



Wilmot's New Official Plan

What We Heard Report #1

November 2025



SL Indigenous
Advisory Services

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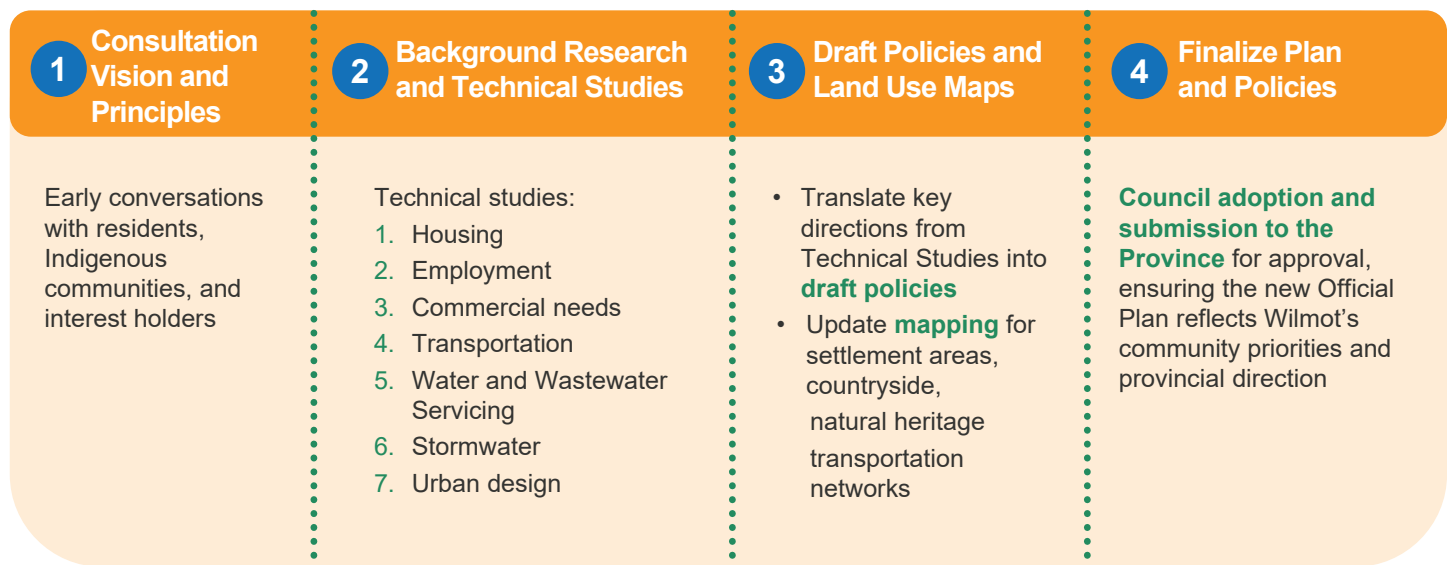
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1.0 Introduction

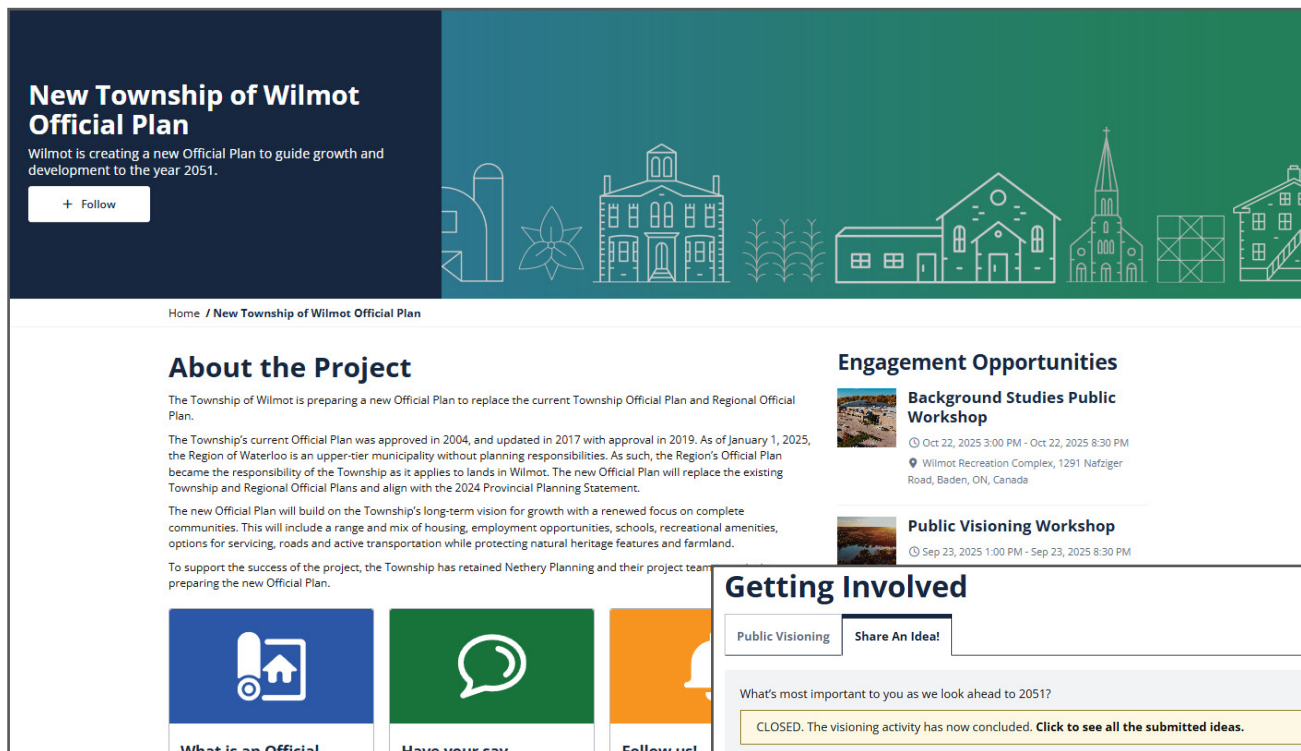
The Township of Wilmot is preparing a new Official Plan to replace the current Township Official Plan and Regional Official Plan.

