

Renewing Prescott's Official Plan



A statement
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INTRODUCTION

An Official Plan will affect almost every aspect of life in Prescott. This is a complicated process especially with a pandemic and a climate crisis bearing down on us.

A new Official Plan will establish community priorities and land use policies for Prescott for the many years to come. These will affect not only our small town quality of life but our economy and our physical and mental wellbeing. This is hard work and meaningful public involvement is crucial! Some suggestions for this renewal follow.



1. **New Provincial Policy Statement of 2020 is foundational**

A review of the new Provincial Policy Statement reminds us that the Provincial Policy Statement of 2020 and the Town's current Strategic Plan are considered the basis for the new Official Plan. What will Prescott be like decades from now? Rethinking, defining and incorporating new OP policies in the following areas would be a great start:

- a) add a fourth pillar to the current Strategic Plan that would consider the health, safety and well-being of people of *all* ages and particularly the most vulnerable such as the elderly and those with specialized health and accessibility needs
- b) wise use and management of natural resources and the Upper St. Lawrence shoreline must be assured e.g. recharge areas, shoreline protection, trees, buffer zones, open spaces, the arboretum on the water front, natural sound barriers, parks and the urban forest. Institute a climate change plan
- c) focus quality of life, safety, health and wellbeing in strategic plan considerations beyond youth to people of all ages. Consider involving the citizens in updating the Strategic Plan which is currently forming the basis of a renewed Official Plan. There is great concern about the pandemic and mental health
- d) conserve built heritage resources and cultural heritage through application of the Ontario and Federal Heritage Acts and other legislation, reports and related opportunities for funding and support
- e) correct consistency between OP maps and the map of the BIA as shown in Schedule A to by-law No. 54.86
- f) include reference to the current "Design Guidelines" as part of our OP and ensure they are adhered to through implementation in the zoning by-law

- g) encourage distinct advisory, meaningful and responsible roles for Committees such as Planning, Recreation, Heritage and Economic Development

2. Economic Development

Our new Official Plan should speak to the fact that we adjoin two rural townships that are also working hard on economic development and co-operation is the way to succeed. Research should demonstrate what industries and businesses are trending and have the greatest chance at success. This endeavor needs to be knowledge and evidence based. “Knowledge is powerful but only when it is shared.” (Dr. Henry Lickers)

3. Tourism

The United Nations World Tourism Organization provides the following insights that apply not only to cities and regions but also to small towns.

Our new Official Plan should:

- a) harness the power of “Culture and Creativity in Tourism”
- b) ensure any promotion of a waterfront hotel recognizes that the lands are protected for a heritage hotel with strictly controlled height, design parameters, etc. by Letters Patent with the Federal Government. Perhaps a special zoning in keeping with these Letters Patent would clarify the current confusion.
- c) improve information and data exchange between sectors. The socio economic impacts of COVID-19 on culture and tourism need to be well understood. Addressing the entire “ecosystem” will help create more focused solutions
- d) launch innovative alliances and inspire a more resilient tourism workforce. inspire a more sustainable future for cultural tourism
- e) strengthen governance structures for better coordination and information sharing and refresh past tourism action plans with what we have learned through the pandemic crisis and incorporate this new insight into a renewed Official Plan.

4. Conclusion

I hope this has been helpful. I have a library and files addressing all these matters in one way or another and will be pleased to assist in any way I can. Sandra.lawn@gmail.com