
To: Mayor and Members of Council
Meeting Date: February 12, 2025
Subject: PLA 2025-005: Official Plan Status Update

Recommendation

THAT Staff Report PLA 2025-005 dated February 12, 2024 regarding Official Plan Status Update, be received.

Purpose/Background

Section 26 of the Ontario Planning Act requires municipalities, including Adjala-Tosorontio, to review and update their Official Plans every 5 years to ensure conformity with provincial plans, consideration of provincial interests, and consistency with issued policy statements.

Additionally, Section 27 mandates that Adjala-Tosorontio's Official Plan must conform to the upper-tier plan within one year of the upper-tier plan's adoption. The Township's Official Plan, over 20 years old, has been amended numerous times, but significant changes are needed to align with evolving community goals and recent provincial and regional land use planning updates. These updates should address current needs and comply with the latest planning policies.

The Township's Official Plan was consolidated in 2000, it has been amended over 25 times. As a result of the numerous amendment updates, it is necessary to complete a new Official Plan rather than introduce any further amendments to the current document. The project undertaken is a comprehensive initiative to develop a New Official Plan that will fully repeal and replace the current Official Plan.

In June of 2015, Township launched its Official Plan Review project; a significant, Township-wide planning initiative by hiring Skelton Brumwell and Associates Inc. to lead the process. The scope of the proposal included several key objectives:

- Conducting policy research to adapt and formulate Official Plan policies that reflect the community's resources and objectives.
- Revising and updating Official Plan schedules.
- Preparing clear, concise planning policies that provide direction while maintaining flexibility to address future needs and opportunities.
- Rationalizing the municipal land budget for integration into the County of Simcoe's growth management exercise.
- Holding two public meetings for community input.
- Engaging with other land-use planning agencies.
- Coordinating closely with Township staff throughout the process.

- Mapping to implement Official Plan policies scaled to individual properties to integrate with the County of Simcoe GIS system.

The plan was to be provided in both digital formats, with GIS and PDF mapping.

Over the years, the project has faced delays due to frequent changes in planning staff, and ongoing updates to planning policies and legislation, largely introduced through provincial and County initiatives. With the completion of Phase 1 by Skelton Brumwell and Associates, the Township now plans to rely on its in-house staff, with support from County planning staff at different stages, to complete the remaining phases of the Official Plan. The Township is also supported by SGL Consultants to undertake mapping and identify policy gaps from a technical and applicable planning policy perspective. All other aspects, including the critical tasks of amending and drafting new planning policies and finalizing the Official Plan document to align with the Township's vision and evolving planning framework, will be managed by the Township's in-house staff, with strategic support from County planning staff.

A draft of the Official Plan has been available on the Township's website ([Township of Adjala-Tosorontio Official Plan Review | Shaping Our Future](#)) since December 2023 for public review and comment. To date, the Township has received limited feedback, including a suggestion regarding the provision of pickleball courts for residents in Lisle and a few inquiries related to the land use map or schedules.

The purpose of this report is to update the public and Council on the status of the Township's Official Plan review, outline what has been completed so far, and provide a roadmap for the next steps in the process. This report will highlight key developments, including the completion of the previous consultant's work after Phase 1, the availability of the draft Official Plan on the Township's website since December 2023, and the required updates to ensure compliance with current planning policies. It will also detail how the Township plans to move forward with in-house staff resources to complete the project.

Analysis and Discussion

Work Completed to Date:

Year	Work Completed
2018	-Policy Discussion Papers (Phase 1),
2018	- Policy Discussion Papers (Phase 2), Visioning Discussion Papers
2019	-May: Comments from Council, December: Draft Official Plan (Version 1)
2023	-December: Draft Official Plan (Version 2) published on the Township's website
2024	-Public feedback received, including input from NVCA (April), Simcoe County School Board (June), and Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. -Staff monitoring provincial planning changes for integration into the Official Plan.

In 2018, various policy and visioning discussion papers were produced addressing key topics such as agriculture, aggregate resources, climate change, community improvement, heritage, historic settlement patterns, transportation, hazards, the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM), employment, health

communities, and housing. Many of these, including heritage, environmental concerns, climate change, hazards, ORM, and historic settlement, remain relevant and compatible with current planning objectives. However, areas such as growth management, housing, agriculture, rural lands, community improvement, and transportation have experienced significant provincial changes, impacting the overall framework of the Official Plan.

Based on the research from these papers, the comments from Council were incorporated, leading to the preparation of Draft Version 1 of the Official Plan. Following the disruptions caused by the pandemic and changes in planning regulations, a revised draft was produced and made available on the Township's website in December 2023.

In 2024, additional feedback was received, including comments from the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) in April, the Simcoe County School District School Board in June, and various public comments.

