

TOWNSHIP OF Wilmot

NEW OFFICIAL PLAN
Urban Design Background Report

DRAFT

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The Planning Partnership

NETHERY Planning

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1.0 Introduction and Purpose of the Discussion Paper

This section provides an overview of what an Official Plan is and how it is used. It introduces the Township's new Official Plan process, the discussion papers, and the purpose of this discussion paper.

1.1 What is an Official Plan?

An Official Plan is a comprehensive document, intended for long-term use, that shapes the future of a municipality by establishing how land in the community will be used. It outlines the goals, objectives, and policies for sustainable, efficient, growth within Wilmot Township. All development and public works in the township must conform to the Official Plan.

The legislative ability for municipalities to enact an Official Plan arises from the Provincial *Planning Act.* All policies in the Official Plan must conform to this higher-order Provincial legislation. The Township of Wilmot is in the process of crafting a new Official Plan which will guide growth and development within Wilmot to the year 2051. For the past two decades, growth in Wilmot has been shaped by both the Region of Waterloo's Official Plan and the Wilmot Official Plan. With recent provincial legislation that removed planning authority from the Region of Waterloo, Wilmot has the opportunity to create a made for Wilmot Official Plan. This will incorporate the best of our past and present Official Plan policies, while charting out the future of Wilmot to the year 2051. A new Official Plan is being created to replace the existing Township and Regional Official Plans and align with the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement.

The new Official Plan will build on the Township's long-term vision for growth with a renewed focus on complete communities. This will include a range and mix of housing, employment opportunities, schools, recreational amenities, options for servicing, roads, and active transportation while protecting natural heritage features and farmland.

1.2 Township of Wilmot New Official Plan Process

The creation of Wilmot's New Official Plan will occur over a year long period with several touchpoints for community consultation.



*Figure **1**: Graphic showing the Wilmot New Official Plan Process*

Phase 1 of the project included drafting the Consultation Strategy and early conversations the project team held with Wilmot residents to inform the process. A series of one-on-one conversations were had between residents and interested members of the public to lay the foundation for the project. Notice of the project initiation was provided to agencies and Indigenous communities. The Township of Wilmot project team hosted a booth at the 2025 New Hamburg Fall Fair, where we began to shape a vision for what Wilmot's new Official Plan could look like. Following those initial early touchpoints with the community, a formal Public Workshop was held on September 23, 2025, to gather thoughts from the public on the vision and fundamental principles that form the foundation of the new Official Plan.

Phase 2 of the Official Plan involves conducting Background Research and Study Preparation, which includes the release of seven draft discussion papers for public and stakeholder review and comment. At this time, a Special Meeting of Council will be held to formally introduce the project to the community and offer tangible research that will help focus community conversations on the themes of housing, commercial needs, employment, transportation, water and wastewater, stormwater management, and urban design. Based on public feedback, the draft discussion papers will be reviewed

and finalized. What we've heard will inform a series of policy directions which will inform Phase 3 of the project.

Phase 3 of Wilmot's new Official Plan is the drafting of policies and land use maps. These draft policies and maps will be published as draft and shared with Wilmot residents, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities for any further suggestions and input. A copy of the draft Official Plan will be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for their review as part of Phase 3 of the project.

Phase 4 of the project involves the formal adoption of Wilmot's new Official Plan by the Township of Wilmot's Council. Once Council adopts Wilmot's new Official Plan, the Official Plan will be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the Minister's review and approval. After ministerial approval, the Township's new Official Plan will be in effect and replace both existing Township and Regional Official Plans.

1.3 What are the Discussion Papers?

A series of seven background supporting studies have been developed to support the creation of Wilmot's new Official Plan. Each of the discussion papers covers a key theme for the project, including:

- Housing Needs Study
- Commercial Needs Analysis
- Employment Projections and Employment Land Needs Analysis
- Transportation
- Water, Wastewater Servicing Strategy
- Stormwater Servicing Strategy
- Urban Design

The discussion papers will form the basis of the first phase of consultation for the project and assist Wilmot Township in developing the preliminary policy directions for the new Official Plan.

1.4 Purpose of this Discussion Paper

This Discussion Paper examines Urban Design, Public Realm, Built Form, and Sustainability and is intended to generate discussion around places and spaces that enable active and healthy living, promoting excellence in urban design, and design best practices that celebrate the Township's diversity while contributing to resiliency in the face of a changing climate. As the Urban Areas will be the primary focus of future residential, employment, and commercial growth within the Township, with limited development occurring in the Rural Settlement Areas, the majority of the content is directed to Baden and New Hamburg.

This Discussion Paper sets forth several considerations and recommendations for urban design policies in Wilmot's new Official Plan and for a stand-alone urban design document, that will be a tool for the Township to ensure consistency in neighbourhood design.

2.0 Legislative Overview

This section provides an overview of the provincial legislative context which informs the basis of creating Wilmot's new Official Plan.

2.1 Planning Act

The *Planning Act* is the overarching Provincial legislation which governs land use planning in Ontario. It establishes the respective roles of the Province and municipalities regarding land use planning and provides the basis for municipalities to create and use various planning tools, such as Official Plans and Zoning By-laws. The Act also sets out regulations for how planning processes are to be carried out, including mandatory dates for the completion of tasks, such as deciding on a planning application and setting the date for a public meeting. Notably, in Section 2, the Act establishes "matters of provincial interest," which municipalities must have regard to when carrying out land use planning. These matters include (but are not limited to) protection of ecological systems, protection of agricultural and natural resources, conservation of cultural history, provision of a full range of housing, the accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the orderly development of safe and healthy communities. It is important to note that all planning decisions and policies made by a municipality (or other planning authority) must conform to the *Planning Act,* as well as provincial plans, as outlined in Section 2.1 of the Act. Further, Section 3 of the Act requires that all planning decisions shall be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement.

The *Planning Act, Part III – Official Plans* sets out how Official Plans shall be created by a municipality, with respect to content and process.

16 (1) An official plan shall contain,

(a) goals, objectives and policies established primarily to manage and direct physical change and the effects on the social, economic, built and natural environment of the municipality or part of it, or an area that is without municipal organization;

(a.1) such policies and measures as are practicable to ensure the adequate provision of affordable housing;

(b) a description of the measures and procedures for informing and obtaining the views of the public in respect of,

(i) proposed amendments to the official plan or proposed revisions of the plan,

(ii) proposed zoning by-laws,

(iii) proposed plans of subdivision, and

(iv) proposed consents under section 53; and

(c) such other matters as may be prescribed.

Section 17 of the *Planning Act* sets out that "*the Minister is the approval authority in respect of the approval of a plan as an official plan*" and outlines a prescribed process the Township of Wilmot must follow in the preparation of a new Official Plan. Specifically, the Township must provide for consultation and a public meeting, an open house, and adequate notice provided for each.

(15) In the course of the preparation of a plan, the council shall ensure that,

(a) the appropriate approval authority is consulted on the preparation of the plan and given an opportunity to review all supporting information and material and any other prescribed information and material, even if the plan is exempt from approval;

(b) the prescribed public bodies are consulted on the preparation of the plan and given an opportunity to review all supporting information and material and any other prescribed information and material;

(c) adequate information and material, including a copy of the current proposed plan, is made available to the public, in the prescribed manner, if any; and

(d) at least one public meeting is held for the purpose of giving the public an opportunity to make representations in respect of the current proposed plan. 2006, c. 23, s. 9 (2).

(16) If the plan is being revised under section 26 or amended in relation to a development permit system, the council shall ensure that at least one open house is held for the purpose of giving the public an opportunity to review and ask questions about the information and material made available under clause (15) (c).

The creation of Wilmot's new Official Plan must be done in conformity with the *Planning Act* and the legislated process outlined above.

2.2 Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

The Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 ("PPS") is a guiding policy document that provides direction on a variety of planning and land use matters in the province. The legal basis for conformity to the PPS is rooted in Section 3 of the *Planning Act,* which requires that all planning decisions be consistent with the minimum standards set out in the PPS. The Provincial Planning Statement outlines that "Official plans are the most important vehicle for implementation of the Provincial Planning Statement and for achieving comprehensive, integrated and long-term planning."

The PPS puts forward policy regarding housing, infrastructure, resource management, and public health. Pertinent policies for the new Wilmot Official Plan include adjustments to municipal planning boundaries, regulations regarding employment areas, agricultural protection, and population growth targets. Specific policy guidance is provided by the PPS, as it relates to planning for people and homes.

2.1.3 At the time of creating a new official plan and each official plan update, sufficient land shall be made available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for a time horizon of at least 20 years, but not more than 30 years, informed by provincial guidance. Planning for infrastructure,

public service facilities, strategic growth areas and employment areas may extend beyond this time horizon.

