



GEORGINA

Zoning By-law Conformity Exercise (Phase I)
The Corporation of the Town of Georgina

Public Engagement and Communications Plan

July 2021

H A R D Y
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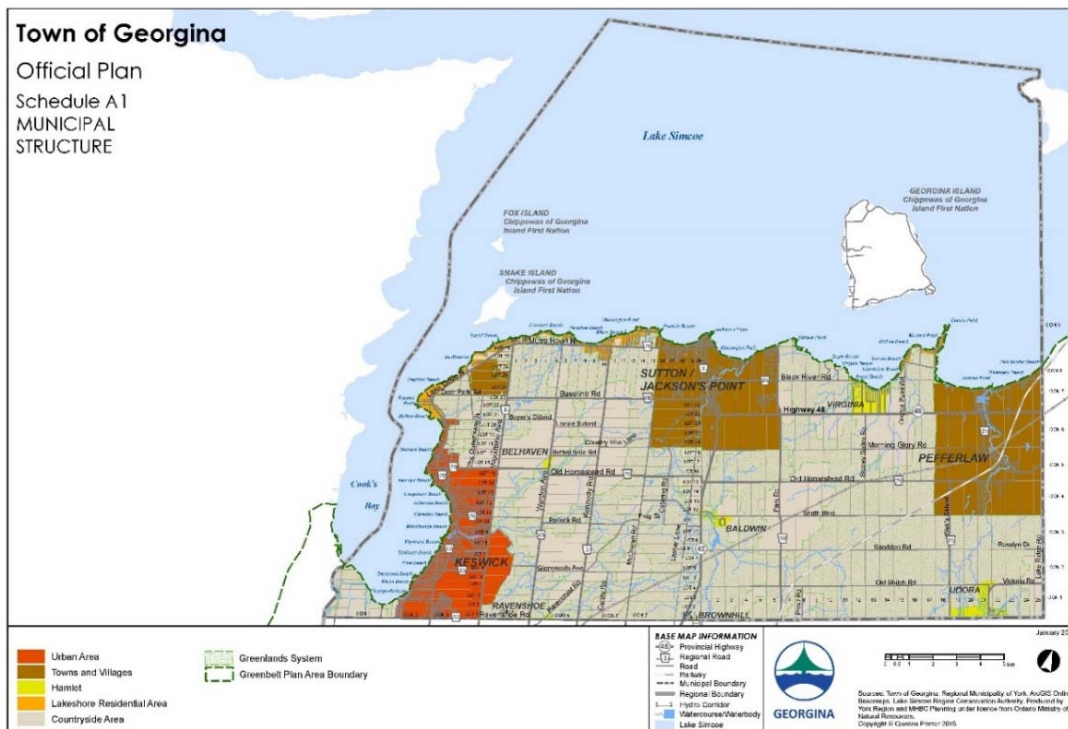
1.0 Background and Foundation of Plan

1.1 Project Basis

The Corporation of the Town of Georgina is undertaking Phase I of a Zoning By-law Conformity Exercise to bring the Town’s comprehensive Zoning By-law No. 500 (zoning by-law), into conformity with the Town of Georgina Official Plan (Official Plan).

Phase I will implement mapping and zoning provisions for the Town’s Countryside Area¹ as identified on Schedule A1 of the Official Plan (fig. 1). Specifically, the focus will be to implement the individual designations and respective policies within the Countryside Area including the Environmental Protection Area, Agricultural Protection Area, Specialty Crop Area, Rural Area, and all other applicable designations as set out in Schedule A2 of the Official Plan.

Fig 1: Official Plan, Schedule A1 – Municipal Structure



¹ The Countryside Area is identified by the tan colour on Schedule A1.

The Official Plan came into force on Nov. 23, 2016, and established an updated vision, policy framework and mapping to guide growth and development while protecting the Town’s natural resources. In accordance with the Planning Act, Section 26 (9), within three years of a revision to an Official Plan, the Town must amend all zoning by-laws in effect to ensure they conform to the policies and land-use designations of the Official Plan. Phase I represents the first of two phases to bring the zoning by-law into conformity with the Official Plan.

