



Community Planning Permit System

Educational Booklet

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1.0 What is a Community Planning Permit System?

The Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) is a Provincial land use planning tool that municipalities in Ontario can use to help plan the future of their communities. The CPPS combines zoning bylaw amendments, minor variances and site plan applications into one single application and approval process.

A CPPS provides an alternative to the traditional planning approval process. Over the past decade, the CPPS has slowly gained traction in Ontario municipalities as collective understanding of the tool has evolved.

The CPPS is administered through a Community Planning Permit (CPP) Bylaw. A CPP Bylaw implements the Official Plan and replaces the existing zoning bylaw for the area to which the CPPS applies. Once a CPP Bylaw is in effect, the City can issue Planning Permits to allow development to occur if an application meets the standards set out in the CPP Bylaw.

Some key terms:

Zoning bylaw amendment: Zoning bylaws set rules for how land can be used and what can be built on it. If a proposed development doesn't fit these rules, a change to the zoning bylaw is needed, which is called a zoning bylaw amendment.

Minor variance: A minor variance allows a property owner to seek relief from a zoning rule. This lets them use or build on their land in a way that doesn't exactly follow the bylaw (for example, reduced parking or setbacks), but still meets the overall intent.

Site plan: A site plan is a tool used to manage the design and layout of new developments or redevelopments. It helps the City ensure that the building will fit well within the existing environment.



2.0 What are the provincial laws and regulations for a Community Planning Permit System?

The legislative framework that allows municipalities to implement a CPPS dates back more than 15 years. Recently, the tool has gained more popularity and attention through changes to the Planning Act (1990) and as more municipalities seek to implement one. The legislative basis for a CPPS in Ontario can be found in Section 70.2 of the Planning Act.

In 2007, the Planning Act was updated to enable the implementation of a development approvals framework known as the Development Permit System (DPS). The tool was first implemented through Ontario Regulation 608/06 with the intent to provide municipalities with the option of regulating and managing development in a more streamlined, flexible manner. In 2017, the regulatory framework for implementing the DPS was modified, and the tool was re-implemented and introduced as a "Community Planning Permit System" under Ontario Regulation 173/16.



3.0 Why is the City of Guelph piloting a Community Planning Permit System?

The City of Guelph is working to improve housing supply and affordability. In 2024, Guelph received federal funding through the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) to help fast-track the creation of new homes. As part of its HAF action plan, Guelph identified eight initiatives—including the CPPS pilot project—to help meet these goals.

The Community Planning Permit System is also a primary action in the City's [Housing Affordability Strategy](#), designed to bring more housing that is affordable to Guelph over the next decade.



4.0 What are the benefits of a Community Planning Permit System for Guelph?

A CPPS is one of the tools the City of Guelph can use to shape development. Here are some of the benefits of the CPPS:

- **Streamlined approvals:** Make the development approval process faster by combining three separate applications—zoning bylaw amendments, minor variances and site plan applications—into one.
- **Taller buildings with added community benefits:** Allow taller buildings in certain areas if builders include affordable housing or other needs—such as parkland—identified by the City.
- **Fit the community's character:** Ensure new developments fit well within the existing community by incorporating design standards into the CPP Bylaw.
- **Support growth in Guelph:** Plan for long term growth comprehensively within two priority growth areas.



