



Phase 1 Engagement Summary Report

Town of Fort Erie Zoning By-law Review

August 2026



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1 Overview

This Engagement Summary Report summarizes communication and engagement activities completed as part of Phase 1 of the Town of Fort Erie Zoning By-law Review (the “Project”). The purpose of the Project is to prepare a new, modern Zoning By-law that implements the Town’s new Official Plan, reflects current Provincial planning direction, and responds to local needs and priorities.

The Zoning By-law is the Town’s rulebook for land use and development. It identifies what uses are permitted on each property and sets standards for things like building height, setbacks, lot coverage, parking, and accessory structures. The new Zoning By-law will replace Comprehensive Zoning By-law 129-90 and is intended to be clearer, easier to use, and better aligned with the Town’s long-term planning framework.

Engagement activities were conducted by the Town, with support from WSP Canada Inc. as the Town’s consultant. The communication and engagement process has focused on sharing information, gathering feedback on key zoning issues, and creating opportunities for the public, Council, staff, Indigenous communities, and other interested parties to help shape the direction of the new Zoning By-law.

Project Purpose



- ✓ Create New Zoning By-law
- ✓ Implement Official Plan
- ✓ Address Local & Provincial Needs

What is a Zoning By-law?



- ✓ Land Use Rules
- ✓ Building Standards
- ✓ Height, Setbacks, Parking & More

Why Update?



- ✓ Replace By-law 129-90
- ✓ Clear & User-Friendly
- ✓ Align with Long-Term Plans

Who was Involved?



- ✓ Town of Fort Erie
- ✓ WSP Canada Inc.
- ✓ Residents ✓ Council
- ✓ Indigenous Communities

