



# SMITHS FALLS

RISE AT THE FALLS

Report # 2025-021

To: Mayor and Council  
From: Karl Grenke, Manager of Development Services  
Date: March 13, 2025  
Committee of the Whole Date: March 17, 2025  
Title: Official Plan Vision and Strategic Approaches

For Direction  
 For Information  
 For Adoption  
 Attachments: N/A

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**Recommendation:**

**THAT Council supports the vision and strategic approaches for the new Official Plan, as outlined in report # 2025-021.**

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**Purpose:** This report seeks Council's endorsement of a Vision Statement for the new Official Plan and Strategic Directions to carry forward the five key themes identified previously through consultation. This will inform and guide the writing of the new Official Plan.

**Background:** In May 2024, Council awarded a contract to Dillon Consulting Limited to guide the development of the Town's new Official Plan. The new Official Plan would repeal and replace the 2014 Official Plan and position the Town to accommodate an additional 1,400 new residential units as well as new employment lands, as forecast in the 2023 Land Needs Study. The new Plan would identify where that growth would occur, as well as how, so that it would make the best use of existing and planned infrastructure and support the principles of social, economic, environmental sustainability.

The framework for the scope of the Official Plan project was defined by Council on October 2, 2023 - see Report 2023-116. Council decided that the Plan would build around a 25-year growth horizon, consistent with the Land Needs Study, the project would include several integral components:

Five key consultation themes to guide the re-write, identified through an initial public visioning process:

- 1) **Downtown revitalization** to support the core as the Town's social, cultural and economic heart;
- 2) **Housing** that is sufficient in supply and meets the changing needs of the community;
- 3) **Sustainability** that ensures resilience in a changing world;
- 4) **Transportation and connections**, including multi-modal transportation;
- 5) **Community spaces** to enhance quality of life in both the public and private realm.

Four opportunity areas that are underutilized and warrant strategic attention to leverage intensification:

- 1) **Ferguson and Ferrara area**
- 2) **Cornelia and Mazie corridor**
- 3) **Lorne Street extension lands**
- 4) **Gallipeau Centre lands**

Supporting technical work to complement the background work already done and fill in knowledge gaps to support the development of the Plan:

- Transportation Master Plan
- Commercial Sector Analysis
- Housing Needs Study.

The Housing Needs Study was presented to Council on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and subsequently supported. Several recommendations arising from that study can be carried forward and implemented in the new Official Plan. The Commercial Sector Analysis updated the 2021 Commercial Land Needs Assessment and also proposed a number of policy and strategic recommendations that can be incorporated into the Official Plan. The work on the Transportation Master Plan is ongoing. With the receipt of all remaining traffic data, the gap analysis to inform the policy development as well as right-of-way classifications is underway and will be presented to Council in draft in the coming months.

On October 10, 2024, the Planning Division and Dillon Consultants hosted an open house at the Smiths Falls Youth Arena, where approximately 30 residents provided their feedback and ideas related to the five consultation themes. The facilitated sessions allowed participants to focus on up to three of the five themes that were of most interest to them, which allowed for a focused exchange of ideas and generated very helpful information on what is important to the community. A summary of this meeting has been posted on the Town website and has also informed us of the vision and strategic approaches of the Plan, which is the focus of this report.

On November 21, 2024, the consulting team facilitated a two-hour collaborative workshop with Planning staff and the Management Team to help craft the planning vision for the Town. The purpose of this workshop was to identify pressing challenges facing the local context, assess potential solutions and refine strategic directions across the five key themes. The successful implementation of the strategic vision of the Official Plan relies on the collaboration of the entire management team as this Plan will be relevant in some manner to each department.

Through a review of background information, public and staff engagement, critical issues have been identified that challenge us relating to each of the five key themes, as well as solutions where the Town has the ability to drive positive change.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Main Challenges Identified</b>	<b>Potential Solutions</b>
Downtown Revitalization	Quality and supply of housing stock and financial challenges in restoring commercial spaces	Funding supports to strategically improve conditions and to support design guidelines and streetscape enhancements. Align zoning and

	to make them attractive. Desire for more accessible services.	property standards with the broader objectives.
Housing	Servicing and capacity constraints with our existing water and sewer systems, rising construction costs and challenges in securing funding to support affordable housing. Availability of land and need for diverse housing types also identified.	Updating planning policy to support more flexibility and securing funding to study and upgrade water and sewer capacity to support growth. Municipal support through financial incentives (including Community Improvement Plan) as well as the strategic provision of Town owned land.
Sustainability	Need for long-term predictable funding, effective asset management and the practical and financial realities of balancing the four pillars of sustainability to achieve tangible outcomes.	Educating residents on their roles and promoting sustainability. Develop an enduring commitment to sustainability that supersedes council terms. Creating more integrated neighbourhoods would all promote community sustainability and resilience.
Transportation	Some gaps in a broad multi-modal network, including absence of commuter rail, lack of improved active transportation connections and need to alleviate traffic congestion on Lombard Street.	TMP and future work to assess capacity improvements as well as the ongoing implementation of the 2021 Active Transportation Plan. Assess synergies with potential expansion of the Lanark County Transportation services.
Community Spaces	The need to adapt to evolving community needs, address existing budget and resource constraints and the tension between dense development and the availability of green space.	Ensure that the requirement for greenspace and quality of life enhancements are meaningfully embedded in planning policy. Ongoing and strategic revitalization of existing greenspaces, including efforts to modernize, green them, and align them to meet with current and evolving community needs.

