



The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie
COUNCIL REPORT

April 13, 2026

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council
AUTHOR: Jonathan Kircal, Intermediate Planner
DEPARTMENT: Community Development and Enterprise Services
RE: A-02-26-OP (OPA 259): Rural Estate Subdivisions

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to propose Official Plan Amendments to create a policy framework to permit rural estate residential subdivisions in a controlled and limited manner.

PROPOSED CHANGE

The applicant, the City of Sault Ste. Marie, wishes to amend the Rural Residential Growth, and Rural Area policies of the Official Plan to establish a new policy framework to permit rural estate residential subdivisions.

Under the proposed policies, rural estate residential subdivisions served by private well and septic would only be permitted where they have first been considered through a Rural Subdivision Intake Window and determined to satisfy the City's evaluation criteria.

The amendment would also establish an annual lot quota, limit the share of the quota that may be taken up by any one application, and provide for the preparation of an Intake Window Guideline to address matters such as submission requirements, evaluation criteria, timing, and approval expiry.

Proposed Official Plan Amendment No. 259 is attached as Appendix A to this report.

Subject Property:

The Application applies to all lands within the Rural Land Use Designation, as shown on Schedule C of the Official Plan.

BACKGROUND

At its October 14, 2025 meeting, under Agenda Item 7.15, Council received an update from staff on ongoing policy work that included consideration of a new Rural Estate Residential Policy Framework.

ANALYSIS

Since 1996, the Official Plan (OP) has prohibited rural estate residential subdivisions. Since that time, only a very limited number of new rural estate subdivisions have received draft approval, each requiring an Official Plan Amendment as part of the approval process. The last rural estate subdivision was approved in 2009.

The moratorium was the result of a variety of factors, most prominent:

- Provincial policy direction historically emphasized limiting rural residential growth. Earlier Provincial policy frameworks placed significant emphasis on restricting rural residential development. This was reflected in 2010, when the Province appealed a local Official Plan Amendment that would have enabled a five-lot severance, arguing that it would contribute to sprawl and did not represent appropriate planning. Although the appeal was ultimately dismissed due to its late filing, it still illustrates the Provincial policy approach at that time.
- A stagnant and declining local population, with relatively high residential vacancy rates, and the general view that strong policies were required to focus all new residential development to urban areas. This approach was later amended to permit limited rural severances.
- A significant surplus of vacant rural lots in draft approved and registered rural estate residential subdivisions. In recent years, a large proportion of these lots have been developed, reducing the availability of such lots.

In light of changing growth conditions, it is appropriate to review the current moratorium on rural estate residential subdivisions. The City has experienced renewed population growth, housing demand has increased, and a large share of previously vacant rural estate subdivision lots have gradually been absorbed, with very limited new rural estate lot supply added since the mid-1990's. Staff are recommending that limited rural estate residential subdivisions be permitted through a carefully controlled framework.

Based on building permit data, approximately 16% of new dwelling units constructed since 2011 have been in the rural area, with 84% occurring in the urban area. More recently, since 2021, the rural share has declined to approximately 10.5%. Severance activity has also remained modest, averaging approximately 4.6 rural lots created per year over the past decade. These trends suggest that rural housing demand exists, but that it remains a relatively small and stable component of the City's overall market for new dwellings. There are approximately 182 developable vacant lots in the rural area, including approximately 79 lots within existing rural estate subdivisions. However, only a small proportion of these lots are actively listed for sale, and some may remain undeveloped due to site-specific constraints such as unsuitable soils, topography and other servicing challenges. As a result, the nominal rural lot inventory may overstate the amount of truly available and market-ready rural supply.

The current supply of rural lots has generally been through consent, where new lots are created on existing rural roads, which may have significant traffic volumes and the resulting 'strip development' lacks the neighbourhood feel one can find in a rural estate subdivision. Therefore, demand exists for rural estate lots that are within a plan of subdivision.

At the same time, rural estate subdivisions must be reviewed cautiously. Although they generally rely on private wells and septic systems, they still generate municipal service demands, including road maintenance, snowplowing, waste collection, and emergency response. Because rural development occurs at lower densities and over greater distances, these services are typically more costly to provide on a per-unit basis than in urban areas. Rural estate subdivisions may also compete with the City's broader urban growth objectives by drawing population and investment away from serviced urban areas. For these reasons, staff are recommending a managed framework that permits rural estate subdivisions on a limited and policy-controlled basis. The overall policy objective is to allow a modest amount of rural estate subdivision development while ensuring that rural lot creation remains limited, strategically located, and consistent with land use planning principles.

