



Township of Essa New Official Plan

Engagement Summary #1
Final – December 2024

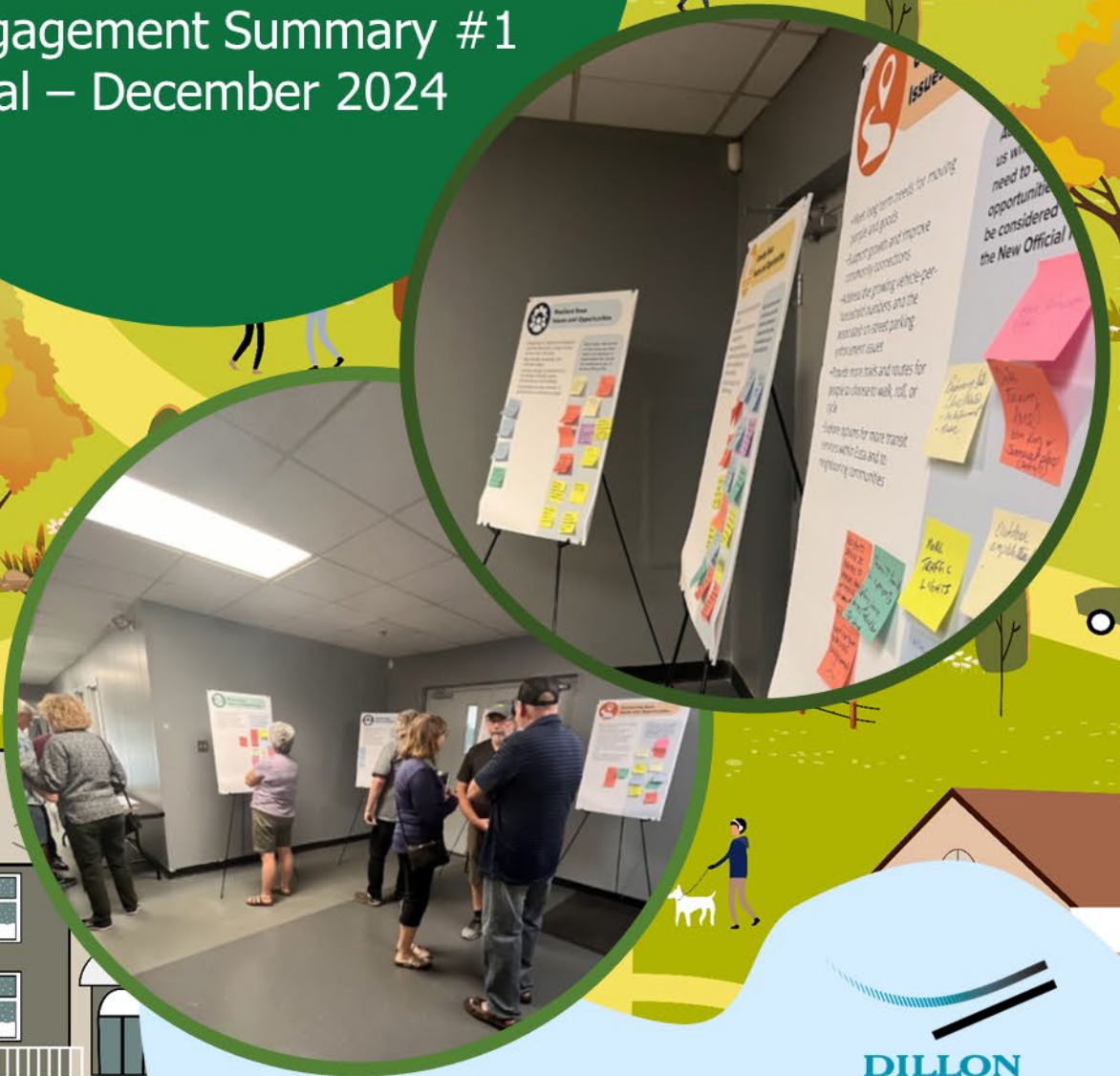


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1.0 Introduction

Like every municipality, the Township of Essa has an Official Plan, a key document that lays out where and how we plan to grow into the future, and guides where we live, work, and play. The Township's current Official Plan was put into effect on July 6, 2001. In 2020, the Township of Essa started developing a new Official Plan to bring the document into conformity with the latest provincial policies and community interests. The Official Plan Review was placed on hold in 2022 while the Township engaged with the Province and County of Simcoe to better understand the impact of legislative changes. Engagement on the New Official Plan resumed in August 2024.

1.1 Issues and Opportunities Key Themes

The issues and opportunities summary has been prepared to summarize planning matters and public comments heard to date from the public and staff during the Official Plan update process, and posted on the [project website](#).

The official Plan will focus on five key policy themes, which were developed as part of earlier engagement conducted in 2020:

1. **Rural Essa:**
 - a. promote and protect agriculture as an important part of the Township's economy and identity.
2. **Natural Essa:**
 - a. protect environmental areas from development effects and incompatible land uses, areas such as – Flood Prone Areas, Wetlands, and Significant Areas
3. **Growing Essa:**
 - a. Having a greater focus on urban structure, and settlement hierarchy, to preserve agricultural and rural lands.
 - b. Areas of focus include – growth management, housing strategy, employment strategy, and servicing infrastructure.
4. **Resilient Essa:**
 - a. Focus on approaches that achieve healthy and complete communities through design, active transportation and providing meaningful places live, work, and play.
5. **Connecting Essa:**
 - a. Provide a road network and transportation network that meets long term needs and facilitates the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

Community engagement and outreach is a key part of the New Official Plan, and continued opportunities for community engagement will be provided throughout the process.



