



NEW OFFICIAL PLAN Land Use Policy Review and Analysis

November 2025



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1.0 Introduction and Purpose of the 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 the Township of Wellesley. All land use, 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 Wellesley is preparing a new Official Plan, which will guide growth and development within the Township until 2051. For the past two decades, growth in the Township has been shaped by both the Waterloo Regional Official Plan and the Township of Wellesley Official Plan. With recent provincial legislation that removed planning authority from the Region of Waterloo, the Township has the opportunity to create a “made-for-Wellesley” Official Plan. This new Official Plan will incorporate the best of our past and present Official Plan policies, while charting out the future of Wellesley to the year 2051. A new Official Plan is being created to replace the existing Township and Regional Official Plans, and to align with the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement.

The Township of Wellesley has one urban area with full municipal services (Village of Wellesley) and ten rural settlement areas, covering an area of 278 square kilometres with a population of about 12,371 residents. The Township includes three designated rural employment areas (the Scheider Rural Employment Area, the M.K. Martin Rural Employment Area, and the Wellesley Rural Employment Area) characterized predominantly by industrial and agricultural activities. It is projected that the Township will grow to approximately 14,191 to 17,301 residents and 6,390 to 10,070 jobs by 2051. The new Official Plan will build on the Township’s long-term vision for growth with a

renewed focus on complete communities, addressing land needs in both the urban area and rural settlement areas of the Township. This will include housing mix and affordability, employment and commercial opportunities, servicing options, active transportation, open space and recreation, environmental protection and management, and the continued preservation of agricultural land.

1.2 Township of Wellesley New Official Plan Process

The creation of the Township of Wellesley's new Official Plan will occur over a year-long period, with several opportunities for community consultation.



Phase 1 of the project included drafting and finalizing the Comprehensive Consultation and Engagement Strategy, and early conversations were held with Township residents and Council members to inform the process. A series of one-on-one conversations were held between interested members of the public and the project team to lay the foundation for the project. The Township of Wellesley project team hosted a booth at the 2025 Wellesley Fall Fair, where members of the public were introduced to the project, asked about opportunities and current challenges, and shaping the vision of the new Official Plan. Notice of the project initiation was provided to agencies, Indigenous communities, and residents. The *Planning Act* Section 26 legislative requirements were met by providing a Notice of a Special Council Meeting to local newspapers leading up to the meeting. On August 26, 2025, the Special Council Meeting was held, where the project was formally introduced and initiated. This included information regarding the project's process and how residents and members of the public could get involved and follow along during the different phases of the project.

Phase 2 of the Official Plan involves conducting Background Research and Study Preparation, which includes the release of six draft Discussion Papers for public and stakeholder review and comment. Based on Township, agency, Council, and public feedback, the draft discussion papers will be reviewed and finalized. What is heard from engagement on these background reports will inform a series of policy directions which will inform Phase 3 of the project.

Phase 3 of the new Official Plan is the drafting of policies and land use maps. These **DRAFT** policies and maps will be published and shared with Township residents, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities for any further suggestions and input. The Statutory Public Open House and Statutory Public Meeting will both be held to inform Phase 4 finalization. A copy of the **DRAFT** Official Plan will be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for their review.

Phase 4 of the project involves the formal adoption of the new Township of Wellesley Official Plan by Township Council. Once Council adopts the new Official Plan, it 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, replacing both existing Township and Regional Official Plans.

1.3 What are the Discussion Papers?

A series of six Discussion Papers have been prepared, which establish a foundation from which to develop policy directions for the new Official Plan. They include:

- Residential Growth, Housing, and Intensification Strategy
- Commercial Needs Assessment
- Employment Projections and Employment Lands
- Scoped Secondary Plan for New Designated Growth Areas
- Settlement Boundary Expansions
- Land Use Policy Review and Analysis

Each paper includes policy context of Provincial, Regional, and local documents relevant to the topic, an overview of the current state, and preliminary policy directions for the Township, key topics for discussion, and next steps. These papers represent the basis of the first phase of consultation for the project, assisting in the development of policy directions for the new Official Plan.

1.4 Purpose of this Discussion Paper

This Discussion Paper will review relevant documents and policies to generate discussion around several themes of the new Official Plan, including, goals and objectives, consolidation and consistency of local, Regional, and Provincial planning frameworks, agricultural protection and enhancement, stormwater management, source water protection, climate change mitigation and adaption, water and wastewater servicing, and official plan implementation.

With the transfer of planning authority from the Region of Waterloo to the Township, the new Official Plan process will comprehensively review all existing Regional Official Plan policies to determine their continued relevance and appropriateness for inclusion in the Township's new Official Plan.

2.0 Legislative Overview

This section provides an overview of the provincial legislative context which informs the basis of creating The Township of Wellesley'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 making a decision 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. Specifically, this section includes direction for the inclusion of Provincial policies and restrictions on Official Plans, as well as requirements for assessment reporting, amendments to plans, and approval authorities.

Section 17 of the *Planning Act* states that “the Minister is the approval authority in respect of the approval of a plan as an official plan” and sets out a prescribed process the Township of Wellesley 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.

The creation of the new Township of Wellesley 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 Township of Wellesley Official Plan include, but are not limited to, 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 during the creation of a new official plan.

Section 2.3.1 states that “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.”

Furthermore, the PPS provides general policies for implementation and interpretation as it relates to the creation of the new Official Plan in Section 6.1.5. This section details

how Official Plans shall identify Provincial planning interests and sets out policies which implement these interests.

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.

The PPS provides policies for a wide range of uses where Provincial interest exists. Local Official Plans must demonstrate that the policies set out are consistent with that of the PPS, including:

- Section 4.1 contains policy for municipalities to identify and protect the Natural Heritage System. It prescribes where development is or is not permitted in relation to natural heritage features and areas.
- Section 4.2 provides policies for water, specifying the requirement to protect, improve, or restore the quality and quantity of water through watershed planning, restricting development, and site alteration near sensitive surface and ground water features to maintain hydrologic function.
- Section 4.3 protects prime agricultural areas and specialty crop areas for long-term agricultural use and avoiding new development. Where avoidance is impossible, mitigating and minimizing any adverse impacts to the agricultural system is necessary;
- Section 4.5 protects mineral aggregate resources for long-term use, providing policy which identifies manners for extraction, protection from sensitive uses, and rehabilitation; and
- Section 4.6 identifies policies for conserving cultural heritage and archaeology, such as requiring that any development or site alteration on lands or lands adjacent to protected heritage properties and areas of archaeological potential will not be permitted unless all resources are conserved. This section also identifies the need

for early engagement with Indigenous communities when heritage identification, protection, and management are being considered.

Furthermore, the PPS provides general policies for implementation and interpretation as it relates to the creation of the new Official Plan in Section 6.1.5. This section details how Official Plans shall identify Provincial planning interests and set out policies which implement these interests.

Finally, once the Township of Wellesley'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 Context

The following section provides an overview of the Region of Waterloo and Township of Wellesley's policy and strategic documents that set out direction and priorities for planning matters within in the Township.

3.1 Waterloo Regional Official Plan, 2025

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 Wellesley. Historically, the Region of Waterloo was the approval authority for the Township of Wellesley's Official Plan, and Wellesley was required to conform to that plan.

As of January 1, 2025, the ROP became a Local Plan of the Township of Wellesley. The new Official Plan that is being created will replace the existing Township and Regional Official Plans and will align with Provincial direction set out in the PPS. The Township of Wellesley's new Official Plan will incorporate the best of the Region of Waterloo's Official Plan policies, while charting out the future of the Township's growth to the year 2051.

Specific ROP policies relating to the contents of this background will be covered in their individual sections for efficient review.

3.2 Waterloo Economic Development Corporation Rural Investment Readiness Strategy, 2024

The report provides an analysis of the economic development context and employment land needs for the Township of Wellesley through 2054. This strategy is aimed at investing in local, rural economic sectors and creating opportunities in the agri-food, cleantech, and automotive sectors, including electric vehicle development. The finalized strategy identifies key actions to attract investment, enhance competitiveness, and foster innovation across rural communities.

3.3 Region of Waterloo Transportation Master Plan, 2018

The Region of Waterloo Transportation Master Plan (TMP), titled *Moving Forward*, is a long-term strategic document guiding transportation development in the region to the year 2041. The TMP includes policies and outlines goals and strategies to address the Region's active transportation, public transit, and road network needs, which in turn supports sustainable travel and economic growth. The Plan outlines four overall goals brought forward from the previous 2010 TMP:

- Promote travel choice
- Foster a strong economy
- Support sustainable development
- Optimize the transportation system

To achieve these goals, five broad strategies were created to serve as guiding principles for future initiatives. These strategies include:

- Building a Transportation Network that Supports all Modes of Travel
- Promoting a Healthy Community
- Developing a Frequent Transit Network
- Enhancing Inter-Regional Connections
- Positioning the Network for New Mobility

The Plan emphasizes a shift toward active transportation and public transit, with investments in walking, cycling, and transit infrastructure. By 2041, the TMP involves planned transit service enhancements, active transportation network expansion, road network changes, and new or updated strategies. Developed through extensive public and stakeholder engagement, the TMP reflects the Region's commitment to inclusive, forward-thinking transportation planning that supports both community well-being and long-term sustainability.

