



Report on Proposed Grey County Centralized Planning Model

City Council

Monday, October 7, 2024

owen
sound
where you *want* to live

Background - Previous County Reports – Planning Efficiency and Centralized Planning Model

**PDR- CW- 03-24 Planning Efficiencies Discussion Paper
(February 2024)**

County process change recommendations include, among other matters:

- Limit County comments on site plan control applications, minor variance applications, and municipal applications in settlement areas where there is no corresponding County application.

Municipal Process Change Recommendations

- 7 points

Background - Previous County Reports – Planning Efficiency and Centralized Planning Model

- **June 27, 2024 - PDR- CW- 27-24 Centralized Planning Service Delivery Model (Closed report)**
- **August 8, 2024 – Joint meeting – County and lower-tier Municipal Councils**
- **August 9, 2024 – Grey County Planners Meeting
- Presentation of the Centralized Planning Model to Municipal Planning Staff**
- **Sept. 12, 2024 - PDR-CW-52-24 – Investigating a Model for Planning Efficiencies and Shared Service Delivery (Open)**
- **October 18, 2024 – Feedback deadline**

City staff report – CS-24-085

This report provides an analysis of the County Centralized Planning Model by providing:

- An overview of the planning framework in the Province, County of Grey and City of Owen Sound;
- A description of the City's integrated Development Team model and current roles of the City's Planning & Heritage Division;
- A description of the recent provincial changes in planning legislation;
- An analysis by City staff of the benefits of the proposed centralized planning service model as identified by the County staff report; and,
- Feedback on those topics requested by the County, as outlined in Report PDR-CW-52-24.

Overview of the Provincial Land Use Planning Framework

Ontario Planning Act

The purpose of the Planning Act is to:

- provide for planning processes that are fair by making them open, accessible, timely and efficient;
- provide for a land use planning system led by provincial policy;
- integrate matters of provincial interest into provincial and municipal planning decisions by requiring that all decisions be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and conform/not conflict with provincial plans;
- encourage cooperation and coordination among various interests; and,
- recognize the decision-making authority and accountability of municipal councils in planning.

Overview of the Provincial Land Use Planning Framework

Provincial Policy Statement (Oct 20 Provincial Planning Statement)

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) stresses that a coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive approach should be used in dealing with planning matters within municipalities across lower, single, and/or upper tiers. Items noted in the PPS include:

- Managing and promoting growth and economic development strategies;
- Intensification targets;
- Managing natural heritage features;
- Waste management;
- Natural and man-made hazards like former landfill locations;
- Archaeological resource identification; and,
- Housing needs in accordance with provincial housing policies, including those that address homelessness.

Overview of the Provincial Land Use Planning Framework

County of Grey (Ontario Regulation 518/98)

- Acts in the place of the Province
- Previously provided land use planning services for many lower tiers
- City rejoined in 2001 – retained all land use planning authorities including subdivision/condo approval

Municipality	Approval Authority		
	Consents, Minor Variances, Site Plans, Zoning By-laws & Zoning By-law Amendments	Official Plans & Amendments	Plans of Subdivision / Condominium
Chatsworth	Yes	N/A	No
Georgian Bluffs	Yes	Township adopts but the County approves	No
Grey Highlands	Yes	Municipality adopts but the County approves	No
Hanover	Yes	Town adopts but the County approves	No
Meaford	Yes	Municipality adopts but the County approves	No
Owen Sound	Yes	City approves most amendments but County approves new plans, five year reviews, and boundary expansions	Yes
Southgate	Yes	Township adopts but the County approves	No
The Blue Mountains	Yes	Town adopts but the County approves	No
West Grey	Yes	Municipality adopts but the County approves	No
Grey County	N/A	County approves most amendments but the Province approves new plans and five year reviews	Yes for all municipalities except Owen Sound

Figure 1: Summary of Upper-tier and Lower-tier Approval Authority in Grey County (Source: County of Grey)

City Development Team Approach to Planning Act Applications

- In 2016, the City created a “Development Team” model of service delivery.
- The City’s Development Team is responsible for coordinating planning, building and growth-related engineering approvals in a team by providing integrated service to improve the customer service experience as well as efficiency and coordination.