This Report summarizes the input received on the new Township of Wilmot Official Plan from July to September 2025. The project is organized into 4 phases: consultation on vision and principles, background research and technical studies, draft policies and land use maps, and finalizing the Official Plan's policies. This document summarizes the communication and engagement so far.

Project Process



1.1 Township of Wilmot Official Plan Engage Page



Screenshots of the New Township of Wilmot Official Plan Engage Page.

A dedicated [project web page for the Township of Wilmot Official Plan](#) was launched in August 2025.

Information about the project, updates, and related documents and materials can be found on the web page, as well as information about engagement opportunities and engagement activities.

We asked people to "Share An Idea" on "What's most important to you as we look ahead to 2051?", one of the first engagement activities to gather preliminary ideas from the community.

Following the "Share An Idea" activity, the screenshot on the right shows the visioning activity posted on the web page to gather preliminary ideas from the community on words and phrases the new Township of Wilmot Official Plan "vision" and "principles" should include.

Getting Involved

Public Visioning | **Share An Idea!**

What's most important to you as we look ahead to 2051?

CLOSED. The visioning activity has now concluded. [Click to see all the submitted ideas.](#)

18 August, 2025
Mathew Toussaint says:
"Growth and accessibility for the community"

17 August, 2025
Sandy Glaze says:
"Social aspects and what is being planned."

15 August, 2025
Angela says:
"Protect our water, farmland, and Indigenous rights because without them, there's no future worth passing on our planning for."

Visioning Activity

A vision statement describes the aspiration for how Wilmot will grow and develop to 2051. It sets the overarching framework for the Official Plan.

What words or phrases should be captured in the vision statement? *Required*

Principles
Principles "nest" under the vision statement and provide direction for key components of growth.
What words or phrases should be captured in topics such as:

Communities

Transportation

Natural Heritage

Servicing (Infrastructure)

Agricultural

Parks and Open Space

Housing

Employment

1.2 Community Engagement So Far

The diagram below is an overview of the engagement completed up to September 2025, where input was sought on the vision and principles for Wilmot's new Official Plan:



This is what we focused on...

- What are the biggest issues facing the Township to be considered in new policy in the Official Plan?
- What are the biggest opportunities to consider in the Township?
- Where are examples of other rural areas, towns or villages that do a terrific job providing housing, places to work and livable communities?

1.3 Overall Summary of What We Heard So Far

The following themes have emerged from the feedback received:

1. Community Character and Growth

- Strong desire to preserve Wilmot's small-town, rural character and prevent urban sprawl.
- Broad opposition to expansion into countryside/farmland.
- Support for measured, controlled growth through infill, intensification, and redevelopment within existing serviced areas.
- Preference for "better up than out".
- Maintain distinct settlement boundaries (Baden, New Hamburg, etc.) and the Countryside Line.

2. Farmland, Environment, and Sustainability

- Farmland protection is one of the strongest and most consistent priorities.
- Calls for serious environmental stewardship — protect water, wetlands, tree canopy, and natural corridors.
- Emphasis on climate action: reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote green infrastructure, and support energy-efficient housing.
- Preference for sustainable, low-impact growth (e.g., agri-tourism, trails, farm-to-fork economy).
- Protect groundwater and aquifers; growth should align with available servicing capacity.



Photo of Happy Explorers Learning Academy

3. Water, Sewage, and Infrastructure

- Residents fear overextension of groundwater capacity.
- Broad agreement that servicing limitations must guide growth; avoid costly or environmentally damaging infrastructure extensions.
- Strong support for efficient use of existing systems and investment in infrastructure before approving new development.