Engagement Events



- ✓ Public Meetings
- ✓ Advisory Group Meetings
- ✓ Stakeholder Workshops

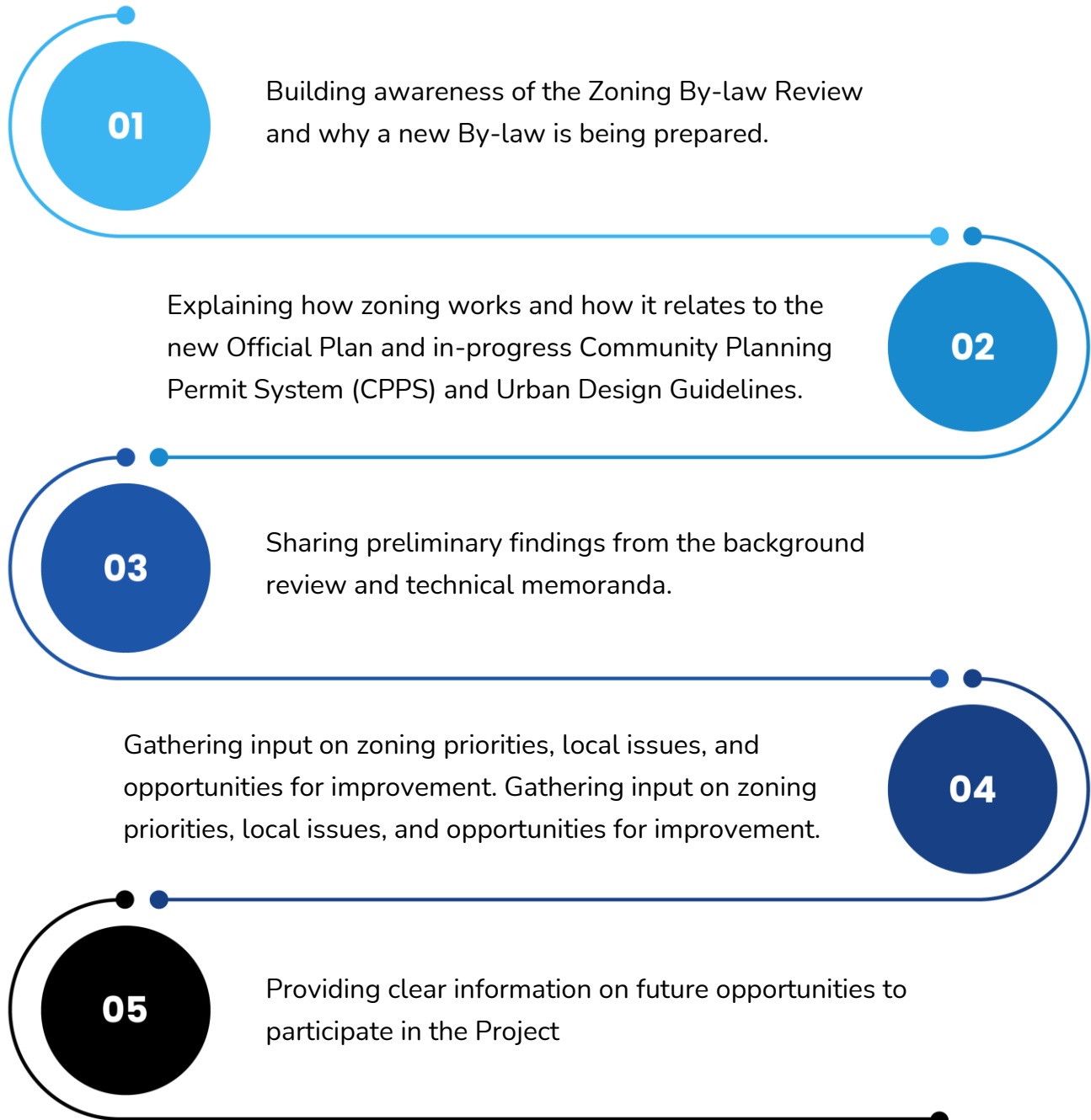
Key Activities



- ✓ Share Information
- ✓ Gather Feedback
- ✓ Shape the New By-law

2 Engagement Objectives

The engagement program is intended to support a transparent and accessible process. Key objectives included:



3 Engagement and Communication Activities

Throughout the Project, a range of communication and engagement activities are planned to reach different audiences. Activities in Phase 1 included information sharing and feedback collection through the Town's webpage and online platforms, Staff and Council workshops, a Joint Advisory Group meeting, Indigenous outreach, and a Public Open House.

