

# Official Plan Review Discussion Paper #1 - Draft



Where Town and Country Meet

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Prepared for:

**Township of Essa**

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

The purpose of this Discussion Paper is to:

- provide an overview of the submissions made by the community and the results of the Visioning Workshop for the new Official Plan;
- propose possible options for revised and new policy areas for the new Official Plan; and,
- seek further input from residents and other stakeholders about the specific policy options and approaches for the new Official Plan and in particular, to hear views on the proposed directions identified.

The intention is to use the views and ideas collected through consultation on this Discussion Paper to:

- further develop the detail of policy options which have been identified;
- ensure no critical policy areas are missed; and,
- provide guidance for the preparation of the first draft of the new Official Plan.

This Discussion Paper has been structured in line with the five main land use forms and policy areas (Rural Essa, Natural Essa, Growing Essa, Resilient Essa, and Connecting Essa) required to be addressed by the Provincial and County plans and policies. In relation to each land use form and policy area, this Discussion Paper describes:

- the policy context – a review of the policy requirements of the Provincial Policy Statement, Growth Plan and County of Simcoe Official Plan is provided in respect of the direction provided for that land use form and/or policy area;
- the current approach – a review of the current approach to the land use form or policy area in the existing Township of Essa Official Plan; and,
- the possible policy directions, noting that a number of the directions are complementary and that more than one direction may impact multiple land use forms and policy areas.

## 1.1 Why a new Official Plan

The Official Plan is the primary tool for implementing the Township's goals and objectives, and establishes a long term strategy for the Township that recognizes the public interest to effectively manage change. Land use planning plays an important role in identifying and protecting a range of community values that include but not limited to the following identified by the community during the Visioning Workshop as being of first importance:

- Clean water and clean air
- Sense of belonging/Sense of place
- Rural character
- Community Safety
- Complete community with adequate commercial and other services
- Natural environment

The updated Official Plan will guide all land use planning and development in the Township of Essa for the next 20 years.

The current Township Official Plan was adopted in 2000 and has been subject to several amendments over the years. The *Planning Act*, which establishes the rules for land use planning in Ontario, requires that the Township Official Plan be revised to ensure it conforms to provincial plans and is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

There are several provincial planning documents that form the basis for land use planning in central Ontario, and to which the Township Official Plan is required to be consistent with and have regard to the:

- Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) – Provides policy direction on matters relating to municipal planning that are of provincial interest, and sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land. The main themes of the PPS include building strong communities, the wise management and use of resources, and protecting health and safety. The PPS was last updated in 2020.
- Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe - seeks to plan for growth and development in a way that supports economic prosperity, protects the environment, and helps communities achieve a high quality of life in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was released under the Places to Grow Act, 2005 and was last updated in 2020.

In addition, the Township Official Plan is required to conform to the County of Simcoe Official Plan that was approved in 2016.

The current Township of Essa Official Plan was adopted by Council on April 19, 2000, and approved by the County of Simcoe on November 28, 2001. Section 26 of the Planning Act requires the Township Official Plan be revised to ensure it has regard to matters of provincial interest, conforms to provincial plans, and is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

The new Official Plan will form the foundation for decision makers in protecting the environment, and guiding future development, public works, and capital investment. The decisions of Township Council must conform to the Official Plan.

## 1.2 Update Process

The Official Plan update will be undertaken in three (3) phases, over an approximately sixteen (16) month period. Overall, the process will consist of a thorough background research phase, including opportunities for community input, preparation of a draft Official Plan, and finalization and adoption of the new Official Plan.

As part of the review, the Official Plan update will consider the following:

- Appropriateness of currently designated lands
- Scale and appropriateness of growth
- Source water protection policies
- Policies for additional residential units
- Better definition of flood policies and mapping
- Age-Friendly, Culturally Aware and Healthy Community Planning
- Secondary plan policies for each Settlement Area
- Policies for agricultural related-uses and on-farm diversified uses
- Economic development and growth
- Urban design policies



## 1.3 What We've Heard – Visioning Workshop Results

As part of the first phase of the Official Plan update, a Visioning Workshop was held between September 22<sup>nd</sup> and October 6<sup>th</sup> to solicit community feedback on a number of planning matters. The workshop took the form of a questionnaire and was intended to identify Township values and planning issues related to a number of topics including:

- Growth & Development
- Economy
- Natural Environment
- Agricultural & Rural Areas

A summary of the responses received during the Visioning Workshop is included as Appendix 1. Overall, five (5) policy areas that encompass the values and planning issues of the Township, became apparent through this Visioning Workshop.

## 1.4 Rural Essa – Agricultural & Rural Lands

The Visioning Workshop identified that while there is a general agreement that the current Official Plan sufficiently protects agricultural lands, there is underlying concern with respect to future residential growth pressures on the supply of agricultural lands.

There is an identified need to balance rural lot creation in the Township, with lot creation being limited on prime agricultural lands. From the responses received, there is broad support for allowing alternative income sources on farm properties, provided such uses are secondary in nature.

### **1.4.1 Natural Essa - Natural Environment**

From the Visioning Workshop responses there is a clear appreciation of the Township's natural assets and desire to protect these features. Accordingly, there is an interest in separating growth from natural features and implementation of appropriate development standards.

Concerns with light and noise pollution were also highlighted, as were ensuring the provision of clean drinking water and fresh air. Access to the natural environment and green spaces was a common point raised across respondents.

From the responses received, there is some indication from the community that current Official Plan policies could be enhanced to better protect environmental features, including trees.

### **1.4.2 Growing Essa – Economic & Residential Growth**

There is a recognition in the Township of the need to accommodate future growth. However, while there is general agreement for orderly growth and the protection of natural features and agricultural lands from encroaching development, specifics on how and where to grow varied amongst respondents.

Servicing and infrastructure were identified as important factors in determining where development should occur, with the need for facilities and infrastructure services to support the community also highlighted as important elements.

The need for more affordable housing and housing options were identified as planning issues in the Township, as well as the greater support for seniors through aging in place and long-term care.

Additionally, local employment opportunities and economic development in the Township were identified as important issues to the community. From the responses received, there is a desire to support local, small businesses, with responses suggesting potential incentives and the creation of Community Improvement Area as opportunities to do so. The potential for increased tourism uses in

the Township was also highlighted, with eco-tourism and agri-tourism identified as specific opportunities.

As it relates to employment uses, providing opportunities for the expansion of commercial and industrial lands to accommodate growing businesses and to attract new businesses was identified as a planning issue within the Township. Additionally, the responses received recognize transportation corridors as appropriate locations for employment type uses. There is also a perceived underutilization of existing commercial areas.

### ***1.4.3 Resilient Essa - Healthy Communities & Climate Change***

One of the themes that was apparent through the Visioning Session was the sense of community that the Township of Essa provides. Based on the responses received, maintaining quality of life and community wellbeing is important to Township residents. Access to open space and community spaces were highlighted as important aspects of the community, with support for senior citizens and aging in place highlighted as issues that the Township will face in the coming years.

Climate change and the associated impacts on the community was also identified as a planning issue that the Township should address through the Official Plan review.

### ***1.4.4 Connecting Essa - Linking***

The trails and transportation systems within the Township form the basis for the connectivity theme. Overall, access to the recreational trail system and the ability to cycle and walk safely in the Township were identified as important issues to community members. A lack of public transportation, separated vehicle and pedestrian/cyclist routes, and an increase in traffic were identified as planning concerns by the community.

These five (5) policy areas form the foundation of this Discussion Paper and are explored in greater detail in the following sections.

## 1.5 What Else is Going On – County MCR

The 2020 Growth Plan requires that the County undertake a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) to bring its Official Plan into conformity with the Growth Plan by July 1, 2022. An MCR is a comprehensive planning study that addresses a broad range of complex planning and policy matters including a growth management strategy to allocate the population and employment growth allocations for the County to the year 2051. Ultimately, the MCR will result in an amendment to the County of Simcoe Official Plan to bring the policies and schedules into conformity with the Growth Plan. The MCR amendment to the County Official Plan will require approval from the Province of Ontario.

The County's MCR, as defined in its Request for Proposals, includes the following background studies and scope of work:

1. Natural Heritage System Review and Refinement Update
2. Agricultural System Review and Refinement Update
3. Employment Strategy
4. Climate Change Strategy
5. Watershed Management Strategy
6. Growth Management Strategy
7. County Official Plan Amendments

A meeting was held with the County in October 2020 to discuss the Township Official Plan Review, the County MCR, and the possible synergies in both exercises occurring concurrently. The first task of the MCR would be to undertake work to refine and implement the Provincial Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System mapping through a detailed refinement process. This work would lead to a County Official Plan Amendment early in the project, with an expectation that it would be completed by the 3rd quarter of 2021. The refinement process will rely on the greater accuracy of the County and Township mapping to refine the Provincial mapping, where permitted. This timing would coincide well with the Township's Official Plan Review and could be incorporated into the new Township of Essa Official Plan once completed. This approach would eliminate the need for further updates to the new Essa Official Plan regarding this planning matters in future.

As noted above, the County MCR is required to be completed by July 1, 2022. Accordingly, the majority of the other MCR work would not fit within the schedule for the new Township Official Plan. In accordance with the *Places to Grow Act*, once the MCR update to the County Official Plan is approved by the Province, a further amendment to the Essa Official Plan may be required. The MCR schedule and the limitations in the Growth Plan as to what changes can occur in advance of the MCR, particularly as it relates to growth management issues, will impose some restrictions on the scope of the new Township Official Plan. Specifically, no expansions to settlement areas, limited consideration of conversions of employment areas, and no major new development should be considered as part of the development of the new Essa Official Plan.

Further details of the County’s MCR will be forthcoming from the County once the Consultant team is selected and the work plan and schedule are finalized. When those details are provided, the work plan and schedule for the new Essa Official Plan will be reviewed and a report will be provided to the Township with respect to implications of the County MCR.

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# 2.0 RURAL ESSA

The Township of Essa has a significant rural and agricultural land base, and the current Township Official Plan recognizes these areas as an important segment in the Township's economy. Land uses in the rural areas of the Township are diverse and include agricultural operations of varying scales, rural residential uses, aggregate extraction, industrial uses, environmental and open space areas, and waste disposal uses.

Objectives in the current Township Official Plan broadly seek to protect and enhance agricultural resources which are important to the Township's economic base and maintain rural and agricultural character and quality of life.

The following elements capture Rural Essa:

- **Agricultural Lands and Economy**
- **Rural Lands**
- **Aggregate Resources**

## 2.1 Agricultural Lands and Economy

Agriculture and farming have a strong presence in the Township of Essa, and agriculture forms an important segment of the Township's economy. With increasing development pressures on agricultural lands in many parts of the Province, there is a heightened recognition of the importance of safeguarding agriculturally productive lands and operations from incompatible land uses.