2.0 What We Heard Overview

This summary provides an overview of the in-person and online public engagement held between August 2024 and October 2024. Please refer to the project website for summaries of past engagements that were completed in earlier stages of the review for the Essa Official Plan, which are also being considered and feedback brought forward into the current development of the new Official Plan: <https://www.essatownship.on.ca/official-plan-review/>

2.1 Community Sessions

Two in-person sessions were held to invite input on the issues and opportunities for the New Official Plan:

- Pop-up Agricultural Community Event: August 22nd, 2024 (4pm-8pm) during the Barrie Fair (Essa Agriplex, Ivy); and
- Settlement Areas Open House: September 25th, 2024 (5pm-7pm) at the Angus Recreation Centre, Angus.

The Township's Pop-up booth was attended by a range of residents across Essa, and awareness of the project raised through materials including a poster, postcards, and physical copies of an online survey. One completed survey was collected, and postcards were handed out to all those who stopped by the booth.

At the Settlement Areas Open House, approximately 50 members of the public that attended were asked to give feedback on the different themes of the Official Plan through sticky notes on poster boards. The feedback received for every theme is summarized below.

Resilient Essa: Issues and Opportunities

- **New development and built form**
 - Provide durable and climate resilient housing stock.
 - Introduce new development to manage tree loss.
 - **Community facilities and services**
 - Increase daycare centres.
 - Support different people and different needs through services and community programming.
 - Bring in developers to invest in the community.
 - Expand recreational facilities along with better maintenance for pools and soccer fields.
 - Do not build main steads or downtowns.
 - **Transportation and transit**
 - Improve walking, biking, and rest areas at Barrie Collingwood Railway (BCRY).
 - Make downtown core walkable.
 - Provide transit from the County.
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- **Sustainability and Nature**
 - Integrate parks, treed green space, and water features.
 - Consider becoming a blue community.
- **Policies and Bylaws**
 - Create a bylaw to replace trees lost due to development.
 - Manage land regulations strictly.
 - Establish a community identity.

Growing Essa: Issues and Opportunities

- **Community facilities and services**
 - Build a seniors' home, like IOOF.
 - Improve internet services.
 - Enhance transit and provide more support for senior housing.
- **Parking**
 - Provide on-street parking
 - Enforce parking standards, especially on 5th Line
- **New development and built form**
 - Build affordable homes, either small or apartment-style.
 - Develop high-density residential options.
 - Focus growth in the existing settlement areas.
 - Promote infill development to preserve natural and agricultural areas.
- **Policies and Bylaws**
 - Prohibit trailers and boats in driveways during summer.
 - Maintain Angus as a town, not a city.
 - Implement stronger urban design for a durable community.
 - Warn residents to remove items at the end of their driveways by a certain time after junk has been removed.
 - Increase council and local expertise to make decisions and understand issues.

Connecting Essa: Issues and Opportunities

- **Community Facilities and Services**
 - Create more accessible parks.
 - Develop performing arts facilities, including live theatre, entertainment, music, and an outdoor amphitheatre.
 - **Transportation and transit**
 - Install a center turning lane, such as in King and Summerset Place.
 - Prioritize transit, as options have been studied for too long.
 - Implement alternatives to speed bumps.
 - Install more traffic lights.
 - Improve bus connections from the County to regional routes.
 - Create more well-marked bike lanes.
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- **Policies and Bylaws**
 - Enforce noise bylaw (motor vehicles).

Rural Essa: Issues and Opportunities

- **Environment**
 - Preserve agricultural land.
- **Community Facilities and Services**
 - Build a school and more housing in Thornton.
- **Policies and Bylaws**
 - Enact a bylaw to tear down old buildings.

Natural Essa: Issues and Opportunities

- **Policies**
 - Enact a tree preservation bylaw.
 - Maintain the tree canopy and provide compensation.
 - Implement the tree policy suggested by the local environmental group.
- **Land Designation**
 - Conservation Authority to restrict unbuildable land due to floodplain.
 - Protect environment lands around Thornton.
- **Maintenance**
 - Continue maintaining natural areas for wildlife habitat and flood mitigation.
 - Continue supporting the managed forest program.
 - Address erosion concerns along the floodplain in Angus.
 - Improve maintenance for Nottawasaga and Pine Rivers by clearing logs.
 - Keep 5th Line to 25th well-groomed, including grass, for walkers and bikers.
- **Sustainability**
 - Transition to a blue community.

Below is a summary for the feedback from participants on the existing Land Use Designation map.

- **Data**
 - Verify if flood data is up-to-date.
 - Assess how much water is used from the aquifer.
 - **Issues**
 - Address basement flooding and reconsider the necessity of basements.
 - Evaluate water pressure issues for older homes.
 - Investigate if the water in the LeClair Park/Bob Geddes Park area is stagnant.
 - Address water/sewer capacity concerns near Murphy Road as shown in the figure below.
 - **Land Use**
 - Discussions with individual land owners on potential redesignations.
 - Expand the area surrounded by 30th Sideroad, 25th Sideroad, 6th Line, and 5th Line to the settlement area.
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- Designate more public green space.
- Integrate the industrial park into Angus and expand the settlement area.
- **Planning Process**
 - Conduct an Agricultural Impact Assessment.