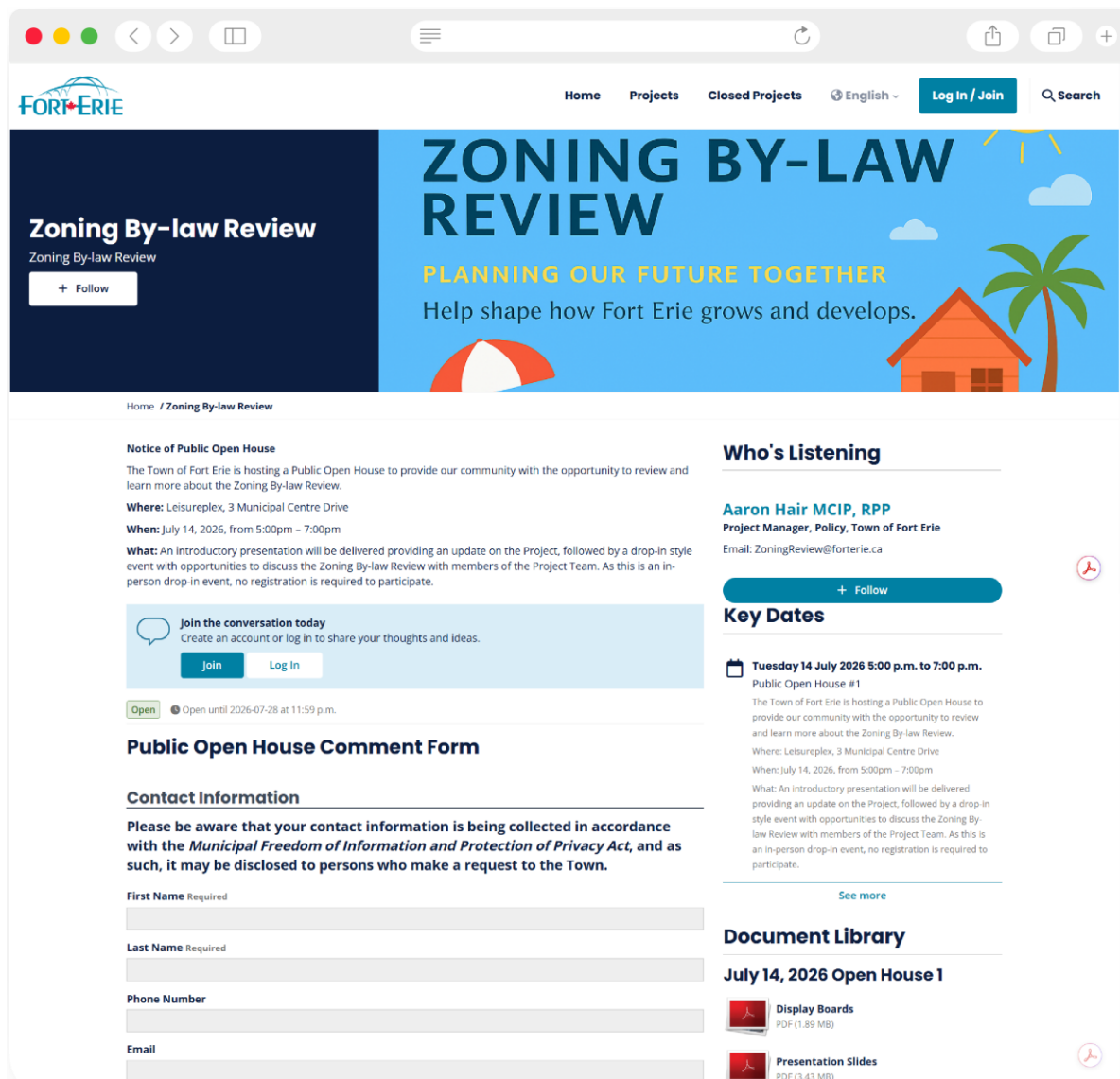


Figure 1: Fort Erie Zoning By-law Review Webpage

Overview of Communications



Project Webpage

January 2026 onward

Provided Project information, updates, key dates, documents, and opportunities to get involved.

Between Mid-January 2026 and the end of August 2026, the webpage had 327 unique visitors and 473 visits in total.



Indigenous Outreach

February 26, 2026

Notified potentially impacted Indigenous Nations and organizations of the Project and invited input on interests, priorities, and preferred methods of consultation. Contacted Nations and organizations include the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River, the Métis Nation of Ontario, and the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre.



Public Notice for Public Open House #1

June 24, 2026

Introduced the Project to the public and invited them to attend the Public Open House or submit comments about the Project on the Project's webpage.

Overview of Engagement Events



Joint Advisory Group Meeting #1

April 9, 2026

Orient advisory group members to the Zoning By-law Review, CPPS, and Urban Design Guidelines, and gather preliminary feedback. Representatives from the Region, NPCA, and Niagara Parks Commission were in attendance.



Town Staff Technical Workshop #1

April 29, 2026

Engaged with Town staff to inform the preparation of Technical Memos #3 (Employment and Commercial Uses) and #5 (Environment, Open Space, and Parks Uses) to understand what is working and what the existing challenges are.



Council Workshop and Community Tour

May 20, 2026

Introduce the Project to Council, review technical considerations, and discuss priorities and direction. The Project Team also undertook a community tour of the Town, which was an opportunity for the consultant and Town staff to discuss key priorities for the Zoning By-law Review.



Town Staff Technical Workshop #2

June 17, 2026

Engaged with Town staff to inform the preparation of Technical Memo #2 (Residential Uses) to understand what is working and what the existing challenges are.