Provincial policy direction broadly seeks to protect prime agricultural areas for the long-term use of agriculture, and encourages recognition of the varying sizes, types and intensities of agricultural uses and farm practices. A systems approach is recommended to ensure the geographic continuity of the agricultural land base and the functional and economic connections to the agri-food network.

Agricultural lands differentiate from rural lands in that they exhibit higher agricultural capability. In general, prime agricultural lands are identified as consisting of Class 1 to 3 lands, as defined by the Canada Land Inventory's ("CLI") Soil Capability for Agriculture.

### Current Approach

The primary objective within the current Township Official Plan is to promote and protect the agricultural resource base within the Township, and to exclude non-agricultural or incompatible uses from areas designated 'Agricultural'. The intention of such action, is to preserve fertile lands for agricultural uses, prevent fragmentation, and minimize conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses.

Within the current Township Official Plan, the 'Agricultural' designation applies to lands where Class 1 to 4 lands predominate as defined by the CLI's Soil Capability for Agriculture; lands which have a high capability for specialty crops; and additional areas where farms exhibit characteristics of ongoing viable agriculture.

Current permitted uses within the 'Agricultural' designation include agriculture and farm related uses, which are identified as including the raising of animals and birds, and the growing of agricultural crops, mushrooms and nursery stock, and farm related commercial and farm related industrial uses. The retail sale of produce grown on the farm supplemented by locally grown produce, bed and breakfast establishments, garden suite, home occupations, home industries, and utility corridors and associated facilities are also currently permitted uses in the 'Agricultural' designation.

As it relates to development in the 'Agriculture' designation, policies within the current Township Official Plan outline provisions related to Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) requirements, farm related residential dwellings, home occupations and small-scale home industries, bed-and-breakfast, and garden suites.

### Proposed Policy Directions

While the current Township Official Plan has regard for the importance of protecting and preserving agriculturally viable lands, there are opportunities to enhance policy clarity, improve consistency with Provincial and County direction, and strengthen the approach taken to agricultural lands through the Official Plan update.

The following policy directions are recommended:

**Direction #1:** Review of lands designated 'Agricultural' in the Township Official Plan.

- The County's review and refinement of the Provincial Agricultural System is based significantly on its own Official Plan's 'Agricultural' designation mapping, which identifies prime agricultural lands in the County, should be reviewed and implemented through the Official Plan update.

**Direction #2:** Broadening the permitted uses in agricultural areas to support and serve the agricultural community.

- Permitted uses should be reviewed and refined to ensure they are consistent with and reflective of the language used in the PPS, County Official Plan and the Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas.
- Since the current Township Official Plan was approved, definitions have been provided in the PPS to clarify the meaning of agricultural uses, agricultural-related uses, and on-farm diversified uses.

- Policies will also be required to implement the permitted uses and identify what criteria must be met in order to establish an agricultural-related use or on-farm diversified use.

**Direction #3:** Review and inclusion of permissions for non-agricultural uses in prime agricultural areas.

- The PPS and County Official Plan, contain permissions for the extraction of minerals, petroleum resources and mineral aggregate resources, as well as limited non-residential development in prime agriculture areas, provided conformity with a set of development criteria can be demonstrated.

**Direction #4:** Implementation of agri-food strategies and other approaches to sustain and enhance the Township's Agricultural System.

- Opportunities for local food production and urban agriculture.
- Policies to minimize land use conflict and mitigate impacts where unavoidable.
- Consideration of the agricultural support network in land use planning decisions to support the long-term viability of the Township's agricultural resources.
- Review land division policies within the Agricultural areas.
- Review and update policies regarding Minimum Distance Separation formulae.
- Establish enabling policies that support agri-tourism.

## 2.2 Rural Lands

As noted, the Township of Essa is predominantly comprised of agricultural and rural lands. Rural lands differentiate from agricultural areas in that they generally exhibit a lower capability for agricultural production.

The preservation and protection of rural character, as well as the long-term viability of rural economic activities are key objectives for rural lands. Broadly, Provincial policy direction supports a diversified rural economy through the protection of agricultural and other resource-related uses, and encourages development which is compatible with the rural landscape and appropriate for servicing levels.

### Current Approach

The intent for rural lands within the current Township Official Plan is to protect the viability of existing agricultural operations and, through the established policies, retain the natural landscape and rural character of the Township by preventing uncontrolled and scattered development.

The 'Rural' designation is described as applicable to those lands which exhibit a lower agricultural capability for agriculture which generally includes lands in Class 5, 6 and 7 according to the CLI of Soil Capability for Agriculture. Permitted uses within the 'Rural' designation are identified as the following:

Uses permitted in the agricultural designation

- Forestry
- Resource management
- Commercial uses which are agriculturally- related
- Home occupation and home industry
- Farm produce stands
- Bed and breakfast establishments,
- Single detached dwellings on existing vacant lots
- Garden Suites

Non-agricultural uses, including the following, may also be permitted in the 'Rural' designation:

- Highway and service commercial
- Tourist commercial
- Public use
- Institutional
- Kennels
- Private club
- Open space

While the 'Rural' designation permits a broader array of uses, policy direction within the current Official Plan still prioritizes agriculture on rural lands, while directing non-agricultural and agriculturally related uses to poorer quality agricultural lands. Further, where non-agricultural uses are contemplated they are to have minimum impacts on agricultural uses, provide adequate buffering for adjacent uses, be consolidated in groups rather than scattered, and have no other reasonable, alternative location in the Township.

The current Township Official Plan recognizes a history of farm-related severances and rural lot creation, and consideration has been given to maintain the agricultural and rural community in the Township. While the creation of new lots by consent is currently permitted in all land use designations in the Township, Rural and Agricultural lands are the most inquired about lands for severance. The Township Official Plan currently outlines a set of development criteria that must be satisfied when contemplating new lot creation applications to ensure the viability of existing agricultural operations, as well as the natural landscape and rural character of the Township, are maintained.

#### Proposed Policy Directions

The current Township Official Plan has a policy foundation for rural lands which seeks to protect prime agricultural lands and operations, preserve natural heritage features and the rural landscape, avoid scattered development, and minimize the extension of municipal services. The Official Plan update will build off these objectives and ensure that policies are enhanced where necessary to achieve these directives, as well as conform to Provincial and County Plans.

The following policy directions are recommended:

**Direction #1:** Continued focus of rural and agricultural land uses in the 'Rural' designation.

- The permitted uses in the 'Rural' designation should be reviewed, consideration for environmentally sensitive recreational uses should be contemplated in accordance with Provincial policy.
- Consistent with Provincial and County guidance, the policies of the Township Official Plan should be reviewed and updated to provide clearer circumstances under which industrial and commercial uses would be further contemplated in the 'Rural' designation.

**Direction #2:** Residential development should be limited on 'Rural' designated lands.

- Focusing development in the Township's settlement areas will promote their vitality and protect the rural economy through the preservation of rural lands.

**Direction #3:** Review and update consent policies to limit rural residential lot creation.

- Between 2015 and 2020, the Township approved twenty-eight (28) consent applications, the majority of which resulted in the creation of new rural lots.
- As part of establishing a hierarchy for residential development, the consent policies should be reviewed to ensure that new multiple lot creation is directed to settlement areas and that consents permitted in the 'Rural' designation are limited and subject to a comprehensive set of criteria.

**Direction #4:** Development of a supportive agri-tourism and eco-tourism framework.

- Provincial and County policies permit the establishment of uses in the Rural area that are resource-related and are compatible with rural land uses.
- Enabling policies should be developed to promote opportunities to diversify the local economy through the development of agri-tourism and eco-tourism opportunities in Rural areas.

## 2.3 Mineral Aggregate Resources

Mineral aggregate resources, including sand, stone and gravel, form an important component of the Township's rural areas and contribute positively to the rural economy. As a finite resource, there is provincial interest in protecting known aggregate resource deposits and existing operations from incompatible development to protect close to market resources for the long-term.

However, while there is recognition of the importance of mineral aggregate resources, there is an appreciation of the need to ensure extraction occurs in a manner which minimizes social, economic and environmental impacts. Provincial policy requires comprehensive studies and progressive rehabilitation be undertaken for aggregate operations in Ontario.

### Current Approach

The current Official Plan identifies aggregate resources as necessary to the economic wellbeing of the Township. On this basis, the policies seek to protect primary and secondary aggregate resource areas, as well as areas of high aggregate potential, for existing and future extraction.

Policies within the current Township Official Plan identify that applications to establish extractive uses shall be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Official Plan, and seek to minimize disturbances to the community and natural environment.

There are two land use designations applicable to aggregate resources in the Township Official Plan, 'Aggregate Potential' and 'Extractive Industrial'. The 'Aggregate Potential' designation applies to lands which are considered to have high aggregate potential, and the 'Extractive Industrial' designation applies to licensed pits and quarries in the Township.

An Official Plan Amendment is required for all new and expanding aggregate uses in the Township, with the exception of where lands are designated 'Aggregate Potential'. Where an Official Plan Amendment is made to permit aggregate extraction, the Township Official Plan outlines what information is required to support the application. Policy considerations are also outlined for appropriate rehabilitation, extraction below the water table, wayside pits, haulage routes, and abandoned pits and quarries.

### Proposed Policy Directions

The current Official Plan recognizes the importance of aggregate resources to the Township's economy and establishes a basis for protecting these areas for existing and future extraction. The Official Plan update will build off the directive established in the existing Official Plan, while strengthening policies related to land use compatibility where warranted in the context of recent amendments to provincial policy.

The following policy directions are recommended:

**Direction #1:** Continued recognition of the importance of aggregate resources in the Township.

- Protection of aggregate and potential aggregate resource areas for existing and future extraction from incompatible land uses will be important in ensuring the continued availability of this economic resource for the Township, as well as contribute towards minimizing potential land use conflict. Development of more comprehensive land use compatibility policies to ensure that existing and future operations are suitably buffered from adjacent land uses will be important in achieving this direction.
- Consideration of additional policies for facilities secondary to aggregate uses, as well as site rehabilitation, should be undertaken as part of the Official Plan review process.

**Direction #2:** Review areas in the Township with aggregate potential.

- The current Township Official Plan designates lands with 'Aggregate Potential'. These areas should be reviewed against the County Official Plan mapping to ensure that all lands with aggregate potential are captured through the Official Plan update. Additionally, it should be

confirmed that aggregate extraction can be realized on lands designated aggregate potential, and that this designation does not extend into existing built-up areas or areas where sensitive uses predominate.