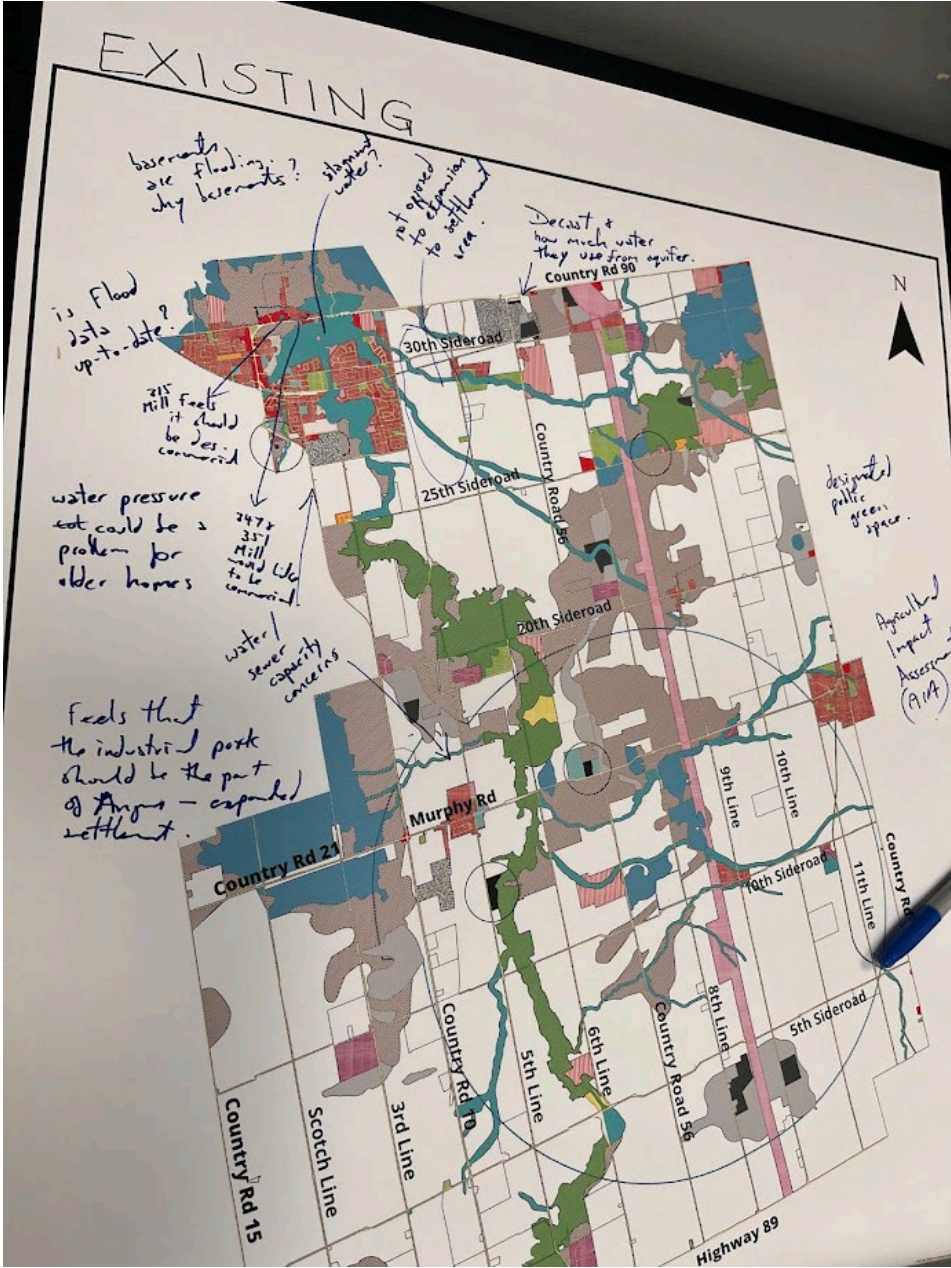


Figure 2-1: Existing Official Plan with comments from public engagement

2.2 Online Survey #1

Participant Profile

The first survey garnered a total of 188 responses. The participant profile shown in **Figure 2-2** shows the majority of participants being Essa residents (95%), along with a number of people who work in Essa (15%) and a few who have professional interest in growth and planning in Essa, own a business in Essa, are frequent or occasional visitors to Essa, are potential future Essa residents, or are Canadian Forces Base Borden personnel.

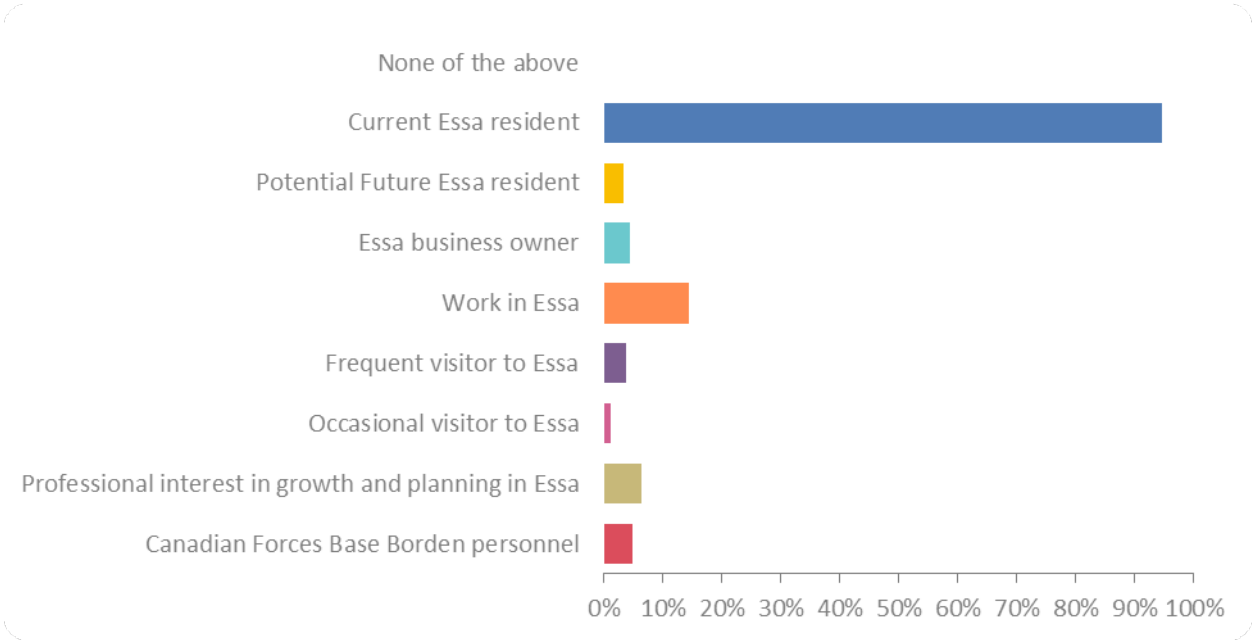


Figure 2-2 Survey #1 Participants – Background

There was wide variability in the communities that participants who live in Essa resided in, with the highest number being from Angus (74%) followed by Rural area in Essa (8%). A summary of where respondents of the survey live is shown in **Figure 2-3**.