3.4 Region of Waterloo Active Transportation Plan, 2014

The Region of Waterloo's Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP), titled *Walk Cycle Waterloo Region*, is a strategic document aimed at enhancing walking, cycling, and rolling infrastructure throughout the Region. Developed in alignment with the broader Transportation Master Plan, the ATMP supports the Region's goals for sustainable growth, compact urban development, and improved mobility for all residents. With the population expected to grow significantly by 2031, the Plan seeks to make active transportation a safe, convenient, and attractive option for everyday travel, helping to reduce congestion, support transit use, and foster healthier communities.

The ATMP envisions a connected and inclusive region where active transportation plays a central role in daily life. It sets a target to increase the share of walking and cycling trips in the Region from 7.8% to 12% by 2031. In rural municipalities like the Township of Wellesley, the walking mode share goal is 4.7%. To achieve this, the plan outlines five key action areas:

1. Network Action Plan
2. Strategic Signage Action Plan
3. Winter Network Action Plan
4. Behavioural Shift Action Plan
5. Performance Monitoring Action Plan

These strategies are designed to create accessible routes that serve people of all ages and abilities while also improving access to schools, transit, and other community destinations. Developed through extensive public engagement, the ATMP also supports broader regional objectives such as reducing emissions, improving public health, and advancing transportation equity. It emphasizes the importance of inclusive planning, ensuring that active transportation investments benefit vulnerable populations.

3.5 Township of Wellesley Official Plan (2022)

The Township of Wellesley has one urban area, the Village of Wellesley, ten rural settlement areas, three rural employment areas, and one rural mixed-use/agricultural cluster. The Village of Wellesley, or Wellesley Urban Area, is the only settlement area with full servicing; the remaining settlement areas are serviced by partial services or individual/private sewage and water services (well water and septic system).

Specific Township of Wellesley Official Plan policies relating to the contents of this background report will be covered in Appendix A.

3.6 Township of Wellesley Transportation and Mobility Master Plan (Forthcoming)

The Township of Wellesley is in the process of creating a Transportation and Mobility Master Plan to determine the Township's long-term and short-term transportation needs over the next twenty-five years. The Plan will look at safe, healthy, and accessible mobility options and opportunities for complete streets, land use and transportation integration, transportation demand management, and future technologies.

The Transportation and Mobility Master Plan is in the early stages of the project, with a draft of the Plan expected in winter 2025–26 and a final Plan to be presented to Council for adoption in February 2026. The Transportation and Mobility Master Plan is being developed concurrently with the new Official Plan. Findings and directions from each respective Plan will inform and reinforce one another, creating an integrated and collaborative approach to planning for the Township's future mobility and land use needs.

3.7 Wellesley Water and Wastewater Master Plan (Forthcoming)

The Region of Waterloo is in the process of completing a Water and Wastewater Master Plan (WWWMP) for Wellesley Village to address the community's water and wastewater needs to 2051. The Municipal Class Environmental Assessment projects growth for Wellesley Village to grow from its current population of 3,700 to approximately 5,600 by

2051 and will evaluate and the most effective ways to provide these services through upgrades to existing water and wastewater servicing infrastructure and proposed new projects.

The following key projects have been identified as part of the ongoing study:

- **Increased Water Supply Capacity:** There is an identified the need to increase water supply capacity by 2034 to service growth. This includes studies to examine increasing capacity at the existing Wellesley wells, as well as supply from potential new wells.
- **New Water Storage Facility at Bill Gies Recreation Centre Location:** The study has identified insufficient water storage to meet growth demands and is recommending a preferred location for the new storage facility to be located on the Bill Gies Recreation Centre lands.
- **Upgrades to the Existing Wastewater Treatment Plant:** The study has recommended significant need for capacity and process upgrades at the existing Wellesley Wastewater Treatment Plant in order to service growth needs.
- **Firella Creek Trunk Sewer Inflow and Infiltration Reduction:** The Firella Creek Trunk Sewer has been identified as key wastewater infrastructure that can provide additional capacity through inflow and infiltration (I&I) reduction measures and has recommended additional study to determine how best rehabilitate/upgrade the trunk sewer to reduce I&I flows.

3.8 Township of Wellesley Recreation Master Plan, 2024

The Township of Wellesley Recreation 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 under strategic themes such as Financial Sustainability, Facilities and Space Allocation, and Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces. The recommendations include suggested timing for implementation under “Short-, Medium-, and Long-Term” priorities.

The summary of observations from the Recreation Master Plan identified that the Township does not have an established park classification or park standards framework, is slightly deficient in neighbourhood parks, and that there are opportunities to create additional trails around sports fields.

Two recommendations that came out of the Master Plan as it relates to the planning policies for the new Official Plan include:

- **Recommendation 4.1** includes adopting a parkland classification system and amending the Official Plan to reflect the parkland classification system, including parkland targets.
- **Recommendation 4.13** encourages the Township to ensure development applications identify lands for park dedication and trail connections.

3.9 The Township of Wellesley Strategic Plan, 2019

The Township’s Strategic Plan ‘community’ is a guidance document which allows Council and Staff to prepare for the future needs of the Township. The 2019–2023 Plan has been extended to the end of 2026.

The Strategic Plan includes five focus areas, developed by the Region of Waterloo and adopted by the Township:

- Thriving Economy
- Sustainable Transportation
- Environment and Sustainable Growth
- Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities

- Responsive and Engaging Government Services

Under these five focus areas are fourteen strategic initiatives, including Affordable/Age Appropriate/Available Housing, Environmental Stewardship, Health Promotion, Intensification, Zoning, Development and Growth, and Public Transit/Access to Urban Services, Rural Character and Identity, among others.

3.10 Township of Wellesley Accessibility Plan, 2018

The Township of Wellesley Accessibility Plan (2018–2022) is a multi-year strategy developed to meet the obligations of Provincial accessibility legislation, including the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2025. The plan outlines potential accessibility barriers in municipal services and facilities, including information and communication barriers, technological barriers, policy/practice barriers, attitudinal barriers, and physical/architectural barriers. It highlights previous accessibility initiatives and sets out goals for new and ongoing initiatives, largely focusing on addressing physical/architectural barriers. The Township also commits to maintaining accessible formats and communication supports upon request to ensure that people with disabilities can access information and services.

4.0 Key Topics for Discussion

This section provides an overview of foundational themes throughout the existing Official Plan and the ROP, including:

- Agricultural and Natural Heritage System Preservation
- Stormwater Management
- Source Water Protection
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation
- Servicing and Infrastructure

An overview of implementation guidelines will also be provided per the existing Official Plan and ROP. Through the creation of the new Official Plan, existing gaps between the current Official Plan, the Region's former policies, and new Provincial guidance from the PPS will also need to be addressed and are reviewed in this paper.

4.1 Establishing Guiding Principles, Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives are required in an Official Plan, as outlined in the *Planning Act*. They help manage and direct development on the social, economic, built, and natural environment.

Through the development of goals and objectives, the Township needs to consider Provincial interests and Regional priorities that are relevant to the Township, and Township priorities.

The ROP outlines a vision for the Region of Waterloo, as well as three foundational themes to achieve a well-planned community. The vision is as follows:

“Waterloo Region will be an inclusive, thriving, and sustainable region of connected urban and rural communities with global reach, fostering opportunities for current and future generations.”

This is further implemented through the ROP's foundational themes:

- Building an Equitable Community;
- Building a Thriving Community; and
- Building a Sustainable Community.

The policies within the ROP are guided by a set of principles for development and resource protection, including but not limited to the following guiding principles (Section 1.5):

- Support the achievement of 15-minute neighbourhoods designed to support healthy and active living and meet people's needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime;
- Consider the wellbeing and belonging of all residents, including children and youth, and work towards only making investments that benefit everyone;
- Support a range and mix of housing options, including additional residential units, and affordable and missing middle housing, to serve all sizes, incomes, and ages of households in all residential areas;
- Protect and enhance natural heritage areas, including the Grand River and its tributaries, hydrologic, drinking water and landform systems, features, and functions; and
- Support and enhance the long-term viability and productivity of agriculture by protecting prime agricultural areas and the agri-food network.

Section 1.6 of the Township Official Plan identifies nineteen goals which form the basis for policies outlined in the Official Plan and are included in Appendix A.

ROP objectives and Township Official Plan goals will be reviewed with Township Council and staff as part of the Council Workshop Meeting #1 – Background Reports. As part of this exercise, a visioning exercise will be undertaken to review the goals and objectives

and discuss key words and phrases that should be included to reflect the new Township of Wellesley Official Plan to 2051.

4.1.1 Preliminary Policy Directions

1. The new Official Plan will span a 25-year timeframe, during which emerging trends surrounding climate change, housing, transportation, a changing demographic profile and the aging population, and employment opportunities will shape planning priorities.
2. A stewardship-based approach should be taken to guide continued preservation of agricultural lands and the Natural Heritage System, while supporting modest growth and rural economic development opportunities.
3. A policy framework for early and often consultation with Indigenous communities in planning and development applications that may affect Indigenous interests, such as cultural heritage and archaeological resources, should included in the new Official Plan.
4. The goals and objectives should align with those identified in recent local Plans, including the Strategic Plan, Master Plans, and the Community Improvement Plan.