Proposed Approval Framework

Stage 1 – Preliminary Screening Intake Window and Evaluation

Prospective developers would be invited to submit a high-level concept package outlining the proposed layout and general design of a potential rural estate subdivision. Pre-consultation with City staff and relevant agencies would continue to be available in the same manner as for other development applications.

Submissions would be assessed against published scoring criteria and an annual lot quota. Detailed technical reports that are costly and time consuming to prepare would not be required at this stage. The purpose of Stage 1 is to evaluate preliminary suitability and relative merit before applicants incur the full cost of preparing a complete Draft Plan approval (Section 51 of the Planning Act) application.

The Stage 1 intake window would be evaluated in 2 steps:

Stage 1A: Evaluation of Must Pass Criteria

The 'must pass' criteria are used to screen out proposals that are fundamentally inappropriate in principle, conflict with higher-order planning policy, exceed the lot quota requirements, or undermine longer-term municipal objectives such as future urban growth or infrastructure planning. The must pass criteria will relate to the following matters:

- i. Lot Quota – If a subdivision is beyond the lot quota requirements, as discussed later in this report, it does not proceed. As previously mentioned,

through pre-consultation, projects can be refined and scoped to meet the annual lot quota restrictions.

- ii. Location Based – There will be a number of must pass criteria that relate to the location of the proposed subdivision. For example, rural estate subdivisions are not permitted in Primary Aggregate Resource Areas or the Precambrian Uplands Area. In addition, it is contemplated not to permit rural estate subdivisions within Secondary Aggregate Resource Areas and the Rural Land Reserve, which have not yet been implemented, however staff intend to present them to Council for consideration following further staff review and public consultation.

Stage 1B: Evaluation of General Scoring Criteria

Proposals that satisfy the ‘must pass’ criteria are then evaluated against general scoring criteria as noted in the in the table below:

1B. Evaluation of General Scoring Criteria		
Criteria Stream	Evaluation Considerations	Scoring
Land Use Compatibility	Adequate separation from incompatible or potentially noxious land uses, such as industrial uses, aggregate operations, livestock facilities, railways, and other major facilities.	0 to 5
Natural Heritage	Avoids or on a preliminary basis can minimize impacts to natural heritage features and adjacent lands, including wetlands, fish habitat, significant wildlife habitat, woodlands, and related ecological functions.	0 to 5
Natural Hazards	Outside of, or on a preliminary basis can appropriately address, natural and built hazards such as floodplains, steep slopes, unstable land, mining hazards, and other physical constraints.	0 to 5
Subdivision Layout	The subdivision is laid out in an efficient manner that maximizes the overall parcel fabric and minimizes excess linear infrastructure (i.e. roads).	0 to 5
Overall Policy Alignment	Supports orderly rural development, avoids fragmented strip development, and does not undermine the City’s broader urban-first growth strategy. Demonstrates consistency with the Provincial Planning Statement, conformity with the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, and the Official Plan.	0 to 5
Scoring Legend		
Score	Description	
0	Unacceptable. Proposal does not advance.	

1	Major revisions or additional studies required.
2	Significant mitigation required.
3	Meets minimum expectations.
4	Strong.
5	Excellent.

In order to pass Stage 1B, a proposal must achieve a score of at least 3 in order to be evaluated against any other proposal that may be part of the same intake.

As previously noted, the pre-consultation process will be available and staff will assist prospective applicants by providing various information associated with the general scoring criteria, such as the location of natural heritage features (i.e. wetlands), hazards (i.e. flood plains), etc., which will help inform development decisions on preliminary designs. It is also important to reiterate that the evaluation is intended to implement a quota-based system that is not first-come, first-serve. It is anticipated that in some years there may be no subdivision applications, or only one application. In such cases, a proposal would only need to satisfy the must-pass criteria and achieve the minimum scoring threshold.

Stage 2 – Complete Draft Plan of Subdivision/Condominium Application

Proposals selected through Stage 1 would be invited to prepare and submit a complete application for draft plan of subdivision or condominium approval, including all required technical studies. Advancing to this stage means that the proposal has been identified as appropriate to proceed to detailed review through the formal Planning Act process.

If a complete application is not submitted within 12 months of the Stage 2 invitation, the eligibility would lapse and the applicant would be required to re-apply through Stage 1 at the next scheduled intake window. This is intended to prevent the annual lot quota from being tied up by inactive proposals. Limited extensions may be granted where the delay is minor or where legitimate reasons are demonstrated.