1.2 Communications Planning

Consistent consultation and engagement early and throughout the project are key features of effective communications planning. For this reason, it is important at the start of the project to establish values and commitments, opportunities and challenges, key messages, and the roles and responsibilities of project team members in communications development and approval.

The project team has already met for a project initiation meeting and has developed this document as well as the project work plan in order to establish a logical working path for the project.

1.3 Communications Team

The team responsible for public engagement and communications development, approval and facilitation/distribution consists of Town staff with support from the Town’s retained consultant, Hardy Stevenson and Associates Limited (HSAL). The individual team members and there specific roles/responsibilities with respect to implementation of the plan is outlined below in Table 1.

Table 1: Communications Team Roles and Responsibilities

Title	Organization	Name	Role/Responsibility
Project Manager	Town of Georgina	Tolek Makarewicz	Oversees project direction, reviews all material prior to circulation, and ensures appropriate internal staff engagement.

Manager of Planning Policy	Town of Georgina	Alan Drozd	Approver.
Public Consultation Facilitator	Hardy Stevenson and Associates Limited (HSAL)	Noah Brotman Sandra LeFaucheur	Lead development and execution of PECP.
Communications Supervisor	Town of Georgina	Anne Winstanley	Facilitates public notification and project updates through the Town's Social Media channels, local newspapers, media releases and the Town's digital signs.
Strategy and QA QC	Hardy Stevenson and Associates Limited (HSAL)	Dave Hardy R.P.P.	Responsible for the overall success of the PECP and support for the exercise.

1.4 Values and Commitments

The following is a summary of the values and commitments that will guide the actions of the project team as it relates to engagement and communications undertakings for the project.

Engagement and Communications Values and Commitments

Transparency:

1. Ensure the public is engaged early in the project and kept informed throughout.
2. Pertinent updates, information, reports, by-laws and Council decisions related to the project will be made available through the dedicated project webpage.

Accountability:

1. General questions, concerns, comments and requests for information from the public and stakeholders will typically be responded to by the project team within one business day.

2. Site-specific concerns or comments of a technical nature that require detailed review and further consideration will be acknowledged by the project team typically within one business day and a response provided following a comprehensive review of all comments received.
3. All comments received and responses provided will be reported to Council comprehensively.

Inclusiveness:

1. A variety of community outreach methods will be utilized to notify, inform and update the widest audience possible.
2. The stakeholder registry will be updated frequently to reflect changes.
3. Public Information Centres are anticipated to be held virtually due to the pandemic. This will be reassessed as public health regulations change.

1.5 Objectives

This PECP is designed to exceed the minimum consultation requirements of the Planning Act. The plan reflects the Town's desire to engage, educate and regularly communicate with the public and respond to all requests for information in a timely manner. More specifically, implementation of the PECP is intended to achieve the following objectives:

- **Build and enhance awareness of the project:**
 - Inform the public on the process and legislative requirements to enhance their understanding of the project and its purpose.
 - Awareness of the project will be built through:
 - conducting an initial mail circulation to all assessed property owners within the study area advising them of the project and directing them to the dedicated project webpage for further information;
 - posting about the project through the Town's social medial channels and on the news and alerts section of the Town website;
 - posting a media release and notice of project initiation in the Georgina Advocate;
 - posting information at the Georgina Public Library (when possible given COVID restrictions on public space);