4. Housing and Complete Communities

- Need for diverse and affordable housing options — apartments, townhouses, and rentals.
- Support for complete, walkable communities with access to local services, parks, and amenities.
- Desire for inclusive, multi-generational neighbourhoods where young people and seniors can stay in Wilmot.



Photo of farmland in Wilmot

5. Local Economy and Employment

- Support for local entrepreneurship, small business growth, and tourism-based economies.
- Interest in light industrial, commercial, and mixed-use employment lands, not large-scale industrial parks.
- Calls to make Wilmot more business-friendly through flexible zoning, reduced fees, and streamlined approvals.
- Promote Wilmot as a destination for food, culture, and nature — “Discover Wilmot.”

6. Governance, Transparency, and Trust

- Transparency and trust emerged as major issues.
- Concern about provincial overreach and decisions being made outside local control.
- Calls for greater community involvement and accountability in the planning process.

Photo of farmland in Wilmot



Photo of a park in Wilmot



Photo of Puddicombe House

7. Mobility, Parks, and Recreation

- Support for active transportation infrastructure — sidewalks, trails, cycling routes, and river access.
- Calls to improve connectivity and transit options between settlements.
- Interest in more parks, splash pads, dog parks, and recreation amenities for all ages.

8. Shared Vision for Wilmot's Future

- A vision centred on balance: sustainable growth that protects farmland, water, and heritage while fostering opportunity and inclusivity.
- Community-first planning, where livability, resilience, and respect for Wilmot's natural and cultural assets are at the forefront.
- Plan deliberately and transparently, ensuring growth benefits current and future generations.

2.0 Input Through Engage Wilmot

A question was posted to the web page in August 2025 to engage the community early and to gather some ideas on what people want to see in the Official Plan. People were asked to post their comments, thoughts, and ideas directly onto the web page using virtual sticky notes. Others could upvote or downvote peoples' comments to show their support for different ideas. Additionally, emails were received by the Township's project email WilmotOP@wilmot.ca.

We asked:

What's most important to you as we look ahead to 2051?

What we heard:

Community Character and Growth

- Desire to maintain small-town feel; concern that too much growth will harm community character.
- Support for proper and orderly growth with firm urban boundaries.
- Opposition to an industrial mega-site and secrecy surrounding development.
- Want responsible growth that protects valued assets like farmland, environment, and heritage.
- Support for expanding the water system.
- Build on local strengths — heritage, farmland, and community character

Environment and Sustainability

- Protect water, farmland, and Indigenous rights.
- Emphasis that everyone shares responsibility for a livable, sustainable future.
- Serious environmental protection and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Interest in active transportation and expanding a network of trails.
- Suggestions for underground hydro lines and using the Baden Dam for hydro power.
- Support for more treelined streets and green infrastructure.

...protections must be established and remain in place, or you end up with Joni Mitchell's song Big Yellow Taxi (paved paradise, put up a parking lot)

Community and Recreation

- Need for work and entertainment opportunities for teenagers in Baden.
- Suggestion to turn green space near Township offices into a skating rink in winter.
- Promote Wilmot as a destination for food, culture, and nature while keeping its rural charm.
- Support small-scale, tourism-based growth over industrial or data centre development.

Implementation and Economic Benefits

- Develop a "Discover Wilmot" brand focused on authenticity and sustainability.
- Foster partnerships among farmers, artisans, and cultural groups.
- Enable agri-tourism, boutique inns, and cultural venues through supportive zoning.
- Create local jobs while preserving farmland and heritage.

Communication and Governance

- Call for greater transparency and public access to planning information.
- Clear communication about long-term planning implications.
- Concern for value for taxes and ensuring community benefits from growth.

We need to focus on active transportation and continue to build a network of trails (which can be enjoyed by all and for free!)

Key Statistics and Top Contributions for the "Share An Idea" Activity

Key Statistics:



26 contributors



236 total votes

Top Voted Contributions:

- 1 "Growth that we can afford & keep up with. Protection of farmland. No mega site. Instead make easier for existing businesses to grow." 22
- 2 "Responsible growth to retain our small town feel. Too many people = more traffic congestion, over-full schools, inadequate recreation." 20
- 3 "Many of us in Baden have fled large busy places for the small town life. It is very important to many of us to retain that." 20
- 4 "Agriculture and small businesses, many of them family owned, are thriving . We need to support the businesses we have . This is who we are." 15
- 5 "Keeping farmland and our small towns small" 14

Overall key themes of participant contributions, larger text represents higher frequency of key words



3.0 Input from Emails

4 emails were received by the Township's project email WilmotOP@wilmot.ca.

