

Official Plan Update Discussion Papers

July 2020



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Engagement with Indigenous Peoples

The history of indigenous peoples in Collingwood, both prior to and after contact with Europeans, is reflected in the cultural perspective and oral history of the people who have occupied and harvested these and area lands and waters. There is a rich archaeological record of indigenous occupation and use in the area. This record readily acknowledges that, although this is one of the more studied areas, the extent of the history of occupation and land use in the area by indigenous peoples has yet to be fully uncovered. As it stands, the record we do have matches the written accounts of early European contact with indigenous people that documented settlement by thousands of people living in communities across the area in complex societies with unique social and cultural perspectives. This history is an evolving one and reflects the dynamics of indigenous land use patterns, the geo political and post-colonial legacy of interaction with other cultures and self-determination to the present day.

To recognize the important contributions of indigenous peoples in Collingwood, each formal meeting of the Town of Collingwood Council begins with an evolving acknowledgement of indigenous peoples that generally runs as follows:

“Today we acknowledge that this event is taking place on the traditional territory of the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, including the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, and Ojibwe peoples, and on lands connected with the Lake Simcoe-Nottawasaga Treaty of 1818. This is the home of a diverse range of Indigenous peoples whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.”

This acknowledgement and its spirit extends to the Official Plan Update. The Town recognizes those indigenous peoples who reside in, have historical connections to and contribute to the community in Collingwood and the surrounding area today. The Town acknowledges the historical and cultural perspective of indigenous peoples and their unique relationship with the land. As the Official Plan Update focuses on where and how land is used in Collingwood, in this respect, the Official Plan Update can benefit from the unique perspective of First Nations and Metis people. To this end, the Town is reaching out to indigenous people with connections to the area to seek opportunities for engagement.

The Provincial Policy Statement (the Province’s lead policy document on the land use regime in Ontario) sets out and prioritizes matters of Provincial interest and requires that municipalities conform or have regard to these accordingly. Through the Official Plan Update the Town will seek to fulfill the directives of the Province of Ontario as set out in the Provincial Policy Statement by reaching out to area First Nations and Metis to:

- > Engage with Indigenous communities and coordinate on land use planning matters; and,
- > Engage with Indigenous communities and consider their interests when identifying, protecting and managing cultural heritage and archaeological resources.

At a time of reflection on the relationship with indigenous peoples both past, present and moving forward, the Town seeks to fulfill this direction and, where possible, help continue on the path of reconciliation.

00 Introduction and Purpose of the Discussion Papers

What will your Collingwood look like over the next 20 years?

The Town of Collingwood is completing its Official Plan Update, to develop a modernized planning policy framework guiding the future evolution and development of the Town. This Official Plan Update project provides an opportunity to refresh the vision for the Town, recognize Collingwood's unique identity, respond to Collingwood's evolution as a community, respond to changing circumstances and plan for the future.

The Official Plan is an important policy document that contains a broad range of community goals, objectives and policies that provide guidance and direction to landowners, potential investors, land developers, home builders, and the community at large. It includes policies related to numerous community-building elements, such as housing, commercial and industrial development, heritage, the environment, parks and open space, transportation, infrastructure and urban design. The New Collingwood Official Plan (NCOP) is required to conform with the County of Simcoe Official Plan and the Provincial Growth Plan and be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

As part of the preliminary phases of the Official Plan Update, the project team undertook a detailed background review to gain an understanding of what are some of the key issues in Collingwood, how is the Collingwood context evolving and what are residents, business owners and developers concerned about. A critical part of this background review also involved reviewing what the current County and Provincial policies say, and what needs to be reflected in the NCOP.

The results of this comprehensive background work is presented in the 8 Discussion Papers. The purpose of these Discussion Papers is to organize the project team's findings in a logical manner, provide access to these findings to all who are interested in the Official Plan Update, and serve as the basis for obtaining additional public and stakeholder input. The Discussion Papers will set the stage for the next step of preparing an Options and Recommendations Report and, ultimately, preparing the NCOP.

