

PLANNING

Introduction

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The Planning Department supports County Council and local municipal councils to make decisions that often have long-term implications for the protection of resources and the growth and development of the communities within Middlesex County. The Planning Department includes four service areas.

County Planning - the Department administers the County's Official Plan and the Provincially delegated Approval Authority role for plans of subdivision, plans of condominium and local municipal official plans and official plan amendments.

Local Planning - the Department works with local municipalities to provide local planning services including development review and special projects. An agreement is in place to define service levels and the planners have on-site office days and function largely as municipal staff.

Mapping and GIS - the Department provides Geographic Information Services (GIS) for the County and aspects of GIS services for local municipalities and emergency services. This includes joint purchasing of GIS and planning software, the sharing of standardized data, centralized storage and access to web-based applications.

Woodlands - the Department manages the County-owned Forest (1040 hectares), administers the Woodlands Conservation By-law (regulates the cutting of trees within woodlands under the Municipal Act) and administers the County and local municipal responsibilities under the Weed Control Act (noxious weeds growing in close proximity to agriculture).

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2023 Budget Highlights

In alignment with the objectives of the Middlesex County Strategic Plan (strengthening our economy and promoting service excellence), the 2023 budget includes the Cloud Permit System license of \$75,000. This joint purchase on behalf of the County and local municipalities is an outcome of the Modernization Program to allow for the digital submission and processing of planning applications and was initiated with Provincial funding.

The seemingly continuous Provincial legislative, regulatory, and policy changes to land use planning (Bills 108, 109, 23) place additional responsibilities on the County and local municipalities at a time of significant development volume. Some of these changes, such as application timeline refunds and elimination of conservation authority natural heritage expertise, place further demands on staff.

Special Project funding is proposed in order to complete a couple of projects, including to amend the County Official Plan as a result of the direction of the Province and the recommendations of the Attainable Housing Review. The department has applied for a grant to receive funds to address the requirements of the Council motion related to the adopted Official Plan Amendment No. 3 update "THAT the issues of a 'County-wide Growth Management Study' and a 'Population, Housing, and Employment Forecast Update' be included by County Council as part of the 2023 budget process."