
To: Mayor Watters and Members of Council**Report:** PLN2026-19**Prepared By:** Mariana Iglesias, Manager of Planning Services**Date:** 27 Apr 2026**RE:** Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) Initiation

Recommendation:

THAT the Council of the Township of Centre Wellington receives staff report PLN2026-19 regarding initiation of a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) for information; and

THAT Council endorses the initiation of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) in the Township of Centre Wellington.

Report:**Background**

The purpose of this report is to present information on a proposed Township-initiated Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) in Centre Wellington and to update Council on previous discussions and decisions that led to the recommendations made in this report.

What is a Community Planning Permit System?

A Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) is a land use planning tool available to municipalities in Ontario as authorized under Section 70.2 of the Planning Act. It is intended as an alternative tool that can help plan and shape the future of a community based on its own vision and objectives. It combines several typical planning application types, such as zoning by-law amendments, minor variances, and site plan approval into a single streamlined application and approval process. These application review processes typically run consecutively, sometimes with large spans of time in between each approval until the final building permit stage. A CPP application would take only 45 days to approve, instead of up to 180 days or more through the other application processes.

A CPPS would still be required to conform with the Official Plan and its policies and goals. It could apply to an entire municipality or only to selected specified geographic areas. A CPP By-law implements the Official Plan policies and replaces the existing Zoning By-law for the area to which it applies. Once in effect, staff can issue the majority of permits to allow development to occur, after which only a building permit is required. Theoretically, it is intended to reduce time from application to construction.

Formerly known as the "Development Permit System (DPS)" when it was introduced as a land use planning tool in Ontario in 2007, the current CPPS framework is more efficient and provides more flexibility as a planning tool. Ontario Regulation 173/16 (Link: [O. Reg. 173/16 COMMUNITY PLANNING PERMITS | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/reg/16/160173.htm)) of the Planning Act directs the use and implementation of a CPPS. It is encouraged by the Province for use by municipalities to help implement a community's vision and is advertised as having key benefits over traditional land use planning tools. Additionally, significant changes are occurring in the Province in an effort to reduce red tape and perceived barriers to development. The Province has increasingly reduced staff's ability to review development applications or apply site plan control (i.e. fewer than 10 residential units) reducing the ability to shape development over the long term. Over the past decade, the CPPS has slowly gained traction in Ontario municipalities as collective understanding of the tool has evolved. Examples and links to other municipalities' CPP projects and by-laws, including the City of Guelph and City of Waterloo, are provided at the end of this report for reference. More information on the CPPS is available on the Province's website here: [Community planning permit system | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/govt/community-planning-permit-system). Further, figures taken from the City of Guelph's recent CPPS Educational Booklet (May 2025) help visually explain the differences between the traditional planning tools and the CPPS approach.

How A CPPS Works and Legislated Requirements for Implementation

A CPPS process would be administered through a new CPP By-law, which would replace all or a portion of the Township's comprehensive Zoning By-law 2009-045. To use a CPPS, a municipality must:

1. Adopt an Official Plan Amendment for the CPPS area (to define the area to which it applies). This can be addressed through the County and/or Township Official Plan.
2. Pass a Community Planning Permit By-law which, similar to a traditional zoning by-law, would contain a list of permitted uses and development standards, such as height and density specifications (for example, how tall a building can be or how many units it can have). Other typical site plan control matters such as landscaping, site access, urban design guidelines can be included and would be enforceable. It could also contain other elements not found in a traditional zoning by-law, such as: land uses that are allowed, subject to certain conditions, also known as "discretionary uses", and classes of development or uses of land exempt from requiring a permit (for example, garages, pools, sheds).
3. Issue community planning permits once the system is in place.

