

Comprehensive Zoning By-law Review Update

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Attachments: N/A

Executive Summary

This report is intended to provide an update on the current status of the Comprehensive Zoning By-law Review project. The Comprehensive Zoning By-Law Review Project is currently in Phase 2, which explores qualitative and quantitative research to effectively evaluate the existing Zoning By-laws against current zoning trends and best practices and draft a series of 6 discussion papers that will provide the basis for the recommended changes to the Zoning By-laws. At this time, 3 of the 6 Phase 2 Background Papers have been presented to and reviewed by the project's Steering Committee and comments have been collected for consideration. Once all comments for the 3 Phase 2 Background Papers are addressed, the reports will be published online for public review and comment. As for the remaining Phase 2 Background Papers, the fourth background paper has been drafted and is awaiting review by the Steering Committee, while the other 2 background papers are targeted for draft completion by end of September 2026.

Phase One Recap

The Zoning By-law Project was initiated in early March 2025, following endorsement from all 4 local Councils to initiate the review project. Phase 1 of the Zoning By-law Review project began with the creation of a Steering Committee, made up of Council and Staff representatives, and the drafting of a project Terms of Reference to guide the key deliverables and engagement events of each stage of the project. Phase 1 also involved the completion of a Phase 1 Policy Background Report, through which 41 pieces of legislation and local provisions and plans were reviewed. Federal, Provincial, County and Local policies were reviewed and assessed for relevance and direction to determine incorporations in the Phase 2 Discussion Papers.

The Phase 1 Background Paper was published for commenting on the project website in November 2025, with the commenting period closing January 2, 2026. No public comments were received on the Phase 1 Background Paper; however, comments were received from 2 agencies and have since been incorporated into the Phase 2 scope of work.

PHASE TWO UPDATE

Since the publication of the Phase 1 Policy Background Report in November 2025 and the closure of the commenting period on January 2, 2026, the Project Team has been working towards the completion of a series of 6 discussion papers, which are based on the following key chapters found within each Zoning By-law:

- Background Paper #1 – Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional Zones

- Background Paper #2 – Residential Zones
- Background Paper #3 – Parking and Loading Provisions
- Background Paper #4 – Agricultural and Aggregate Zones
- Background Paper #5 – Open Spaces and Natural Resources
- Background Paper #6 – General Provisions and Definitions

The original scope of work for the Phase 2 discussion papers included a summary of existing zones and site-specific zones, a review of Official Plan conformity, a mapping comparison exercise, comparator analysis with like municipalities, and trends analysis to provide the basis for the recommended revisions to the Zoning By-laws zone hierarchy in Phase 3. However, once drafting of the discussion papers began, the project team came to the realization that it would be more effective and efficient to draft the revised zoning hierarchy while the themes and recommendations related to certain sections of the Zoning By-laws were top of mind, rather than having to revisit each theme in Phase 3. As such, the Phase 2 discussion papers have been advanced one step further than the original scope to include a draft revised zoning hierarchy, that will all be consolidated into an initial draft of the revised Zoning By-laws in Phase 3. Additional scope was also added to Phase 2 to facilitate the completion of 4 in-person workshops with Key Interest Groups; the feedback from which have been incorporated into the Phase 2 discussion papers. The following provides a summary of key Phase 2 deliverables.

Existing Conditions

The Phase 2 Background Papers also detail the similarities and differences for how each of the Zoning By-laws is implemented across Perth County. Each paper reviews the number of zones, permitted uses in each zone, and the development standards required by each zone related to the overall background paper theme. Such a review allows staff to understand where changes are required to ensure a uniform approach to zoning is applied across the County. The following table provides a summary of the existing zone hierarchy for all local Zoning By-laws.