Advancing to Stage 2 indicates that staff are generally supportive of the proposal in principle, subject to the findings of the required technical studies and Council approval, as with other Planning Act applications. During Stage 2, technical studies may identify constraints that cannot be adequately mitigated, such as unstable slopes, poor subsurface conditions, inadequate well supply, or other site-specific limitations that render a development unsupportable. Those risks are borne by applicants as part of normal development due diligence.

Where a proposal does not advance beyond the Stage 1 preliminary screening and intake window process, a draft plan of subdivision application, including all

technical studies required for completeness, may still be submitted to the City. However, as such an application would not conform with the Official Plan's intake window requirements, a concurrent Official Plan Amendment application would also be required. Staff would not recommend approval of such applications.

Appendix B illustrates the approvals process through a flow chart.

Lot Quota

The OP policy framework proposes a lot quota to limit rural estate subdivision development to no more than 10% of the rolling five-year average of urban housing starts. This approach is intended to support the City's urban-first growth strategy while still allowing a modest level of rural residential choice.

Recognizing pent-up demand during the initial implementation period, staff are recommending that the quota be doubled during the first year. Based on current trends, the rolling five-year average of urban residential housing starts is 202 dwelling units. The default lot quota would therefore be 20 lots per year. During the first year of implementation, that cap would be doubled to 40 lots. The OP policy will allow for some flexibility, if for example, the quota is 20 lots and 2 eligible subdivisions total 24 lots, staff are able to recommend draft plan approval without amending the Official Plan. At this time, staff are not recommending that unused quota be carried forward to future years. However, the extent of any unused quota will be monitored and may help inform future decisions regarding minor deviations or adjustments to the annual lot quota.

The 10% quota reflects current rural development patterns while helping to prevent the creation of a large surplus of vacant rural subdivision lots. It also ensures that rural estate subdivision supply remains proportionate to the strength of urban development activity and does not undermine the City's broader urban-first growth framework.

To avoid a single proposal from taking up the full annual lot quota where there are multiple eligible applications, a per-application allotment of 40% is proposed in any year with two or more eligible submissions. For example, where the annual quota is 20 lots, no single application would receive more than 8 lots in that year if multiple eligible proposals are competing for allocation. If only one eligible proposal is submitted, the per-application allotment would not apply, and the full annual allocation could be assigned to that proposal. Larger subdivisions exceeding the annual lot quota or per-application allotment would be expected to proceed in phases, with lots beyond the annual allocation requiring consideration through future intake windows. This would allow later phases to be compared with other proposals submitted in subsequent years. Much like the overall lot quota, flexibility has been built into the per-application allotment policies, to ensure fairness and allow minor adjustments without the need for an Official Plan Amendment.

Once implemented, staff will continue to monitor rural residential building and severance activity, vacant draft-approved lots, and registered but undeveloped lots, and may recommend adjustments to the framework over time as warranted. Approvals for draft plans of subdivision would also be subject to expiry periods so that approved supply is brought forward in a timely manner rather than remaining dormant. Staff are recommending a three-year expiry period, whereby phases of draft approved plans must be registered within 3 years. This is consistent with Bill 185, *Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024*, which requires municipalities to adopt “use it or lose it” clauses for new plans of subdivision and condominium approvals, and which also applies retroactively to certain approvals issued prior to 1995.

Housing Starts as the Basis for the Rural Lot Quota

The lot quota is proposed to be tied to urban development activity. That activity can be measured through building permits, housing starts, or final occupancy, each of which reflects a different stage in the development process. While building permits are a useful early indicator of development activity, they do not confirm that construction has actually started. Housing starts provide a stronger basis for the rural estate subdivision lot quota because they reflect projects that have advanced beyond approval and into active construction. This makes housing starts a more reliable indicator of actual development commitment, while also aligning more closely with broader housing supply monitoring practices used by higher levels of government. The measure of housing starts will also capture conversions within existing buildings, such as the creation of a basement apartment within a single detached dwelling.

COMMENTS

Conformity with the Official Plan

The proposed Rural Estate Subdivision policy requires textual amendments to the Official Plan, including revisions to Section 4.9 (Rural Area) and Section 4.9.1 (Rural Estate Residential Subdivisions) to incorporate the new Framework, as well as policy deletions that currently prohibit rural estate subdivisions.

The policies align with the Official Plan’s objective of maintaining an adequate supply of residential land to meet long-term housing needs.

The framework policies support the Official Plan’s objectives with respect to protecting natural heritage features, hazard lands, groundwater, and a growth management strategy that is focused on financially sustainable and urban-focused growth.

