



WELCOME!

Town of Fort Erie

Zoning By-law Review

Public Open House #1
July 14, 2026

- Please sign-in at the front table.
- Scan the QR Code to visit the Project Webpage.
- Feel free to review the boards and maps.
- Staff are available to answer questions.



The purpose of today's open house is to...

- **Introduce and explain** why a new Zoning By-law is being developed.
- **Highlight** key elements of what a Zoning By-law is, and preliminary work completed to date.
- **Seek** your input and comments on the direction of the Zoning By-law Review.

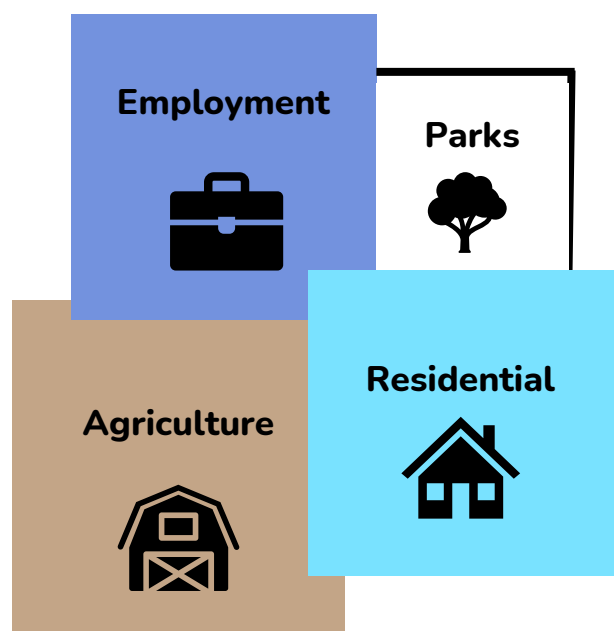
Overview of Zoning



What is a Zoning By-law?

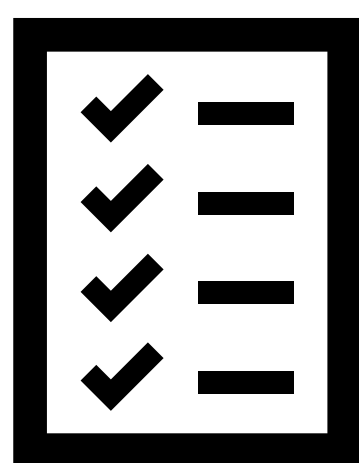
A Zoning By-law provides regulations for how land can be used and what can be built on it on a property-specific basis. It implements the Official Plan, which provides more general direction regarding land uses in the Town.

Fort Erie’s zoning is regulated through Comprehensive Zoning By-law 129-90, as amended.

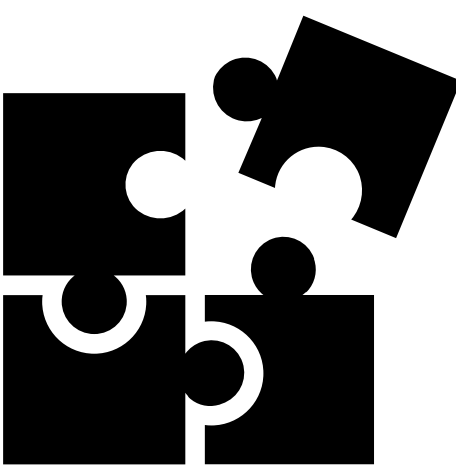


- ✓ All land in Fort Erie is ‘**zoned**’ under different land use categories, such as ‘Residential’, ‘Employment’, or ‘Agriculture’. There are also sub-categories or zones, such as R1 – Residential and R2 – Residential. Each ‘zone’ has a set of detailed permitted uses and regulations. See the table below for an example.