- Implementation of an aggregate potential overlay or separate schedule should also be considered as part of the Official Plan update. Currently, areas of aggregate potential are identified as a distinct land use designation in the Township Official Plan. However, use of an overlay designation would enable recognition of an underlying land use designation and consistency with the County Official Plan.

**Direction #3:** Identify areas where aggregate extraction is not permitted in the Township in accordance with Provincial policies and the County Official Plan.

- The Growth Plan and the County Official Plan both contain provisions that outline where new and/or expansions to mineral aggregate operations are not permitted. New policies will need to be implemented in the updated Official Plan to ensure conformity with these plans.

**Direction #4:** Require an Official Plan Amendment for all proposed new and/or expansions to existing aggregate operations.

- In accordance with the County Official Plan, a local Official Plan Amendment shall be required for all proposed new and/or expansions to existing aggregate operations. Currently, the Township Official Plan may permit a new and/or expansions to existing aggregate operation through a Zoning By-law Amendment on lands designated 'Aggregate Potential'.

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# 3.0 NATURAL ESSA

The Township's natural environment was identified as an important and valued component of the community in the Visioning Workshop. The Township's natural heritage features and functions add to the Township's rural character, provide a visual open space landscape, and contribute to the overall health of the environment and community. The Township has a diverse and interconnected natural heritage system, comprised of a variety of natural features and land forms, including numerous watercourses, wetlands and woodlands.

The Township of Essa is located within the Nottawasaga Valley Watershed and is traversed by several major watercourses and their tributaries, including the Nottawasaga, Pine, and Mad Rivers. As it relates to protecting and managing impacts on water and other natural resources, the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority plays an integral role in land use planning decisions in the Township. The following elements comprise Natural Essa:

- **Natural Heritage System and Natural Environment**
- **Natural Hazards**
- **Water Resources**

## 3.1 Natural Heritage System and Natural Environment

The Township has a diverse and interconnected natural heritage system, comprised of a variety of natural features and land forms, including rivers, streams, wetlands, woodlands and Areas of Natural & Scientific Interest (ANSI).

As it relates to the natural environment, provincial policy broadly seeks to protect natural features and areas for the long-term. Accordingly, provincial policy directs for the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems should be maintained, restored, or where possible improved, recognizing linkages between and among natural heritage features and areas, surface water features and ground water features. In accordance with the above direction, development is restricted in certain features, unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or their ecological functions.

Within the PPS, "natural heritage features and areas" means features and areas, including significant wetlands, significant coastal wetlands, other coastal wetlands, fish habitat, significant woodlands and significant valleylands, habitat of endangered species and threatened species, significant wildlife

habitat, and significant areas of natural and scientific interest, which are important for their environmental and social values as a legacy of the natural landscapes of an area.

“Natural heritage system” is defined as a system made up of natural heritage features and areas, and linkages intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species, and ecosystems. These systems can include natural heritage features and areas, federal and provincial parks and conservation reserves, other natural heritage features, lands that have been restored or have the potential to be restored to a natural state, areas that support hydrologic functions, and working landscapes that enable ecological functions to continue. The Province has a recommended a methodology for identifying natural heritage systems, but municipal approaches that achieve or exceed the same objective may also be used.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe implements a Natural Heritage System (“NHS”), which has been mapped by the Province, and is intended to support a comprehensive, integrated and long-term approach to planning for the protection of the region’s natural heritage system. Generally, development is further restricted in key natural heritage features that are a part of the NHS for the Growth Plan.

#### Current Approach

The current Official Plan recognizes that the Township’s natural heritage features and functions add to the Township’s rural character, provide a natural open space landscape, and contribute to the overall health of the environment and its human population. On this basis, one of the purposes of the current Official Plan is to provide for the conservation of the natural environment, including wetlands, woodlands, Areas of Natural & Scientific Interest (ANSI), Environmental Sensitive Areas (ESA), fish and wildlife habitat, and lakes, rivers and streams, on an ecosystem management basis.

Further, it is the objective of the Official Plan to protect, preserve, and enhance through land use designations and establishment of policies, the significant natural heritage features and their ecological functions which include:

- rivers and streams
- valley lands
- wetlands
- hazardous lands and sites including flood plains, steep slopes and unstable soils
- headwaters
- wildlife habitat and linkages
- fish habitat
- ANSI, surface water
- recharge, discharge, aquifers and headwaters
- habitat of threatened and endangered species
- environmentally sensitive areas
- woodlands

There are currently three (3) categories of land use designations which apply to the environmental areas of the Township:

1. Environmental-Flood Prone Areas – comprised of the major rivers, streams and defined flood plain lands.
2. Environmental-Wetlands – comprised of all major wetland areas.
3. Environmental-Significant Areas – comprised of the Nottawasaga River ANSI and the Allandale Lake Algonquin Bluffs ANSI.

Overall, it is the intent of Council to protect these areas from the effects of development and incompatible land uses. Accordingly, development is generally restricted in these areas to passive recreational uses. Current policies within the Township Official Plan touch on the requirements for environmental impact studies, riparian corridor and woodlands.

#### Proposed Policy Directions

While the current Township Official Plan recognizes the importance of natural heritage features, there is opportunity to implement a systems based approach to the Township's natural heritage system and strengthen policies in accordance with Provincial and County directions.

The following policy directions are recommended:

**Direction #1:** Update language in new Official Plan for policy consistency with PPS and Growth Plan.

- Consistency in identifying and naming natural heritage features should be applied in the new Official Plan. A review of the Province's Natural Heritage Reference Manual, which provides guidance on the identification and significance of natural heritage features and areas should be undertaken.

**Direction #2:** Implementation of the Provincial Natural Heritage System, the County's Greenlands Natural Heritage System, and associated policies.

- The Growth Plan directs Municipalities to incorporate the Natural Heritage System from the Growth Plan as an overlay in Official Plans and to apply appropriate policies to maintain, restore, or enhance the diversity and connectivity of the system and the long-term ecological or hydrologic functions of the features and areas as set out in the policies of the Growth Plan. However, the Growth Plan notes that this Natural Heritage System is not to apply until it has been implemented in the County of Simcoe Official Plan. Until that time, the Natural Heritage System policies will apply outside of settlement areas to the Natural Heritage Systems identified in Official Plans that were approved and in effect as of July 1, 2017. It is noted that the County is currently undertaking their Municipal Comprehensive Review, which will include reviewing and refining the Provincial Natural Heritage System as a preliminary

task. Accordingly, the County's review and update to the Natural Heritage System should be incorporated as part of the Township's Official Plan update.

**Direction #3:** Review and update Environmental Impact Study requirements and policies.

- A review and update of the Environmental Impact Study requirements should be undertaken to ensure consistency with provincial and County direction.

## 3.2 Natural Hazards

In the context of the PPS, 'hazardous lands' are generally defined as; "property or lands that could be unsafe for development due to naturally occurring processes. Along river, stream and small inland lake systems, this means the land, including that covered by water, to the furthest landward limit of the flooding hazard or erosion hazard limits." Likewise, 'hazardous sites' are identified as property or lands that could be unsafe for development and site alteration due to naturally occurring hazards. These may include unstable soils (sensitive marine clays [leda], organic soils) or unstable bedrock (karst topography).

Provincial policy acknowledges that Ontario's long-term prosperity, environmental health and social well-being depend on reducing the potential for public cost or risk to Ontario's residents from natural or human-made hazards. Accordingly, development is to be directed away from areas of natural or human-made hazards where there is an unacceptable risk to public health, safety or property damage. Additionally, development shall not create new, or aggravate existing hazards.

Further, provincial policy directs that planning authorities prepare for the impacts of a changing climate that may increase the risk associated with natural hazards.

### Current Approach

One of the purposes of the current Official Plan is to ensure that growth and development within the Township occurs in a manner that will minimize public health and safety issues, including the protection of human life and property from water related hazards such as flooding and erosion.

As noted, the 'Environmental-Flood Prone Areas' designation recognizes defined flood plain lands associated with the major rivers and streams within the Township. However, it is identified that not all watercourses within the Township are located within this designation. Generally, the policies of the Official Plan direct development away from hazardous lands and sites including flood prone and steep areas.

The current Official Plan also contains flood management policies specific to the Settlement Area of Angus. Additional policies have been provided for Angus due to the fact that existing residential, commercial and institutional uses are situated within the flood plain.

### Proposed Policy Directions

Given the abundance of watercourses which traverse the Township, the hazard policies within the current Official Plan should be reviewed and refined to ensure that they reflect the most current mapping and information. Consideration of climate change and consistency with provincial policy should also be contemplated through the Official Plan review.

The following policy directions are recommended:

**Direction #1:** Review and update hazard provisions to ensure consistency with provincial policy.

- While the current Official Plan generally restricts development on hazardous lands, further clarity and consideration should be given to the provisions established in the PPS, which provide instances in which development can be contemplated and certain uses which are prohibited from development in hazardous lands and sites.

**Direction #2:** Stronger definition of flood policies and mapping.

- It is noted in the current Official Plan that the boundaries of the 'Environmental-Flood Prone Areas' designation are general in nature and that not all watercourses within the Township are captured within the designation. The current Official Plan also identifies that when more detailed mapping becomes available the Township will reflect the detailed mapping in the Zoning By-law. The Official Plan update presents an opportunity to ensure that the flood plain mapping is better defined using the best data and mapping available.
- The Official Plan update may also consider application of a two zone concept for flood plains, whereby development and site alteration may be permitted in the flood fringe, subject to appropriate flood proofing to the flooding hazard elevation or another flooding hazard standard approved by the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Within the current Official Plan a two-zone concept is only applied to the Settlement Area of Angus.

**Direction #3:** Consideration of the impacts of climate change and the risks associated with natural hazards.

- The current Official Plan was adopted in 2000 and makes no reference to climate change. Policies should be implemented in the new Official Plan which acknowledge climate change and the potential for increased risk associated with natural hazards as a result.

### 3.3 Water Resources

The Township of Essa is located within the Nottawasaga Valley Watershed and is traversed by several major watercourses and their tributaries, including the Nottawasaga, Pine, and Mad Rivers. Overall, provincial policies direct the planning authorities to protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water by using the watershed as the ecologically meaningful scale for integrated and long-term planning.

Water resource systems are identified as consisting of ground water features, hydrologic functions, natural heritage features and areas, and surface water features including shoreline areas, which are necessary for the ecological and hydrological integrity of the watershed. Overall, maintaining linkages and related functions among ground water features, hydrologic functions, natural heritage features and areas, and surface water features, is a key provincial policy objective.