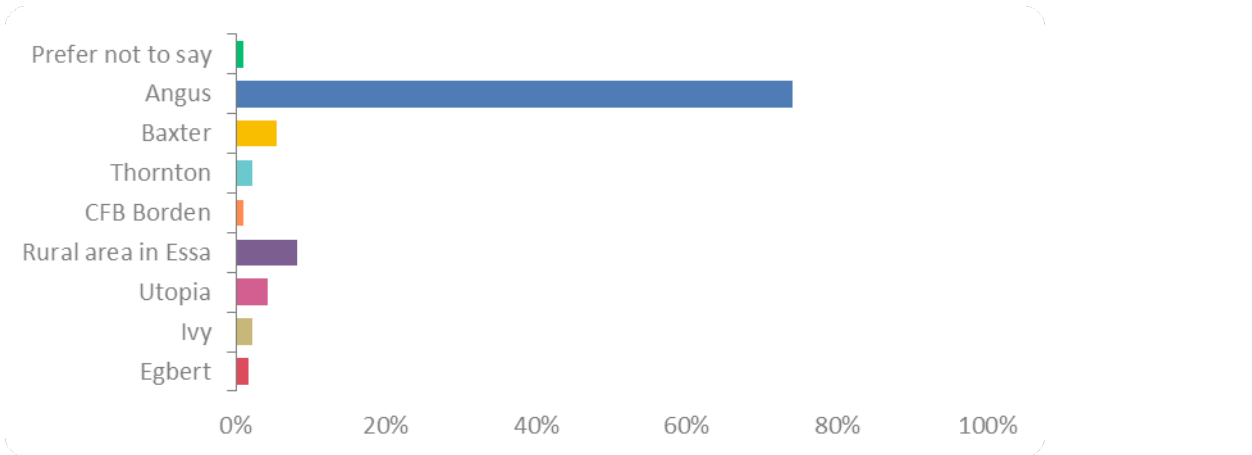


Figure 2-3 Survey #1 Participants – Neighbourhood of Residence

Key Topics of Interest

Rural Essa – Agricultural Lands:

Please rate the following topics and tell us how important each one is to you: 1) protecting agricultural lands and 2) supporting the growth and diversification of the agriculture industry.

There were 165 responses to this question summarized on **Figure 2-4**, with both topics being highly rated. 89% rated Protecting agricultural lands as Very Important or Important, and 81% rated the same for supporting the growth and diversification of the agricultural industry.

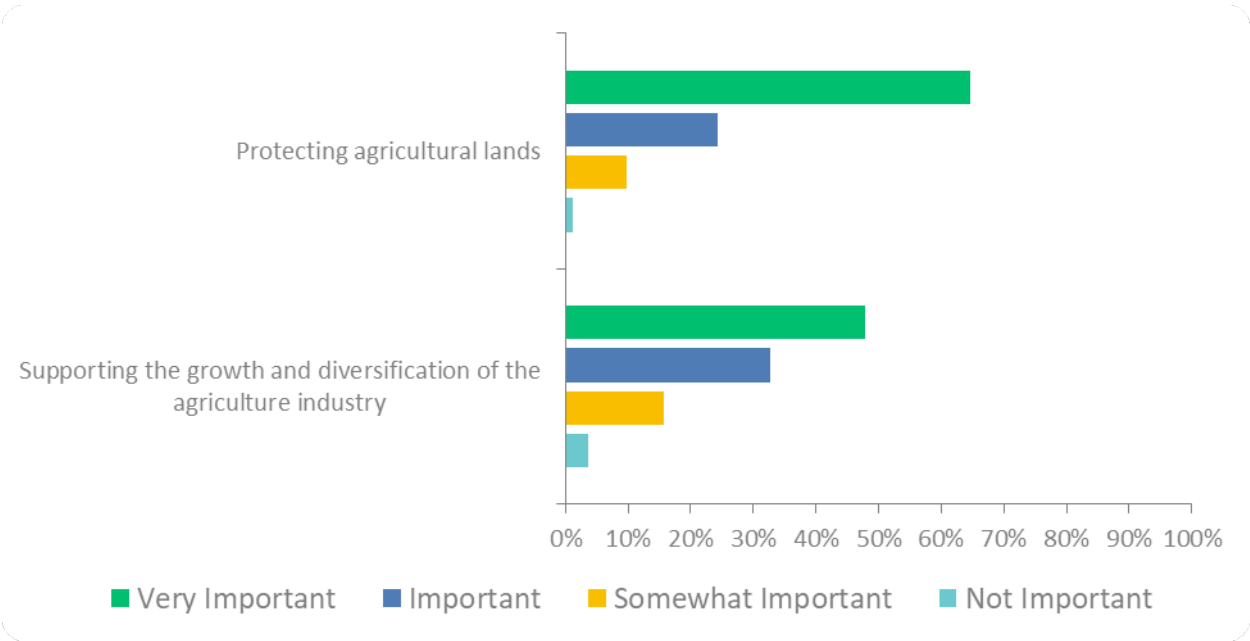


Figure 2-4 Rural Essa – Topics Importance to Participants

Natural Essa – Protecting the Natural Environment

Please rate the following topics and tell us how important each is to you: 1) managing flooding in Angus and other storm and climate change related impacts and 2) better protecting the natural environment from new development.

There were 164 responses to this question summarized on **Figure 2-5**. 87% said managing flooding was Very Important or Important, and 87% said the same for better protecting the natural environment from development, with a notably higher proportion of responses for this as being Very Important.