The 8 Discussion Papers are designed to act as 'stand-alone' documents, with each including the same introduction and context information throughout. However, the topics addressed through each of the Discussion Papers are interconnected, and therefore gaining a comprehensive overview of specific topics may require reference to multiple Discussion Papers.

Responding to the unique global event now impacting many facets of our everyday lives, the project team also prepared a 9th document to outline some of the potential land use planning considerations resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. As this public health crisis is still underway and there remain many unknowns, this document is not intended to outline definitive impacts, and is instead intended to start a conversation to explore this issue.

The next two sub-sections introduce how to shape the Official Plan through policy language, and an overview of the Collingwood context. More detail on land use planning in Ontario and the role of the Official Plan is found in the Appendix.

Levels of Control: Regulate - Manage - Facilitate

It will be important to consider the specific language of the policies in the NCOP. Each policy provides direction on how it is to be implemented, how it is situated within the broader Town-wide context, and how it relates to other policies. The choice of language in the NCOP is crucial.

For each topic to be included within the NCOP, with a few exceptions, a decision about what to control and the level of control to be exercised will need to be made. The language used in the NCOP will distinguish between the types of policies and the nature of implementation. The identification of the “level of control” is an important discussion because it will involve decisions about how the NCOP will be applied throughout Collingwood, particularly in consideration of achieving particular elements of the vision and principles.

- > **Regulate** - The Official Plan can include both aspirational and regulatory elements. At the regulatory level, the Official Plan includes policies that specifically identify what is to be done, and how it is to be done. The wording of regulatory policies tends to include words like ‘require’, ‘will’, ‘shall’ and ‘must’, identifying elements of the policy framework that are mandatory, and that compel a landowner to do things in conformity with the policy in a very specific way. When a policy is considered at the regulatory level there is typically little room for interpretive flexibility;
- > **Manage** - A policy framework that is somewhere in between the regulatory and facilitative levels is considered to be more focussed on a management function. Words used here include ‘permit’, ‘prefer’, ‘may’ and ‘should’. This more permissive approach

talks about principles and uses words that have inherent interpretive flexibility. Generally, the less specific and less narrow the policy framework is, there is less control exerted over development and there is more flexibility to allow things to happen; and,

