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Sault Ste. Marie North Planning Area **Preparation of a New Official Plan**



Background Report

View of Pancake Bay
(Image Source: Northern Ontario Travel)

March 17, 2025

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Sault Ste. Marie North Planning Board (Planning Board) was established in 1976 and comprises a vast geographic territory north of the City of Sault Ste. Marie along the shoreline of Lake Superior consisting of the Sault Ste. North Planning Area (Planning Area). The Planning Area spans thirty-one unorganized townships and seven built-up communities. Much of the Planning Area is comprised of vacant and uninhabited Crown land, although seasonal residential and, to a lesser extent, year-round residential use is predominant in the southern portion of the Planning Area along Highway 17, the shoreline of Lake Superior and inland lakes, and secondary provincial highways.

An Official Plan is a policy document that municipalities and planning authorities maintain which describes how land in a community should be used and is prepared with input from the public to ensure that future planning and development will meet the specific needs of a community. The purpose of an Official Plan is to manage and direct physical change and the effects on the social, economic, built, and natural environments of a community over a twenty-five-year planning horizon. An Official Plan deals mainly with issues such as:

- Where new housing, industry, offices, and shops will be located.
- What services, like roads, watermains, sewers, parks, and schools, will be needed.
- When, and in what order, parts of a community will grow.
- Community improvement initiatives.

The first Official Plan for the Planning Area (Official Plan) was prepared in 1978 and approved by the Province on January 16, 1979. The most recent comprehensive review and update to the Planning Area's Official Plan was undertaken in 2009 to be consistent with the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement. The Official Plan establishes a vision and comprehensive set of policies based on the following guiding principles:

- Strengthening the identity of distinctive built-up communities within the Planning Area.
- Maintaining shoreline communities exclusively for residential use for both permanent and seasonal populations.
- Strengthening the Planning Area's economic base, comprised of tourism, development of the area's natural resources, and dependence of employment provided in the City of Sault Ste. Marie.
- Coordinating decision-making on land use planning and development with partner agencies to provide for orderly community development.
- Promoting alternative and renewable energy sources and energy conservation measures to provide a more sustainable way of life for residents of the Planning Area.

1.2 Project Overview

Given the long-term nature of an Official Plan, consistent change in the external environment, and a continuously evolving legislative, policy, and regulatory framework for land use planning, it is a

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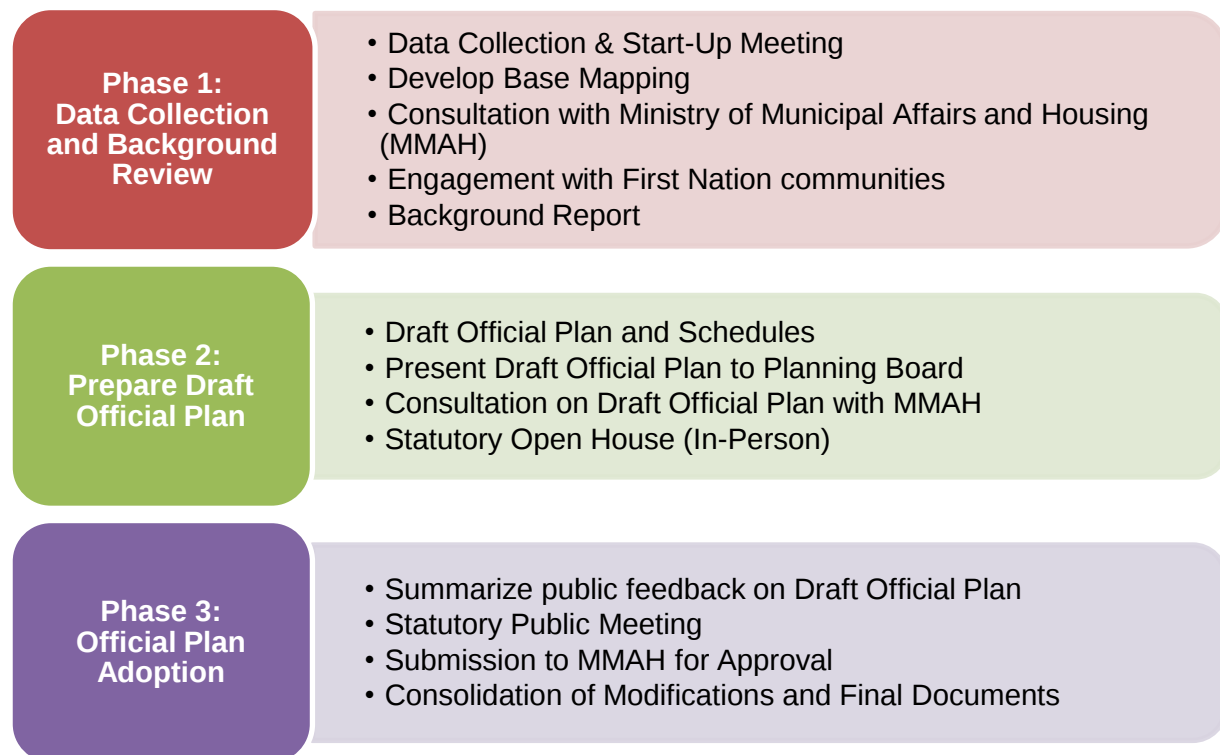
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standard practice to periodically review an Official Plan to ensure that it reflects the best available information, continues to reflect the vision and goals of the community, and balances the vision and goals with matters of provincial interest in local land use planning.

This practice is enshrined in the Planning Act under Section 26 which requires that planning authorities revise their Official Plan no less frequently than ten years after it comes into effect as a new Official Plan and every five years thereafter, unless replaced by a new Official Plan. The purpose of this regular review and update is to ensure that the Official Plan has regard to matters of provincial interest in land use planning as per Section 2 of the Planning Act, is consistent with policy statements issued under Section 3 of the Planning Act, and that it conforms, or does not conflict with, provincial plans.

Since the Official Plan was last comprehensively reviewed, there have been numerous changes to legislation and policy at the provincial level which are not reflected in the Official Plan. Given the extensive change that has occurred in the planning framework since 2009, when the last comprehensive review and update occurred, the Planning Board has initiated this project to prepare a new Official Plan to guide land use planning and development within the Planning Area over the next twenty-five years. Following the preparation of a new Official Plan for the Planning Area, the Planning Board will initiate a subsequent effort to prepare a new Zoning By-law to implement the new policies of the Official Plan.

The project is structured in a series of phases, as outlined below:



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1.3 Purpose of Report

Phase 1 of the project is underway, and the current report represents the findings of background research and policy recommendations for inclusion in the new Official Plan. This report summarizes key information from several sources, describes the existing provincial policy framework for land use planning and development, and discusses policies in the existing Official Plan. The report is organized thematically to address the following topics:



2.0 Planning Context

The planning policy framework for preparing a new Official Plan is comprised by the Planning Act, the Provincial Planning Statement, and the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, each of which is discussed in this section.

2.1 Planning Act

The *Planning Act* is the Province's legislation for land use planning in Ontario and provides the basis for planning authorities to prepare Official Plans to guide growth and development in their communities over a twenty-five-year planning period. Under the *Planning Act*, planning authorities must have regard to matters of provincial interest as listed in Section 2, and decisions affecting

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land use planning must be consistent with policy statements issued under Section 3 of the Act and conform to, or not conflict with, provincial plans.

Since 2009, when the Official Plan was last comprehensively reviewed and updated, the *Planning Act* has been the subject of numerous amendments, including:

- *Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act*, 2011 (Bill 140)
- *Smart Growth for our Communities Act*, 2015 (Bill 73)
- *Promoting Affordable Housing Act*, 2016 (Bill 7)
- *Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act*, 2017 (Bill 39)
- *Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act*, 2017 (Bill 139)
- *More Homes, More Choice Act*, 2019 (Bill 108)
- *Covid-19 Economic Recovery Act*, 2020 (Bill 197)
- *Supporting Recovery and Competitiveness Act*, 2021 (Bill 276)
- *More Homes for Everyone Act*, 2022 (Bill 109)
- *Build More Homes Faster Act*, 2022 (Bill 23)
- *Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act*, 2024 (Bill 185)
- *Homeowner Protection Act*, 2024 (Bill 200)

The key updates pertinent to the Official Plan, among other matters, include:

- Requirements for planning authorities to consider the adequate provision of a full range of housing, including affordable housing, as a matter of provincial interest.
- Modified parkland dedication requirements.
- Modified timelines for appeals of non-decisions for certain types of development applications (e.g., shortened timelines where a decision must be made on any application to amend the Zoning By-law or to create a new lot by consent within 90 days of receiving an application).
- Changes to types of matters and reasons for appeal of decisions, as well as changes to persons who may file appeals, accompanied by transformation of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) to the now Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT).

2.2 Provincial Planning Statement

The Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) is issued under Section 3 of the *Planning Act* and provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. As a key part of Ontario's policy-led planning system, the PPS sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land province-wide, helping achieve the provincial goal of meeting the needs of a fast-growing province while enhancing the quality of life for all Ontarians.

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The last comprehensive review and update to the Official Plan was undertaken in 2009 when the 2005 PPS was in force and effect. Since then, a new PPS was issued in 2014, which was subsequently updated in 2020. On August 15, 2024, the Province approved a new Provincial Planning Statement (2024 PPS) which replaced the 2020 PPS and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe when it came into effect on October 20, 2024.

In 2014 and 2020, changes to the PPS were made to:

- Encourage planning for communities that are strong, sustainable, and resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.
- Promote development that minimizes or avoids negative impacts or adverse effects on the natural environment.
- Encourage the development of an increased mix and supply of housing.
- Protect the environment and public safety.
- Reduce barriers and costs for development.
- Provide greater predictability.
- Support rural, northern, and Indigenous communities.
- Support the economy and job creation.

The 2024 PPS builds on the changes reflected in the 2014 PPS and 2020 PPS to:

- Increase housing and mix housing options.
- Address housing affordability needs.
- Support investment ready communities.
- Optimize investments in infrastructure and public service facilities.
- Prioritize growth and development within urban and rural settlements.
- Support viability of rural areas and local food production and the agri-food network.
- Protect natural areas, local food production and the agri-food network.
- Further recognize the role of indigenous communities in land use planning and development.

2.3 Growth Plan for Northern Ontario

The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario (Growth Plan) was issued on March 3, 2011, and provides guidance to align provincial decision-making and investment for economic and population growth in northern Ontario. The key growth management goals for the Growth Plan include:

- Diversifying of traditional resource-based industries
- Workforce education and training
- Integration of infrastructure investments and planning
- Tools for Indigenous peoples' participation in the economy

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Planning authorities' decision-making affecting land use planning, including the adoption of a new Official Plan, must conform or not conflict with the Growth Plan.

3.0 Growth and Settlement

3.1 Background

Understanding the future development needs of the community is vital to ensuring there is adequate land supply, servicing, and infrastructure available, and a framework in place to ensure development meets the needs of the community. This section provides an overview of the population projections for the Planning Area, and the current approach to growth management in the Official Plan. This information will be used to determine vacant land supply needs of the Planning Area. Population estimates form the foundation and greatly influence the shape of community master planning.

3.2 Population

Section 2.1 of the PPS, Planning for People and Homes, states that at the time of creating a new Official Plan, sufficient land must be made available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for a time horizon of at least 20 years, but not more than 30 years, informed by provincial guidance. Planning authorities are directed to base population and employment growth forecasts on Ontario Population Projections published by the Ministry of Finance.

