

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

Phase 1 Comprehensive Review Study Update

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Community Planning

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That County Council authorize staff to retain Watson and Associates (in partnership with Dillon Consulting), pursuant to the single source provisions of the County Purchasing Policy 6.07, to undertake updates to the County's Phase 1 Comprehensive Review Study, as described in Report CP 2024-31;
2. And further that the CAO and Director of Community Planning be authorized to sign related documents.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed approach to updating the County's Phase 1 Comprehensive Review Study (updated growth forecasts and land need analysis) and to obtain Council approval to proceed with retaining Watson and Associates (in partnership with Dillon Consulting) to undertake the work necessary to complete the project.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

With Council's direction, staff will proceed to retain Watson and Associates (in partnership with Dillon Consulting) to undertake the planned updates to the County's Phase 1 Comprehensive Review study over the course of 2024.

Financial Impact

The estimated cost of undertaking the Phase 1 Comprehensive Review Study as outlined in this report is approximately \$208,000. The study cost falls within the identified budget for contracted services in the approved 2024 Community Planning Office budget and would be funded from the County's Administration Development Charge Reserve and, to a lesser extent, the Planning Reserve.

Staff are proposing that Council authorize a single source procurement for this project as it refers to the following paragraphs within the County’s Purchasing Policy 6.07:

7.3.2 (c) There is a need for compatibility with goods and/or services previously acquired or the required goods and/or services will be additional to similar goods and/or services being supplied under an existing contract (i.e. contract extension or renewal); and

7.3.2 (d) The required goods and/or services are to be supplied by a particular supplier(s) having special knowledge, skills, expertise or experience.

Communications




County Council approval of single or sole source procurement is required for the acquisition of goods and services directly from a particular supplier without conducting a competitive bid process or soliciting bids from a limited number of suppliers when the procurement value exceeds \$120,000. Upon approval of the recommendations contained in this report, staff will enter into an agreement with Watson and Associates to commence with this engagement.

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Oxford County Council approved the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council’s vision of “Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future.” These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendations in this report support the following strategic goals.

Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
Promoting community vitality	Enhancing environmental sustainability	Fostering progressive government
<p>Goal 1.1 – 100% Housed</p> <p>Goal 1.2 – Sustainable infrastructure and development</p>	<p>Goal 2.2 – Preserve and enhance our natural environment</p>	<p>Goal 3.1 – Continuous improvement and results-driven solutions</p> <p>Goal 3.4 – Financial sustainability</p>

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

DISCUSSION

Background

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), 2020 directs that the County, in consultation with Area Municipalities, shall identify, coordinate and allocate population, housing and employment projections for the Area Municipalities, identify areas where growth or development will be directed, and identify targets for intensification and re-development. Further, the policies require that sufficient land be made available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for a time horizon of up to 25 years, through intensification and redevelopment and, if necessary, designated growth lands. This is typically accomplished through what is referred to as a 'comprehensive review' process.

The County's last Phase 1 Comprehensive Review (growth forecasts and land needs analysis) was approved by Council in early 2020. Since that time, the County and many of the area municipalities have experienced considerably higher levels of growth than was forecasted in that study. These recent trends, together with the recent release of 2021 Census data and numerous other changes (e.g. legislation, policies, boundary adjustments, land uses, approved development, etc.) all support the need for updates to be undertaken.

As such, the County's Phase 1 Comprehensive Review study is now in need of update to ensure the County's growth forecasts and associated land need analysis (LNA) reflect current Provincial and local policies, land use, statistical data, economic, demographic and social factors/trends and other relevant considerations. The primary intent of these updates would be to ensure the County and Area Municipalities have the updated technical basis necessary for:

- Determining and monitoring the adequacy of the current land supply (including the extent to which forecasted growth can reasonably be accommodated through intensification and re-development);
- Establishing appropriate intensification, density and unit type mix targets;
- Establishing the need to expand any of the fully serviced settlement areas in the County to accommodate forecasted growth; and
- Planning for the longer term protection of 'employment areas'.