Current Roles and Responsibilities of the Planning & Heritage Division

Department: Community Services

Divisions: TOM | Tourism | Events, Community Development
(River District) Planning and Heritage
Parks and Open Space, Facility Booking and
Programs, Building, Arena Operations

What the Division Does Day-To-Day

Development

- Local Official Plan Amendments (save and except for any 5-year review of the Official Plan, a new Official Plan, or an amendment related to a boundary expansion)
- Draft Plans of Subdivisions or Condominium and Part Lot Control
- Zoning By-laws, Zoning By-law Amendments, Removal of Holding Provisions
- Committee of Adjustment applications - Minor Variances & Consent (severance)
- Processing of the above includes reviewing applications for completeness, preparing applications for circulation, a notice of complete application and public meeting, preparation of technical and recommendation reports, presentation at meetings, preparation of amending policy and approval documents, etc.
- Site Plan Approval – review of applications, preparation of recommendation report including conditions of approval, negotiate and prepare site plan agreements and securities, and ascertain compliance and release agreements and securities
- Planning staff review and comment on:
 - building permit applications,
 - sign permits,
 - business licenses,
 - encroachment requests,
 - lands sale requests,
 - compliance matters with By-law Enforcement requests for agreement release, capital projects, and all other property-related issues for compliance with City Planning policies.

Development (continued)

- Indigenous consultation is included in the City's required work.
- Review of capital projects
- Verbal and written responses to public, legal firms & developer inquiries
- Customer service – front counter, email, phone inquiries
- FOI requests
- Represent the City at Ontario Land Tribunal
- Maintain the Planning & Heritage webpages within the City's website:
 - Heritage
 - Current Development Projects
 - How to Apply
 - Planning Policy & Urban Design
 - Zoning By-law
- Lead the City's Development Team one window' contact for applicants seeking information on potential property development or change of use in the City of Owen Sound.
- (Development Team includes: Planning, Building, Engineering, Public Works, Clerks, Finance, as well as peer review if required)

Policy

- Draft, maintain, and implement the City's Planning policy framework:
 - Official Plan- updated in 2021-2022
 - Community Improvement Plan (see below)
 - Zoning By-law – comprehensive update currently underway
- Policy planning studies and special projects such as Official Plan reviews, Zoning By-law reviews, Secondary Plans, Community Improvement Plans, Heritage Conservation Plans, Community Gardens Policy, Sidewalk Patio Guidelines, and other policy matters

Policy (continued)

- Coordinate the activities of consultants working on studies or technical reports for the City, including preparing study outlines, arranging for requests for proposals or quotations with City Purchasing staff, assisting with consultant selection, acting as the primary contact for the City, and overseeing the completion of project deliverables.
- Tracking and implementing provincial and upper-tier planning and development-related policy and legislation such as County Official Plan or the PPS.
- Monitor and make recommendations on changes to Upper-tier plans
- Assist other City staff, including the Managers, Clerk's Office, Engineer, Chief Building Official, and By-law Enforcement Officers, in the interpretation and implementation of City and Provincial planning policies, legislation, and/or by-laws, updating City policies, practices, etc.
- Report to Council, Community Services Committee (Heritage Committee), Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Development and management of strategies, policies, regulations, and programs that implement the City's Official Plan and Zoning By-law and are related to land use planning, including but not limited to:
 - cultural and natural heritage conservation
 - accessibility (AODA)
 - community gardens
 - sidewalk patio program & permitting
 - community improvement planning
 - site alteration
 - retail and commercial policy
 - urban design
 - growth management
 - infrastructure planning.

