



TOWN OF
HALTON HILLS
Working Together Working for You!
REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Melissa Ricci, Senior Policy Planner

DATE: June 17, 2025

REPORT NO.: PD-2025-024

SUBJECT: Official Plan Review Community Engagement Strategy

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PD-2025-24, dated June 17, 2025, regarding the Official Plan Review (OPR) Public Engagement Strategy be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council endorse the OPR Public Engagement Strategy embedded in this report;

AND FURTHER THAT staff provide updates to Council on the Official Plan Review in accordance with the approved Terms of Reference.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The purpose of this report is to present to Council the Official Plan Review (OPR) Public Engagement Strategy (PES).
- In November 2024, the Town retained Sajecki Planning as the lead consultant to assist in the preparation of a new Official Plan that will ensure consistency with recent updates to the provincial and regional planning framework and accommodate growth in a strategic and sustainable manner to the year 2051.
- The Official Plan Review will be guided by a community-integrated process with opportunities for community engagement at each project phase.
- A Public Engagement Strategy, which identifies the engagement approach and objectives, target audiences for each phase, and engagement tools that will be used to engage with the community, has been prepared.
- The PES is built upon the Town's Public Engagement Charter to ensure that communication methods align with the Town's ongoing commitment to transparency, notification, and participation.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

1. Context

The Official Plan Review project launch initiated in late February 2025 and included:

- The creation of a short [video](#), and the launch of the [project website](#) and engagement platform on [Let's Talk Halton Hills](#) (LTHH).
- An initial survey was posted on the LTHH page until June 27th. The goal of the survey was to help the project team obtain initial feedback on the key themes for the community, preferred channels for receiving information about the project and how community members would like to be engaged through the process. Approximately 150 users have completed the survey as of the date of this report.
- A [map tool](#) on LTHH page which asks participants to add a pin to the map highlighting areas in the Town that they love and to tell us why.
- A mobile sign, advertising the OPR project and directing the community to the Let's Talk Halton Hills page, was located at Guelph Street and Maple Avenue for the month of April and is now located at Prospect Park in Acton.
- A dedicated email (opr@haltonhills.ca) to ensure that the project team responds efficiently to project inquiries.

As part of Phase One of the Official Plan Review project a Public Engagement Strategy (PES) has been prepared. This report seeks Council's endorsement of the PES, which aligns with the Council approved project Terms of Reference. The Strategy will ensure that all voices are heard through a variety of communication channels and that there are opportunities for various community groups including residents, local businesses, development industry representatives, agencies, and Indigenous communities to participate in the process. Minor refinements or adjustments¹ that do not alter the overall intent of the PES as determined by staff may be required as the project unfolds; however, any major alterations would be brought forward to Council for approval.

The PES outlines how and when the public and interested participants will be engaged through the Official Plan Review.

Table 1: Overview of Project Phases and Timelines

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Focus	Set the Stage	Refresh the Vision & Confirm Priorities	Assess Directions	Refine Plan	Finalize Plan
Timing	Winter 2024 – Summer 2025	Spring – Fall 2025	Fall – Winter 2025/2026	Winter 2025/2026 – Spring 2026	Spring – Summer 2026

*Note: *Timelines are subject to change. Some overlapping of engagement deliverables may occur between phases.*

¹ A 'minor refinement or adjustment' could potentially include shifting a meeting date slightly to accommodate scheduling conflicts; or attending an additional community event not listed below.

The PES goes well beyond *Planning Act* requirements to establish a transparent and iterative engagement process that ensures that the community is involved in all phases of the project and there are multiple opportunities through the preparation of the new Official Plan for learning, discussing and collaborating. The section below outlines the specific *Planning Act* requirements, followed by a detailed description of public engagement deliverables that have been identified in the Engagement Plan attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2. The Planning Act Requirements

As per the statutory requirements of the *Planning Act* when considering an official plan, Council must ensure that:

- A special meeting of Council that is open to the public and an open house are held.
- At least one (statutory) public meeting is held, notice of which must be given at least 20 days ahead of time, usually through the Town's website and online local newspapers.
- The approval authority (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing) is consulted and given the opportunity to review all supporting information and material.
- Adequate information, including a copy of the proposed official plan, is made available to the public in advance of the (statutory) public meeting.

In addition, any person or public body may provide written comments and/or speak at the (statutory) public meeting about the proposed plan and Council may consult with agencies, boards, authorities or commissions before making a decision.

3. Public Engagement Strategy

The PES incorporates a number of strategies in order to reach as many people as possible, including a combination of online and in-person tactics. In addition to the established Public Open Houses, staff have identified a number of pop-up consultation opportunities during fairs, farmers markets and at Community Centres, and during other community events over the next two years. These include:

- Public events including open houses, workshops, pop-up booths and drop-in sessions
- Social media notifications
- Regular updates through the Official Plan mailing lists
- Online and hardcopy surveys

The PES identifies components of the Official Plan that are i) fixed inputs and will need to be implemented to ensure conformity with Provincial legislation and policies and ii) local planning considerations that the public can or may influence. Examples of items that are considered fixed inputs and those that the public can influence are identified in the table below:

Table 2: Official Plan Review - Fixed Inputs and Opportunities for Public Influence

