efficiency, improved air quality, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and preparing for the impacts of a changing climate.

The following are recommended policy directions for climate change in the updated Official Plan:

- Climate change and the impacts of global warming will impact all aspects of community building from basic infrastructure design, transportation and transit, outdoor recreation facilities and design, building design, low impact development strategies, etc. Climate change policies as such should be incorporated throughout the updated Official Plan as well as its own section

to ensure policy guidance is provided for all development issues and matters.

- Establish policies that encourage development applications to mitigate the impact of climate change (i.e. use of design elements to help minimize and/or mitigate impacts of climate change, require approaches to construction and building design to minimize waste, examine opportunities to support energy conservation).
- Policies supporting the implementation of the Province’s climate change plans and strategies should be considered.

UPDATE - Economy

From the feedback received during the Phase One engagement efforts, the importance of strengthening the year-round economy by leveraging tourism and promoting a diversity of jobs in the local economy was identified.

Developing complete communities requires that the Town ensure that employment opportunities and a full range of commercial and service facilities are planned and accommodated.

The Town’s economy has three primary components:

- Local and regional population supporting jobs (i.e. services including health care, social services and education);
- Tourism and related; and.
- Industrial lands.

Local Economy

Promoting a diversity of jobs in the local economy beyond tourism was identified as an important challenge to strengthen the economy on a year-round basis. Jobs in the retail, service and light industrial sectors were identified as areas to explore.

The following are recommended policy directions relating to the Local Economy for the updated Official Plan:

- Establish policies that promote a diversity of jobs in the local economy beyond tourism that provide services to the local and regional population on a year-round basis (i.e. jobs in the retail, service, and light industrial sectors).
- Enhance policies to support the growth of the health care sector.

Tourism

In the responses received through the feedback on Discussion Paper #1, there were suggested ideas for how to grow the year- round tourism economy. The potential for enhanced tourism draws both at the waterfront and in the downtown areas through creating inviting places, and ensuring there is a strong connection between them was also noted.

The current Official Plan notes at a high level that tourism plays a key role in the Town and that the Town is committed to actively promoting new tourist commercial opportunities, parks, trails and tourist destinations.

The following are recommended policy directions for Tourism in the updated Official Plan:

- Review existing “Tourism” policies in current Official Plan.
- Establish policies to support the tourism focus of the waterfront and downtown areas.
 - Establish policies that encourage businesses that will thrive year-round (private investment encouragement policies).
- Include policies that speak to the public investment in tourism including waterfront activities/place-making, and connections to the downtown area (i.e. place-making, attractiveness, trails connectivity and parking).

Industrial Lands

The following are recommended policy directions relating to Industrial Lands in the updated Official Plan:

- Review existing “Economic Development” policies in the current Official Plan to ensure consistency with the current Provincial Policy Statement (2020).
- Employment lands and areas should be identified and designated appropriately in the updated Official Plan.
 - Employment areas and employment lands should be identified on the maps in the Official Plan.
 - Describe what is meant as Employment areas, the types of uses and why it is important to protect these areas (i.e. making land available for manufacturing and processing types of businesses).

- Policies protecting employment areas from conversion applications should be added to the updated Official Plan.
 - Conversion policies for employment lands should be considered for inclusion in the new Official Plan.
 - Ensure there is policy direction to allow for some light industrial uses on the edges of employment areas that act as a buffer to more sensitive land uses adjacent to employment areas.

NEW - Public Spaces

Through the engagement efforts to date, the importance of creating more gathering spaces in Town for people to enjoy was identified. Additionally, enhancing and repairing the Town dock as well as adding more public docking facilities was viewed as important ways of providing other means of accessing the Town.

The following are recommended policy directions relating to Public Spaces in the updated Official Plan:

- Identify areas such as Market Square, that can be used as gathering spaces and places of activity.
- Establish policies that ensure all streets and open spaces have a clearly distinguishable purpose and function and that their design prioritizes the pedestrian experience (i.e. signage and wayfinding).
- Require that development, if possible, improve connectivity between existing and planned open spaces and trails.
- Establish policies that encourage public spaces to be areas of activity.
- Establish policies that encourage consideration of additional public docking in the harbour lands.

UPDATE - Hazards

In the context of the current Provincial Policy Statement, 'hazardous lands' are considered lands that are generally susceptible to flooding and erosion (i.e. lands along rivers, streams and small inland lakes) or due to human activities/uses that might not be appropriate for the development. Development is to be directed away from areas of natural or human-made hazards where there is an unacceptable risk to public health, safety or property damage.

