West Lincoln

Cultivating West Lincoln
New Official Plan

Discussion Paper

An Attractive Township

November 2026

Introduction

As West Lincoln evolves, there is an opportunity to strengthen the quality and design of its settlement areas, particularly Smithville, and other hamlets, while preserving the Township's rural identity and agricultural heritage.

How growth is planned and designed will play an important role in making West Lincoln a more attractive place to live, work and play. Well-designed streets, parks, public spaces, and buildings contribute to vibrant, attractive, and livable communities. These spaces support local businesses, encourage walking and social interaction, create welcoming gathering places, and strengthen community identity and sense of place.

Through the Official Plan Review, West Lincoln has an opportunity to explore policy directions that support main street revitalization, high-quality urban design, public realm improvements, and connected community spaces. Together, these goals can help enhance the Township's long-term quality of life.



Smithville parkette includes greenery, benches, bike racks, and Smithville gateway sign.

Policy Context

Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

The PPS supports the creation of complete, connected, and accessible communities through policies related to land use planning, transportation, public spaces, and community design. Key policy direction includes:

- **Urban Design and Built Form:** Encourages compact, complete communities with a mix of housing, employment, parks, and services, while ensuring development is compatible with its surroundings.
- **Public Realm:** Supports safe and attractive public spaces, streets, parks, trails, and community facilities that encourage social interaction and community well-being.
- **Complete Streets and Active Transportation:** Promotes transportation networks that accommodate all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, transit users, and goods movement.
- **Parks and Open Space:** Encourages the provision of parks, trails, recreation facilities, and publicly accessible open spaces that support healthy and active lifestyles.
- **Accessibility and Inclusion:** Emphasizes equitable access to housing, transportation, public spaces, services, and recreation for people of all ages and abilities.
- **Complete Communities:** Supports providing community services and facilities close to where people live and spend time. This includes schools, child care facilities, community centres, health care services, and long-term care facilities.

Niagara Official Plan

The Niagara Official Plan expands on the PPS by providing detailed policy direction on urban design excellence, complete streets, public realm improvements, placemaking, accessibility, active transportation, and community character. It establishes expectations for high-quality building and site design, vibrant public spaces, pedestrian-oriented development, and context-sensitive transitions, supported through Regional design guidelines and implementation tools. Key policy directions includes:

- Urban design and placemaking, including building design, streetscape quality, public art, gateway features, and community identity.
- Public realm design, including street trees, street furniture, wayfinding, and public gathering spaces.
- Complete streets, requiring the use of the Niagara Region Complete Streets Design Manual and designing roads to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, motorists, and goods movement.
- Active transportation, with policies supporting connected walking and cycling networks and reducing travel distances between destinations.
- Accessibility, including accessible design principles in public spaces, transportation networks, and urban design guidelines.
- Built form compatibility and transitions, including guidance for intensification areas and transitions between settlement areas and adjacent rural or agricultural lands.
- Implementation tools, including Regional Urban Design Guidelines, Model Urban Design Guidelines, secondary plans, CPTED principles, and Complete Streets Guidelines.

Emerging Policy Ideas

Main Street Revitalization and Economic Development

- Support the revitalization of Smithville's downtown through streetscape improvements and infrastructure upgrades.
- Establish appropriate building heights and built form along main streets to create a comfortable and pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Encourage active uses along main streets, with buildings oriented toward streets and public spaces.
- Enhance streetscape features such as lighting, seating, landscaping and street trees to support beautification efforts.
- Provide a variety of gathering spaces where residents and visitors can relax, socialize, and participate in community activities.
- Encourage a fine-grained mix of shops, services, restaurants, and businesses that support a vibrant main street environment.
- Maintain consistent street edges and building setbacks that reinforce main street and rural identity.
- Locate and design parking locations to minimize their visual impact on the public realm.



Pedestrians walking on a main street in Kleinburg, Ontario.

Building Height and Transitions

- Establish building height and massing guidelines that respect the scale and character of rural communities and existing neighbourhoods.
- Provide appropriate transitions between taller buildings and adjacent low-rise residential areas.
- Support a range of missing-middle housing forms such as townhouses, garden suites, and low-rise apartments.



Main street with charming buildings and public realm in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Updating Urban Design Guidance

- Refresh rural and small-town urban appropriate design guidelines that reflect West Lincoln's rural identity.
- Encourage compact, walkable neighbourhoods with access to parks, services, and community facilities in Smithville and other settlement areas.
- Preserve rural views, natural features, and rural community character and activities (e.g. festivals etc.)
- Establish attractive gateway features at key entrances into settlement areas and the Township.
- Incorporate landscaping, public art, signage, lighting, and community branding to reinforce local identity, heritage, and history.
- Create memorable landmarks and gathering places that contribute to a sense of arrival and community pride.

Public Realm Improvements

- Encourage year-round public realm design that incorporates weather protection measures to improve comfort throughout the year.
- Support the creation and enhancement of community gathering spaces including plazas, squares, or parklets.

Improving Pedestrian Experience and Safety

- Prioritize universal accessibility for pedestrians and all road users.
- Identify appropriate locations for pedestrian activity while balancing the movement of vehicles, including agricultural and commercial traffic.
- Enhance pedestrian comfort and accessibility through improved crossings, traffic calming, lighting, and streetscape enhancements.

Community Hubs

- Encourage the co-location of community facilities, services, and institutions to improve accessibility and community connections across West Lincoln.

Revitalizing Parks and Public Spaces

- Provide parks, public spaces, and recreational amenities of varying sizes and functions to serve residents of all ages and abilities.
- Ensure recreational facilities and amenities are accessible, functional, and sustainable.

Heritage Consevation and Rural Identity

- Protect and celebrate West Lincoln's cultural heritage resources, cultural landscapes, and archaeological resources.
- Encourage the conservation and adaptive re-use of heritage buildings and sites.
- Recognize and incorporate Indigenous histories, cultures, and placekeeping opportunities into planning initiatives.
- Preserve the rural character, historic settlement patterns, and agricultural landscapes that define West Lincoln's identity.



West Street pedestrian crossover in Smithville