- messages on the Town’s digital signs to promote Public Open House (POH);
 - presentations to Council and committees; and
 - Town staff, the Mayor and Council through conversations with the public.
- Find opportunities to make engagement interesting and fun.
 - Establish meaningful communication at key points in the project between the Town, project team and stakeholders.
 - Utilize web-based, electronic and print materials to ensure stakeholders have access to available information and documentation.
- **Engage in open, two-way communications with stakeholders:**
 - Engage with stakeholders through a variety of communications methods throughout the project. This will include: responding to requests for additional information; directly speaking with and addressing the concerns of property owners who may be impacted by changing zoning designations; holding a POH for the community to gain a greater understanding of the project; and ensuring Council, York Region, and the Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority are engaged.
 - Provide timely, accurate and easily understood information so people can be meaningfully involved in the process.
 - Be flexible and facilitate additional consultation activities if extra dialogue with stakeholders or the public is required.
 - Under normal circumstances, equal access for participation would be ensured by hosting events at venues that are accessible (e.g., meeting the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act), conveniently located and known to the public. However, due to the pandemic, meetings and consultation events will be held virtually.
 - Advertise the contact information of the project manager to establish open lines of communication.
 - Listen.

- **Deliver timely and effective communications:**
 - A variety of methods will be used to provide stakeholders and the public with timely information (e.g., project webpage, email, social media and print notices, as required).
 - Sufficient notice (a minimum of two weeks) will be provided by the project team for all public meetings and consultation events.

- **Resolve issues that arise:**
 - Direct all comments and concerns to the project manager for receipt, review and follow up.
 - Track and respond to all issues, comments and concerns raised by the public and report to Council on their resolution.

1.6 Challenges

Due to their nature, planning exercises such as this come with a host of common challenges. One of the primary challenges for this project is that zoning by-laws updates, like many other planning exercises, are processes which many community members' are either not aware of or choose not to engage in for a variety of reasons. By the time they find out about the change in zoning on their property, it is usually too late to contribute to the process. This usually happens when the landowner submits or inquires about information related to building permits on their land. Additional challenges which the project team may encounter throughout the conformity exercise include:

- Ensuring as many landowners, businesses and residents potentially impacted by the conformity exercise are notified of the project early in the process so they are able to participate from start to finish if they have an interest.
- Explaining where this project fits in to the overall planning efforts of the Town, Region and Province.

- Explaining the scope of what is being done through this project and how the existing planning and regulatory framework currently provides the same level of protection for the land.
- Assuring stakeholders their input matters and the Town will act in the best interests of the community and the environment.
- Maintaining public interest throughout the entirety of the project to facilitate meaningful dialogue.

In order to address these challenges early in the process, the PECP has been designed to frontload notification and communication efforts to reach the widest audience possible within the study area. Project notifications and updates will be provided for major milestones throughout the project so that there is no public fatigue from providing over notification. Furthermore, since this is a mandated conformity exercise, an important component when communicating with members of the public will be educating them on the process and explaining how it fits into the overall Ontario planning framework. In summary, the project team proposes to address these identified challenges with the public and stakeholders through adequate notification, open communication and public education.

1.7 Communication during COVID-19

During the pandemic, all efforts will be made to limit in-person meetings and hand-delivered notices by the project team to private residences, business and Town facilities. As distancing regulations begin to loosen, the project team will carefully consider the implementation of hand-delivered notices, in-person conversations and holding the Public Information Centre in person, all in keeping with current regulations and Public Health guidelines. The dedicated project webpage will act as the central touch point for project information and updates.

1.8 Key Messages

The following are key messages to be promoted throughout the project:

1. The purpose of this conformity exercise is to bring the Town’s zoning by-law into compliance with the Official Plan.
2. This conformity exercise is mandated by legislation and required to implement the Official Plan’s vision, permitted uses and policies within the Countryside Area.
3. The Town recognizes the importance and value of public and stakeholder consultation and input, and ensure all input is acknowledged and considered.

2.0 Stakeholders

For this project, a variety stakeholders will be engaged. Consultation will be a two-way communication process between the project team and affected or interested stakeholders and landowners.

2.1 Public Stakeholders

Public stakeholders are primarily residents, landowners, businesses and people who are employed in the Countryside Area of the Town, although environmental and other groups and residents in settlement areas and hamlets may also have an interest in the project.

A stakeholder registry will be used for the project to track interested parties and stakeholders. The registry will be a living document and updated as necessary to reflect the following:

- Add new stakeholders who request to be notified of future project updates and events;
- Record mail that has been returned as unsend or undeliverable;
- Reflect requested changes to contact information; and,
- Removal of stakeholders who wish to receive no further notice regarding the project.