Furthermore, the PPS provides general policies for implementation and interpretation as it relates to the creation of Wilmot's new Official Plan.

6.1.5 Official plans shall identify provincial interests and set out appropriate land use designations and policies. Official plans shall provide clear, reasonable and attainable policies to protect provincial interests and facilitate development in suitable areas.

In order to protect provincial interests, planning authorities shall keep their official plans up-to date with the Provincial Planning Statement. The policies of the Provincial Planning Statement continue to apply after adoption and approval of an official plan.

While there are no specific policies on urban design, and that well-designed built form that provides for a high quality, safe, attractive and vibrant public space is a Provincial interest per Section 2(r) of the *Planning Act*, the PPS generally supports the creation of complete communities and well-designed development.

2.1.6 Planning authorities should support the achievement of complete communities by:

(a) accommodating an appropriate range and mix of land uses, housing options, transportation options with multimodal access, employment, public service facilities and other institutional uses (including schools and associated child care facilities, long term care facilities, places of worship and cemeteries), recreation, parks and open space, and other uses to meet long-term needs;

(b) improving accessibility for people of all ages and abilities by addressing land use barriers which restrict their full participation in society; and

(c) improving social equity and overall quality of life for people of all ages, abilities, and incomes, including equity-deserving groups.

Finally, once Wilmot's new Official Plan has been approved by the minister, the PPS sets out a requirement for ongoing monitoring of the Official Plan's implementation.

3.0 Local Urban Design Context

The following provides an overview of the Township's strategies, policies, and master plans, and how urban design is reflected or supported by recommendations, actions, or measures.

3.1 Waterloo's Regional Official Plan

The Waterloo Regional Official Plan, 2025 ("ROP") was the Official Plan of the Region of Waterloo, which is an upper-tier municipality that encompasses a federation of lower-tier municipalities, including the Township of Wilmot. Historically, the Region of Waterloo was the approval authority for the Township of Wilmot's Official Plan, and Wilmot was required to conform to that plan.

As of January 1, 2025, the Waterloo Regional Official Plan became a Local Plan of the Township of Wilmot. A new Official Plan is being created to replace the existing Township and Regional Official Plans and align with the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement. Wilmot's new Official Plan will incorporate the best of the Region of Waterloo's Official Plan policies, while charting out the future of Wilmot Township's growth to the year 2051.

The Region of Waterloo's Official Plan contained high-level policies which guided urban design implementation at the local Township level. These policies spoke briefly to:

- A focus on ensuring the development of high-quality urban form through site design and urban design standards that create an attractive and vibrant public realm.
- Supporting net-zero building development, accessible design, and sustainable transportation options, including pedestrian and cyclist movement.

More specific urban design policies took direction from the Region's Official Plan and are implemented through the Township of Wilmot's Official Plan.

3.2 Township of Wilmot Official Plan, 2024

It is important to understand how the current Township of Wilmot Official Plan addresses urban design, open spaces, and new development. The Official Plan, modified in 2024 through an Office Consolidation, establishes policies for reurbanization, active transportation, open space and recreational facilities, tree and woodland preservation, compatibility, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. There are limited urban design policies or guidance to direct new development, built form, or public realm elements. To establish a set of refreshed policies and to develop appropriate and meaningful urban design guidelines, it is important to recognize the existing policy framework and where the opportunities exist to enhance placemaking and urban design excellence.

Section 2.5 establishes policies for the urban areas of Baden and New Hamburg, which will be the primary areas for growth in the Township. Policies include respecting the scale, physical character, and context of established neighbourhoods, transition of built form to adjacent areas, supporting complete communities through a mix of uses and a diverse range of housing options, access to transportation options, parks, trails and open spaces, high-quality built form, an attractive public realm, and the integration of green infrastructure and low-impact development. Policies further outline the intent to develop and implement urban design and site design guidelines to direct new development to ensure a high-quality public realm and compact built form.

Under Section 5, the Township also uses Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) as a tool to maintain and promote an attractive and safe living and working environment through community improvement, maintenance, rehabilitation, and revitalization.

Section 6.1 establishes policies for land use compatibility, which is critical to appropriately accommodating and encouraging intensification while preserving the neighbourhood character and for the locating of new employment uses.

Section 6.7 includes policies for a complete streets approach for the design, refurbishment, or reconstruction of existing and planned streets to balance the needs of all users. Further, policies support cycling and pedestrian routes to encourage active transportation “for purposes of convenient travel, recreation, health, environmental and economic reasons, and promoting physical activity.”

Section 6.11 recognizes the importance of parks, open spaces, and recreational faculties to provide both active and passive recreational opportunities to meet the needs of all age groups and abilities. The Official Plan encourages the development of a system of linked green spaces and trails and a network of bicycle routes and pedestrian paths to link major public spaces, schools, and activity centres.

Section 8 establishes policies to support the conservation of water and energy, air quality improvement through emissions reductions, and waste management. Energy conservation for existing buildings and planned development will use land use patterns and urban design standards to support energy efficiency and demand reductions.

3.3 Township of Wilmot Strategic Action Plan: 2025–2027

In 2024, the Township of Wilmot developed their Strategic Action Plan based on public and stakeholder feedback to guide decision-making over the 2025–2027 term of Council under Four Strategic Goals: Financial Stability, Healthy Community, Prosperous Business and Balanced Growth, and Trustworthy Leadership.

The Strategic Action Plan identifies several actions to support healthy living, quality of life, the preservation of small-town character, and protection of the natural environment:

- Complete an accessibility plan.
- Funding for enhanced recreation amenities in alignment with the Community Services Master Plan.
- Enhance quality of life by facilitating partnerships and connections between organizations.
- Enhance public transit options.

- Develop Secondary Plans for Baden and New Hamburg to direct appropriate locations for growth.
- Develop a strategy for sustainable growth.
- Introduce a Community Improvement Plan to revitalize core urban centres.
- Increase the urban tree canopy.
- Expand and enhance the trail network.
- Explore opportunities for a green energy pilot project.

3.4 Township of Wilmot Tree Canopy Policy Framework, 2023

The Wilmot Tree Canopy Policy is a policy framework that was developed to adopt and maintain policies to protect and enhance the tree canopy and natural vegetation in the Township. The report identifies that the current tree canopy cover in the Township is 22.14%. The intent is that by 2049, the tree canopy cover will be increased to 22.6%. To achieve this goal, the report sets tree canopy increase targets for urban areas, rural settlement areas, and the countryside, as well as proactive programs and policies to achieve the tree canopy target.

The Report identifies that to reach the target of 22.6% (5,963 hectares) tree canopy cover by 2049, an estimated increase of 122.62 hectares of tree canopy cover is needed. The following breaks down the land area required within Township Urban Areas, Rural Settlement Areas, and the Countryside to reach the tree canopy coverage target:

- Urban Areas (New Hamburg and Baden) – 27.76 hectares
- Rural Settlements (St. Agatha, Petersburg, Mannheim, New Dundee, Philipsburg, Shingletown, Wilmot Centre, Haysville, Luxemburg, Lisbon, Sunfish Lake, and Foxboro Green) – 11.69 hectares
- Countryside (rural areas outside of settlement areas) – 83.17 hectares

The recommendations range from creating an urban forester position to tree maintenance. Of important note is the recommendation to establish an approved street tree planting list of both native and non-native (non-invasive) tree species.

The Official Plan includes numerous policies that speak to the protection of trees and woodland resources. In addition, the Township can identify Scenic Road Corridors, specifically where “b) they are adjacent to an area containing unique vegetation or species, including mature tree cover or enclosure;”

In terms of urban design, supporting the urban forest benefits human and environmental health, such as reducing the heat island effect, sequestering greenhouse gases, providing shade in the summer, and contributing to more appealing sidewalks and streets.

3.5 Township of Wilmot Traffic Calming Policy, 2024

The Township has developed a Traffic Calming Policy to address the concerns of residents and to make existing streets safer and more accessible for all users. The goals are to improve public safety and livability, ensure streets function as intended, and encourage active transportation.

The purpose of the policy is to provide staff with a tool and a formal process to initiate and implement appropriate traffic calming measures that result in the greatest improvement of public safety or roadways in the Township. The policy applies to primarily residential collector and local roads with predominantly two lanes of traffic in each direction, which typically have lower volumes and speed.

The Policy identifies traffic calming measures to reduce vehicle speeds and volumes and conflicts between users, which may include the following:

- **Speed Controls** – Speed bumps, speed tables, raised intersections, traffic circles, roundabouts, chokers, curb extensions, centre islands.

- **Volume Control** – Full or partial street closures, diagonal diverters, and median barriers. The report notes that these are less likely to be implemented. These measures reduce connectivity and block travel movement.
- **Non-Physical** – Speed enforcement, pavement markings, school zones (signage and pavement markings), lane narrowing and shoulder widening, radar speed display signs, and Community Safety Zones.
- **All-Way Stops** – Stop signs are not a speed control measure but are to be used to control the right-of-way at intersections.