Water resource systems are to be identified to provide for protection of hydrologic features and their functions. Development is generally not permitted within hydrologic features. Restrictions on development and site alteration are to be implemented to protect all municipal drinking water supplies and designated vulnerable areas. Policies to protect, improve or restore vulnerable surface and ground water, sensitive surface water features and sensitive ground water features, and their hydrologic functions are also provided. Additionally, the Township lies within the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Plan area, and Official Plans are to have regard to the applicable significant drinking water threat policies.

As part of preparing for the impacts of a changing climate on water resource systems, stormwater management planning is to be undertaken in a manner that assesses the impacts of extreme weather events and incorporates appropriate green infrastructure and low impact development.

#### Current Approach

It is one of the purposes of the current Official Plan to ensure that land use planning within the Township contributes to the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of water, related resources and aquatic ecosystems, on an integrated watershed management basis. Additionally, the current Official Plan seeks to ensure that all land use decisions promote water conservation and support the efficient use of water resources on a watershed basis.

An objective of the current Official Plan is to establish policy to protect groundwater from contamination and to ensure that development does not adversely impact the Township's groundwater supplies. On this basis, the current Official Plan contains policies specific to groundwater and recognizes that groundwater is a valuable resource to be protected to ensure that the Township's water supplies do not result in health risks and are preserved for future generations. Where development is proposed, it is a requirement within the current Official Plan for the assessment of the potential impacts of development on the local hydrological and hydrogeological characteristics. Development

is to maintain the quality and quantity of groundwater resources, as well as the drainage pattern. Additionally, such assessment is to identify any groundwater recharge or discharge areas, aquifers or headwater areas.

With respect to stormwater management, the current Official Plan identifies that future development shall contain measures to manage storm water run-off in such a way as to support a healthy aquatic ecosystem, including removing contaminants and suspended solids from discharge, retaining run-off, reducing temperatures and increasing dissolved oxygen content of surface water as it enters the natural streams. Larger scale developments are currently subject to stormwater management plans in accordance with the requirements outlined in the Township Official Plan.

#### Proposed Policy Directions

It is recognized that while the current Township Official Plan seeks to protect the quality and quantity of water resources, there is opportunity to strengthen the current policy framework to assist in realizing this directive.

The following policy directions are recommended:

**Direction #1:** Develop source water protection policies for implementation in new Official Plan.

- Source water protection policies seek to ensure the provision of clean drinking water in the Township. The Township lies within the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Plan area. In accordance with Section 26 of the *Planning Act*, the Official Plan must be updated to conform to the applicable significant drinking water threat policies.
- The County of Simcoe Official Plan currently identifies Wellhead Protection Areas, Surface Water Intake Protection Areas, Highly Vulnerable Aquifers and Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas in the County. These should be mapped in the new Official Plan and County policies should be considered in the development of source water protection policies and incorporated accordingly in the new Official Plan.

**Direction #2:** Establishment of clear stormwater management policies and requirements.

- While the current Official Plan contains stormwater management requirements, a review and update of all stormwater management policies should be undertaken to ensure consistency with provincial and County direction.
- Updated stormwater management policies should also recognize the value of green infrastructure and low impact development and consider opportunities for co-locating recreational amenities with stormwater management facilities.

# 4.0 GROWING ESSA

The Township's Official Plan, as the principal planning document in the municipality, must provide the land use and policy framework to ensure that residential and employment growth can be accommodated, that residents have a complete range of housing opportunities, and that the Township grows in an efficient and sustainable manner. This section reviews the relevant plans and policies around the following four main themes of the continued and sustainable growth of the Township of Essa:

- **Growth Management Strategy**
- **Housing Strategy**
- **Employment Strategy**
- **Infrastructure**

## 4.1 Growth Management Strategy

The PPS, as noted earlier, provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The Province, in the revisions and replacement of the 2014 PPS, has strengthened the policy supports and direction for municipalities to address growth management and settlement planning in local official plans and in day-to-day planning decisions. Within a land use framework that identifies and protects the agricultural and natural heritage systems, the PPS directs that settlement areas shall be the focus of growth and development. Significant policy direction is provided in Section 1.1.3 of the PPS in regards to the planning and management of growth to and within defined settlement areas including the following:

- Land use patterns within settlement areas shall be based on a range of densities and a mix of uses to efficiently use land and infrastructure, minimize the impacts of climate change, support active transportation, and promote intensification and redevelopment.
- Accommodate a range of housing options.
- Development of phasing policies to help ensure intensification and redevelopment targets are achieved and orderly progression of development occurs.
- Permit settlement area expansion only as part of a municipal comprehensive review.

Building and supporting the policy directions in the PPS, the Growth Plan 2020 provides significant direction to municipalities in regards to incorporating growth management policies and detailed targets and directions on where and how to grow. The Growth Plan, as noted in Section 1.2 describes the Province's "initiative to plan for growth and development in a way that supports economic prosperity, protects the environment, and helps communities achieve a high quality of life". While the entire Growth Plan deals with growth management and settlement area strategies, Section 2 of the Growth Plan sets out a detailed policy approach to a complex range of growth management approaches and techniques. Fundamental to this approach is accommodating forecasted growth in complete communities, which are planned and designed to meet people's needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime. This is to be achieved by providing access to a mix of jobs, services, public facilities and a range of housing options to accommodate a range of incomes and household sizes. Complete communities are expected to provide for a balance of jobs and housing. Population and employment growth (jobs) are directly allocated by the Growth Plan to the lower tier municipalities in the Simcoe area. While much of the obligation of creating a growth strategy, settlement area hierarchy and urban structure falls to the County of Simcoe, the Growth Plan provides clear direction for Essa on how it must manage and direct its growth through its Official Plan. These include the following:

- Directing the vast majority of growth to complete communities and settlement areas that have a delineated built boundary and existing or planned municipal infrastructure.
- Growth will be limited in rural settlements that are not serviced by existing or planned municipal water and wastewater systems.
- Growth within settlement areas that are complete communities will have growth focused in delineated built-up areas, strategic growth areas, locations with existing or planned transit and areas with existing or planned public service facilities.
- Provide for more compact built form and a vibrant public realm.
- Provide a diverse mix of land uses including residential, employment uses, local stores and public service facilities.
- Incorporate a minimum intensification target (established by the County) for growth within the delineated built-up area and require a strategy to achieve the target.
- Incorporate a minimum density target (established by the County) for new development occurring in a designated greenfield area within settlement areas.
- Population and employment growth is provided to 2051 to the County; but the disaggregation and allocation of the growth between 2031 and 2051 must occur through the County MCR.

As noted in the Introduction to this Discussion Paper, the County will be commencing its Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) early in 2021. The MCR is a major planning study that will be principally focused on growth and settlement issues including the allocation of population and employment growth to 2051 in order to bring the County Official Plan into conformity with the 2020 Growth Plan. The MCR is a major undertaking, will require

the participation and cooperation of Essa and every municipality in the County, and will have significant long term impacts on the planning and growth of every municipality and community in Simcoe. The new Essa Official Plan, being prepared ahead of and in concert with the MCR, provides the Township a unique opportunity to provide input and advice to the County and influence and impact the direction and outcomes of the MCR and the resultant amendments to the County Official Plan.

The County of Simcoe Official Plan, adopted in 2008 and approved in 2016, in conformity with the 2006 Growth Plan and the 2008 PPS, incorporates the strong growth management focus established by the Province. Settlement policies and a Growth Management Strategy are enunciated in Sections 2.3, 3.1 and 3.5 and on the various schedules of the County OP and provides policy that reiterates the Provincial directions including:

- Directing a significant portion of growth and development to settlements, particularly fully serviced settlements and primary settlement areas identified by the Growth Plan.
- Identifying and designating the settlements of Angus, Colwell, Utopia, Ivy, Thornton and Baxter and mapping a Built Boundary for Angus.
- New growth should be accommodated through intensification and minimum density targets; 20% intensification target by 2015 and each year thereafter and 32 residents and jobs per hectare for Essa Township.
- Protecting agriculture, resource-based employment and natural heritage system.
- Developing communities with diversified economic opportunities and a range of housing options.
- Allocation of population and employment growth to 2031 to each municipality in keeping with the Growth Plan; 21,500 persons by 2031 and 9,000 jobs for Essa Township by 2031.

The County Official Plan requires municipalities, when updating the local Official Plans, to implement the growth management strategy and approach, in a manner that is both in conformity with its policy framework, but is also in conformity with the Growth Plan and consistent with the PPS. Deviations from the County's strategy, expansions to settlement areas or increases in growth beyond the allocations to 2031 can only occur as part of the recently launched MCR.

### Current Approach

The Township of Essa Official Plan contains clear growth management policies in the Purpose of the Plan (Section 2), in the Concept of the Plan (Section 3), within the Goals and Objectives (Section 4), and specifically in Section 5 – Growth Management Strategy. The Official Plan identifies thirteen fundamental purposes for the document, which includes generally directing growth to the established and serviced settlement areas of the Township. The Plan further supports this direction in Section 3.3 by describing an urban

structure and settlement hierarchy for the management of growth. Section 3.3 states as follows:

“Urban development within the Township is to be directed primarily to the Angus area where it can be serviced by full water supply and sewage disposal facilities. Some additional, lower density urban residential development may also be located in Thornton, and Baxter, where a municipal water system has been developed and where partial servicing is available, can be expanded to some degree. Urban development may also be permitted in several hamlets located in the Township at a scale and of a nature compatible with the existing form of development.”

The Goals and Objectives of the Official Plan support this settlement hierarchy and growth strategy by creating a land use framework that protects the Township’s agricultural resources, protects the significant natural heritage system, protects aggregate resources for existing and future extraction. The growth strategy is also supported by the goal for municipal services being to ensure that all development is properly serviced and identifying three objectives:

1. “To direct major growth to the established settlement areas having the appropriate municipal services.
2. To upgrade and improve municipal services to meet the needs of the Township.
3. To ensure that development does not impact adversely on the Township’s groundwater supplies and the natural environment.”

A detailed settlement area and growth strategy is further set out in the goals and objectives for Development in Section 4 of the Official Plan. The goal for all new development in the Township is to allow for compatible growth which protects the natural environment, protects the agricultural base, and ensures the rural character and quality of life in the municipality. Eight objectives further enunciate the growth strategy for the Township:

1. “To direct major development to settlement areas.
2. To identify the boundaries of the settlement area and hamlets.
3. To ensure that development does not place an undue financial burden on the Township.
4. To ensure that a reasonable supply of land for residential and other land uses is available to meet the needs of the Township.
5. To provide an adequate supply and diversity of housing types to meet the needs of the Township.
6. To encourage innovative forms of development which will provide the integration of various density forms, and natural open space areas, with the topographic features of the area.

7. To assess the impacts of new development and their servicing facilities on the form, function, and aesthetic quality of the natural and cultural environment.
8. To ensure the continued recognition of the Township as an agricultural community.”