Current Roles and Responsibilities of the Planning & Heritage Division

Department: Community Services
Divisions: TOM | Tourism | Events, Community Development
(River District) **Planning and Heritage**,
Parks and Open Space, Facility Bookings and
Programs, Building, Arena Operations

What the Division Does Day-To-Day

Community Improvement Plan

- Maintain and update the CIP document and associated program guidelines
 - Annual report to Council – monitoring & evaluation
 - Provide annual update to CSC of completed projects
- Intake including pre-consultation with potential applicants, application review, recommendation report to staff delegate or Community Services Committee as required
- Develop the financial incentive program agreement (FIPA) between the City and the applicant, which includes the procedure and requirements prior to commencing work to obtain reimbursement from the City, liabilities and responsibilities, changes to work
- Site visits at the beginning and end of the process to evaluate works to determine if they were completed in accordance with the agreement
- Building & heritage permits may be required
- Review of receipts and final project, administer request for payout
- Monitor and manage the annual CIP operating budget
- Coordinate with the County to implement County CIP contribution, including annual report in the form of a report card (\$20,000)

Community Improvement Plan (continued)

- The CIP has five financial incentive programs that provide capital grant funding to eligible property owners and authorized tenants of land and buildings each year:
 - Façade & Structural Improvement Grant Program
 - Accessibility Improvement Grant Program
 - Start-up Space Leasehold Improvement Grant Program
 - Landscaping & Property Improvement Grant Program
 - Vacant Building Conversion & Expansion Grant Program
- The CIP also contains city-wide incentive programs, including:
 - Brownfield Financial Tax Incentive Program
 - Tax Increment Equivalent Grant
 - Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program
 - Vacant Lands Tax Assistance

Heritage

- Maintain the City's Heritage Register (designated & listed properties), including monitoring and maintaining documentation for the lands/buildings/structures designated under the Ontario Heritage Act,
- Heritage Conservation & Maintenance Agreements – these apply to designated properties, the agreements include a conservation & maintenance plan which describes the existing conditions of the designated features and lays out ongoing & upcoming maintenance works & can provide tax relief under the CIP

Heritage (continued)

- Provide heritage comments on development applications involving identified heritage resources as well as applications for the façade and structural improvement program.
- Provide recommendations on the administration, assessment, and preservation of the City's heritage and cultural resources.
- Coordinate and assist in the development and implementation of cultural heritage policies, studies, and initiatives
- Provide process support for property owners who wish to nominate a property for the City's Heritage Register which may include listing or designation of a property
- Heritage Easements
- Process Heritage Permits for alterations to properties included on the City's Heritage Register to ensure alterations are sympathetic to identified heritage attributes
- Heritage Permit application process is also used to track façade and structural improvement programs under the CIP
- Staff respond to inquiries from the public and property owners regarding the City's Heritage Register and provide historical information for specific properties
- maintenance and implementation of the City's Cultural Heritage Interpretation Program, specifically Interpretive Plaques



Proposed Centralized County Planning Service Model

- “an effort to explore potential opportunities to enhance and improve the efficiency of planning services being provided by the County and member municipalities”.
- 4 Hubs
 - 1) Northwest hub – serving Georgian Bluffs and Owen Sound;
 - 2) Northeast hub – serving Meaford and the Blue Mountains;
 - 3) Southwest hub – serving Chatsworth, Hanover, and West Grey; and,
 - 4) Southeast hub – serving Grey Highlands and Southgate.
- Planning Authority – City Council

Legislative Authority and Recent Amendments

Provincial Housing Affordability Task Force

- 55 recommendations to the Province
- Bill 23 – the More Homes Built Faster Act

"Speeding up Municipal Processes

*In some areas with upper and lower-tier municipalities (for example, the City of Mississauga, which is part of the Region of Peel), both levels of government have input into development approvals. We're proposing to focus responsibility for land use policies and approvals in **the local, lower-tier municipality.** **This would give the public more influence over decisions, clarify responsibilities and improve efficiency.**"*

Review of Anticipated Benefits

- Staff recruitment and Attraction
- Resiliency to Short-term Staffing Changes and Potential Cost Savings
- Reducing Duplication
- Ability to Provide Specialized Skill Sets
- Knowledge Sharing, Training and Problem Solving
- Consistency in Process and Application of Policy