The Traffic Calming Policy relies on an established and formal process for investigating traffic calming requests and resident participation in creating a supportable traffic calming plan suitable to the neighbourhood.

For new development, it is imperative that the design of the neighbourhood acknowledges pedestrian, cyclist, and vehicular movements to avoid the use of traffic calming. There are several design guidelines that can be utilized that include shorter block lengths, sidewalks on both sides of the street, street trees, on-street parking, reduced rights-of-ways, avoiding long, straight streets, and the introduction of traffic circles. These will be discussed further under Public Realm Design.

3.6 Township of Wilmot Community Services Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2024

The Township of Wilmot Community Services Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan) was prepared to provide a long-term vision for future growth and changes in demographics. The Master Plan was based on an extensive consultation program that engaged Council, staff, user groups, community leaders, participants, and residents to understand the needs and interest for future parks and recreation services.

The Master Plan recognizes the importance of promoting physical and mental health through access to green spaces and recreational facilities. Recommendations are grouped by subject area, such as aquatics, community centres and halls, parks and

outdoor faculties, and so on. The recommendations provide an expected outcome, such as ensuring that new neighbourhoods have well-designed parkland, and identify short-term (1–3 years), mid-term (4–6 years), and long-term (7–10 years) priorities.

The review of the Master Plan, for urban design purposes, focused on parkland, trails, urban canopy, and access.

Park Supply

The Township of Wilmot has a current supply of 91.8 hectares of parkland (as of 2021), which meets the current demand for parkland. To maintain the current parkland supply standard, the Master Plan recommends the Township should acquire an additional 15.37 hectares of parkland to meet growth over the next 10 years.

- **Township Parks** – 55.2 hectares
- **Settlement Parks** – 27.0 hectares
- **Neighbourhood Parks** – 9.6 hectares

The Master Plan also identifies that the Township should ensure that future plans of subdivisions include a sufficient park block of no less that one hectare in size to serve the neighbourhood. Further, for smaller developments, the Township should consider accepting cash-in-lieu of parkland to assist in building their parkland reserve to acquire any additional parkland beyond that available through parkland dedication.

The Master Plan notes that the 2017 Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommended a parkland hierarchy and classification system for the development or redevelopment of the park system (outlined in Table 3), and that those standards be included in the next Official Plan Review. The Master Plan supports the recommendations in the 2017 Recreation Master Plan and the inclusion of the hierarchy in Wilmot's New Official Plan.

Table 3: Recommended Parkland Hierarchy System, Township of Wilmot
Township Park
• Intended to serve all Township residents, with a secondary function of potentially attracting visitors from other municipalities. • Generally, drive-to parks that are accessible by car or public transit. • May include unique natural and physical features, including (but not limited to) significant historical or cultural amenities, extensive trail networks, special events or staging areas, or a grouping of multiple major recreation facilities (e.g., indoor recreational complex, sports field complex, etc.) • Supported by park amenities including (but not limited to) parking, trail connections, washrooms, concessions, seating, pavilions, or other ancillary features. • Varies in size depending on its intended function. The land area is typically much larger than a Settlement Park, although often much smaller if a cenotaph is the main focus.
Settlement Park
• Intended to serve the entire settlement area and should be developed so that they are accessible to a wide segment of the population. • Drive-to parks, but can also be accessed by walking or cycling. • Should be located on generally level land and in order to support a combination of active recreation facilities including sports fields, hard surface courts, community centres, and playgrounds, as well as unstructured green space and natural areas. • Supported by park amenities including (but not limited to) parking, trail connections, pavilions, civic features, seating, and other ancillary features.

• The preferred size for a Settlement Park is 4.0 to 8.0 hectares although in lesser populated settlement/hamlet areas, 2.0 to 4.0 hectares may be considered.
Neighbourhood Park
• Intended to serve local residential areas within a larger settlement. • Should be located within about 800 metres (about a 10-minute walking distance) from the residential area being served, without crossing major barriers, preferably on the corner of two intersecting local roads. • Includes existing undersized neighbourhood parkettes, as well as linear linkages to other neighbourhoods. • Facilitates spontaneous recreation and leisure activities, providing a limited range of active facilities including playground equipment. • Supported by seating, trail connections, pavilions, and other small-scale features. • The preferred size for a Neighbourhood Park is 1.0 to 2.0 hectares. • Undersized Neighbourhood Parks less than 0.5 hectares should be discouraged, except in instances than may be advantageous to the Township to reconcile gap areas and to address shortfalls in parkland.

The Master Plan also recommends updating Development Standards for neighbourhood parks that include minimum size, range of outdoor amenities, trail linkages to and through the park, accessibility, age-friendly, CPTED, Co-location with SWMA and/or school properties, and Minimum Street frontage. Development Standards for Community Parks should also be established using the same standards categories associated with neighbourhood parks.

Trails

The Master Plan also supports the Township's plan to update its previous Trails Master Plan and ensure that appropriate trail standards are included in the Township's "development standards manual." Current Official Policies support the Trails Master Plan and should be carried forward in Wilmot's new Official Plan.

Urban Canopy

Another recommendation is to work with the volunteer horticultural society and "Let's Tree Wilmot" to increase tree canopy throughout the Township. Let's Tree Wilmot is an initiative of the Wilmot Horticultural Society. Its mission is to provide volunteers, education, and expertise to enhance the trees and forest ecosystems in the Township.

Access

The Township should ensure that new neighbourhood parks include a play structure and that it is located between 500-800 metres of residents. Ensuring accessibility and age diversity is a priority to improve access to open space adjacent the Nith River in conjunction with the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Overall, improved accessibility is needed to all parks and outdoor facilities.

Urban design policies and guidelines will support a parkland hierarchy and classification system for Wilmot's new Official Plan. A variety of parks and open spaces supports opportunities for physical activity and improved public health, as well as providing places for gathering, socializing, and active and passive recreation.

3.7 Township of Wilmot Trails Master Plan, 2015

The Township of Wilmot Trails Master Plan was prepared to establish a vision for trail development and create an integrated system of trails in the Township to support active transportation. The Master Plan proposes trail networks, short-, medium- and long-term priorities, and is accompanied by an Implementation Plan that provides guidelines for trail development. Trails include off-road and on-road multi-use trails, paved shoulder and on-road bike lanes, and walking and hiking trails.

