

Dufferin stakeholders talk County plan priorities

Written By JAMES MATTHEWS

Dufferin County has taken to the people the task of plotting its course into the future.

In a manner of speaking, that is exactly what County officials hoped for in hosting an Official Plan public review workshop at the Monora Park Pavilion on Tuesday (March 3).

Representatives of municipalities within the umbrella of Dufferin County were asked to describe their vision for the region into the next 25 years.

The March 3 workshop provided people an opportunity to share thoughts on important issues such as housing, economic development, agriculture, and the natural environment.

An Official Plan makes the public aware of general land use policies and ensures growth coordinates with the community's needs. Such a plan gives the community a heads-up as to how the land may be used to meet future needs.

To that end, the Official Plan aids the County in identifying where infrastructure like roads, watermains, sewers, garbage dumps, parks and other services will be built.

On Tuesday, Dufferin stakeholders divided across a number of tables at the pavilion. Those at each table hashed out future priorities regarding such concerns as transportation and mobility, housing affordability, environmental and climate issues, and how to best manage the region's expected population growth.

Greg Bender, manager of municipal planning at consulting firm WSP, said the County is expected to increase its population by about 23,000 people by 2041. Such an increase, he says, tightens demand on such things as transportation, housing, and basic infrastructure.

"The Official Plan will endeavour to accommodate that growth," said Mr. Bender. "And there's been a lot of things that's happened over the last seven to 10 years with regards to housing."

A next step in the consultation process will be a County Council public meeting March 12 at Orangeville's town hall. That's part of the process to garner input for an eventual report to the county that will outline required policy changes to achieve goals for the new Official Plan.

Mr. Bender said details of priorities forwarded by each county municipality will yield a more inclusive plan county-wide.