Requested Feedback – Report PDR-CW-52-24

- Service delivery and customer service
- In-person office hours and location of staff
- Impact on other departments and staff
- Questions on the development application process and reporting to municipal councils and committees
- Financial, IT (software), legal or human resources matters
- Municipal record keeping
- Municipal agreements
- Timelines or transition considerations
- Communications and reporting between County and municipal staff
- Future memorandum of understanding considerations
- Any other feedback or questions

Requested Feedback – Report PDR-CW-52-24

Service delivery and customer service

- Planning Ecologist role
- FTE comparison

Proposed County Model		Current City Model
Director – shared over entire County (assuming the County director has a significant workload and will not add significant support for each planning hub)		Director of Community Services (spends 40% time on Planning and Development) (0.4 FTE)
Deputy Director/Manager of Development (shared with all 9 municipalities) (0.111 FTE)	Manager of Policy (shared with all 9 municipalities) (0.111 FTE)	Manager of Planning & Heritage 1.0 FTE
Senior Planner (shared with Georgian Bluffs) (0.5 FTE)	Senior Policy Planner (shared with all 9 municipalities) (0.111 FTE)	Senior Planner 1.0 FTE
Intermediate Planner (shared with Georgian Bluffs) (0.5 FTE)	Policy Planner (shared with all 9 municipalities) (0.111 FTE)	Junior Planner (1.0 FTE)
Planner/Planning Technician (shared with Georgian Bluffs) (0.5 FTE)		Development Coordinator (0.3 FTE)
Planning Ecologist (shared with 5 of the 9 municipalities) (0.2 FTE)		Planning Ecologist (shared with 5 of the 9 municipalities) (0.2 FTE)
Floater (shared with Georgian Bluffs, or could be assigned to an entirely different hub, based on workload) (0.5 FTE)		Deputy Clerk/Secretary Treasurer of the Committee of Adjustment (0.5 FTE)
2.311 FTE	0.333 FTE	4.2 FTE
Total County Model - 2.644 FTE		Total Current City Model - 4.2 FTE