5.0 How does a Community Planning Permit Bylaw differ from the City's Zoning Bylaw?

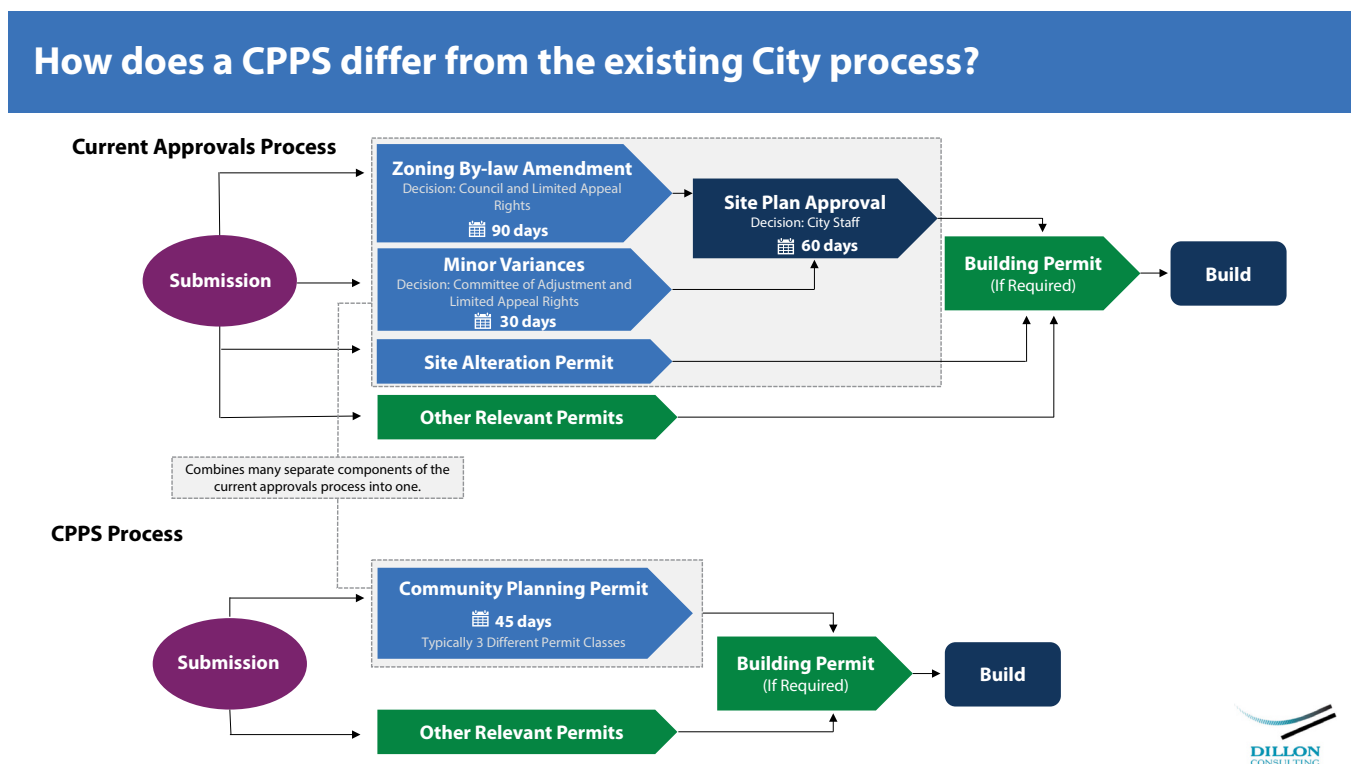
Similar to a zoning bylaw, the CPPS regulates land use and establishes permitted uses and development standards on a site-by-site basis. In Guelph, a CPP Bylaw also establishes and maps “precincts”—much like the “zones” within a zoning bylaw.

A CPPS differs from a zoning bylaw in that it streamlines the development approvals process. It establishes the rules of development and specifies where flexibility may be permitted, based on the satisfaction of certain criteria or conditions. This helps housing projects get approved more quickly.

For residents and builders, the CPP Bylaw also simplifies the process of applying to develop housing. All necessary information is provided upfront, which allows City staff to decide on approvals faster. The 45-day review period also ensures timely processing.

Figure 5.1 shows how the current approvals process compares to the process and timelines under a CPPS.

Figure 5.1: Comparison between the current approvals process and the process under a CPPS.



6.0 What areas in Guelph are included under the Community Planning Permit System?

The Official Plan for Guelph sets how and where the city will grow in the years to come. Downtown Guelph and the Stone Road/Edinburgh Road area are identified as Strategic Growth Areas. These areas will be home to more people, jobs, infrastructure, and public amenities in the future.