At minimum, these updates will need to address the key PPS and OP requirements pertaining to growth forecasting and land need for the County and Area Municipalities. Where the need for additional growth lands is identified through the Phase 1 study, further study (i.e. Phase 2 Comprehensive Review, secondary planning and servicing strategy) would need to be initiated to address the more context-specific PPS and Official Plan growth related policies (e.g. feasibility of and most appropriate direction for growth, coordination with servicing, etc.) for a particular settlement area.

The growth forecasts and lands needs analysis from this project will also be used to inform a range of other comprehensive planning-related studies and analysis, including servicing studies, secondary planning, housing strategies, etc.

Comments

Given the number and extent of enacted and proposed changes to Provincial growth management and housing policies/direction over the last two years and the uncertainty that this has created for municipalities, Planning staff have been postponing the initiation of formal updates to the County's Phase 1 Comprehensive review study to ensure that the data and findings will not become immediately irrelevant due to pending Provincial changes. That said, with the recent changes at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), it is hoped there will now be greater stability in Provincial land use planning direction and improved consultation with municipalities on any proposed Provincial changes going forward. As such, Planning staff are of the opinion that the County should proceed with planned updates to the County's Phase 1 Comprehensive study to allow that project to move forward expeditiously, while recognizing the current uncertainties related to provincial policy direction. First and foremost, any new or updated Provincial growth management policies that are introduced through the proposed Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) updates will need to be considered and addressed as part of the project, once the final PPS is released. Although there has been no formal indication of timing for the release of the updated PPS from the Province to date, staff are currently anticipating it will be sometime in early 2024.

The consultation draft of the proposed PPS updates identified several substantial changes to the growth management and housing policies (i.e. overall planning time frames, density/intensification, housing options, etc.) that could directly impact the overall approach and assumptions in the Phase 1 Comprehensive Review study. As such, the nature and scope of any changes to these PPS policies that are ultimately enacted by the Province will need to be closely considered and addressed as part of the study updates and may impact the project timelines.

Given their technical nature and scope, Planning staff do not currently have the expertise or capacity to complete such studies in-house and, as such, consulting services and additional expertise are required. However, the intent is to develop more in-house expertise and capacity through the completion of this project, so that the County's reliance on such consulting services for such projects will be lessened in the future.

County staff are seeking Council approval to single source Watson and Associates (in partnership with Dillon Consulting) for this particular project, given their extensive background in growth forecasting and land needs analysis across the Province and ongoing involvement in, and experience with, various other growth-related projects across the County (i.e. Development Charges study updates, Town of Ingersoll South-West Secondary Plan and Financial/Economic Impact Analysis).

In Planning staff's experience, there are a very few firms that have the specialized expertise, skills and experience necessary to meet the County's expectations for this particular project. Further, given Watson and Associates on-going involvement in the above-noted County projects, they have already received, assessed and analyzed much of the background material and data (i.e. building permits, development applications/proposals, land supply, infrastructure capacity) necessary to inform this project and have developed a strong understanding of local growth and land-need drivers, factors and considerations. As such, Watson and Associates is uniquely positioned to complete this particular update on behalf of the County and Area Municipalities efficiently and expeditiously, including by leveraging the existing work they are

undertaking on behalf of the County to minimize duplication of staff and consultant effort and ensure coordination and consistency between the various projects.

For the above-noted reasons, it is the opinion of Planning staff that single sourcing the updates to the County's Phase 1 Comprehensive Review Study would be advantageous to, and in the best interests of, the County in this particular case.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is recommended that Council authorize staff to retain Watson and Associates (in partnership with Dillon Consulting) to undertake the updates to the County's Phase 1 Comprehensive Review study, as outlined in this report, with the intent to initiate the study updates as soon as possible following receipt of Council's authorization.

SIGNATURES

Report author:

Original Signed By _____
Paul Michiels
Manager of Planning Policy

Departmental Approval:

Original Signed By _____
Gordon K. Hough, RPP
Director of Community Planning

Approved for submission:

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Benjamin R. Addley
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