This is what we heard:

Community Values and Environmental Responsibility

- Strong concern about urban sprawl and outside influence from Waterloo bylaws.
- Desire to protect rural character, farmland, and the environment from over development.
- Call for ethical, sustainable decision-making and recognition of planetary limits.
- Emphasis that everyone shares responsibility for a livable, sustainable future.
- Importance of reducing total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions with a target of 80% reduction from 2010 levels by 2050, track emissions quarterly and prepare an action plan.
- New development applications in the Township must show the impact they will have on both corporate and community GHG emissions.
- Provide incentives to developments with no natural gas connections to dwellings and EV charging capability.

Growth and Infrastructure

- Support for expanding the water system and village boundaries in Petersburg to allow balanced growth.
- Interest in commercial, residential, and industrial opportunities in Petersburg that use existing resources wisely.
- Recognition that Petersburg's location makes it suitable for planned, managed expansion.
- Protect ground water sources since they provide most of the Township's drinking water.
- Development must be within the capacity of Township services and infrastructure (e.g. water and sewage) and support a long-term healthy environment.

Petersburg is sandwiched between Kitchener and Baden/New Hamburg. Planning for future growth in Petersburg just makes sense.

Protect our water, farmland, and Indigenous rights because without them, there's no future worth passing on our planning for.

...A place where families hike trails, visit farms like Udderly Ridiculous or the Donkey Sanctuary, and connect with how their food is grown. Where boutique inns, B&Bs, and even a high-end destination spa would turn day trips into weekend stays. Where rustic barn venues and heritage farms host weddings and celebrations.

Vision for Wilmot's Future

- Promote Wilmot as a destination for food, culture, and nature while keeping its rural charm.
- Support small-scale, tourism-based growth over industrial or data centre development.
- Build on local strengths — heritage, farmland, and community character.
- Prioritize the creation neighbourhoods where people can meet most of their daily transportation needs by walking, cycling, or rolling.
- Continue to work with the Region of Waterloo to ensure the availability of public transit in existing and new developments.
- Provide appropriately sized paved shoulders on urban streets and Township roads for active transportation.

Implementation and Economic Benefits

- Develop a “Discover Wilmot” brand focused on authenticity and sustainability.
- Foster partnerships between farmers, artisans, and cultural groups.
- Enable agri-tourism, boutique inns, and cultural venues through supportive zoning.
- Create local jobs while preserving farmland and heritage.

Agriculture

- Must permanently protect the countryside line to prevent any reduction in the amount of farmland through urban development.
- Carry forward the countryside line.

4.0 Engagement with Indigenous Communities

Letters were sent to the local Indigenous communities in July and September 2025. Sara Jane Souliere, Owner of SL Indigenous Advisory Services, is the lead Indigenous engagement consultant for the project. SL is a 100% Indigenous-owned and operated business, rooted in Anishinaabe values and recognized for its culturally grounded and inclusive engagement practices.

Engagement opportunities will include virtual meetings, collaborative discussions, and culturally appropriate approaches based on the communities' preferences.

As of the end of October 2025, virtual meetings were held with Indigenous communities as part of the Township's ongoing engagement on the new Official Plan:

- October 6, 2025: Kettle and Stony Point First Nation and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- October 20, 2025: Walpole Island First Nation and Chippewas of the Thames First Nation

Communities expressed appreciation for the open and ongoing communication and confirmed their interest in receiving regular project updates.

- Three communities identified the project area as being within their Treaty and Traditional Territory lands, specifically referencing the Huron Tract Treaty No. 29, the Between the Lakes Purchase (1792), and the Big Bear Creek Additional to Reserve (ATR) land selection area.
- Two communities offered to share sample language used in other municipal plans to support the inclusion of appropriate and approved language.
- Dialogue and collaboration with all participating communities will continue throughout the completion of the Official Plan process.

The Province directs the Township to consult with the following Indigenous communities:

- Mississaugas of the Credit
- Six Nations of the Grand River
- Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council
- Aamjiwnaang First Nation
- Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point
- Chippewas of the Thames First Nation
- Walpole Island First Nation



5.0 One-on-ones with Residents

35

On August 18, 2025, residents were invited to register for one-on-one phone calls and video calls with a member of the consultant team. A notice was posted to the project web page, with questions to help participants prepare for the conversation, including:

A total of **35** conversations were held with residents.

The following is a summary of what we heard from the one-on-one conversations:

Farmland & Countryside

- Opposition to the 770 acres being taken out of farmland — described as a “land grab,” backroom deal, or betrayal of the Countryside Line
- Want permanent protection for farmland, aquifers, and sensitive landscapes.

Water, Sewage & Infrastructure

- Residents stress Wilmot depends on groundwater, which is already at capacity.
- Fear new growth will require pipelines to the Great Lakes or overwhelm sewage systems.
- Infrastructure costs are seen as unsustainable, development charges won’t cover long-term costs.