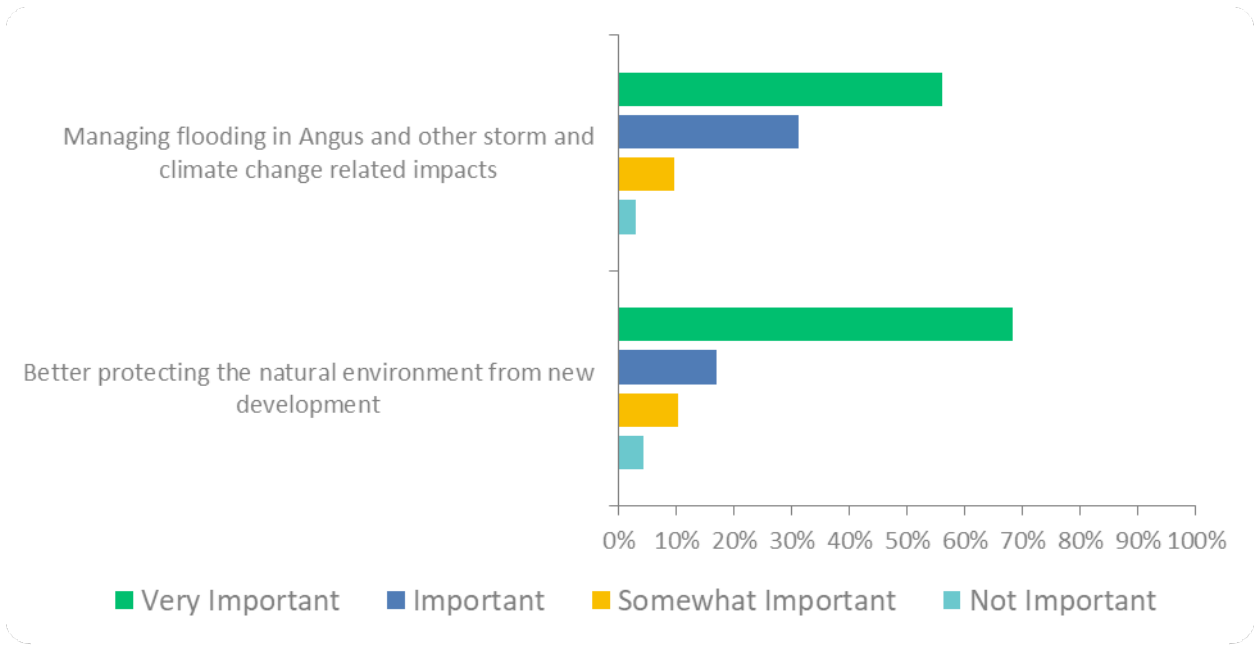


Figure 2-5 Natural Essa – Topics of Importance to Participants

Growing Essa – Providing more housing and jobs.

Please rate the following topics and tell us how important each one is to you: 1) a range of housing types options (including higher densities – townhouses and apartments), 2) more affordable housing options, 3) growth of new jobs and businesses, 4) more mixed-use and walkable communities, and 4) greater connectivity between the communities of CFB Borden and the Township.

For the topic of range of housing type options, there were 164 responses as summarized on **Figure 2-6**. The most highly rated issues in terms of importance were: more affordable housing options, growth of new jobs and businesses, and more mixed-use and walkable communities.

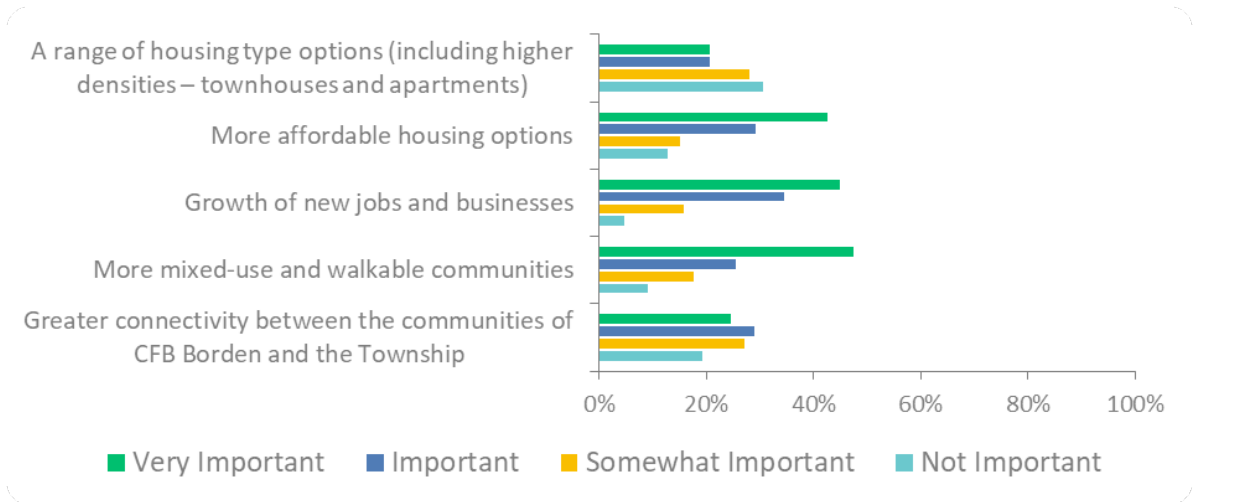


Figure 2-6 Growing Essa – Topics of Importance to Participants

Resilient Essa – Healthy, Complete Communities

Please rate the following topics and tell us how important each one is to you: more community facilities including community centres and schools, more well-designed public spaces, and accessible communities that support residents of all ages and those with disabilities.

There were 166 responses to this question, with all three topics receiving fairly similar ratings and being rated as Very Important or Important by the majority of respondents (78 – 89% across the three topics) as shown on **Figure 2-7**.

