

# Planning for a Greener Future: Climate Change

## Issues and Options Report

### How can we plan for a greener future through Our Orillia Official Plan Review?

Climate change is one of the most critical issues facing communities throughout the world. Climate impacts such as unpredictable weather events are already impacting municipalities across Canada, and will worsen significantly if massive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are not achieved within the next 30 years. Local governments in Ontario have the authority to take action through land use planning to respond to climate change, including reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation and buildings, reducing waste, and preserving and enhancing tree cover and vegetation. The City of Orillia (the “City”) is recognized as a global leader in climate change. In 2023, the City prepared its first report to the Climate Disclosure Project (CDP), a global reporting framework that tracks climate action across municipalities, companies, states, and regions and received an ‘A-’ for its demonstration of best practices in climate adaptation and mitigation and a set of ambitious targets.

Acting on climate change and sustainability has been identified as priority in the City’s 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan, and the urgency of taking action has been echoed by the general public, Indigenous communities, advocacy groups like Sustainable Orillia, and the City’s Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Working Group, – all of whom have been engaged through Our Orillia Official Plan Review and other City-led climate initiatives.

The City has made great strides towards achieving ambitious climate related targets and actions set out in the Community Climate Action Plan and the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. This includes the City’s target to achieve net zero GHG emissions by 2050, and to help the Orillia community build resiliency to climate impacts.

“Sustainability and Stewardship” is one of the six Made-in-Orillia Guiding Principles that will direct the new Official Plan. Through Our Orillia, **Planning for a Greener Future: Climate Change** means considering and exploring opportunities identified in the City Moves Report for policies in the new Official Plan to support the City’s climate journey.

#### What are the elements of Planning for a Greener Future in Orillia?

- Municipal Leadership
- People and Health
- Built Environment
- Natural Environment
- Energy and Economy

#### What We Heard

85% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that climate change should implement adaptation measures in response to climate change.

## Policy Issues and Options

The policy issues and options outlined below are organized by the elements of the **Planning for a Greener Future: Climate Change Report** and build on the input received from the community during Phase 1 of Our Orillia Official Plan Review engagement activities and City Moves Report. These issues and options will provide the basis for community and stakeholder consultation in Phase 2 of Our Orillia Official Plan Review and will inform a subsequent Policy Directions Report which will recommend specific actions to implement new or updated policies in the Official Plan.

### Do you want to know how the Guiding Principles are being considered in the Official Plan?

Each of the issues outlined in the Report are ‘tagged’ with one or more icons that show how each issue aligns with the Guiding Principles for Our Orillia.



**Complete Community**



**Strong & Diverse Economy**



**Integrated Mobility**



**Sustainability & Stewardship**



**Safe & Affordable Housing**



**Wellness & Creativity**

## Municipal Leadership

### What does the current Orillia Official Plan say?

Principle 3 of the Official Plan speaks to several issues of sustainability and the environment, including protecting natural heritage and water quality, reducing landfill waste, supporting and promoting renewable energy, and reducing GHG emissions. Beyond this Principle, however, there is no guidance for reducing emissions, and there is no mention of climate change at all in the Official Plan.

### What does Provincial policy or legislation require us to do?

The Provincial *Planning Act* requires municipalities to include policies in their Official Plans that identify actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. A Place to Grow: A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020 (Growth Plan, 2020) provides further direction to support sustainability and climate change action, including:

- Supporting the achievement of complete communities;
- Reducing reliance on automobiles and supporting transit and active transportation;
- Promoting local food;

- Addressing infrastructure risks and vulnerabilities; and
- Developing strategies to reduce GHG emissions, improve resilience, and develop GHG inventories.

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS 2020), also requires municipalities to “support energy conservation and efficiency, improved air quality, reduced greenhouse gas emission, and preparing for the impacts of a changing climate through land use and development patterns”.

This shows clear direction from the Province for the City to incorporate policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for climate change into its Official Plan.

### Policy Issues & Options

The following policy issues and options have been informed by input from the community, the requirements and directions of Provincial policy and legislation, and other City plans and policies, including the Community Climate Action Plan and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.



**Issue 1. The City must include policies in the Official Plan that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change, and should reference climate change action already taken by the City.**

- **Recommendation 1.A** – Refer to the Community Climate Action Plan and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and incorporate relevant actions and GHG emission targets as policy, where appropriate. Together, the Community Climate Action Plan and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy guide the City’s built, natural, and social systems in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to a changing climate.

### Climate Targets

Orillia’s Climate Future provides a roadmap to reducing community greenhouse gas emissions **by one-third by 2030** and achieve **net-zero by 2050**.