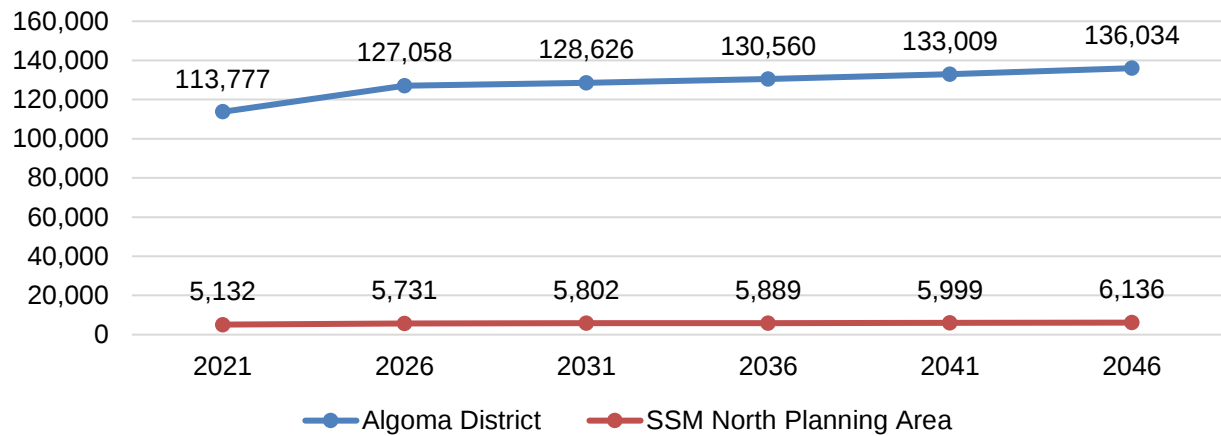
Available census geographies from Statistics Canada do not match the boundaries of the Planning Area, making it difficult to generate an accurate portrait of current population counts and future projections within the Planning Area. Based on available census data for 2021 at the level of dissemination areas, a population of 5,132 is estimated for the Planning Area.¹ This represents approximately 4.5% of the overall population for Algoma District in 2021, which was 113,777. Using Ministry of Finance projections for Algoma District and assuming a consistent 4.5% share of the District's population growth for 2021 to 2046, it is estimated that the Planning Area's population will increase slightly to 6,136 by 2046, a change of approximately 19.6% over 25 years.

¹ This estimate of population was derived from summing the population counts of dissemination areas within the boundaries of the Planning Area where census data are disseminated. Where dissemination areas extend beyond the boundaries of the Planning Area, the population counts were estimated based on the percentage of land area within the boundaries of the Planning Area and assuming an even population distribution (i.e., if 50% of the dissemination area is within the Planning Area, then 50% of the population count for that dissemination area is counted towards the total population estimate).

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Figure 1 Actual and projected population for Algoma District and the Sault Ste. Marie North Planning Area (2021-2046) (Data source: Statistics Canada, Ontario Ministry of Finance)



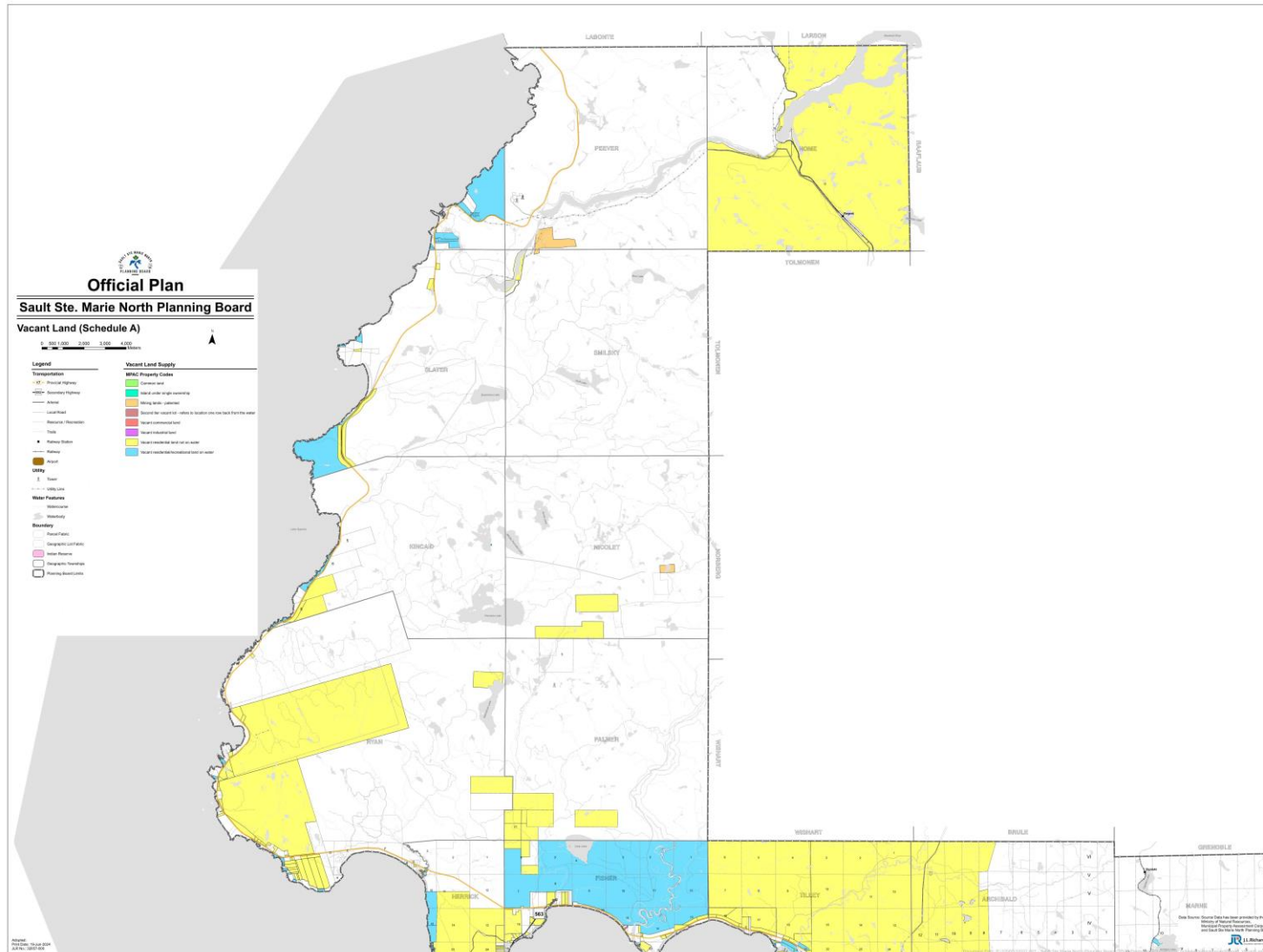
3.3 Land Supply

Using the projected population estimates for the Planning Area, the next step in determining whether there is sufficient land supply to meet projected needs over the next 20 to 30 years is to examine the current supply of vacant land within the Planning Area which may accommodate future residential development. In addition to ensuring an adequate land supply over this time horizon, the PPS further requires that planning authorities maintain at all times the ability to accommodate residential growth for at least 15 years through lands which are designated and available for residential development, as well as ensuring adequate land is available with servicing capacity which is sufficient to provide at least a three-year supply of residential units (i.e., lands suitably zoned for residential use, including units in draft approved or registered plans).

Reviewing MPAC vacant land property codes for the Planning Area gives an estimation of the current supply of land within the Planning Area. Figure 2 shows a map of the vacant lots within the northern portion of the Planning Area and Figure 3 shows a map of the vacant lots within the southern portion of the Planning Area based on MPAC codes, and which are not impeded by development constraints or natural heritage features.

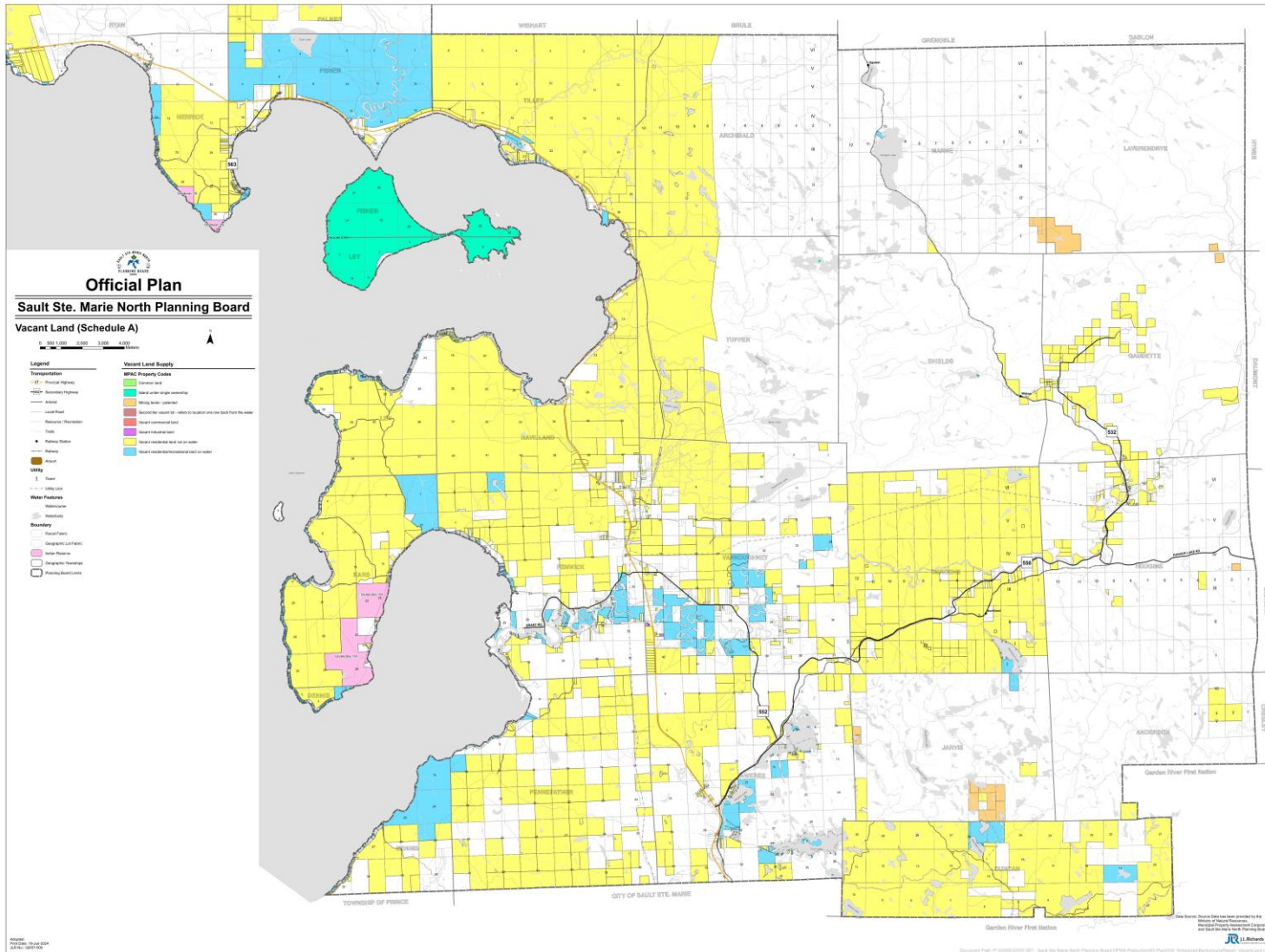
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Figure 2 Vacant lands by MPAC Property Code in the Northern Portion of the Planning Area



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Figure 3 Vacant lands by MPAC Property Code in the Southern Portion of the Planning Area



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Criteria to consider the potential land supply for future residential development include the MPAC property code, the minimum lot area prescribed for that land use type (i.e., seasonal residential vs. rural residential), properties having access on an existing road, and properties unconstrained by natural heritage features or other development constraints. In addition, considerations for the potential land supply for future residential development also include factoring in the severance potential of larger properties based on the existing Official Plan's policies for lot creation (i.e., permitting a maximum of two severances plus the retained as of the date of adoption of the Official Plan).²

Table 1 Vacant residential land supply by MPAC property code

MPAC Property Code	Count of vacant parcels meeting minimum lot area	Count of potential vacant lots created by severance	Total lot area of all vacant lots (ha)
Island under single ownership	8	18	2,078.47
Vacant residential land not on water	1,418	2,743	68,438.39
Vacant residential/recreational land on water	900	1,112	7,565.13
Total	2,326	3,873	78,081.99

Based on this, there are 2,326 vacant residential parcels in the Planning Area which meet the minimum lot area prescribed by the Zoning By-law and which could accommodate future residential development. When considering the severance potential of these parcels, this number increases to a total of 3,873 potential vacant residential parcels which could accommodate future residential development.

