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**ELGIN COUNTY OFFICIAL PLAN ADOPTION
P. YEOMAN**

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS - PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
FROM:	JOHN M. FLEMING MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING & CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT:	INFORMATION REPORT ELGIN COUNTY OFFICIAL PLAN ADOPTION MEETING ON AUGUST 20, 2012

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning & City Planner, the following report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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None.

BACKGROUND

On July 24, 2012 the County of Elgin adopted its first-ever Official Plan as an upper-tier municipality. Until the commencement of this initiative, the County’s constituent municipalities (Aylmer, Bayham, Central Elgin, Dutton/Dunwich, Malahide, Southwold, and West Elgin) have had their own official plans in force and effect for many years, and have considered planning issues from a local perspective. The adoption of the County Official Plan will provide direction and coordination to these municipalities from a regional perspective. All constituent municipalities will be required to bring their official plans into conformity with the County Plan as per the *Planning Act*.

The full text of the Elgin County Official Plan can be found at:
<http://www.elgincounty.ca/ElginCounty/documents/ElginCountyAdoptedOfficialPlan.pdf>

The Plan aims to foster opportunities for economic development, to focus residential and employment development to settlements with full municipal services, to protect prime agricultural lands, and to enhance the County’s natural heritage system.

A significant feature of the new County Plan is the establishment of a growth management framework to guide future growth for the municipality. Elgin County is anticipating moderate population and employment growth, with 3773 people and 219 employees respectively between 2011 and 2031 (Note: St. Thomas is a separated municipality and not included as part of these growth projections). In order to guide the physical development associated with this growth, the County has established three categories of settlements:

- Tier 1 Settlement Areas (10 in total): These are settlements with full municipal services, and include Aylmer, Port Stanley and West Lorne. The Tier 1 Settlement Areas are the focus for future development in the County and there exists a surplus of vacant land to accommodate 20 year residential and employment development.
- Tier 2 Settlement Areas (26 in total): This category consists of settlements with partial municipal services, and include Straffordville, Springfield, Port Bruce, and Iona Station. Only infill development will be permitted in these settlements.

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- Tier 3 Settlement Areas (14 in total): Settlements that are serviced by private sanitary and water systems are included in this category. These settlements include Sparta, Avon and South Gore. Very limited development is anticipated for these areas given the lack of municipal services.

The Official Plan recognizes that there are more than sufficient lands within the identified settlements to accommodate future development opportunities associated with the growth forecasts. The County has committed to maintaining the settlement area boundaries as established in the Plan, and will only consider expansions based on established criteria and the policies of the Plan. An amendment to the County Official Plan will be required for a settlement area expansion.

Given the rural nature of the County, extensive agricultural policies are included in the Plan. Efforts have been made to promote agri-tourism through the Plan as an economic development strategy.

Through the policies of the Official Plan, the County seeks to protect and enhance its natural heritage system. Trigger distances and criteria are included for evaluating development proposals adjacent to identified and potential natural heritage features through Environmental Impact Studies. Policies are also included concerning development impacting water and aggregate resources, as well as natural hazards and floodplains.

Finally, the Elgin County Official Plan includes numerous policies to conform to the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement (e.g., cultural heritage, infrastructure, transportation, implementation, etc.)

CONCLUSION

Elgin County Council has adopted its first-ever Official Plan to guide the future development of its constituent municipalities from a regional perspective. The Plan is comprehensive and provides policies consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

The Elgin County Official Plan has been submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval as the County's approval authority. Once approved, the County's Plan will be in full force and effect.

PREPARED BY:	SUBMITTED BY:
PAUL YEOMAN PLANNER I CITY PLANNING AND RESEARCH	GREGG BARRETT, AICP MANAGER, CITY PLANNING AND RESEARCH
RECOMMENDED BY:	
JOHN FLEMING, MCIP, RPP MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING & CITY PLANNER	

August 3, 2012
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