### What is climate change mitigation and adaptation?

Climate change **mitigation** focuses on ways to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that are released through everyday activities by people and businesses.

Climate change **adaptation** focuses on planning and preparing for the effects that are being experienced now and will be experienced in the future as a result of a changing climate.

## Healthy and Green Communities

### What does the current Orillia Official Plan say?

The current Official Plan recognizes the importance of opportunities for recreation, active transportation, and reducing dependency on internal combustion automobiles in supporting a healthy population and a sustainable City. This includes:

- Encouraging the installation of infrastructure for alternative fueled vehicles (e.g., electric vehicles), wherever feasible;
- Direction enhanced connections for pedestrians within parking lots and from parking lots to streets in the Downtown Area;
- The identification of several “Flex Streets” in the Downtown Area, most notably Mississaga Street, as shared rights-of-way for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles at low speeds; and
- Requirements for bicycle parking at schools (throughout the Downtown Area and Waterfront Redevelopment Area, and places of worship (Policy 3.3.3.14).

### What does Provincial policy or legislation require us to do?

The PPS 2020 establishes baseline policy requirements for achieving healthy, livable, and safe communities, including:

- Preparing for the impacts of a changing climate;
- Avoiding development and land use patterns which may cause public health and safety concerns; and
- Promoting the integration of land use planning, growth management, and transit-supportive development.

The PPS 2020 also requires municipalities to support improved air quality and reduced greenhouse gas emissions through land use and development patterns that minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and support current and future uses or transit and active transportation.

The Growth Plan, 2020 builds on the directions of the PPS 2020 by requiring municipalities to include policies in Official Plans that:

- Promote and expand convenient access to healthy, local and affordable food options, including through urban agriculture; and
- Reduce dependency on automobiles and support existing and planned transit and active transportation.

### Policy Issues & Options

The following policy issues and options have been informed by input from the community, the requirements and directions of Provincial policy and legislation, and other City plans and policies, including the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Community Climate Action Plan.



**Issue 2. The City is required to include policies in the new Official Plan that support and expand access to local food activities and urban agriculture in the new Official Plan.**

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- **Recommendation 2.A** – Add new Official Plan policies which direct the City to:
  - Continue to promote community planting initiatives and continue to run the City-funded tree planting program to support the urban tree canopy;
  - Permit and encourage urban agriculture (e.g., community gardens, backyard growing, shared garden allotments) in all and/or certain land use designations;
  - Support the use of City-owned land for growing food; and
  - Explore opportunities to strengthen the local food supply value chain by making it easier for agricultural producers to sell to retailers and restaurants through new platforms, education, sharing of best practices, etc.



**Issue 3. The Climate Change Adaptation Strategy refers to the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) Healthy Community Design Policy for Official Plans. There is an opportunity to incorporate recommendations from the SMDHU into the new Official Plan.**

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- **Recommendation 3.A** – Incorporate policies outlined by the SMDHU in the Healthy Community Design Policy for Official Plans document. For example:
  - Refer to the SMDHU as an important partner in policy development and land use planning;
  - Protect and conserve land and water for use as part of a sustainable local food system;
  - Promote renewable and alternative energy resources, conserve energy, and protect quality; and
  - Ensure a built environment that supports and promotes active transportation as a priority travel option through a complete streets approach to transportation master plans, environmental assessments and road design.
  - Incorporating a community-wide Urban Forestry Management Plan that maximizes environmental and community health benefits of a robust City-wide tree canopy.

**What are “Healthy Community Design Policies”?**

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has prepared a resource for municipalities to use when updating their official plans. This resource includes policy guidance for health and complete communities, including climate change.



**Issue 4. There is an opportunity to enhance existing policies to support climate change mitigation and adaptation through improved and updated transportation and mobility infrastructure options.**

- **Recommendation 4.A** – Expand transportation related policies, including the relationship between transportation and climate change, including:
  - Review of policies for bicycle parking and low- or zero-emissions vehicles, and consider expanding application of these policies to other land use designations and types of development (e.g., requiring EV-ready parking spaces as part of multi-unit residential uses);
  - Introduce new policy that directs the City to develop transportation demand management (TDM) strategies (i.e. carpool, vanpool, car share. etc.) to reduce reliance on private automobiles, in alignment with the City’s Multi-Modal Transportation Master Plan;
  - Consider introducing new policy direction for the City to explore reduced parking requirements in higher-density areas that can support active transportation and transit; and
  - Recognize the relationship between the City’s transportation network and the City’s response to climate change, leveraging language and inspiration from the Community Climate Action Plan

## Built Environment

### What does the current Orillia Official Plan say?

Principle 3 in the Official Plan directs the City to consider sustainability in regulating the built environment.

