

Community Spaces Policy Brochure

The Town of Smiths Falls is in the process of creating a new Official Plan (O.P.). This is a key guiding document that provides context for, and directs, growth and development throughout the Town. 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

Historically, Smiths Falls has strategically cultivated strong placemaking by seizing opportunities and addressing economic challenges. Smiths Falls has focused on both economic and urban revitalization, with an emphasis on sustainable town planning. By embracing its historic architecture, the Town has initiated projects like the Beckwith Street Redevelopment and the transformation of neglected riverfront areas into lively recreational spaces. Creative placemaking efforts, such as the Station Theatre, are fostering cultural expression, pride, and vibrancy. As Smiths Falls continues to evolve, the return of Hershey Canada to its original location on Hershey Drive symbolizes not only economic resilience but also the town's adaptability and enduring strength. The Town's proactive strategy to attract diverse businesses and create a business-friendly environment has led to a positive outcome, with an expanding range of industries such as tech startups, craft breweries, and tourism ventures.

Why 'Community Spaces'?

By highlighting the Town's unique historical and cultural elements, placemaking through community spaces fosters community pride and a deeper connection among residents. Community spaces attract tourism and investment by creating appealing and vibrant social hubs, which are vital for a small town's economic growth. A byproduct of excellent community spaces includes improved quality of life by providing safe, accessible, and engaging spaces that encourage outdoor activities and social interaction. Overall, strong policies related to placemaking can help strengthen Smiths Falls, making it a more dynamic and resilient community that positions Smiths Falls as an attractive destination for a highly mobile workforce.



Key Policies Influences on Community Spaces in Smiths Falls

Provincial Legislation

The Planning Act encourages placemaking by requiring municipalities to create Official Plans to guide long term land use and development. O.P.'s must promote healthy, livable, and safe communities, which includes the design of vibrant public spaces that encourage social interaction and community cohesion. Under the Planning Act, municipalities can also develop Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) to focus on the enhancement or revitalization of certain areas. CIPs help attract investment and community involvement, fostering pride and a sense of place in neighborhoods.

Provincial Policies

Ontario's Provincial Planning Statement (PPS 2024) enables strong placemaking policies through Chapter 2, Building Homes, Sustaining Strong and Competitive Communities.

Municipal Policies

In conjunction with the existing O.P., the Town is also equipped with a Community Improvement Plan (CIP), Canal District Master Plan, Downtown Revitalization and Waterfront Masterplan, and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. All these documents collectively work towards a vision for the area that seeks to enhance the Town's livability, heritage, and community spaces.



Assessment of Existing OP Policies

High Quality Built Environment: The current O.P. promotes a compact development pattern with adequate public services and infrastructure to support growth. It emphasizes opportunities for redevelopment in targeted areas, creating cohesive, vibrant, and attractive neighborhoods, as well as a vital downtown. The plan aims to provide accessible housing for all, preserve cultural heritage, and enhance the Town's distinctive image.

Safe and Healthy Community: The current O.P. focuses on ensuring Smiths Falls is a safe and welcoming town for living, working, learning, and recreation. It prioritizes promoting opportunities for active and healthy lifestyles.

Diverse Range of Cultural and Recreational Opportunities: The current O.P. aims to integrate arts and creativity into the community, while developing a connected network of parks and recreational facilities. Additionally, the plan recognizes the Rideau Canal National Historic Site and UNESCO World Heritage Site as key tourism and recreational assets, supporting their development and management through coordinated strategies and plans.

Potential Policy Directions for the Future

The new O.P. offers an opportunity to influence the streetscape and surrounding neighborhoods for the future to tell the story of Smith Falls through innovative public art installations, high quality public spaces, natural areas, land use compatibility, wayfinding signage, and connectivity.



Strategies and/or Policies to Consider:

Storytelling: Incorporating public art installations or plaques can tell the stories of important figures and events in the community and wayfinding signage. These elements will enhance the town's cultural identity while improving navigation for residents and visitors.

Percent of Art: Council adopted a Public Arts Policy and Master Plan that calls for up to 1% of the Town's revenue to be set aside for public arts. There is an opportunity for the Official Plan to determine the goals and intent of the public art grants.

Shared Spaces: Having businesses, residences, and public spaces side by side promotes interaction among different groups of people. A mix of uses with higher density means that people of all ages and backgrounds will naturally cross paths and interact, building a more inclusive and cohesive community.

Leveraging What Is Already Here: This approach not only preserves the community's heritage but also introduces modern amenities to respect the historical context, enhance the sense of

place, ensuring that the community's identity is maintained, existing cultural heritage is conserved, all while embracing future growth.

Design Aesthetic: Smiths Falls can encourage building designs that draw inspiration from the local heritage and natural surroundings, blending tradition with the environment. By incorporating architectural elements that reflect the town's history and landscape, new developments can foster a sense of continuity and pride. This approach not only preserves the community's unique character but also enhances its aesthetic appeal, creating spaces that feel authentic and connected to the area.

Questions for Consideration

1. What makes a community space feel like a community space?
2. What aspects of Smiths Falls' character and heritage do you believe should be preserved and highlighted in new developments or public spaces?
3. What types of public spaces would you like to see more of in Smiths Falls?
4. In your opinion, how can we better utilize the Rideau Canal and waterfront areas to enhance public enjoyment, connectivity, and tourism in Smiths Falls?

Let us know what you think!

Visit 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