	Residential 1 (R1) Zone	Residential 3 (R3) Zone
Permitted Uses (simplified for example)	1 single-detached dwelling - Home occupations - Short-term rentals, where owner occupied	1 single detached dwelling - Home occupations - Short-term rental, where owner occupied Semi-detached dwellings Duplex dwellings



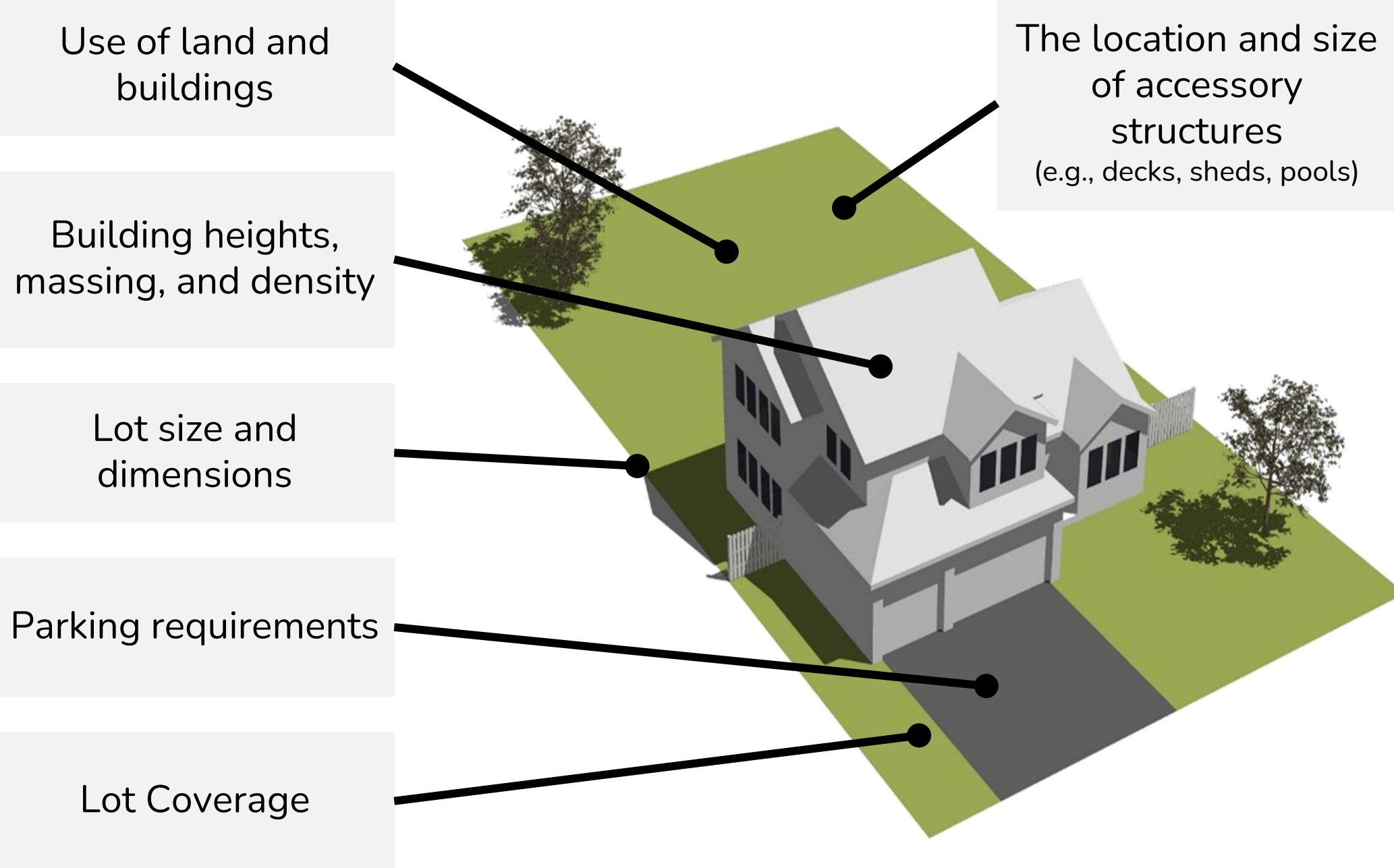
- ✓ If a development does not meet the requirements of the Zoning By-law, the applicant will need to **apply to amend the Zoning By-law** (a rezoning) or apply for a ‘minor variance’ (a very small amendment) for one or more of the By-law’s requirements.



- ✓ The Zoning By-law is used by landowners, members of the public, Town staff, and Town Council to **inform development decisions and the use of land**.

What Does Zoning Regulate?

Zoning By-laws contain many regulations and standards to guide development, such as:



What is Being Reviewed?

The Zoning By-law Review will look at each property in the Town to determine if the current zone and rules are still appropriate. This includes residential, commercial, and employment land uses.