The CPP By-law can be developed at the same time as, or after, the Official Plan Amendment. A key feature of the implementing CPP Bylaw is the introduction of permit classes and variation thresholds. Within the permit classes, Council can delegate the approval of development applications to staff. The CPP Bylaw typically establishes three permit classes, as follows:

- Class 1 and 2 applications, which meet all or most development standards and fall within the variation threshold and are approved by staff.
- Class 3 applications, requiring significant variation from the development standards and exceed the variation threshold, are approved by Council or a Committee of Council.

Regardless of the permit class, all applications are subject to a 45-day decision period as required under the Planning Act. Decisions must be made within 45 days to either approve or approve with conditions. An applicant may be required to enter into an agreement with the Township to address conditions.

CPPS Appeal Process

Anyone who participates in the initial planning consultation process when a CPPS is being considered can generally appeal the Official Plan Amendment or the passing of the Community Planning Permit By-law to the Ontario Land Tribunal. However, once a CPPS is in place, only the person making the application can appeal a municipality's decision or non-decision regarding a community planning permit application, therefore there is more certainty to developers and the community.

Applications by third parties to amend the CPPS Official Plan policy or By-law are not permitted within the first five years after enactment, unless the Council of the municipality permits it, upon request, and by way of Council resolution. Municipalities can undertake their own amendments to the policies and by-laws of a CPPS, although these are typically done for housekeeping purposes as issues arise during the initial implementation phase. Site specific amendments can be processed in the traditional zoning by-law amendment process after the five year amendment prohibition.

Key Steps in Developing a CPPS Framework and Methodology for the Municipality

Township staff proposes to engage a consultant to study the Township's planning and growth vision, its goals and priorities, and offer recommendations on establishing a CPPS. This would involve the typical legislated requirements noted above, but would also include the key steps below to ensure a robust and inclusive approach. These would be included in the RFP document as key deliverables, among others.

1. Identify CPPS Opportunities – Key opportunities for a CPPS are identified to achieve broad municipal goals , typically aligned with Council's strategic plan. For example, Council may establish a key priority for increasing housing supply, particularly affordable units, or protecting trees and heritage properties. A CPPS could include key criteria and information requirements to be met for a complete

application. Key zoning issues can also be identified through previous minor variance applications, to address needed changes to modernize regulations.

2. Shared Visioning Exercise – A CPPS is based on a vision gained through extensive consultation with the community and stakeholders. This ensures the greatest level of information sharing, buy-in and understanding of the process itself by all parties and will produce the goals and objectives to help inform the Official Plan Amendment and By-law.
3. Develop Official Plan Policies – The provincial regulations require the Official Plan to set out the municipal goals, objectives, and policies to be adopted; the type of criteria that may be included for specific classes of development and any uses of land that may be permitted; and the conditions that may be included in approvals.
4. Preparation of CPP By-law – The CPP By-law is drafted and includes: a description of the area to which the By-law applies; permitted uses; discretionary uses; development standards; variations from development standards; criteria for evaluating development standards and variations; a list of appropriate approval conditions and when these conditions may apply; and who makes the decisions on various classes of applications.
5. Application Processing and Review Procedures – Implementation of a CPPS requires the development of new administrative procedures, work flows and documents, including work instructions, application forms and fees, and development agreements. This change management process should be undertaken in conjunction with and as a key part of the development of the CPP By-law so that when it is finally passed, all systems are ready and functioning. Public education on the new processes is also vital.

Other Municipalities' CPPS Projects

The City of Markham conducted a jurisdictional scan of 9 other municipalities' use of the CPPS when it embarked on its own CPPS project. These included: Lake of Bays, Carleton Place, Town of Gananoque, City of Brampton, Town of Innisfil, Town of Huntsville, City of Ajax, City of Ottawa, and City of Toronto. The scan indicated that the majority of municipalities who had implemented the system found it to be a more efficient method of processing development approvals with the same staff levels, allowing more approvals to be processed faster. They also indicated that these municipalities expressed their preference to continue to operate within a CPPS. The City of Markham indicated key lessons learned:

- The need for comprehensive consultation to establish a vision with all stakeholders
- Public education and educational materials will increase understanding of the process and how the tool can be used
- A key staff liaison would assist during the development and implementation as a key point of contact
- A draft CPP By-law should be developed and reviewed prior to the approval of the Official Plan Amendment
- A pilot area would be helpful as an initial phase to understand the tool and its potential impact

Township planning staff also conducted a telephone interview with the Manager of Planning in Huntsville to understand their experience with the CPPS. The fundamental lesson learned from them is that public engagement/stakeholder consultation is key to success given that third party appeal rights are not possible through the permit application process. Further, given the delegation of authority embedded in the by-law, it's important to ensure that all possible public concerns are considered and addressed through the design of the by-law provisions themselves, to ensure that all decisions delegated to staff regarding "variations" and/or "discretionary uses" will occur in accordance with the preordained criteria, which are endorsed by the community. This helps to reduce later concerns or conflicts and helps build trust in the process and end result. Staff resources also played a crucial role in administering the By-law and permit processes once it was in effect. So, it's important to ensure resources are in place for implementation.

Previous Considerations for a CPPS in Centre Wellington:

Township Council and Advisory Committees

In the previous term of Council from 2019-2022, the Healthy Growth Advisory Committee focused its efforts on housing supply and affordability through a number of initiatives, including exploration of the potential benefits of adopting a Community Planning Permit System. On November 4, 2020, a Report titled "Introduction to Community Planning Permit System" went to the Healthy Growth Advisory Committee. At the October 25th, 2021, Council meeting staff presented report PLN2021-32 regarding the merits of establishing a CPPS system. The following resolution (in part) was passed by Council at that time:

"That Council directs staff, in consultation with the Healthy Growth Committee, to report back on the merits of implementing a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) to streamline the planning approval process and increase the supply of attainable housing in the Township."

At that meeting, questions were raised regarding CPPS implementation timelines, appeal rights, and citizen input opportunities. Information on these matters is provided throughout this report.

County of Wellington Official Plan

On April 27, 2023, through County of Wellington Official Plan Amendment No. 121, the County adopted policy changes focused on development approval process updates. OPA 121 specifically enabled municipalities within the County of Wellington to adopt Community Planning Permit Systems as a tool. The policies are outlined below:

13.11 COMMUNITY PLANNING PERMIT SYSTEM

A Community Planning Permit System is a planning tool that is intended to streamline the development review process by combining zoning, site plan control and minor variances into one approval system. Prior to local municipalities establishing a Community Planning Permit By-law in accordance with section 70.2 of the Planning Act, amendments to local Official Plans or Section 9 of this Plan, where applicable, will be required to:

- a) Identify the area of the proposed Community Planning Permit Area;
- b) Set out the scope of authority that may be delegated by Council and any limitations on the delegation;
- c) Identify municipal goals, objectives and policies in any proposed Community Planning Permit Area;
- d) Set out types of criteria that may be included in the Community Planning Permit By-law for evaluating discretionary uses and variations;
- e) Set out the types of conditions that may be included in a Community Planning Permit By law;
- f) Set out information and materials that are required for a Community Planning Permit System application;
- g) Exempt any class of development or use of land from information and material requirements for complete applications;
- h) Include policies related to the provision of specified facilities, services or matters in exchange for a specified density or height of development or increases in density or height.

Where reference to a zoning by-law, site plan control or minor variance is made in this Plan, it is the intent of this Plan, that the implementation and objectives of those policies continue to be achieved through a Community Planning Permit by-law and permit system.

Township's Housing Needs Assessment

The Township has recently undertaken a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) in fulfillment of federal funding requirements to increase the supply of housing. The report was prepared by Watson and Associates Economists and was received by Township Council in July 2025 through staff report PLN2025-34. The HNA provided data to support decision-making at the local level focusing on ways to address the deficit in housing supply that has not kept pace with growing demand in Centre Wellington.