Section 5 of the Essa Official Plan describes a comprehensive strategy for the management of growth in the Township including identifying proposed population levels for the life of the Plan. A settlement area hierarchy is established that directs the majority of growth to the settlements of Angus, Thornton and Baxter, with limited additional development occurring through infilling, estate residential development, vacant lot development and severance activity. A detailed framework of ten criteria are established for the review and vetting of additional development proposed in the Township including the need or justification, impacts on the agricultural community, impacts on the natural heritage system, servicing, and implications for community services including roads.

The Official Plan’s growth strategy extends to employment uses and areas in both the sections addressing commercial (14) and industrial development (17). While not specifically directed to the defined settlement areas of the municipality, the locational criteria for the Commercial designation would support the commercial growth in the six defined settlement areas (Angus, Baxter, Colwell, Ivy, Thornton, and Utopia) and in appropriate highway locations. Industrial development is also directed to three identified employment areas in Angus, Baxter and the County Road 56 industrial employment area.

Utility and servicing policies in the Official Plan, more specifically described later in this section, also generally support the growth management strategy and settlement hierarchy of the Plan.

The Township undertook a growth management study in 2013 and released the “Township of Essa Growth Strategy” by the Ainley Group (Ainley) in October 2013. The study and the strategy set out in the Ainley report built on the existing policy framework of the Essa Official Plan and responded to the policy requirements of the County Official Plan, the PPS and the Growth Plan. The Ainley report undertook a detailed review of the population and employment growth allocated to the Township to 2031, analyzed the supply of lands for growth, reviewed the settlement structure of the Township, and identified and recommended a settlement hierarchy for the municipality.

The Ainley report identified the following conclusions and recommendations:

- Approved and designated lands would support a population that exceeded the allocations to 2031 from the Growth Plan and County. However, this it is noted that this was permitted and anticipated based on the historic approvals and transition polices of the both plans at that date.

- The surplus of designated lands for development (in 2013) could impact future development approval requests including those outside settlement areas and expansions to settlement areas.
- Angus should be identified as a “primary” settlement area where major development should be directed as a fully serviced complete community. Development should be directed to the ‘Built Boundary’ through redevelopment, intensification and infilling.
- Limited growth should be directed to Thornton and Baxter and only limited infilling with Utopia, Colwell and Ivy.
- A future study may be appropriate in 2023 to consider whether a settlement area expansion for Angus is warranted.

In light of the County MCR, there is be significant merit in using the 2013 Growth Management Study and its settlement hierarchy, updated where possible, as the basis for the growth management recommendations and approach in the new Essa Official Plan. In keeping with the Ainley report, settlement area boundary expansions are not required at this time and not recommended until 2023, at the earliest, by which time the County MCR should be complete and implemented.

The County’s 2016 Population/Residential land budget is being updated to 2019 by Hemson Consulting and could be used in the Essa OPR. The 2017 Employment land budget data is the most recent available.

### Proposed Policy Directions

#### **Direction #1:** Update the Vision for the municipality in the Township Official Plan

- The vision for the Township of Essa should be updated to include a stronger urban structure, settlement hierarchy, and growth strategy in support of the goals of preserving the agricultural, resource and rural base and character of the municipality.

#### **Direction #2:** Update the Guiding Principles of the Township Official Plan

- The guiding principles for the new Official Plan should consider future direction regarding protecting the agricultural, resource and rural resources by managing growth and development and directing the majority of same to the defined settlement areas.
- Guiding principles to support Angus as a complete community and directing commercial and industrial development to the settlement area should be added to the new Plan.
- Consider limiting residential lot creation in the rural areas of the Township in support of a stronger settlement growth management strategy.

**Direction #3:** Further refine the settlement area hierarchy and growth management strategy in the new Official Plan

- Create and define a detailed settlement area hierarchy and provide a comprehensive policy framework for the planned function of each settlement in accordance with the Ainley 2013 Growth Strategy, updated as appropriate.
- Update the policies for settlement areas to ensure consistency with the PPS, and conformity with the Growth Plan and County Official Plan
- Consider establishing a policy framework for the review and update of the growth strategy based on the upcoming County MCR.

## 4.2 Housing Strategy

Planning for and accommodating population growth and housing is a fundamental role for land use planning and for the new Essa Official Plan. Ensuring that the Township provides a full range of housing types, built forms and densities to meet the needs of all its residents based on age and income levels is a primary focus of the PPS and the Growth Plan.

The PPS contains important policy directions on how, when and where housing issues should be addressed in local planning decisions and in local Official Plans, specifically in Section 1.4. A range and mix of housing options and densities are to be provided to meet the needs of current and future residents and maintaining a land supply to accommodate 15 years of growth through intensification, redevelopment and greenfield areas in designated settlement areas. Market based and affordable housing options should be planned and accommodated for as part of the new Official Plan including establishing minimum targets for housing that is affordable to low and moderate income households, although this will form a significant part of the County MCR.

The Growth Plan, in Section 2.2.6, also provides policy direction in respect of housing issues that must be considered and addressed in the new Essa Official Plan. Like the PPS, the Growth Plan places the responsibility for development housing policies with the County who will, in consultation with its member municipalities, provide policies that support housing choice, identify a diverse range and mix of housing options and densities, permit additional or secondary dwelling units and affordable housing and targets for same. The Growth Plan also requires the alignment of land use planning with the County's Housing and Homelessness Plan. The Growth Plan also incorporates the notion that housing choice and options need to be part of the larger growth management strategy by requiring that implementing the housing policies will support the achievement of complete communities and the Plan's intensification and density targets.

The County Official Plan focuses on housing policies as part of its larger Growth Management Strategy in Sections 4.1 and 4.3. Providing a range of housing choices and options, housing types and densities, and the development of affordable housing options to reduce unmet need and reduce housing inequality. Individual lot intensification such as secondary and accessory dwellings in residential buildings, zoning changes to permit the provision of affordable housing, and alternative development standards are encouraged by the County as tools for local municipalities to implement to achieve the housing objectives of the County Official Plan. The County also provides a range of other policy options for the Township to consider as part of developing its new Official Plan including financial incentives to encourage affordable housing proposals.

### Current Approach

The Township of Essa Official Plan adopted in 2000 and approved by the County later in 2000, contains a number of housing policies within a number of sections throughout the Plan. There is no separate policy section addressing housing policy matters in the current Official Plan. Housing form, primarily single detached dwellings, and density policies are provided in Section 8 of the Essa Official Plan and provide guidance on the development of these forms of housing. While a low density residential character of the settlement areas of the Township is recognized, a range of ground-based housing forms including semi-detached, duplex, townhouses and low-rise apartment buildings are also permitted in accordance with the Plan and subject to individual development applications and in accordance with a range of development criteria and policy. No affordable housing policies are provided in the current Essa Official Plan.

### Proposed Policy Directions

The following policy directions are recommended:

**Direction #1:** Housing policies should be incorporated into the new Official Plan

- The new Official Plan must incorporate a policy framework regarding housing choice and options, housing targets and housing affordability.
- The Township should consider policy incentives to encourage and promote affordable housing projects within the defined settlement areas.
- Intensification policies regarding secondary and accessory units within single, semi and townhouse dwellings should be considered for incorporation in the new Plan.
- Policy supports for a range of housing tenure and built form should also be incorporated into the new Official Plan.

## 4.3 Employment Strategy

Developing complete communities, and in particularly settlement areas that are complete communities, requires that municipalities ensure that employment opportunities and a full range of commercial and service facilities are planned and accommodated. Ensuring that the forecast employment growth has planned areas for development is an important function of local planning and local Official Plans. The PPS, Growth Plan and the County Official Plan provide clear guidance to the Township on the necessary approaches and policies required to appropriately plan for employment growth and the development of complete communities.

Section 1.3 of the PPS states that municipalities shall promote economic development by providing for an appropriate mix and range of employment, institutional and mixed uses and providing opportunities for investing by identifying strategic sites. Employment areas are to be protected and preserved for their planned use and ensure that industrial and manufacturing uses are appropriately separated from sensitive land uses. Conversions of employment lands within employment areas to non-employment uses are only permitted through a municipal comprehensive review and policies protecting employment areas are required.

The Growth Plan provides important policy direction in regards to economic development and employment issues. The Plan recognizes that strong, healthy and prosperous rural communities are also important to the economic success of the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Plan further recognizes the important role rural towns and villages provide as a focus for economic, cultural and social activities that support the surrounding rural and agricultural areas. Opportunities to build a diversified rural economy and maintaining the well-being and health of rural communities is part of the vitality of the larger region. The Growth Plan provides similar but more detailed policy guidance regarding employment matters than the PPS including:

- Vast majority of growth is to be directed to settlement areas that have a delineated built boundary, full services and are or can become complete communities. The corollary of this is that growth will be limited in settlement areas that are rural settlements and not fully serviced or planned to be fully serviced.
- The County, in consultation with its member municipalities, is obligated to designate all employment areas and protect them for appropriate uses over the long term.
- The Township should designate and preserve lands within settlement areas located near major transportation corridors for manufacturing, warehousing and logistics and appropriate associated uses and ancillary facilities.
- Land use compatibility polices to protect employment areas are required.
- Outside employment areas, criteria should be established to ensure redevelopment protects a similar number of jobs on the sites.

- Retail and service uses shall be supported by promoting compact built form and intensification and encouraging the integration of those uses with other land uses (mixed use developments).
- Conversions of employment lands and areas will not be permitted outside a County MCR.
- Population and employment growth is provided to 2051 to the County; but the disaggregation and allocation of the growth between 2031 and 2051 must occur through the County MCR.

The County Official Plan provides policy guidance complementary to the PPS and Growth Plan regarding employment matters in various schedules and in Sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.9. The development of communities with diversified economic functions and opportunities is part of the County's overall planning strategy, with the Plan also recognizing settlement located employment areas and the continuation of rural employment areas as part of that planning strategy for economic development. The strategy also encourages more businesses within the County as providing jobs and to help achieve complete communities. An employment projection of 9000 (total jobs) to 2031 are allocated to Essa Township. This would include existing jobs as of 2016 and the new jobs projected for the Township.

#### Current Approach

As new and emerging concepts in land use planning and policy making, it is not surprising that the 2001 Essa Official Plan does not identify or designate employment areas, strategic employment area or employment lands. The existing Official Plan does provide a comprehensive land use and policy framework for a range of uses that would form components of this new PPS/Growth Plan nomenclature. Schedule 'A' to the Official Plan designates institutional, industrial, commercial and commercial recreational land uses and Schedule 'B – Angus' identifies a range of designations (Commercial, Commercial-Recreation, Institutional and Industrial) that would be classified as employment.