Table 2 below is a summary of the various public stakeholder groups as well as their potential interests and influences.

Table 2: Public Stakeholders

Group	Potential Interest/Influence
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<p>Landowners, business owners, residents and community associations</p>	<p>Direct interest in the impacts new zoning will have on specific properties within the Countryside Area as it relates to permitted uses and restrictions.</p> <p>Conversations about the project among community members will have the greatest influence on public perception.</p> <p>Landowners, residents and business owners may also approach the project team and the Mayor and members of Council regarding concerns about the proposed zoning of land they have an interest in.</p>
<p>Environmental, Agricultural and other organization and/or groups</p>	<p>Their interest will be to ensure that environmental features and functions and/or prime agricultural lands are appropriately identified and protected through zoning and related prohibitions on development in accordance with provincial policy and best practices.</p> <p>Organizations and groups can impact the public perception of the project and can be positive contributors to helping the community’s understanding of the project.</p>

2.2 Indigenous Consultation

In addition to engaging the public and agencies, the Town will also circulate an initial project initiation notice to the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation and other indigenous communities who may have an interest in the project. The notice will introduce the project and offer an initial meeting with the project team to provide an opportunity to talk about the project, ask questions and identify their interests. This invitation will be extended early in the process and appropriate engagement activities will be determined based on individual responses.

3.0 Engagement and Communications Activities

The focus of engagement and communications for this project will be to help explain and simplify the complex ideas and processes of the Zoning By-law Conformity Exercise so everyone can understand and participate. Key principles of the engagement and communications activities for the project will be to share clear information and maps in an easily accessible way, to give people a variety of ways to have their input heard, and to work with various groups and individuals who may have questions or concerns.

Outlined below is a summary of all the communications deliverables for the project, including the purpose, method of communication, audience, responsibility and frequency. Target delivery dates, as set out in the project work plan, will be confirmed as the project advances.

Communications will be conducted in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) including the selection of the venue(s) for the public open house and preparation of public notices and project documentation. During the pandemic, all meetings and events will be virtual.

3.1 Notification Process

The following describes the general process that will be followed for the project notifications. All notices will be prepared with sufficient time allotted to incorporate the Town's review process.

- HSAL will prepare the notices within a five-day timeframe prior to sending to the Town project team members for the start of the Town's internal review process.
- Town will review and make changes as necessary to finalize the notices.
- Town will post and circulate the notice as appropriate, and provide the final version to HSAL.
- The Town will track all written comments and concerns that are directly received from the public in a comment matrix (Excel database) and send to the project team for review and response.

- Town Planning Policy staff, in concert with Communications staff, will be primarily responsible for communications. HSAL will support all communications efforts by the Town and provide input on responses as requested.
- Regular project updates and notices will be distributed:
 - Through direct email to stakeholder list of those who have requested to stay updated.
 - Regularly updated content posted to the dedicated project webpage.
 - Direct mail to specific stakeholders as necessary.
 - Statutory circulations in accordance with the Planning Act will be conducted where required.

3.2 Customer Service Tracking (Comment Matrix)

Throughout the project, all stakeholder engagements will be documented in a comment matrix.

The proposed protocol for managing stakeholder communication is:

- Town staff will log all comments, concerns and questions received from external stakeholders via written correspondence. These will be recorded a comment matrix for issue tracking and record keeping purposes.
- All responses will be recorded, including the dates of incoming and outgoing communications.
- All comments received and responses provided will be summarized and provided in a future report to Council.

3.3 Public Open House

Once the initial draft of the zoning by-law has been developed, a POH will be held to allow the public and stakeholders to directly connect with the project team and to obtain information through personal (or virtual) interaction. Depending on governmental guidance relating to the pandemic, the POH will be held either as an in-person, open-house style format with display boards, or as a virtual event to be held entirely online. Team members from both the Town and

HSAL will be present at the POH to explain the project and respond to any questions or concerns that attendees may have. POH material including display boards, sign-in sheets and comments forms will be prepared as per Town standards.