This work has informed a draft vision and strategic direction relating to the five key themes, which Council is being asked to endorse.

**Analysis and Options:** As it relates to the Official Plan, a vision statement sets out the Town’s desired future, which is then articulated through a set of guiding principles or theme or topic specific strategic directions. Together, these provide focus for the Town’s long term land use, growth and development plans, which are carried out in individual policies and mapping. In short, this aspirational text conveys Council’s intent, which is relied upon in interpreting the policies of the Plan and carrying out future work. Presently, the Official Plan does not contain a single guiding vision, but rather visions and objectives related to the following themes: Thriving community (economy), environment, liveability, safety and

wellness, parks and culture, informed and involved community and transportation. These visions align broadly with Council's current Strategic Plan and still resonate today, however in the 10 years since the current Plan's approval, community needs have evolved along with the Town.

The following draft vision statement posits what Council wishes Smiths Falls to be at the end of the 25-year planning horizon. The vision would be included in the new Official Plan to serve as a guiding beacon for the Town's future development and strategic initiatives.

***In 25 years, Smiths Falls will be a dynamic, inclusive, and thriving community that meets the needs of its growing population. Smiths Falls will be a hub for diverse housing, strong social supports, and vibrant neighbourhoods with local employment opportunities. Our Town will be sustainable and well-connected, with an attractive downtown and mobility options for everyone. Smiths Falls will be a place where all residents can live, work, and play, celebrating our unique cultural, natural and economic features.***

It is proposed that overall vision of the Official Plan will be underpinned by five strategic directions that are based on the previously noted consultation themes. Council's endorsement of the five strategic directions will guide the preparation of the Official Plan. The order in which these are presented do not imply order of importance.

- 1. Downtown Revitalization: The Town of Smiths Falls will keep advancing downtown towards a vibrant, inclusive centre that is powered by enhanced services, recognized heritage assets, additional residents, community partnerships, and strategic funding to develop a strong sense of place.***
- 2. Housing: The Town of Smiths Falls will create a diverse and inclusive community with sufficient supply where all residents have access to an adequate and affordable range of housing types.***
- 3. Sustainability: The Town of Smiths Falls will harness the four pillars of sustainability – economic vitality, social cohesion, environmental stewardship, and cultural vibrancy – to foster resiliency and create enduring positive outcomes for our community.***
- 4. Transportation: The Town of Smiths Falls will develop accessible and efficient travel options aligned to evolving transportation needs and shifting demographics, including linkages within the Town and regionally.***
- 5. Community Spaces: The Town of Smiths Falls will foster dynamic public and privately owned community spaces that reflect their diverse users, with upgraded parks, innovative redesigns, and citizen engagement to keep them accessible and vibrant for all.***

At this time, work has begun on drafting the text of the new Official Plan. The proposed vision and strategic directions outlined above are generally consistent with the policy framework outlined in the current Official Plan, however results in a natural evolution of focus that reflects the changes to the Town's economic and demographic structure since 2014. The vision and strategic directions will be incorporated verbatim into the Official Plan to help set the tone for the years ahead. As part of the on-going review of the plan, policies will be refined as appropriate to align to the strategic directions. At this point, it is expected that a first draft of the new Official Plan will be made available for public feedback and comment in May, where opportunities for in-person and online engagement will be organized.

**Options for Council's consideration:**

1. Endorse the vision and strategic directions as outlined in this report. (recommended)
2. Amend the vision and/or strategic directions to better align with Council's expectations for the new Official Plan (as directed by Council).

**Budget/Financial Implications:** N/A

**Link to Strategic Plan:** The Official Plan project relates to initiatives in all six Strategic Priorities identified in Council's 2023-26 Strategic Plan.

**Existing Policy:** Official Plan 2034; Provincial Planning Statement

**Consultations:** Project Consultants (Dillon); Project Steering Committee; Management Team

**Attachments:** N/A

**Notes/Action (space for Council Member's notes):**

Respectfully Submitted:

*Original Signed By:*

Karl Grenke RPP, MCIP  
Manager of Development Services

Approved for agenda by CAO:

*Original Signed By:*

Malcolm Morris, CMO  
Chief Administrative Officer