The next step to understanding the land supply needed to accommodate projected population growth includes consideration of the average household size to determine the number of households anticipated in 2046. Census data from 2006 to 2021 for the Algoma District Census Division were reviewed to understand how the average household size has changed over time, calculating the average change, minimum change, and maximum change in household size over this time period. As shown in the table below, the average household size for the Algoma District Census Division remained relatively constant, with the average household size decreasing slightly from 2.3 people per household in 2006 and 2011 to 2.2 people per household in 2016 and 2021 (a 4.3% decline).

² In considering the severance potential of each property, it is assumed that no land has been previously severed from the property as of the date of adoption of the Official Plan. The minimum lot area of 0.8 ha is used to determine the number of lots that could be created from each vacant parcel, as prescribed by the Official Plan for lot creation for residential purposes.

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Table 2 Change in average household size from 2006 to 2021 in Algoma District Census Division

	2006	2011	2016	2021
Average Household Size	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.2
% change in Average Household Size	-	0.0%	- 4.3%	0.0%

Using this information, we can estimate that the average household size will continue to decline from 2021 to 2046, applying a 5-year change in average household size in three scenarios:

- Dramatic change: 4.3% decline in average household size in each 5-year increment;
- Moderate change: 1.4% decline in average household size each 5-year increment; or,
- No change: average household size remains at 2.2 people per household to 2046.

Table 3 shows the projected change in average household size in each of these scenarios, with an average household size estimated at 1.76 people per household in the dramatic change scenario, 2.05 people per household in the moderate change scenario, and remaining at 2.2 people per household in the no change scenario.

Table 3 Projected average household size from 2026 to 2046 in Algoma District Census Division

	2026	2031	2036	2041	2046
Average Household Size (-4.6% change)	2.10	2.01	1.93	1.84	1.76
Average Household Size (-1.4% change)	2.17	2.14	2.11	2.08	2.05
Average Household Size (no change)	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2

Assuming that the average household size for Algoma District is the same as that for the Planning Area, we can estimate the total number of households expected for the Planning Area based on the population growth projections estimated to 2046. Table 4 shows the total number of households expected in the Planning Area in 5-year increments under each scenario (i.e., no change in average household size, modest change in average household size, and dramatic change in average household size).

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Table 4 Projected number of households from 2026 to 2046 in the Planning Area

	2026	2031	2036	2041	2046
# Households (no change in Average Household Size)	2,605	2,637	2,677	2,727	2,789
# Households (-1.4% change in Average Household Size)	2,643	2,715	2,797	2,891	3,000
# Households (-4.6% change in Average Household Size)	2,723	2,882	3,059	3,258	3,483

Based on this, it is estimated that by 2046, there will be 2,789 households in the Planning Area assuming the largest average household size (2.20 people per household) and 3,483 households assuming the smallest average household size (1.76 people per household).

3.4 Recommendations

Comparing the projected number of households in the Planning Area in 2046 to the existing vacant residential land supply, the current number of vacant residential parcels (2,326) is slightly less than the projected number of households assuming no change in average household size (2,789), as well as in all other growth scenarios (i.e., modest or dramatic decline in average household size). However, when considering the severance potential of these lands, the potential number of vacant residential parcels which could be created through consent (3,873) is sufficient to meet the estimated number of households in the Planning Area in 2046 under all scenarios (i.e., 2,789, 3,000, and 3,483 with no change, modest change, or dramatic change in average household size, respectively). Based on this, we recommend that sufficient vacant land is available to accommodate future population growth in the Planning Area and meet the tests of the PPS with respect to growth management.

4.0 Protecting the Natural Environment

4.1 Background

Natural heritage features and areas provide numerous economic, environmental, and social benefits, and contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and to the maintenance of the quality of our air, land, and water. The PPS includes consideration for significant wetlands, significant coastal wetlands, fish habitat, habitat of endangered 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.

The protection of ecological systems, including natural areas, features, and functions, is one of several matters of provincial interest in land use planning to which the Official Plan must consider. To this end, the PPS directs that development and site alteration shall not be permitted in significant wetlands, significant coastal wetlands, fish habitat, habitat of endangered and threatened species, significant wildlife habitat, and significant areas of natural and scientific interest, unless it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or their ecological functions. In addition, the PPS directs that development and site

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alteration shall not be permitted on adjacent lands to these natural heritage features and areas unless the ecological function of the adjacent lands has been evaluated, and it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or their ecological functions.

In determining the scope of what constitutes “adjacent lands” to the above-referenced natural heritage features and areas, the Natural Heritage Reference Manual prepared by the Ministry of Natural Resources provides the following recommendations:

Table 5 Width of adjacent lands by natural heritage feature or area

Natural Heritage Feature / Area	Adjacent Lands
Habitat of endangered and threatened species	120 m
Significant wetlands and significant coastal wetlands	120 m
Significant wildlife habitat	120 m
Significant areas of natural and scientific interest – life science	120 m
Significant areas of natural and scientific interest – earth science	50 m
Fish habitat – inland lake trout lake (at capacity) on Canadian shield	300 m*
Fish habitat – all other fish habitat	120 m*

* To be measured from the seasonal highwater mark

Following one-window consultation with partner ministries, the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) has indicated the presence of several types of known significant wildlife habitat within the Planning Area, including deer wintering areas, waterfowl staging areas, nesting sites/colonies, moose aquatic feeding areas, and habitat of species of conservation concern, which should be protected from development and site alteration. Given the vast geography of the Planning Area, there are likely occurrences of significant wildlife habitat which have not been documented but that nonetheless should be protected from development and site alteration. MNR recommends that site-specific screening for the presence of significant wildlife habitat occur where large-scale development is proposed.

4.2 Current Official Plan

The current Official Plan recognizes the importance of natural heritage and states objectives for maintaining, protecting, and enhancing the natural environment. Natural heritage features are identified on Schedule B of the current Official Plan, including areas of natural and scientific interest, lake trout lakes, spawning areas, raptors nests, waterfowl nesting areas, moose aquatic feeding areas, deer wintering yards, light and heavy aquatic shoreline environmental protection area (SEPA), and wetland SEPA. Occurrences of species at risk habitat is not identified on Schedule B to the Official Plan, though policies encourage applicants to exercise due diligence to ensure that land use activities do not contravene the *Endangered Species Act*.

Policies within the Official Plan address provincially significant coastal wetlands, provincially significant wetlands, unevaluated wetlands, and evaluated wetlands deemed not to be significant, as well as significant habitat of endangered and threatened species, significant wildlife habitat, significant areas of natural and scientific interest, and fish habitat. Policies generally mirror those of the PPS and do not permit development or site alteration on or adjacent to lands containing significant natural heritage features and allow development or site alteration on adjacent lands only where supported by an impact assessment completed by a qualified professional which

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demonstrates no negative impact to the feature or its ecological function. It should be noted that since the Official Plan's adoption, the Province updated the natural heritage policies of the PPS to protect all habitat of endangered and threatened species, regardless of the habitat's significance. Accordingly, it is recommended that the new Official Plan carry forward this change to remain consistent with the PPS.

4.3 Recommendations

The Official Plan schedules will be reviewed and updated to clearly identify what natural heritage features are present in the Planning Area and where they are located, and policies will be updated to specify what (if any) development can occur on or adjacent to these features, in line with provincial guidance. In particular, it is recommended that policies regarding the protection of natural heritage features and areas be incorporated in the new Official Plan which:

- Recognize the importance of sensitive environmental features in general and support their protection.
- Recognize that fish habitat includes all lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, intermittent and seasonally flooded, unless demonstrated to be otherwise by a study completed by a qualified professional.
- Where adjacent lands to fish habitat have not been evaluated by a qualified professional, directing the Zoning By-law to incorporate a holding provision on the adjacent lands (i.e., to prohibit development or site alteration on any portion of the property within 120 metres of the fish habitat unless the adjacent lands have been evaluated by a qualified professional and it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the fish habitat or their ecological functions), and otherwise permitting development or site alteration on the remaining lands (i.e., any portions of the property located more than 120 metres from the fish habitat).
- Direct that should new provincially significant wetlands (PSWs) be identified, policies related to PSWs are to apply and the schedules may be updated to reflect the new PSWs without amendment to the plan.
- Require assessment of ecological features and functions and the consideration of impacts, to be undertaken by a qualified professional, where development or site alteration is proposed on lands adjacent to significant natural heritage features, as outlined in the table above.
- Where adjacent lands to an identified or designated natural heritage feature or area have not be evaluated by a qualified professional, directing the Zoning By-law to incorporate a holding provision on the adjacent lands (i.e., to prohibit development or site alteration on any portion of the property within the prescribed distance of the natural heritage feature or area unless it has been evaluated by a qualified professional and demonstrated that there will be no negative impact to the feature and/or its ecological functions).
- Recommend that wetland evaluation be undertaken for any unevaluated wetlands in accordance with provincial standards prior to granting any planning approvals (i.e., any approvals to amend the Official Plan, to amend or vary the Zoning By-law, or to create a new lot through an application for consent) where an unevaluated wetland is present on the subject or adjacent lands (i.e., on or within 120 metres of an unevaluated wetland).

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- Recommend that site-specific assessment is undertaken to identify the potential of significant wildlife habitat when lands outside of existing built-up communities are subject to one or more of the following:
 - creation of more than three lots through either consent or plan of subdivision.
 - change in land use, not including the creation of a lot, that requires approval under the *Planning Act*.
 - lot creation where the subject lands have direct frontage on Lake Superior, an inland lake, or a large river and are within 120 metres of the adjacent waterbody (i.e., excluding any 'back lot' creation which is prohibited by the plan in shoreline communities)
 - development or site alteration which is required to facilitate proposed recreational uses (e.g., golf courses, serviced playing fields, serviced campgrounds, and ski hills) that require large-scale modification of terrain, vegetation, or both).
- Wherever feasible, encourage setbacks of at least 30 metres for new development along waterbodies and encourage that these lands remain undisturbed and naturally vegetated to the greatest extent possible, with direction for the Zoning By-law to implement any required setbacks.
- Wherever feasible, introduce mechanisms to minimize and control the removal of vegetation and ensure the protection of naturally vegetated buffers adjacent to any provincially significant areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs) where identified by the plan or through a study completed by a qualified professional. Such mechanisms may include, for example, the use of holding provisions or development agreements registered on title as a condition of provisional approval of a Planning Act application (e.g., any minor variance application or consent application to facilitate lot creation).

5.0 Climate Change

5.1 Background

In 2019, the Government of Canada released Canada's *Changing Climate Report*, part of a national assessment of how and why Canada's climate is changing, the impacts of those changes and how the country is adapting to the change. This report concludes, in part, that:

- Both past and future warming in Canada is, on average, about double the magnitude of global warming.
- The effects of widespread warming are evident in many parts of Canada and are projected to intensify in the future. This includes more extreme heat, less extreme cold, longer growing seasons, reduced snow and ice cover, and early spring peak streamflow.
- Precipitation is projected to increase for most of Canada, on average, although summer rainfall may decrease in some areas. Precipitation has increased in many parts of Canada, and there has been a shift toward less snowfall and more rainfall. Annual and winter precipitation is projected to increase everywhere in Canada over the 21st Century. More intense rainfalls will increase flood risk.

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- The seasonal availability of freshwater is changing. Warmer winters and earlier snowmelt will combine to produce higher winter streamflows. Warmer summers will increase evaporation of surface water and contribute to reduced summer water availability in the future despite more precipitation in some places.
- A warmer climate will intensify some weather extremes in the future. Extreme hot temperatures will become more frequent. This will increase the severity of heatwaves and contribute to the increased drought and wildfire risk.
- The rate and magnitude of climate change under high versus low emission scenarios project two very different futures for Canada. Much of the impacts of climate change will depend on the ability of individuals, corporations, municipalities, and all levels of government, to reduce carbon emissions.