These areas are key to reaching the city's housing target of 18,000 units by 2031. They are ready to support growth because they have easily accessible transit, roads and other important infrastructure. The City has identified Downtown Guelph and the Stone Road/Edinburgh Road area as pilot project areas to establish a Community Planning Permit System.



7.0 When is a Community Planning Permit required?

A Community Planning Permit is required for any development within a defined CPP Area, which generally includes the following:

- a change in land use
- construction of, or additions to, a building
- the addition or alteration of buildings
- site alterations

To obtain a CPP, the proposed development must:

- conform to the City's Official Plan,
- avoid significant adverse impacts on the site or surrounding area, and
- align with municipal and provincial policies and standards.

Certain developments within CPPS areas are exempt from requiring a CPP. These exemptions typically align with the following bylaws:

- Site Plan Control Bylaw
- Site Alteration Bylaw
- Private Tree Protection Bylaw

They can also incorporate exemptions from the Planning Act and other provincial policies. Exemptions include:

- developments with an approved site plan
- minor renovations
- extensions to existing structures if the permitted use does not change
- a new single or semi-detached dwelling
- addition or any accessory building or structure that meets all requirements of the bylaw
- residential development with 10 or less units
- portable classrooms on school sites existing as of January 1, 2007, provided they comply with provincial and federal requirements for grading/fill and vegetation removal



8.0 What is involved in the Community Planning Permit process?

8.1 Approval authority and Community Planning Permit classes

A key feature of the CPP Bylaw is the introduction of permit classes and variation thresholds. Within the permit classes, Council can delegate the approval of development applications to staff.

The CPP Bylaw establishes three permit classes.

- **Class 1 and 2 applications**, which meet all or most development standards and fall within the variation threshold and are approved by staff.
- **Class 3 applications**, requiring significant variation from the development standards and exceed the variation threshold, are approved by Council or a Committee of Council.

Regardless of the permit class, all applications are subject to a 45-day decision period.

Table 8.1 provides an overview of permit classes and their approval authorities

Table 8.1: Community Planning Permit application types

Class type	Variation	Approval authority
Class 1 – Standards Met	Application: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• meets all development standards of the bylaw• includes a permitted use	General Manager, Planning and Building Services for the City and/or delegate
Class 2 – Staff Variation	Application: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• generally meets the development standards of the bylaw• requires a variation to one or more development standards within the defined variation threshold• includes a discretionary use	General Manager, Planning and Building Services for the City and/or delegate
Class 3 – Council Variation	Application: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• generally meets the development standards of the bylaw• requires a Council Variation to one or more development standards beyond the defined variation threshold	Council or a Committee of Council

8.2 Consultation

The CPPS legislation does not mandate public notification for Planning Permit applications or require public meetings. Notice for permits above Class 1 will be provided in the following ways:

- **For Class 2 and 3 applications**, notices will be posted on the [Current Development Applications page](#) on the City's website and through on-site signage.
- **For Class 3 applications**, notices will be posted on the [Current Development Applications page](#) on the City's website, be mailed to residents within 120 meters of the subject property and through on-site signage.

The City consulted with the public and stakeholders before approving the CPP Bylaw and Official Plan amendment for the Stone Road/Edinburgh Road area. Anyone who participated in the CPPS implementation process was able to appeal the Official Plan amendment or CPP Bylaw to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) within 20 days of its approval.

To learn more about this engagement, please read the Engagement Summary available here: haveyoursay.guelph.ca/44925/widgets/190384/documents/150924

8.3 Appeals

Appeals of the CPP Bylaw are limited. Members of the public can appeal the Bylaw when it is first adopted by Council.

Once it is in place, the public cannot appeal individual permit applications under the CPP Bylaw. Only the applicant can appeal a permit to the OLT.

8.4 Conditions of approval

A Community Planning Permit may be approved with conditions that the applicant must address. This helps ensure decisions are made within the 45-day legislated timeframe, even if additional work or study is needed before final approval.