The following are recommended guiding principles for consideration based on foundational topics outlined in the Background Reports and the existing Official Plan goals and objectives:

Theme	Draft Guiding Principle
Agricultural	Protect prime agricultural areas and maintain the Township's rural identity.
Climate Change	Promote a resilient and adaptive Township through responsible resource use, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and demands on energy, water, and waste systems.

Theme	Draft Guiding Principle
Complete Communities	Create public spaces and streetscapes that are safe and accessible for people of all ages and abilities and support opportunities for daily physical activity and social interaction.
Cultural Heritage and Archaeological Resources	To protect and conserve the cultural heritage and archaeological resources of the Township and provide for early engagement of Indigenous communities in development applications.
Growth	Accommodate modest residential and employment growth within designated settlement areas.
Health, Community, and Social Services	Strive to ensure health, community, and social services are provided within the Township through partnerships with community and not-for-profit organizations, the Region, Ontario Health Teams, and relevant Ministries.
Housing	Where appropriate, provide a mix and range of housing options, including more affordable housing types, to meet the projected needs of present and future residents throughout all stages of their lives.
Land Use	Maintain distinct boundaries between urban and Countryside areas by ensuring efficient use of urban lands and restricting incompatible uses within the Countryside.
Parkland, Open Space, and Recreation	Provide for an accessible, connected, and integrated system of parks, open spaces, and trails that are linked to existing natural features, parks, and trails.
Rural Economic Development	Support and encourage agribusinesses and agritourism throughout the Township and the diversification of the economic base.

Theme	Draft Guiding Principle
Servicing and Infrastructure	Promote phased development that aligns with current infrastructure and servicing capacity and future planned capacity.
Source Water Protection	Protect and maintain surface and groundwater resources, including source water protection areas, the Regional Recharge Area and key hydrologic areas.
Transportation	Ensure the Township's transportation network is integrated to support the efficient movement of people and goods and meet the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, horse-drawn vehicles, farm equipment and motor vehicles.

4.2 Policy Consolidations and Conformity with the PPS

The development of the new Township of Wellesley Official Plan will involve a review of existing local planning documents, such as the Township Official Plan and the Regional Official Plan. This process will consolidate and update relevant policies, while introducing new policies to reflect recent legislative and Provincial changes. In addition, a conformity exercise will be completed to ensure that the new Township Official Plan is consistent with the PPS.

Provincial Policy Changes

The Provincial Planning Statement 2024 replaces the 2020 PPS and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and introduces several new Provincial directions for growth targets, settlement area expansions, Strategic Growth Areas, Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs), intensification, employment lands and uses, and municipal comprehensive reviews, among other policy changes. Some of these changes specifically include:

- **Employment Use:** Any development within 300 metres of an employment area must avoid or mitigate potential impacts on the employment use and its long-term viability;
- **Settlement Area Expansions:** Municipalities and landowners are enabled to initiate settlement area boundary expansions outside of a municipal comprehensive review;
- **Growth Targets and Strategic Growth Areas:** When creating new Official Plans, 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. Planning for infrastructure, public service facilities, strategic growth areas, and employment areas may extend beyond this time horizon. In addition, density targets should be established based on local conditions for designated growth areas. Large and fast-growing municipalities should plan for a target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare in designated growth areas.

Provincial Legislative Changes

Major provincial legislative changes that must be implemented into the Township of Wellesley New Official Plan include:

- **Bill 23 – More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022:** The purpose of Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022, was to accelerate housing construction with a goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031. Several Acts were amended resulting from a number of changes to support housing construction, which are detailed in Appendix B.
- **Bill 162 – Get it Done Act, 2024:** The purpose of Bill 162, Get It Done Act, 2024, was to accelerate infrastructure, transit, and housing and development projects by streamlining approvals, reducing regulatory “red tape,” and making land acquisition easier. Several Acts were amended, such as the Environmental Protection Act and *Planning Act*, which are detailed in Appendix B.
- **Bill 185 – Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024:** The purpose of Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024, was aimed at streamlining the planning and development processes so that homebuilding could occur more quickly. Details of the changes are included in Appendix B.
- **Bill 17 – Protect Ontario By Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025:** Bill 17, Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025, was introduced to accelerate the development of housing, infrastructure, and transit in Ontario by reducing regulatory hurdles, standardizing processes, and lowering costs. Bill 17 impacted several acts, which can be found in Appendix B.

Any legislative changes that will impact the Township of Wellesley will be addressed in the new Official Plan.

Local Policy Changes

The current Township Official Plan was adopted in 2015. The ROP was adopted in 2009, took effect in 2015, and was later modified by ROPA 6 in 2023.

The new Official Plan will bring forward elements of the Regional and Township Official Plans, ensuring consistency with the PPS. The new Official Plan will also bring in new policies resulting from legislative changes, ensuring the Plan is consistent with the PPS. The following will occur as part of the creation of the new Official Plan:

- A consolidation of Township and Regional Amendments, including ROPA 6, which alongside Bill 162, added an additional 24 hectares of land to the Township Urban Area; and,
- New local plans will be added that have been developed since the last local Official Plan amendment, including: the Strategic Plan, the Transportation and Mobility Master Plan, the Recreation Master Plan, the Community Improvement Plan, the Rural Investment and Readiness Strategy, and the Development Charges Background Study and By-law.

This Discussion Paper, along with the five other related papers, will help shape the key directions for policy development. **DRAFT** policies will be shared with Council, agencies, interested parties, and the public as part of Phase 3 of the project.

4.2.1 Preliminary Policy Directions

1. All policies and definitions used must be consistent with those set out in the PPS.
2. Policies and definitions should align with relevant local strategic planning documents, to the extent appropriate (such as the Strategic Plan, the Rural Investment Readiness Strategy, and the Community Improvement Plan, among others).
3. Recommendations and findings from local plans currently under development, such as the Transportation and Mobility Master Plan and the Reimagining the Wellesley Arena and Community Centre Lands, will be integrated into the new Official Plan.

4. Ensure the policies reflect changes to the scope of responsibilities of conservation authorities and Regional planning responsibilities.
5. Ensure that key changes in legislation and policy have been incorporated into the Plan regarding matters such as public consultation, limitation on appeals of planning decisions, changes related to heritage designations (individual and heritage conservation districts), and permissions for additional residential units on properties as of right.

4.3 Protecting and Enhancing the Agricultural System

The Township of Wellesley's agricultural landscape is unique, with an active agricultural sector, on-farm diversified uses, and some limited agritourism businesses. In the development of a new Township Official Plan, it will be important to continue protecting the countryside and prime agricultural areas, while also supporting the diversification of suitable lands through agri-tourism and agri-business initiatives.

The ROP provides policies in Section 1.6.2 for the Region's agricultural system, which is made up of the agricultural land base and agri-food network. The policies set out to enhance the long-term viability of the agricultural lands of the Region while also supporting the economic connections to the agri-food system.

