

Community engaged through Official Plan review

By Mark PavilonsEditorLocal JournalismInitiative Reporter

King's guiding document ? the Our King Official Plan ? presents an orderly, coordinated planning approach through 2051. Staff presented an update to council recently, including a vast array of information and data through reports, discussion papers and community feedback. This will culminate in an updated OP, to be presented for approval in 2026. Through surveys and open houses ??which attracted close to 200 residents and saw more than 130 submissions ??staff put collected all pertinent feedback to help shape the OP. Councillors provided their general endorsement of the policy directions, and have not made any concrete planning decisions. Several delegations took the opportunity to lobby for their project or parcel to be included in King's long-term development projections. These site-specific concerns will be taken into consideration, but staff pointed out the OP and its policies don't prevent any development application from being made in King. King also has to follow certain regulations mandated by the Province and York Region. Stephen Naylor, King's director of growth management services, pointed out they are striving to achieve a balance, and ?build a future we can all be happy with.? Mayor Steve Pellegrini noted the dilemma council faces is ever-changing planning rules, courtesy of Queen's Park. The public often asks why council doesn't just flatly deny applications and the mayor said they can't, under the rules. Anyone can make an application that has to be considered. He noted that's why the community plans within the OP?are important, to pinpoint areas and criteria of development. King also has to consider the cost of land tribunal (LPAT) hearings, which average \$100,000. That is a substantial amount of money for the municipality and it was noted that for every \$365,000 the Township spends, it means a 1% tax impact. Avoiding costly LPAT hearings is ?what we're faced with,??the mayor said. He said he would like nothing more than to sit, meet and discuss development plans with proponents and residents, and stay within the character of King's communities. Planner Kristen Harrison said staff are further refining the OP and the neighbourhood plans. Staff and council welcome the opportunity to listen to residents and legal experts, to ensure the municipality gets what it wants out of the OP?rules and amendments. Councillor Mary Asselstine said she'd like stronger wording in the plan to limit building heights, particularly in Schomberg.

The Official Plan review is comprised of five phases. The policy directions presented to council are in phase 3. The report includes 13 discussion papers, and results of three community engagement sessions. Since the February 2025 report to council, several key actions on the project have taken place, including council endorsement of the Growth Management and Employment Land Strategies, and its associated population, housing and employment forecasts and targets. Council also endorsed the addendum to the Growth Management Strategy and its revised overall population and housing forecasts, intensification rate, and community area land needs for Nobleton. Further, the Township initiated a comprehensive Natural Heritage Study for the Township. The Doctors Lane and Old King Road Neighbourhood Plan Studies are being integrated into the Official Plan Review, to streamline the development of the OP?policies needed to enable a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS). The revised completion of the draft OP?maintains the objective of presenting the draft Official Plan in May or June 2026, well ahead of the municipal election on October 26, 2026. Phase 3 included three public open houses that were held in September 2025. They provided opportunities for the public and interested parties to learn and ask questions about the topics covered in the 13 Discussion Papers and the policy directions for the Review. Comments and input were collected from attendees at the open houses by Township staff and facilitation consultants from Kennedy Consulting. Staff noted that as the Official Plan review progresses into Phases 4 and 5, the Township is committed to continuing meaningful community engagement to inform the development of draft Official Plan Amendments. Building on the input received through earlier phases, the next round of engagement will include: A Council education session in January/February 2026. Public open houses (February 2026), which will be designed to provide residents and interested parties (including agencies, Indigenous communities and community groups) with an opportunity to review and comment on the draft Official Plan Amendments; Statutory public open house and public meeting (April 2026) which will be formal consultation events to address legislative requirements under the Planning Act and offer additional opportunities for public input on the proposed Official Plan. A final draft of the Official Plan Amendments are pegged for May/June 2026 for Council consideration/adoption. The Discussion Papers are in their final form and have informed the draft policy directions and have identified six key policy areas requiring strategic direction: Doctors Lane and Old King Road Neighbourhood Plan Study. Proposed ?Intensification Hierarchy.? Planning for

the Nobleton Village Reserve. Settlement Area Boundary Expansions. King's Whitebelt. The Hamlet boundary of Laskay. These areas are integral to the broader planning framework and impact a number of the proposed policy directions to the Official Plan. Nobleton resident Nancy Hopkinson sent a letter to staff, commenting on the OP review. She said hosting open houses is not the same as hosting meetings. Open houses are a waste of time for everyone. Putting little sticky notes on items does not inform the public as to everyone else's questions or concerns. Meetings are much superior for letting everyone be able to hear each other's ideas and concerns. She said at the first round of open houses at both King City and Nobleton there was a short presentation by the consultants. But when we wanted to ask questions as a group, we were not allowed. The question remains why not? What is so terrible about meetings? Hopkinson also pointed out that the public certainly let Premier Ford know that allowing development into the Greenbelt was not acceptable, and he quickly withdrew the egregious proposals. However, the consultants are saying that Settlement Area Boundary Expansions into the Greenbelt can be allowed right now under the Ford Government, but only if it is 10 hectares or less. The consultants seemed to think that King Township should make use of this provision while it is available. This goes against what the people want. They want the Greenbelt preserved. They do not want the Greenbelt nibbled away in little chunks until nothing is left. She said King Township has always prided itself on its green heritage. If King council is serious about preserving the Greenbelt, then it cannot endorse the proposed Settlement Area Boundary Expansions for Schomberg and King City. This is expansion of the settlement areas into the Greenbelt. The King Township public is unaware of this. The consultants have never really mentioned that this boundary goes into the Greenbelt. If the public knew, they would be upset. As the process for the review continues, Hopkinson said she'd prefer more meetings, not open houses. She also wants the municipality to wholeheartedly support the Greenbelt, though OP policies.