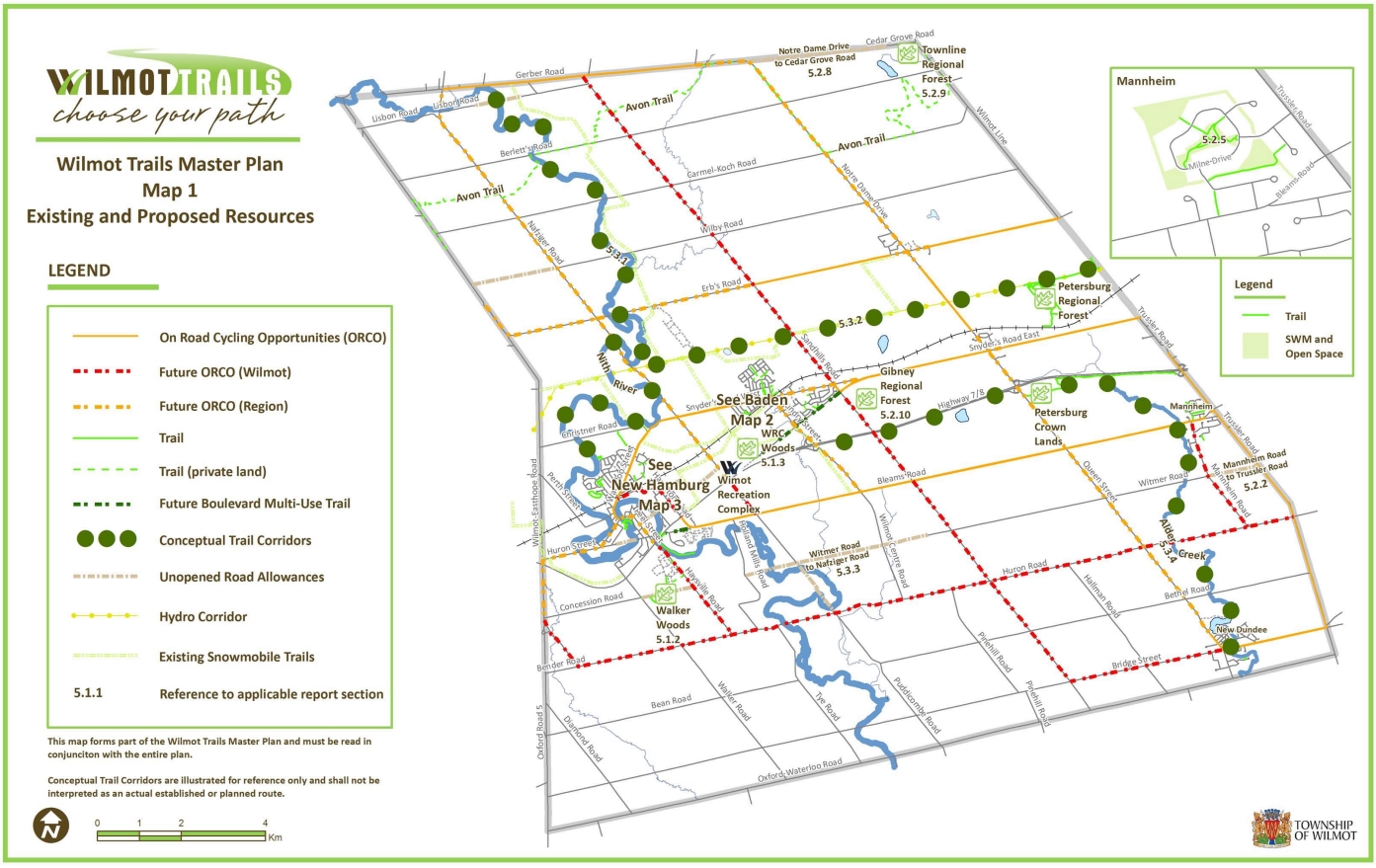


Figure 2 Map 1 of the Wilmot Trails Master Plan

The goals for the Trails Master Plan include:

- **Planned** – ensure integration of existing, new, and planned trails
- **Connected** – connect neighbourhoods, communities, facilities, and recreational areas through a continuous network that is off-road wherever possible, supported by on-road links
- **Diverse** – diverse in appeal and use to encourage all users – walking, hiking, cycling, and other non-motorized activities
- **Enviable** – promotion of rich natural features, agricultural areas, recreational amenities, cultural assets, and urban environments
- **Accessible** – system of trails providing a range of recreational opportunities accessible to all ages and abilities
- **Sustainable** – developed and managed in a manner that preserves the environment, is financially responsible, and encourages stewardship

The Implementation Plan focuses on guiding the development, operation, and maintenance of trails with objectives to implement a continuous and connected trail system, ensure trails infrastructure in new neighbourhoods, and strengthen current design standards.

The current Official Plan includes polices under Section 6.7.9 that support the Trails Master Plan and the integration and expansion of active transportation opportunities in the Township.

3.8 Township of Wilmot Arts and Culture Master Plan, 2018

The Wilmot Arts and Culture Master Plan was prepared to define the goals, objectives, and priorities for arts, culture, and heritage for the municipality and to better understand the needs of residents and cultural community. The Township is comprised of several historic settlements and larger communities that include an array of built heritage resources and cultural heritage resources.

The Arts and Culture Master Plan set forth a number of recommendations to continue and expand existing activities, such as continuing to promote greater use of public space and facilities for arts, culture, and heritage activities; maintaining and updating existing municipal heritage designation listing; and continuing and expanding ongoing efforts to engage local artists to support murals and public art; as well as new actions to support the diversity of cultures, widespread awareness, and the creative industries.

One of the recommendations is to develop a Public Art policy. Supporting the creative industry sector by developing a public art policy would promote and guide the development of public art in public spaces in the Township. Consideration should be given to including a public art policy in Wilmot's new Official Plan. Enhancing the public realm with public art showcases local talent and the history and culture of Wilmot Township.

The Township of Wilmot Community Services Parks and Recreation Master Plan also supports cultural programs, community cultural events, and cultural venues to preserve and celebrate the Township's rich heritage.

The Township is currently updating its Arts and Culture Master Plan. The Final Report is being compiled and the findings, when available, will be considered for incorporation into Wilmot's new Official Plan.

4.0 Key Topics for Discussion

The following section provides an overview of the key topics for discussion as they relate to the Urban Design discussion paper.

4.1 How will the Urban Design Policies and Guidelines be used?

The urban design policies and guidelines are intended to implement the Official Plan direction and provide greater clarity on a full range of community and urban design considerations including public realm elements such as parks, streetscapes, and trails; the private realm related to site organization and built form; and sustainability initiatives including green infrastructure, by:

- Encouraging and supporting active living, social engagement, civic pride, and the creation of a sense of place and well-being.
- Distinguishing the Township within its context.
- Building beautiful streets and streetscapes that accommodate all modes of transportation and are designed to be pedestrian friendly and safe.
- Ensuring that parks and open spaces, and natural features, are accessible, well-designed, and linked.
- Requiring high-quality architecture through a diversity of scale and style.
- Ensuring that new development and intensification are compatible with their surroundings.
- Responding to the impacts of a changing climate through resilient built form.

Further, Urban Design Guidelines complement the objectives and policies of the Official Plan, provisions of the Zoning By-law, and other guidelines and standards, such as the Township of Wilmot Infrastructure Standards and Specifications.

The following discussion of urban design not only includes recommendations for guidelines as a development tool for the Township, but also how urban design can be

incorporated into Wilmot's new Official Plan through policy to promote best practices and high quality built spaces.

4.2 Healthy Communities

Public health and land use planning are intrinsically linked. It's essential to bring to the forefront a number of increasing public health challenges related to the way in which we interact with our built and natural environments. Built environments that encourage physical activity can, in fact, reduce the incidence of diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, asthma, and respiratory disease and contribute to better overall public health. It is essential that the goal of creating livable communities that focus on public health, climate change, and the built environment be at the forefront of all policy documents.

The limited supply of land for development within urban boundaries and the current pattern of development in many municipalities is placing a strain on the natural environment, agriculture, and the health of residents. The evidence of the linkage between improvements to both sustainability and public health through meaningful interventions in community design has made significant progress in recent years. The



nature and shape of development need to change to respond to these limits if we are to achieve any meaningful sustainable measures.

A supportive, inclusive, and healthy community ensures the well-being of residents by providing all the pieces they need to thrive and meet their basic needs of food, shelter, water, income, and safety. A healthy community not only meets basic needs, but provides a high-quality living environment, access to public health services, a variety of experiences, a welcoming atmosphere, support of cultural heritage, a vibrant economy, and a healthy ecosystem.

Things to Think About

1. Ensuring the Township evolves and develops in a manner that is accessible to all is critical to creating an inclusive community. Buildings, parks, transportation, and information need to be accessible to ensure those with a disability are afforded the same opportunity as those without a disability in an equally effective manner. Through the development of Wilmot's new Official Plan, it will be important to ensure that the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005 (AODA) are appropriately implemented.
2. Key considerations for healthy community design include:
    - Healthy community and active transportation criteria, including walking and cycling as viable modes of transportation for a variety of trips;
    - Continued protection and future expansion of the Township's trail system;
    - Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, meeting emission targets; and,
    - Continued implementation of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, for not only cycling and pedestrian paths, but for the design of parks.
3. Physical, social, and mental well-being are the necessary components of public health. The built environment should ensure access to healthy food, clean air and water, safe environments, and opportunities for physical activity.

4. Review and discuss opportunities for a sustainable local food system that may include local farmers markets, agri-tourism, Community Shared Agriculture programs, diversity of agricultural uses (greenhouses, orchards), educational and on-farm experiences, and community gardens. Food insecurity is increasing with challenges in access to fresh food.
5. Support the Tree Canopy Policy Framework (2023) and tree canopy coverage target. Establishing more robust urban forest policies can include speaking to the benefits of the urban forest, such as reduction in air pollution, mitigating the urban heat island effect, energy savings, habitat, biodiversity, and opportunities for physical activity. Wilmot's new Official Plan can explore implementation of tree replacement requirements and other tree protection policies.

4.3 Place-making

Place-making involves a multifaceted approach to the planning, design, and management of private development and public spaces to create quality places that strengthen the connections between people and these places. Place-making is the recognition and enhancement of a community's unique assets and potential. Recognizing the unique assets of a community requires an understanding of its history, existing attributes, and how they contribute to creating a recognizable and defined character. These attributes assist in understanding the physical makeup of an area and help to identify what sets an area apart from its surrounding context.

Great architecture and design, attractive streets and parks, distinct neighbourhoods, a sense of safety and security, and opportunities for social interaction all work together to support place-making in an area and improve the happiness, mental health, and well-being of residents. It requires the correct balance of policy direction, political will to deliver on that direction, and encouraging and documenting the results of strong design practices through development.



Things to Think About

Many of the considerations for a healthy community support place-making and creating an environment where people want to live, work, play, and learn.