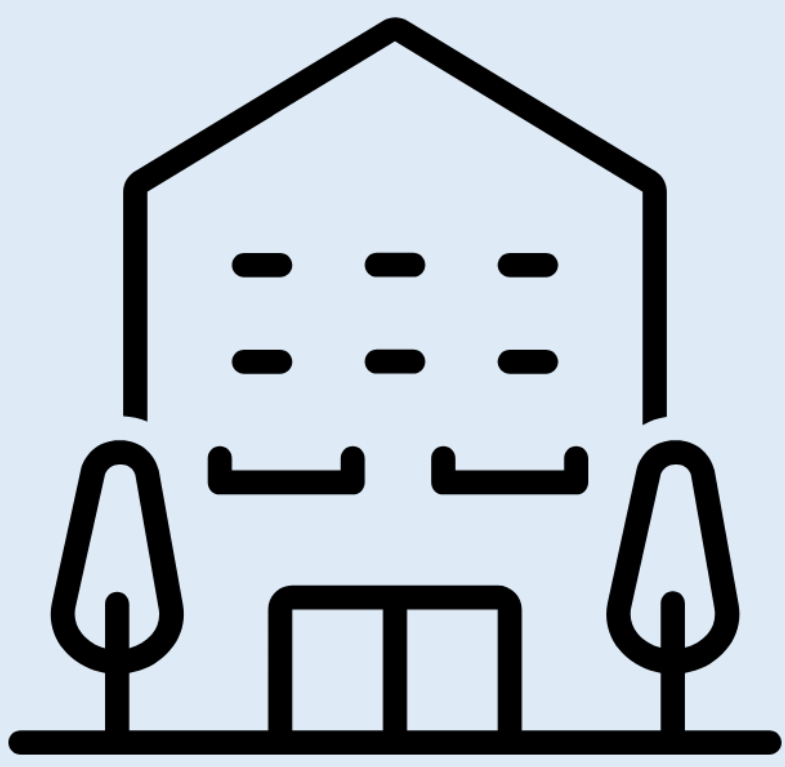


Legend

- Open Space (OS) Zone
- Public (P) Zone
- Highway Commercial (C3) Zone
- Agricultural (A) Zone
- Residential 1 (R1) Zone

Questions to Think About

Developing a new Zoning By-law is about deciding how to balance new development for the future with what people value today.



How should zoning make room for more housing options and mixed-use development?

- Where could the zoning by-law allow a mix of residential and commercial uses on the same property or in the same area?
- Where more than one unit is permitted on a lot (e.g., basement apartments or garden suites), are there impacts that need to be addressed through stronger regulation?
- Should a wider range of housing types (e.g., multi-unit homes, apartments) be permitted through zoning in certain areas?
- Are there places where current zoning is too restrictive in terms of what types of buildings or uses are allowed?



What should new development look like?

- What rules need to be in place so that new buildings visually fit in with existing neighbourhoods (e.g., height, size, and distance between buildings)?
- What parts of Fort Erie should be protected as they are today? For example, where should we maintain the character of neighbourhoods, natural areas, and the shoreline?



How do we support a strong, livable community?

- Where should zoning allow more flexibility for tourism-related uses, small businesses, or home-based businesses?
- Are there any existing rules that are too complicated or create unnecessary barriers?
- Are there specific regulations (e.g., parking, setbacks, lot sizes) that feel too restrictive or not restrictive enough?



How can we learn from our previous experience?

- What do you see in the Town that is currently working well?
- Where do you see challenges that the Town could better address?

Overview of Zoning



How Did We Get Here?

The Town is updating its Zoning By-law in response to recent changes in the planning framework that flows from the Province down to local municipalities.

The Town’s authority to pass a Zoning By-law comes from Section 34 of the Province of Ontario’s *Planning Act*.

- In 2024, the Province introduced the **Provincial Planning Statement, 2024**, which provides direction for how communities across the Province should plan for growth, housing, and infrastructure.
- The Town of Fort Erie was required to update its **Official Plan** (approved and in-effect as of May 2026) to align with the Province’s direction. This plan sets out the Town’s overall vision for growth in Fort Erie, but it does not regulate development in detail. That is the role of the Zoning By-law.
- The **Zoning By-law** sets the specific rules for what can be built on each property, including permitted uses, building heights, and setbacks. Because the Official Plan has changed, the Town must now update its Zoning By-law to ensure that these detailed rules match the new direction and comply with current provincial policies.