Growth & Community Character

- Desire for measured, modest growth that preserves Wilmot’s small-town feel.
- Many say they “did not move here to become the next Milton.”
- Support for infill, brownfields, and joining Baden and New Hamburg together carefully.
- Demand for affordable apartments, townhouses, and rental options so young people and seniors can stay.
- Want to see the Township densify, redevelop, and infill land that is already serviced.

Preserve the agricultural community, adding to their economic strength.

... we have lots of history about the buildings in New Hamburg that could be recognized with historic plaques and identifiers.

Local Economy & Jobs

- Some want more industrial/commercial jobs to balance the tax base, others say Wilmot already has unused zoned industrial land, so farmland shouldn’t be touched.
- Support for revitalizing downtown New Hamburg with arts, culture, heritage preservation, and small businesses.
- Official Plan policies should strengthen the downtown.
- Multiple mentions of the difficulty of starting/operating a small business in Wilmot - business owners want more flexibility with space

Public Engagement & Governance

- Many feel transparency is a major issue.
- Residents feel local decisions are overridden by the Province or Tribunal (OLT).
- The Township is sometimes called “WilNOT” for being too bureaucratic and unfriendly to small businesses.
- A lot of representation from older generations - newer generations need a voice too.
- Rebuild trust with transparency, meaningful consultation, and local decision-making.

Climate & Environment

- Many want the Official Plan to take climate change more seriously, with metrics for reducing emissions.
- Strong desire to learn from the Region’s past success with the Countryside Line, intensification, and transit.
- Residents see opportunity in agri-tourism, trails, arts, and farm-to-fork initiatives as sustainable growth strategies.

7.0 One-on-ones with Interest Holders & Developers

In September 2025 the consultant team invited interest holders and developers for one-on-one conversations. The interest holder and developer groups included:

- Nith Valley EcoBoosters
- Federation of Agriculture
- Green WR
- New Hamburg Board of Trade

5

The following is a summary of what we heard from the one-on-one conversations:

Servicing & Infrastructure

- Servicing capacity (sanitary trunk extensions, easements) is the biggest constraint to growth.
- Development sequencing is highly dependent on servicing solutions.
- Significant engineering work is underway but approvals are slow.

Growth & Housing

- Baden and New Hamburg are seen as family-oriented growth areas with several projects underway.
- Mix of singles, towns, stacked towns, and some mid-rise, but market tension between demand for larger homes vs. regional density targets.
- Broader question: Should significant growth occur in townships, given assimilative creek capacity and regional infrastructure?

Community & Economy

- Regional initiatives (EV plants, defense spending projects) and potential land expropriation could reshape growth.

- Local businesses seek land availability and opportunities for expansion.
- Board of Trade members supportive of transitioning to a Business Improvement Area to strengthen downtown and coordinate events.
- Community events (parades, sidewalk sales, car shows) are central to local identity and vitality.
- Developers see potential for mixed-use and employment lands to balance jobs and housing.

Agriculture & Countryside Protection

- Concern about the loss of farmland.
- Regional Official Plan praised for visionary countryside line and environmental protections.
- Fears that provincial policy changes will erode these protections.
- Calls for higher densities in settlement areas and for growth to fully cover infrastructure costs.
- Advocates for adjusting development charges: higher for greenfield sprawl, lower for infill and multi-unit housing.

Losing 319 acres of farmland a day in Ontario

Struggle with applications for permits and event running (Board of Trade)

People need a place to live, need to find a way to all people to live that doesn't use farmland

New development should pay for new infrastructure

8.0 New Hamburg Fall Fair Pop-Up Engagement

The consultant team had a pop-up booth at the New Hamburg Fall Fair on September 20, 2025 where people could share ideas, ask questions and write them down on sticky notes.

We asked:

What is your vision for the future of Wilmot? What are some challenges and opportunities for new policy to focus on?

What we heard:

- Opportunities for outdoor recreation – sidewalks, improved river access, multi-use trails for walking and biking, boat launch, splash pads, parks, and dog parks
- Respect existing land uses through policy – farmland, heritage sites, industrial uses, schools, and promoting overall land use compatibility
- Opportunity for more uses – commercial areas for entertainment and supporting services such as daycares
- Keep Wilmot’s “small-town feel”
- Address accessibility and transit connectivity



Photo of members of the project team at the Wilmot Fall Fair pop-up engagement booth

9.0 Public Visioning Workshop

28
Participants

Three 2-hour public workshop sessions were hosted on September 23, 2025 at the New Dundee Community Centre with sessions starting at 1:00 pm, 3:30 pm and 6:30 pm. There was a total of 28 participants across the three sessions.

The meeting began with a presentation to summarize the scope of work and schedule to prepare the new Official Plan, public engagement planned over the coming months, the various inputs to creating a new Official Plan and what we've heard so far. Table group discussions followed the presentation, where input was sought on a vision statement and fundamental principles that will form the foundation of the new Official Plan. Worksheets were provided for participants to write down their thoughts and ideas. The following is a summary of what we heard.