According to the Canadian Centre for Climate Services, annual mean temperature and total precipitation are projected to increase over the next 30 years in the Planning Area. Available data for Goulais River shows:

- For the 1971-2000 period, the annual average temperature was 4.3 °C.
- Under a high emissions scenario, annual average temperatures are projected to increase to 7.0 °C for the 2021-2050 period, 9.2 °C for the 2051-2080 period and 10.9 °C for the last 30 years of this century.
- Average annual precipitation for the 1971-2000 period was 930 mm.
- Under a high emissions scenario, this is projected to be 12% higher for the 2051-2080 period and 15% higher for the last 30 years of this century.

The PPS requires that planning authorities plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change through approaches that:

- Support the achievement of compact, transit-supportive, and complete communities;
- Incorporate climate change considerations in planning for and the development of infrastructure, including stormwater management systems, and public service facilities;
- Support energy conservation and efficiency;
- Promote green infrastructure, low impact development, and active transportation;
- Protect the environment and improve air quality; and,
- Take into consideration any additional approaches that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build community resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.

5.2 Current Official Plan

The existing Official Plan contains some policies regarding the conservation of energy, water, and building materials, however, does not address climate change mitigation or adaptation. In order to respond to, adapt, and mitigate the impacts of climate change, a holistic and proactive policy approach within the Official Plan is required.

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5.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that the new Official Plan contain policies which:

- Continue to promote compact form within built-up communities and shoreline communities (i.e., avoiding scattered or remote development within the Planning Area and instead focusing future growth and development within existing built-up communities and existing shoreline communities where development is appropriate to the infrastructure which is planned or available and avoids the unjustified and/or uneconomical expansion of this infrastructure).
- Where new development or redevelopment is proposed in the Planning Area, continue to encourage energy conservation practices in building design which may be further enhanced by retaining natural vegetative cover in site design and development.
- Continue to encourage the use of alternative and renewable energy systems where they comply with provincial legislation and local zoning standards (e.g., systems that generate electricity, heat and/or cooling from a renewable energy source, including wind, water, biomass, biogas, biofuel, solar energy, geothermal energy, or tidal forces).
- Wherever feasible, encourage designs which maximize energy efficiency and conservation and consider the mitigating impacts of vegetation and green infrastructure (e.g., components such as natural heritage features and systems, parklands, stormwater management systems, natural channels, permeable surfaces, green roofs, etc., which provide ecological and hydrological functions and processes).
- Wherever feasible, encourage green infrastructure, including low impact development, to complement traditional stormwater management infrastructure that may be required with development proposed by plan of subdivision or plan of condominium.
- Require any planning for stormwater management to consider the impacts of a changing climate through the effective management of stormwater including the use of green infrastructure (i.e., where the Official Plan requires that a Stormwater Management Report or Plan be prepared alongside any application for a plan of subdivision, industrial proposal or other large-scale non-residential development within the Planning Area, requiring that the report includes consideration for the impacts of a changing climate on the frequency and intensity of adverse weather events and increased climate variability, as well as consideration for any low impact development practices or green infrastructure approaches to managing stormwater).
- Continue to direct development away from natural and human-made hazards in order to protect public health and safety from the risks posed by a changing climate.³

³ Refer to Section 16.0 of this background report for more information about the impacts of a changing climate on natural hazards (e.g., flooding hazards, erosion hazards, dynamic beach hazards, etc.).

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6.0 Economic Development

6.1 Background

A strong economy is central to a healthy and sustainable community. The economic base of the Planning Area is diverse, comprising resource development and related industries, tourism, construction, transportation, communication, and community, business, and personal service industries. Prospects for new business development is related to the market for resource-related industries, such as forestry, mining, commercial fishing, and mineral aggregate extraction, as well as the health of the tourism industry and the health of the economy of the City of Sault Ste. Marie.

In territories without municipal organization such as the Planning Area, the PPS directs that the focus of development must be related to the sustainable management or use of resources and resource-based recreational uses. Further policies permit other uses in areas adjacent to and surrounding municipalities where the area forms part of a Planning Area, the necessary infrastructure and public service facilities are planned or available to support the development and are financially viable over their life cycle, and it has been determined that the impacts of development will not place an undue strain on the public service facilities and infrastructure provided by adjacent municipalities, regions, and/or the Province.

Policies of the PPS more specific to economic development require that planning authorities promote economic development and competitiveness by:

- providing for an appropriate mix and range of employment, institutional, and broader mixed uses to meet long-term needs;
- providing opportunities for a diversified economic base, including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for employment uses which support a wide range of economic activities and ancillary uses, and take into account the needs of existing and future businesses;
- identifying strategic sites for investment, monitoring the availability and suitability of employment sites, including market-ready sites, and seeking to address potential barriers to investment;
- encouraging intensification of employment uses and compatible, compact, mixed-use development to support the achievement of complete communities; and
- addressing land use compatibility adjacent to employment areas by providing an appropriate transition to sensitive land uses.

Policies in the PPS specific to industrial uses require that major facilities and sensitive land uses be planned and developed to avoid any potential adverse effects from odour, noise, and other contaminants, minimize risk to public health and safety, and to ensure the long-term operational and economic viability of major facilities in accordance with provincial guidelines, standards, and procedures. Where avoidance of potential adverse effects is not possible, the PPS requires major facilities and sensitive land uses to be planned and developed to minimize and mitigate any potential adverse effects.

When considering the above policy directions of the PPS with respect to economic development and competitiveness and concerning industrial development, the policies of the Official Plan must ensure that any such uses that are promoted are appropriate to the infrastructure which is

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planned or available and avoids the need for the unjustified and/or uneconomical expansion of this infrastructure, as is required by the PPS in territories without municipal organization.

6.2 Current Official Plan

Within the identified Built-Up Communities of the Planning Area, the Official Plan permits general commercial uses, such as retail, personal and service commercial uses which are appropriate to the needs and scale of the communities they serve, and highway commercial uses that are dependent on the traveling public or the management or use of resources and resource-based recreational activities. Given the dependence of the Planning Area on tourism for its economic base, resort commercial uses are permitted in identified Built Up Communities and Shoreline Communities, including goods and services which are provided to the vacationing public, are recreation or leisure oriented, and where the location is use-specific. Large-scale commercial uses (e.g., shopping centres or large retail or warehousing outlets) are not permitted in the Planning Area and are directed to adjacent municipalities.

The Official Plan prescribes development and locational criteria which apply when establishing new general commercial, highway commercial, or resort commercial uses, including matters such as lot size, access/frontage on a publicly maintained road, servicing, and adequate separation distance from adjacent residential uses. Further criteria include:

- Encouraging general commercial uses to cluster together wherever feasible and avoid land use conflicts with adjacent properties, including buffering as needed.
- Encouraging highway commercial uses where lands are adjacent to provincial highways, with entrances along secondary roads, shared access points, or via serviced roads, and where development is in compliance with MTO standards.
- Encouraging new resort commercial uses where topography, tree cover, scenic vistas, and other natural amenities can be taken advantage of.

With respect to industrial uses, the Official Plan permits those industrial uses which are resource-based in the Rural Areas, including industries related to forestry, mineral aggregate extraction, mining, agriculture, and commercial fishing, and directs non-resource related industrial uses to adjacent municipalities. Where new resource-related industrial uses are proposed, or existing resource-related industrial uses are expanded, the Official Plan prescribes criteria regarding location (i.e., avoiding land use conflicts with adjacent uses and protecting the natural resource base) and servicing (i.e., prohibiting industrial uses requiring large quantities of water for their operation), and further stipulates that such uses may only be established by amendment to the Zoning By-law.

6.3 Recommendations

We recommend that the existing policies concerning economic development are sufficient to meet the needs of the Planning Area, are consistent with the relevant policies of the PPS, and should be carried forward into the new OP.

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7.0 Housing

7.1 Background

Housing is a basic human right. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, international law requires that Canada work towards having access to adequate and affordable housing. There is ample evidence that demonstrates that attainable and affordable housing is central to achieving positive economic and social outcomes. It is becoming increasingly evident that Canada's housing market has become more competitive in recent years, placing upward pressure on housing costs, both ownership and rental. In the Planning Area, there has been an increasing trend of seasonal residential uses converting to year-round permanent dwellings.

The PPS directs planning authorities to provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities to meet projected needs of current and future residents of the regional market area. Directions to achieve this goal in the PPS include:

- Establishing and implementing minimum targets for the provision of housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income households, and coordinating land use planning and planning for housing with Service Managers to address the full range of housing options, including affordable housing needs;
- Permitting and facilitating all housing options required to meet the social, health, economic and well-being requirements of current and future residents, including additional needs housing and needs arising from demographic changes and employment opportunities;
- Permitting and facilitating all types of residential intensification, including the development and redevelopment of underutilized commercial and institutional sites for residential use, development and introduction of new housing options within previously developed areas, and redevelopment which results in a net increase in residential units;
- Promoting densities for new housing which efficiently use land, resources, infrastructure and public service facilities, and support the use of active transportation

Planning authorities can promote attainable and affordable housing within their communities through various tools including the Official Plan. An Official Plan can set the stage for new housing opportunities by designating an adequate supply of residential land, allowing a full range of housing types and densities, and creating efficient development and servicing standards that help to reduce the cost of bringing housing to market.

Given that the Planning Area is not organized as a municipality there are limitations to the application of housing policies, particularly as they relate to meeting the requirements of the Planning Act and PPS. These include, for example, the requirements imposed on municipalities to permit additional residential units as-of-right on parcels of urban residential land (i.e., land within a settlement area where full municipal services are provided), which are not applicable to the Planning Area.

7.2 Current Official Plan

Housing policies within the Official Plan encourage new residential development on existing lots of record, particularly within identified built-up communities, and encourage multiple unit housing developments to adjacent municipalities, such as the City of Sault Ste. Marie or Prince Township.

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These policies give direction to the Zoning By-law to make provisions for low density housing types, including single-detached and two-unit dwellings. There are no policies within the current Official Plan which address affordable or attainable housing.

7.3 Recommendations

Although not required by the Planning Act, the Planning Board may contemplate introducing permissions for additional residential units within identified built-up communities subject to criteria to demonstrate their suitability, considering the need for more affordable housing in the Planning Area. Such criteria could include, for example, allowing up to one additional residential unit per lot developed with an existing dwelling unit, requiring demonstration of the adequacy of water and sewage servicing, including reserve system capacity for hauled sewage, and prohibiting additional residential units within identified shoreline communities.

In light of changes to provincial legislation and policy requiring consideration of an appropriate affordable and market-based range of residential types, it is recommended that the new Official Plan include policies related to:

- Minimum targets for the provision of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income households.
- Permissions for additional residential units, where they can be demonstrated to be appropriate (i.e., in the built-up communities or rural areas and subject to minimum criteria, including, for example, considerations for the number of permitted additional residential units, whether they are permitted in the main building or accessory buildings on the lot, appropriate lot sizing for private individual on-site services, requirements for the additional residential units to be maintained on the same lot as the primary dwelling in the case of any future severance, among other considerations as may be appropriate to regulate through the Zoning By-law).
- Appropriate servicing requirements and definitions for designations intended for year-round residential uses and regulations to prevent unintended residential use.
- Ensuring safe human habitation standards for residential dwellings (i.e., prohibiting human habitation in non-residential buildings).
- Adherence to Ontario's Human Rights Code as it related to group homes and additional needs housing.