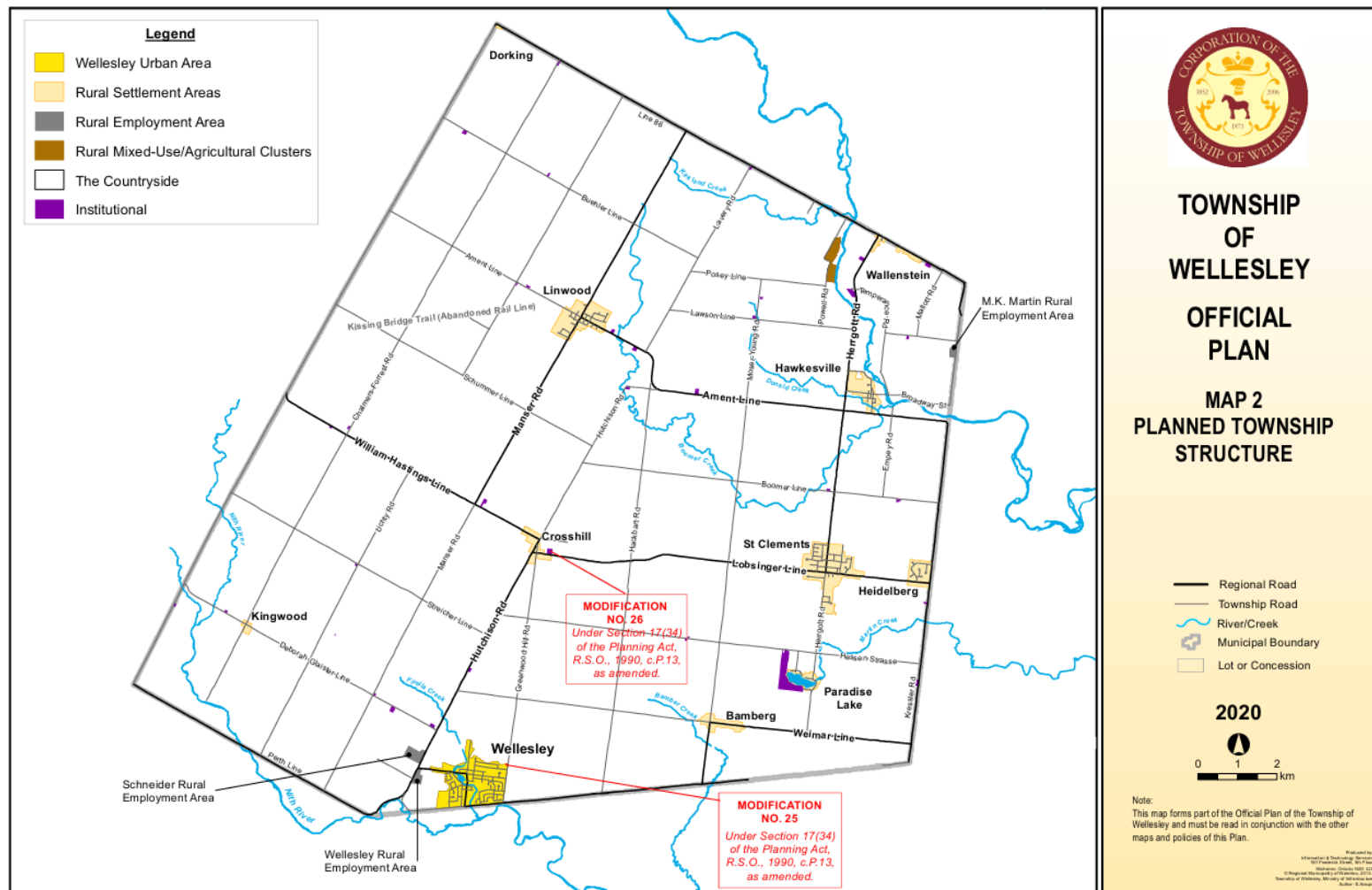


Figure 1: Planned Township Structure – The Countryside. Source: Township of Wellesley Official Plan Map #2.

The current Township Official Plan and Regional Official Plan both provide policies for the protection of the Countryside by focusing development in the Township Urban Area and rural settlement areas. Agricultural lands are a focal component of the Township's identity and must continue to be preserved in the new Official Plan.

Slow-Moving Vehicles and Horse-Drawn Vehicles

The Township's roads support large farming equipment, school busses, large commercial vehicles, cyclists, cars, pedestrians, and horse-drawn vehicles. Specific to the Township's rural context, there is a significant presence of slow-moving vehicles such as farm equipment and horse-drawn vehicles. Horse-drawn vehicles range from open to closed carts, carrying one person to several people, crops, and equipment. While horse-drawn vehicles travel primarily on the shoulder of the road, ensuring road safety for all transportation methods is important, as conflict can arise between these slow-moving vehicles and other motor vehicles. Unlike active modes, these slow-moving vehicles are often larger than the average car, and as such, providing dedicated lanes for them is not feasible.

The mixture of road users presents a unique opportunity to implement a variety of enhanced safety and calming measures where typical traffic-calming infrastructure may not be suitable. The Official Plan should prioritize the safety of active transportation users and slow-moving vehicles in mixed traffic by supporting strategies that reduce conflict and encourage the safe coexistence of all road users. It is expected that the forthcoming Township Transportation Master Plan (TMP) will address these items and will be incorporated into the new Official Plan as appropriate.

High-Speed Rural Roads

Rural roads in the Township are integral to the movement of people and goods, supporting local travel as well as connecting Regional destinations. While rural roads serve various functions, overall traffic volumes are often low, leading to higher speeds.

For active transportation modes, this could include separated bike lanes or multiuse paths, which create safer, more accessible environments for a diverse range of users, including cyclists, pedestrians, individuals using mobility devices, and families with children. However, this can be difficult to achieve when road space is limited. As such, it is important to consider thoughtful design and opportunities for traffic-calming measures that can accommodate safe shared spaces for diverse users. Public engagement and education can also contribute to safer roads for everyone. It is expected that the forthcoming Township Transportation Master Plan (TMP) will address these items and will be incorporated into the new Official Plan as appropriate.

4.3.1 Preliminary Policy Directions

1. Continue to protect prime agricultural lands by directing the majority of growth to the Wellesley Urban Area, Rural Settlements Areas and Rural Employment Areas.
2. Agribusiness and rural economic development are key priorities for the Township. The Township has a strong agrifood and industrial sector, which plays a vital role in the local economy, and this should be reflected in the policies of the new Official Plan.
3. New or updated policies could help enhance, promote, and strengthen the agribusinesses industry within the Township. The new Official Plan should support value-added agricultural operations, local food processing, on-farm diversification, and agritourism that complements farming activities. Policies should also align with Provincial guidelines for agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses, while maintaining the long-term protection of prime agricultural lands and encouraging collaboration with local agricultural and economic development partners.
4. A goal of the Township of Wellesley Community Improvement Plan is to “foster economic growth and attract visitors,” and it offers an incentive program to support local economic development with programs geared to agritourism. The current Official Plan is limited in providing criteria for evaluating agriculture-related and on-

farm diversified uses. Intentional policies based on provincially determined criteria could support agritourism and agribusinesses in the Township on eligible lands, and this should be developed and included in the new Official Plan.

5. New or updated policies that align with the Rural Investment Readiness Strategy recommendations, such as the protection, efficient use, and economic development of rural employment areas, promoting climate resilience and sustainability, and encouraging new rural tourism development should be considered and evaluated as part of the policy development process.
6. The Township should support opportunities for a sustainable local food system that may include local farmers markets, agritourism, Community Shared Agriculture programs, diversity of agricultural uses (greenhouses, orchards), educational and on-farm experiences, and community gardens. Urban agriculture should be part of a community's character and integrated into the open space system to provide a transitional use between the natural and built environments.
7. Slow-moving vehicles, such as farm equipment and horse-drawn vehicles, continue to play a key role in the Township's transportation network, especially within the rural clusters. Their presence contributes to the agricultural, cultural identity, and character of the community, and their safe integration is essential. Official Plan policies geared to slow-moving vehicles, high-speed rural roads, traffic-calming measures and dedicated shelters will take direction from the work being completed on the Transportation Master Plan.

4.4 Stormwater Management

Historically, strong stormwater guidance had been provided by the Province and implemented through the ROP, as well as from the Grand River Conservation Authority for lands within their regulated areas. With the removal of planning authority from the Region, the reviewing and integrating of relevant stormwater policies within the new Township Official Plan will be important.

Municipal Consolidated Linear Infrastructure Environmental Compliance

Approval

The Municipal Consolidated Linear Infrastructure Environmental Compliance Approval (CLI-ECA) is a municipal document for a stormwater management system that provides a single consolidated environmental approval. The Township's CLI-ECA will be issued by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). It confers upon the Township the authority to make changes to the system when requirements in the CLI-ECA are met and to approve alterations to stormwater infrastructure that meet certain requirements.

The CLI-ECA further outlines obligations on the part of the municipality, regarding the monitoring of the stormwater management infrastructure for performance, the maintenance of the stormwater management infrastructure, responses to emergency situations, and reporting to the Ministry on the foregoing. At the time of reporting, it is understood that the Township has submitted the CLI-ECA application to MECP and that the final CLI-ECA is pending. The approved document will contain information regarding the upkeep and evaluation of stormwater infrastructure and criteria for the design of new infrastructure. Guidelines of the responsibilities of the Township and duties to report to the Ministry will also be outlined. Information on LIDs will be included as well, as these are requirements for new stormwater management systems.

4.4.1 Preliminary Policy Directions

1. Stormwater management continues to evolve past traditional flood control, erosion mitigation, and quality control measures. The MECP has put in place guidelines for source intervention of stormwater to help with maintaining water balance. These criteria can be found in the CLI-ECA. It is also important to note that the Township's obligation to maintain water balance is linked to source water protection policies.
2. The requirements under the CLI-ECA should be acknowledged in the new Official Plan, as it contains important information related to stormwater management and the upkeep of stormwater infrastructure. There is limited coverage on policy for funding for stormwater management infrastructure, as well as monitoring requirements and reporting. Without CLI-ECA, important policies in relation to the implementation and maintenance of Low-Impact Development (LID) are also missing. These policies provide a framework for the Township to develop a funding mechanism to support the monitoring and maintenance requirements specified in the CLI-ECA.
3. It's vital to establish clear stormwater management policies in the new Official Plan relating to development, design practices of stormwater management, and storm sewers based on the 2017 Development Standards that are not included in the current Official Plan.

4.5 Source Water Protection

The Township of Wellesley supplies the majority of its drinking water through ground water resources. Ground water accounts for approximately 75% of the region's drinking water supply, as outlined in the Regional Official Plan. To protect and maintain the quality and quantity of groundwater aquifers and drinking water, the Plan provides comprehensive source water protection policies. The Region has made recent updates to its Plan, including updated mapping and terminology, which will be reflected in the new Official Plan. Throughout the new Official Plan process, Township staff will continue working with the Region to update source water protection policies.