The current Official Plan contains general policies which broadly direct development outside of hazardous lands. The following are recommended policy directions for Hazard policies in the updated Official Plan:

- Review current Official Plan to ensure existing hazard policies (i.e. flood protection, steep slopes and erosion hazards) are consistent with the current Provincial Policy Statement (2020).
- Consideration of the impacts of climate change and the risks associated with natural hazards.
 - As mentioned, the current Official Plan was adopted in 2014 and makes no reference to climate change. Policies need to be included in the updated Official Plan which acknowledge climate change and the potential for increased risk associated with natural hazards as a result.
- The current Official Plan requires studies to ensure public safety in hazardous areas where development is proposed. It is recommended the study requirement policies be reviewed and updated as necessary.

UPDATE - Municipal Infrastructure

From a servicing standpoint, we have heard through our engagement efforts that there are infrastructure challenges and constraints in parts of the Town's current sewer and water systems that would hinder major developments to occur. It is important to align the land use and development policies with infrastructure considerations in the updated Official Plan to ensure that capacity exists or is planned to support the potential for future development/redevelopment in order to manage growth expectations accordingly. This would include identifying areas of Town that currently do not have municipal services. Policies also need to be developed to recognize the financial constraints associated with providing this infrastructure and the need for the Town to plan for system upgrades to support/enable redevelopment opportunities in a fiscally responsible way.

The following are recommended Municipal Infrastructure policy directions for the updated Official Plan:

- Within the existing serviced areas, identify areas with capacity as well as areas that have constraints/limitations for development and redevelopment and consider adding a new map as an Appendix to the Official Plan to illustrate this. Including the map as an Appendix will provide the Town flexibility to make changes to the map without the need to amend the Official Plan if information or circumstances change that require an update.
- Ensure policies reflect building sustainable infrastructure that accounts for the lifecycle of the systems and the need to upgrade and replace these over the long-term.
- Review and modernize policies on sewer, water, storm water and solid waste management to ensure proper guidance is provided to evaluate development proposals and system constraints (i.e. ensure municipal capacity exists, and triggers for additional studies).
- Review policies on sewer, water, storm water and solid waste management and update to ensure consistency with the current Provincial Policy Statement (2020).
- Provide policy direction for how the Town will manage the possible future extension of municipal sewer and water to areas within Town that currently do not have services.
- Provide policy support for best practices in storm water management and encourage use of green infrastructure and low impact development that considers the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events.
- Bring all servicing related policies from other sections of the current Official Plan together under this section including the guiding principles and objectives.

UPDATE - Transportation

Road System

The current Official Plan classifies roads by their jurisdiction, function, and level of service into four categories: Provincial Highway (Highway 400), arterial roads, collector roads, and local roads. Schedule B of the current Official Plan includes a Transportation map.

The following are recommended policy directions relating to the Road System for the updated Official Plan:

- Review the current road classification system and associated map to ensure it reflects the current situation and update as required.
- Include policies specific to the properties on Parry Island.
- Identify planned upgrades to road networks (i.e. ROW for road widening purposes) and ensure there are appropriate policies in the Official Plan to allow for road dedication at time of Plan of Subdivision/Consent.
- Ensure that transportation infrastructure can support future growth and development.
- Add consideration to allow private roads (i.e. condominium-style roads) for infill developments and allow privately owned services under the roads (i.e. the Town would not assume the roads or infrastructure).

Transit

The Town of Parry Sound does not have a municipal transit system and therefore minimal policies exist in the current Official Plan. Through the engagement efforts, the lack of public transportation was identified as a challenge.

Public transportation is identified as a Provincial priority, and there is broad direction for municipalities to plan for the ability to have transit service integration, and connectivity through land use planning. It is recognized that areas of higher residential and employment densities and mixed uses can help achieve this approach.

It is recommended that the updated Official Plan review and enhance the existing municipal transit policies and identify unique opportunities for a transit system solution that may suit the needs of residents in the shorter term. Additionally, the updated Official Plan will establish policies to support and encourage mixed-uses and densities that will help to create locations where a basic transit system could become more viable over the long-term.

NEW - Active Transportation

Through the engagement efforts, it was identified that due to the lack of public transit in the community, walkability is crucial in ensuring that people can live and work in close proximity and easily get to where they want to go or need to go.

Active transportation is a term used to describe using your own power to get from one place to another. This can include walking, biking, hiking, running, cross country skiing and generally any non-motorized mode of travel. Active transportation provides many benefits to human health, the existing transportation network, the environment and the economy.

While the Town has historically been reliant upon automobiles, there are significant recreational resources and trails in the Town that can be used as a basis for establishing a more connected active transportation network.

The current Town Official Plan does not contain any specific policy direction with respect to active transportation. The Official Plan update will build from Provincial directives to develop a policy framework for active transportation in the Town.