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8.0 Built-Up Communities

8.1 Background

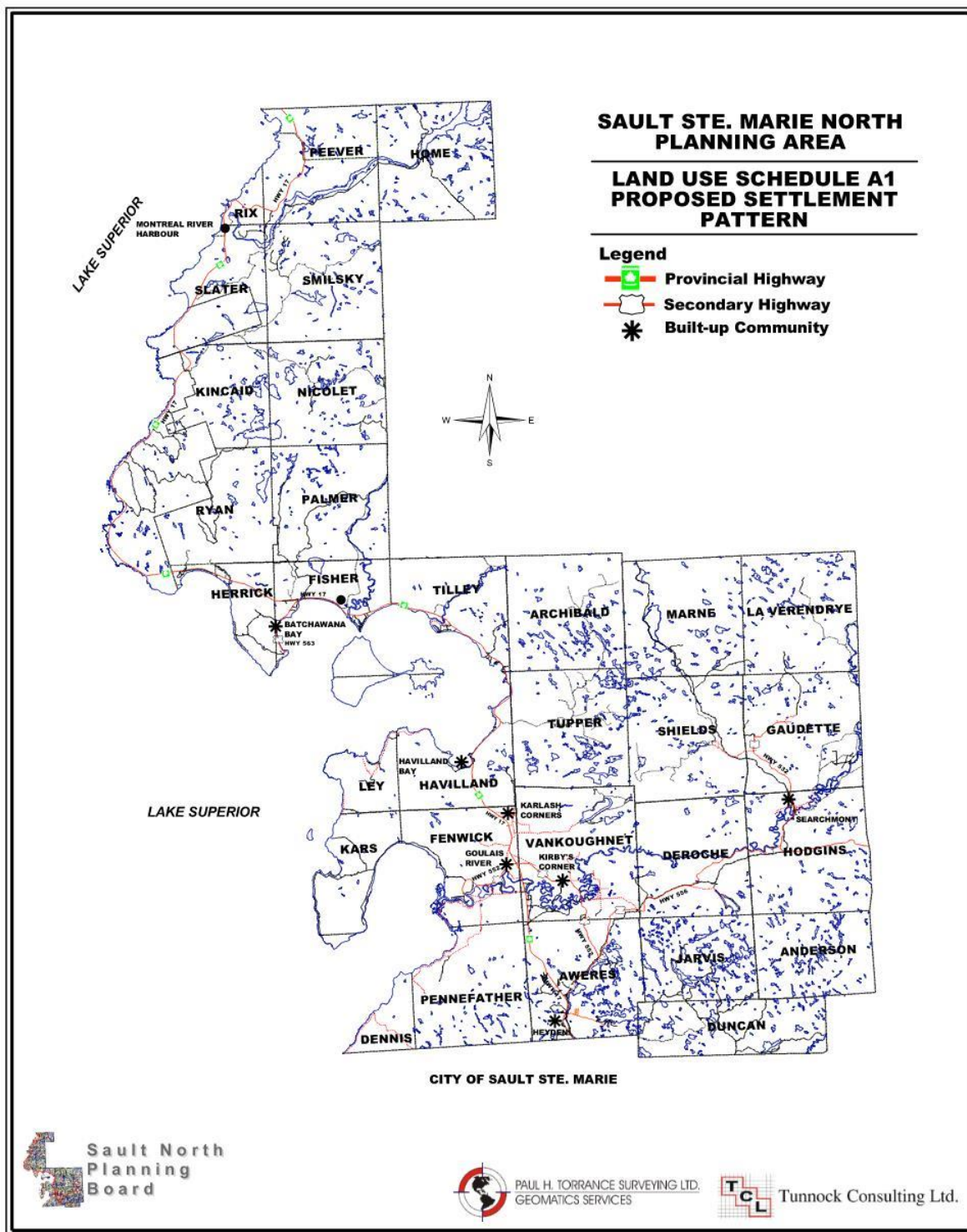
Growth and settlement within the Planning Area has been influenced by a number of factors, including road access, characteristics of the terrain, with easily developable lands not constrained by Canadian Shield topography developed first, preference for residential development on water bodies, proximity or commuting distance to the City of Sault Ste. Marie, clustering around community facilities, scenic vistas and locations rich in natural beauty, and development arising from resource-related activities.

The settlement pattern in the Planning Area includes seven built-up communities as well as a series of other shoreline communities along Lake Superior and inland lakes discussed in the section to follow. Built-up communities include Goulais River, Heyden, Kirby's Corners, Karalash Corners, Havilland Bay, Batchewana Bay, and Searchmont-Wabos. Figure 4 is an excerpt of Schedule A1 to the existing Official Plan which shows the general geographic locations of the built-up communities which form the Planning Area.

As previously discussed, the PPS directs that on rural lands in territories without municipal organization, the focus of development activity must be related to the sustainable management or use of resources and resource-based recreational uses, including recreational dwellings not intended as permanent residences. The PPS further requires that the development of land within territories without municipal organization must be appropriate to the infrastructure which is planned or available, and avoid the need for the unjustified and/or uneconomical expansion of such infrastructure. In areas adjacent to and surrounding municipalities where the area forms part of a planning area, the PPS permits development that is not related to the sustainable management or use of resources and resource-based recreational uses if specific criteria can be met. These criteria include the demonstration that the necessary infrastructure and public services are planned or available to support the development which are financially viable over their life cycle, and demonstration that the impacts of development will not place undue strain on the public service facilities and infrastructure provided by adjacent municipalities, regions, and/or the Province.

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Figure 4 Excerpt of Schedule A1 to the current Official Plan (Proposed Settlement Pattern)



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8.2 Current Official Plan

The locations and boundaries of the built-up communities are loosely shown in Schedules A1 and A1A-G of the current Official Plan, however, their boundaries are only generally described in the text of the Official Plan.

The current Official Plan does not establish land use designations for built-up communities, but rather outlines permitted land uses and development criteria which apply to generally to all lands. Within built-up communities, permitted uses include low density residential uses, including mobile home parks, general commercial uses, highway commercial uses, resort commercial uses, and institutional uses. The Official Plan establishes corresponding development criteria which relate to each permitted land use type which considers lot size and frontage, access to a year-round publicly maintained road, access to public service facilities (e.g., school transportation, fire protection, utilities), servicing requirements, land use compatibility, and development constraints (e.g., natural heritage, cultural heritage, resource management, etc.).

The Official Plan further speaks to the establishment of accessory uses wherever they are normally incidental or essential to principal uses, and prescribes policies for certain types of accessory uses, including bed and breakfast establishments, garden suites, sleep cabins, and residential uses accessory to a principal non-residential use. While these policies apply to the designated built-up communities, they are not specific to only these communities and similarly apply to the shoreline communities, rural area, and resource townships.

The Official Plan also includes lot creation policies which are specific to the identified Built-Up Communities and included in Table 3.7.11(A). These policies prescribe a minimum lot size for lots

created through consent, a maximum number of severances which may be permitted (including certain exemptions to this maximum number), requirements for access to the severed and retained lots (including criteria specific to lot creation in proximity to provincial highways), requirements for on-site water and sewage services, consideration of necessary technical studies and their timing relative to granting consent, requiring that lot creation complies with the prevailing zoning standard prior to final approval, and finally, consideration for the suitability of a plan of subdivision as an alternative to lot creation by consent. The Official Plan provides limited direction on permissions for lot creation by plan of subdivision, permitting them only in designated built-up communities and shoreline communities, and prescribing specific scenarios where plans of subdivision will be allowed (i.e., where it will lead to a more compact or contiguous form of development, as an alternative to multiple lot development by severance, as a means to addressing specific land development issues as a pre-requisite to development, and as a means of resolving land development concerns).

8.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that the new Official Plan include a land use designation specific to the identified Built-Up Communities which shows the precise boundaries of each community on a schedule to the Official Plan for ease of interpretation of the policies which apply. We further recommend that a new section of the Official Plan include high level direction for the types of uses permitted in the identified Built-Up Communities, land use policies specific to permitted uses, and direction for the Zoning By-law to implement permitted uses, general provisions, and zone-specific development standards. This new section would incorporate and update the consent policies and the permitted uses and development criteria of the existing Official Plan that related to lands within

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identified Built-Up Communities and provide more specific direction outlining the requirements which apply to development proposed through plan of subdivision.

This new structure for the policies which apply to the designated Built-Up Communities is proposed to improve the user-friendly functionality of the plan, while also updating the standards which apply to these lands.

9.0 Shoreline Communities

9.1 Background

The Planning Area's proximity to inland lakes and Lake Superior provides ample waterfront areas with immense cultural, environmental, and aesthetic value for residents and tourists. The Planning Board wishes to preserve the value of public and private shorelines for their long-term use and enjoyment. With regard to shoreline development, waterfront lots are clustered into the following designated shoreline communities:

- Montreal River Harbour
- Mamainse
- Pancake Bay
- Herrick
- Sand Point
- Chippewa Falls
- Jones Landing
- Harmony Bay
- Havilland-Ley-Kars
- Fenwick-Kars
- Pennefather
- Dennis

Shoreline communities within the Planning Area consist exclusively of limited low density residential development in a linear, single-tier fashion along the shoreline of Lake Superior and include both year-round and seasonal residential uses.

The PPS directs planning authorities to protect, improve, or restore the quality and quantity of water through a variety of approaches. Among others, these approaches include implementing necessary restrictions on development and site alteration to protect, improve, or restore vulnerable surface and ground water and their hydrologic functions, which may require mitigative measures and/or alternative development approaches in or near sensitive surface water features.

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9.2 Current Official Plan

The current Official Plan permits only low-density residential use and resort commercial use within the shoreline communities and specifies development and locational criteria that apply to each use. For residential use, these criteria largely mirror those prescribed for the designated built-up communities, though additional criteria apply to prohibit backlot creation in the shoreline communities. For resort commercial uses, development and locational criteria promote the siting of such uses to take advantage of topography, tree cover, scenic vistas and other natural amenities, and further require that resort commercial uses have appropriate access and on-site parking, that lot sizes are appropriate for the intended use and on-site servicing, that appropriate separation distances are provided adjacent to residential uses, and that development constraints can be appropriately overcome where they are present (i.e., natural hazard, natural heritage, and cultural heritage features). Consent policies for the shoreline communities also mirror those prescribed for the built-up communities, though additional criteria also apply to specify that backlot creation is not permitted.

With respect to water quality and quantity, the Official Plan establishes policies which promote the conservation and protection of ground and surface water through the stewardship of a natural heritage system, as discussed in future sections of this report and through the use of sustainable development measures (e.g., measures undertaken to minimize sediment input into waterbodies, or measures which do not result in increased flooding or erosion or the undue alteration of natural drainage systems). Further policies require assessments of lakeshore capacity where large-scale development is proposed on inland lakes (e.g., plan of subdivision, commercial development, industrial development, development on a lake trout lake, or any lot creation, redevelopment, or intensification of existing uses on any lake within existing development). Policies in this section of the current Official Plan further require a minimum setback from waterbodies for septic systems and promote the maintenance of shoreline vegetation in its natural state, though these policies are not cross-referenced in the development and locational criteria which apply to the designated shoreline communities.

9.3 Recommendations

Following one-window consultation with partner ministries, MECP recommends that development along shorelines protect, improve, or restore water quality by adhering to best management practices, such as encouraging minimum 30 metre setbacks, larger lot sizes, vegetated buffers, reducing lot grading, and using stormwater management techniques such as grassed swales/vegetated filter strips and other measures to control stormwater runoff.

Furthermore, we recommend additional policy be included within the new Official Plan which introduces some flexibility as it relates to a minimum lot size for new lot creation along Lake Superior or large inland lakes. This could include flexibility to allow severances for legal or technical purposes (e.g., to address cases where existing undersized lots have unintentionally merged under common ownership).

It is recommended that the new Official Plan incorporate a new designation for properties with shoreline frontage on a waterbody, whether Lake Superior or an inland lake. With this new designation, we recommend that a new section of the Official Plan include land use policies specific to lands within this designation which would incorporate and update the land division policies and permitted uses and development criteria of the existing Official Plan, at a high level,

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and give direction for the Zoning By-law to prescribe more detailed zone-specific standards for new development or redevelopment in the existing shoreline communities.

This new structure for the policies, which would apply to properties with shoreline frontage on a waterbody, is proposed to improve the user-friendly functionality of the plan, while also updating the standards which apply to these lands to ensure that the plan promotes development that is sensitive to potential impacts on adjacent waterbodies.

10.0 Rural Areas and Resource Townships

10.1 Background

Outside of the built-up communities and shoreline communities, the Planning Area has a predominantly rural character. Ample land, water, and natural resources have historically sustained economic development in the Planning Area. These natural resources include extensive swaths of forested lands which have been historically used for “non-traditional” agricultural uses suitable to the shallow soil cover and rocky topography which is found throughout the Planning Area (e.g., raising of animals for fur or fibre, agro-forestry, maple syrup production, and associated on-farm diversified uses).

, We note that there are no lands or areas within the Planning Area identified as being “prime agricultural areas” as defined by the PPS which must be protected over the long term for their predominant use for agricultural purposes, given the Planning Area’s lack of suitability for “traditional” agricultural uses (e.g., growing of crops or raising of livestock or other animals for food).