Therefore, the proposed policy framework and OP amendments, as discussed throughout this report, conform to other parts of the City’s Official Plan.

Conformity with the Provincial Planning Statement 2024 (PPS)

The proposed policy framework conforms to the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2024, particularly Policies 2.6 (Rural Areas), 2.3.2 (Settlement Area Expansions), 4.1 and 4.2 (Natural Heritage & Water), and 5.1 (Hazards). The PPS permits limited rural residential development where it fits the rural context and does not redirect growth away from settlement areas.

Consistent with Policy 2.6.1, these subdivisions maintain rural character through larger lot sizes, private servicing, and needing to respond to natural features, and are appropriately located outside the Urban Settlement Area, ensuring settlement areas remain the primary focus of housing and servicing investment.

The proposed servicing requirements conform with Policy 3.6, which permits rural development on private wells and septic systems where they can be demonstrated to function safely and sustainably over the long term. Minimum lot sizes, as prescribed in the Zoning By-law, help ensure that lots are capable of supporting private servicing and avoid the need for municipal water or sanitary sewer extensions, thereby supporting financial sustainability.

The proposed locational criteria of rural estate subdivisions avoids impacts on the agricultural system (PPS Policies 2.3.2(1)(c–f)), as they are not within specialty crop areas or prime agricultural lands. Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) is applied as required under Policy 2.3.2(1)(e) to ensure compatibility with nearby agricultural operations. Subdivisions are also directed away from natural hazards and significant natural heritage features, consistent with Policies 4.1, 4.2, and 5.1, ensuring environmental features, water resources, and hazard lands are protected.

Overall, the City's approach to Rural Estate Subdivisions supports orderly, limited, and context-appropriate rural growth that aligns with PPS direction by maintaining rural character, avoiding agricultural and environmental impacts, relying on sustainable private servicing, and ensuring that the Urban Settlement Area continues to accommodate the majority of residential and serviced growth.

Therefore, both the expansion of the urban settlement area, and permitting limited rural estate subdivisions, conform to the PPS.

Conformity with the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario 2011 (GPNO)

The rural estate policy framework conforms to the Growth Plan, which recognizes the continued importance of Northern Ontario's rural and resource-based areas while emphasizing that the majority of new growth should occur in serviced urban centres. The City's Rural Estate Subdivision policies limit rural residential development to low-density, large-lot formats that maintain rural character, rely on long-term private servicing, and avoid costly or premature municipal infrastructure extensions. This approach supports the Growth Plan's direction to ensure rural

development is environmentally responsible, financially sustainable, and compatible with surrounding rural and agricultural uses, without undermining the growth, servicing, and economic development objectives of the City's urban area.

Therefore, these initiatives conform to the GPNO.

CONSULTATION

The rural estate subdivision framework was initially considered as part of a broader rural growth management policy review, which also included proposed policy directions respecting Urban Settlement Area boundary expansions, Locally Significant Agricultural Areas (LSAA), and Secondary Mineral Aggregate Resource Areas (SMAR). A separate report recommending approval of a number of Urban Settlement Area boundary adjustments appears elsewhere on Council's agenda.

An initial open house was held in January 2026. Notice was provided by direct mail to all property owners within the LSAA, SMAR, and USA study areas. Given the broad geographic scope of these policy areas, approximately 1,170 direct mail notices were issued. Notice of the open house was also provided through social media, newspaper advertising, and email circulation to some industry representatives.

While there was significant interest in the other growth management policies, there were very few comments received relating to the proposed rural estate residential subdivision policy framework. As expected, there are a small number of developers that welcome the ability to potentially develop a rural estate subdivision, although there is some concern related to the restrictions that the proposed lot quota will create.

Up to the drafting of this report, one email was received, which is attached to this report. Mr. Porier does not support permitting rural estate subdivisions, for a number of reasons, including inefficient low-density development, the inability to densify within rural residential subdivisions, the fragmentation of rural parcel fabric and impacts to agricultural uses.

Planning staff recognize Mr. Porier's concerns, and the proposed framework aims to either eliminate or minimize such concerns. The lot quota is directly tied to urban residential housing starts, thereby ensuring that in any one-year, rural estate approvals do not exceed 10% of urban housing starts. Additional evaluation criteria aim to reward developments that are the most efficiently designed, with special regard for inefficient road patterns. It is also important to note that current OP policies and Zoning provisions permit, as a matter of right, up to 2 dwelling units in the Estate Residential (R1) and Rural Area (RA) Zones, albeit such intensification opportunities and resulting densities are lower than that of an urban lot. With regards to lot fragmentation and impacts on agriculture, there are existing OP policies, proposed evaluation criteria and future recommended policy changes

aimed at managing such issues. For example, there are existing policies requiring all new sensitive use development (including rural estate residences) to adhere to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' (OMAFRA) Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Guidelines, which require specific setbacks from existing livestock facilities. In addition, the MDS framework includes setbacks from vacant parcels that may have agricultural potential. The setback formulas are based upon the tillable acreage of the vacant parcel.