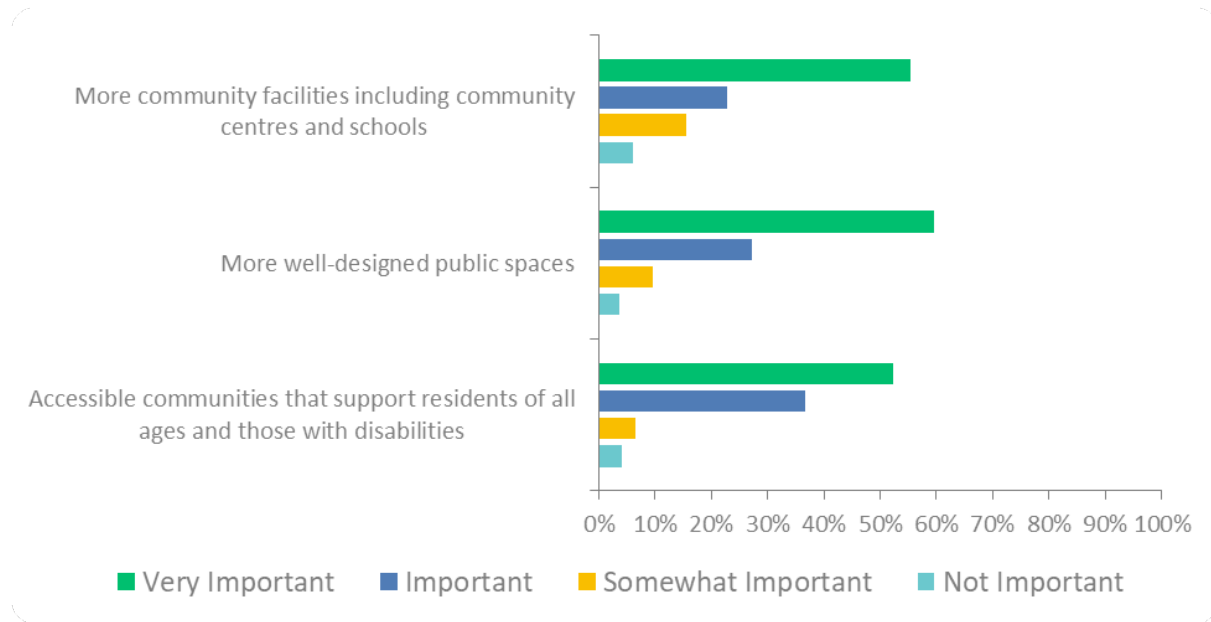


Figure 2-7 Resilient Essa - Topics of Importance to Participants

Connecting Essa – Roads and Transportation

Please rate the following topics and tell us how important each one is to you: 1) More ways for people to cycle and walk in neighbourhoods, 2) Bus connections between communities in Essa, 3) Managing traffic on residential streets, and 4) Public parking in residential areas (e.g. on-street parking, metered parking in public parks).

There were 166 responses to this question. More ways for people to cycle and walk in neighbourhoods was rated as Very Important or Important by 67% of participants. Bus connections between communities in Essa was rated the same way by 61% of participants, and managing traffic on residential streets was rated this way by 63% of respondents, as shown in **Figure 2-8**.

Public parking in residential areas (e.g. on-street parking, metered parking in public parks), has the majority of respondents rating it as Not Important (41%) or Somewhat Important (25%).

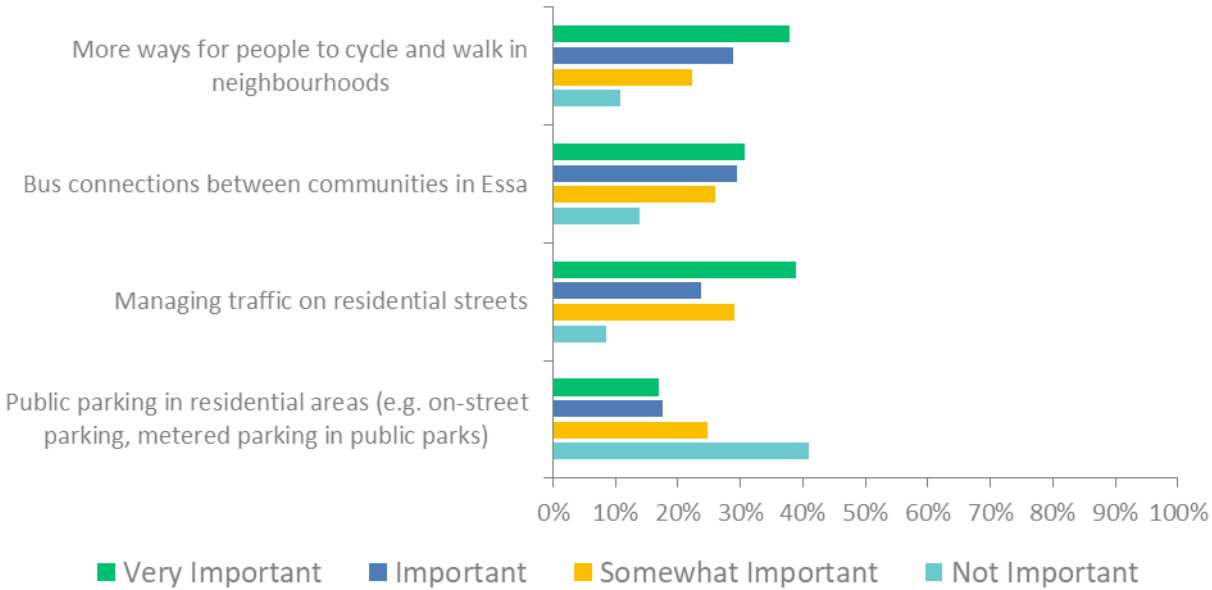


Figure 2-8 Connecting Essa – Topics of Importance to Participants

Types of Housing

What type of housing would you like to see in your neighbourhood and/or residential areas in Essa more broadly?

Of the 154 responses to this question, the highest rated types of housing selected were detached houses (70%) and mid-rise apartments (17%), as shown in Figure 2-9.