1. Wilmot Township has many attributes that set it apart from other communities, such as the New Hamburg's setting next to the Nith River, the New Hamburg Water Wheel, and Castle Kilbride, which create a connection to the area's culture and natural setting. Policies should support engendering a sense of pride in the Township as a place to live and a sense of stewardship in its long-term care and maintenance.
2. The integration of arts, culture, and heritage with local businesses, health and social services, schools, parks, and civic buildings. Consideration should also be

given to cultural integration into landscape design, recognizing cultural heritage landscapes, or promoting culture in the design of parks or art installations. The Township of Wilmot Arts and Culture Master Plan also supports these initiatives.

3. Opportunities to celebrate and incorporate Indigenous art and culture. The Township should consider a location for an open space or park. The location should:
    - Consider decolonizing the place name of any location chosen;
    - Ensure the space is accessible and welcoming for everyone; and,
    - Incorporate Indigenous elements such as art, plants, ceremony spaces, and storytelling.
4. Looking beyond statutory requirements, the Township should consider policies to enhance its local character and identify opportunities for built heritage resources. The adaptive reuse of older buildings, such as the Puddicome House, which can also include adding modern additions, is often a popular strategy for preserving the character of older buildings, while adapting them to contemporary uses. Adaptive reuse can also provide environmental sustainability benefits through the reuse of existing materials. The Township should continue to implement policies to encourage adaptive reuse, particularly encouraging the adaptation of the entire building, rather than the facade alone.
5. Support a refreshed vision for urban design that will enhance place-making through a focus on the form and function of the public realm, such as streets, parks, squares, and public infrastructure. Creating meaningful and beautiful places through good urban design can strengthen economic, social, and environmental benefits.

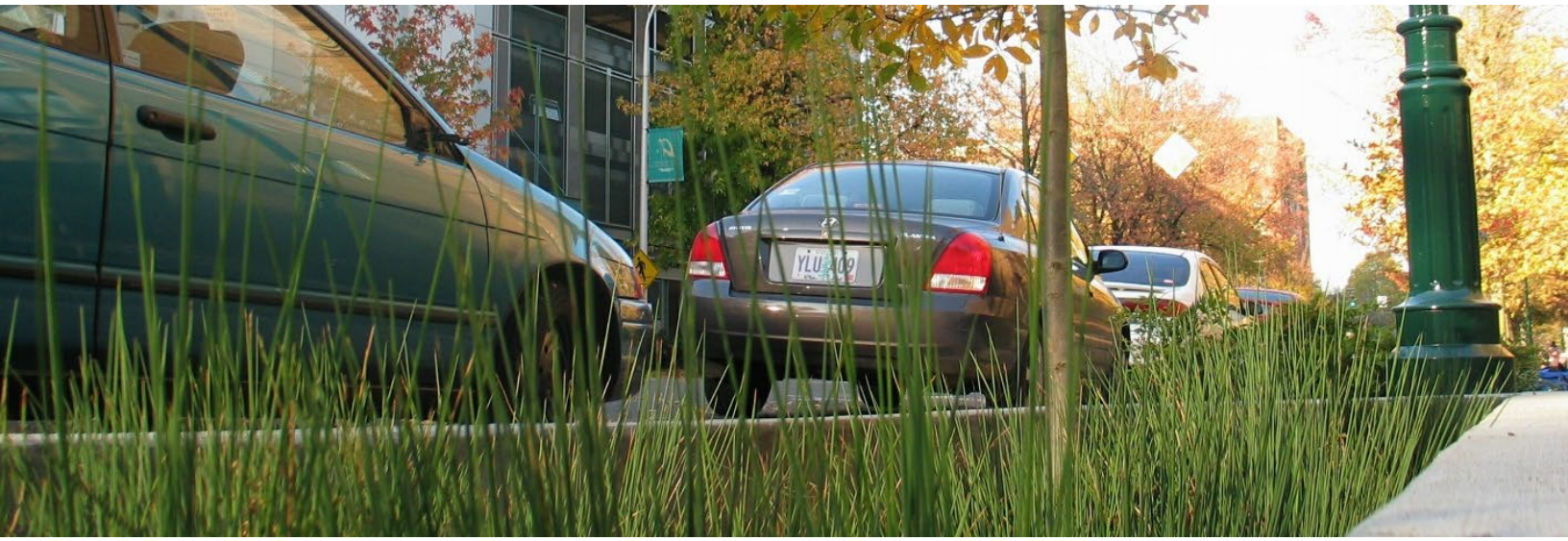
4.4 Urban Design and Sustainability

Land use planning, urban design, and sustainability need to be fundamentally linked to guide and create liveable and sustainable communities that are resilient to the impacts of climate change. Land use plans and policies must not only guide land use distribution

and the creation of complete, walkable, and attractive neighbourhoods, but also direct development to support reductions in energy and greenhouse gas emissions, address urban flooding, and move towards net zero communities.

With respect to the policy review, there is clear direction from the Province and Region to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate by planning for efficient land use and development patterns, supporting the use of alternative transportation modes, supporting water and energy conservation, and embracing the use of green infrastructure and natural areas for water infiltration.

While various planning, urban design, and sustainable policies and principles share a common intent and are applicable in a broad range of conditions, how they are applied can vary significantly with the local context.



Things to Think About

1. In setting a refreshed direction for community and urban design policies and the development of urban design guidelines, there are several themes which must run throughout the policies and guidelines for them to be relevant, comprehensive, and defensible.

- **Preservation** – Can occur in a variety of ways and applies to the safeguarding of built and cultural heritage, as well as the natural environment. It encompasses the preservation of views, important places, and landmarks.
- **Compatibility** – As more intense forms of development are considered; the concept of compatibility becomes important. New development should integrate with the existing context and consider high-quality design, sensitivity to heritage (built and natural), appropriate transitions to stable neighbourhoods, the character of neighbourhoods and community identity, and fit within the streetscape and overall vision for Wilmot.
- **Connectivity** – Should occur beyond the scale of roads and must consider how pedestrians connect to smaller sites, access transit, visit natural systems, and do so safely and in a comfortable manner. New development must play a role in ensuring a high degree of connectivity by enhancing circulation systems and creating clear routes.
- **Legibility** – It is important that there is coherence across Official Plan policies and land use classifications to allow for the harmonious integration of new and existing development. A legible urban environment should be easy to navigate, safe, and create opportunities for public interaction.
- **Sustainable Urban Form** – Sustainability impacts all aspects of the Official Plan and should be used as a lens for policy development. It is essential this approach be reflected in support for new growth that is compact, designed efficiently, avoids ecosystem degradation, creates sustainable systems of transportation, promotes active transportation, green infrastructure, healthy communities, and mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
- **Conservation** – Support conservation objectives including water conservation, energy conservation and generation, emissions reductions, and waste management. Other considerations should include sustainable

design strategies such as passive solar orientation, low-impact development, and green infrastructure. Supporting emission reductions, the Township has provided for five EV charging stations: two in New Hamburg (two at 122 Wilmot St., Kirkpatrick Park) and three in Baden (two at the Wilmot Recreation Complex and one at the Township of Wilmot Administration Complex).

4.5 Public Realm Design

Public realm design addresses matters such as the arrangement of streets and blocks, ease of movement, streetscapes and sidewalks, building orientation, parks and open spaces, views, gateways, natural features, and public spaces. The successful design of the public realm relies on defining the community character and creating diverse, comfortable, welcoming, safe, and accessible spaces. The design of the public realm plays an incredibly important role in defining the community character and presenting an attractive and successful image to residents and visitors. Good design can improve walkability/bikeability, attract visitors and customers for local businesses, spur private investment, and improve the overall quality of life.

A high-quality public realm, consisting of a hierarchy of active and passive parks, along with a variety of streets, will enhance mobility, promote healthy and active lifestyles, and contribute to the character of the community.

Things to Think About

1. Policies and guidelines for the public realm in new development should address internal connectivity and multiple connections to existing and adjacent neighbourhoods, through street network connections, sidewalks, and trails. Creating a permeable system with multiple connections and block lengths no more than 200–250 metres in length supports active transportation and disperses traffic movements.