Planning Act	- Provide overall Provincial direction - Require municipalities to plan for 20-30 years of expected growth. - Town’s Zoning By-law must be consistent with the Provincial policy and legislation.
Provincial Planning Statement	
Town of Fort Erie Official Plan	- Sets the vision for growth, development, and infrastructure. - Policies to guide, not force development - Higher level, implemented mainly through the Zoning By-law.
Town of Fort Erie Zoning By-law	- Regulates the permitted uses, building requirements, and parking and loading. requirements on all properties in the Town - Technical and highly specific.
Zoning By-law Amendments	- Privately-led (or in some cases by other public bodies like school boards). - Reviewed by the Town against OP and Zoning By-law.

New Zoning By-law Principles

The following are some guiding principles for preparing the new Zoning By-law:

- ✓ Create a user-friendly Zoning By-law that is easy for residents and businesses to confirm zoning.
- ✓ Establish consistent regulations across the Town of Fort Erie.
- ✓ Modernize zoning terms to reflect current and emerging land uses and business types.
- ✓ Respond to public and stakeholder input and comments to improve the Zoning By-law and address the issues observed by the community.

Zoning in Fort Erie



Zoning By-law 129-90 (ZBL) – By the Numbers

Over time, the Town’s Zoning By-law has become increasingly complex and reliant on site-specific exceptions, and the new Zoning By-law will streamline and clarify these rules to create a more consistent and user-friendly framework.



Share your Input!

Which of the following should be the highest priorities in the new Zoning By-law?
(Select up to 3 to place a dot next to)

Housing Choice & Affordability	
Housing Form (e.g., Height, lot placement, etc.)	
Parking Requirements	
Recognize Neighbourhood Character	
Supporting Local Businesses & Employment	
Preserving Rural & Agricultural Areas	
Protecting the Natural Environment and Shorelines	
Simplifying and Modernizing the By-law	

Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) & Urban Design Guidelines (UDG)

The Town of Fort Erie is developing a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) for the key areas in the Town where growth will be focused over the next 25 years: our ‘**Strategic Growth Areas**’ (see map below).

We are also developing Urban Design Guidelines that will apply Town-wide, to support the design of comfortable, inviting, and appealing public spaces and provide consistent guidance for private development.

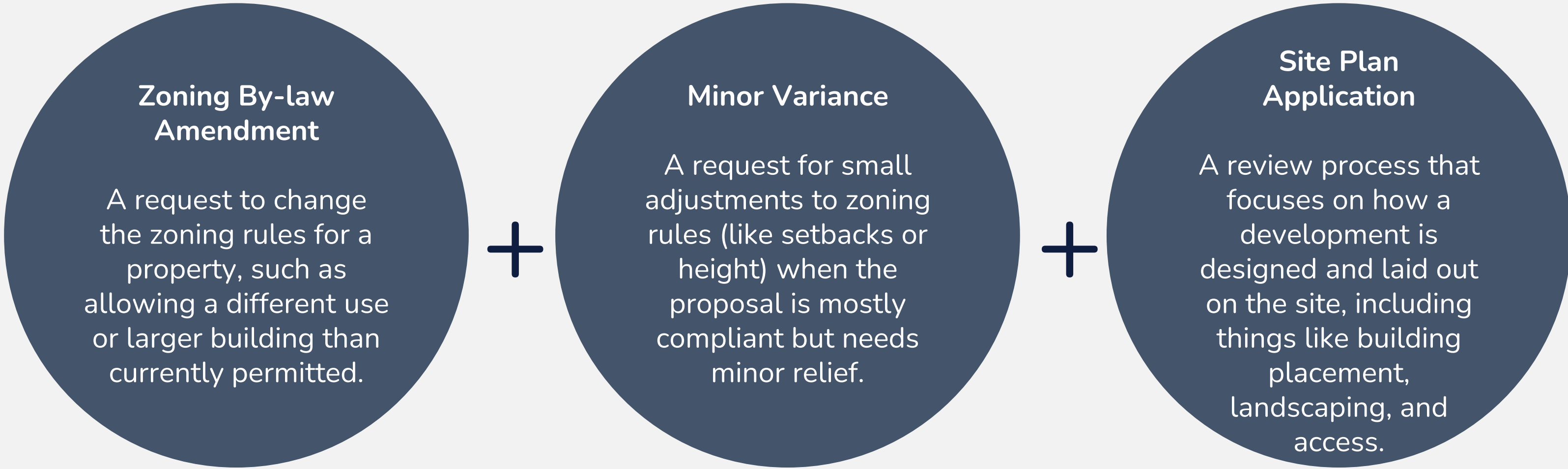


The CPPS is a transformative tool that Ontario municipalities can use to streamline development approvals by combining Zoning By-law Amendments, Minor Variances, and Site Plan applications into a single approval process. This system provides several benefits, including:

- increased transparency with the public;
- reduced planning approval timelines; and
- accelerated delivery of housing options to meet community needs.