Detailed policies are provided for each of these land use designations in sections 14, 15, 16, and 17 of the Official Plan. Industrial development is directed to three areas within the Township that take advantage of transportation linkages and servicing within two of the areas. The employment/industrial areas are the Angus Industrial area, Baxter Industrial area, and the County Road 56 Industrial areas. Permitted uses include manufacturing, assembly, processing, fabrication, storage, and warehousing and research establishments. Accessory retail uses are also permitted where they serve the industrial areas or are the accessory sale of products manufactured on-site. While the policy framework is comprehensive for the individual uses within the employment category, there is no overall employment area policy framework that would guide investment and development in keeping with the new Provincial policy framework. The Essa Official Plan also does not provide a policy framework addressing protecting employment areas and restricting conversion applications subject to a MCR process.

## Proposed Policy Directions

**Direction #1:** Employment lands and areas should be identified and designated in the new Official Plan

- Employment areas and employment lands should be identified in the schedules to the new Official Plan.
- Existing employment lands should be designated in each of the defined settlement areas, where appropriate.

**Direction #2:** Policies protecting employment areas from conversion applications should be added to the new Official Plan

- A policy framework should be added to the Plan prohibiting conversion of employment areas outside of a County MCR.
- Non-employment uses, such as residential, major office, major retail and major institutional uses should be considered whether appropriate for employment areas.
- Conversion policies for employment lands should be considered for inclusion in the new Official Plan

**Direction #3:** Policies for rural employment and rural-resource based recreational employment uses should be enhanced

- Enhance policies to guide the development and redevelopment of existing rural employment uses.
- Enhance land use compatibility policies to limit and/or mitigate impacts on sensitive land uses and restrict such uses adjacent to existing employment areas and uses.

## 4.4 Infrastructure

The infrastructure policies of the PPS are set out in Section 1.6 and address sewage, water and stormwater, transportation systems, transportation and infrastructure corridors, rail, waste management, and energy supply. Waste management and energy are addressed in **Section 5 – Resilient Essa** and transportation and infrastructure corridors are addressed in **Section 6 – Connecting Essa** of this Discussion Paper. This Section will address the policies affecting water and sewage, and stormwater services in the new Official Plan.

The PPS, Growth Plan and County Official Plan have all strengthened the linkages between land use planning, growth management and infrastructure planning and require an iterative planning process to ensure that new growth and development has the full range of required services and facilities to support growth. There is also a greater focus on

ensuring that the provision of the required services and the accommodation of new growth is managed in a fiscally and financially sustainable manner.

Sewage, Water and Stormwater guidance is provided in Section 1.6 of the PPS. Planning for sewage and water servicing is required to accommodate the forecasted growth in an efficient and optimized manner, is viable over their lifecycle, can be sustained by the source water resources and protects human health and the natural environment. The planning for servicing must also be in accordance with the detailed servicing hierarchy for the provision of water and sewer services set out in sections 1.6.6.2 to 1.6.6.5.

Generally speaking, municipal sewage and municipal water services are the preferred form of servicing for settlement areas (Policy 1.6.6.2) and a range of less preferred options for servicing for development are provided from private communal to individual on-site services. Partial servicing (municipal & private) is only permitted to address failed private/individual on-site services or within settlement areas to allow for infilling and minor rounding out of the existing development footprint.

New lot creation shall only be permitted where there is sufficient reserve treatment capacity in the water and sewage systems (whether municipal or communal) and that determination shall include capacity for hauled sewage (septage) from communal and individual on-site services. Planning for stormwater management must also be integrated with planning for sewage and water servicing, minimize stormwater quality impacts, minimize erosion and water balance impacts, and promote best practices including low impact development approaches.

The Growth Plan, like the PPS, places significant importance on the linkages between land use planning, growth management and infrastructure planning to support growth. Section 3 of the Growth Plan identifies the need for integrated land use and infrastructure planning including transportation systems for moving people and goods, the identification and protection of transportation corridors, and integrated policies for water and wastewater systems, stormwater management and public service facilities. The Growth Plan requires policies that growth management matters be supported by both environmental and financial planning, coordination with other municipalities where source water or the receiving water body is shared, opportunities for optimization and improved efficiency, support intensification and density targets of the Plan, and be informed by watershed planning or its equivalent. The Growth Plan also has other policies that would directly impact the preparation and development of master plans for water, wastewater and stormwater management in settlement areas including no servicing from Great Lakes source.

The County Official Plan provides infrastructure policies regarding sewage and water services in Section 4.7. The infrastructure policies for sewage and water services mirror those of the PPS and Growth Plan and incorporate the servicing hierarchy, requirements for reserve capacity, requirements for master servicing plans for settlement areas, requirements for feasibility studies, coordinated infrastructure planning, and tying infrastructure planning to settlement and growth management strategies.

### Current Approach

Essa's Official Plan includes policies that integrate infrastructure and land use planning and require the financial consideration of managing and accommodating growth and development. Servicing policies are provided in Section 25 of the Essa Official Plan and address sanitary sewer services and water services, but do not address stormwater management. However, the detailed frameworks and servicing hierarchy for water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructures are not provided to the extent required for conformity and consistency with the Provincial and County Plans and policies.

### Proposed Policy Directions

**Direction #1:** Update and modernize the water and wastewater servicing policies in the new Official Plan

- Establish the full range of servicing policies including the servicing hierarchy in support of the Township's growth strategy and settlement hierarchy.
- Consider policy support for the required master plans for water and sewage infrastructure in support of the Township's growth strategy and settlement hierarchy.
- Provide policies to require planning for infrastructure in a manner that is financially sound and lifecycle based, promotes optimization and efficiencies, and is founded in watershed framework.

**Direction #2:** Establish a full policy framework for stormwater management matters

- Develop a policy framework to integrate stormwater management planning and infrastructure with the Township's growth and settlement strategy.
- Consider policy support for the required master plan for stormwater infrastructure in support of the Township's growth strategy and settlement hierarchy.
- Provide policy support for best practices in stormwater including green infrastructure and low impact development and that considers the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events.
- Ensure that policies are provided that focus on building sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including full life cycle costs, and options to pay for these costs over the long-term.

# 5.0 RESILIENT ESSA

Beginning in 1990, the first United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Report underlined the importance of climate change as a challenge with global consequences and requiring international cooperation. From the Second Assessment Report in 1995, Third Assessment Report in 2001, the Fourth Assessment Report in 2007 to the Fifth Assessment Report in 2014, the IPCC has focused attention on the impacts of climate change and the need to reduce global warming and cope with the consequences of climate change, through reductions, adaptation and resilience.

The Province has committed Ontario and its municipalities to fighting climate change and building adaptive and resilient communities in both the Growth Plan and in the Provincial Policy Statement as required by Subsection 2 (s) of the *Planning Act* that identifies the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to a changing climate as a matter of provincial interest.

The following elements capture the main policy themes of building a resilient Essa Township that are discussed in this section:

- **Climate Change**
- **Energy**
- **Healthy Communities**
- **Waste Management**

## 5.1 Climate Change

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), as noted earlier, provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The Province, in the revisions and replacement of the 2014 PPS, has strengthened the policy support and direction for municipalities to address climate change in local official plans and in day-to-day planning decisions. Section 1.1 of the PPS requires municipalities to manage and direct land use to achieve efficient and resilient development and land use patterns and to prepare for the regional and local impacts of a changing climate. Further policy directions regarding energy conservation, air quality and climate change are provided in Section 1.8 of the PPS. These include promoting compact form and a structure of nodes and corridors, promoting active transportation and transit, focus major development on site serviced by transit, promote design which maximizes energy efficiency and conservation and maximizes vegetation within settlement areas, where feasible.

Building and supporting the policy directions in the PPS, the Growth Plan 2020 provides significant direction to municipalities in regards to incorporating climate change policies and adaptation and resiliency approaches into local planning documents. The importance of climate change is built into the introduction to the Growth Plan where it states:

“The impacts of a changing climate are already being felt. Communities and infrastructure must be adapted to be more resilient, greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors of the economy need to be reduced, and valuable water resources and natural areas need to be protected.”

The Growth Plan provides ten guiding principles for growth and change in the communities with the Plan area in Section 1.2.2 including the following:

“Integrate climate change considerations into planning and managing growth such as planning for more resilient communities and infrastructure – that are adaptive to the impacts of a changing climate – and moving towards environmentally sustainable communities by incorporating approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

The PPS and the Growth Plan will require that the Township address a changing climate and adaptation and resiliency policies in its new Official Plan.

#### Current Approach

Based on the age of the Township of Essa Official Plan, it would be unusual to find a comprehensive policy framework addressing climate change, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, climate adaptation or resiliency. While the existing Essa Official Plan has important policy directions for growth management including directing growth to settlement areas and building compact and complete communities, the Plan contains no formal policies addressing climate change. As such, new policy guidelines and a framework for climate change must be incorporated into the new Official Plan. The following outlines possible climate change policy directions for the new Official Plan.

#### Proposed Policy Directions

**Direction #1:** Update the Vision for the municipality in the Township Official Plan

- The vision for the Township of Essa should be updated to incorporate the twin goals of greenhouse gas reductions and climate adaptation and resiliency to create a healthy and sustainable municipality.

**Direction #2:** Update the Guiding Principles of the Township Official Plan

- The guiding principles for the new Official Plan should incorporate specific direction on the steps required to fight climate change, planning for a more resilient Essa, and ensuring that Essa is planning for the green infrastructure to support its future growth and development.

**Direction #3:** Weave climate change policies throughout the new Official Plan

- Climate change and the impacts of global warming will impact all aspects of community building from basic infrastructure design, transportation and transit, outdoor recreation facilities and design, building design, low impact development strategies, etc. Climate change policies as such should be incorporated throughout the new Official Plan to ensure policy guidance is provided for all development issues and matters.
- Policy supporting the implementation of the Province’s climate change plans and strategies should be considered.

## 5.2 Energy

In a related policy area to climate change, energy issues including energy efficiency, energy conservation, energy demand reduction and management, alternative energy systems leading to the wise use of energy, reduced consumption, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions are all matters that both the PPS and the Growth Plan will require be addressed in the new Township Official Plan. The following sets out the framework for the possible approaches to address energy issues in the new Plan.

The PPS contains important policy directions on how, when and where energy related issues should be addressed in local planning decisions and in local Official Plans. Land use patterns within settlement areas are required to be based on a density and mix of uses that promote energy efficiency (1.1.3.2).

Under the Infrastructure and Public Service Facilities policies, Section 1.6.11 provides as follows:

“Planning authorities should provide opportunities for the development of energy supply including electricity generation facilities and transmission and distribution systems, district energy, and renewable energy systems and alternative energy systems, to accommodate current and projected needs.”