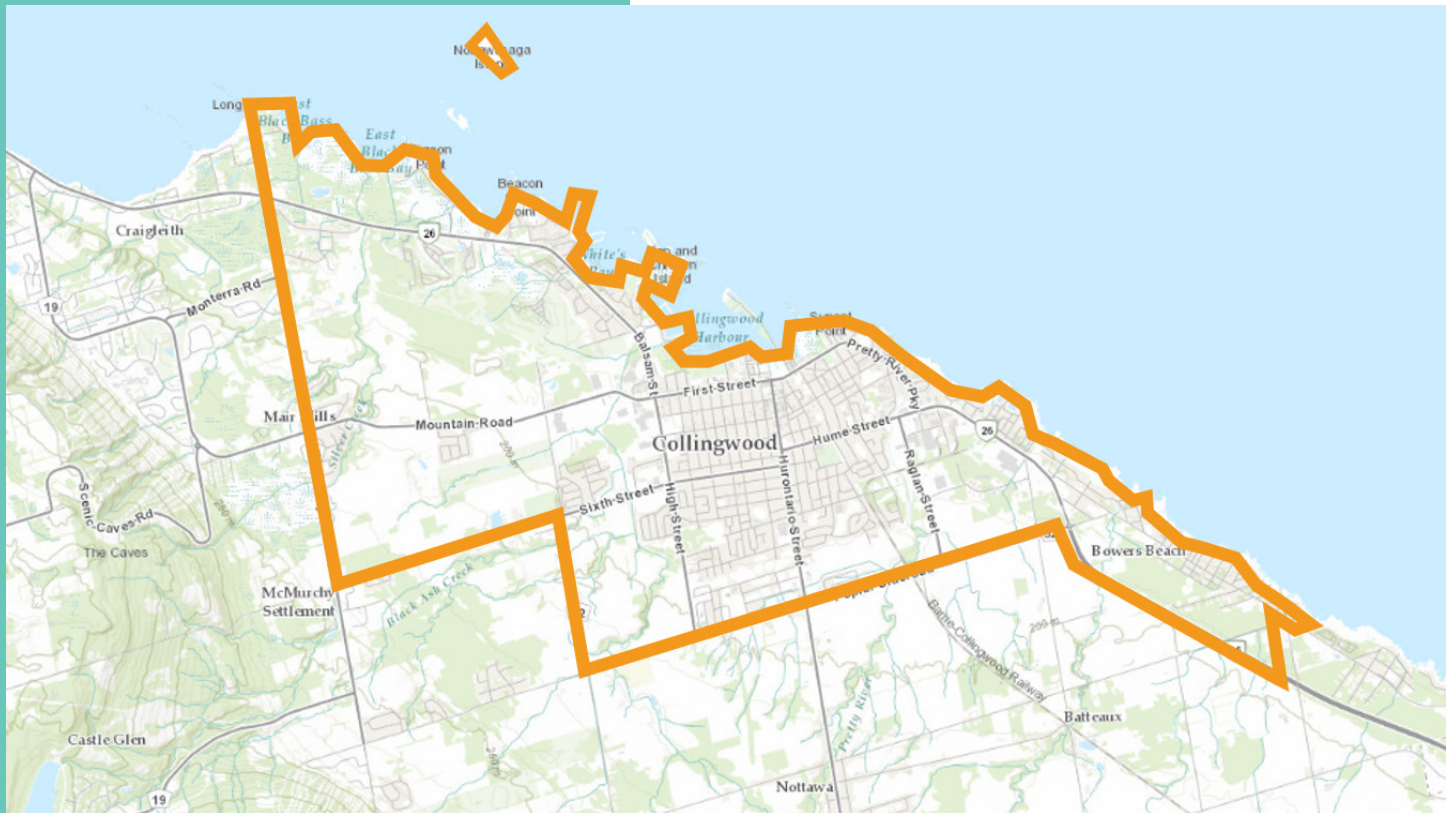
- > **Facilitate** - The Official Plan is, by nature, an aspirational document, providing a road map for the Town over a long-term time horizon. Within the NCOP, there will be town-building elements that are desirable, but more difficult to achieve due to market responsiveness, or fiscal constraints. The NCOP in considering its regulatory and management functions, should also be considered a powerful tool to facilitate positive change. The facilitative element of the NCOP is expected to use words like ‘encourage’, ‘desire’ and, in some cases, ‘incent’. Where a particular town-building element is desirable, but is typically difficult to achieve, the policy framework needs to move to its facilitation function. The facilitation function generally deals with a spectrum of key elements, including:
 - + Establish the environment for change;
 - + Reduce the costs associated with development; and,
 - + Reduce the inherent risk of the development approval process.

The Town will play an important role in the facilitative aspects of the NCOP, and in doing so all of the identified key elements noted above need to be considered, and some of those elements must find their way into the NCOP.

Collingwood Context

The Town of Collingwood is located along the shoreline of Nottawasaga Bay in the northwest corner of the County of Simcoe, herein referred to as “Simcoe County.” The municipality’s total area amounts to an estimated 3,300 hectares (8,150 acres), and is generally bordered by Highway 26 and Poplar Sideroad and Sixth Street to the south, Simcoe Road 34/Grey Roads 19/21 to the west, and the Nottawasaga Bay shoreline to the north and east. Surrounding municipalities to Collingwood include The Blue Mountains to the west, Clearview to the south, and Wasaga Beach to the far east.

