

CHAPTER 1: PLAN FRAMEWORK

FOREWORD

The Official Plan provides a policy framework to manage and direct physical development and its effects on the social, economic and natural environment of the Township of Wellesley (the Township) until the year 2031. This Plan was last approved in 2004 and has been periodically amended since then. In 2013, Township Council updated its Official Plan to bring it into conformity with the new Regional Official Plan and several Provincial planning initiatives, including the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Provincial Policy Statement.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As illustrated on Map 1, the township is one of seven Area Municipalities that comprise the Regional Municipality of Waterloo (the Region). While mainly rural in character, the township's 27,186 hectares also embrace a variety of urban and rural environments, including the Wellesley Urban Area, ten Rural Settlement Areas, three Rural Employment Areas and one Rural Mixed-Use/Agricultural Cluster.

The township contains an abundance of *environmental features* that form part of a broader Greenlands Network described in the Regional Official Plan. The Greenlands Network, which includes *woodlands*, *wetlands*, watercourses, recharge areas and other natural areas, provides a range of habitats while supporting the environmental health of the township. In addition, the township also includes a diverse range of natural resources, including productive farm lands, rich groundwater resources and significant *mineral aggregate resources* that support agriculture, tourism, recreation and aggregate extraction uses. These valuable renewable and non-renewable resources are essential for the long-term economic prosperity and quality of life of the township.

1.2 PURPOSE

This document consisting of text and maps constitutes the Official Plan for the Township of Wellesley.

The Official Plan outlines Council's long-term policy direction to guide the future development within the Township. This Plan has been prepared and enacted in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Planning Act.

The Plan establishes the direction for development initiated by both the public and private sectors. The land use strategies and policies of this Plan are the tools that allow the Township to manage change towards a desired future. To be effective, it is incumbent on Council to ensure that development proceeds in accordance with the objectives of this Plan. It is intended that this Plan will ensure that adequate public services are available for the health, safety and convenience of the residents of the Township and will encourage the development of a desirable community that is efficient and economical for all Wellesley residents.

Planning a community is an ongoing process. Objectives and policies must be subject to periodic review to make the Plan an effective and meaningful instrument. Consistent with the requirements of the Planning Act, Council shall, not less than once every five years revise this

Official Plan as required to ensure that it conforms to the Regional Official Plan and any Provincial Plans, and is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

Although the policies adopted are to guide changes in the physical structure of the Township, such changes should be in harmony with social needs, economic needs, municipal financial capabilities, environmental considerations and the management of natural resources. The Official Plan, therefore, contains much more than a set of land use controls.

The main purposes of the Plan are to:

- a) provide a formal statement of the Township's intentions relating to land use planning and growth management until the year 2031 and beyond;
- b) establish a policy framework for maintaining and enhancing the township's valuable agricultural, environmental, natural and *cultural heritage resources* while promoting the development of a *liveable* and *sustainable* community with a strong economy;
- c) provide a legal framework to guide public and private decisions relating to the development and the provision of roads, watermains, sewers, *community infrastructure* and other services within the Township;
- d) reflect local initiatives and circumstances unique to the Township as a whole and of specific areas within the Township in particular;
- e) provide a policy framework for establishing Zoning By-laws to set Township regulations and standards; and
- f) build on and implement the policies of the Region and the *Province*, including the Regional Official Plan, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Provincial Policy Statement.

1.3 REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Land use planning in the township is guided and implemented through a hierarchy of Regional, Provincial and Township planning documents. Collectively, these documents provide a framework for comprehensive, long-term planning that supports the creation of *sustainable* communities with a high quality of life. The general purpose of each of the documents and how they influence planning in the township are described below:

1. **The Regional Official Plan (ROP)** – this document is the Official Plan for the Region of Waterloo. It is adopted by Regional Council and approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Regional Official Plan establishes the overall policy framework for planning within the region and therefore plays a significant role in shaping the township. It allocates future population and employment growth to the township, determines the *reurbanization* and density targets set out in this Plan, and plays a critical role in coordinating *infrastructure* investments and other matters while allowing for effective local decision-making. The Regional Official Plan also ensures that Provincial interests in planning matters, as expressed in the Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, are appropriately addressed. Interpretation of the policies in the Regional Official Plan is the responsibility of Regional Council.

