

# What is an Official Plan?

## Official Plans 101

An Official Plan (or OP as it is sometimes called) is a policy document that guides the short-term and long-term development in your community. It applies to all lands within the municipal boundary and the policies within it provide direction for the size and location of land uses, provision of



municipal services and facilities, and preparation of regulatory by-laws to control the development and use of land. These

types of policies are considered necessary to promote orderly growth and compatibility among land uses. An official plan may address issues such as where new housing or industry can be located; where roads, watermains and sewers will be needed; and what parts of your community will grow.

Generally speaking, an Official Plan consists of three parts:

- **Policies** that describe specific uses that are allowed in each designation, and criteria for evaluating specific types of applications or developments (new plans of subdivision, for example)
- **Schedules** (or maps) of all lands in the municipality, with colours or patterns used to represent each land use designation
- **Appendices** which provide further information, add clarification and are contained in the document for ease of reference

### Is there a difference between an Official Plan and Zoning By-Law?

Yes! An Official Plan and a Zoning By-Law are completely separate documents, although they do work together and complement each other.

An Official Plan sets out a community's vision and goals for the future. It ensures that new development and growth considers a broad range of interests and perspectives and that land use planning decisions reflect local values. If you are interested in long term growth forecasts, future development patterns, and strategies for protecting resources, an Official Plan is the document you should consult.

Zoning By-Laws, on the other hand, put the Official Plan into effect and provide for its day-to-day administration. Zoning By-Laws are legally enforceable, and construction or new development that doesn't comply with a zoning by-law is not allowed, and the municipality will refuse to issue a building permit. Zoning By-Laws set out detailed requirements such as minimum lot areas, maximum building height and number of parking spaces that need to be provided.



### What about a zone and a designation, are they the same?

No, and it is very common for these terms to be confused.

A zone is a term used to describe the applicable category in a Zoning By-Law. A designation is a word used to describe a land use category in an Official Plan. Every property within the County, and across Ontario, has both a zone and a designation that is applicable to it.

Misuse of the terms can create some confusion, particularly if you're talking to a Planner (we are a very particular bunch!). It could lead to discussions about separate documents and processes, which is why it's important to understand that they mean different things.

### **What is a County Component and a Local Component?**

We refer to the County Official Plan as a hybrid. There are some sections (the County Component) that apply to all eight Townships within the County. And then there are other sections (the Local Component) that currently apply only to four Townships: Asphodel-Norwood, Douro-Dummer, North Kawartha and Selwyn. Policies in the Local Component are Township specific and reflect each Township's goals toward future development; the Local Component essentially works as a Township Official Plan.

### **Why is the County creating a new Official Plan?**

The Planning Act, which regulates all land use planning in Ontario, requires municipalities to review their Official Plan every five years. The County is overdue for this review and, after having looked at available options, decided to undertake a comprehensive review and develop a new Plan. It is intended that the new Official Plan will be more user-friendly, and will meet both Provincial and local directives.

This project will cover both the County and Local Components, as described above. In fact, other municipalities have expressed interest in joining the Local Component so the new document may serve more than the current four Townships.

### **How long will it take to create the new Official Plan?**

This is a big project. Considering that it will be six Official Plans all in one (the County Component plus the Local Component serving at least five Townships), and it will be undertaken by County Planning Department staff who have other regular duties, we have estimated a generous time-frame of about two years.

### **Where can I find more general information about Official Plans?**

Citizens Guide to Official Plans:  
<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1759.aspx>

### **Staying Informed**

Keep up-to-date on the status of our Official Plan Project. New information will be released as it becomes available.

Follow us on social media!



Watch our website!  
[County Official Plan Project Page](#)

### **Who can I contact if I would like to find out more about the County's new Official Plan, or I have comments or suggestions to make?**

You can contact the County Planning Department by calling 705-743-0380 or emailing [planning@ptbocounty.ca](mailto:planning@ptbocounty.ca).

Our website will be a great resource as the project moves forward. Please monitor it for new information and/or opportunities to provide your input:

<https://www.ptbocounty.ca/en/growing/new-county-op.aspx>