The following are recommended policy directions for Active Transportation policies in the updated Official Plan:

- Inclusion of active transportation policies and planning that design, build and support public spaces that foster a pedestrian-friendly environment that encourages walkability and active transportation.
- Establish a network of paths and trails for both recreational uses and active transportation to support a healthy and active community.
- Establish design policies that require the municipality and developers to follow such as incorporating creative lighting throughout the active transportation network to enhance pedestrian comfort and safety as well as requiring sidewalk connections especially in newly developing or redeveloping areas.
- Facilitate land use patterns which support active transportation.
 - Designating areas of mixed land use and including policy direction in Residential Land Use Designation to consider higher densities will contribute towards facilitating land use patterns which are pedestrian-friendly and support active transportation.
- Implement Site Plan Design requirements which promote multi-modal transportation, accessibility and complete streets.
 - A Complete Streets policy approach should be included in the updated Official Plan to promote safety for all users of streets and not just automobiles and would support building a healthy and age-friendly community.

UPDATE - Natural Resources

From the community engagement efforts to date, we heard about the need to balance the changes that are occurring, while preserving the natural environment and unique setting of Parry Sound. This includes protecting the environment and natural setting, while allowing for development and redevelopment opportunities.

This part of the Plan will be updated to be consistent with the current Provincial Policy Statement 2020. Beyond that, the policies will be updated to ensure protection of the natural environment is weighed on balance with development considerations.

Natural Features

The following are recommended policy directions for the Natural Features in the updated Official Plan:

- Review current Official Plan to ensure existing Natural Heritage policies are consistent with the current Provincial Policy Statement 2020.
- Review and update Environmental Impact Study requirements and policies.
- Update policies regarding adjacent lands based on the current Provincial Policy Statement and provide guidance on if there are any development opportunities, what needs to be studied when and criteria to satisfy these.
- Review existing Natural Features Map D in Official Plan for any necessary updates.
- Bring all natural features related policies from other sections of the current Official Plan together under this section including the guiding principles and objectives to provide greater clarity.

Mineral Aggregates

Although there is only one active quarry in Town, we need to ensure policies support its continuation and protect the operation from encroachment of sensitive land uses that would hinder its continued operation or expansion.

The following is a recommended policy direction for the Mineral Aggregates in the updated Official Plan:

- Review the current Official Plan to ensure existing mineral aggregate policies are consistent with the current Provincial Policy Statement 2020.

Cultural Heritage and Archaeological Resources

The following are recommended policy directions for the Cultural Heritage and Archeological Resources in the updated Official Plan:

- Review the current Official Plan to ensure existing heritage policies are consistent with the current Provincial Policy Statement 2020.
- Confirm accuracy of properties listed in Appendix 2.
- Review the current Official Plan to ensure existing archaeological resource policies are consistent with the current Provincial Policy Statement 2020.
- Incorporate policies regarding the requirement for First Nation engagement.
- Establish policies that help in identifying and protecting key views and vistas related to landmarks and natural areas (i.e. the railway trestle and other important landmarks).

UPDATE - Community Improvement Plan

A Community Improvement Plan is a tool that allows a municipality to direct funds and implement policy initiatives toward a specifically defined project area. The Town has the ability, as provided through Section 28 of the *Planning Act*, to advance community improvement planning to achieve certain social and community goals. One of the key benefits of community improvement planning is the ability of the Town to provide financial incentives as stimulus to achieve a desired outcome. The Town currently has a Community Improvement Plan in place.

It is recommended that:

- Through the Official Plan update, the Town review opportunities to strengthen and update the existing Community Improvement Plan.
- Review the Community Improvement Plan policies in the current Official Plan and update as appropriate to provide greater clarity in alignment with the provisions of the *Planning Act* for the use of this tool.

NEW - Community Planning Permit System

The *Planning Act* enables municipalities to implement a community planning permit system (CPPS) as an alternate avenue for approving development.

The Community Planning Permit System is a tool that allows municipalities to establish a framework to process development applications in a timely manner, to ensure the Town will be responsive to changes, by allowing development and redevelopment to occur within the parameters of the land use designation and Zoning By-law provisions with a certain amount of administrative discretion granted to staff to allow variances without requiring other approvals or having to go to Council for approvals. As such it is recommended that the updated Official Plan should:

- Establish policies to enable consideration of the use of a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS). These policies will streamline the process to achieve development approvals. The Town could choose to enact this system in the waterfront and harbour lands for example (e.g. establish a framework for staff approvals provided a development proposal meets certain criteria, then it doesn't need to go to Council for approval). These policies set the stage for the Town to use as an additional tool in future.

NEW – First Nation Engagement

The current Provincial Policy Statement identifies that planning authorities shall engage with Indigenous communities and coordinate on land use planning matters. In particular, planning authorities are encouraged to build constructive, cooperative relationships through meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities to facilitate knowledge-sharing in land use planning processes and inform decision-making.