Despite this, the new Official Plan can encourage agricultural use as an economic driver for future resource-related growth.

In addition to the rural areas of the Planning Area, the existing Official Plan identifies Resource Townships as the following northern and eastern former townships (shown on Schedule A1 to the current Official Plan and provided as Figure 4 in this report):

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Rix (excluding Montreal River Harbour) | • Palmer |
| • Peever | • Archibald |
| • Home | • Marne (except Icewagon Lake and Ogidaki Lake) |
| • Slater (excluding Montreal River Harbour) | • LaVerendrye |
| • Smilsky | • Tupper |
| • Kincaid | • Jarvis |
| • Nicolet | • Anderson |
| | • Duncan |

As previously discussed, the PPS permits development on rural lands located in territory without municipal organization only where it is related to the sustainable management or use of resources, including resource-based recreational uses and recreational dwellings, and where it is

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appropriate to the infrastructure which is planned or available, avoiding the need for the unjustified or uneconomical expansion of such infrastructure.

The PPS only permits the development of other uses where the area forms part of a planning area, the necessary infrastructure and public service facilities are planned or available to support the development and are financially viable over their lifecycle, and it has been determined that the impacts of development will not place an undue strain on the public service facilities and infrastructure provided by adjacent municipalities, regions, and/or the province.

10.2 Current Official Plan

The Official Plan permits development in the Rural Area and identified Resource Townships on a limited basis, including single-detached dwellings on existing lots of record or lots created in accordance with consent policies of the plan, as well as non-residential uses, limited to conservation uses and small-scale resource-related industrial uses. The Official Plan requires that any other non-residential use in the rural area or resource townships may be permitted subject to a Zoning By-law Amendment provided there is adequate justification as to why the use cannot be located in a designated built-up area or shoreline community, and subject to the development and locational criteria established by the plan.

Permitted uses in the identified resource townships are limited to resource-based and resource-related uses governed by policies relating to agricultural land, waste management systems, mineral aggregate and mineral resources, remote development, and include conservation uses and small-scale resource-related industrial uses as are permitted in the rural area.

Consent policies for the rural area and identified resource townships largely mirror those prescribed for designated built-up communities and shoreline communities, except that the Official Plan does not prescribe a minimum lot size for lands within the identified resource townships, nor does it prescribe a maximum number of lots which may be severed from the original Crown-surveyed lot in the identified resource townships. The consent policies further establish that subdivisions are not permitted in the rural area or identified resource townships.

Within both the rural area and identified resource townships, new industrial uses are subject to criteria addressing location (i.e., to avoid land use incompatibility with adjacent residential uses), servicing (i.e., to prohibit industries requiring large quantities of water as part of their operation), compliance with applicable servicing policies and environmental standards, and direct that new industrial uses may only be permitted through a site-specific amendment to the Zoning By-law to ensure that all above criteria are met.

The existing Official Plan also contains limited policies regarding agricultural use in the rural areas, noting that although the topography of the Planning Area does not generally lend itself to agricultural use, there may be some lands within the Planning Area where small-scale agricultural use is viable. Policies specific to agricultural use in the rural areas outline permitted agricultural uses, including the growing of crops, raising of livestock and other animals, associated on-farm buildings and structures, agriculture-related uses (e.g., farm-related industrial and commercial uses small in scale and directly related to a farm operation in close proximity), and accessory uses such as a residential dwelling. These policies further establish a minimum lot size of 32 ha for agricultural use, and require that any new development, land uses, and new or expanding livestock facilities comply with the Minimum Distance Separation Formulae I and II where applicable.

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10.3 Recommendations

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness and the Ministry of Rural Affairs (formerly OMAFRA) provided preliminary comments on the Ministry's interests in protecting agriculture in Ontario following one-window consultation with partner ministries. The Ministry recommends updating the Official Plan to ensure that terminology for agricultural use is consistent with the PPS, and that policies concerning the Minimum Distance Separation are updated to reflect the new guidelines published in 2017. The new Official Plan can also incorporate additional flexibility in establishing guidelines for a minimum lot size recommended for agricultural use, with direction for more specific standards to be established and implemented in the Zoning By-law.

Concerning nutrient management, the new Official Plan can contain an explanatory note to outline the OMAFA's approach to nutrient management through applicable provincial legislation (i.e., Nutrient Management Act, 2002, S.O. 2002, c. 4). Although the Official Plan may not further regulate or introduce policy regarding nutrient management, the plan can give direction to landowners on the purpose and intent of the Nutrient Management Act (i.e., in providing for the management of materials containing nutrients in ways that enhance the protections of the natural environment and provide a sustainable future for agricultural operations and rural development) and any regulations that may apply.

In the new Official Plan, policies for residential and non-residential uses in the rural area and identified resource townships will be reviewed to ensure the Official Plan is consistent with the intent of the Planning Board for the rural area and identified resource townships and are in line with the policy direction for lands without municipal organization per the PPS. On rural lands, policies will include:

- Permitting a range of uses typically found in rural areas, such as the management or use of resources, resource-based recreational dwellings, locally appropriate residential development, agricultural uses, home occupations, home industries, cemeteries, and other rural land uses.
- Promoting tourism, recreation, and other economic opportunities on rural lands.
- Protecting rural land uses that require separation from other uses, including agricultural and resource-related uses.

It is further recommended that the new Official Plan incorporate a new structure for the policies which apply to the rural area and resource townships to improve the user-friendly functionality of the plan. This can be accomplished by establishing a "Rural Areas" land use designation and a "Resource Areas" land use designation in the new Official Plan, each with specific land use policies which relate to the designation, and which incorporate and update the policies of the existing Official Plan which apply to each (e.g., land division policies, permitted uses, and development and locational criteria).

The boundaries of each designation will generally follow the current zoning that applies to the Planning Area and can be further refined through consultation with the Planning Board, key external stakeholders, and members of the general public (i.e., through any future public open house or other engagement events held once draft materials are available for review and comment).

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11.0 Recreation, Parks, and Open Space

11.1 Background

Access to nature and outdoor recreation are key components of a healthy, liveable, and safe community. Parks and open spaces provide a range of benefits. From an environmental perspective, parks and open space mitigate flood risks and impacts of climate change by offering permeable, high-absorbing lands that offset the impacts of potential flood events, and trees and vegetation that absorb carbon dioxide and provide cooling canopies. Additionally, parks and open spaces provide areas where native species can thrive within developed or built-up areas. On a human level, parks and open spaces have positive impacts on physical health by encouraging physical activity and community connections. Parks and open spaces also offer opportunities to attract residents to the area and create a sense of place and space for residents.

Vast areas within the Planning Area are comprised of vacant, undeveloped Crown lands. The Planning Area also features several provincial parks and conservation reserves, including Pancake Bay Provincial Park, Batchewana River Provincial Park, Lake Superior Provincial Park, Goulais River Provincial Park, Montreal River Provincial Park, Wabos North Conservation Reserve, Wabos South Conservation Reserve, Searchmont South Forest Conservation Reserve, and Goulais River Beach Ridges Conservation Reserve.

As for public access to the waterfront, a substantial portion of the Planning Area borders on inland lakes and Lake Superior, where shorelines are stripped with residential development. While this ensures direct water access for those property owners that have abutting land, this does not provide any assurance of access by the general public nor for any back shore property owners.

The PPS directs planning authorities to promote healthy and active communities through a variety of approaches, including:

- planning public streets, spaces, and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of persons of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, foster social interaction, and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity;
- planning and providing for the needs of persons of all ages and abilities in the distribution of a full range of publicly accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, public spaces, open space areas, trails and linkages, and, where practical, water-based resources;
- providing opportunities for public access to shorelines; and
- recognizing provincial parks, conservation reserves, and other protected areas, and minimizing negative impacts on these areas.

With respect to acquiring additional lands for park and other public recreation purposes through the development process, Section 51.1 of the *Planning Act* enables planning authorities, including the Planning Board, to require that land be conveyed to for park or other public recreation purposes as a condition of approval of a plan of subdivision.⁴ In the case of a subdivision proposed

⁴ It should be noted that Section 42 of the *Planning Act* regarding conveyance of land for park purposes does not apply to the Planning Area, as the authority to require that land be conveyed for park or other public recreation purposes as a condition of development or redevelopment of land is limited to the council of a local municipality.

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for commercial or industrial purposes, the amount of land to be conveyed for park or other public recreation purposes cannot exceed 2 percent of the land within the plan of subdivision, and in the case of a subdivision proposed for all other purposes, including residential purposes, the amount of land to be conveyed for park or other public recreation purposes cannot exceed 5 percent of the land within the plan of subdivision. As an alternative to conveying land for park or other public recreation purposes, planning authorities may instead require a payment in lieu, to the value of the land otherwise required to be conveyed.

11.2 Current Official Plan

The current Official Plan contains limited policies with respect to recreation, parks, and open space. Recreation and parks are addressed briefly in the policies of Section 3.1 of the Official Plan (Social and Human Services), and commit the Planning Board to “facilitate a range of public service facilities that are necessary to meet the needs of the residents of the Planning Area” through the provision of recreation and cultural services including parks, playing fields, playgrounds, recreational trails, libraries, cemeteries, and group homes. Further policies in this section direct that certain public service facilities are better located in adjacent municipalities and not duplicated within the Planning Area, and direct that where new public service facilities are developed, they are located within designated built-up communities. Section 3.4 of the Official Plan (Efficient Use of Land, Infrastructure and Public Facilities) speaks to the limited public service facilities located in the Planning Area, including parks, community centres, and a library, note that additional facilities are not foreseen within the planning horizon of the plan, and direct that expansion of existing facilities can be accommodated on existing properties.

As for conservation reserves and provincial parks, these are identified on Schedule D of the Official Plan and highlighted in the Official Plan as key assets that provide opportunities for recreation in the Planning Area. Although the Official Plan identifies these areas for their conservation and recreational values, it does not provide corresponding policy to delineate the uses that are appropriate for conservation reserves, or to protect these lands from the impacts of development.

In terms of access to public lands and waterbodies, the Official Plan contains policies to recognize and protect existing points of access to waterbodies within the Planning Area and to protect access to public lands, including policy to require the conveyance or dedication of land or monies to be directed towards the acquisition and/or maintenance of public access points.

Aside from the policies enabling the conveyance of land or cash-in-lieu to acquire and/or maintain public access points to waterbodies, the existing Official Plan does not contain any policies which would enable them to require the conveyance of land for park or other public recreation purposes as a condition of approval of a plan of subdivision.

11.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that the new Official Plan includes policy corresponding to the conservation reserves and provincial parks identified on Schedule D to achieve the outcomes established by the current plan (i.e., preserving these areas for their conservation and recreational values).

It is further recommended that the current policies in the Official Plan be strengthened to achieve public access to shorelines and meet the requirements of the PPS.

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We further recommend that the new Official Plan contain policies for parks and open spaces which promote active transportation, including public trails and linkages, provide opportunities for public access to shorelines as part of the development approval process, plan for the provision of adequate parks and recreational facilities in the Planning Area, and recognize provincial parks and other protected areas, minimizing the potential impact of development on these areas.

12.0 Transportation

12.1 Background

A safe and efficient multimodal transportation system is central to quality of life, a strong economy and clean and healthy environment for all residents of the Planning Area. The PPS defines a transportation system as a system consisting of facilities, corridors and rights-of-way for the movement of people and goods, and associated transportation facilities including transit stops and stations, sidewalks, cycle lanes, bus lanes, high occupancy vehicle lanes, rail facilities, parking facilities, park'n'ride lots, service centres, rest stops, vehicle inspection stations, inter-modal facilities, harbours, airports, marine facilities, ferries, canals and associated facilities such as storage and maintenance. These transportation systems move individuals from their point of origin to their destination and can be considered either active (e.g., walking, cycling) or passive (e.g., driving, bus).

The PPS encourages the provision of transportation systems which are safe, energy efficient, facilitate the movement of people and goods, are appropriate to address projected needs, and support the use of zero- and low-emission vehicles. Transportation policies in the PPS further encourage connectivity within and among transportation systems and promote the planning, and improvement of transportation modes and connections which cross jurisdictional boundaries.