Source water protection areas are sensitive areas that contribute water or are near municipal water service wells and surface water intakes that are vulnerable to contamination or depletion from incompatible land uses. While policies will be updated according to regional updates to the Plan, the current Township of Wellesley Official Plan identifies three types of source water protection areas:

- **Wellhead Protection Sensitivity Areas:** These areas are classified on a scale from one to eight, as designated on the following map. The classification is determined by the varying degrees of management relative to the vulnerability of the underlying groundwater to contamination, the importance of the well to the capacity of the municipal water services, and the length of time the groundwater within the area will take to reach the municipal water service well.

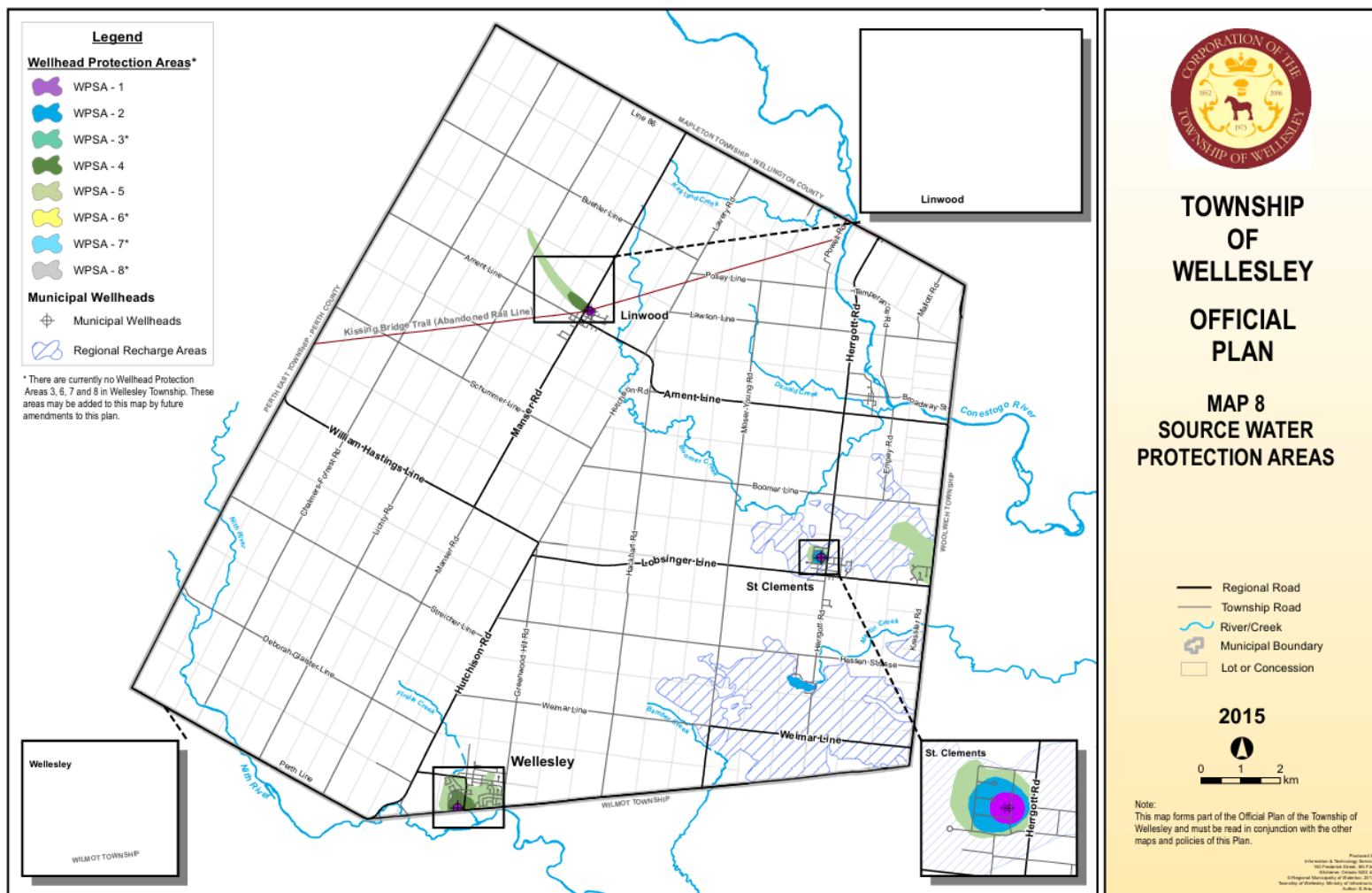


Figure 2: Source Water Protection Areas. Source: Township Official Plan, Map 8.

- **High Microbial Risk Management Zones:** Areas where the underlying groundwater is most vulnerable to disease-causing organisms. These zones surround municipal water well services supplied by Groundwater Under the Direct Influence of Surface Water (GUDI). GUDI wells draw groundwater that is directly connected to and dependent upon surface water in locations where contaminants may not be filtered adequately by the overlying soil or subsurface before entering the well.
- **Regional Recharge Areas:** Areas protected from land use practices and hazardous chemicals that could impact the quality and quantity of water within and available to the aquifers that contribute to municipal water services. The Regional Recharge Areas are identified in light blue in Figure 3 on the next page.

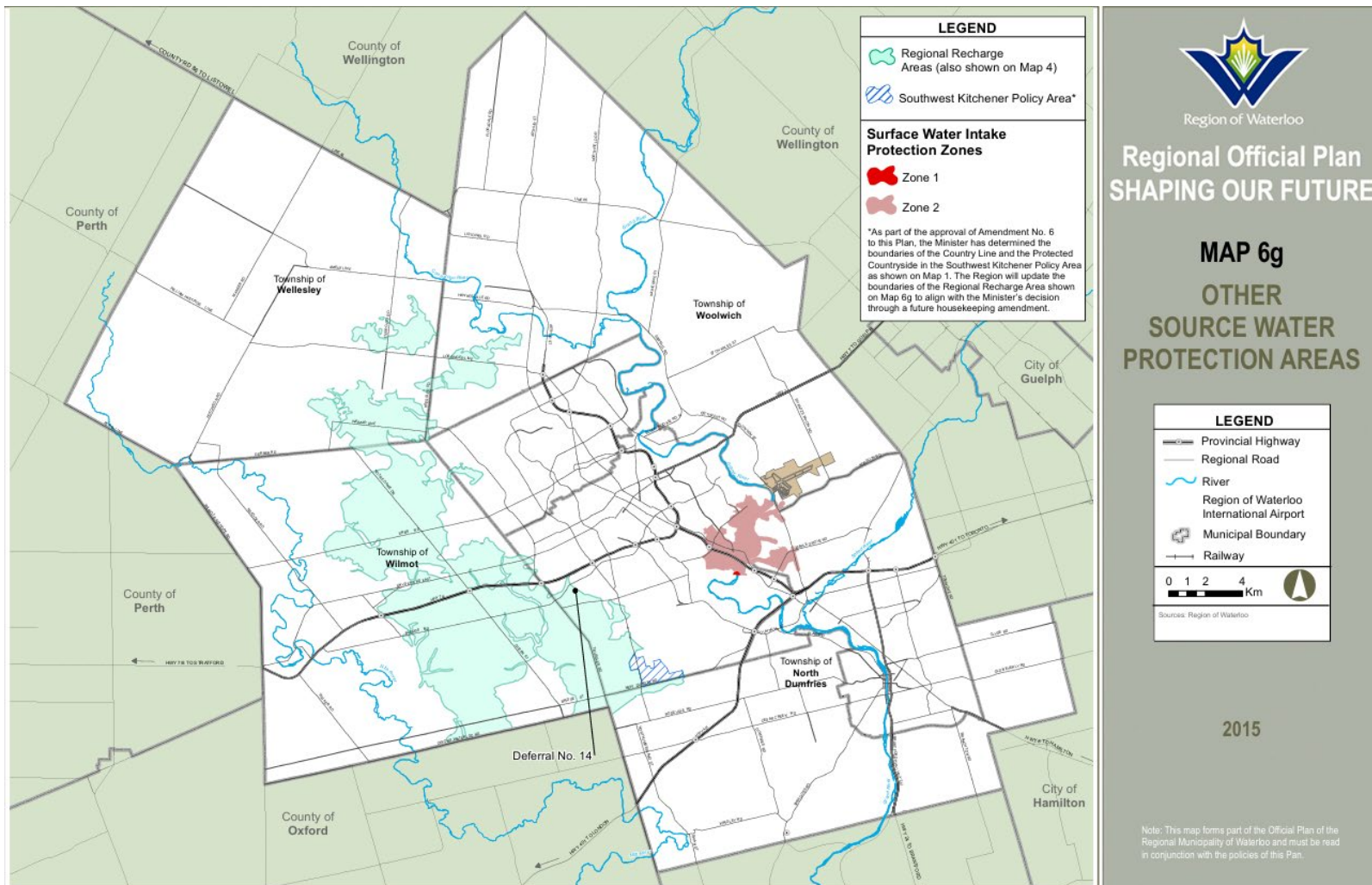


Figure 3: Regional Recharge Areas. Source: Waterloo Regional Official Plan, Map 6g.

Specific policies surrounding these three areas are provided within the Township and Regional Official Plans. The reliance on groundwater for drinking water within the Region combined with the heightened role of municipalities in protecting source water highlights the importance of incorporating appropriate policies into the new Official Plan.