OPR Fixed Inputs	
Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant legislation – Planning Act, Greenbelt Act, Niagara Escarpment Planning & Development Act, OHA, etc. • Greenbelt Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Boundary ○ Applicable designations and policies • Niagara Escarpment Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Boundary ○ Applicable designation and policies • Applicable Source Protection Plans • Provincial Planning Statement
Regional Official Plan Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2051 Planning Horizon • 2051 Population and Employment Targets • Urban Boundaries
Local Planning Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan • Approved Secondary Plans (Vision Georgetown, Southeast Georgetown, Stewarttown (under appeal), Destination Downtown, Glen Williams, Norval, Premier Gateway Phases 1B and 2B (under appeal) • Pending Secondary Plans (Georgetown GO Station/Mill Street Corridor, Guelph Street Corridor) • Cultural Heritage Strategy
OPR – Opportunities for Public Influence	
Identify Vision, Challenges and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and collect feedback on the vision for Halton Hills to 2051. • Identify community features that should be preserved and those features that would benefit from change. • Identify local issues and potential solutions that can be addressed through the Official Plan. • Identify desirable features to make spaces more age-friendly, accessible and responsive to diverse needs of the community. • Identify solutions to mitigate/adapt to the effects of climate change.
Review Policies and Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential gaps in draft/proposed policies and recommendations. Did we miss anything? • Review draft policies for the Official Plan and provide comments/feedback for further consideration.
Engage and Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend and participate in engagement activities and events throughout each project phase.

- Spread the word and share information about the project with friends, community, workplace and network to help the Town solicit as much feedback as possible.

Website and Let's Talk Halton Hills

The [project website](#) includes information about the project and background studies. The website will be utilized to provide up to date information about the project and ensure that all documents that will be prepared as part of the review are accessible to the public.

The Let's Talk Halton Hills page will include surveys, polls, and interactive mapping. The LTHH page will describe:

- What is an official plan?
- How to stay informed
- Engagement opportunities, and
- Milestone markers of where we are in the process

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The project will be guided by a Technical Advisory Committee which will provide peer-review services on key deliverables to ensure consistency and alignment across multiple jurisdictions. TAC members include representatives from key agencies such as the Region of Halton, Credit Valley Conservation, Conservation Halton and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. TAC members will assist with issue identification and resolution and will provide technical comments through the preparation of background studies and draft policies.

Community Working Group (CWG)

In accordance with the approved Terms of Reference, which are attached as Appendix 2 to this report, the Community Working Group (CWG) will be comprised of selected members of the community and special interest groups.

The role of the CWG is to bring together community resources, and to provide local knowledge and input at key stages of the project and/or on key issues. Members will provide insight and guidance; however, the group will not be a decision-making body as its role is advisory in nature.

A kick-off meeting will be held to review the Committee Terms of Reference that will outline clear roles and responsibilities for committee members. A total of four CWG meetings will be held throughout the project life cycle.

Council Workshops

Council members will be engaged throughout all project phases via Council Reports, presentations, and workshops. The PES identifies four Council Workshops at key project milestones which will focus on engaging Council on their goals and objectives

for the Official Plan Review and providing information on Council's statutory obligations regarding conformity with the Provincial policy and legislative framework. These approximately 90-minute in-person workshops will include a presentation, interactive workshop discussion and question and answer period.

Public Engagement Deliverables

The following list summarizes public engagement deliverables for each of the project phases. A list of deliverables and timelines is included in the Engagement Workplan attached as Appendix 1 for reference purposes.

Phase 1 Key Deliverables (Winter 2024 - Spring 2025):

- Project Launch
- Commencement Notice
- TAC Meeting
- Indigenous Engagement (Town-led) ²
- Public Engagement Strategy
- CWG Meeting
- Public Open House #1 (in Person) – Information Session
- Council Meeting- project update

Phase 2 Key Deliverables (Spring - Fall 2025):

- “What’s Next for our Town?” Artist Call ³
- Key Interviews
- TAC Meeting
- CWG Meeting
- Indigenous Engagement
- Public Open House #2 (in person) – OPR vision and priorities
- Council Workshop #1
- Engagement Summary Report

Phase 3 Key Deliverables (Fall– Winter 2025/2026):

- TAC Meeting
- CWG Meeting
- Indigenous Engagement
- Council Workshop #2
- Special Meeting of Council – Section 26 of the *Planning Act*
- Engagement Summary Report #2

² Engagement approach to be confirmed through initial meetings

³ An Artist Call was published until the end of June to invite local artists to participate in an art contest and submit proposals on conducting an arts-based engagement session with the community and in partnership with the Town

Phase 4 Key Deliverables (Winter 2025/2026- Spring 2026):

- TAC Meeting to present the Draft OPA
- CWG Meeting to present the Draft OPA
- Indigenous Engagement
- Council Workshop #3
- Public Open House #3 A- in Person in Acton
- Public Open House #3 B- in Person in Georgetown
- Public Open House #3 C- Virtual
- Engagement Summary Report #3

Phase 5 Key Deliverables (Spring – Summer 2026):

- Statutory Public Open House #4 and Statutory Public Meeting
- Engagement Summary Report #4
- Recommendation Report to Council

4. Next Steps

The Kick-off TAC meeting took place in April 2025. The first meeting with the Community Working Group is anticipated to be scheduled following the first Public Open House for the project, which will be held on June 26th, 2025.

Planning staff will continue to work with our Corporate Communications team to leverage all available channels to promote the project and invite the community to participate in the Official Plan Review.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report aligns with all four pillars of the Town's Strategic Plan.

It should be noted that quarterly updates on the Official Plan Review will be provided to the Growth and Infrastructure Committee.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement will be required; consultation with Communications staff is ongoing.

The Public Engagement Strategy identifies the engagement approach and objectives and identifies the engagement tools and tactics that will be used to engage with the community through all phases of the Official Plan Review project.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Consultation with the Town's Corporate Communications team and the Manager of Culture and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion took place for the preparation of the Official Plan Public Engagement Strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report will be funded through an existing approved budget source.

As the project continues, if additional consultation or significant changes are requested by Council the budget may need to be re-visited.

Reviewed and approved by,

Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning & Development

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer