

## **What is the County's Official Plan?**

The County of Essex Official Plan lays out a long-term vision for how the land and resources will be managed for the upcoming 30 years until 2052. The County is projected to grow by more than 70,000 persons over this time and to add 30,000 new jobs. The new County Official Plan will need to designate sufficient land to accommodate this projected growth.

The updated plan will include new land use policies that provide direction to landowners, business owners, developers, homebuilders, and the community at large on matters such as:

- how communities will expand and be serviced, how and where new building lots will be created, and how growth is managed;
- the land resources that will be needed to meet the projected increase in new population, new households and new employment;
- policies for making housing more affordable for families and individuals that are looking to purchase or rent a home;
- methods to encourage land uses and activities that contribute to vibrant rural communities;
- policies to be good stewards of important agricultural and natural heritage lands;
- policies that will protect people and property from more frequent flood events and other hazards, and build resiliency into our communities;
- a policy approach that will give people mobility choices so that they can continue to safely travel to and from work, to visit friends and family, and to live their daily lives, using all forms of transportation that meets their needs, including but not limited to cars, trucks, buses, bicycles, and walking;

The updated Official Plan will give county residents of all ages the ability to live healthier and more active lifestyles in towns, villages, hamlets and rural areas that have access to a greater diversity of employment and housing opportunities.

They will also be living in a county that values clean water and green spaces that

will be protected by the policies of this Official Plan for their children and grandchildren to also enjoy.

Official Plans are created with significant public input so that residents of a municipality can help shape the sort of community in which they want to live. How can we provide more affordable housing? Is protecting farmland a priority? Are greenspaces important and should we do more to protect these areas? These are the sorts of questions that are dealt with in an Official Plan.

An Official Plan is a broad policy document. It is not an enforcement tool.

The Province of Ontario requires all municipalities in Ontario to have an Official Plan.

[Read more about Official Plans on the Province of Ontario website.](#)

[Read more about the County's Official Plan on our Official Plan review page!](#)

### **Why is the County of Essex reviewing the Official Plan?**

The Province of Ontario expects municipalities to regularly update their Official Plans to ensure that they conform to the latest Provincial Policy Statement. The most recent Provincial Policy Statement was adopted by the Province in 2020 so the County must now review and update its Official Plan.

As well, communities grow and develop over time so it essential that Official Plans be regularly updated to address local priorities and changing community needs as identified by residents and duly-elected Councillors as part of a comprehensive public engagement process. Reviewing and updating Official Plans is nothing new and all municipalities in Ontario are required to do it.

The County has had an Official Plan since 2005 and the County's current Official Plan was adopted and approved in 2014, based on background work that started in 2009. The review of the Official Plan now underway was launched in February of 2022.

This process of updating the Official Plan requires extensive research and consultations with the public and other stakeholders. A special public meeting to gather feedback and discuss any issues or matters that should be considered during the process is required.

## **What Happened at the Special Public Meeting on April 5<sup>th</sup>?**

The meeting on April 5 to gather public input on the Official Plan had to be adjourned shortly after it started because of the large number of attendees, which made it difficult for people inside and outside of Council Chambers to hear what was being said or to take part in the proceedings. Many of the attendees voiced opposition to the concept of 15-minute cities even though 15-minute cities were not on the agenda and are not mentioned anywhere in the Official Plan documents.

[Watch a report on the meeting and the 15-minute city issue from CBC Windsor.](#)

## **What is a 15-Minute City?**

The term 15-Minute City was coined by Carlos Morena, a professor from France. It is a planning concept calling for the development of communities where residents would have access to amenities and services, like schools, shops, banks and parks within a 15-minute bike ride or walk from their home. Some counter opinions believe that the 15-minute City concept could facilitate lockdowns and be used as a tool to restrict movements, track carbon emissions and monitor people.

There is no mention of 15-Minute Cities in the County's Official Plan or any of the background documents prepared as part of the Official Plan Review process.

[Read this statement put out about 15-Minute Cities by the Canadian Institute of Planners and Territorial Institutes and Associations on Recent Threats to Planning Professionals and Policies](#)

[Visit the County's Official Plan Review page for more information.](#)

[Read this CBC Windsor story about 15-Minute Cities.](#)

## **Will there be another public meeting?**

Yes, the County of Essex will hold a virtual, public meeting on Wednesday, June 7, 2023 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The meeting will be streamed live on the County of Essex website at the following link: <https://video.isilive.ca/countyofessex/live.html>.

Members of the public who want to attend the meeting virtually can [register using this form](#) and will be provided via email a link to attend the meeting.

Members of the public who wish to provide comment on the Official Plan during the meeting must also register to be a delegate prior to the meeting [using this online form](#). Delegations will be limited to five minutes.

### **Why is this meeting being held virtually?**

Holding a virtual meeting open to all provides a vehicle for meaningful and respectful dialogue about the County's Official Plan and will help ensure that all opinions can be freely shared and considered as part of the Official Plan Review process. Participation in a virtual public meeting will not be limited by the capacity restrictions of Council Chambers in the Essex County Civic Centre and maximizes the potential for meaningful public engagement.

### **I don't want to be a delegate at the meeting. How else can I share my views?**

This meeting is only one way to comment on the Official Plan review process, which is in its early stages.

There will be additional opportunities throughout the Official Plan review process for the public to review draft documents and provide comments to Council and staff.

Written comments can be provided at anytime via email to [OfficialPlanReview@countyofessex.ca](mailto:OfficialPlanReview@countyofessex.ca).

More information, including a timeline of the review process and two background reports prepared as part of the review's initial phase, is available at [countyofessex.ca/OfficialPlanReview](http://countyofessex.ca/OfficialPlanReview).