The HNA helped inform recommendations that the Township could implement related to housing, including the use of regulatory tools to support housing-related policies and programs. One such recommendation was for the Township to review local zoning and land-related barriers and regulatory incentives to identify opportunities to expand housing supply. It was recommended that the Township consider a Community

Planning Permit System to support and enable a higher rate of residential development activity, particularly for more affordable ownership options.

The biggest benefit of a CPPS is streamlining the planning approvals process into a one-step single application process, to replace at least 2 to 3 other typical required planning approvals (i.e. zoning, site plan, minor variance). This should, in theory, bring housing to market faster and provide developers more certainty in the process and outcomes. Instead of typically allotted timelines of up to 180 days for the former approvals, the CPPS would process permit approvals within 45 days.

Key Considerations and Staff Recommendations:

Since Council endorsed the recommendations of the Healthy Growth Committee, funding has been allocated to a CPPS study in the amount of \$150,000 in the Capital Budget since 2023. However, it has been challenging for Township staff to bring forward a recommendation to begin a CPPS study in the Township due to the ever-changing provincial planning policy changes, the lack of staff resources due to other priorities, and some uncertainty about implementation given the relatively low take up of the tool across the Province in earlier years. Additionally, staff was awaiting the County's OPA 121 to implement enabling policies for municipalities to use a CPPS. However, in recent years many more municipalities have gone through the process of establishing CPPSs, so there is more opportunity to learn from these and adapt already developed CPPS processes for the Township. Staff is of the opinion that the Township is now in a position to undertake the CPPS Project to reduce barriers and help increase the supply of housing, while also implementing the Township's vision for how the community should develop over the long term with the significant growth projected.

Staff have explored the potential of using a CPPS over the last number of years to help reach the Township's goals and feel it is one of the most effective tools to accomplish this. A CPPS would provide the Township several key benefits, including:

- **A more streamlined approval process** that combines zoning approval, site plan approval, and minor variance approval into one permit with shorter approval times, within 45 days to a decision, providing greater efficiencies with staff resources and greater certainty to applicants
- **Ability to require specific plans/studies** aligned with Township priorities and goals, such as heritage impact or tree studies as a condition of a complete permit application, some of which are beyond what can be required through more traditional planning applications
- **Ability to apply inclusionary zoning and discretionary uses** that require specific conditions to be met, such as requiring a certain amount of affordable units, which traditional zoning does not allow outside of a Major Transit Station area
- **Ability to require mandatory pre-consultation and complete application requirements**, which currently don't exist for site plan or minor variance applications, having recently been removed from the Planning Act

- **Broader scope of review** for matters not typically included in standard applications, such as site alteration, removal of vegetation, and other matters
- **Supports local objectives and priorities** tailored to specific areas through the ability to attach conditions to approval requiring “facilities, services and matters” for matters the community deems are priorities, for example by requiring a percentage of affordable housing units, increased housing diversity, sustainable design, tree protection, heritage protection, etc., which are currently not permitted through zoning or site plan control
- **Provides predictability** by creating certainty and transparency for the community, landowners and developers, since community input, consultation, and appeals are addressed up front when establishing the community vision

While the list of purported advantages are many, the main concern of establishing a CPPS is that it requires a significant amount of resources and time up front as a result of the lengthy and comprehensive process required to establish such a system. It is typically a very prescriptive approval system that yields targeted results. A typical CPPS takes approximately 18 months to 2 years to be in full effect. The process would require an external consultant to coordinate and complete the majority of the work and public consultation, with review and direction from planning staff and Council. With increased planning staff capacity, staff is in a better position to move forward at this time. As such, staff recommends proceeding with preparation and issuance of an RFP for a CPPS that would review the Township’s goals and objectives in terms of land use planning and other priorities, and identify a key area or areas where a CPPS could be used, draft the Official Plan policies and a draft CPP By-law for community consultation and feedback.