Town of Collingwood Municipal Boundary



Collingwood Context Continued

Collingwood functions as a major commercial centre for northwest Simcoe County and northeast Grey County. As one of the larger settlement areas within Simcoe County, Collingwood offers a wide range of residential, commercial, institutional, and recreational uses; and has continued to evolve into a well-balanced community for residents and visitors. The Town of Collingwood possesses the following key locational characteristics:

- > **Transportation Access:** Collingwood is primarily accessed by way of Highway 26, which connects the Town to Wasaga Beach and Barrie to the east, and Owen Sound and other South Georgian Bay communities to the west. Further, Highway 26 is the primary route for traffic travelling to Blue Mountain Resort and other area ski destinations. Public transit in Collingwood is operated by Colltrans, which includes three frequent bus transit routes within the Town. A less frequent Collingwood-Wasaga Beach Link route to connect the two municipalities is operated by Simcoe County LINX. For the most part, however, Collingwood is an auto oriented community;
- > **Local Institutions:** The Town is home to the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital and Georgian College – South Georgian Bay Campus, which offers full-time academic programming in hospitality, personal support work, and computer programming, among others. Both of these institutions provide existing and future residents of Collingwood with access to well-paying jobs as well as essential services;
- > **Local Commercial Uses:** Because of its role as a regional centre and tourism and outdoor recreation destination, Collingwood has an abundance of commercial nodes with a diverse range of retail/service commercial offerings. Most notably, the western commercial district contains large format retailers/facilities including Canadian Tire, Galaxy Cinema, Walmart, The Home Depot, and Winners. Hurontario Street functions as Collingwood’s historic downtown and offers a variety of restaurants, boutique shops, and art galleries; and,
- > **Outdoor Recreation Amenities:** Collingwood is well situated on the shoreline of Nottawasaga Bay, and in proximity to prominent ski and snowboard destinations. Further, the area’s extensive trail networks, harbour, scenic caves, golf courses, and beaches have firmly established the Town as a four-season tourism destination and has attracted a significant visitor and seasonal population.

02 Key Topics for Discussion

Things to Think About

COVID-19 is an event that is currently the focus of everyone's attention. The uncertainty surrounding the pandemic is creating a lot of fear about the future, and how our lives will be affected in the short, medium and longer terms. However, at this point in time, COVID-19 in itself, is not considered a major long-term planning issue. It will, in the opinion of many, be largely resolved in 6 months, a year, 18 months.

Land use planning does, however, need to respond to the lessons learned from the pandemic, and how mid and long-term planning will be ready for the "next one", whether that be another health crisis, or a natural disaster, or some other human-made crisis. That discussion is about ensuring that communities are resilient, and are ready to appropriately respond to whatever the next crisis might be.

One lesson learned in the current COVID-19 crisis is about how to function in a world with self-isolation and social distancing and the limitations those activities put on traditional social interactions and the functionality of the economy. It is believed that these current social measures may have, in fact, hastened the realization of some trends that have been on the radar for some time, including:

- > **The need for bricks and mortar retail space** - How much per capita retail space will be needed in the future? Will it be functionally replaced by on-line shopping? What format will survive? What would the future role of historic downtowns be should there be a less substantial retail presence?
- > **The need for formal office space** - How will business, professional and health care offices function in the future? Will there be a need for formal office space? Will the per person space needs in an office continue to reduce, or will they increase to facilitate social distancing? Will work-from-home become predominant? How will face to face meeting requirements be met? How will security issues be overcome? Will dwelling unit design change to accommodate work from home? Will high speed internet be available to facilitate work from home?