The transportation system in the Planning Area includes provincial highways (e.g., Highway 17 and several 500-series highways – 552, 556, 532 and 563), Local Roads Board roads, 50/50 agreement roads (i.e., roads with special agreements for maintenance between MTO and groups of property owners), private roads, and resource access roads. In addition, rail service provides access to some remote recreational dwellings within the Planning Area.

With proximity to the City of Sault Ste. Marie and the high proportion of workers commuting outside of the Planning Area for employment, strong transportation links are required between the Planning Area and surrounding communities.

Transportation planning guidelines have evolved to place an increasing emphasis on the need to integrate land use and transportation planning decisions and to provide individuals with additional non-automobile modes of transportation, including walking and cycling, with the goal of improving population health and climate change mitigation outcomes. Creating communities that support a variety of transportation methods helps to create healthier, more active communities. Enhanced sidewalk and trail networks provide venues for active transportation methods which allow for physical activity, increased social exchanges, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. These forms of transportation are also more accessible to a larger population.

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12.2 Current Official Plan

Transportation policies in the current Official Plan outline policies specific to provincial highways, local roads board and statute labour boards roads, 50/50 agreement roads, private roads, resource access roads, and rail services which provide access to remote recreational dwellings within the Planning Area, with the classification of these roads identified on Schedule A1 and A1A-G to the Official Plan (Proposed Settlement Pattern). Implementation policies address the review of development applications to verify the location of development relative to the type of road, point of access, and standard of construction and maintenance, directing proponents to MTO to obtain necessary permits where development is proposed in proximity to provincial highways. Further implementation policies encourage collaboration with other agencies, including local roads boards and statute labour boards, to enable their participation in the development review process, and directs the Zoning By-law to incorporate appropriate setbacks reflective of provincial standards and local land use control requirements.

Development and locational criteria for the designated built-up communities, shoreline communities, and rural areas include references to MTO's access requirements where lot creation is proposed along a 500 series highway or Highway 17.

12.3 Recommendations

We recommend that the transportation policies of the existing Official Plan are sufficient to address the needs of the Planning Area over the planning horizon of the new plan. We recommend that existing policies regarding development in the proximity of provincial highways should be updated to reflect current provincial guidance, where appropriate.

13.0 Servicing

13.1 Background

There are no full municipal sewage and water services within the Planning Area – all properties are serviced entirely by way of private on-site water and sewage services, with most systems being private individual on-site systems and few being private communal systems. There are no plans to introduce additional communal systems or full or partial municipal systems to service future development in the Planning Area.

Policies within Section 3.6 of the PPS concern sewage, water, and stormwater services, and direct planning authorities to accommodate forecasted growth in a timely manner that:

- promotes the efficient use and optimization of existing private communal sewage services and private communal water services;
- ensures that these services are provided in a manner that:
 - a) can be sustained by the water resources upon which such services rely;
 - b) is feasible and financially viable over their life cycle; and,
 - c) protects human health and safety, and the natural environment, including the quality and quantity of water;
- promotes water and energy conservation and efficiency;

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- integrates servicing and land use considerations at all stages of the planning process;
- is in accordance with the servicing options outlined through the policies of the PPS.

Further policies in this section of the PPS direct that where municipal sewage services and municipal water services or private communal sewage services and private communal water services are not available, planned or feasible, individual on-site sewage services and individual on-site water services may be used provided that site conditions are suitable for the long-term provision of such services with no negative impacts. These policies further encourage planning authorities, at the time of official plan review or update, to assess the long-term impacts of individual on-site sewage services and individual on-site water services on environmental health and the financial viability or feasibility of other forms of servicing set out in the PPS (i.e., municipal or private communal services). The PPS also specifies that new lot creation shall only be permitted where there is sufficient reserve sewage and water system capacity, which includes treatment capacity for hauled sewage from private communal and individual on-site services.

With respect to waste management, there are currently two active waste management facilities in the Planning Area – one in Havilland and the second in Montreal River, as well as three closed sites at Searchmont, Fenwick, and Batchewana. The PPS directs that waste management systems need to be planned for and provided that are of an appropriate size, type, and location to accommodate present and future requirements, and facilitate integrated waste management.

The final consideration for servicing relates to stormwater management. In the Planning Area, stormwater management predominantly takes the form of ditches, swales, and culverts that are managed by the authority having jurisdiction, including, for example, MTO, the Local Roads Board, or the Statute Labour Board. Policy direction in the PPS related to stormwater management directs that planning must:

- minimize, or, where possible, prevent or reduce increases in stormwater volumes and contaminant loads;
- minimize erosion and changes in water balance including through the use of green infrastructure;
- mitigate risks to human health, safety, property and the environment;
- maximize the extent and function of vegetative and pervious surfaces; and,
- promote best practices, including stormwater attenuation and re-use, water conservation and efficiency, and low impact development

It is important to ensure that development and site alteration affecting stormwater management facilities follow best management practices and make efficient use of available infrastructure. As discussed in previous sections of this report, the impacts of a changing climate will necessitate sufficient infrastructure for stormwater management. Since the Official Plan came into effect, land use planning for stormwater management has also evolved to emphasize the need for more naturalized stormwater management practices to help reduce maintenance cost and encourage more sustainable practices, such as green infrastructure and low impact development.

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13.2 Current Official Plan

The Official Plan includes policies regarding water and sewage services which promote new development on the basis of private individual on-site services, detail the conditions wherein a servicing options report or hydrogeological study may be required to support lot creation, and prescribe a minimum lot area of 0.8 ha for development to be supported by individual private services.

As for waste management, the Official Plan includes policies for solid waste disposal sites and limitations to development adjacent to these sites to ensure land use compatibility in line with MECP's D-4 guidelines. The Official Plan does not specifically contemplate the capacity of existing landfill sites to accommodate the waste generated by existing and future anticipated development over the time horizon of the plan, noting only that the Planning Board will work with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Sault North Waste Management Council in the continued planning and operation of these sites for area residents.

With respect to stormwater management, policies in the Official Plan prescribe the preparation of a stormwater management plan when large-scale development or redevelopment (i.e., plan of subdivision, industrial development, or large-scale non-residential development) is proposed in the Environmental Management Policy Area as delineated on Schedule D. Lands within the Environmental Management Policy Area are limited to lands affected by flooding hazards or hazardous lands.

13.3 Recommendations

The new Official Plan should reflect the servicing hierarchy established by the PPS, which allows for private individual on-site water and sewage services, where municipal or private communal water or sewage services are not available, planned or feasible, and provided site conditions are suitable for the long-term use of private individual on-site services with no negative impacts.

Policies of the Official Plan should also be reviewed in the context of the updated PPS policies, including, for example, ensuring there is sufficient capacity in existing waste management facilities to accommodate existing and future development anticipated over the time horizon of the plan, and indicating how the need for additional landfill capacity will be addressed if there is insufficient capacity available. As a next step, we recommend further consultation with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) as to the capacity and lifespan of the existing waste management facilities to serve the limited growth and development anticipated within the Planning Area over the plan's horizon.

With respect to stormwater management, the new Official Plan should include policy to require the preparation of a stormwater management and construction mitigation plan to support large-scale development in all areas of the Planning Area, not only those within the Environmental Management Policy Area, or where development is proposed near the waterfront, and should also be updated to reflect the policy requirements of the PPS.

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14.0 Minerals and Aggregate Resources

14.1 Background

The conservation and management of natural resources and the mineral resource base is a matter of provincial interest outlined in the Planning Act, given that Ontario's long-term prosperity depends on protecting mineral resources for their economic and social benefits.

The PPS states that minerals, petroleum resources and mineral aggregate resources shall be protected for long term use and requires planning authorities to establish policies related to development on or adjacent to deposits of these resources. The PPS defines adjacent lands as those "contiguous to lands on the surface of known petroleum resources, mineral deposits, or deposits of mineral aggregate resources where it is likely that development would constrain future access to the resources". Policy direction within the PPS requires that mineral mining and petroleum resource operations be identified and protected from development activities which would preclude or hinder their expansion or continued use, or which would be incompatible for reasons of public health, public safety, or environmental impacts. The PPS prescribes exclusive criteria for which development on lands adjacent to known mineral deposits, known petroleum resources, and significant areas of mineral potential to achieve this goal, permitting development only if resource use would not be feasible, the proposed land use or development serves a greater long-term public interest, and issues of public health, public safety, and environmental impact are addressed. Policies regarding mineral and petroleum resources in the PPS further require rehabilitation once extraction and related uses have ceased in order to accommodate subsequent land uses and encourage progressive rehabilitation wherever feasible.

Policies in the PPS regarding mineral aggregate resources mirror those concerning minerals and petroleum resources and further require that extraction be undertaken in a manner which minimizes social, economic, and environmental impacts, and that mineral aggregate resource conversation must be undertaken wherever feasible. The PPS also requires that as much of the mineral aggregate resources as is realistically possible be made available as close to markets as possible and emphasizes that demonstration of the need for mineral aggregate resources not be required, notwithstanding the availability, designation, or licensing for extraction of mineral aggregate resources locally or elsewhere.

The Province also provides the D-series Environmental Land Use guides, which provide recommended measures to ensure land use compatibility and environmental considerations. These include the D-6 series of guides for compatibility between industrial facilities, to which mineral resource extraction and mineral aggregate operations are subject. These provide guidance for municipalities and planning authorities on recommended separation distances and applicable studies to determine potential impacts on adjacent uses to ensure compatibility.

14.2 Current Official Plan

Minerals and mineral aggregate resources, including sand and gravel pits, sand and gravel resource areas (primary and secondary significance), aggregate sites, mineral potential areas, mineral deposit inventories (occurrences and discretionary occurrences), and mine hazards, are identified on Schedule C to the Official Plan.

Policies regarding aggregate extraction address the protection of human health and safety, the protection of areas of resource potential from incompatible land uses which would hinder resource

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extraction (i.e., prescribing an influence area around mineral aggregate extraction activities), and the promotion of proper rehabilitation sites after extraction has ceased.

With respect to mineral resources, the goal of the existing Official Plan is to manage mining resource lands by protecting existing and potential resources, by controlling and regulating operations, by requiring rehabilitation plans, by minimizing adverse impacts on the environment, by protecting the resource from incompatible land uses, and by providing for subsequent land uses once mineral extraction activities have ceased. These policies place pre-emptive rights on mineral resource-related uses, including exploration, development and mining of mineral resources, mine structures, buildings, and mining resource-related uses, on those lands with mineral resource potential. As with the policies regarding mineral aggregate extraction, the policies concerning mineral resources address the establishment of new mines, activities on past producing mines, rehabilitation measures, development in proximity of abandoned mine sites, resource depletion, and the protection of areas of resource potential from incompatible land uses which would hinder resource extraction (i.e., prescribing an influence area around mineral aggregate extraction activities).

14.3 Recommendations

It is recommended that the existing policies of the Official Plan with respect to minerals and mineral aggregate resources be carried forward and supplemented with policies to address new policies of the PPS, including:

- Encouraging the progressive rehabilitation of former mineral and mineral aggregate resource extraction activities wherever feasible;
- Specifying that applications for new mineral aggregate resource extraction activities are not required to demonstrate the need for mineral aggregate resources, including any type of supply/demand analysis, notwithstanding the availability, designation, or licensing for extraction of mineral aggregate resources locally or elsewhere;
- Requiring that extraction of mineral aggregate resources must be undertaken in a manner that minimizes social, economic, and environmental impacts, as may be demonstrated through the completion of impact assessments or other technical studies;
- Specifying that existing mineral aggregate resource operations are permitted to continue without amendment to the Official Plan and/or Zoning By-law;
- Encouraging comprehensive rehabilitation planning where there is a concentration of mineral aggregate operations; and,
- Requiring progressive and final rehabilitation to accommodate subsequent land uses once extraction activities have ceased, promote land use compatibility, recognize the interim nature of extraction, and mitigate negative impacts to the extent possible, taking into consideration surrounding land use and approved land use designations.