2. **Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan)** – this Provincial Plan was prepared and approved under the Place to Grow Act, 2005 and took effect on June 16, 2006. The Growth Plan was established to better manage growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe to the year 2031. It applies to all of the municipalities within the Greater Golden Horseshoe including the Township of Wellesley. The Growth Plan is intended to guide decisions on a wide range of matters, such as transportation, *infrastructure* planning, land use planning, urban form, housing, natural heritage and resource protection, in the interest of better managing growth while promoting economic prosperity. Any planning decision of Township Council must conform to the Growth Plan as implemented through the Regional Official Plan.
3. **Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)** – this document was issued under Section 3 of the Planning Act and came into effect March 1, 2005. It provides overall policy direction on matters of Provincial interest related to land use planning and development in Ontario. In particular, it contains a set of policies that support appropriate development while protecting natural resources, public health and safety, and the quality of the natural environment. The policies of the PPS are to be read in conjunction with the Growth Plan. Under the Planning Act, any planning decision of Township Council must be consistent with the PPS.
4. **Township of Wellesley Official Plan** - this Plan functions as a link between the policies of the Regional Official Plan, the Growth Plan, the PPS and the municipal objectives of the Township. This Plan provides policies to guide both development and *infrastructure* investment within the Township. In accordance with Section 27 of the Planning Act, this Plan must conform with the Regional Official Plan, however, the policies in this Plan may be more restrictive on the same subject, but may not be more permissive than the policy direction established by the Regional Official Plan. Interpretation of the policies in this Plan is the responsibility of Township Council.
5. **Township Zoning By-laws** – Township Zoning By-laws are adopted in accordance with Section 34 of the Planning Act. These by-laws are used to implement the policies of this Plan and provide standards for individual developments within the broader planning context. Under the Planning Act, any Zoning By-laws adopted by Township Council must conform to the policies of this Plan.

1.4 OTHER STATUTORY APPROVALS

In situations where statutory approvals may be required under provincial legislation other than the Planning Act (e.g., Ontario Water Resources Act, Environmental Protection Act, Conservation Authorities Act etc.), consultations directly with the responsible Ministry to determine any necessary requirements and/or conditions are encouraged. Compliance with such conditions, however, does not mean acceptance or approval of a land use issue governed by this Official Plan. All applicable policies and/or tests of this Plan must be met.

The Planning Act further provides that where an Official Plan is in effect, no public work shall be undertaken and no By-law passed for any purpose unless it is in conformity with the Official Plan.

The Township will, wherever feasible, fulfill the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act and other associated Planning Act processes concurrent with the processing of

development applications to avoid delays in development approvals.

1.5 GENERAL INTERPRETATION

The following section is intended to assist the reader in the general interpretation of this Plan. Chapter 10 sets out the detailed provisions on how the policies of this Plan are to be interpreted and implemented.

This Plan, including the introductory text, goals, policies, definitions and schedules, is intended to be read in its entirety, and all relevant policies are to be applied to each situation. Where the terms “Township” or “Region” are capitalized, they refer to the Corporations of the Township of Wellesley or Region of Waterloo respectively. Where the terms “township” or “region” are used in lowercase letters, they refer to the geographic area comprising the Township of Wellesley or the Region of Waterloo respectively.

Policies in this Plan that use the word “will” or “shall” express a mandatory course of action. Where the words “encourage” or “may” are used, it indicates that the Township requires consideration be given to the policy, but not necessarily compliance in all instances. Such policies are intended to provide direction and support for achieving the overall goals of this Plan. Italicized terms in this Plan are defined in the Glossary. Defined terms are intended to capture both the singular and plural of forms of these terms. For undefined terms, the normal meaning of the word applies.

1.6 GOALS

The following Goals reflect the values and principles of the residents of the Township of Wellesley and are consistent with the vision and objectives contained in the Regional Official Plan. These Goals form the basis for the formulation of the policies contained in this Plan.

a) **Agriculture**

To preserve and protect the valuable farm lands in the Township of Wellesley not only for the production of food and other products, but also as an important component of the township's economic base, a source of employment and as a basis for the township's rural community.

b) **Settlements**

To foster the development of compact, vibrant and *complete communities* and to achieve the *reurbanization* and density targets set out in this Plan.

c) **Environment**

To maintain, enhance or wherever feasible restore the quality of the environment and the long-term health of the ecosystems represented in the township while providing for the changing needs of the population. All other goals should attempt to satisfy the requirements of the environmental goal so as to improve the quality of life for residents.

d) **Transportation**

To promote the continued development and coordination of a safe integrated and efficient transportation network for the safe and efficient movement of all people and goods to meet the needs of *pedestrians*, cyclists, horse-drawn vehicles, farm vehicles and motor vehicles.