The Town of Parry Sound is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinabek people. The Town has commenced the process of engaging with the Wasauksing First Nation as part of the Official Plan update and will engage with other First Nation communities with ancestral territory interest in this area.

The current Official Plan does not address the obligations and requirements for engagement and consultation with First Nations and Indigenous communities. The updated Official Plan will incorporate policies regarding this requirement.

NEW – Language

The language used in the current Official Plan is passive. As part of the update, a review of the current and proposed policies in the updated Official Plan will be undertaken to determine which policies require supportive language and which require restrictive. The updated Official Plan will utilize language that is intended to distinguish between the types of policies and the nature of the implementation. For example, some policies will use enabling and supportive language such as “should,” “promote,” and “encourage” while others will set out requirements or limitations using more direct language such as “shall” or “shall not.” There is some discretion when applying a policy with enabling or supportive language in contrast to a policy with directive, limitation or prohibition.

UPDATE - Official Plan Maps/Appendices

The current Official Plan contains two (2) appendices and three (3) maps. All maps will be updated using current software, providing clarity and making them easier to use and read. Specific changes to the Official Plan mapping will include:

- Add a new map for the Community Structure as described above.
- Update the Land Use Designation map to reflect the Land Use Designation changes described in this Discussion Paper.
- Update other existing Official Plan maps as necessary.
- Add a new servicing constraints map as an Appendix to the Plan that will provide flexibility to make changes without the need to amend the Plan.

As previously mentioned, there are sections of the existing Official Plan that do not require updating or may require very minor edits. These sections will focus on the direction in terms of implementation of the Plan as well as the administrative matters. The Official Plan implementation is dealt with through a future Zoning By-law update after the Official Plan is approved.

5.0 Draft Official Plan Structure

The key changes made to the structure of the Official Plan include the inclusion of a New Section 3: Community Structure, some reorganization of the Land Use Designations, and the reorganization of sections to combine similar policies under broader headings that are more intuitive and help make the Plan more user friendly (e.g. keeping all of the housing policies together).

Based on the policy directions outlined above, the following is a suggested draft outline for the Table of Contents for the updated Official Plan.

1. Introduction and Context (Structure, Purpose, Basis)
2. Guiding Principles (Vision, Regional Context)
3. Community Structure (Living Areas, Economic/Mixed-Use Areas, Central Commerce Area, and Harbour Area)
4. Land Use Designations (Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Mixed-Use)
5. General Development Policies (Housing, Economy, Hazards, Public Spaces)
6. Natural Resources (Natural Features, Mineral Aggregates, Cultural Heritage and Archaeological Resources)
7. Municipal Infrastructure (Water System, Sewer System, Stormwater Management, Climate Change)
8. Transportation (Road System, Transit, Active Transportation)
9. Implementation (Community Improvement Plan, Community Planning Permit System, First Nation Engagement)
10. Administration and Interpretation (Language)

Maps

Map A – Community Structure
Map B – Land Use Designations
Map C – Transportation and Servicing
Map D – Natural Features

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Current Endangered and Threatened Species List in the Town of Parry Sound
Appendix 2 – Properties Designated under the Ontario Heritage Act
Appendix 3 – Servicing Constraints (Sewer and Water Systems)

6.0 How to Participate

Let us know what you think! We encourage you to provide comments on Discussion Paper #2 in response to the following questions. Your feedback will be used to help inform the preparation of the updated Official Plan for the Town of Parry Sound.

- 1) Based on your review of Discussion Paper #2, please provide your general thoughts/feedback on the concepts, ideas or policy directions presented in the Paper.
- 2) Are there any concepts, ideas or directions that might be missing, that we should consider adding? If so, please elaborate.
- 3) Are there any policy directions that require further clarity? If so, please elaborate.
- 4) Are there any policy directions that should not be included? If so, please provide reasons as to why.

Comments should be submitted by using the online form, or in writing to the Town's Official Plan email account at officialplan@parrysound.ca or feel free to drop off hard copies of your responses to the Planning Department at the Town of Parry Sound to the attention of Jeremy Rand.

We welcome your submission of comments on this Discussion Paper until May 29, 2024. Please check the Town's Official Plan Review website for further details on the Official Plan Update project.

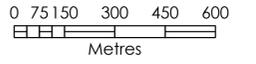
The link to the website is: <https://www.parrysound.ca/business-development/planning-and-development/official-plan-review/>

As we move forward, there will be additional opportunities for you to participate in the preparation of the updated Official Plan as described above. We look forward to your continued involvement in this important initiative.

OFFICIAL PLAN | MAP A COMMUNITY STRUCTURE



Scale: 1:10,000



- Municipal Boundary
- Provincial Highway
- Arterial / Collector
- Local / Private
- Railway
- Living Area
- Central Commerce Area
- Economic/Mixed-Use Area
- Harbour Area
- Waterbody

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