Table 1: Perth County Local Zoning By-laws Zone Hierarchy

	North Perth	Perth East	Perth South	West Perth
Residential				
R1				
R2				
R3				
R4				
R5				
R6				
R7				
HVR				
RR				
MH				
Commercial				
C1				
C2				
C3				

	North Perth	Perth East	Perth South	West Perth
C4				
C5				
HVC				*C2
Agricultural				
A				
ACM				
MAR				
Industrial				
M1				
M2		*M1		
Institutional				
IN				
Environmental				
PR				
NRE1				
NRE2				
FP				
FFCA				
AL				

Official Plan Conformity

In accordance with Section 34(1) of the Planning Act, by-laws and public works must conform to the policies of the Official Plan. Further, the Official Plan states that each local municipality will prepare a Comprehensive Zoning By-law that will be in conformity with the principles, policies, and land use designation contained in the County Official Plan.

Collectively, the provisions and regulations of the local Zoning By-laws are the regulatory tools that implement the policies of the County Official Plan. As such a conformity exercise was also undertaken to ensure the local Zoning By-laws comply with Section 34(1) of the Planning Act.

Mapping Analysis

Municipal Zoning By-laws contain maps, typically referred to as Schedules, which illustrate the applicable Zone for each property located in a municipality. The current Perth County Zoning By-laws include the following schedules to establish the location of Zones throughout each municipality:

- North Perth Zoning By-law No. 6-ZB-1999 – 48 Schedules
- West Perth Zoning By-law No. 100-1998 – 68 Schedules
- Perth East Zoning By-law No. 30-1999 – 54 Schedules
- Perth South Zoning By-law No. 4-1999 – 31 Schedules

To understand how the existing Zoning By-laws align with the County Official Plan, Phase 2 included a review of all existing 201 Zoning Schedules, as well as a review of the County's Online Public GIS Viewer. County GIS staff provided Planning staff with a summarized list of discrepancies between the Official Plan and the Zoning By-laws, resulting in the identification of 9,000 property discrepancies needing a detailed review. Upon further review, it was determined that geometry errors, such as instances where a Zone boundary is not geo-

referenced to align with a parcel boundary, were resulting in the false identification of property discrepancies. To resolve the number of discrepancies, County GIS staff worked to align the existing zoning polygons to the County's property boundary fabric so that a true list of property discrepancies could be compiled. The new and aligned zoning layer created by GIS staff also ensures that updates to the Zoning layers based on the Comprehensive Review can easily be undertaken once a revised Zoning framework is finalized at the end of Phase 2 and the drafting of the initial draft Zoning By-laws begins.

Site Specific Review

In addition to the general zones located within the four Zoning By-laws, a review was also undertaken for each of the site-specific zones located within the Zoning By-laws. Site-Specific subsections, also referred to as Special Zones or Special Provisions in the local Zoning By-laws, generally apply to specific properties and reflect where site-specific Zoning By-law Amendments have been approved. County Planning and GIS staff have compiled a complete list of site-specific Zoning By-law Amendments, totaling 1,139 different Site-Specific Zones that impact 4,320 properties across the four Zoning By-laws. In instances where site-specific provisions are providing the same type of relief again and again, this can be an indication that the as-of-right zoning provisions are no longer serving their purpose. Further, similar relief on such a regular basis over time establishes new development standards for certain provisions and there is a need to identify this within the new Zoning By-laws.

Moving forward, the Zoning By-laws will aim to provide a standardized zoning hierarchy which aligns permissions with the newly established development standards to reduce the need for copious site-specific zones. Further, it will be strongly discouraged that site-specific zones be applied in one-off manners that result in more restrictive development standards than that of the parent zone. Continuous usage of one-off amendments is time-consuming to implement and regulate, which frequently leads to inconsistent decisions over time. Creating standardized development standards allows applicants to better anticipate the possibility of application approval and allows for the zoning by-law to be applied in a uniform and consistent manner.