The proposed Urban Settlement Area Expansions (USA) will result in including lands within the USA that have urban development potential within the next 25-years, thereby protecting such lands from low density rural development.

Additionally, staff will be bringing forward a policy framework aimed at identifying and protecting a 'Rural Land Reserve (RLR)' and a 'Secondary Mineral Aggregate Resource Area (SMAR)'. The proposed RLR is located in the west end of the community and identified as having intact parcels, and a cluster of agricultural uses. The SMAR area is generally located in the northern portion of the community, south of the Primary Mineral Aggregate Resource Area. As presently contemplated, rural residential severances and subdivisions would be prohibited in both areas. In addition, the RLR is contemplated as an area where future urban growth, including employment uses, could occur, thereby protecting these lands for long-term urban growth beyond the next 25-years.

Public notice of the Council meeting was posted on the city website, and placed as an advertisement in the Sault Star on March 21, 2026.

Application Circulation

As part of the application review, this proposal was circulated to City divisions and external agencies for detailed technical review and comment. No major concerns were raised.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Approval of the proposed Official Plan amendment will not result in any immediate incremental change to municipal finances. The amendment is policy-level in nature and does not, in itself, approve any rural estate subdivision or authorize the construction of new municipal infrastructure. Any future financial implications would arise only through subsequent draft plan of subdivision and related Planning Act applications, at which time detailed technical review and conditions of approval would be considered through the development process.

Because rural estate subdivisions are intended to rely on private wells and septic systems, the amendment is not expected to create direct municipal obligations for water or sanitary sewer extensions. However, over time, approved rural estate subdivisions may contribute to additional municipal service demands, including road maintenance, snowplowing, waste collection, and emergency response. The

proposed quota, phasing, and intake evaluation framework are intended to limit these long-term fiscal impacts by ensuring that rural estate subdivision development remains modest in scale and carefully managed.

STRATEGIC PLAN / POLICY IMPACT

The proposed rural estate residential subdivision framework supports the City's strategic and policy objectives by replacing a blanket prohibition with a more structured and transparent growth management approach. It provides a limited policy pathway for rural residential development while maintaining an urban-first framework, reinforcing that rural estate subdivisions are to remain modest in scale, carefully evaluated, and phased in a manner consistent with broader land use, servicing, and fiscal objectives.

Limiting the scale of rural estate subdivision development and tying approvals to a managed quota and evaluation process, helps reduce the risk of uncoordinated and dispersed rural growth patterns. In this respect, the framework supports a more deliberate approach to growth management, which is generally more consistent with long-term environmental and fiscal sustainability than open-ended rural expansion.

SUMMARY

This report recommends amendments to the Official Plan to permit limited rural estate residential subdivisions through a structured intake, evaluation, and phasing framework. The proposed changes are intended to replace the current blanket prohibition with a more controlled and transparent policy approach.

The amendment is not intended to make rural estate subdivisions a primary form of growth or to allow open-ended rural development. Instead, it establishes a managed framework that keeps rural estate subdivision development limited in scale, tied to annual lot quotas, and subject to comparative evaluation and detailed technical review.

The proposed framework supports the City's broader growth management objectives by providing a modest rural subdivision housing option while reinforcing an urban-first approach to development and reducing the risk of scattered rural lot creation.

Approval of the amendment would not, in itself, approve any subdivision, as future proposals would still require further review and approval through the Planning Act process.

RECOMMENDATION

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Planner dated April 13, 2026 concerning Application A-02-26-OP (OPA 259) be received and that Council approve Official Plan Amendment 259 as set out in Appendix A;

And that Legal Department be requested to prepare the necessary by-law(s) to effect the same.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Kircal, RPP

Intermediate Planner

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j.kircal@cityssm.on.ca

**AMENDMENT NO. 259 (Rural Estate Subdivisions)
TO THE
SAULT STE. MARIE OFFICIAL PLAN**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Official Plan Amendment is to:

- Permit rural estate residential subdivisions in a controlled manner.
- Establish a structured and transparent policy framework that permits rural estate residential subdivisions only through a Rural Subdivision Intake Window.
- Replace the existing prohibition-based approach to rural estate residential subdivisions with a controlled, merit-based system that manages the timing, scale, and location of such development in a manner that is consistent with the City's urban growth strategy, rural character, servicing considerations, environmental constraints, and broader land use compatibility considerations.