Other land use planning topics for discussion will now include:

- > **The role of schools and other educational facilities** - Will there be a need for formal classroom spaces? Will schools require outdoor/indoor activity space? Will studies be on-line, with a greater emphasis on home schooling? How will that impact household activities, the need for day care and the ability to have 2-income households? How will peer-to-peer socialization be facilitated? How will the quality of education, equitable access to online education/technology be ensured?
- > **The role of cultural facilities** - Will art galleries and museums be needed, or will they become on-line experiences only?
- > **The scale and design of community facilities and public open spaces** - Will there be a need for sports fields, arenas and community centres? How will outdoor public spaces be designed? Will there be a need for social gathering spaces? Will parks become more passive? Will parks become bigger/smaller?
- > **The scale and design of public realm elements** - will sidewalks become wider? How will bike lanes and trails be incorporated into community design? Will there need to be more collector and arterial roads to accommodate emergency vehicles and other traffic? Will there be a need for fewer traffic lanes as a result of increased working from home?
- > **The use of public transit facilities** - Will transit ridership decline? Will rush hours be eliminated with people staggering their work hours? Will public transit systems be replaced with other forms of more personal mobility?

In addition to those land use planning topics for discussion, one of the key questions will be about **the future of the Ontario Health Care System** - How will the Health Care System prepare for "the next one", whether it be a pandemic, natural disaster, or some other human-made crisis. Will there be staff resources and appropriate equipment? Will there be a plan to expand facilities and services when that is required?

Fundamental to the discussion is about the **changes that are required to seniors long-term care facilities**. How can these existing facilities be safeguarded to ensure the health and safety of their residents? Will the current form of seniors care proliferate, or will a new model of care be developed (age in place, for example)?

Urban vs Suburban - Not the End of Density

Interestingly, some believe that the COVID-19 problem is a result of concentrations of population and, specifically, about the density of development. According to a recent study published in the American Planning Journal that surveyed the effects of density on the COVID-19 infection and mortality rates in 913 U.S Metropolitan counties, density is not significantly correlated with infection rates. While it is commonly presumed that density leads to closer interaction between residents, thus spreading the disease faster, there is little evidence to support this. This could in part be due to the fact that higher density urban centres tend to offer better access to health care and stronger public health departments, as well as the tendency for stricter adherence to social distancing guidelines in denser areas. While the study focuses on the American context, it is worth noting that Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore, all cities with very high density urban centres, have successfully contained COVID-19, with fewer than 100 deaths amongst them.

Further, history has shown that urban centres have considerable capacity to rebound from the economic and public health impacts of pandemics. For example, Florence, in the 14th century struggled with the bubonic plague that killed a significant percentage of its population, it emerged from that pandemic and launched the renaissance. In the 1790s Philadelphia was hit with yellow fever, and lost 10 percent of its population. It remains one of the most important cities in the United States.

The resilience of higher density urban centres through history is rooted in the fact that human interaction and community connection will always be a core part of both our economies and our daily lives. Human beings like to mingle, and to

be close to the action. We learn from both formal and informal social interactions.

In addressing the COVID-19 pandemic from a planning perspective, it is therefore important that we recognize the myriad benefits of density as a driver of community and, importantly, economic resiliency. Research has also shown that higher density urban centres result in a host of positive outcomes for the environment (including a positive response to climate change), the economy and for residents. In general, higher density urban centres:

- > Are economic and social agglomerations that support the highest order of health care, educational, cultural and recreational activities and events. Higher density urban centres also support more, and higher order restaurant, retail and service commercial uses;
- > Facilitate multiple mobility options by supporting a mixture of land uses in proximity that promotes alternative forms of transportation including transit, cycling and walking. With more options and better access to essential services, including access to food, the impact of the number of people in proximity is mitigated by the multiple choices that they can make; and,
- > Are the most sustainable way to accommodate people and the economic and social opportunities that they support because:
 - + They are comparatively efficient in the use of land, requiring less land to accommodate anticipated growth;
 - + They are comparatively less expensive to develop, requiring less roads and piped infrastructure to serve growth;
 - + They have comparatively fewer impacts on the natural heritage system; and,
 - + They can decrease the per unit land costs, and promote smaller dwelling units which, together, has a positive impact on housing affordability.

On the other hand, a return to the lower density suburban development model that characterized

Ontario communities from the 50s through to the 90s comes with a host of environmental problems, and is one of the key reasons why the world finds itself where it does with respect to, among other things, climate change.