Municipalities are encouraged to support long term economic prosperity (1.7 j)) by promoting energy conservation and providing opportunities for increased energy supply. Section 1.8 of the PSS provides specific policy direction requiring municipalities to support energy conservation and efficiency through land use and development patterns that promotes design and orientation which maximizes energy efficiency and conservation.

The PPS also contains a number of new definitions for energy related matters including defining renewable energy sources to include wind, water, biomass, solar energy and geothermal sources that will have to be considered when preparing the new Essa Official Plan.

### Current Approach

The Township of Essa Official Plan was adopted in 2000 and approved by the County in 2001, as such it would be unusual to find a comprehensive policy framework addressing energy issues including but not limited to energy efficiency, energy conservation, energy demand reduction and management, and renewable energy systems. While the existing Essa Official Plan has important policy directions for growth management, land use patterns and development approaches that could result in lower energy use, the Plan contains no formal policies addressing the required range of energy issues. As such, new policy guidelines regarding the full spectrum of energy matters must be incorporated into the new Official Plan. The following outlines possible energy policy directions for the new Official Plan.

### Proposed Policy Directions

The following policy directions are recommended:

#### **Direction #1:** Energy issues must be incorporated into the new Official Plan

- The new Official Plan must incorporate a policy framework regarding energy efficiency, energy conservation, energy demand reduction and management.
- The Township should consider policy support for green building and green infrastructure approaches to help reduce energy use and demand.

#### **Direction #2:** Renewable energy systems should be considered in the new Official Plan

- The new Official Plan should provide both policy and locational directions on where renewable energy systems such as wind turbines and solar panel could be located in the Township and under what policy criteria.

#### **Direction #3:** Corporate and Community Energy Plans

- Policy support should be considered for the development of an Energy Conservation and Demand Management Plan which is required pursuant to the Green Energy Act
- Policy support for the development of a much broader Community Energy Plan, that would address energy use and conservation in the entire municipality, should be considered for inclusion in the new Official Plan.

## 5.3 Healthy Communities

Recent practice in land use planning, particularly at the comprehensive policy stages like Official Plans, has been to focus on planning and development approaches that propose to achieve healthy communities through community design, active transportation, decrease reliance on motor vehicles and improve road safety, provide places to plan and gather which are safe, and create complete communities. In addition to the Province, healthy communities have been advocated by many organizations including the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit in its 2014 publication “Healthy Community Design – Policy Statements for Official Plans”. As part of healthy community design, a Complete Streets policy that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel for users of all ages and abilities regardless of the mode of transportation. Complete Streets allow for safe travel by those walking, cycling, driving automobiles, riding public transportation, or delivering goods and forms part of a healthy community design planning approach.

The County, as part of this direction towards healthy community policies, is also promoting the concept of an age-friendly community concept and is considering an amendment to the County Official Plan to implement its 2017 Positive Aging Strategy.

Both the 2020 PPS and the 2020 Growth Plan build on the notion of health community design and age-friendly community design throughout the documents in particular as part of a complete communities focus for growth and development.

The Township must consider the concepts of Healthy Community Design and Age-Friendly community is the preparation of its new Official Plan.

### Current Approach

As new and emerging concepts in community design, land use planning and policy making, it is not surprising that the 2001 Essa Official Plan contains no policy guidance around healthy community design and age-friendly communities. The new Official Plan for the Township of Essa will have to incorporate both concepts, in particular as part of a settlement area strategy and the development of complete and healthy communities.

### Proposed Policy Directions

#### **Direction #1:** Healthy Community Design

- The new Official Plan should include healthy community design concepts and should consider the inclusion of polices recommended by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit.
- Healthy community design policies, specifically addressing growth management and settlement area strategy, should be incorporated into the relevant section of the new Official Plan.

- Policies addressing motor vehicle and pedestrian safety, including the concept of Complete Streets should be incorporated in the new Official Plan to provide particular guidance for the growth and change of the Township's settlement areas.

**Direction #2:** Age-Friendly Community Design

- A policy framework should be added to the Plan requiring new developments to consider age-friendly design approaches including active aging, aging in place, and healthy aging.
- Supportive policies regarding transit and transportation planning that support age-friendly community design and aging in place should be considered for the new Official Plan.

**Direction #3:** Complete Streets

- A Complete Streets policy approach should be included in the new Official Plan to promote safety for all users of streets and not just automobiles and would support building a healthy and age-friendly community.

## 5.4 Waste Management

All aspects of waste management, both historic and current require policy direction in a municipal Official Plan. While the provision of waste collection and disposal services is a County responsibility and guided by the Province, dealing with land use compatibility issues of active and inactive waste disposal sites, waste collection design for private developments, and an overall approach to waste management are matters that should be addressed in the new Official Plan.

The 2020 PPS requires greater coordination and linkages between growth management development strategies and infrastructure planning to support the forecasted growth for those communities. Infrastructure is defined as including all the facilities and corridors that form the foundation for development including waste management systems. Waste management facilities are also defined as major facilities, including recycling facilities, transfer stations, processing sites and disposal sites, that all may require separation from sensitive lands uses. Section 1.2 of the PPS requires a coordinated, integrated and comprehensive approach between all levels of government when dealing with a range of matters including waste management systems.

Land use compatibility policies are provided in Section 1.2.6 of the PPS and these will need to be reflected in the new Official Plan. Specific policies are provided in Section 1.6.10 Waste Management, but generally these reflect the obligations on the County to provide facilities to meet present and future requirements of the communities they serve.

The Growth Plan provides a policy framework that reflects the newest thinking and approaches for waste management. Section 4.2.9 - A Culture of Conservation, establishes the following requirements for the new Official Plan:

“4.2.9.1 Municipalities will develop and implement official plan policies and other strategies in support of the following conservation objectives:

- d) integrated waste management, including through:
  - i. enhanced waste reduction, composting, and recycling initiatives, and the identification of new opportunities for energy from waste, source reduction, reuse, and diversion, where appropriate;
  - ii. a comprehensive plan with integrated approaches to waste management, including reduction, reuse, recycling, composting, diversion, and disposal of residual waste;
  - iii. promotion of building conservation and adaptive reuse, as well as the reuse and recycling of construction materials; and
  - iv. consideration of waste management initiatives within the context of long-term regional planning, and in collaboration with neighbouring municipalities.”

#### Current Approach

The Township Official Plan addresses waste management issues both in Section 19 of the Plan and through the identification of waste disposal sites and the associated assessment areas on Schedule A to the Plan. The policy framework reflects the requirements of both the County's 1997 Official Plan and Provincial 'D-4 Land Use On or Near Landfills and Dumps' guidelines.

The policies are intended to provide for the disposal of solid wastes and to identify those lands previously used for waste disposal so as to protect future uses proposed for adjacent lands and land previously used for waste disposal. Section 19.3.4 of the Official Plan requires that new development within 500 metres of an active or inactive waste disposal site must undertake engineering studies to address the potential impacts of the site on the proposed development.

Since the adoption of the Essa Official Plan in 2000, the new County Official Plan adopted in 2008 (approved December 2016) has refined the policies and approach to dealing with active and inactive County and private waste disposal sites.

#### Proposed Policy Directions

**Direction #1:** Ensure conformity with Schedules 5.6.1 and 5.6.2 of County Official Plan.

- Schedules 5.6.1 identifies County Waste Disposal Sites and these should be confirmed on the new schedules and with the County.
- Schedule 5.6.2 identifies private and other municipal and government waste disposal sites which should be confirmed on the new schedules and with the County.

**Direction #2:** Review and update Waste Disposal policies

- Update the Waste Disposal policies to ensure conformity with the 2016 County Official Plan and consistency with PPS.
- Update the policies to reflect the culture of conservation required by the Growth Plan and create an integrated policy dealing with those matters of Township jurisdiction dealing with waste reduction, composting, and recycling initiatives, and the identification of new opportunities for energy from waste, source reduction, reuse, and diversion.
- Provide a policy framework for the development of an excess soil reuse policy including best practices for the management of excess soil generated during development and site alteration applications under the Planning Act.

# 6.0 Connecting Essa

The safe and efficient movement of people and goods is a key provincial policy objective, which necessitates the coordination of transportation system planning with land use planning and investment. Part of facilitating the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, is through the provision of transportation systems which are integrated and connected, and includes utilizing multimodal transportation systems and recognizing the role of active transportation.

The Township is bounded by several significant road corridors, is intersected by two railways, and has an established network of trails. In recognizing the importance of moving people and goods, the Township's Strategic Plan identifies 'Good and Safe Roads and Transportation' as a goal for the Township and includes the following related priorities:

- Public transportation to help with affordability and social issues
- Good roads, road safety and improvements
- Improved transportation network with linkages
- Support for active transportation
- Improve on the transportation system including coordination with County roads

Additionally, it is recognized that significant work has been undertaken at the County level related to transportation planning, including the preparation of the County of Simcoe Transportation Master Plan (2014). This document has been reviewed as it relates to transportation planning in the Township.

Overall, there is Provincial policy directive that Municipalities develop and implement transportation demand management policies in Official Plans or other documents that reduce trips, increase modal share alternatives, prioritize active transportation, transit and goods movement, expand infrastructure to support active transportation, and consider needs of major trip generators.

Accordingly, Connecting Essa can be characterized by the following components:

- **Road System**
- **Transit**
- **Active Transportation**

## 6.1 Road System

The Township is bounded and intersected by several major roadways, and is located in proximity to Provincial Highway 400 to the east.

As it relates to the road system, provincial policies direct for the safe and efficient movement of goods and people, as well as the efficient use of existing and planned infrastructure. Protection of key transportation and goods movement corridors for the long-term, through ensuring compatible development is a key policy objective.

### Current Approach

The objectives of the current Township Official Plan broadly seeks to provide a road network which meets the long term needs of Township residents and regional transportation network requirements, to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

The Township Official Plan currently classifies roads to their ultimate function and includes the following:

1. Arterial Roads – Include Provincial Highways and County Roads and are designed to move large volumes of traffic through the Township. It is noted that heavy traffic flows should be directed to these roads and accesses controlled to prevent hazards.
2. Collector Roads – Are intended to collect and carry local traffic to arterial roads or to distribute traffic to the local roads. Collector roads have an identified minimum right-of-way width of 26 metres and have two lanes of traffic.
3. Local Roads – Consist of the remaining roads in Township, where through traffic is generally discouraged. Local roads have an identified minimum right-of-way width of 20 metres and have two lanes of traffic. However, it is noted that greater width may be required due to constraints, future improvements, drainage, and/or daylighting triangle requirements.