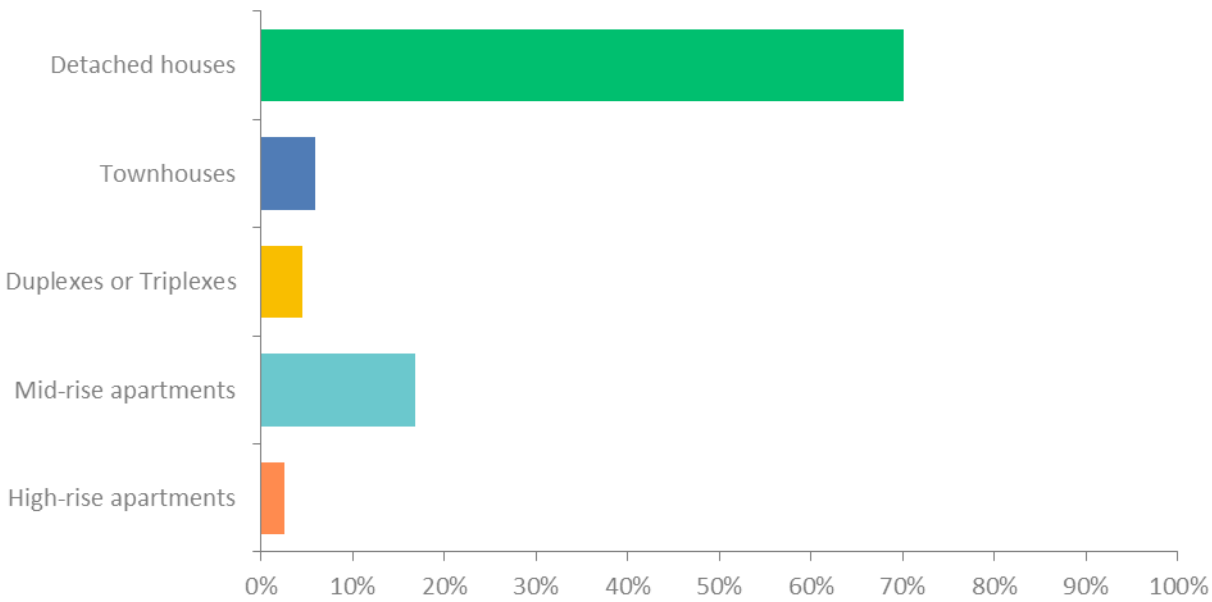


Figure 2-9 Types of housing Essa residents would like to see in their neighbourhood Next Steps and Staying Involved

Types of Facilities

What other types of community facilities would you like to see more of in your neighbourhood?

There were 155 responses to this question, with the top five options selected being clinics/medical facilities (68%), retail stores, restaurants, cafés, etc. (63%), recreational facility/gym (50%), parks (48%), and sidewalks (37%), as shown in **Figure 2-10**.

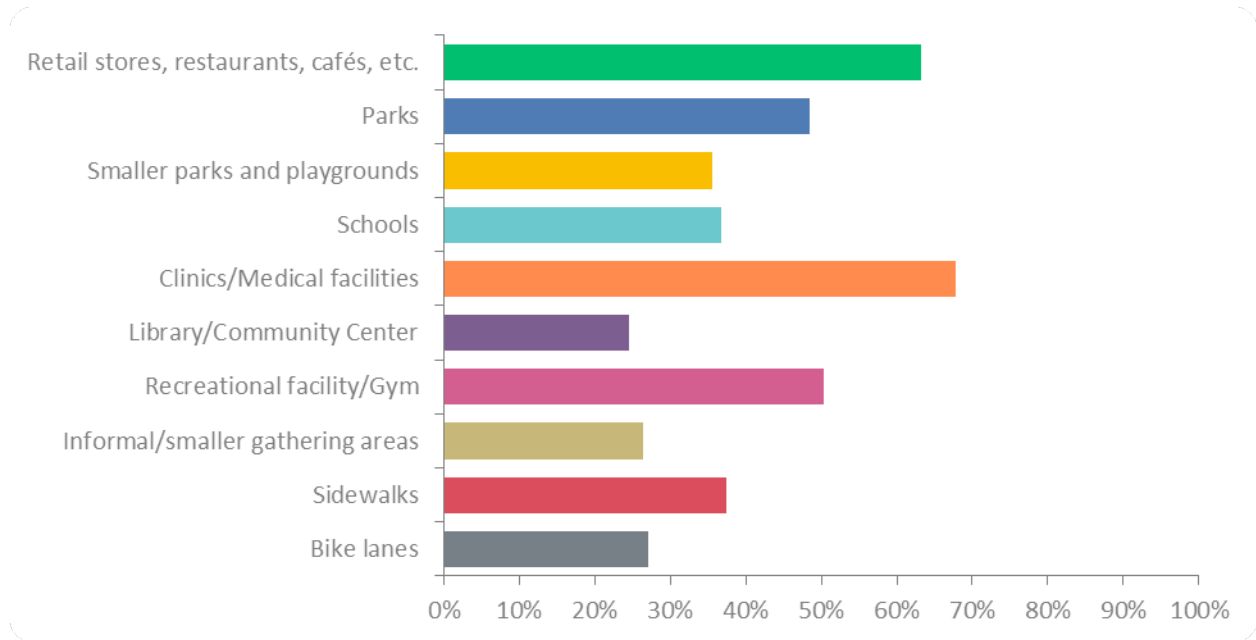


Figure 2-10 Types of community facilities Essa residents would like to see in their neighbourhood

What do you like most about living or working in Essa?

This open-ended question received 166 responses, with the following key themes:

- The people and small rural town feel of the area, including sense of welcoming community
- Limited traffic and generally quiet atmosphere
- Balance of country/rural life with access to daily amenities and proximity to large urban centres
- Low property taxes and affordable cost of living, though some noted this has begun to change
- Proximity to natural areas and integration with nature
- Sense of safety

Are there any other important considerations as we plan to make Essa a welcoming place for all?