The following Official Plan land use designations include policies for sustainable building practices:

- In the **Downtown Area, Waterfront Area, Hospital District, Central Core Intensification Area, Downtown Shoulder**, new buildings are directed to incorporate principles of sustainable development, energy efficiency, and resource efficiency;
- In the **Downtown Area and Waterfront Area**, parking facilities are also encouraged to include sustainable design features, including permeable paving, on-site stormwater management technologies, and alternative-fuel vehicles and car-sharing services;
- In the **Living Area**, all buildings are required to incorporate principles of sustainable development, and energy and resource efficiency, connections and support for public transit, and green roofs are encouraged.
- Development within the **Employment Lands** is encouraged to include energy efficient building design.

The City’s infrastructure, including roads, transit, stormwater systems, and water sanitary systems, are all guided by the policies of the Official Plan. Section 6.0 provides direction for the provision and design of these services, however, there is no explicit reference to the impacts of a changing climate or sustainable design features as part of these services.

Through Our Orillia Official Plan Review, there is an opportunity to reimagine the way Orillia’s built environment, including buildings and infrastructure, contributes to a climate-resilient future.

### **What does Provincial policy or legislation require us to do?**

The PPS 2020 includes policies for the development of a quality built environment. Section 1.8 of the PPS 2020 requires planning authorities to support land use and development patterns that, among other matters:

- Maximize energy efficiency and conservation, and considers the mitigating effects of vegetation and green infrastructure;
- Maximize vegetation within settlement areas; and
- Promotes the use of active transportation and transit between land uses.

The Growth Plan, 2020 provides more specific direction for municipalities to include policies in the Official Plan that deal with:

- Water conservation (e.g., water demand management and water recycling);
- Energy conservation through land use patterns and urban design that support energy efficiency, and opportunities for district energy, renewable and alternative energy systems, etc.;
- Integrated waste management, including adaptive reuse and building conservation; and
- Improvement of air quality.

There is clear direction from the Province to establish policies in the new Official Plan as it relates to the City’s built environment and climate change.

### **Policy Issues & Options**

The following policy issues and options have been informed by input from the community, the requirements and directions of Provincial policy and legislation, and emerging practices in land use planning.



#### **Issue 5. There is an opportunity for the new Official Plan to establish stronger policies to protect and enhance the tree canopy.**

- **Recommendation 5.A** – Introduce new or updated policies that to protect and enhance the tree canopy and its contribution to climate action, including:
  - Referencing the role of tree planting in contributing to the City’s tree canopy cover targets and the City’s response to climate change, as established in the Community Climate Action Plan and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy;

- Encouraging the City and/or the development community to partner with community groups for initiatives such as tree planting; and
- Promoting City and community-led planting initiatives to support protection and enhancement of the tree canopy.



**Issue 6. The current Official Plan contains some direction for sustainable design of buildings. In the new Official Plan, there are several options to consider for promoting sustainable design and climate change through the built environment.**

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- **Option 6.A** – Retain the current policy framework for the design of buildings (i.e., embedded within land use designations), but introduce new policies that require new and emerging standards for climate-resilient design, including:
  - Compliance with the City’s Salt Management Policy;
  - Requiring the incorporation of green infrastructure and low impact development; and
  - Requirements for the use of shading features for new development.
- **Option 6.B** – Consolidate general design policies in the current Official Plan that contemplate sustainable design principles. These policies may apply to all new development, regardless of land use designation.
- **Option 6.C** – Introduce a new, standalone policy directing the City to prepare a minimum standard for new residential and non-residential development. The standard for new development could be referred to as the “Orillia Green Standard” to align with the direction of the Community Climate Action Plan and could apply to new development applications subject to the *Planning Act*.

This policy may include direction for the “Orillia Green Standard” to include sustainability design principles required by the current Official Plan and/or recommended by the Community Climate Action Plan and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy:

- Green infrastructure and low impact development;
- Stormwater management measures to mitigate snowfall and rainfall;
- Waste management systems;
- Water and energy conservation measures;
- Coordination with the City’s Salt Management policy, Tree Canopy and Native Vegetation policy, and other City-led initiatives;
- Resilient building requirements;
- Consideration for the impacts on vulnerable populations, including children and seniors;
- Alternative and/or renewable energy systems;



- Minimum requirements for electric vehicle charging infrastructure and/or bicycle parking; and
- Opportunities for financial and non-financial incentives to support implementation of sustainable development.