Source water protection is related to stormwater management, specifically with respect to the implementation of LID infiltration BMPs which provide stormwater quality treatment and maintain groundwater recharge. As source water protection policies in Official Plans was previously under the purview of the Region, the current Township policies do not fully incorporate the requirements to comply with Source Water Protection Policy. Recently, municipalities have become more involved in the administration of Source Water Protection Policies through the planning process. Source Water Protection Policies will be reviewed and incorporated into the new Official Plan.

4.5.1 Preliminary Policy Directions

1. The Township is reliant on groundwater resources to supply the majority of its drinking water. It is important that Source Water Protection Policies be integrated into the new Official Plan. Although the current Township Official Plan includes policies related to source water protection, it is recommended that the policies be reviewed and updated in consultation with the Region.
2. Source water protection practices contribute towards the overall sustainability of the Natural Heritage System. The Greenlands Network, Supporting Environmental Features, and Environmental Constraint Areas are important to recognize due to

their significance to source water protection. Township Official Plan policies should continue to:

- Protect key natural heritage and key hydrologic features and associated buffers, using Provincially identified features as a starting point for base environmental mapping.
 - Prohibit development and site alteration in key natural heritage and key hydrologic features.
 - Provide for the protection of additional linkages identified through the completion of Sub-Watershed Studies or Environmental Impact Studies.
 - Provide policy flexibility for essential infrastructure for which an Environmental Assessment has been completed, or which is required as a condition of approval under the Planning Act for location in the Natural Heritage System.
 - Restrict development and site alteration in or near sensitive surface water features and sensitive ground water features to protect, improve, or restore their hydrological features which may require mitigative measures and/or alternative development approaches.
3. Incorporate Regional policies on source water protection into the new Official Plan and Secondary Plan to ensure for the ongoing protection of source water.
 4. Include the latest mapping and policies from source water protection plans and the Grand River Conservation Authority for key hydrologic areas and resources, including areas of significant and/or sensitive groundwater recharge, areas of surface water contributions, and ecologically Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas.

4.6 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption

Given the Township's dependence on agriculture, groundwater, and the importance of its natural ecosystems, building climate resilience and ensuring the long-term protection of water resources are critical to maintaining public health, biodiversity, and future prosperity.

Introducing sustainability as a lens for future development will lead to communities that are safer, more active, healthier, financially prosperous, and more resource-conscious. Provincial policy directs planning authorities to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate by supporting energy conservation, efficient land use, and development patterns, and embracing the use of green infrastructure and natural areas for water infiltration.

Discussion on climate change action and positive initiatives must start at the local level and focus on issues that are impacting a specific area. Not all areas are the same, nor do they have the same issues. Understanding local conditions makes sustainable approaches more effective and impactful. For the Township of Wellesley, growth and development creates an opportunity to ensure an efficient and compact development pattern that supports healthy outcomes through the delivery of housing options, a connected mobility system, and resilient and cost-effective infrastructure.

4.6.1 Preliminary Policy Directions

1. Continue to implement and refine ROP policies that protect the diverse range of environmental features that form part of a broader Greenland's Network within the Township. This natural system provides economic, ecological, and social benefits, and also contributes to the overall quality of life in the Township. It supports and enhances air, land and water quality and maintains biological diversity as well.
2. Maintain and strengthen Protected Countryside policies to safeguard a continuous band of productive agricultural lands and valuable environmentally sensitive landscapes. These lands contain a large concentration of prime agricultural areas

and key natural heritage features such as woodlands, wetlands, streams, and habitat for a range of plants and wildlife. By protecting these features and areas, essential ecosystem services that increase our resilience to climate change can be provided.

3. As Waterloo Region is committed to transformational climate action, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 and transition off fossil fuels through the TransformWR strategy, the new Official Plan should emphasize the role of land use planning in building a low-carbon, resilient, and equitable community over the next three decades.
4. Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impacts of a changing climate through approaches that incorporate climate change considerations in planning for and the development of infrastructure, including stormwater management systems and public service facilities.
5. Sustainability impacts all aspects of the Official Plan and should be used as a lens for policy development. It is essential that this approach be reflected in support for new growth that is compact, designed efficiently, and avoids ecosystem degradation. It should also create sustainable systems of transportation and promote active transportation, green infrastructure, healthy communities, and ongoing mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
6. The increasing severity and occurrence of extreme weather events and the risks they pose require an approach that is sustainable in the long-term. A combination of approaches to flood mitigation may be required. At the local level, policies for low-impact development measures to promote increased evapotranspiration, infiltration and groundwater recharge, and lower surface runoff volumes and flow rates should be considered. LID measures include (but are not limited to) the application of green roofs, bioretention areas, and limiting impervious (solid) ground cover to assist with water infiltration that can be included as adaptation or mitigation measures.

7. Explore opportunities in the new Official Plan to support Emergency Preparedness Planning with respect to development, infrastructure, and systems to ensure access to basic needs are designed in a way that mitigates the impacts of climate change and related extreme weather events, such as flooding, heat waves, severe winter storms, and supply chain disruption.
8. Consider adding new policies that support the High-Performance Development Standards work that is being undertaken with other area municipalities. This could include policies related to:
 - Energy conservation (geo exchange, solar thermal).
 - Innovative public and private building designs that contribute to energy reduction and natural resource conservation, green roofs, synergies between buildings, and site management practices (such as winter maintenance or salt management plans for new developments).
 - The use of native plants and/or plants that are drought/salt resistant in landscaping and Township-preferred street trees listed in Appendix A of the Development Standards.
 - Low-impact development and other initiatives to improve stormwater management and infiltration.
 - Support utilizing passive solar orientation in the layout of new development to maximize solar energy gain opportunities.
9. Implement recommendations from the Transportation Master Plan as they relate to multimodal transportation and mobility policies that impact climate change.
10. One of the consequences of a changing climate is the development of “urban heat islands.” This term refers to urban areas with higher temperatures, typically caused by heat-absorbing buildings, roads, and other hard surfaces such as surface parking

lots. Responding to heat islands requires strategies related to both the built and natural environment, and policies could promote planting trees and urban greening, a tree canopy target, green or cool roofs, and reflective surfaces.

4.7 Water and Wastewater Servicing

The Urban Area of the Village of Wellesley is the only area of the Township with full municipal services. The remaining settlement areas are privately or partially serviced. The following section provides an overview of key topics for discussion as they relate to servicing needs within the Township.

Water Supply and Treatment and Wastewater Treatment Capacity to Support Growth within the Township

Water supply and wastewater treatment capacity are a significant constraint to growth in Wellesley, and as the WWWMP outlined in Section 3.7 highlights, there is a need to increase water supply capacity by 2032 to service growth. The work to identify sources of water supply and determine the required expansion of water and wastewater treatment are extensive. They include significant Municipal Class EA components, complex design, and construction processes, and often also include significant requirements for additional property taking/availability and associated infrastructure projects. These major infrastructure projects also require extensive coordination between the Township and the Region as the supply and treatment facilities are studied, designed, constructed, commissioned, and operated by the Region.

Wastewater Conveyance Capacity to Support Growth

Capacity constraints within the existing sanitary sewer network can be optimized through reduction of inflow and infiltration (I&I) to better “seal up” existing sewers identified to be taking on rainwater/stormwater or groundwater through leaky joints, damaged pipe, downspout connections, etc. Ultimately, this can provide affected catchments within the Village of Wellesley with increased sanitary capacity that can be allocated to new growth/development.

Water Capacity Impacts on Land Use Type

Service areas with high-available fire flow needs require water storage and larger trunk watermains. This can have a significant impact on growth areas. Higher-density, industrial, or other similar areas with high-available fire flow requirements drive the need for more complex water projects, including additional storage. Available fire flow is typically the primary “water-system”-based constraint for new development areas.

Area municipalities have recently commenced studies to rethink how they provide available fire flow—including consideration for reduced fire-flow provision from the municipal water system and enhanced requirements for sites and development that requires higher available fire flow.

Small Community Water Systems

The PPS notes that municipal water services are the preferred form for servicing for settlement areas. Private communal water services are only preferred where municipal services are not available, planned, or feasible. The PPS directs planning authorities to assess the financial viability or feasibility of municipal or private communal systems as alternatives to individual on-site water services.

Within the Township of Wellesley, there are Rural Settlement Areas and Rural Employment Areas that are serviced by legacy private water systems. The current Official Plan specifies all Dry Industrial/ Commercial land users within Service Settlements and Rural Employment Area will be designated Dry Industrial/Commercial and only permitted to utilize private water and individual wastewater systems.

4.7.1 Preliminary Policy Directions

1. A better understanding is required of the existing available capacity, updated water demand, and wastewater flow projections for future growth and Township coordination with the Region. This will help establish consistent projections and

clearly set out available capacity and potential for constraints. These can then identify triggers for infrastructure upgrade requirements based on growth projections—and associated growth-phasing opportunities within the Township. The framework for Township studies to evaluate and validate available capacity can be included as part of the Official Plan. This will ensure that the Township’s knowledge and understanding of existing and future water demands and wastewater flows is compared with the Region’s work—and ultimately provides the Township with a true understanding of available capacity and upgrade triggers for Township and Region infrastructure.