LOCATION

The Rural Estate Subdivision policy (T-172) applies to all lands within the Rural Area Land Use Designation on Schedule C (Land Use) of the Official Plan.

BASIS

Council has identified the need to:

- Accommodate limited rural estate residential development in a structured, transparent, and fiscally responsible manner;
- Address demand for rural estate lots while directing such growth only to locations that are appropriate based on land use planning, servicing, and compatibility considerations;
- Avoid scattered, ad hoc rural lot creation patterns that fragment rural lands and undermine comprehensive planning; and
- Ensure that rural estate residential development does not undermine the City's urban growth strategy, long-term servicing objectives, or the orderly management of rural lands.

Council now considers it desirable to amend the Official Plan.

DETAILS OF THE ACTUAL AMENDMENT & POLICIES RELATED THERETO

The Official Plan for the City of Sault Ste. Marie is hereby amended as follows:

**(T-171) Amendment to Part VI (Physical Development – Built Environment),
Section 2.3 (Land Use)**

The subsection titled “Rural Residential Growth” is hereby repealed in its entirety.

**(T-172) Amendment to Part VI (Physical Development – Built Environment),
Section 2.3.6 (Rural Area)**

The following new Policies are added to existing Policy RA.11 (implemented through OPA’s 167 & 203):

1. Rural Estate Residential Subdivisions

Introduction

Rural Estate Residential Subdivisions, which are characterized as residential subdivisions with individual on-site well and septic services, are not permitted unless approved through the Rural Subdivision Intake Window.

Policies

1.1 Quota and Allocation

In order to ensure that rural estate residential subdivisions remain limited and reflective of the overall growth of the community, the following lot quotas apply:

- a. In any given year, the number of lots approved shall not exceed 10% of the rolling five-year average of urban housing starts.
 - i. Despite the provision above, minor deviations from the annual lot quota may be permitted, without an amendment to this plan, where it can be demonstrated that the deviation is numerically minor.
- b. No single application may contain more than 40% of the annual lot quota unless it is the only eligible application or in combination with all other eligible applications, the total lot quota is not exceeded.
- c. Shared applications, adjacent proposals, or integrated designs may be treated as one application for the purposes of the quota.
- d. For the first year following adoption of Policy 1.1 above, the annual lot quota will be doubled to 20%, after which, the quota will remain at 10%.

1.2 Preliminary Screening Intake Window

The Rural Subdivision Intake Window is intended to manage the timing, scale, and location of rural estate residential development in a manner that is orderly, transparent, and consistent with the City’s urban growth strategy, servicing capacity, rural character, and broader land use planning objectives.

The Intake Window is intended to evaluate concept proposals collectively and comparatively in order to determine which proposals, if any, are appropriate to advance to a formal Draft Plan of Subdivision application.

Only proposals that have been approved through the Preliminary Screening Intake Window shall be eligible to proceed to a formal Draft Plan of Subdivision application under this Plan.

Applicants shall submit a concept package sufficient for preliminary evaluation. Concept plans are reviewed collectively and concurrently during the intake window based on screening criteria addressing:

- a. Conformity to Provincial and Municipal policies and plans,
- b. Preliminary environmental constraints,
- c. Land use compatibility, including impacts to nearby noxious uses such as industrial uses and agricultural uses,
- d. Servicing feasibility,
- e. Appropriateness of proposed lot sizes and configuration, and a layout that minimizes excess linear infrastructure and associated servicing and maintenance,
- f. Whether the proposal represents an orderly and contiguous form of rural development and avoids scattered or premature fragmentation of rural lands,
- g. Cumulative impacts relative to all other submissions within the Intake Window, and
- h. Any other matters identified in the applicable Intake Window Guideline.

1.3 Expiry of Draft Approved Rural Estate Residential Plans of Subdivision and Condominium

- a. Every draft approved plan of subdivision or condominium, or any phase thereof, shall expire three years from the date of draft approval if the plan or phase has not been registered.
- b. A request to extend draft approval must be submitted prior to the expiry date. Any extension request shall be subject to review by the Planning Director and may be approved, approved with modifications, or denied. Extensions may be granted where the applicant demonstrates:
 - i. Substantial progress on fulfilling conditions (e.g. engineering design, subdivision agreement);
 - ii. Continued conformity with the Provincial Planning Statement, the Official Plan, the Zoning By-law, and current municipal engineering standards, and
- c. No combination of the original draft approval period and any extension or extensions shall result in a total approval period exceeding nine years without an amendment to this Plan.
- d. Where Draft Approval has lapsed, Council may consider a request to deem it not to have lapsed, subject to the statutory tests under s.51(33.1) of the *Planning Act*.