In Fort Erie, this system will specifically target the Town’s seven Strategic Growth Areas (SGA), including:

Community Planning Permit System



Zoning By-law vs. Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) – What’s the Difference?

Zoning By-law

A Zoning By-law is the Town’s standard rulebook for development across the municipality. It sets clear, fixed rules such as:

- What uses are allowed on a property (e.g., residential, commercial)
- How tall buildings can be
- How far they must be set back from property lines

These rules apply broadly and are used for day-to-day development decisions

Think of it as the baseline rules for properties based on general categories of use.

Community Planning Permit System

A CPPS is a more flexible tool used in specific areas, usually where the Town wants to guide a higher level of change or growth. Instead of relying only on fixed rules, a CPPS:

- Combines zoning, minor variance, and site plan approval into one system.
- Allows for more flexibility, while still meeting clear policy goals
- Can include both: Firm rules, and Discretion to adjust things like height or layout within set limits.

Think of it as a tailored planning approach for areas expected to grow or change more quickly.

As part of the Town of Fort Erie’s Zoning By-law Review, the Project Team has conducted background research and identified specific issues and trends to inform future zoning directions.

Collectively, this background research will support the development of a new zoning by-law that conforms to the Town’s new Official Plan and advances a clear, consistent, and modern approach to land use regulation and sets the **foundation for the new Zoning By-law**, including key principles and overall direction.

The Project Team will review how the current Zoning By-law 129-90 can be modernized to align with the new Official Plan and Provincial direction and harness current zoning trends and best practices.

Current Policies & Zoning

- By-law 129-90 has **grown complex over time**, with many **outdated** definitions and site-specific exceptions.
- **Must be updated to conform** with the new Official Plan (2026) and Provincial Planning Statement, 2024.

Today, finding the rules for your property can mean navigating multiple overlapping exceptions. The new By-law will bring everything together in one clear, easy-to-find place so you know what applies, the first time you look.

Trends in Zoning

- Focus on the appearance of development
- Greater flexibility in zoning regulations
- Integrating land use and transportation planning
- Improving clarity and accessibility
- Support for broader policy objectives

Zoning Directions & Recommendations

1. Build the By-law around six guiding principles, including a user-friendly format that uses plain language and is grounded in meaningful consultation.
2. Streamline zones and definitions to reduce complexity and improve clarity.
3. Consolidate and reorganize key sections such as parking, exceptions, holding provisions, and general provisions.
4. Ensure strong public access through clear writing and tools such as up-to-date interactive online zoning maps.
5. Likely approach: prepare a new By-law (rather than amending 129-90), with transition provisions for in-progress applications.



Share your Input!

What would make the Zoning By-law easier to understand or use?
(Write on a sticky note)

Overview of Residential Zoning

Purpose: review how residential areas from single-detached homes to apartments are zoned today, and how the framework can be modernized to support a wider range of context-appropriate housing options that are aligned with the new Official Plan.

Current Policies & Zoning

- The existing Zoning By-law 129-90 includes **more than 10 residential zones**, which in many cases differ only slightly in terms of requirements and permissions.
- Residential zones carry the largest share of exception zones in the existing Zoning By-law (**350+ total residential exception zones**), often adjusting permissions to be more lenient with relation to zoning requirements.
- Secondary Plans (i.e., detailed plans for how specific parts of the Town will develop) introduce additional rules that the new By-law must reflect for the Bridgeburg, Gateway, Douglas Town-Black Creek, and Stevensville Plans. The policies contained in Secondary Plans take precedence over the policies of the Official Plan.
- Additional residential units (up to 2 per lot) are permitted in all designations, but more detailed regulations may be developed through the new Zoning By-law.

Today, four similar residential zones (R1, R2, R2A, R2B) regulate single-detached homes with only minor differences in lot size, coverage, height, and setbacks. This example highlights that the new By-law will consider opportunities to combine the existing residential zones to provide more straightforward and easy-to-use zoning permissions.