2. Inflow & infiltration reduction can be targeted to improve sewers that will have potential to service key growth areas. A framework should be included to prioritize these studies as effective measures to free up available capacity and improve the condition of the overall wastewater network.
3. Access to available fire flow and proximity to existing infrastructure can be key constraints to high-water use land uses. Planning for required servicing works should be integrated into growth and land use policy.
4. Establish a framework for future study requirements to evaluate how the Township provides available fire flow, with consideration for opportunities and constraints within existing water distribution infrastructure, enhanced site requirements for fire flow storage/provision, encouragement for innovative construction and/or processes that reduce fire-flow requirements, or restrictions to specific land use types that can offer benefits to the larger system.
5. Incorporate policies for communal water and wastewater servicing within settlement areas, in accordance with the direction from the PPS.
6. A clearly defined responsibility hierarchy for small communal water systems (with consideration for long-term financial impacts) should be considered in collaboration with the Region. Formal agreements should be in place between the Township and

the Region for each system, with notification protocols to ensure proper coordination of communication to residents and businesses.

4.8 Official Plan Implementation

The implementation section of Official Plans is an important component as it addresses how the plan will come into effect. Implementation is achieved through a series of tools such as legislative frameworks, Zoning By-laws, capital forecasting, Community Improvement Plans, and collaboration with interested parties and the public.

Implementation sections also identify the amendment process, and how the Plan will continue to be consistent with policies set out by the Province, such as the PPS, and the overall monitoring and evaluation tools.

While the Township's Official Plan implementation policies are similar to the ROP, updates are required to indicate the change in roles that the Township and Region now play. The Township will also require revising the Local/Regional Jurisdiction policies to reflect the role of the Province in providing approvals to Official Plans, indicating consistency with new legislation and the removal of Regional Official Plan references.

4.8.1 Preliminary Policy Directions

1. Revise, add, and clarify the role of engagement and consultation. This includes providing defined roles and responsibilities with respect to engagement with Indigenous communities, agencies, the Province, and the public.
2. Identify engagement tools and techniques, including providing proposed documentation in plain language and accommodating accessibility requirements.
3. Identify policies that support early engagement with Indigenous communities, recognize Indigenous interests in land use planning, and consider the potential impacts of planning decisions on Aboriginal and treaty rights.
4. As the Region of Waterloo is now classified as an upper-tier municipality without planning responsibilities, a new Development Review and Approvals section outlining the processes and responsibilities of the Province, the Township, and other agencies are required.

5.0 Next Steps

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

This paper establishes a foundation from which the Township will develop policy directions. This is a starting point for generating discussion around key land use policies for the future of the Township of Wellesley. Policy directions will follow out of this engagement to outline proposed changes in the new Township of Wellesley Official Plan.

5.1 What We Heard Summary

The Discussion Papers were released in **DRAFT** form to inform public engagement in fall 2025. The Township and consulting team hosted an open public session, as well as a virtual meeting with agencies, in November 2025 to present the Discussion Papers and discuss revisions that may be required. These engagements were some of several opportunities throughout this project where public input is needed and welcomed. These papers have been updated to reflect additional insights or items arising from public engagement and include thematic summaries of input received (with a companion Engagement Report also being prepared).

Through engagement, we heard about the importance of the countryside line in protecting agricultural land, that transportation must be safe and consider vulnerable road users and students, the Township's reliance of groundwater resources and their protection, and the importance of balancing development with servicing capacity.

5.2 Township Council Presentation of Policy Directions

The **FINAL** reports include recommended policy directions that will inform the development of the new Official Plan. These papers will be presented to Township of Wellesley Council on December 9, 2025. The reports, together with public input, will

serve as the basis for developing the Township of Wellesley's new Official Plan as part of Phase 3: Draft Policies and Land Use Maps. The **DRAFT** new Official Plan will be released for review in 2026 and includes public events in addition to the statutory *Planning Act* process.

Appendix A: Provincial, Regional, and Township Guiding Policy Provisions

Township Goals and Objectives in Official Plan (Section 1.6)

Section 1.6	Goal
Category	
a) Agriculture	To preserve and protect the valuable farm lands in the Township of Wellesley not only for the production of food and other products, but also as an important component of the township's economic base, a source of employment and as a basis for the township's rural community.
b) Settlements	To foster the development of compact, vibrant and complete communities and to achieve the reurbanization and density targets set out in this Plan.
c) Environment	To maintain, enhance or wherever feasible restore the quality of the environment and the long-term health of the ecosystems represented in the township while providing for the changing needs of the population. All other goals should attempt to satisfy the requirements of the environmental goal so as to improve the quality of life for residents.
d) Transportation	To promote the continued development and coordination of a safe integrated and efficient transportation network for the safe and efficient movement of all people and goods to meet the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, horse-drawn vehicles, farm vehicles and motor vehicles.
e) Services	To provide and maintain, in co-operation with the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, a level of municipal services to the various areas of the Township in accordance with economic, social, and environmental considerations.
f) Cultural Heritage Resources	To protect, conserve or wherever feasible, rehabilitate and/or reuse the cultural heritage resources of the Township.

Section 1.6	
Category	Goal
g) Community Improvement	To promote the implementation of community improvement by way of the maintenance, rehabilitation, and redevelopment of the physical environment in a coordinated and fiscally prudent manner while having regard to improvements to the economic potential and social environment.
h) Economic Development and Financial Stability	To promote the development of the Township's economic potential by ensuring the continuing expansion of the economic opportunities and diversification of the economic base, in accordance with the policies of this Plan.
i) Community and Culture	To maximize the use of existing facilities and to encourage their upkeep by providing for a range of community, institutional and cultural services and facilities.
j) Commercial and Industrial	To provide for a broad range of commercial and industrial activities and services to meet the diverse needs of the Township's residents and businesses, as well as to generate employment opportunities, within a strong commercial structure focused on Wellesley's Urban Growth Centre, the Core Areas of the Rural Settlement Area and other appropriately located Rural Employment Areas.
k) Natural Resources	To optimize the use of the township's natural resources through management based on sound economic, social and environmental guidelines.
l) Parkland, Open Space and Recreation	To meet the present and future recreational needs of township residents by maximizing recreation opportunities on existing open space areas and facilities, while planning for an integrated parkland and trail system.

Section 1.6	
Category	Goal
m) Governance	To support the regional and township system of government and the municipal boundaries established through the Municipal Act, 2001. To work with all levels of government to ensure effective, efficient and responsible decision making and service delivery on behalf of the residents of the Township of Wellesley.
n) Fringe Areas	To maintain distinct boundaries between urban and the Countryside within the Township by ensuring efficient use of urban lands and restricting inappropriate uses within the Countryside.
o) Community Health	To strive to provide access to primary health care and associated services through partnerships with groups such as the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.
p) Community Initiatives	To promote the enhancement of the Township's quality of life through the development of appropriate partnerships with non-profit organizations and community groups.
q) Housing	To provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing types, including affordable housing, to meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents.
r) Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities	To improve accessibility for persons with disabilities by identifying, preventing and removing land use barriers which restrict their full participation in society.
s) Energy Conservation	To promote land use and development patterns that support energy conservation and efficiency, improved air quality, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Agricultural Policy Considerations

Report	Summary
Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas	The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) developed <i>Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas</i> ("the Guidelines"). It is intended to assist in strengthening the rural economy through providing diverse economic opportunities while protecting Ontario's farmland. The Guidelines help municipalities, decision-makers, farmers, and others understand the uses permitted in prime agricultural areas. The document addresses criteria in permitting agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses (OFDUs). They are farm-related uses (i.e., commercial or industrial uses) that are secondary to the primary agricultural use and complement the ongoing agricultural operation. It includes home occupations, home industries, agritourism uses, and uses that produce value-added agricultural products. These uses are to be directly related to the agricultural production of the area.
Enabling Opportunity: Ontario's Rural Economic Development Strategy	At the beginning of 2025, the Province also <i>released Enabling Opportunity: Ontario's Rural Economic Development Strategy</i> , aiming to support rural Ontario through funding and supporting diverse economic opportunities. The Enabling Opportunity Strategy consists of three key pillars: safe and strong rural communities, business development and attraction, and growing the rural workforce. These pillars include several initiatives, such as developing tourism sectors, attracting more workers, supporting small businesses, and developing housing, transit and infrastructure. These initiatives are backed by different Provincial Funds, Programs, and Legislative Acts to support their attainment.

Stormwater Management Policy Considerations

Report/Policy	Summary
Provincial Planning Statement	The PPS includes several policies specifically pertaining to stormwater management and the protection of the water resources system. Section 3.6(8) includes policies that encourage planning for stormwater management at the watershed scale and require that planning authorities incorporate climate change considerations in the planning of stormwater management systems. It also includes policies that restrict development and site alteration near sensitive surface water features and groundwater features, which may require mitigative measures and/or alternative development approaches.
Region of Waterloo Official Plan	The ROP provided direction for the creation of Watershed Studies, Source Water and Wellhead Protection, and Stormwater Management requirements as part of new development. The Township's new Official Plan will take direction from the robust range of policies that were included in the ROP to create new policies for the Township that carry forward stormwater best management practices in compliance with new Provincial guidance.
Township Official Plan	The Township's Official Plan includes several policies for stormwater management. Section 6 of the Township Official Plan outlines general land use policies which include infrastructure and servicing planning related to wastewater, water supply, and waste management. Section 6.9 states "The Township, in conjunction with the Region, will ensure that all new development is provided with adequate and effective water, wastewater and storm water facilities by promoting the use of servicing practices and

Report/Policy

Summary

technologies that aim to protect human health and the natural environment.”