1.4 Rural Estate Residential Subdivision Intake Window Guideline

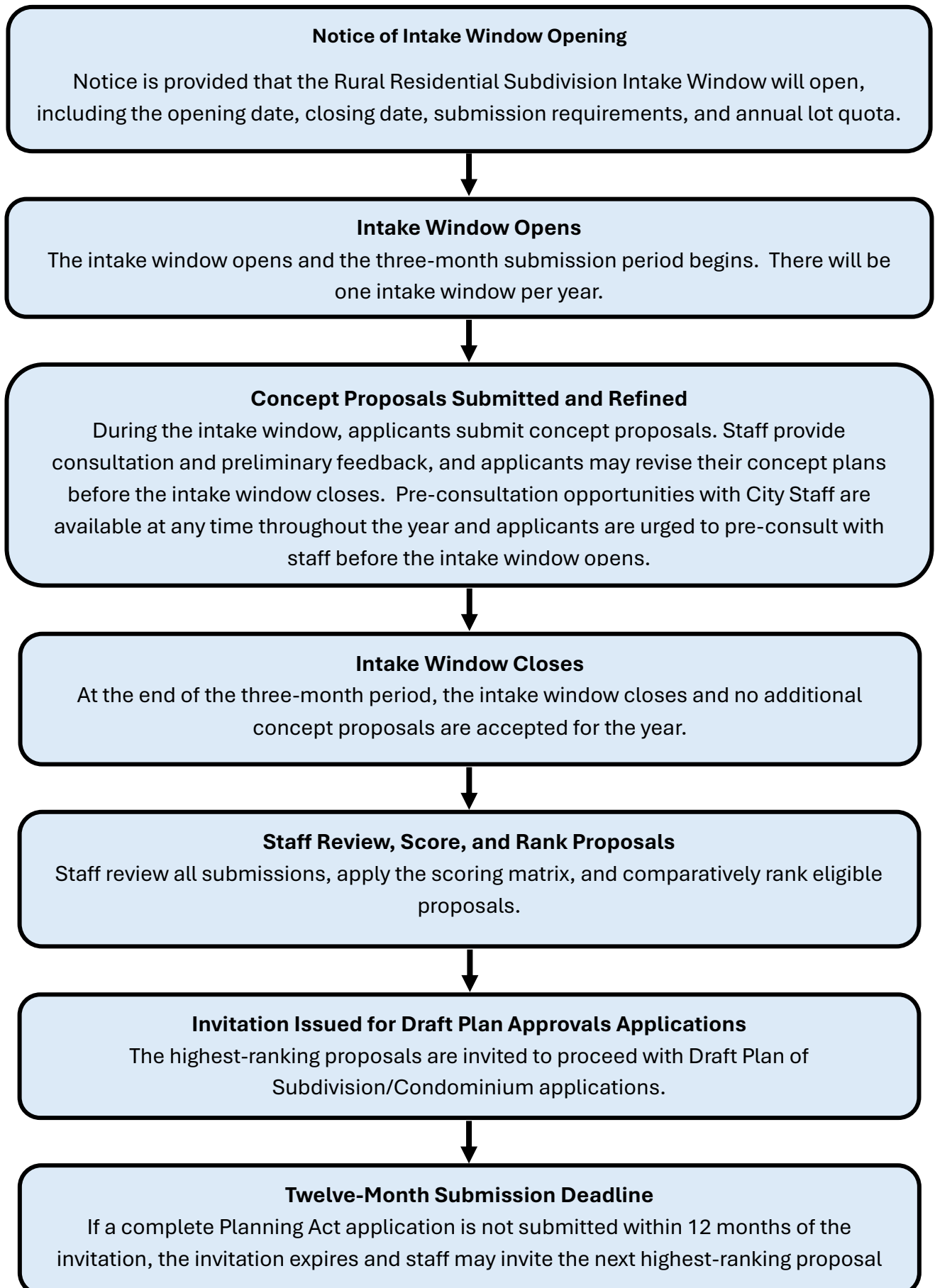
A Rural Estate Residential Subdivision Intake Window Guideline will be prepared and maintained by the City to provide additional direction respecting the administration of the Intake Window process, including but not limited to:

- a. Timing of intake windows,
- b. Submission requirements,
- c. Application content and supporting materials,
- d. Evaluation criteria,
- e. Annual rural estate residential subdivision lot quota calculations, and
- f. Expiry timeframes for Intake Window approvals.