Given the legislative requirements for consultation and other prescriptive matters, staff would report back to Council on the results of the RFP process and a work plan prior to work being undertaken by the successful consultant. The report back would detail the specific work and steps that will be undertaken.

Other CPPS Links for Reference

City of Guelph CPPS (Housing Focus)

Link: <https://guelph.ca/living/house-and-home/housing-in-guelph/creating-housing/community-planning-permit-system/>

The City of Guelph’s CPPS is focused on streamlining development approvals and addressing local needs, such as affordable housing, diverse housing types, public facilities, parks and open spaces, to support their growing population. It was identified as a tool in their Housing Affordability Strategy and is funded by the Housing Accelerator Fund which aims to boost housing supply. It currently applies to a specific area in the Stone Road and Edinburgh Road modified Strategic Growth Area. The City is also currently developing a CPPS for the Downtown.

City of Waterloo CPPS (Housing Focus)

Link: <https://www.engagewr.ca/waterloo-haf-initiative-7>

As part of the City of Waterloo's ongoing work to enable housing to reach the market more quickly, the City is developing a CPPS to streamline development approvals along a portion of the Erb Street Corridor.

City of Brampton (Heritage Preservation Focus)

Link: <https://www.brampton.ca/en/Business/planning-development/projects-studies/Pages/main-street-north.aspx>

The City of Brampton's CPPS is focused on transforming its downtown into a mix of commercial, residential and recreational uses through reinvestment, revitalization and increasing density (intensification). Policies in the CPPS promote sensitive intensification by ensuring that the character of existing residential neighbourhoods is maintained while preserving the heritage buildings within the CPPS area. The CPPS promotes efficient use of urban land by combining commercial, residential and other land uses within small, medium and large-scale developments where appropriate, to create vibrant, walkable neighbourhoods. Development is also subject to urban design standards, such as preserving mature trees, and preserving the historic architectural styles on the exterior of buildings, to ensure compatibility with the historic character of the CPPS area.

Town of Gananoque (Preserving Small-town Character Focus)

Link: <https://www.gananoque.ca/sites/gananoque.ca/files/Development-Permit-By-Law.pdf>

The Town of Gananoque put in place a comprehensive CPPS for the whole town. The main goal of the CPPS is to guide development opportunities while making sure the small-town cultural heritage character is maintained and enhanced as new development occurs. Design criteria for new development involve incorporating appropriate exterior architectural elements such as window and door detailing. In doing so, the CPPS promotes commercial, residential and institutional uses resulting in a mixed-use, vibrant, liveable community.

Town of Huntsville CPPS (Shoreline Protection Focus)

Link: <https://www.huntsville.ca/business-development-environment/planning-and-development/planning-applications/community-planning-permit-and-amendment>

The Town of Huntsville adopted a CPPS in 2022. The focus was on environmental conservation and restoration, site alteration, grading, vegetation removal, among other priorities such as ensuring compatible development.

Corporate Strategic Plan:

Create the conditions for economic prosperity
Improve the activity, health & wellness of our community
Managing growth while enhancing the community's unique character
Championing environmental stewardship
Provide innovative & sustainable governance

Financial Implications:

The Community Planning Permit System project has been budgeted in the Township's Capital Forecast.

Consultation:

As required per the Planning Act if the project proceeds.

Attachments:

- [PLN2026-19 Attachment 1](#)

Approved By:

Brett Salmon, Managing Director of Planning and Development
Dan Wilson, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment 1: Additional Resources for CPPS Process

How does a CPPS differ from the existing City process?