We asked:

1. A vision statement describes the aspiration for how Wilmot will grow and develop to 2051. It sets the overarching framework for the Official Plan. What words or phrases should be captured in the vision statement?

What we heard:

Environmental Protection and Sustainability

- Environmental health should guide all aspects of planning.
- Protect water resources, floodplains, wetlands, and natural areas.
- Preserve tree canopy and strengthen stormwater management.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions (50% by 2030; 80% by 2050); phase out natural gas.
- Promote climate mitigation, sustainability, and resilience.
- Protect and celebrate the Nith River, Baden Pond, and connected creeks.

Agriculture and Rural Identity

- Agriculture is central to Wilmot's economy and culture; farmland must be protected.
- Maintain firm urban-rural boundaries (Countryside Line).
- Prevent development on prime agricultural lands.
- Support farm-based and small agri-tourism businesses.
- Preserve rural character, scenic landscapes, and the "small town feel."

Growth Management

- Support slow, controlled, and thoughtful growth.
- Focus on infill and intensification within serviced settlement areas.
- Avoid urban sprawl and large-scale industrial expansion.
- Growth should match infrastructure and servicing capacity.
- Maintain distinct settlement areas (Baden, New Hamburg, etc.).



Photo from the public workshop

Active Transportation infrastructure connecting residential, services, grocery schools, businesses, employers

Community Character and Identity

- Keep Wilmot's friendly, small-town atmosphere.
- Encourage inclusive, caring communities with opportunities for all ages.
- Strengthen heritage, cultural landscapes, and sense of place.
- Encourage small businesses and community-based tourism ("Discover Wilmot").
- Foster distinct settlement areas with local character.

Water and Servicing

- Address limited water and sewage capacity before allowing further growth.
- Protect source water and private well supplies.
- Oppose costly or environmentally damaging infrastructure extensions.
- Learn from Walkerton; ensure public health and safety.

Economy and Employment

- Protect farmland while supporting economic vitality through small businesses.
- Encourage employment close to housing for well-paying local jobs.
- Focus on agri-tourism, small-scale industry, and local entrepreneurship.
- Avoid overexpansion of industrial land (e.g., 770 acres concern).

Governance and Implementation

- Strong concern about lack of trust in regional and provincial decision-making.
- Call for greater transparency, enforcement, and accountability in the plan.
- Desire for a robust consultation process with the agricultural community.

Create reasonable sized employment buildings (not large industrial)

Opportunity is here to craft a vision that protects the economy and builds Wilmot to be Southern Ontario's next great destination

"Need to show jobs are important for a community to survive."



Foster distinct settlement areas



Photo from the public workshop

We asked:

2. Principles “nest” under the vision statement and provide direction for key components of growth. What words or phrases should be captured in topics such as:



What we heard:

Communities

- Preserve small-town, close-knit feel and community identity.
- Build inclusive, connected communities where all residents belong.
- Support neighbourhoods with local amenities.
- Encourage mixed housing and complete communities.
- Maintain and celebrate local heritage and culture.

Transportation

- Improve active transportation (safe biking, walking, rolling networks).
- Paved shoulders for e-bikes and safe routes for farm vehicles.
- Strengthen road safety and connectivity between settlements.
- Expand public transit options; restore rail service.
- Reduce emissions from transportation and prioritize walkability.

Natural Heritage

- Protect and enhance the Nith River, Baden Hill, ponds, creeks, and Schout wetlands.
- Preserve and connect trails, woodlands, and natural corridors.
- Maintain rural landscape character while promoting sustainability.
- Celebrate and protect built and cultural heritage.

Implement design standards for new development to build for walking, cycling + rolling to be the primary mode of travel as well as access to public transit

Servicing

- Grow only at a rate that servicing can support.
- Protect groundwater and prevent runoff into rivers and creeks.
- Require updated water and sewage systems before development.
- Use existing infrastructure efficiently; avoid over-servicing.
- Explore alternative energy sources (beyond gas and hydro).

Agriculture

- Maintain the Countryside Line and prevent non-agricultural development on farmland.
- Protect farmland as an economic and cultural asset.
- Support agricultural businesses and agri-tourism.
- Keep farmland for food production and rural livelihoods.



"Networks for wildlife."

Energy conservation + efficiency needs to be supported and encouraged

Protection of existing operations

More space (affordable) for small business + start up business

Parks and Open Space

- Preserve existing parks and greenspaces; connect them through trail networks.
- Protect natural areas and woodlands for wildlife and recreation.
- Emphasize mental health and community benefits of green space.
- Maintain safe, accessible trails for walking and biking.

Housing

- Provide diverse, affordable, and accessible housing options.
- Encourage higher density and mixed-use development in settlement cores.
- Support energy-efficient and net-zero housing.
- Ensure housing meets needs for all income levels and life stages.
- Maintain countryside boundaries; focus growth within existing areas.