Key Interest Group Workshops

From June 1st to June 4th 2026, Perth County Staff held Interest Group Workshops in each of the four local municipal/township offices pertaining to the Comprehensive Zoning By-law Review currently being undertaken by the County of Perth for the four local Zoning By-laws. Representatives of various interest groups throughout the County, including Builders, Business Owners, Community Groups, Agencies, and Farm Organizations, were invited to attend and share preliminary feedback on what improvements can be made to the Zoning By-law. A total of 50 participants, representing 4 Municipalities and 15 different Interest Groups, attended to provide feedback on how the current zoning is working and where improvements can be made to better reflects the needs, priorities, and aspirations of valued voices within each community.

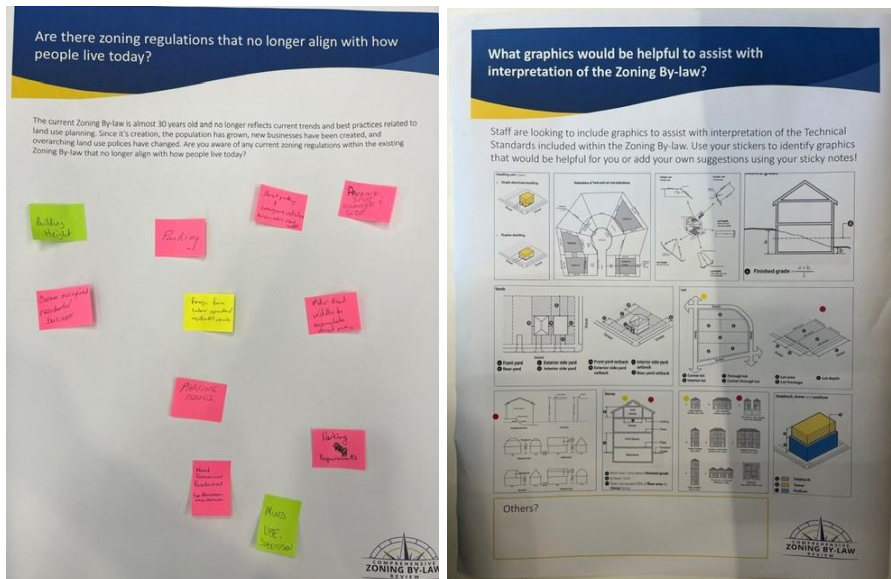


Figure 1: Presentation Boards with Feedback from Key Interest Group Workshops

Comparison Research

A comparison review was undertaken as part of Phase 2 for staff to understand how Perth County's existing regulations align with a broader provincial context. The research reviewed and compared the current Zoning By-laws, inclusive of all zones, permitted uses, and provisions, with eight other municipal Zoning By-laws from across Ontario. The eight other Zoning By-laws were chosen based on the municipality's similarities to Perth County in land use and population size, as well as how recent a review of said Zoning By-law was undertaken. A secondary round of comparator review was further undertaken for certain Phase 2 Background Papers where specific themes required more tailored comparison, such as permissions for on-farm diversified uses in Municipalities with CLI Soils 1-3 and no specialty crops. The review allowed staff to understand how other municipalities address common planning matters, including similarities and differences in structure, terminology, land use permissions, and development standards, as well as to highlight emerging trends and best practices in zoning. The insights gained through this comparison further inform recommendations for a modern, clear, and effective Comprehensive Zoning By-law that reflects current planning priorities and community needs. The following table provides a summary of all comparator municipalities used in the comparison research.