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15.0 Cultural Heritage

15.1 Background

Cultural heritage landscapes are defined in the PPS as “defined geographical area[s] that may have been modified by human activity and [are] identified as having cultural heritage value or interest by a community, including an Indigenous community.” These areas may include features such as buildings, structures, spaces, views, archaeological sites or natural elements that are valued together for their interrelationship, meaning or association. Built heritage also falls under the realm of cultural heritage and is an important component of responsible land use planning. Built heritage resources refers to buildings, structures, monuments, installations or any manufactured or constructed parts or remnants that contribute to a property’s cultural heritage value or interest as identified by a community, including an Indigenous community. Policy direction in the PPS requires that protected heritage property, which may contain built heritage resources or cultural heritage landscapes, must be conserved.

Archaeological resources and areas of archaeological potential comprise the final component of cultural heritage contemplated by the PPS. Archaeological resources include artifacts, archaeological sites, and marine archaeological sites which are identified and evaluated based upon archaeological fieldwork conducted in accordance with the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Areas which are likely to contain archaeological resources are deemed to hold archaeological potential and require confirmation by a licensed archaeologist where development or site alteration is proposed. The Province has an established set of criteria to identify whether a property may hold archaeological potential which considers factors such as the presence of known archaeological sites on adjacent lands, proximity to present or past water sources, or evidence of early historic settlement, among other factors.⁵ Policy direction in the PPS prohibits development and site alteration on lands containing archaeological resources or in areas of archaeological potential unless significant archaeological resources have been conserved.

The PPS also requires that planning authorities engage early with Indigenous communities and ensure their interests are considered when identifying, protecting, and managing archaeological resources, built heritage resources, and cultural heritage landscapes.

15.2 Current Official Plan

Section 3.10 of the Official Plan contains policies to guide the preservation of cultural heritage, built heritage, and archaeological resources. Existing policies in the Official Plan recognize the importance of cultural heritage, landscapes, built heritage resources, and archaeological resources and provide for the identification, restoration, protection, maintenance, and enhancement of these resources.

Concerning archaeological resources specifically, the current Official Plan provides direction for areas having potential for archaeological resources to be identified and incorporated into a specific GIS layer which may be periodically updated through amendment to the plan. Policies within this section further prescribe consultation with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport (MTCS) as to where archaeological resources may be identified, as an interim measure until areas of archaeological potential are identified and mapped. These policies further require that,

⁵ Refer to “Criteria for Evaluating Archaeological Potential” (Form 021-0478) available on the Province’s Central Forms Repository: <https://forms.mgcs.gov.on.ca/en/dataset/021-0478>

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where archaeological resources may be identified (i.e., on lands with archaeological potential), proponents must carry out assessment of the subject property and mitigate any adverse impacts to significant archaeological resources that are found. The Official Plan further prescribes specific criteria for how an archaeological assessment must be carried out (i.e., to be completed by a licensed archaeologist subject to the requirements of the *Ontario Heritage Act* and in accordance with the protocols of MTCS). The current Official Plan further requires proponents of waterfront development to complete an archaeological assessment prepared by a licensed marine archaeologist, recognizing that there may be archaeological remains underneath the waterways of the Planning Area, and notably the waters of Lake Superior. These policies further outline general consultation requirements to assist in determining archaeological potential (i.e., when an assessment should be required), directing the Planning Board to consult with MTCS and Indigenous communities. The Official Plan also directs that the Planning Board consult with MTCS and Indigenous communities where archaeological resources are identified through development, requiring also that the Ontario Provincial Police are consulted where unidentified burial sites are encountered.

The remainder of the Official Plan's policies concerning cultural heritage generally prohibit development and site alteration, including public work, private development, consent, or zoning by-law amendment, on lands adjacent to a cultural heritage feature or property unless the impacts have been evaluated by a qualified professional and provisions are made which demonstrate that the heritage attributes of the adjacent property will be protected.

15.3 Recommendations

Comments from the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism (MCM) following One-Window consultation provide direction for the Official Plan to be updated with respect to the preservation of cultural heritage resources to be consistent with the 2024 PPS. Their recommendations address such matters as the transfer of responsibility for administering the Ontario Heritage Act to MCM from MTCS, suggestions for a new format of subsections to delineate policy respecting each of the three prongs of cultural heritage, and overall, to improve consistency with the terminology and policy directions of the PPS, the *Ontario Heritage Act*, and other relevant provincial legislation. Specific recommendations for the new or updated policies in the Official Plan include:

- Updating any references to MTCS to MCM in line with their responsibility to administer the Ontario Heritage Act.
- Utilizing terminology from the PPS throughout policy in this section – i.e., cultural heritage resources as an umbrella term to refer to cultural heritage landscapes, built heritage resources, and archaeological resources, and refer to each in the introductory text of this section and underscores their importance to contributing to a community's sense of place.
- Re-organizing subsections under Section 3.10.4 (Policy) to address archaeological resources separately from built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes.
- Including reference to the requirements under the *Ontario Heritage Act* to maintain a register of property situated in the Planning Area which is of cultural heritage value or interest, and to reference municipal designation powers under the Ontario Heritage Act and the Board's ability to establish a heritage committee.

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- Reflecting PPS direction to conserve significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes, and to prohibit development and site alteration on lands containing archaeological resources or areas of archaeological potential unless significant archaeological resources have been conserved.
- Including policy to address demolition control of designated heritage properties as per Section 33 of the *Planning Act*.
- Including policy to recognize the presence of terrestrial and/or marine archaeological sites or areas of archaeological potential within the Planning Area and revising existing policy regarding when an archaeological assessment may be required to reflect PPS direction. Furthermore, introducing alternative approaches to safeguarding areas of high potential for the recovery of archaeological resources, including with holding provisions, as appropriate, to prohibit development and site alteration where an assessment has not yet been completed by a qualified professional.
- Including policy that provides consideration for the Planning Board's future efforts to undertake an Archaeological Management Plan with direction from MCM.
- Including policy that provides direction for the Planning Board to enter into a data sharing agreement with MCM to assist in the conservation of archaeological resources.
- Revising existing policy regarding cemeteries and burial sites to align with the Ontario Heritage Act and the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act.
- Removing policy that references consultation with the province as part of the development review process.
- Strengthening existing policies regarding consultation and engagement with Indigenous communities in the identification and conservation of cultural heritage resources.
- Including a new section of the Official Plan that addresses a broad range of technical studies that may be required to support development applications, including, for example, conservation plans, archaeological assessments and heritage impact assessments as they relate to the preservation of cultural heritage resources.

16.0 Protecting Public Health and Safety

16.1 Background

A key element of land use planning is ensuring that development does not occur in locations that are not appropriate due to the risk of public health and safety and property damage/loss. These areas fall within two categories – natural hazards and human made hazards.

Natural hazards include hazardous lands, hazardous sites and hazardous forest types for wildland fire. These hazard types are influenced by climate change. The PPS defines hazardous lands as property or lands that could be unsafe for development due to naturally occurring processes. Policies concerning natural hazards in the 2024 PPS direct development to generally occur in areas outside of hazardous lands adjacent to the shorelines of the Great Lakes, large inland lakes, rivers, streams, and small inland lakes impacted by flooding hazards, erosion hazards, and/or dynamic beach hazards and in areas outside of hazardous sites (i.e., property or lands that could be unsafe for development and site alteration due to naturally occurring hazards, including

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unstable soils or unstable bedrock, steep slopes which may be associated with slope instability, erosion, or access constraints).

The PPS expressly prohibits development and site alteration within the dynamic beach hazard and floodways, regardless of whether the area of inundation contains high points of land not subject to flooding. Natural hazard policies in the PPS further prohibit development and site alteration within areas that would be rendered inaccessible to people and vehicles during times of flooding hazards, erosion hazards and/or dynamic beach hazards, unless it has been demonstrated that the site has safe access appropriate for the nature of the development and the natural hazard. New policies in the 2024 PPS require that planning authorities prepare for the impacts of a changing climate that may increase the risk associated with natural hazards. Only limited permissions are included in the PPS for development and site alteration in certain areas associated with the flooding hazard along river, stream, and small inland lake systems, for example, where development is limited to uses which by their nature must locate within the floodway, in those exceptional circumstances where a special policy area has been approved by the Province, and where effects and risk to public safety are minor, could be mitigated in accordance with provincial standards, and meets defined criteria.

As for other types of natural hazards, the PPS further requires that development be generally directed to areas outside of lands that are unsafe for development due to the presence of hazardous forest types for wildland fire – that is, forest types assessed as being associated with the risk of high to extreme wildland fire using risk assessment tools established by the province and amended from time to time. The PPS permits development on lands with hazardous forest types for wildland fire only where the risk is mitigated in accordance with wildland fire assessment and mitigation standards.

The last category of hazards contemplated by the PPS are human made hazards – that is, those places where human activity on the landscape has occurred and the activity has created a risk to further development. Human made hazards include mine hazards, oil, gas and salt hazards, or former mineral mining operations, mineral aggregate operations or petroleum resource operations. Policies regarding human-made hazards in the PPS permit development on, abutting, or adjacent to lands affected by human-made hazards only if rehabilitation or other measures to address and mitigate known or suspected hazards are underway or have been completed. These policies also require contaminated sites to be assessed and remediated as needed prior to any activity on the site associated with a proposed use such that there will be no adverse effects.

16.2 Current Official Plan

The Official Plan includes policies for hazardous lands as delineated on Schedule D in the Environmental Management Policy Area, which include lands subject to hazards including flooding, erosion, dynamic beaches, unstable soils, and unstable bedrock. These policies define a specific elevation for the flooding hazard of Lake Superior and define the floodplain for all other lands adjacent to waterbodies as the 1:100 regulatory flood, with direction for the Zoning By-law to include a prescribed setback to prohibit development within the floodplain. Existing policies in the Official Plan generally direct development away from hazardous lands and dynamic beaches, and outline permitted uses within the Environmental Management Policy Area consistent with direction from the PPS. Although policies specific to the Environmental Management Policy Area generally prohibit new development, the Official Plan does recognize existing buildings within the floodplain and permits minor additions through amendment to the Zoning By-law where specified criteria can be met.

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Policies regarding human made hazards specifically address mine hazards given the Planning Area's history of resource extraction and provide for safe development on or adjacent to lands where mine hazards are known or suspected, including appropriate remediation and rehabilitation measures to mitigate any risk to public health, public safety, or property damage.

16.3 Recommendations

The Official Plan policies related to public health and safety should be reviewed and expanded to include the full range of hazards identified in the PPS, including new provincial requirements for wildland fires. The Official Plan should also be reviewed to ensure that hazard mapping remains accurate and that policies are appropriate to address the risk of development associated with such hazards and are consistent with the 2024 PPS. In particular, policies in the Official Plan should be updated to:

- give additional direction to proponents as to the requirements of technical studies prepared by qualified professionals to refine the extent and boundaries of flooding, erosion, and/or dynamic beach hazards on a site-specific basis;
- address the criteria defined by the 2024 PPS by which development and site alteration may be permitted in portions of hazardous lands and hazardous sites where the effects to public safety are minor;
- provide guidance on accepted floodproofing standards, protection works standards, and access standards that must be applied where development is proposed on portions of hazardous lands where risk to public safety is minor; and,
- consider the impacts on natural hazards posed by a changing climate, as discussed in previous sections of this report.

17.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

The recommendations presented in this report will inform the basis for drafting the new Official Plan for the Planning Area and will be presented to the Planning Board, stakeholders, and the public for their input on the directions for the new Official Plan. Once a draft of the new Official Plan has been prepared based on the recommendations provided in this background report, direction from the Planning Board, and early consultation with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the draft Official Plan will be presented to the public and interested stakeholders at an in-person open house and public meeting, in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning Act*. The final draft Official Plan will be accordingly revised to incorporate input from the public and stakeholders before presenting it to the Planning Board for a decision on adoption at or following a statutory public meeting, and a summary of the feedback gathered throughout the project will be presented to the Board in a report which will be made publicly available.

Ultimately, the new Official Plan will be subject to approval by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing upon its adoption by the Planning Board. We anticipate that the open house and public meeting will be held in mid to late 2025, with approval from the Ministry following in 2026.

Once the new Official Plan is approved and in full force and effect, project efforts will focus on updating the Zoning By-law to implement the new and updated policies of the new Official Plan.

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