



MEMO

TO: Michael Di Lullo, CAO
FROM: Matt Alexander, Project Manager
SUBJECT: Official Plan Review Engagement Summary – Phases 1 & 2
DATE: January 8, 2021

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an overview of the public engagement initiatives undertaken for the Municipality of Middlesex Centre (the Municipality) Official Plan Review (OPR). This document presents a summary of the input received during Phases 1 and 2 from stakeholders, the public and members of Council that will help inform the OPR process moving forward.

As outlined in the Communications and Engagement Strategy, the OPR process aims to raise public awareness about the importance of the Official Plan and help the public understand the role of the Official Plan in meeting community needs now and in the future. The input received as a result of the Communications and Engagement Strategy has helped to focus the preparation of Discussion Papers and contribute to the development of policy options for the Official Plan update.

TIMELINE OVERVIEW

INITIATIVE DATE(S) PURPOSE

PHASE 1: PROJECT INITIATION		
Special Council Meeting (Section 26)	August 12, 2020	Special Meeting with Council held under Section 26 of the <i>Planning Act</i> . The Project Team discussed potential updates to the Official Plan, and provided an opportunity for the public to provide input on matters of interest related to the Official Plan.
Indigenous Outreach – Letter of Introduction	July 2020	A Letter titled “Notification of Updates to the Official Plan in Middlesex Centre” was sent from the Municipality to: Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames and Munsee Delaware Nation. The Letter provided an overview of the Official Plan process and a request for input on issues related to land use and the

		<p>environment. In addition, a request to arrange a meeting was also included in the Letter.</p> <p>To date, the Municipality has not yet received further input or confirmation of a request to meet. During Phase 3 of the Project, another Letter will be sent to provide and update on the Project as policy direction and recommendations are drafted.</p>
Public Survey	Mid-July to mid-August	A public survey was issued via random mail-out and online for the joint projects initiative (Official Plan Review, Strategic Plan Review and the Municipal Budget Review).
PHASE 2: BACKGROUND REPORTS & STUDIES		
Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting #1	September 30, 2020	To facilitate initial input on key themes in the Official Plan from different stakeholders in the community.
Vision Workshop	October 6, 2020	To develop a shared vision and guiding principles for the updated Official Plan.
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting #1	November 13, 2020	To initiate discussion and scoping of key policy issues and opportunities identified in the Discussion Papers with a strategic team of municipal staff and technical agency staff.
Council Policy Workshop	December 2, 2020	To provide an update to Council on the OPR progress and gather feedback on the key policy issues and opportunities identified in the Discussion Papers.

WHAT WE HEARD

VISION WORKSHOP

During multiple engagement touchpoints, Middlesex Centre’s strong agricultural roots and rural charm were regarded as highly valuable by community members. Many expressed that these factors contribute greatly toward the character of the community, economy and quality of life.

Figure 1 is a word cloud derived from input received during the Vision Workshop held on October 6, 2020. Larger words were mentioned relatively more often than the smaller words. This helps to illustrate a high priority for agriculture and natural areas among participants.



Figure 1: Key Words identified during the Vision Workshop that represent the vision of Middlesex Centre

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Since the start of the project, the Municipality has received comments from eleven members of the public, including individual residents/land owners and members of the development and building industry. The majority of comments submitted included requests for the expansion of a settlement area to allow for development of specific lands. This is typical for any Official Plan Review. Each of the property locations has been noted and they will be considered for inclusion within a settlement area if a need to expand is identified over the course of this project.

Other comments requested a review of rural severance policies and a reconsideration of certain agricultural lands that are no longer used for agriculture.

All public comments will be considered as part of the Official Plan review and the Comment / Response Matrix to be provided in Phase 3 will indicate how each comment influenced the preparation of the Official Plan update.



COMMENTS FROM COUNCIL

Following the Council Policy Workshop on December 2, 2020, WSP received a number of comments from members of Council. The comments received reflected the values and priorities expressed by residents during the Vision Workshop and provided some specific input on a number of subjects including: infilling of hamlets prior to expansion into agricultural areas; accommodating commercial and employment uses in a manner compatible with existing residential uses; nuisances related to cannabis production facilities; and providing a balance between existing low density residential uses and relatively higher density uses within villages and hamlets.

These comments will be very helpful in framing an approach to the issues identified earlier in the project. The Directions and Recommendation Report provided in Phase 3 will explore opportunities to address these priorities and others.

NEXT STEPS

The Municipality should follow-up with the Indigenous communities who were notified about the OPR at the outset of the project. WSP will provide messaging as with the initial communication and a follow-up phone call is recommended to provide an update on the progress of the OPR.

This memo and the four Discussion Papers should be posted on the OPR project website to give the public an opportunity to review and provide comments.

The next major deliverable will be the draft Directions and Recommendation report which will propose specific changes to the Official Plan to reflect Provincial and County policy direction and the values and priorities of the Municipality. The draft report will be presented at the next Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting and the Public Open House to be held in the Spring of 2021.

We anticipate that the public, stakeholders and members of Council will continue to provide comments throughout the project. We will continue to log these comments and consider them as we finalize the Directions and Recommendations report and the draft Official Plan Amendment.

All comments will be addressed through the Comment / Response Matrix to be submitted near the end of Phase 3 of the project.