The foundational documents, including base reviews, visioning studies, and discussion papers, were developed prior to 2020. These documents have guided the preparation of the initial drafts of the Official Plan. The latest version, Draft Official Plan Version 2, reflected necessary updates to ensure consistency with provincial planning policies that were current at the time. Moving forward with the project, it will be necessary to adapt the OP to once again bring it into consistency with more recent policy changes in land use planning that were introduced by the province.

While the core framework of the Official Plan is derived from earlier work, the feedback from stakeholders, including the NVCA, Simcoe County School Board, and the public, will be incorporated into further revisions. These revisions aim to align the plan with contemporary planning standards and address the evolving needs of the community.

Recent Changes in Planning:

Since the adoption of the Township's previous Official Plan, there have been various policy changes at different government levels. The legislative and policy changes in land use planning over the last two years have been significant. Below is a more focused and relevant list of policies, arranged in order of their direct impact on the Official Plan (OP) update:

1. Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2024

- Replaces the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and the PPS 2020
- Local growth forecasts should be based on Ministry of Finance projections (yet to be provided) or previous Provincial growth forecasts over a 20-year horizon (previously 25 years) or County's projections (refer to OPA 7 below).
- Local density targets will reflect local conditions.
- Development in growth areas must align with available infrastructure.
- Reduced tests for Settlement Area Boundary Expansions.
- The definition of Employment Areas updated, e.g. exclude uses such as retail and office.
- Support redevelopment of commercially designated retail lands (e.g., underutilized shopping malls and plazas), to support mixed-use residential.
- Rural settlements may use individual or partial servicing.
- Promotes increasing housing supply.
- Growth must reflect local conditions and planned/available servicing.
- In Prime Agricultural Areas, principal dwellings are a permitted use, with two additional residential units (either within/attached to or detached nearby).

2. **Bill 109 - More Homes for Everyone Act, 2022**

- Delegated authority for site plan control and approval timelines will streamline development processes, requiring updates to the OP to align with new procedural changes.

3. **Bill 23 - More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022**

- Introduces new policies regarding accessory residential units and limitations on parkland dedication. These changes will necessitate amendments to the OP, particularly in residential growth areas.

4. **County Planning and OPA7**

- The ongoing update of the County's Official Plan and its role in approving OP and settlement expansions will influence local OP growth forecasts. Although OPA 7 was adopted by the County on August 9, 2022, it has yet to be approved by the province.

5. **Strategic Plan Implementation**

- This will affect how the OP addresses financial sustainability, infrastructure, and community vitality in planning decisions.

Focusing on these policies will help shape the Township's OP update to reflect new legislation and provincial planning requirements, ensuring alignment with the latest standards for growth, infrastructure, and housing development.

Key Focus Areas:

The gap analysis for the Official Plan draft is currently underway, and the key focus areas will be identified in greater detail based on its findings. A gap analysis is a methodical process to assess the differences between the current state of a document, policy, or system and the required future state. In the context of the Official Plan, it involves reviewing the existing draft to identify areas where it does not fully align with current provincial planning legislation, policies, or other regulatory frameworks. The purpose of the gap analysis is to pinpoint these discrepancies or "gaps" so that they can be addressed, ensuring that the Official Plan is up-to-date, compliant with legal requirements, and reflects the latest planning best practices. Given the recent rapid changes in provincial planning legislation, the potential key focus areas could include the following:

1. Settlement Area

- The Township is currently reviewing settlement area boundaries to determine whether adjustments, including potential expansion or reduction, are warranted. Any expansion would require an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) to the County's Official Plan, subject to Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing approval.
- As per the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2024, Section 2.3.1.3, the Township must ensure that sufficient land is available to accommodate a range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs over a planning horizon of at least 20 years but no more than 30 years, as guided by provincial requirements.
- Any proposed boundary expansion must be supported by an updated Growth Management Study (GMS) that evaluates projected growth, market demand, servicing feasibility, and changes in growth assumptions, such as the County's GMS process (e.g., Honda expansion).
- The Ontario Land Tribunal has approved 1,321 dwelling units for Farsight and 439 for R&M Homes, totaling 1,760 units in Everett. Given this approved capacity, the Township must determine whether this supply is sufficient to meet near-term housing needs. If the approved

units are deemed adequate, an immediate expansion of settlement boundaries may not be necessary.

- The Township can take a strategic and measured approach, considering to defer expansion decisions until the next Official Plan review in five years. At that stage, a reassessment of growth projections, market conditions, and servicing capacity can guide any future amendments to the Official Plan to accommodate additional expansion if needed.