Conclusion

In the end, the COVID-19 pandemic has given us all time to take stock of the choices about how and where to live. The COVID-19 pandemic is neither an Armageddon scenario, nor is it something to be ignored. The world, and its social norms will never be exactly the same, but that does not mean that there necessarily needs to be a paradigm shift in how our communities are designed and developed.

There does need, however, to be an understanding about how to move forward, and what it all might mean. Part of that discussion is understanding the impacts of decisions that are made in the short-term, and particularly, with respect to the Collingwood Official Plan, how decisions about the future will affect the design and built form of our communities in the mid to long-terms. That is a discussion fundamentally about balance and resilience. Ensuring how to anticipate future disasters, and to avoid or minimize their impacts, balanced against the equally important issues of mitigating climate change, environmental and economic sustainability, and the quality of life of the existing and future residents of Collingwood.

04 Next Steps

Collectively, the issues explored through this Discussion Paper will serve as the basis for obtaining additional public and stakeholder feedback, and will act as a starting point for preparing a number of options and ultimately, recommendations for the planning framework to be included in the new Collingwood Official Plan.

The subsequent Options and Recommendations Report will explore options for underlying ‘philosophies,’ which will provide a foundation for how planning issues are to be approached in Collingwood, as well as options for addressing a number of other ‘special issues’ that have come up in this process to-date.

Appendix

Land Use Planning in Ontario

Land use planning is the process of decision-making for the management of our land and resources. Land use planning is regulated under Ontario's policy led land use planning system, which is given legal authority under the Planning Act. The Planning Act defines:

- > How the land use planning system works;
- > Who makes decisions;
- > How to resolve disputes and seek public input; and,
- > Provincial and municipal roles in planning administration.

Land use planning helps each community to set development goals while keeping social, economic and environmental factors in mind. It helps decide where in our communities homes and factories should be built; where parks and schools should be located; and where roads, sewers and other essential services should be provided. Good land use planning leads to orderly growth and the efficient provision of services. It touches all of us and helps us to have the kind of community we want.

The Town's Role in Land Use Planning

The Town of Collingwood has a major role in land use planning. The Town uses the Official Plan, Zoning By-law, development application approval processes, and transportation and infrastructure planning, among other tools, to help decide how to grow and develop, while keeping important social, economic and environmental concerns in mind. The approvals processes for land use planning and land development balance the interests of individual property owners with the wider interests and objectives of the whole community.

Role of the Official Plan

Collingwood's Official Plan is a key element of Ontario's policy led planning and development system, however, it is not the only element.

The Collingwood Official Plan is required to conform with the County of Simcoe Official Plan, and both of those Plans are required to conform with/be consistent with a host of Provincial legislation, plans, policies and regulations, not the least of which are the Planning Act, the Growth Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement.

The Official Plan provides the overarching policy framework within which growth and development is to proceed over the defined planning horizon. The Official Plan includes a vision and principles, and a policy framework that is aimed at achieving the vision and principles over time.

The Official Plan is given a more legal framework through the Implementing Zoning By-law. The Implementing Zoning By-law provides very specific regulations and provisions that define what, and where development is to occur, and how it is to be configured (height and massing) on any given property. For projects where the Town may wish to exert control even more specifically over the architectural details, colours and materials, as well as landscape treatments - the Site Plan Approval process is implemented.

The New Collingwood Official Plan (NCOP) is the most important vehicle for achieving comprehensive, integrated and long-term planning within the Town. The NCOP will:

- > Provide policy direction on matters of growth and development within the Town. It sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land. It also supports the overarching goal to enhance the quality of life for all residents of Collingwood;
- > Provide a framework for comprehensive, integrated, place-based and long-term planning that supports and integrates the principles of strong communities, a clean and healthy environment and economic growth, for the long term;
- > Support improved land use planning and management, which contributes to a more effective and efficient land use planning system within the Town; and,
- > Coordinate cross-boundary matters to complement the actions of other planning authorities and promote mutually beneficial solutions.