Table 2: Comparator Municipalities used for Zoning By-law comparison review

Municipality	Notes
Prince Edward County	Newly adopted county-wide by-law with an agricultural focus
Centre Wellington	Older by-law with urban/rural zones implemented for CLI 1-3 land
Woolwich	Newly adopted by-law, with updated urban and rural zones.
West Grey	Traditional by-law with full sections for agricultural and rural areas
City of Brantford	Newly adopted by-law with urban and suburban zones.
Kawartha Lakes	Newly adopted, rural-oriented consolidated by-law
Meaford	Full consolidated by-law with small-town style zoning provisions.
South Bruce	Shorter rural municipality Zoning By-law.
North Middlesex	Similar Agricultural Structure (CLI 1-3 Soils, No Specialty Crops)
Southwest Middlesex	

Municipality	Notes
Strathroy-Caradoc	
Thames Centre	
Zorra	
Norwich	
Blandford-Blenheim	
East Zorra Tavistock	
South-West Oxford	
Guelph/Eramosa	
Town of Erin	
Mapleton	
Minto	
Puslinch	
Amherstburg	Municipality located within a County that utilizes a similar application of Natural Heritage Designation and Natural Heritage Overlay as the Perth County Official Plan
Essex	
Kingsville	
Lakeshore	
Lasalle	
Leamington	
Tecumseh	
Chatham-Kent	
Georgian Bluffs	
Chatsworth	
Meaford	
Grey Highlands	
Hanover	
Owen Sound	
Southgate	
Town of Blue Mountains	

Recommended Zoning Hierarchy

Using the information gained from comparator research and key interest group workshops, combined the findings of the existing conditions review and Official Plan conformity exercise, the Phase 2 Background Reports provide a revised zoning hierarchy, complete with zones, permitted uses, and zone provisions. This revised zoning hierarchy looks to reduce duplicative and repetitive zoning standards existing within the current Zoning By-laws, as well as apply a uniform zoning approach across all four local municipalities. The revised zones presented in the Phase 2 Background Reports will be available for review beginning September 2026 and will be the basis of the draft revised Zoning By-laws in Phase 3.

Project Schedule

As required by Section 26 (9) of the Ontario Planning Act, all 4 Lower-Tier Zoning By-laws are required to conform to the County Official Plan 3 years after the Official Plan is approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Zoning By-law project was initiated in March 2025, following endorsement from all 4 local Councils to initiate the review project. At the time of project initiation, staff anticipated to receive Minister's approval of the Zoning By-law in December 2025, which would have required the Zoning By-law review to be complete in

December 2028, however, the original project schedule projected completion for July 2028. In April 2025, County staff received Minister changes to the County Official Plan, which resulted in the Zoning By-law project being placed on a temporary hold for 2 Months beginning. Another 1 month hold was placed on the Zoning By-law project in July 2025 to make modifications to the County Official Plan. Minister approval of the County Official Plan was received in September 2025, which requires the Zoning By-law review to be completed by September 2028. The following provides a schedule update for completion of the Zoning By-law project. This schedule considers the date of Official Plan adoption by the Minister and the extension of Phase 2 and reduction of Phase 3 due to the shifting of the zone hierarchy recommendations from Phase 3 to Phase 2.

Phase	Proposed Timing	Start Date	End Date	Duration
Phase 1: Project Initiation & Background Policy Review	January 2025 – August 2025	January 2025	November 2025	~ 11 months
Phase 2: Research and Analysis	August 2025 – May 2026	December 2025	November 2026	~ 11 months
Phase 3: Draft Zoning By-laws	May 2026 – November 2027	December 2026	October 2027	~ 10 months
Phase 4: Final Zoning By-laws	November 2027 – July 2028	November 2027	July 2028	~ 9 months
Phase 5: Zoning By-law Implementation and Appeals	August 2028+	August 2028 +	TBD	TBD

NEXT STEPS

- Finalize Background Paper #1, #2, and #3 based on Steering Committee comments and publish on project website for public feedback
- Complete Background Paper #4 – Agricultural and Aggregate Zones and share with Steering Committee for review and feedback
- Complete Background Paper #5 – Open Spaces and Natural Resources and share with Steering Committee for review and feedback
- Once all zones and permitted uses are finalized within Background Paper #1 to #5, general provisions and definitions will be finalized in Background Paper #6 for Steering Committee Review
- Finalize Background Paper #4, #5, and #6 based on Steering Committee comments and publish on project website for public feedback

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