Zoning Directions & Recommendations

1. Restructure residential zones into a clearer hierarchy that more clearly addresses the form and location of the zones (i.e., Low-Rise, Mid-Rise, High-Rise, and Rural Residential).
2. Modernize permitted uses to support a broader range of housing forms, including additional residential units, multi-unit homes, and low-rise apartments.
3. Reflect Secondary Plan direction (use permissions, height, mixed-uses, etc.) directly in the new By-law to reduce reliance on site-specific amendments.
4. Review parking, driveway, and recreational vehicle standards to reflect modern neighbourhood needs.
5. Tie residential height and built form permissions to local road classifications to ensure development is scaled appropriately to the surrounding context and infrastructure capacity.



Share your Input!

Place a dot next to your top two priorities for residential zoning:

More Housing Options	
Existing Neighbourhood Character	
Making it Easier to Add Additional Residential Units	
Update Parking and Driveway Rules	
Improving Walkability and Mix of Uses in Neighbourhoods	
Clear and Predictable Development Rules	

Overview of Employment & Commercial Zoning



Purpose: review how commercial and employment areas are zoned in Fort Erie today, how the existing regulations can be modernized to reflect how these areas function, and how the Town can respond to new Provincial requirements for these types of lands.

- **Commercial areas include** shops, restaurants, offices, services, and other similar uses
- **Employment areas include** industrial areas, business parks, and other job-generating uses

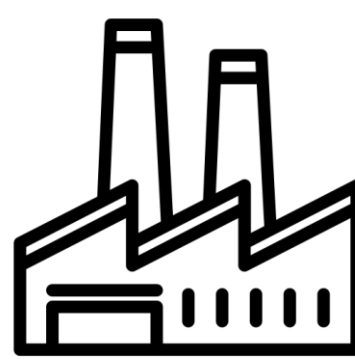
Current Policies & Zoning

Commercial Uses

- The existing Zoning By-law 129-90 includes 16 separate commercial zones, with many overlapping rules or rarely-used categories.
- Some zones (like Shopping Centre Commercial) are not applied to any properties at all.
- Residential uses associated with commercial areas are only permitted in Strategic Growth Areas and will be handled through the Community Planning Permit System (CPPS), not the new Zoning By-law.

Employment Uses

- The existing Zoning By-law 129-90 includes 5 employment-related zones: Prestige Industrial, Industrial, Dry Industrial, Extractive Industrial, and Public.
- In 2024, the Province moved from a more permissive approach to lands that accommodate employment uses (i.e., previously a wide mix of uses allowed) to a more restrictive approach (i.e., permits specific uses only) for Employment Areas.
- Current zoning does not fully reflect the updated Provincial direction or modern industrial development patterns.



Commercial Zoning Directions & Recommendations

1. Combine the 16 commercial zones into a clearer, smaller set.
2. Use modern, broader use definitions that group similar uses rather than listing each one separately.
3. Update development standards (e.g., reduce requirements for the depth of backyards) to reflect modern development.
4. Align permissions in the Zoning By-law with the new Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) to ensure compatibility between different areas in the Town.

Employment Zoning Directions & Recommendations

1. Adjust existing industrial zones to align with the new provincial definition of 'Employment Areas.'
2. Introduce a new Business Park zone for job-related uses that don't fit the strict 'Employment Area' definition.
3. Review required distances between employment and non-employment zones to avoid incompatibility.
4. Update rules for outside storage, building height, and the portion of lots that can be built on to reflect modern industrial development.



Share your Input!

What types of shops or amenities do you want to see more or less of in Fort Erie?
(Write on a sticky note)

Overview of Rural and Agriculture Zoning



Purpose: review how the Countryside is zoned, including uses such as farms, rural homes, and rural businesses. It explores how zoning can support a vibrant agricultural community while protecting farmland for the long term.

- Agricultural lands include lands that are protected for long-term agricultural uses and normal farm practices.
- Rural lands include lands that are outside of settlement and prime agricultural areas that provide opportunities for residential uses, limited agriculture uses, and resource-based activities, recreation, and tourism.