2. Addressing factors such as high-quality streetscaping and sidewalks, appropriate streets cross-sections/widths for different contexts, ensuring well-designed facilities for all modes of travel (walking, cycling, transit), incorporating green elements, and creating opportunities for public art can all have a positive impact on moving through Wilmot Township and encouraging active transportation.
3. It is also important to link streetscaping policies with the design and configuration of adjacent buildings, which play an important role in creating a comfortable public realm. Policies should ensure that buildings frame adjacent streets and open spaces to assist in further defining and complementing the public realm.
4. Wilmot's new Official Plan should guide the physical orientation of streets and newly built development to maximize solar energy gain opportunities.
5. Wilmot's new Official Plan should support the Township of Wilmot Arts and Culture Master Plan and include policies that encourage public art in both the public and private realms. Public art can strengthen a sense of place, and can take a variety of forms, media, and scales. Support for Indigenous art should be included.
6. Park locations in new developments should be accessible, supporting walking distances that serve residents, such as a 5-to-10-minute walk to a neighbourhood park. As discussed in the next section under Parks and Open Spaces, it is a recommendation that a park hierarchy be created with supporting policies in Wilmot's new Official Plan.
7. Urban design policies and guidelines would further support park development, such as identifying parks as focal points in a neighbourhood, ensuring native plant materials, providing for bicycling parking, design for natural parks and play spaces, and barrier-free access. If appropriate, consideration should be given to smaller park typologies, such as urban squares in the downtowns or along the main streets, where there is significant public exposure, to offer locations for public art, seating areas, and landscape treatments.

8. Consideration should be given to the location and opportunities for gateways to enhance wayfinding and a sense of identity by using a combination of buildings, landscapes, structures, spaces or public art.

4.6 Parks and Open Spaces

All residents should have access to parks and open spaces, and this should be a key planning principle. Opportunities to engage with nature has physical, mental, and social health benefits and should be available through trail systems, a variety of parks and open spaces such as municipal parks, community parks, neighbourhood parks, parkettes, sports fields, and community gardens, as well as access to the natural environment.



Parks and open spaces have many benefits, such as providing for a healthier urban ecosystem through improved air quality and the reduction of heat islands, while also encouraging residents to be physically and socially engaged. As communities become more compact with higher density forms of housing, it is critical to ensure a diversity of accessible park spaces are available for residents to provide areas for both active and passive recreation.

An accessible, animated, and varied hierarchy of park spaces is vital to promoting a healthy community and important to fostering a strong sense of place within Wilmot Township. Well-designed, interesting, and unique park spaces where people go to rest, relax, play, walk their dogs, eat lunch, enjoy the landscape, access community amenities, provide a platform for public events, and become the jewels of the community. These spaces must support a variety of special, seasonal, and daily activities. The benefits of parks, such as providing for a healthier urban ecosystem through improved air quality and the reduction of heat islands, also encourages residents to be physically and socially engaged.

Things to Think About

1. Ensure that the policy framework supports an appropriate parks and open space network, which considers the current needs of residents in addition to future needs as the Township continues to grow and evolve. This may include policies for park typologies. The Township of Wilmot Community Services Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommends incorporating a parkland hierarchy and classification for parks in the Township. The Master Plan also recommends updating Development Standards for neighbourhood parks that include minimum size, range of outdoor amenities, trail linkages to and through the park, accessibility, age-friendly, CPTED, co-location with stormwater management facilities and/or school properties, and minimum street frontage. Development Standards for Community Parks should also be established using the same standard categories associated with neighbourhood parks.
2. Policies should be provided to ensure that parks and open spaces, including the existing natural features, are beautiful, accessible, and linked. Parks and open spaces need to be visible and accessible from, and integrated with, the street system, and include a full array of opportunities for outdoor festivals, recreation, and play, as well as quiet contemplation. High-quality landscape architecture will

ensure that these outdoor spaces include public art and appropriate grading, paving, and planting materials.

3. The preparation of Wilmot's new Official Plan must undertake an overview of parkland dedication to support the harmonization of the existing frameworks, reflect updates required to conform to legislative changes, consider the inclusion of more urban park typologies, and ensure that new growth supports the development of parks.
4. Consider policies for Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS). POPS are privately owned spaces that are publicly accessible, such as plazas, parks, or courtyards, located within private properties. POPS should be secured through appropriate legal agreements to ensure ongoing public access, as well as appropriate design and maintenance standards over the long-term. POPS may be considered as contributions to the required parkland dedication, on a site-by-site basis, to the satisfaction of the Township. With that said, given concerns about life-cycle costs, and programing control, POPS may not be fully credited toward the achievement of parkland dedication requirements.
5. Consider naturalized open spaces. Naturalization is an ecologically based approach to restore environmental integrity to the urban landscape and promote passive recreation. Utilizing plant species native to the area creates a sustainable landscape. The Township of Wilmot Arboretum, the first of its type in Ontario, is located in New Hamburg. It is a 5.9-acre regional park that features more than 70 species of native and exotic trees. It was developed in 1956 as the Waterloo County Arboretum to demonstrate soil conservation techniques.

4.7 Complete Streets

Complete streets provide pleasing pedestrian experiences, improved safety for cyclists, and enhanced opportunities for active transportation, all while ensuring the efficient movement of goods, transit, and passenger vehicles within a balanced right-of-way.

Enhancing multimodal connectivity for residents throughout the Township and to the wider region will better facilitate access to jobs, services, recreation, and housing.

Recent trends in land use and transportation planning, as well as public health research, emphasize the importance of ensuring the provision of a well-connected, attractive, and functional multimodal system to provide more balanced access to active transportation options. Active transportation, including walking, cycling, and transit (existing or planned), will become increasingly important within Wilmot as more intensified development occurs and to increase the accessibility of all residents.

There is the opportunity to support a full spectrum of mobility options for all residents and improved connectivity within a fully integrated network. This is an essential element of planning for sustained transportation methods and healthier lifestyles.

Things to Think About

1. Overview of Provincial and Regional policies require that the Township meet the transportation needs of all users, irrespective of mode, including the implementation of a “complete streets” approach.
2. The current Official Plan includes a policy that the “...*design, refurbishment, or reconstruction of the existing and planned street network, the Township will adopt a complete streets approach that ensures the needs and safety of all road users are considered and appropriately accommodated.*” Not all streets need to be or will be complete streets. To support the accommodation of all users, the new Official Plan should include the Township’s recently adopted sidewalk policy that includes:
    - Sidewalks shall be required on both sides of residential roads unless it can be demonstrated that the traffic and pedestrian warrants are sufficiently low to permit sidewalk on one side, for example:
        - Cul-de-sacs; and,

- Local roads where projected or measured Annual Average Daily Traffic volume (AADT) are less than 500, and speeds are less than 60kmph with predominantly single family or semi-detached homes

Additional policy considerations should include cycling lanes on collector roads, paved shoulders to support cycling in rural areas, and reducing traffic lanes and speeds, where appropriate in the settlement areas.

3. Wilmot's new Official Plan should include policies about the importance of compact street grids, street connectivity, and well-maintained infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, extra-wide road shoulders for walking and cycling, and/or pedestrian trails and walkways) for all users, particularly vulnerable users, such as children, youth, the elderly, and those with special needs. Urban design guidelines will support these policies to ensure direct routes and reduced travel time for people who walk and cycle.

4.8 Private Realm

The private realm is comprised of the built form and site design within development blocks and their relationship to adjacent open spaces, sidewalks, and roads. The residential, institutional, commercial, mixed-use, and employment buildings within a community contribute to its character and can assist in further defining and complementing the public realm.

High-quality urban design within the private realm is based upon the quality, scale, and character of the surrounding existing and emerging contexts to reinforce ‘human scaled’ environments and promote a sense of place. These include creating distinctive, appealing, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes through attention to building design and detailing; and ensuring appropriate massing, materials, building siting, and design compatibility.



Things to Think About

1. Good urban design practices will promote excellence in the design of the private realm. For high level urban design policies it will be important for Wilmot’s new Official Plan to reinforce human-scaled environments and promote a sense of place. While the specifics of each development proposal may vary, the overall objectives should remain the same throughout Baden and New Hamburg. Objectives include:
    - Creating distinctive, appealing, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes through attention to building design and detailing;
    - Ensuring appropriate massing, materials, building siting, and compatibility; and,

- Identifying and enhanced design requirements for priority lots having high visible elevations.

2. All development shall achieve a high degree of environmental sustainability and demonstrate high-quality architectural form, design, materials, and detailing. Policies for Wilmot's new Official Plan could support Township-wide Urban Design Guidelines to promote excellence for new development and provide specific guidelines for different building typologies, ranging from single-detached up to low- to mid-rise apartments, such as building design, massing, garages and driveways, landscaping, and design for priority/high-visibility locations. Wilmot's new Official Plan will also provide a means to implement these guidelines through policy direction that all new development shall be consistent with the Township-wide urban design guidelines.
3. Consider sustainable design policies for new development and buildings related to energy conservation (e.g., geo exchange, solar thermal), innovative public and private design designs and site management practices, the use of native plants and/or plants that are drought/salt-resistant in landscaping, as well as low-impact development and other initiatives to improve stormwater management and infiltration.
4. Bill 17 introduced a new provision to the Building Code Act that prevents municipalities from passing By-laws that impose construction rules and standards that extend beyond the provincial Building Code using broad authority powers under the Municipal Act, 2001. Currently, certain municipalities have construction requirements that go beyond the Provincial standards established under the Ontario Building Code, many in the form of Green Development Standards that include standards or metrics regarding embodied carbon, energy efficiency, and GHG emissions. This will impact how these standards are applied, meaning they would be considered voluntary rather than mandatory for development applications.