Public Open House #1

July 14, 2026

Introduce the Project to the public, explain the need for a new Zoning By-law, share preliminary work, and seek input on zoning directions. A total of ten people attended the Public Open House, while a further 44 downloaded the display boards and 34 reviewed the Public Open House presentation online.

4 What We Heard

Input received through the Phase 1 engagement process has helped inform a series of Technical Memos produced to address key aspects of the new Zoning By-law, including direction for areas zoned Residential, Employment, Commercial, Agricultural, Rural, Environmental Protection, Open Space, and Parks. These Technical Memos will inform development of the Town's new Zoning By-law, subject to Council's review and endorsement. Overall, feedback to date has emphasized the importance of preparing a By-law that is clear, locally appropriate, and practical to administer. Participants have also highlighted the need to balance flexibility with predictability, particularly as the Town responds to increasing growth pressures and housing needs, while balancing the need for environmental protection and appropriately phased development.

“Feedback to-date has emphasized the importance of preparing a By-law that is clear, locally appropriate, and practical to administer.”

Feedback from staff and Council identified several areas of focus, including simplifying the structure of the By-law, modernizing definitions and standards, reviewing parking and access requirements, supporting a broader range of appropriate housing options, protecting rural and agricultural lands, aligning commercial and employment permissions with current policy direction, and strengthening how environmental features and hazards are addressed through zoning.



Engagement with the public primarily occurred through the Project webpage and Public Open House #1, where participants were invited to review information boards, ask questions of Town staff and the consultant team, and provide input on priorities for the new Zoning By-law. The feedback collected through this Public Open House has been reviewed alongside input from staff, Council, advisory group members, landowners, and other interested parties, and is summarized below by key theme.

The following themes summarize feedback received across Phase 1 engagement activities. They reflect recurring priorities raised by the public, Council, Town staff, advisory group members, and other interested parties, while avoiding attribution to specific individuals.

Key Feedback Themes

Key Theme	What We Heard
 A Clearer, More Modern Zoning By-law	Across the engagement process, participants emphasized that the new Zoning By-law should be easier to understand and apply. Council, staff, and advisory group discussions placed emphasis on modernizing definitions, improving consistency, and creating clearer standards that can support administration and decision-making. There was a desire to ensure the Zoning By-law reflects real-world conditions and local context, rather than purely theoretical standards. Through the Public Open House, participants expressed confusion about how zoning permissions change and how the By-law relates to other planning tools, such as the Community Planning Permit System, emphasizing the need for greater clarity from both staff and public perspectives. Public Open House participants also expressed concern over existing zoning regulations, such as large lots with low lot coverage permissions, highlighting the need for updated standards.

Key Theme	What We Heard
 Balancing Flexibility with Predictability	Feedback highlighted the need for a By-law that is flexible enough to address local conditions, while giving residents, landowners, and applicants a predictable framework. Public feedback highlighted interest in site-specific permissions for properties where unique characteristics, existing permissions, or proposed uses may not fit within standard regulatory frameworks. By contrast, Council and staff discussions emphasized the importance of reducing reliance on repeated amendments and minor variances by providing limited flexibility within the regulations.
 Supporting Context-Sensitive Housing Choice	Growth, housing, and neighbourhood character were recurring topics. Public feedback supported protecting established neighbourhoods, agricultural communities, and the Lake Erie waterfront, while also recognizing opportunities for more housing in appropriate locations such as major roads and mixed-use areas. Council discussions similarly focused on balancing compatibility with housing choice, including apartments and options for older residents looking to downsize. Council emphasized the need to balance lot size, setbacks, and density, with concerns about increasingly small lots and their impact on livability. Additionally, concerns were raised about locating growth appropriately and aligning it with existing and planned servicing capacity for the Town. Staff feedback focused on the zoning tools needed to manage these outcomes, including clearer definitions, appropriate zoning structures, and context-sensitive standards.