2. Prime Agricultural Area

- The Township is committed to driving agricultural viability by encouraging on-farm diversified uses and value-added activities in line with provincial guidelines.
- The integrity of agricultural systems will be preserved, ensuring connectivity and minimizing fragmentation beyond soil classification considerations.
- The Township can promote Agri-tourism uses, such as farm-related tourism activities and limited accommodation options like bed-and-breakfasts, to enhance farm operations and increase public awareness of agricultural practices.
- Additional Residential Units (ARUs) will be facilitated within prime agricultural areas as permitted under PPS 2024, ensuring alignment with provincial policies.

3. Additional Residential Units (ARUs)

- In accordance with Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022, up to two additional residential units (ARUs) are permitted as-of-right on properties within fully serviced settlement areas in Ontario.
- As per the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) 2024, two ARUs are also permitted on prime agricultural areas, subject to specific conditions. The Township currently grants such approvals through Minor Variance (MV) applications and can be incorporated in official plan and further in zoning by-law.
- The Township will be identifying the feasibility of permitting ARUs on unserviced or partially serviced settlement areas. General policies can be established through the Official Plan, with zoning regulations further refining implementation.

4. Employment Areas

- Employment uses exclude retail, office, institutional, and commercial uses as per new PPS 2024.
- Considering provincial definition changes, Township will be revisiting appropriate areas for a range of commercial uses that support the day-to-day needs of the community.
- The Township can identify areas, particularly within prime settlement zones, for potential redevelopment or land-use changes to support convenient commercial development.
- The Township will encourage the intensification of employment uses and compatible, compact, mixed-use development to support the achievement of complete communities.

5. GIS Integration and Public Accessibility

- Official Plan schedules will be transitioned from static PDF documents to interactive GIS-based formats, ensuring integration with the County GIS system.
- Public access can be enhanced by providing a user-friendly interface where Staff and residents can view Official Plan designations and related policies with a single click, improving transparency and efficiency.

6. Future role of the County of Simcoe Official Plan

- The Township is proactively considering how potential provincial decisions on County planning authority may impact the new Official Plan. The Township may integrate applicable County OP policies or adopt sections of the existing County OP on an interim basis.

7. Parkland Dedication

- The Township is ensuring that changes to the Planning Act regarding parkland dedication rates are incorporated into the new Official Plan. Adjustments to the Township's parkland dedication by-law, including land dedication and cash-in-lieu contributions, are being strategically aligned with future development needs.
- The Township is reinforcing its commitment to parkland over cash in lieu by exploring incentives for on-site parkland dedication and proactively planning for future parkland acquisition, ensuring alignment with provincial policies while supporting sustainable community growth.

8. Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP)

- Confirmation that the proposed policies implementing the ORMCP are accurately reflected in the new Official Plan and minimize duplication to prevent potential policy conflicts if the province amends the ORMCP.

9. Integrate the Township's new Strategic Plan

- The Township has adopted a new strategic plan for its residents. The new Official Plan will be structured in alignment with the Strategic Plan to bring broader Township directions to the forefront of planning decisions.

Next Steps

The stages for refining and adopting the Official Plan have been finalized by Staff after discussions with both internal team members and County staff. However, these timelines may change if expansion is required. In such cases, an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) will be necessary to modify the County's Official Plan, which will then be subject to approval by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This expansion will impact the timelines, triggering the County OPA amendments and the related studies required as part of the amendment procedure.

Please see the table below for the Official Plan details:

Stage	Description	Timeline
1. Gap Analysis	- Review the material submitted by the consultant to identify any gaps based on recent changes and policies that are no longer applicable.	March - 2025
2. Refinement of the Draft Official Plan (Version 3)	- Incorporate feedback from Draft Version 2. - Integrate recent planning changes into the new draft. - Generate schedules.	May - 2025
3. Host an Open House/Statutory Public Meeting	- Engage residents and stakeholders for final input.	June - 2025
4. Finalize the Official Plan	- Address comments from the public meeting and Council.	September - 2025
5. Council Adoption	- Present the finalized plan for formal approval and adoption.	November – 2025
6. County's Package	-The Official Plan (OP) will undergo a final review, with ultimate approval resting with the County.	December- 2025

The timelines provided are subject to change based on provincial planning legislation, settlement boundary expansion, or comments received during the process.

The gap analysis of the current materials, including the work completed by the consultant and recent changes, is underway. Staff aim to maintain continuous engagement with the public and stakeholders through the Township's website, where all updates and developments will be uploaded in the coming months.

The County's planning staff will be involved at every stage to provide guidance and support. Once the draft document and schedules are adopted by Council, they will be submitted to the County for review and approval as required under the Planning Act. Approval of the new Township OP may be undertaken by the province should the planning authority of the County change based on recent planning legislation.

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