5. At the Official Plan scale, it could be an overarching goal to ensure accessibility for all or a more specific policy to have accessible homes. To support this goal, policy could be included that requires the development of Accessibility Design Guidelines to address accessible environments for all. For example, for specific developments or dwelling types to be constructed with built-in accessibility, or barrier-free design, compliance with the Building Code is mandatory but is generally a minimum. Additional accessibility standards, such as Accessibility Design Guidelines, can address the varying needs of users and go beyond interior and capture exterior elements as well. Many municipalities have accessibility standards, including the City of Markham, the City of Brampton, the City of Vaughan, and Norfolk County, to name a few.

4.9 Compatibility/Intensification

The concept of compatible development is critical to appropriately accommodating and encouraging redevelopment and intensification while preserving community character. The Township, through Wilmot's new Official Plan, will be placing a stronger emphasis on accommodating and encouraging redevelopment and intensification through reurbanization. It will be important that an appropriate policy framework is in place which ensures that new development provides a positive contribution to the community, without deterring this form of development. Balancing new growth through compatibility ensures positive contributions to the community without disrupting existing neighborhoods in Baden and New Hamburg.

Stable residential neighborhoods can support a variety of housing forms but should not be negatively impacted by housing forms that are not compatible or have an adverse impact on adjacent built form and the comfort and use of private yards, open spaces, and streets.

Things to Think About

1. The current Official Plan includes policies for land use compatibility. Consider adding a clear definition. A suggested definition is, "*Compatible development means development that may not necessarily be the same or similar to the existing buildings in the vicinity, but, nonetheless, enhances an established community and coexists with existing development without causing any undue adverse impact on surrounding properties.*"
2. Ensuring that new buildings are compatible with their surroundings is important in the context of Baden and New Hamburg. These established towns have a context of low-rise development, and introducing mid-rise built forms will need to ensure limited impact to existing buildings and parks in terms of sun and shadow, as well as fit within the neighbourhood or street. Bill 17 Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025, is impacting these issues through limiting requirements for reports and technical studies in order for an application (i.e., official plan amendment, zoning By-law amendment, subdivisions, consent, and site plan) to be deemed complete. Municipalities will only be able to require studies and reports that are already identified in their official plans. Bill 17 has deemed sun/shadow, wind, urban design, and lighting studies among the list of topics that **may** be excluded from complete application requirements.
    - **Sun/Shadow** – Information on the impact of shadows cast by a proposed development on the subject property and surrounding lands, including public streets.
    - **Wind** – Information related to the potential effects of a proposed development on wind conditions in the surrounding area.
    - **Urban Design** – Information concerning how a proposed development aligns with applicable urban design guidelines or policies.

- **Lighting** – Information about lighting levels on the site, including the location and type of exterior fixtures proposed for the building and surrounding property.

It is up to the municipality to request additional information as part of a land use planning process. The key difference is that the applicants will have the right to refuse to provide such additional information.

3. To assist with ensuring that new development, either intensification or greenfield development addresses the above issues, urban design policies should be included in the new Official Plan that speak to not only the above, but compatibility for reurbanization and site layout. Compatible development should be considered in the evaluation of all development proposals throughout the Township.
4. The Township has zoning regulations for the development of Additional Dwelling Units. Wilmot's new Official Plan should update the existing policies for Additional Dwelling Units to conform to Provincial direction and the Township's Zoning By-law.
5. Notwithstanding that the Township is obligated to implement this Provincial requirement, the facilitation of additional residential units throughout Wilmot has the potential to help increase the range of housing options, and in particular, introduce additional rental options in existing low-rise neighbourhoods.
6. Consider policies for new development, which could address elements such as site layout, building location in relation to the street edge, parking, and design for priority/high-visibility locations.

5.0 Emerging Policy Directions

There are several emerging policy directions which should be considered based on the analysis in this discussion paper. Many of the following are also intended to inform the creation of future Township-wide urban design guidelines.

Healthy Communities

1. Support healthy community design through policy objectives that include:
    - Healthy community and active transportation criteria, including walking and cycling as viable modes of transportation for a variety of trips; plan for an active transportation system which is highly integrated and connected within the community, the adjacent communities, and to transportation systems that serve the broader Region; ensure a substantial number of destinations, including parks, cultural and community facilities, shopping, and restaurant opportunities within walking distance to promote walking and cycling to encourage daily physical activity and a lessening of the dependence on automobiles;
    - Continued protection and future expansion of the Township's trail system;
    - Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, meeting emission targets; and,
    - Implementation of accessibility design features, in accordance with the requirements of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005 (AODA).

2. Include policies for a sustainable local food system that may include local farmers markets, agri-tourism, Community Shared Agriculture programs, diversity of agricultural uses (greenhouses, orchards), educational and on-farm experiences, and community gardens.
3. Include a tree canopy coverage target to support more robust urban forest policies that speak to the benefits of the urban forest, such as reduction in air

pollution, mitigating the urban heat island effect, energy savings, habitat for urban wildlife, biodiversity, and opportunities for recreation and physical activity.

4. Consider policies that support and increase the existing tree canopy, such as the Township will preserve, protect, manage, replace, and acquire, where appropriate, tree stands, hedgerows, woodlands, and forested areas within the municipal boundary. Wilmot's new Official Plan can explore the implementation of tree replacement requirements and other tree protection policies.

Place-making

1. The Township should continue to implement policies to encourage adaptive reuse, particularly encouraging the adaptation of the entire building, rather than the facade alone. Adaptive reuse can also provide environmental sustainability benefits through the reuse of existing materials.
2. Include policies that the Township will promote cultural integration in landscape design, recognizing cultural heritage landscapes or promoting culture in the design of parks or art installations.
3. Consider policies that create opportunities to celebrate and incorporate Indigenous art and culture.

Urban Design and Sustainability

1. Include strong urban design policies to apply at a Township-wide scale and location-specific scales (e.g., Downtown New Hamburg and Baden or new greenfield developments) that address compatibility, connectivity, legibility, sustainable urban form, and preservation.
2. Policies for Wilmot's new Official Plan should direct the development of Township-wide Urban Design Guidelines to support the policy directions of the Official Plan and to promote excellence for new development, which could address guidelines for different building typologies, ranging from single-detached up to low- to mid-rise apartments, as well as commercial and mixed use buildings, such as building design, massing, setbacks, entrances, garages and

driveways, and design for priority/high-visibility locations. Wilmot's new Official Plan will also provide a means to implement these guidelines through policy direction that all new development shall be consistent with the Township-wide Urban Design Guidelines.

3. For greenfield development high level policies should include:
    - Encouragement for a mix and diversity of housing types;
    - Designed to create a connected, pedestrian-oriented, and highly interconnected street and block pattern;
    - Access to parks and open spaces;
    - Policies for priority lots such as gateway lots, corner lots, T-intersections, and lots facing, backing on, or adjacent to parks, open spaces, schools, and trails.
4. Include policies that support conservation objectives, including water conservation, energy conservation and generation, emissions reductions, and waste management. Policies should also support alternative energy systems and renewable energy systems to accommodate current and projected needs of the community.

Public Realm

1. Include urban design policies to create a permeable street and sidewalk system with multiple connections and block lengths no more than 200–250 metres in length to support active transportation and disperse traffic movements.
2. Policies should guide the physical orientation of streets and newly built development to maximize solar energy gain opportunities (passive solar orientation – orienting a building to maximize solar heat gain in the winter).
3. The Township shall maintain and enhance its existing inventory of public art and shall pursue the installation of new pieces of public art in public locations. Include policies that encourage public art in both public and private developments in publicly accessible areas, and near high-traffic development.

4. Gateways and landmarks are important identifiers in a community and can be created using a combination of buildings, landscapes, structures, spaces, or public art at key intersections or entrances to core areas. Properly designed, these elements have a unique ability to enhance wayfinding, reinforce a sense of place and identity, and welcome visitors to the towns in Wilmot. Policies should be included to reinforce the importance of these entry features not only to attract tourists but to instill a sense of civic pride in residents. Smaller scale local identifiers that highlight neighbourhood character areas can also create a sense of identity for areas in Baden and New Hamburg, for example. These smaller gateways can be thought of as neighbourhood signatures that help to clearly define neighbourhood boundaries.