Key Theme

What We Heard



Developing Appropriate Parking and Access Strategies to Improve Local Mobility

Parking and access were identified as practical issues that affect daily life in residential areas. Council feedback pointed to concerns about multi-vehicle households, constrained driveways, winter parking restrictions, limited transit, and overflow parking on streets. Advisory group feedback broadened the discussion to include sidewalk connections, cycling infrastructure, bike parking, road quality, and the need for more pedestrian-oriented streetscapes as areas such as Garrison Road evolve.



Protecting the Natural Environment

Protection of Fort Erie's natural environment emerged as one of the strongest themes. Public Open House comments supported protecting dunes, wetlands, woodlands, habitat, biodiversity, migration corridors, and the Lake Erie shoreline. Council feedback also identified environmental protection as a strategic priority alongside growth. Staff discussions focused on how these priorities can be effectively implemented through the Zoning By-law, including opportunities to improve mapping accuracy, provide clearer direction regarding environmental features and hazards, and ensure that appropriate zoning tools are available to support environmental protection while continuing to manage development through the planning review process.

Key Theme	What We Heard
 Protecting Agricultural and Rural Area	Participants emphasized the importance of protecting agricultural and rural areas for long-term agricultural use. Public feedback generally supported keeping new commercial and residential development out of rural and agricultural areas, while also recognizing opportunities for agricultural-related and on-farm diversified uses. Council discussion reflected a similar balance, noting the need to support appropriate rural economic activity while managing scale, servicing, speculation, and potential impacts on farmland.
 Supporting Commercial, Employment, and Mixed-Use Areas that are Sensitive to the Local Market Conditions	Feedback identified the need for commercial and employment permissions to reflect local market conditions, Provincial policy direction, and community objectives. Public comments supported more residential uses in commercial areas, including mixed-use buildings and greater height along major roads, while also noting concerns regarding continued demand for ground-floor commercial space in certain areas. Council and staff discussions focused on employment area regulation changes, home-based businesses, regulation of short-term rentals, and ensuring commercial permissions remain appropriately scaled to their context.

Key Theme

What We Heard



Supporting a More Strategic Approach to Green Space and Open Space Functions

Staff discussions focused on the need to clearly distinguish between areas that are appropriate for natural preservation/light recreation, heavier recreation such as parks and sports facilities, stormwater management facilities, utilities, hydro corridors, and other open space functions so that the By-law is practical to administer. Advisory group feedback also highlighted the importance of community amenities that support growing neighbourhoods, including parks, trails, walking and cycling connections, and improvements to public spaces.



Coordinating with Other Planning Tools and Agencies

Participants asked how the Zoning By-law Review will align with the Town's new Official Plan, future Community Planning Permit System, Urban Design Guidelines, and external review agencies. Public feedback sought clarification on how these tools may affect development permissions and property owner rights. Advisory group discussions focused on implementation, including timelines, regulatory coordination, consistency between tools, and whether urban design guidance should function more like enforceable standards. For example, participants asked how the 45-day Community Planning Permit System timeline would interact with other agency review processes, particularly where agencies such as the Conservation Authority may require more time to provide comments or permits.

5 How Feedback Will Be Used



Feedback received through Phase 1 engagement activities has been reviewed by the Project Team and considered together with the background information, technical analyses, Provincial direction, the Town's new Official Plan, and best practices from other municipalities.

Input collected through consultation has informed a series of Technical Memos addressing key aspects of the new Zoning By-law. These memos will guide the development of the first draft of the new Zoning By-law, including its organization, zone structure, permitted uses, development standards, mapping, parking requirements, environmental protections, and implementation tools.

6 Next Steps



A presentation will be delivered to Town Council in September 2026, which will outline and seek endorsement of the proposed directions for the new Zoning By-law. The Project Team will subsequently begin preparing the first draft of the new Zoning By-law. It is anticipated that a draft will be released for further public review and consultation in early 2027. Additional opportunities to participate will be posted on the Town's Project webpage and shared through the Town's communication channels.

For more information, updates, and future engagement opportunities, community members are encouraged to visit the Town's [Project webpage](#) or contact the Project Team at ZoningReview@forterie.ca.