Arterial and collector roads are identified on Schedule “A” – Land Use Designations, of the current Township Official Plan. Township and/or Provincial road standards will be a minimum requirement for all new roads created or assumed by the Township.

### Proposed Policy Directions

Policies relating to the road system in the current Township Official Plan are based entirely around the classification of roads in the Township. While each road type contains general development considerations and objectives, it is recognized that these policies can be strengthened on the basis of Provincial and County directive.

The following policy directions are recommended:

**Direction #1:** Review current road classification system and right-of-way requirements in the Township.

- The current road classification system for the Township should be reviewed to determine if current minimum widths and access requirements are still appropriate, and that conformity with the road system policies in the County Official Plan are achieved.

**Direction #2:** Identify planned upgrades to road networks.

- Consideration should be given to identifying planned upgrades to roads within the Township through the Official Plan update. The County Transportation Master Plan identifies County Road 27 as a 'Future Provincial Highway'. The road improvements will consist of increasing the capacity to four lanes from two between County Road 21 and County Road 90, and is slated for implementation by 2031.

**Direction #3:** Development of context sensitive road design requirements and criteria for complete streets.

- As per the direction established in County Transportation Master Plan, consideration should be given to the manner in which roads interface with both urban and rural environments in the Township through context sensitive road design.
- Increased setbacks, pedestrian and cycling lanes, boulevard treatments and plantings are all examples of context sensitive road design.
- Where new road construction or reconstruction is planned the application of context sensitive road design may be an appropriate requirement.

**Direction #4:** Protection of key transportation corridors in the Township to facilitate the continued movement of goods for the long-term.

- Policies should be included through the Official Plan update which ensure compatible development along key transportation corridors in the Township. Development which would impede the long-term use of key transportation corridors should not be permitted.
- Separation of development nodes within corridors will provide for clustered development that reduces impacts on the transportation.

**Direction #5:** Ensure that transportation infrastructure in the Township can support future growth and development.

- Policies should be developed which ensure that proposed development can be appropriately serviced from a transportation perspective. It should also be identified that, if required, improvements are to be undertaken prior to new development proceeding.

- Consideration of “County Connector” routes identified in the Transportation Master Plan.

## 6.2 Transit

The Township of Essa is currently serviced by the Simcoe County LINX Transit System, which provides a bus route from Angus to surrounding settlement areas in the County. Additionally, although not currently used for public transportation, the Barrie-Collingwood Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway traverse portions of the Township.

Public transportation is identified as a provincial priority, and there is broad directive for transit service integration, connectivity and modal share within the Province. However, it is recognized that areas of higher residential and employment densities are to be prioritized in this approach.

### Current Approach

The current Township Official Plan does not address public transit. This is due in part to the rural nature and the relatively low population density of the Township. However, given the proximity to larger urban centres and the existing rail networks in the Township, greater policy consideration for public transit is warranted.

### Proposed Policy Directions

As noted, the Township Official Plan does not have policies which contemplate public transportation. There is broad Provincial support for public transportation initiatives and the County has included guidance with respect to these matters within their Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan.

Accordingly, the following policy directions are recommended:

**Direction #1:** Identify planned/potential transit routes and stations in the Township through the Official Plan update.

- County Transportation Master Plan identifies a Municipal Inter Community Link between Barrie and Angus/CFB Borden.
- Proposed GO Rail Line identified through the Township, along the existing Canadian Pacific Rail Line.
- Proposed Busway with Trail identified south of Highway 90 with a proposed Station identified in Angus.

**Direction #2:** Provide policy support and identify opportunities for multimodal integration and linkages in the Township.

- Opportunities for multimodal integration and linkages include identifying locations for public transit connections and carpooling lots.

## 6.3 Active Transportation

Active transportation, at its simplest, is using your own power to get from one place to another. This can include walking, biking, hiking, running, cross country skiing and generally any non-motorized mode of travel. Active transportation provides many benefits to human health, the existing transportation network, the environment and the economy. This is because active transportation gives us an opportunity to be physically active on a regular basis, is accessible to all and increases social exchanges, reduces road congestion, contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and can save money on gas and parking.

There is increasing recognition of the benefits active transportation can provide for both human health and environmental well-being. In an effort to reduce vehicle trips, and associated greenhouse gas emissions, there has been advancement in provincial policies which support land use patterns that can provide opportunity for active transportation modes.

In advancing the directive for active transportation in the Province, there has also been a recognition for the need to ensure the safety for system users, which includes providing separation of modes within transportation corridors.

While the Township has historically been reliant on automobiles due to the largely rural character of the area, there are significant recreational resources and trails in the Township that can be used as a basis for establishing a more connected active transportation network in the Township.

### Current Approach

The current Township Official Plan does not contain any specific policy direction with respect to active transportation.

### Proposed Policy Directions

Despite not having specific policies related to active transportation in the current Official Plan, there are significant recreational resources and trail networks established in the Township. The Official Plan update will build off Provincial directives and County initiatives to develop a policy framework for active transportation in the Township.

The following policy directions are recommended:

**Direction #1:** Inclusion of active transportation policies and planning.

- The County's Transportation Master Plan identifies an Active Transportation Network Concept, which includes existing and proposed routes. In accordance with the County Official Plan, the active transportation routes identified in the

Master Plan are to be implemented in cooperation with the County, adjoining municipalities and trail associations.

**Direction #2:** Facilitate land use patterns which support active transportation.

- Designating areas of higher densities and mixed land use will contribute towards facilitating land use patterns which support active transportation.

**Direction #3:** Implement Site Plan Design requirements which promote multi-modal transportation and complete streets.

- Identified in the County Official Plan as directive for local municipalities.
- Greater consideration of pedestrians and cyclists in road design.

DRAFT

# 7.0 HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Let us know what you think! We welcome your suggestions and comments on the proposed policy directions identified throughout this Discussion Paper. Your ideas will help inform the preparation of the New Official Plan for the Township of Essa.

Comments should be submitted in writing to the Township's Official Plan email account at [officialplan@essatownship.on.ca](mailto:officialplan@essatownship.on.ca) or feel free to drop off hard copies of your responses to the Planning Department at the Township of Essa to the attention of Aimee Powell.

**Four (4) weeks will be provided for the submission of comments on this Discussion Paper from the date of its publication. Please check the Township's Official Plan Review website for further details on the submission of comments and the deadline for submissions.**

The link to the website is: [www.essatownship.on.ca/government/official-plan-review](http://www.essatownship.on.ca/government/official-plan-review)

As we move forward, there will be additional opportunities for you to participate in the preparation of the new Official Plan.

# Appendices

# Appendix **1**

# Summary of Visioning Workshop Responses



The following is a summary of the responses received during the visioning workshop.

1. *What are the top 5 things you value most about your community (in order of importance)?*

- Access to the natural environment and green spaces, including recreational trails
- Town and rural environment
- Clean water and air
- Safety and cleanliness of community
- Affordability
- Sense of community and friendliness
- Services
- Location

2. *Please identify what you believe to be the 5 top planning issues that will face the Township over the next 5 years.*

- Services and infrastructure requirements
  - Schools, internet, medical
- Land supply, managing residential sprawl, and protection of natural environment and farmland
- Affordable housing and diversifying housing supply
- Local jobs and economic development
- Public transportation
- Residential density and community development

3. *Please identify what you believe to be the 5 top planning issues that will face the Township over the next 20 years.*

- Servicing of smaller settlement areas and new development
- Public transportation and increased traffic
- Urban sprawl and protection of farmland
- Infrastructure
- Pollution, including light and noise
- Access to healthcare
- Affordable housing and options for seniors
- Social places and green spaces
- Commercial and industrial expansion

4. *Where should residential and non-residential growth be focused?*

- Where infrastructure is existing
- Already developed and established areas
- Residential growth
  - Angus, Baxter, Utopia, Thornton
  - Near commercial centres

## Summary of Visioning Workshop Responses



- Along County Road 90 or County Road 10
- Existing or planned municipal services
- Non-residential growth
  - Thornton, Ivy, Baxter

5. *Where should residential and non-residential growth not occur?*

- Prime agricultural land
- Sprawl of smaller, un-serviced settlement areas should be limited
- Wetlands and forested areas
- Thornton and Ivy
- Thornton west of Concession 11
- Baxter east of the 5<sup>th</sup> Sideroad

6. *Should second units be permitted? If so, where?*

- Yes,
  - Where density, servicing and parking can support
  - In Angus, close to CFB Borden
  - Near green spaces
  - Throughout the Township
  - With some restrictions
- No

7. *Are there housing styles that are missing or lacking in supply?*

- Units beyond single detached dwellings
- Medium density (2 to 6 units)
- Apartments
- Townhouses
- Condominiums
- Second units
- Bungalows
- Smaller homes

## Summary of Visioning Workshop Responses



8. *What can the OP do to promote new business opportunities and facilitate expansion of existing businesses?*

- Municipal servicing to support industrial and manufacturing
- Development of downtown area
- Online directory of retailers
- Preservation of lands within settlement areas adjacent to major roadways
- Incentives and support for new businesses
- Expand servicing

9. *What are the key economic attributes of the community that are not realized to their full potential?*

- Presence of bilingual persons
- Underutilized commercial spaces
- Tourism
- Creation of Community Improvement Area and financial incentives
- Proximity to major County Roads (90, 89 and 27) and Highway 400

10. *Does the OP do enough to protect environmental features such as woodlands, watercourses, and wetlands?*

- There is balance in the OP and recognition for protection of environmental features
- Does not contain a lot of language regarding the protection
- More community gardens, parks and green space
- Township needs to use power to protect these features
- More education and active engagement required
- NVCA is consulted which helps in protecting these lands

11. *Does the OP sufficiently protect agricultural lands?*

- Yes
  - It sufficiently protects agricultural lands
  - It recognizes the importance of protecting agricultural lands
  - But need to set a percentage of land that can not be changed to other sources
  - However, if growth is going to happen, have to take a look at what is viable farmland
- No

## Summary of Visioning Workshop Responses



12. Does the OP permit too much or not enough rural lot creation?

- Should be limited on useable farmland
- Balance is appropriate
- Rural lots should not be created

13. Is it important that farmers be permitted to have alternative income sources on farm properties?

- Yes,
  - Provided secondary in nature
  - Appropriate by-law and licensing
  - Does not cause damage to the land/water/view
  - If meets intent of PPS
  - Adequate parking, entrances and supporting facilities

14. Are there any other comments you would like to make that should be considered in the OP Review?

- Reconsideration of land use designations to help permit infill designation, higher density housing
- More parks, outdoor spaces and recreation facilities
- Need for sanitary servicing in Thornton
- Seniors lifestyle community and services
- Reducing environmental footprint
- Protection of natural environment
- Expanded events
- Affordable housing and living