Parks and Open Spaces

1. Policies should be provided to ensure that parks and open spaces, including existing natural features, are beautiful, accessible, and linked. Parks and open spaces need to be visible and accessible from, and integrated with, the street system, and include a full array of opportunities for outdoor festivals, recreation and play, as well as quiet contemplation.
2. Provide policy direction to support upgrading and enhancing existing parks and community facilities to improve quality, distribution, equity, and accessibility of these key community assets.
3. Include policies that park locations in new developments should be accessible, supporting walking distances that serve residents, such as a 5-to-10-minute walk to a neighbourhood park.
4. Provide policy direction for developer-built urban park typologies, such as Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS). These parks spaces are to be secured through legal agreements to ensure ongoing public access, as well as setting design and long-term maintenance standards.

5. Urban design guidelines would further support park development, such as identifying parks as focal points in a neighbourhood, ensuring native plant materials, providing for bicycling parking, lighting, design for natural parks and play spaces, and barrier-free access.

Complete Streets

1. Policies should include the importance of compact street grids, street connectivity, and well-maintained infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, extra-wide road shoulders for walking and cycling, and/or pedestrian trails and walkways) for all users, particularly vulnerable users, such as children, youth, the elderly, and those with special needs. Urban design guidelines will support these policies to ensure direct routes and reduced travel time for people who walk and cycle.
2. Include policies that support and recognize active transportation modes, including walking and cycling, as safe, convenient, and appealing options for travelling around the Township. Pedestrian-friendly community design and enhanced and connected trail networks will provide mobility options and enhanced connectivity across the Township for people of all ages, abilities, and needs.
3. To support the accommodation of all users, the new Official Plan should include the Township's recently adopted sidewalk policy that includes:
    - Sidewalks shall be required on both sides of residential roads unless it can be demonstrated that the traffic and pedestrian warrants are sufficiently low to permit sidewalk on one side, for example:
        - Cul-de-sacs; and,
        - Local roads where projected or measured Annual Average Daily Traffic volume (AADT) are less than 500, and speeds are less than 60kmph with predominantly single family or semi-detached homes

Additional policy considerations could include cycling lanes on collector roads, paved shoulders to support cycling in rural areas, and reducing traffic lanes and speeds, where appropriate in the settlement areas.

Private Realm

1. High level urban design policies will be important for Wilmot's new Official Plan to reinforce human-scaled environments and promote a sense of place.: Overall objectives should remain the same throughout Baden and New Hamburg and include:
    - Creating distinctive, appealing, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes through attention to building design and detailing;
    - Ensuring appropriate massing, materials, building siting, and compatibility; and,
    - Identifying and enhanced design requirements for priority lots having high visible elevations.

2. Include sustainable design policies for new development and buildings related to energy conservation (e.g., geo exchange, solar thermal), innovative public and private design designs and site management practices, the use of native plants and/or plants that are drought/salt-resistant in landscaping, as well as low-impact development, and other initiatives to improve stormwater management and infiltration.
3. Consider a policy that supports barrier free and universal design principles for private sector development. It shall be achieved through Site Plan Approval, and the enforcement of all applicable Provincial legislation and standards, including the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005.
4. Consideration should be given to the development of Accessibility Design Guidelines – which can address the varying needs of users and go beyond interior and capture exterior elements as well. An overarching goal in the new Official Plan should be to ensure accessibility for all or a more specific policy to

have accessible homes. To support this goal, policy could be included that requires the development of Accessibility Design Guidelines.

Compatibility/Intensification

1. The current Official Plan includes policies for compatibility and should be carried forward with consideration for including a clear definition for compatibility. A suggested definition is, “Compatible development means development that may not necessarily be the same or similar to the existing buildings in the vicinity, but, nonetheless, enhances an established community and coexists with existing development without causing any undue adverse impact on surrounding properties.”
2. Compatible development shall be considered in the evaluation of all development proposals throughout the Township. To assist with ensuring that new development through intensification addresses compatibility, fit, and site layout, high level urban design policies should be included in the new Official Plan. The following should be considered when evaluating the compatibility of development proposals in neighbourhood areas:
    - The use, height, massing, orientation and landscape characteristics of nearby properties are considered and appropriate transitions between the built forms and uses are ensured;
    - On-site amenity space is provided and is reflective of, or enhances, the existing patterns of private and public amenity space in the vicinity; and
    - Streetscape patterns, including lock lengths, setbacks, and building separations are generally maintained.

    Compatible development in the core areas/downtowns should consider the following:
    - Building location in relation to the street;
    - Active facades for retail/commercial development;
    - Accessible design for building entrances;

- Parking layout and location, screened from view;
- Cycling facilities, including bike racks and storage lockers;
- Lighting; and,
- Location and screening of servicing and loading

3. Include updated policies in the new Official Plan for additional dwelling units in detached, semi-detached, and rowhouses, and in an ancillary building or structure (e.g., above laneway garages or coach houses) that reflect the Township Zoning By-law and Provincial policies.

6.0 Next Steps

This Discussion Paper is one of seven papers that are being completed as part of Phase 2: Background Research and Study Preparation of the Township of Wilmot New Official Plan process.

This paper establishes a foundation from which the Township will develop policy directions. This is a starting point for generating discussion about the importance of Urban Design in Wilmot Township. Policy directions will follow out of this engagement to outline proposed changes in the New Wilmot Official Plan.

The Discussion Papers are being released in **DRAFT** form to inform public engagement in fall 2025. The Discussion Papers will be updated to reflect additional insights or items arising from public engagement and will include thematic summaries of input received (with a companion engagement report also being prepared). Those FINAL reports shall include recommended policy directions that will inform the development of the Township's new official plan.

The **FINAL** reports and policy directions shall be presented to Township Council as part of the meeting required under Section 26 of the *Planning Act*. This meeting is an open session to discuss revisions that may be required to the Township's Official Plan. It is one of several opportunities throughout this project where public input is needed and welcomed.

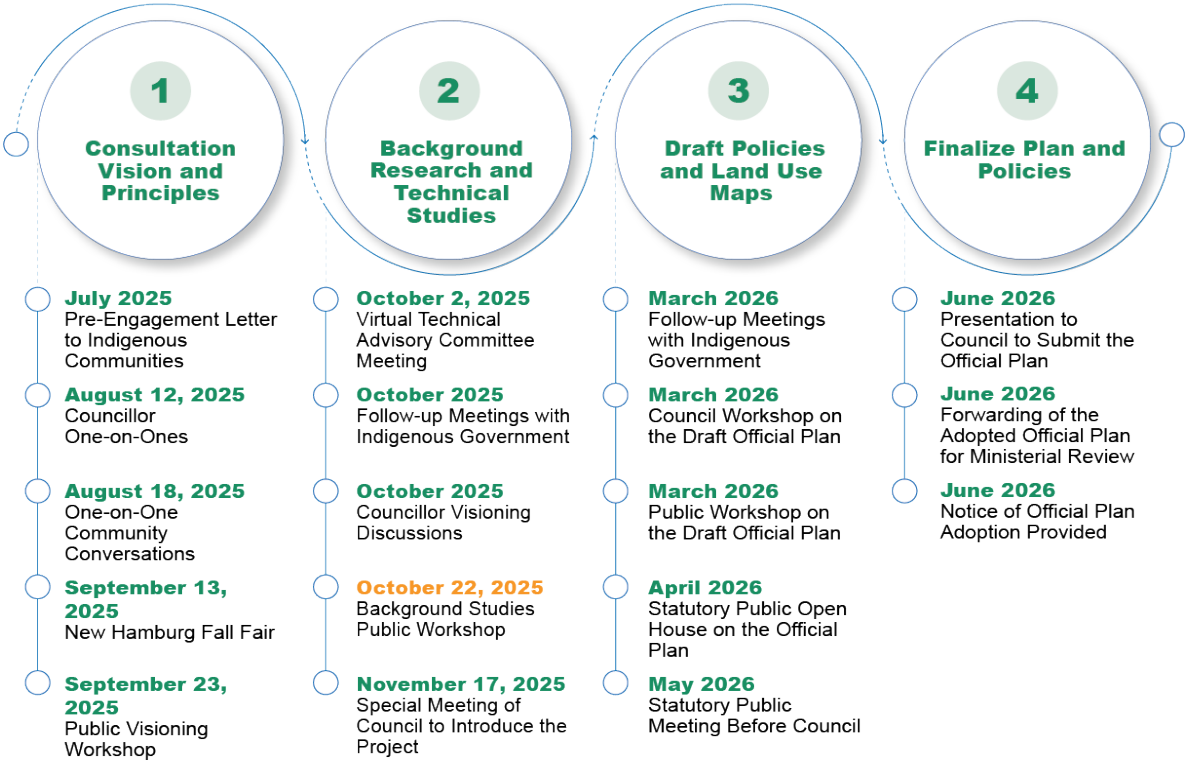


Figure 3 Study Process and Engagement Opportunities

The reports, together with public input, will serve as the basis for developing Wilmot's New Official Plan. The draft New Official Plan will be released for review in 2026 and includes public events in addition to the statutory *Planning Act* process.