Employment

- Support small and medium-sized businesses, start-ups, and home-based enterprises.
- Encourage agricultural and tourism-based economic growth.
- Use existing industrial lands efficiently.
- Protect existing employers from nuisance conflicts.
- Avoid large industrial sprawl; focus on sustainable economic opportunities.

"Mix of housing sizes + affordability for various income levels."



Photo from the public workshop

Below is the worksheet provided at the public workshop:

Wilmot's New Official Plan
Public Visioning Workshop
September 23, 2025



A vision statement describes the aspiration for how Wilmot will grow and develop to 2051. It sets the overarching framework for the Official Plan.

What words or phrases should be captured in the vision statement?

[illegible]

Principles "nest" under the vision statement and provide direction for key components of growth.

What words or phrases should be captured in topics such as:

Communities 	Transportation
Natural Heritage 	Servicing
Agriculture 	Parks and Open Space
Housing 	Employment

10.0 Background Studies Public Workshop

20
Participants

Two 2-hour public workshop sessions were hosted on October 22, 2025 at the Wilmot Recreation Centre with one session beginning at 3:00 pm, and the second at 6:30 pm. Approximately 20 people attended.

The meeting began with a presentation to summarize the scope of work and schedule to prepare the new Official Plan, public engagement planned over the coming months, what we've heard so far, draft principles and a summary of the key directions from each one of the Background Studies on:

- Housing Needs
- Employment
- Commercial Lands Needs
- Transportation
- Water and Wastewater Servicing
- Stormwater Management
- Urban Design

Following the presentation, there were several ways to share input including questions in the whole group, smaller table group discussions focused on housing/employment/commercial needs, transportation and servicing, and one on-one conversations with a member of the team. The following is a summary of input:

- There were general comments and questions from a few asking why we need growth in housing, commercial, and employment and why there is a growth agenda at all.
- How do demographics (aging population) factor into housing need.
- Interest in seeing vacant residential land inventory to understand parcel fabric and associated housing typology projections.
- How does e-commerce factor into commercial needs.
- How do demographics (aging population/retirement community) factor into employment needs.
- Why isn't any future employment growth directed to other areas in Wilmot, such as Petersburg.
- Agriculture should be a distinct chapter in the Official Plan (OP).
- There's a need for more suitable housing for seniors who are downsizing to be located in different parts of the Township.
- Wilmot is both urban and rural; preserving the countryside line is essential.
- Urban boundary expansion by the provincial government raises concerns about accommodating growth without adequate servicing.
- Sewage capacity is a concern; upgrades are in the regional water and wastewater master plan.
- Engineering studies will follow the 20–30 year planning horizon to address servicing needs.
- Tension exists between local planning and provincial/regional directives.
- The OP is a local plan, but external forces may impose changes.



The following are the questions asked following the presentation with the whole group in attendance:

Q: Where does agriculture fit into the Official Plan? Should it be its own category?

A: Yes, agriculture is a critical component and will have its own chapter in the Official Plan.

Q: Why is there no category for lifestyle, arts, and culture?

A: These are addressed through other plans like the Arts and Culture Master Plan and the Trails Master Plan, which have had public engagement. The seven study topics are areas the Township needed more background information on to build upon in the Official Plan.

Q: What are we doing about water and sewage capacity? Will there be a pipeline?

A: Will be addressed in water and wastewater plan which is beyond the scope of the Official Plan. Upgrades to the treatment plant will be needed and will require extensive environmental and public consultation to support any future proposals.

Q: How can we do the OP without knowing servicing capacity availability/constraints?

A: The Official Plan is a long-term (20–30 year) plan. Engineering studies will follow and determine what needs to be done within this planning horizon to support the plan.

Q: Is the Region's 770-acre mega industrial site part of the Official Plan?

A: No. It's outside Wilmot's countryside line and currently designated for agriculture. It is intended to stay designated as agriculture. This site is outside the scope of the current land needs assessment and will be dealt with through a separate process should it advance. Future changes could be addressed in 5- and 10-year OP reviews.

Q: Can we reestablish the countryside line to protect farmland?

A: The countryside line is already in place. No significant changes to this line are being proposed.

Q: How do land needs relate to farmland?

A: The Official Plan focuses on Wilmot's specific needs, including farmland. Decisions about land outside our jurisdiction are not within scope.

Q: How does the system work if each township has its own Official Plan but broader needs exist?

A: There is overarching coordination through the Provincial Planning Statement. Prime agricultural lands are protected across the province and can only be changed through a planning application or official plan review.

Q: How does Wilmot manage planning and servicing allocations with limited staff compared to the Region?

A: Wilmot collaborates with area municipalities through a working group focused on servicing allocations and population growth.

Q: Where is the protected countryside and the countryside line? Are you suggesting we have a countryside line?

A: Yes, the plan will include a countryside line.

