



REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

FROM: Nancy Pasato, Manager of Planning

DATE: January 12, 2021

SUBJECT: County of Elgin Official Plan Review

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council direct staff to proceed with a Five Year Review process for the County of Elgin's Official Plan in 2021;

AND FURTHER THAT Council hold a Special Public Meeting in February, 2021, in accordance with Section 26 (3) of the Planning Act to discuss the Official Plan review process and hear comments from the public.

INTRODUCTION:

The County of Elgin adopted the current Official Plan (OP) in 2013. The Planning Act (Section 26) requires every municipality to update its Official Plan every five years. Plans must have regard for matters of provincial interest and ensure consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS).

DISCUSSION:

What is an Official Plan?

An Official Plan is a legal statutory planning document required by the province that describes the County's land-use strategy. The County of Elgin's Official Plan includes the vision, goals and policy directions of the County, as established by the community, and provides guidance for land use planning decisions in the County; including:

- locations for settlement areas, agricultural lands, and natural heritage;
 - when and in what order parts of our communities will grow; and
 - protection for agricultural, mineral and environmental resources.
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Why do we need to review?

The purpose of an Official Plan 5-Year Review update is to ensure that the community vision/values, directions, policies and actions in the Plan reflect changes and meet the needs of the community for the future, and to review for consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement.

Possible revisions to the OP as part of the 5-Year Review may include the following:

- Adoption of Elgin Natural Heritage Study;
- Policies to address Climate Change in accordance with Bill 139;
- Housing policies (including attainable/affordable housing) in accordance with Bill 139;
- Inclusion of Drinking Water Source Protection policies;
- Population projection and land needs assessments, as per recent changes to the PPS 2020;
- Policy additions, as needed to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement changes from 2020,

and will be further informed by a community, agency, stakeholder and Council consultation process.


Process and Public Consultation Strategy

Consultation and public engagement in the time of COVID makes it very difficult to engage the community. Staff have developed a preliminary public consultation and engagement program, which ensures public and stakeholder engagement at regular intervals. The approach focuses on meeting residents in their communities and ensuring underrepresented voices have a meaningful opportunity to participate in the process.

1. Statutory Public Meetings, Virtual Meetings and One-on-one Meetings

When amending an Official Plan, the Planning Act requires Special Meetings of Council or Committees that are open to the public at certain points in the process. This is intended to provide an opportunity for the public to make comments and suggestions to the Official Plan. Pursuant to Section 26(3)(b) of the Planning Act, before making revisions to the County Official Plan, the County is required to hold a Special Meeting of Council, open to the public, to discuss potential revisions to the Official Plan.

The County will need to conduct a statutory public meeting to start the Official Plan review process. The purpose of this Special Meeting of Council is to discuss potential revisions that may be required to the County Official Plan and provide an opportunity for



the public to offer comments to Council regarding any issues or matters that should be considered in the 5-year review.

It is anticipated this meeting will occur in February, 2021, which will give ample opportunity to advertise through local newspapers, on the County and local municipalities webpages, and through social media channels. Given the current situation in Ontario, it is unlikely this meeting will be in person, but will need to pivot to an online format.

Over the course of OP review process, regular meetings and virtual meetings will be conducted to hear feedback on the various components of the OP review, including population projections, Natural Heritage Study, etc.

Public consultation aims to ensure transparency, discuss the goals and aspirations for the community, contribute opinions, ideas and recommendations on growth and development, and provide an opportunity to participate in the planning process.


External and Internal Consultation will include engaging with internal County staff and departments, consulting with external agencies and targeted stakeholder groups through one on one meetings, consulting with local municipalities, and ensuring the County engages with our Indigenous Communities.

2. Online Engagement through Webpage and Virtual Open House(s)

The County will be creating an Official Plan review webpage which will be the portal to all things OP review. The webpage will list status of the project, timing and timelines, contacts, reports, and provide the ability for stakeholders and residents to provide feedback. We will also be hosting a virtual open house available on our webpage – this will be a produced video that goes through the various components of the current OP and gives an overview of what the OP means to residents, as well an opportunity for residents to review documents and provide feedback.

