

## Sustainability Policy Brochure

The Town of Smiths Falls is creating a new Official Plan (O.P.). This is a key guiding document that provides context for, and directs, downtown revitalization in the Town. The intent of sustainability policies is to benefit the quality of life, the environment, and related economic opportunities available in Smiths Falls. Five brochures provide information on key themes that have been identified as important to the development of the new O.P.: Housing, Community Spaces, Downtown Revitalization, Transportation, and Sustainability.

### Historical Context

Smiths Falls is committed to sustainability and addressing climate change through a variety of initiatives aimed at reducing environmental impact and fostering resilience. This is personified through the Downtown Revitalization and Waterfront Masterplan and our ongoing membership in the Partners for Climate Protection Program and our commitments therein, which we are working on with our own Climate Protection Working Group. The main focus has been on enhancing energy efficiency, promoting green building practices, and expanding active transportation options like walking and cycling. Other efforts include increasing tree canopy coverage, improving waste management and recycling, and supporting renewable energy projects.



### Why ‘Sustainability’?

By embedding sustainability into the new O.P., the Town can promote practices that reduce its ecological footprint, such as encouraging energy-efficient buildings, supporting renewable energy sources, and enhancing green spaces. Sustainable planning also helps mitigate the impacts of climate change, making the town more resilient to extreme weather events and other environmental challenges.

Economically, a focus on sustainability attracts investment and tourism by aligning with the growing demand for eco-friendly communities. It can also reduce infrastructure costs by

promoting compact development and reducing urban sprawl, which makes better use of existing resources and services. Socially, sustainability fosters a higher quality of life by creating a healthier, more livable environment for residents.

## Key Influences on Sustainability in Smiths Falls

### Provincial Legislation

*The Planning Act* enables municipalities like Smiths Falls to implement official plans that emphasize sustainability, including zoning by-laws that promote energy-efficient development, conservation, and the reduction of sprawl. The *Clean Water Act, 2006* focuses on protecting drinking water sources in Ontario. It influences municipal planning by requiring the identification and protection of vulnerable water sources, which is a key aspect of sustainability.

**SUSTAINABILITY** is a broad concept and inventorying everything related to sustainable development would be too much for this brochure, so we simply touch on the most influential provincial matters related to Smiths Falls' New Official Plan.

### Provincial Policies

Ontario's Provincial Planning Statement (PPS 2024) addresses sustainability and climate change throughout Chapter 2, Building Homes, Sustaining Strong and Competitive Communities, and Chapter 3, Infrastructure and Facilities.



## Assessment of Existing O.P. Policies and other Municipal Policies

**Targeted Planning:** The current O.P. includes policies that fulfill the Town's Green Vision goal for the incorporation of specific measurable standards related to green building, recycling, air quality, energy, water resources and woodland/vegetation cover. The Lanark County Climate Action Plan (2012) also aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance climate resilience, and promote sustainable practices across the region, helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change while supporting environmental, economic, and community well-being.

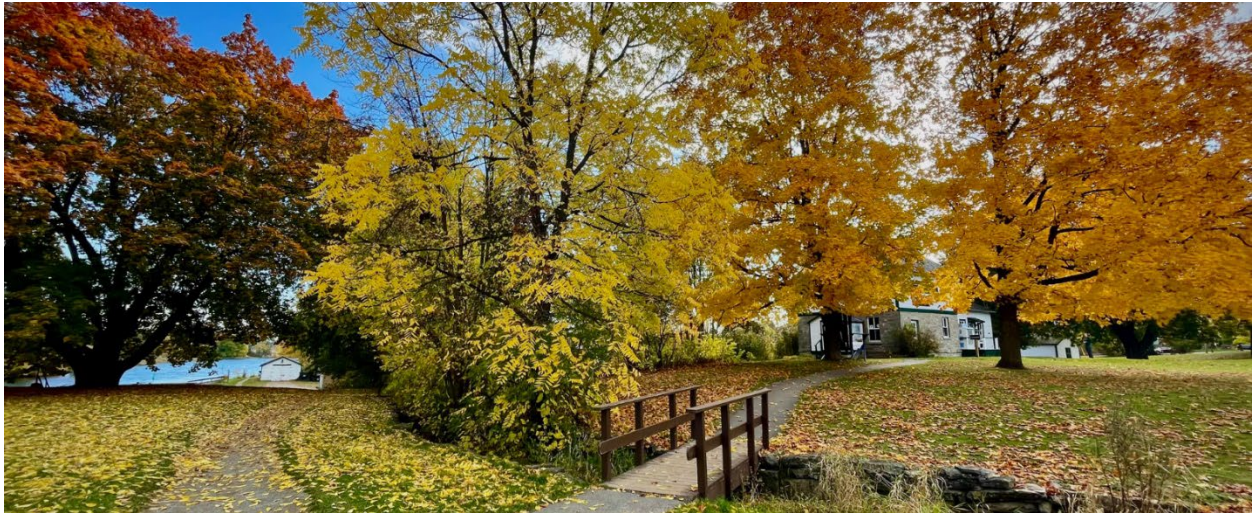
**Environmental Resources:** The current O.P. includes policies to protect the high-quality ecological systems and other environmental resources in the Town.