Q: Where is agricultural land protection being addressed?

A: -We have extensive background information and analysis on agricultural lands. The existing plan includes strong agricultural and environmental protection policies.

Q: Is there industrial land that is still being farmed?

A: Yes, we conducted an inventory of both occupied and vacant industrial lands, including those currently being farmed.

Q: How are responsibilities split between the Region and the Township for water and wastewater infrastructure?

A: The Region handles water supply, treatment, and transmission (large watermains) while the Township is responsible for local distribution.

Q: Who pays for servicing infrastructure to support new development?

A: Any future development would only proceed when infrastructure is available. Developers are responsible for installing infrastructure—money does not come from the tax base. Increased assessment growth helps offset municipal maintenance costs.

Q: Is there a limitation on water availability that could affect residential development?

A: We are only allocating water capacity for planned growth. Any large development would go through its own review process. If capacity is insufficient, developers must propose solutions.

Q: Why do we need to grow?

A: Provincial policy requires municipalities to plan for projected growth. Growth is not optional, so it must be planned responsibly. Growth can occur outward or upward. Preliminary numbers suggest no need for additional land for residential. Growth can be accommodated through slightly higher density. The focus is on intensifying within existing urban areas. Approximately 90 hectares of additional employment land are projected and separate from the land assembly, which is not considered a local need.

Q: Are these plans proposing big changes between Baden and New Hamburg?

A: This vision to focus growth between New Hamburg and Baden has been in place for 28 years through multiple Councils. The goal is to minimize impact by focusing growth between the two communities. This approach consolidates infrastructure and protects surrounding countryside lands.

Q: What is meant by “employment lands”? Is this the same as what is proposed in the 770 acres?

A: Employment lands refer to areas for jobs which are designated for industrial and business uses. The land assembly project relates to employment beyond the scope of Wilmot's land needs. A maximum of approximately 90 hectares is suggested in the land needs assessment for Wilmot.

Q: Does the Official Plan address accessible housing for seniors?

A: Yes, we aim to encourage and support housing options that promote aging in place.

Below is the worksheet provided at the public workshop:

Wilmot's New Official Plan Background Studies Workshop Worksheet

October 22, 2025



Seven background studies were prepared for Wilmot's New Official Plan. These reports guide the development of the Official Plan and identify necessary changes according to Provincial and Regional legislative changes, and local growth and context. They also provide direction for the Official Plan policies through policy directions.

What would you add to the preliminary policy directions? What needs more clarification? Use the spaces provided for each background study to share your ideas below.

Housing Needs

- Zone land for flexibility to allow for multiple types of housing and uses **as of right**.
- Allowing higher densities (6 to 8 stories) in Downtown Areas and main roads to support walkable, mixed-use areas with amenities.
- Planning for a range of possible population growth with no additional land needs required.

***As of right approval:** means housing development can be approved without a zoning amendment, or needing relief from the Township's Zoning By-law, however a Building Permit is still required.*

Employment Needs

- Planning for an employment target of at least 3,200 new jobs by 2051.
- Protecting employment areas through compatibility policies, such as avoiding adverse impacts to sensitive land uses.
- Maintaining and updating an employment land inventory of available lots and sizes through the expansion of between 26.3 and 95.5 hectares of new employment lands.

Commercial Lands Needs

- Identifying new neighbourhood commercial nodes when new neighbourhoods are created as Wilmot may need between 234,400 and 286,600SF of new retail space.
- Permitting a broad range of commercial uses, such as food and grocery stores, pharmacies, merchandise and more.
- Allowing small-scale uses in residential areas such as corner stores or at home daycares.

Urban Design

- Protecting and expanding on the Township's trails system to promote active transportation.
- Include policies that support conservation objectives, including water conservation, energy conservation and more.
- Planning for compatible development, including gentle intensification where appropriate, promoting sustainable design.

Below is the worksheet provided at the public workshop:

Wilmot's New Official Plan Background Studies Workshop Worksheet

October 22, 2025



What would you add to the preliminary policy directions? What needs more clarification? Use the spaces provided for each background study to share your ideas below. (cont'd)

Transportation

- Improving safety through geometric traffic calming measures and public education.
- Designing for an accessible all-season built-form by utilizing tactile paving or audible signals.
- Creating a Township Road Hierarchy Plan to classify roads based on local character and land use context.

Water and Wastewater Servicing

- Introducing policy for a servicing allocation system which manages capacity constraints and life-cycle planning.
- Provide policy direction for rainwater collection and usage.
- Planning for optimization of Township and Region water and wastewater infrastructure, including appropriate phasing of development.

Stormwater Management

- Protect key natural and hydrologic features and their buffers from development or site alteration.
- Encourage Low Impact Development to support rainwater infiltration and filtration.
- Prioritize infrastructure design, location and maintenance to mitigate impacts of climate change and extreme weather.