Similar to a Site Plan Agreement, an applicant may need to enter into an agreement with the City to address the conditions.

8.5 Administrative process

While there are administrative differences between the process for traditional development applications and CPPS application frameworks, the main milestones are similar for both.

Table 8.2 compares the key steps from the perspectives of City staff, Council and applicants, highlighting the differences.

Table 8.2: Traditional versus CPPS approvals process for the City of Guelph

ZBA = Zoning bylaw amendment

Steps	Traditional Process	CPPS Process
Step 1: Pre-submission consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City and all applicable agencies identify submission requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City and all applicable agencies identify submission requirements. City identifies type of Planning Permit application (Class 1, 2 or 3).
Step 2: Application submission and public notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application deemed “complete.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » ZBA: Must be deemed complete within 30 days of submission. Circulation to City Staff and agencies for review. ZBA and minor variance: Public notice sent out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility in determining when an application is deemed “complete” may require agency and department comments in advance. Circulation to City Staff and agencies for review. No legislative requirement for notice. However, Guelph’s CPP By-law establishes notice requirements for Permit Class 2 and 3 applications.
Step 3: Application review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City staff and agencies review application. ZBA: Staff report and recommendations to Council. Minor variance: Staff comments with recommendations to Committee of Adjustment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City staff and agencies review application. Written evaluation/report where variation is required. Staff recommendation for Class 3 applications approved by Council. Flexibility in addressing Site Plan matters.
Step 4: Approval authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ZBA: Council (within 90-day timeframe). Minor variance: Committee of Adjustment. Site plan: General Manager of Planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City staff or Council depending on Permit Class (within 45-day timeframe). May impose conditions of approval.
Step 5: Appeal Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ZBA: Applicant, the Minister, the registered owner of any land to which the application would apply who made verbal or written comments or a specified person or body. Minor variance: Applicants, specified person or public bodies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only the applicant can appeal a decision. No third-party appeal rights.

8.6 Variations and discretionary uses

When a proposed development requires a variation from a development standard, the applicant must demonstrate how they have addressed the variation criteria as part of the complete application.

If a Class 2 or Class 3 Permit for a new building or use is required, the proposed development or a discretionary use is only permitted if the following criteria are addressed:

- a. It follows the requirements and objectives of the CPP Bylaw.
- b. It aligns with the City's Official Plan and any changes to it.
- c. It considers guidelines from the Province, Region, and City, and technical studies.
- d. It follows provincial policies, rules, and standards.
- e. It identifies and reduces any possible negative effects on the surrounding.

8.7 Facilities, services, and matters

Under a CPPS, a Community Benefit Charge (CBC) does not apply. Instead, the CPP Bylaw needs to identify where "facilities, services and matters" are required.

Facilities, services, and matters generally refers to community benefits, which may include the following:

- affordable housing
- accessible dwelling units
- public service facilities
- public art
- additional parkland

These community benefits may be provided in exchange for height or density. In practice, this means the following:

- **For a Class 1 Permit**, the applicant must pay a complete community charge for development with five or more storeys and 10 or more residential units.
- **For a Class 2 Permit**, in addition to the complete community charge noted in Class 1 above, the applicant must also choose one of the following:
 - » **Option 1:** At least 33 per cent of all residential units that exceed the maximum Class 1 building height or density, but are within the Class 2 limits, must be affordable housing.
 - » **Option 2:** A payment, also referred to as cash-in-lieu, can be made instead of providing the required affordable housing units mentioned in Option 1.
 - » **Option 3:** A combination of affordable housing units and a payment (cash-in-lieu) can be provided, instead of the required affordable units mentioned in Option 1.

For a Class 3 Permit, in addition to the complete community charge noted in Class 1 above, the applicant must also provide additional facilities, services, and matters that are greater in value than those required for a Class 2 Permit, with a list of potential things the municipality may accept.

9.0 Questions

Questions?

Contact Planning Services:

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Accessible formats available upon request.

