

FACT SHEET

LAND USE PLANNING

What is the Planning Act?

The Planning Act sets out the ground rules for land use planning in Ontario, describes how land uses may be controlled, and who may control them.

The act provides the basis for:

- considering provincial interests, such as protecting and managing our natural resources.
- establishing local planning administration including planning boards in northern Ontario.
- preparing official plans and planning policies that will guide future development.
- establishing a streamlined planning process which emphasizes local autonomy in decision-making.
- exempting official plans from approval.
- regulating and controlling land uses through zoning by-laws and minor variances.
- dividing land into separate lots for sale or development through a plan of subdivision or a land severance.
- ensuring the rights of local citizens to be notified about planning proposals, to give their views to their municipal council, and to appeal decisions to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). The OMB is an independent administrative tribunal responsible for hearing appeals and deciding on a variety of contentious municipal matters providing that provincial appeals are to be made through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

What is the province's role?

The province:

- issues provincial policy statements under the Planning Act
- promotes provincial interests, such as protecting farmland, natural resources and the environment
- provides one-window planning service to municipalities through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the primary provincial contact for advice and information on land use planning issues
- gives advice to municipalities and the public on land use planning issues
- administers local planning controls and gives the approval where required

What is the role of municipalities?

The local municipality:

- makes local planning decisions that will determine the future of communities
- prepares planning documents, such as: an official plan, which sets out the municipality's general planning goals and policies that will guide future land use, and zoning by-laws, which set the rules and regulations that control development as it occurs. The Planning Act also gives planning boards in northern Ontario the power to pass zoning by-laws for unorganized territory within their planning areas.

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) serves as a guide for municipalities in the creation of their Official Plans and other planning tools, the key working documents of a community, by directing that cultural and environmentally sensitive features are protected.

Find out how you can get involved...

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HOW DOES IT WORK?

FOCA encourages landowners to participate in public meetings:

How does the Planning Act work?

Municipal councils, landowners, developers, planners and the public play an important role in shaping a community. Community planning is aimed at identifying common community goals and balancing competing interests of the various parties.

The central activity in the planning of a community is the making of an official plan, a document which guides future development of an area in the best interest of the community as a whole.

Your municipal council must give you as much information as possible when preparing its official plan. And before it adopts the plan, council must hold at least one public meeting where you can give your opinion. It is up to council to decide the best way to let people know about the meeting, but notice must be given at least 20 days ahead of time, usually through local newspapers or by mail.

The act encourages **early upfront involvement** and the use of mediation techniques to resolve conflict. Make sure you make your views known early in the planning process. If you don't, this may mean that the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) could dismiss an appeal you may make later on, without holding a hearing. The Planning Act requires a similar procedure for changes to the official plan, for zoning by-laws and plans of sub-division.

How can you get involved?

You can be an important part of the land use planning process by keeping informed about what's going on in your community and by **taking part in public meetings**.

With your input, the municipal council will be able to make better decisions that affect your future. So if you are concerned about all or any part of a planning proposal or policy change, you should:

- find out as much as possible about the proposal
- think about how it will affect you
- talk to your neighbours about it
- go to public meetings and information sessions and let council know what you think
- write to your council member or the municipal clerk about your views
- work with council and the municipal staff to resolve your concerns

Finally, if you are not happy with council's decisions on planning issues, you may appeal to the OMB for a public hearing.