**Environmental Considerations/Hazards:** The current O.P. includes policies to reduce the potential land use risks related to environmental hazards.

**Infrastructure:** The current O.P. includes policies for provision and management of the Town's infrastructure systems. By maintaining well-planned water, energy, transportation, and waste systems, municipalities can reduce waste, optimize performance, and minimize environmental impacts. Efficient infrastructure management involves regular maintenance, timely upgrades, and the integration of smart technologies to monitor usage and identify issues early.

**Growth:** The current O.P. supports the intensification of land particularly in the Downtown Core and limits expansion beyond the municipal boundary, curbing the inefficient use of land.



## Potential Policy Directions

Fostering climate resilience is crucial for Smiths Falls to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change, ensuring long-term environmental sustainability and a higher quality of life for residents. By incorporating climate resilience into the town's planning, Smiths Falls can better withstand extreme weather events, such as flooding and heatwaves, which are expected to become more frequent and severe. Climate-resilient communities are not only safer but also more attractive to residents and businesses, promoting economic stability and growth. Resilient infrastructure and natural buffers, such as tree canopies and wetlands, help absorb climate impacts, reducing recovery costs and protecting property values.

### Strategies and/or Policies to Consider:

**Green Roofs:** Green roofs benefit communities by reducing stormwater runoff, improving air quality, and lowering urban heat, while also providing energy savings and creating green spaces that enhance biodiversity and well-being in urban areas.

**Rainwater Harvesting Incentives:** Rainwater harvesting incentives are programs or financial rewards, such as rebates, tax credits, or grants, that encourage individuals, businesses, and developers to install systems for capturing and reusing rainwater, helping to conserve water, reduce demand on municipal supplies, and manage stormwater runoff.

**Permeable Surface Requirements:** Permeable surface requirements in zoning bylaws dictate that a certain percentage of a property's surface, such as driveways, walkways, or parking areas, must be made of materials that allow water to seep into the ground. These rules help manage stormwater, prevent flooding, and support sustainable urban development by promoting natural water absorption.

**Urban Tree Canopy Expansion:** An increase in urban tree canopy coverage promotes sustainability by improving air quality, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and regulating temperature through shading and cooling. Implementing a town-wide tree-planting initiative to increase the urban tree canopy can also function as a natural stormwater management technique to reduce runoff, preventing erosion, and absorbing rainfall. From an aesthetics perspective, this could provide habitats for wildlife, and improve overall public health by creating green spaces for recreation and mental well-being.

**Municipal Buildings:** When new municipal buildings or structures are built, or older buildings and structures are renovated or retrofitted, exploring opportunities to reduce greenhouse gases and energy usage via passive solar, net zero design, sustainable materials, or other sustainable techniques can support sustainable development goals and lead by example

## Questions for Consideration

1. What sustainability initiatives or strategies do you believe would have the most significant positive impact on Smiths Falls, and in what ways do you think these efforts could help create a healthier environment and stronger community?
2. How do you envision the Town balancing sustainable development and preserving natural heritage features and areas as Smiths Falls grows?
3. What measures would you support to make Smiths Falls more resilient to climate change impacts, such as extreme weather events and flooding?

Let us know what you think!

Visit [smithsfalls.ca/opupdates](https://smithsfalls.ca/opupdates) to find out more information about the New Official Plan and ways you can get involved. You can also connect with us at: [opupdate@smithfalls.ca](mailto:opupdate@smithfalls.ca)