There were 121 responses to this question, with the following key themes:

- Wider range of housing types including seniors housing, condominiums, rental, and secondary dwelling units, with less of a focus on subdivision-style development.
- More connections between all communities within Essa, not just Borden.
- Need for more walking trails and sidewalks.
- Improvements to the state of repair of road connections.
- Managing traffic and speeding, with greater enforcement of by-laws relating to parking speeding, noise, and other nuisances.
- Broader range of retail amenities needed, including large format and smaller stores and restaurants.
 - Fewer fast food, gas stations, and cannabis stores.
- More community and recreational facilities in growing communities catering to all ages, particularly in Thornton.
 - Improved access to medical facilities and clinics.
- Protection of environmental features including rivers, green spaces, and wetlands.
- Maintaining the small-town rural feel as growth is brought to Essa.
- Support for a more established ‘downtown’ area in the Township.
- Updates to local by-laws to align with community needs e.g. relating to parking for trailers.
- Provision of the right infrastructure to support growth, including schools, roads, water, waste collection, sanitation, parks, and community facilities.
- Investment in urban design improvements and a sense of place to connect all the communities in the Township.
- Need for more community ‘town halls’ and opportunities for Staff and Council to engage with residents.
- Concern about the increase in tax rates and growing unaffordability of the cost of living in Essa.
- Concern over the magnitude of growth and loss of small-town feel/change in community structure.
- Need for more employment opportunities and investments in economic development.

Do you have any additional questions or comments related to growth in Essa or the Official Plan?

There were 84 responses to this question, as summarized below:

- Suggestion to shift thinking from planning around cars towards planning for more complete and connected communities.
 - Questions about timing of planned infrastructure improvements including road projects and schools in Essa.
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- Comments about the quality of road improvements and connections and desire to see funds spent to ‘do things right’.
- Concern over limitations to development relating to Conservation Authority regulations.
- Desire to see more of a focus on urban design in Borden and visibility of the base and local military/veteran community.
- Comments emphasizing the protection of agricultural lands in Essa and support for the industry to thrive.
- Need for more affordable housing options.
- Suggestions to support increased tourism and destinations to act as a draw to Essa, including a downtown area and recreational opportunities.
- Desire for more information to be shared, as well as ongoing virtual and in-person engagement opportunities and transparency in the decision-making process relating to planning.

Preferred Ways to Engage

How would you like to talk about the Official Plan?

There were 160 responses to this question, with the top two methods selected being through online at my convenience – surveys and copies of presentations (67%) and electronic updates (by subscribing to the News and Notices webpage) (60%), as shown in **Figure 2-11**.

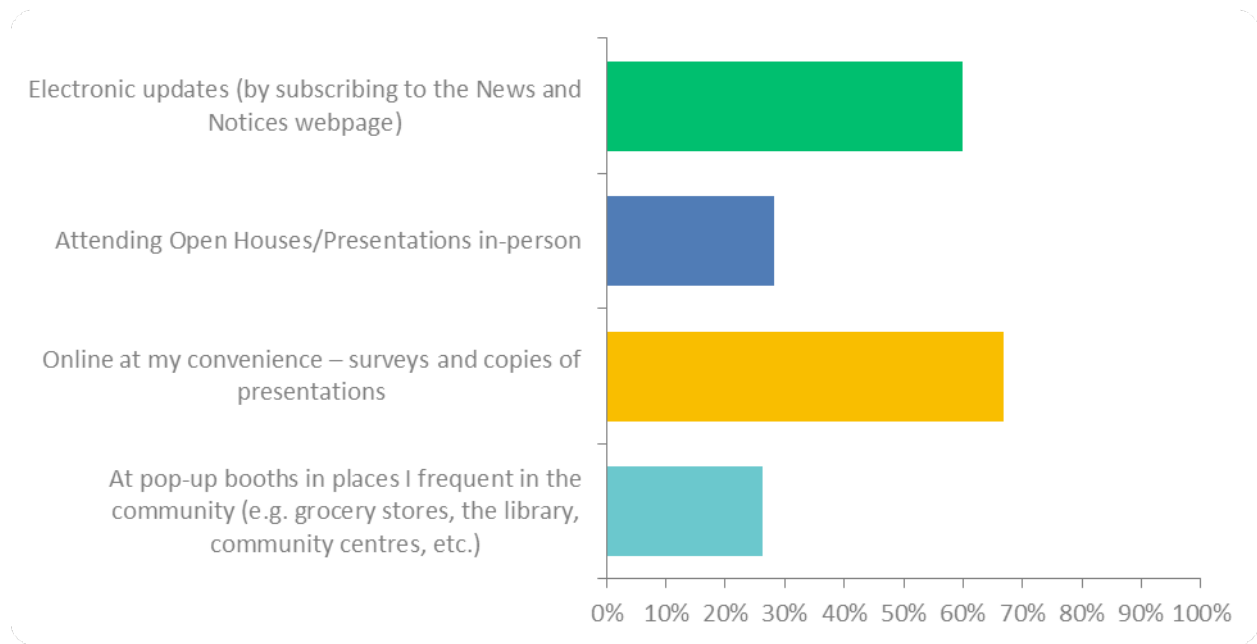


Figure 2-11 Preferred ways to engage in the Official Plan process

2.3 Correspondence

Approximately 30 emails were also received at the re-start of the engagement process, relating to key issues for Township staff to consider in the development of the New Official Plan which included:

- Land use designations for specific properties.
- Protection of the natural environment.
- Protection of agricultural lands and food production.
- Infrastructure management and maintenance, including roads.
- Traffic management and calming measures to limit speeds in residential or school areas.
- Planning and design of a downtown area to support retail and tourism activity.
- Transit and active transportation improvements to support different ways of getting around Essa.

Letters were also sent to each of the following First Nations Rights Holders and caretakers, to provide them with information about the project and invite their participation in discussions around the New Official Plan.

- Williams Treaties First Nations
 - Alderville First Nation
 - Curve Lake First Nation
 - Hiawatha First Nation
 - Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation
 - Chippewas of Rama First Nation
 - Beausoleil First Nation
 - Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation
- Huron-Wendat Nation
- Métis Nation of Ontario:
- Saugeen Ojibway Nation
- Six Nations of the Grand River

3.0 Next Steps

The results of the engagement as presented in this report are being used to inform the next round of meetings and community engagement, as well as the drafting of policies for the New Official Plan. The feedback will be integrated with earlier input received through engagement held prior to the project being put on hold, as well as input from Indigenous Rights Holders and interested parties in the community.