Section 6.10 of the Township Official Plan provides stormwater management policies of the Township, identifying that stormwater management plans may be a requirement of site plan approvals to showcase that the development will not have significant adverse impacts to the natural environment. The requirements of these plans are addressed in Section 6.10.2. Section 10.6 establishes specific stormwater management policies to mitigate downstream flooding, flooding on adjacent lands, and ensure that the discharge of stormwater will not adversely impact watercourses. Stormwater management is crucial to protect the quality and quantity of water in existing watercourses and mitigate the impacts of development on the environment and water resources systems. The standards that are set out in the Official Plan further aim to encourage developers to plan, design, and construct development to minimize vegetation removal, grading and soil compaction, sediment erosion, and impervious surfaces.

Policies relating to the Natural Heritage System (NHS) were included in the review, recognizing that stormwater management practices contribute toward the overall sustainability of the NHS. Certain policies in the Official Plan, such as those included in Section 8.1 the Greenlands Network, and 8.2 Environmental Constraint Areas, are not directly related to stormwater management. However, they remain important to recognize due to their significance to the NHS and source water protection.

Climate Change Policy Considerations:

Report/Policy	Summary
Provincial Planning Statement	Section 2.9 of the PPS speaks to supporting energy conservation and efficiency, improving air quality, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and preparing for climate change. Planning authorities can generally achieve this through land use and development patterns that promote compact, transit-supportive, and complete communities, green infrastructure, and low-impact development. Section 3.8 supports the opportunity for energy supply through district energy systems, including those which utilize renewable and alternative energy.
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change	In 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated that “warming of the climate system is unequivocal”. Evidence of climate change has amassed since that time, in the form of observed increases in temperature, rising sea levels, loss of snow and ice, increased number and size of wildfires, increased droughts, and shifting precipitation patterns at the global scale. In 2021, the Government of Canada issued a National Issues Report specifically related to the impacts and adaptation issues. Many of these issues directly affect the water cycle, and therefore water supply. Observed evidence of climate change impacts to Canada’s water cycle include melting ice, thawing permafrost, shorter duration of snow cover, increasing precipitation, and a transition from snow to rain, changes in the timing of water availability, and changes in the nature of extreme events. Some specific impacts of anticipated changes to Canada’s water cycle caused by climate change include:

- Increased nutrients in water systems and incidences of harmful algae blooms;
- Decreased water availability during hotter months for energy and food production;
- Disruption of farming and industrial operations, and disruption of natural ecosystem patterns;
- Increased flood and shoreline erosion events;
- Damaged infrastructure and increased operating costs; and
- Increased property and casualty insurance payments.

Servicing and Infrastructure Policy Considerations

Report/Policy	Summary
Provincial Planning Statement	<p>The PPS includes several policies specifically pertaining to planning for sewage and water services. Section 3.6 of the PPS specifically outlines the requirements for planning for sewage and water services, requiring that these services shall accommodate forecasted growth, protect human health, be sustainable for the water sources they use, and be supported by municipal planning. The PPS also outlines preferred forms of servicing, prioritizing full municipal services in settlement areas, with private communal systems preferred if municipal servicing is unavailable, and individual on-site services allowed only if they can be provided with no negative long-term impact. During an Official Plan review or update, the PPS states that planning authorities should assess any long-term impacts of these individual on-site sewages and water services to understand if they are still sustainable or environmentally and financially feasible. For new residential</p>

Report/Policy	Summary
Region of Waterloo Official Plan	<p>developments to be created, or lot creation/ adjustments to occur, there must be appropriate servicing provided on-site with reserve sewage and water capacity available.</p> <p>The ROP contains high-level policies which promoted efficient and responsible water and wastewater management at the local Township level. These policies spoke in depth to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus on a commitment of existing drinking water supply and wastewater capacity to development to service the projected growth and that the total system capacities are not exceeded. • Providing sufficient lead time for the planning, design, approval, financing, and construction of new facilities.
Township Official Plan	<p>With the removal of planning authority from the Region, the new Official Plan process will review and evaluate past policies on water and wastewater infrastructure for inclusion in the new Official Plan.</p> <p>The Township of Wellesley Official Plan sets out direction for infrastructure and servicing planning in the Township. Section 6 outlines general land use policies which include infrastructure and servicing planning related to wastewater, water supply, and waste management. Section 6.9 states “The Township, in conjunction with the Region, will ensure that all new development is provided with adequate and effective water, wastewater and storm water facilities by promoting the use of servicing practices and technologies that aim to protect human health and the natural environment.”</p>

Report/Policy	Summary
	<p>Section 6.9.1 identifies wastewater servicing policies where the Township will evaluate servicing options for development applications based on extension of servicing from municipal wastewater services, and new individual wastewater treatment systems. It addresses where new individual wastewater treatment systems will not be permitted, and where studies may be required to support development applications. For instance, the Township requires that any proposed private wastewater servicing be evaluated in accordance with the Region's Guidelines for Hydrogeological Studies for Privately Serviced Development. Within the Wellesley Urban Area, development applications will be assessed based on regional determination of sufficient or insufficient reserve capacity in the municipal wastewater services.</p> <p>Section 6.9.2 provides policies surrounding water supply servicing options and their evaluation in development applications, including private well permissions, where it is discouraged due to sensitive areas, supporting water conservation practices, where private wells may supply portable water, and ensuring private wells will not negatively impact groundwater resources.</p>

Appendix B: Provincial Legislative Changes

Bill	Key Changes
Bill 23 – More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced Development Charges. • The role of conservation authorities has been limited, whereby they are only permitted to comment on Development applications which deal with Natural Hazard lands (flooding, erosion, slope stability). • Removal of power for a number of upper-tier municipalities (County of Simcoe, and Regions of Durham, Halton, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo, and York), which includes approval of lower-tier Official Plan amendments, subdivisions, and consents. • Requires Official Plans and Zoning By-laws to permit as-of-right small-scale residential uses of up to three units per lot in areas where municipal services are available. • Restricting rights to Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) appeal for minor variances and consents to applicants, municipalities, certain public bodies, and a small list of “specified persons.” • Removing public meeting requirements from the draft plan of subdivision approvals. • Establishing new limits on and regulation applicable to inclusionary zoning requirements. • Amending how community benefit charges are calculated and secured and providing exemptions for affordable units. • Reducing the scope of site plan control approvals, including exempting residential buildings containing no more than ten units from site plan control and removing exterior design from the list of matters to be addressed through site plan control, subject to limited exceptions

Bill	Key Changes
Bill 162 – Get It Done Act, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It changes certain protections around land expropriation, enabling faster expropriations (especially for energy or transit projects) even before the completion of environmental assessments. • Seeks to reduce red tape and streamline processes for building infrastructure, housing, transit, etc. • It amends the Environmental Assessment Act to allow the purchase, lease, or expropriation of land for infrastructure before the environmental assessment (EA) process is completed. • It changes rules around official plans, urban boundaries, and municipal planning in rapidly growing regions (e.g. restoring changes rolled back earlier, enabling boundary expansions).
Bill 185 – Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Planning Act</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pre-application consultations are voluntary. ○ Revoking third-party appeals. ○ Allowing applications for settlement expansions (through Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments) to be appealed to the Tribunal (if the land is not in the Greenbelt). ○ Removing planning responsibilities for the upper-tier municipalities of York, Peel, Halton, Simcoe, Durham, Niagara, and Waterloo. ○ Adding a “Zoning Order Framework”. ○ Allowing lapsing provisions. ○ Granting the Minister immunity exemptions from liability for lifting zoning orders in transit-oriented communities.

Bill	Key Changes
Bill 17 – Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deadline extended for property registration from January 1, 2025, to January 1, 2027. ○ If a municipality removes a property from the register, that property typically cannot be readded or redesignated for five years. • Municipal Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy which allows municipalities to pass By-laws surrounding water and sewage capacity and allocation, including developing criteria for allocation. ○ Delegating the ability to grant allocation to one individual, with the Minister able to exempt changes and allocation decisions. ○ Changes to the anti-bonusing provisions to allow for exemptions for municipalities to assist certain businesses. • Development Charges Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rolling back fee refunds and the development charge phase-in. • Development Charges Act to expand development charge deferrals, exemptions, and reductions; • <i>Planning Act</i> to limit municipalities' complete application requirements, require Minister approval of Official Plan amendments, permit conditional Minister's Zoning Orders, permit certain minor variances to allow certain variations that would be permitted as-of-right based on a set percentage of setback, permit schools as-of-right in urban residential areas, and limit affordable housing units required through inclusionary zoning;

Bill	Key Changes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building Code Act to provide clarity on municipal By-laws in construction and demolition to ensure the same standards apply across the Province.