e) **Services**

To provide and maintain, in co-operation with the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, a level of municipal services to the various areas of the Township in accordance with economic, social, and environmental considerations.

f) **Cultural Heritage Resources**

To protect, *conserve* or wherever feasible, rehabilitate and/or reuse the *cultural heritage resources* of the township.

g) **Community Improvement**

To promote the implementation of community improvement by way of the maintenance, rehabilitation, and redevelopment of the physical environment in a coordinated and fiscally prudent manner while having regard to improvements to the economic potential and social environment.

h) **Economic Development and Financial Stability**

To promote the development of the Township's economic potential by ensuring the continuing expansion of the economic opportunities and diversification of the economic base, in accordance with the policies of this Plan.

i) **Community and Culture**

To maximize the use of existing facilities and to encourage their upkeep by providing for a range of community, institutional and cultural services and facilities.

j) **Commercial and Industrial**

To provide for a broad range of commercial and industrial activities and services to meet the diverse needs of the Township's residents and businesses, as well as to generate employment opportunities, within a strong commercial structure focused on Wellesley's Urban Growth Centre, the Core Areas of the Rural Settlement Area and other appropriately located Rural Employment Areas.

k) **Natural Resources**

To optimize the use of the township's natural resources through management based on sound economic, social and environmental guidelines.

l) **Parkland, Open Space and Recreation**

To meet the present and future recreational needs of township residents by maximizing recreation opportunities on *existing* open space areas and facilities, while planning for an

integrated parkland and trail system.

m) **Governance**

To support the regional and township system of government and the municipal boundaries established through the Municipal Act, 2001. To work with all levels of government to ensure effective, efficient and responsible decision making and service delivery on behalf of the residents of the Township of Wellesley.

n) **Fringe Areas**

To maintain distinct boundaries between urban and the Countryside within the Township by ensuring efficient use of urban lands and restricting inappropriate uses within the Countryside.

o) **Community Health**

To strive to provide access to primary health care and associated services through partnerships with groups such as the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

p) **Community Initiatives**

To promote the enhancement of the Township's quality of life through the development of appropriate partnerships with non-profit organizations and community groups.

q) **Housing**

To provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing types, including *affordable housing*, to meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents.

r) **Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities**

To improve accessibility for persons with disabilities by identifying, preventing and removing land use barriers which restrict their full participation in society.

s) **Energy Conservation**

To promote land use and development patterns that support energy conservation and efficiency, improved air quality, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

1.7 POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The Township population and employment forecasts contained in Table 1 of this Plan are taken from Regional forecasts contained in the Regional Official Plan. These population and employment forecasts will be used in all planning, infrastructure, and other studies undertaken by or for the Township. Longer term forecasts may be used if based on the Regional Population and Employment Forecast.

Table 1 - Population and Employment Forecasts

	2006	2029
Population	10,100	12,000
Employment	3,290	4,100

Note: This forecast is taken from Table 1 of the Regional Official Plan as approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on December 22, 2010. The Regional Official Plan, including the population and employment forecasts, are currently before the Ontario Municipal Board. In 2011, the Board issued a preliminary order requiring the Regional Official Plan to use a planning horizon year of 2031, instead of 2029, in accordance with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Board has not yet made a decision on how the Region's population and employment forecasts to 2031 will be allocated to the Townships. Once the Board issues its decision, the Township will initiate a further amendment to this Plan to revise Table 1 accordingly.

1.8 RESIDENTIAL GROWTH STRATEGY

1.8.1 In conjunction with the approval of this Plan, and any future *municipal comprehensive reviews* of the policies and mapping of this Plan, Township Council will adopt by resolution a Residential Growth Strategy to outline how the Township will accommodate the population forecasts shown in Table 1 of this Plan, and achieve the *reurbanization* and density targets set out in Sections 2.7.2 and 2.7.3 of this Plan.

1.9 EMPLOYMENT LAND STRATEGY

1.9.1 In conjunction with the approval of this Plan, and any future *municipal comprehensive reviews* of the policies and mapping of this Plan, Township Council will adopt by resolution, an Employment Land Strategy to outline how the Township will accommodate the employment forecasts shown in Table 1 of this Plan, and achieve the *reurbanization* and density targets set out in Sections 2.7.2 and 2.7.3 of this Plan.

1.9.2 The Township will maintain an employment land inventory including available lot sizes and will, from time-to-time, update this inventory taking into consideration new development, expansions, and intensification of *existing* properties.