Current Policies & Zoning

- The Official Plan establishes two main zoning categories in the Countryside: **Agriculture (prime farmland)** and Rural (broader countryside uses).
- There are two specified zones within the Rural category: **Rural Residential** and **Waterfront Rural Residential**.
- Existing Zoning By-law 129-90 establishes minimum lot sizes for both the Rural zones (min. size of 6 hectares) and Agricultural zone (min. size of 20 hectares) to protect these lands from becoming too small to farm or too fragmented.
- Current terminology used in the existing Zoning By-law 129-90 does not fully align with the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024.
- Uses that need to be regulated by the Zoning By-law in these areas include farm worker housing, home industries, agri-tourism, and rural commercial uses.

Zoning Directions & Recommendations

1. Carry forward the existing Rural and Agricultural zones, updating mapping to match the new Official Plan.
2. Introduce a refreshed framework for two new use categories to align with Provincial direction and support the rural economy: agriculture-related uses (e.g., feed mills, equipment sales) and on-farm diversified uses (e.g., farm markets, agri-tourism, small cafés).
3. Consider creating a new rural commercial zone for existing commercial businesses and future businesses that fit the rural character (e.g., Existing autoshops).
4. Merge Rural Residential and Waterfront Rural Residential into one consolidated zone.
5. Review rules for farm worker dwellings, veterinary clinics, kennels, and short-term rentals.



Share your Input!

What types of uses do you think could be better regulated in the Rural and Agricultural areas in Fort Erie? (Write on a sticky note)

WSP

FORT ERIE

Overview of Natural Environment, Open Space, and Parks Zoning

Purpose: Review how Fort Erie protects its natural environment, parks, and open space through zoning, and how zoning will align with the new Official Plan’s Natural Environment System (NES).

- **Natural Environment lands** include ecologically sensitive areas and features (e.g., woodlands, wetlands, dunes) that are generally intended to be protected from development that could be harmful to them.
- **Open Space lands** include greenspaces that are generally open and undeveloped but are not identified as ecologically significant. These lands are commonly be used for light recreational purposes (e.g., trails, conservation lands), stormwater management facilities (e.g., stormwater management ponds), or cemeteries.
- **Parks lands** include lands intended for active public recreation and gathering. These may include community parks, sports fields, waterfront beaches, and other similar areas.

Current Policies & Zoning

- The existing Zoning By-law 129-90 uses:
 - 4 natural environment zones that capture ecologically sensitive areas that need protection or include natural hazards: Environmental Protection, Environmental Conservation Overlay, Dune Protection, and Hazard.; and
 - 2 open space zones: Open Space and Existing Open Space (both generally permit parks and open space uses but apply to different areas of the Town). Stormwater management facilities are usually placed in Open Space.
- Some natural features in the Town may not be fully mapped and may require site-specific study (e.g., Environmental Impact Study) to confirm their location at the time that development is proposed.
- The Official Plan distinguishes between natural features inside and outside settlement areas.



Levels of Protection

1. Development and Site Alteration Not Permitted

- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Significant Woodlands
- Key Hydrologic Feature

2. Development and Site Alteration Subject to Further Study

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Non-Provincial Significant Wetlands | • Habitat of Threatened, Endangered Species, and Species of Special Concern |
| • Other Woodlands | • Significant Wildlife Habitat |
| • Dune Protection Areas | • Significant Valleylands, Valleylands, and Stream Corridors |
| • Fish Habitat | |
| • Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest | |

Zoning Directions & Recommendations

1. Update environmental zones to reflect different feature types and the level of protection required for each in both settlement and non-settlement contexts.
2. Apply a stricter 'no-touch' zone for significant wetlands and woodlands.
3. Apply a more restrictive dune protection zone limiting new development to the extent of existing development.
4. Restructure open space zones into Parks (active recreation) and Open Space (passive areas) zones.
5. Clarify how stormwater facilities are zoned — including making them a permitted use in Open Space.
6. Reposition the existing Public (P) zone as a new Utility (U) zone to complement the Parks and Open Space Zones.

Stay Involved

Project Timeline



Next Steps

Following today’s public open house, the project team will:

1. Summarize **input** received from today’s public open house.
2. Develop the **First Draft Zoning By-law** based on background research, best practices, and input from staff, Council, the public, and other interested parties.
3. Release the **First Draft Zoning By-law** for further consultation at a **Public Open House**.

It is anticipated that the **Final Zoning By-law** will be presented to Council for adoption in early- to mid-2027.

Contact Information

For more information and updates on the new Zoning By-law project, please contact:

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Visit the website to keep up to date!