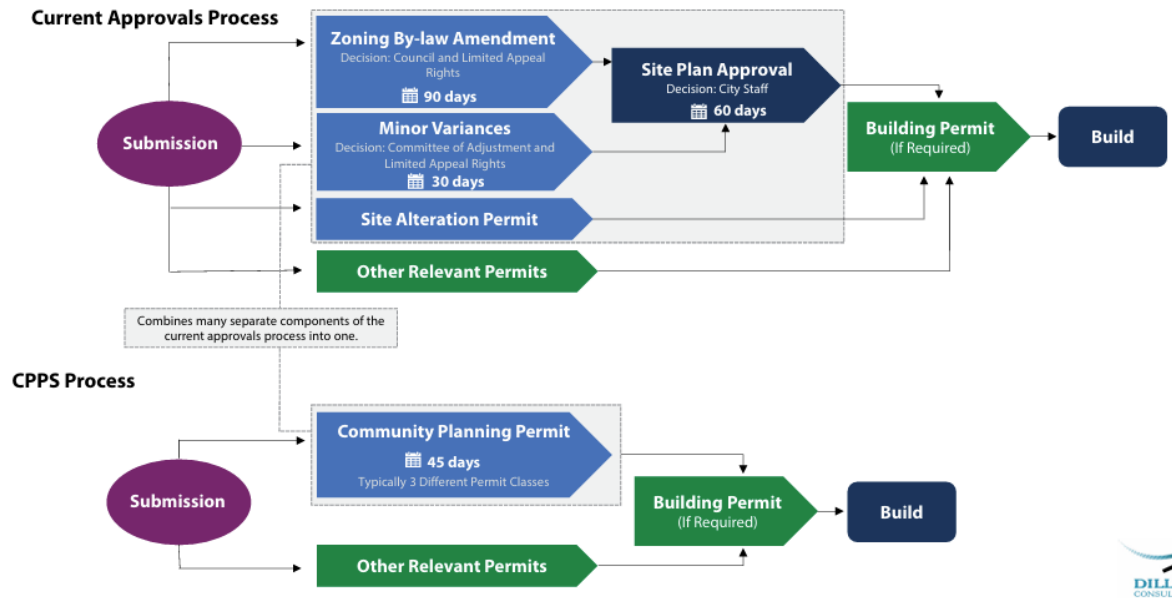


Figure 1: Excerpt from City of Guelph's CPPS Educational Booklet (May 2025)

Table 8.2: Traditional versus CPPS approvals process for the City of Guelph

ZBA = Zoning bylaw amendment

Steps	Traditional Process	CPPS Process
Step 1: Pre-submission consultation	City and all applicable agencies identify submission requirements.	- City and all applicable agencies identify submission requirements. - City identifies type of Planning Permit application (Class 1, 2 or 3).
Step 2: Application submission and public notice	- Application deemed "complete." » ZBA: Must be deemed complete within 30 days of submission. - Circulation to City Staff and agencies for review. - ZBA and minor variance: Public notice sent out.	- Flexibility in determining when an application is deemed "complete" may require agency and department comments in advance. - Circulation to City Staff and agencies for review. - No legislative requirement for notice. However, Guelph's CPP By-law establishes notice requirements for Permit Class 2 and 3 applications.
Step 3: Application review	- City staff and agencies review application. - ZBA: Staff report and recommendations to Council. - Minor variance: Staff comments with recommendations to Committee of Adjustment.	- City staff and agencies review application. - Written evaluation/report where variation is required. - Staff recommendation for Class 3 applications approved by Council. - Flexibility in addressing Site Plan matters.
Step 4: Approval authority	- ZBA: Council (within 90-day timeframe). - Minor variance: Committee of Adjustment. - Site plan: General Manager of Planning.	- City staff or Council depending on Permit Class (within 45-day timeframe). - May impose conditions of approval.
Step 5: Appeal Rights	- ZBA: Applicant, the Minister, the registered owner of any land to which the application would apply who made verbal or written comments or a specified person or body. - Minor variance: Applicants, specified person or public bodies.	- Only the applicant can appeal a decision. - No third-party appeal rights.

Figure 2: Excerpt from City of Guelph's CPPS Educational Booklet (May 2025)