Requested Feedback – Report PDR-CW-52-24

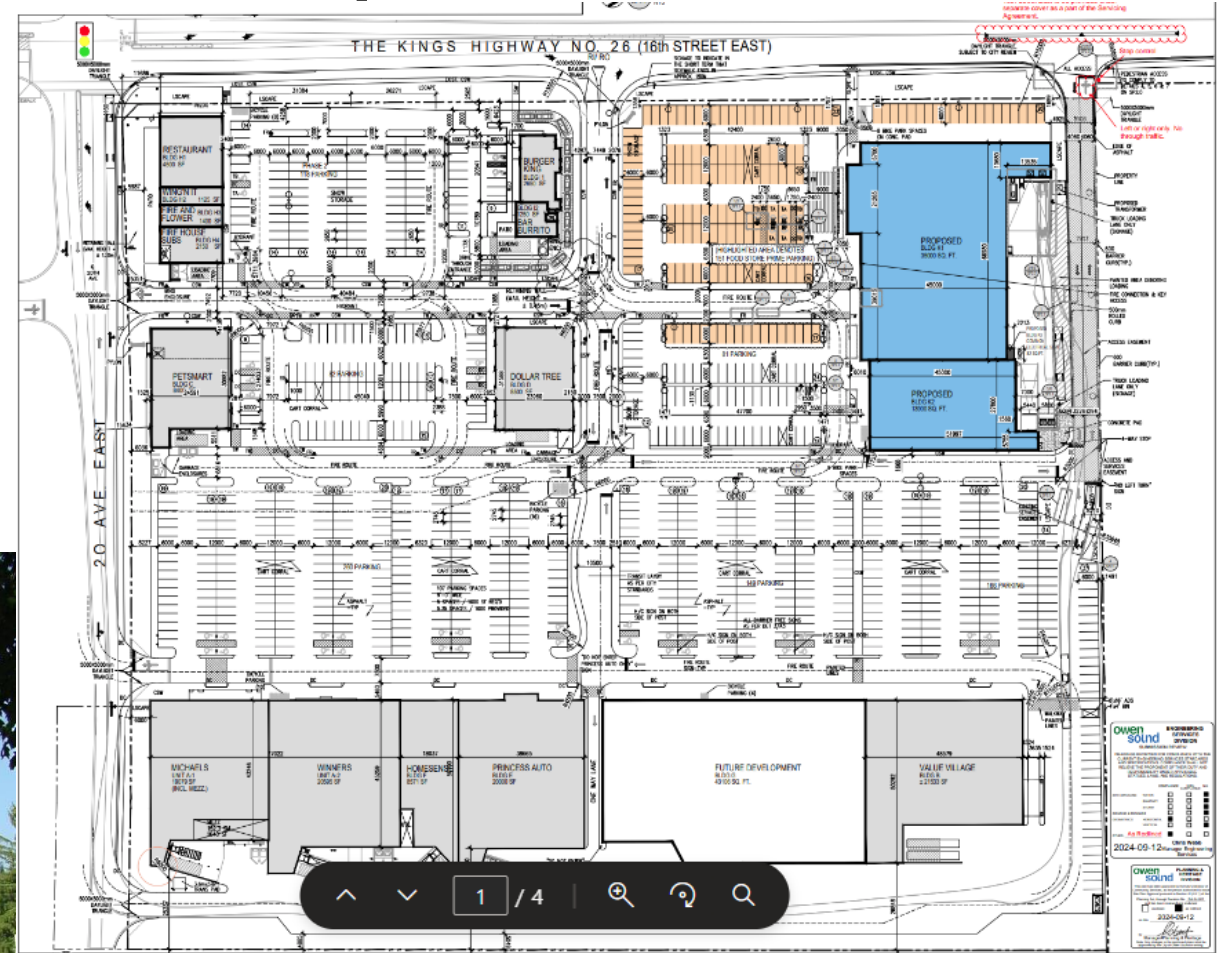
Impact on other municipal departments and staff

- Current integrated service delivery model
- Considerations for “planning adjacent work”

Requested Feedback – Report PDR-CW-52-24

Questions on the development application process and reporting to municipal councils and committees

- Site plan approval
- Heritage Planning



Requested Feedback – Report PDR-CW-52-24

- **Financial, IT (software), legal or human resources matters**

Requested Feedback – Report PDR-CW-52-24

Other Feedback or Questions

- Understanding and Representing the Public Good
- Provincial Direction on land use planning – best done at local level
- Separation of Policy Planning from Development Planning
- Conflicts for staff
- Accountability
- Employee Satisfaction
- Approval Timelines
- Director Support
- Previous County Model & Phasing
- Financial

Recommendation

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-24-073, respecting comments on the County of Grey's proposed centralized planning service model, City Council:

1. Directs Staff to provide a copy of this report, together with Schedule 'A' – Summary of Issues/Matters to be addressed by the County and City Council's resolution on the matter, to Grey County Planning Staff, the County Clerk, the County's Deputy CAO and CAO;
2. Request that the County implement the direction provided by County Council in considering report PDR-CW-03-24 Planning Efficiencies Report and stop commenting on development applications within Primary Settlement Areas, including Owen Sound, to reduce duplication in the planning process unless there is a matter of particular relevance to the County.
3. Request the County develop a Centralized Planning Service Model that excludes Owen Sound;

Recommendation

4. Requests that the County consider a hybrid, phased approach to this model that would start with lower tiers that would benefit from the model, especially for municipalities with sole practitioner planners or consultants, with opportunity for monitoring, feedback and evaluation;
5. Requests that the County, together with the City, consult with the Province on the proposed centralized planning services model prior to implementation and share any comments and/or feedback that may be received through this consultation with member municipalities; and
6. Requests that the County undertake an analysis of the Planning Ecology role examining implementation compared to financial performance, the volume of applications and offsetting fees and how the model is being received and implemented, and other matters considered relevant by County staff.