3.4 Project-specific Web Content for georgina.ca

The Town of Georgina has a well-established website: georgina.ca. A project-specific webpage will be created and updated regularly with pertinent information and project updates. Town Planning staff will be responsible for maintaining the webpage with the assistance of HSAL, as discussed below. Communications staff will be consulted regarding webpage wording and technical matters as necessary to ensure consistency with the Town's procedures and protocols.

Project-specific web content will be developed for use to provide clear, accurate and up-to-date information throughout the project. HSAL will provide the Town with appropriate content beginning with the initial notice and continuing with further information as the project proceeds (e.g., notices, project updates, reports, presentations, etc.). Generally speaking, any background information, reports, mapping or by-laws that are presented to Council will be made publically available through the website. The project team will also post project updates and notices to the webpage as determined appropriate.

3.5 Dedicated Project Email

The Town will establish a dedicated project-specific email address, providing a single point of contact for stakeholders. Town staff will monitor the email and respond to questions and requests for information as necessary.

HSAL will be available to support Town staff in crafting these responses as requested. Comments and concerns requiring a formal response will be added to the comment matrix. The matrix will be consistently reviewed over the course of the project in order to gain a full understanding of the community's thoughts and concerns, and how best to adjust future communications and engagement to address potential issues.

3.6 Stakeholder Meetings

Individual meetings with stakeholders may be held as an engagement tool, providing a forum to express concerns and discuss critical issues, challenges, opportunities, constraints and project impacts. More specifically, a meeting with a stakeholder may occur for one or more of the following reasons:

- In response to a request from a stakeholder to meet
- In response to direction received from the Town to meet with a stakeholder
- To exchange project-related information and seek understanding or clarification
- To proactively resolve an issue, concern, constraint or impact

During COVID-19, all meetings will be held virtually. If the purpose of the meeting requires a site visit, all physical distancing and PPE requirements will be observed.

Minutes of all stakeholder meetings will be documented and included in the project file.

3.7 Communications Tactics

3.7.1 Initial Notice Procedures

The project team will conduct an initial mail circulation notifying landowners within the study area of the project. The initial notice is intended to open the lines of communication between the community and the project team. It will provide a clear and concise description of the project, inviting people to learn more about it through the dedicated project page on the Town's website.

Residents, businesses and property owners will be invited to share their email address with us to be put on the project mailing list should they wish to receive project updates and notices. For those who do not have access to email or the internet, upon request, notification may be provided by telephone or direct mail, as necessary.

A phone number will be included on the notice for those who may not have access to the internet. These members of the public will be given the option to be kept informed via telephone or direct mail.

In addition, the initial notice will be posted in the Town Page of the Georgina Advocate and a media release will be issued by the Town. Posts will also be made on the Town’s social media channels.

The initial notice will also be emailed directly to interested parties from the Official Plan Review that provides the foundation for this project.

3.7.2 Web Content

As described in section 4.4, the project webpage will act as a central hub for all project information including updates, notices, reports, by-laws and deliverables.

3.7.3 Social Media Updates

The Town’s Communications staff, in partnership with the project team, will post updates on the Town’s social media channels. The Town has a very strong following on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.

It is important to note that while social media is not the appropriate forum to introduce or debate policy or technical matters, it provides a key platform for familiarizing people with the project and inviting them to learn more. It is especially useful for giving tidbits of information such as the date and time of a POH or advising of an upcoming report to Council. Social media will link members of the public to the to the dedicated project webpage. Identifying the dedicated project webpage on each post will ensure followers know where to get more information.

Social media posts should be friendly, light in tone and simply written. Photos or other graphics should be included whenever possible.

If followers use social media to raise concerns about the project, the Communications Division will endeavour to respond the same day. Comments and concerns related to the project or a specific property will be directed to the project webpage for further information including how to contact the project team with their concerns.