3. Engagement in the Community at the Local Municipalities

It is important to ensure local voices are heard through the OP review process. Staff would like to conduct meetings at each of the local municipalities/Councils to ensure local issues are heard. It is anticipated that we will be meeting with each of the Councils in February-April, 2021. We will work with the local municipalities to ensure appropriate notice is given, and in a format that is appropriate given the current climate in Ontario.



A local Planners Committee will also be initiated with staff from each of the local municipalities and the County of Elgin, to meet semi-regularly to discuss local and county wide planning issues. Its another opportunity to engage local municipalities in the broader process.

4. One on one meetings with local Stakeholders

Staff will be collaborating with local stakeholders from across the County to gather input on key issues facing Elgin today, and getting feedback on how we want to see our County evolve in the future. These will take the form of one on one meetings during the public consultation component of the OP Review.

Timeline

The work plan is broken down into four (4) phases, each with significant milestones throughout the process. Staff anticipate that the review will take approximately one year to complete, with a final version of the Official Plan to be submitted for consideration by Council by end of year 2021/early 2022. The adopted Official Plan will be then submitted to the Province for approval.

Phase 1 – Engagement

Winter 2021 to Spring (April/May) 2021

After the initial kick off public meeting in February, and through meetings conducted at the lower tier municipalities, the engagement component will focus on engaging local residents and stakeholders to help inform the scope of the OP review. A follow up report on the scope of the OP review will be brought to County Council in the spring 2021.

Phase 2 – Analysis and Specialized Meetings

Spring 2021 – September 2021

During this timeframe the County will retain a consultant to conduct the population projections, employment projections and land needs assessment. Several specialized meetings may also occur during this time, including the Natural Heritage Study, and others that were identified through engagement.

Phase 3 – Findings and draft policy changes

October 2021-December 2021

This report to Council will provide the findings from the population projections and land needs assessments, and any proposed draft changes to the OP. A statutory public meeting will be held at this time to solicit final comments from the public on the draft changes.

These draft changes will also be circulated to the local municipalities for their review and feedback.

Phase 4 – Adoption

Winter 2022

It is anticipated that the final OP and associated amendments would be brought for consideration to Council in the winter of 2022.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) is the Approval Authority for the Official Plan for the County of Elgin. The timeline for MMAH review is unknown, and there may be refinements or changes required to the OP as a result of the MMAH review.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The OP Review process will be undertaken primarily by County staff, with some portions completed by external consultants including population projections and land needs assessments.

Additional funds have been included in the 2021 budget for the OP review process.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Serving Elgin	Growing Elgin	Investing in Elgin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Ensuring alignment of current programs and services with community need. ☒ Exploring different ways of addressing community need. ☒ Engaging with our community and other stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Planning for and facilitating commercial, industrial, residential, and agricultural growth. ☒ Fostering a healthy environment. ☒ Enhancing quality of place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Ensuring we have the necessary tools, resources, and infrastructure to deliver programs and services now and in the future. ☒ Delivering mandated programs and services efficiently and effectively.

LOCAL MUNICIPAL PARTNER IMPACT:

The OP review will be promoted to all Local Municipal Partner Councils. Staff will set up dates to attend local Council meetings to engage local residents and stakeholders. All local municipal Official Plans are required to conform with the County Official Plan, once updated.

COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS:

Communication will include the following:

- Statutory public meetings with Council.
- A webpage will be created and maintained as part of the communication strategy.
- Staff will set up dates to attend local Council meetings to engage residents.
- Regular meetings with local planners.
- Staff will set up one on one meetings with local stakeholders as needed.
- Virtual meetings for components of the OP review.
- Promotional video on the OP.

CONCLUSION:

Initiating the OP review process for the County of Elgin will ensure the OP responds to changing provincial priorities, and confirms the community vision/values, directions, policies and actions to meet the needs of the community for the future. This process is expected to take approximately one year to complete, with ample opportunity for community and local engagement.

It is recommended that a copy of this report will also be forwarded to the County of Elgin's local municipalities, conservation authorities and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for their information.

All of which is Respectfully Submitted

Nancy Pasato
Manager of Planning

Approved for Submission

Julie Gonyou
Chief Administrative Officer