## Modernizing Buildings in Orillia

The City's net-zero target will be achieved by decarbonizing and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from corporate and community buildings. The new Official Plan can support efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment by establishing standards for new buildings.



**Issue 7.** The current Official Plan includes policies for a range of infrastructure services provided by the City. These policies direct the City to have regard for the natural environment when planning for infrastructure and services. The City is required to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate when planning for infrastructure.

- **Recommendation 7.A** – Introduce a new policy that requires the City to plan for infrastructure and services in a manner that prepares for the impacts of a changing climate. This policy may direct the City to incorporate and consider risks to existing infrastructure, as outlined in the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.



**Issue 8.** The current Official Plan requires inclusion of low impact development techniques as part of some stormwater management plans. There is an opportunity to introduce new policies that further the use of green infrastructure, including low impact development.

- **Recommendation 8.A** – Introduce a new policy framework for climate resilient infrastructure. There is an opportunity for the City to provide direction for the provision of climate resilient infrastructure including:
  - Encouraging the City and development proponents to incorporate green infrastructure and low impact development in new planning, engineering, and conversation concepts to complement existing infrastructure.
  - Introducing a new policy that requires the City to consider and integrate climate change into asset management practices and decision-making processes. This could complement the work the City has undertaken previously to prepare the Strategic Asset Management Policy, which takes an integrated approach to help the City deliver value to the community through the effective management of infrastructure assets.

- Recognize various natural and human-made elements as forms of green infrastructure and provide policy direction for the protection and enhancement of these elements to support stormwater management.

## Energy and Economy

### What does the current Orillia Official Plan say?

Tourism potential along the waterfront, paired with direction for sustainable economic development opportunities are the primary focus of economic development and employment land use policies in the current Official Plan. Energy generation and systems that are affordable and reliable, and a well-connected multi-modal transportation system are both recognized as important components of a diversified, competitive and sustainable economic base for Orillia.

### What does Provincial policy or legislation require us to do?

Municipalities are required to support and promote economic development and competitiveness by supporting opportunities for a diversified economic base and providing for a mix of land uses. Energy efficiency and conservation is also an important directive established by the Province in the PPS 2020 and the Growth Plan, 2020.

Renewable energy systems and alternative energy systems are both options identified by the Province that can support and promote a culture of conservation. Municipalities are required to provide direction to reduce energy consumption and support a diversified and growing economic base for long-term prosperity.

### Policy Issues & Options



**Issue 9. There is an opportunity to enhance and potentially streamline existing policies for water conservation and energy generation and conservation in the new Official Plan to better align with Provincial requirements.**

- **Recommendation 9.A** – Introduce a refreshed policy framework for energy and water conservation and efficiency. While there is considerable policy direction for energy efficiency, including renewable energy systems and alternative energy systems in the current Official Plan, there is an opportunity to include policy direction that is aligned with actions in the Community Climate Action Plan and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. This may include:
  - Policy direction for renewable and alternative energy generation and delivery systems at appropriate scales, subject to compatibility with land uses, including district energy, microgrids, and geothermal energy;
  - Explore and consider large-scale solar installation locations (e.g., car parking structures, municipal buildings, large-format commercial rooftops, etc.); and

- Incorporate water and energy conservation and efficiency practices through the City's new sustainable buildings program;



**Issue 10. There is an opportunity to improve the City's energy availability and resiliency through extreme weather events.**

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- **Recommendation 10.A** – Explore opportunities for emergency backup power at City-owned facilities. At a minimum, municipal facilities providing critical services (e.g., water and wastewater systems, fire stations, etc.) should have a reliable backup power system in place. The City may consider utilizing municipal facilities as emergency centres (e.g., cooling and warming centre, evacuation centre, etc.) for residents during extreme weather events.

**Issue 11. There is an opportunity to recognize and support growth and expansion of sustainable tourism and assess new opportunities to promote “climate resilient” tourism as seasonal conditions change.**

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- **Recommendation 11.A** – Expand on existing policies that encourage sustainable tourism opportunities to explore climate resilient tourism. Orillia's tourism industry is a significant economic driver. Weather changes present new opportunities and challenges for this sector. The City can support the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy through the Official Plan by:
  - Supporting and encouraging the evolution of the tourism industry; and
  - Collaborating with surrounding jurisdictions and the local tourism sector to address potential risks to tourism industry, and to increase the offering of all-season activities.