INTERPRETATION

The policies of the Official Plan, as amended from time to time, shall apply to this Amendment. The Director of Planning may maintain and update administrative procedures, submission requirements, and evaluation methodology associated with the Rural Estate Residential Subdivision Intake Window Guideline without amendment to this Plan, provided that such updates remain consistent with the policy framework of this Amendment.

Rural Subdivision Approvals Process



From: Martin Poirier [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, March 21, 2026 10:09 PM
To: Jonathan Kircal <j.kircal@cityssm.on.ca>
Subject: comment on rural estate subdivision framework

Hi,

Thank you for giving residents the opportunity to comment.

I do not support A-2-26-OP. Allowing rural residential subdivisions on wells and septic systems again is, in my opinion, a mistake for the long-term future of the City.

First, this type of development is extremely expensive to service. Long roads, snow removal, emergency services, school transportation, all of it costs a lot, and the tax revenue from large rural lots does not come close to covering those costs. We would be committing ourselves to a financially inefficient pattern for decades.

Second, once these lots are created, they cannot be densified. Wells and septic systems make future intensification almost impossible. If the City ever wants to grow in a smart and efficient way, it needs land that can support proper infrastructure. Rural estate lots remove that option permanently.

Third, these subdivisions destroy agricultural potential. Fragmentation is the real threat. A few houses scattered in the countryside can make far more land unusable than what is actually severed. Setback distances, pesticide restrictions, noise, dust, smells, agriculture and rural residential simply do not mix well.

And what do we gain from this? Rural estate subdivisions usually turn into monocultures of fertilized lawns that damage soil, contaminate water tables, and destroy biodiversity. They are expensive for the City, bad for agriculture, and offer very little benefit in return.

If the City truly wants to protect agriculture and plan responsibly, the best approach is to avoid this type of development altogether. Keep the existing ban.

Merci,

Martin Poirier

365 Maki road, Sault-Sainte-Marie

NOTICE OF APPLICATION AND PUBLIC MEETING

Date: April 13, 2026

Civic Centre, Council Chambers

Time: 5:00 p.m.

99 Foster Drive

TAKE NOTICE THAT the Council of The Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie will hold a Public Meeting on Monday, April 13, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. to consider two Official Plan Amendments (under section 17 and 22 of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13, as amended). Rogers TV will broadcast this meeting and may be viewed on Rogers TV Community Programming Channel, Sootoday.com and on the City's YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/saultstemarieca>

Any person wishing to present at the public meeting may do so electronically or in person. Electronic participants must contact the City Clerk at cityclerk@cityssm.on.ca or 705-759-5388 to register as a presenter. Registered presenters will be provided with instructions as to how to join the meeting in advance. Any written submissions received in advance of the meeting will be included with Council's Agenda.

ADDRESS: AREA-WIDE

Application: A-2-26 / OPA 259 (Rural Estate Subdivision Framework)

Applicant: The Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie

Purpose

The purpose of Official Plan Amendment No. 259 is to introduce a new policy framework to allow Rural Estate Residential Subdivisions in a controlled and limited manner within the Rural Area Land Use designation. The amendment would replace the current prohibition-based approach with a structured Rural Subdivision Intake Window process, through which proposals would be reviewed together using consistent evaluation criteria. The framework is intended to ensure that rural estate subdivision development is considered in a transparent, merit-based manner that takes into account growth management, servicing feasibility, environmental constraints, land use compatibility, and the protection of rural land resources.

Proposed Change

The proposed amendment would modify the Rural Residential Growth, and Rural Area policies of the Official Plan to establish a new Rural Estate Residential Subdivision framework. Under the proposed policies, rural estate residential subdivisions served by private well and septic would only be permitted where they have first been considered through a Rural Subdivision Intake Window and determined to satisfy the City's evaluation criteria. The amendment would also establish an annual lot quota, limit the share of the quota that may be taken up by any one application, and provide for the preparation of an Intake Window Guideline to address matters such as submission requirements, evaluation criteria, timing, and approval expiry. The full Official Plan Amendment No. 259 may be viewed on the City webpage: saultstemarie.ca/OP_Amendment or by contacting the Planner on file.

ADDRESS: AREA-WIDE

Application: A-3-26 / OPA 260 (Urban Settlement Area Boundary Changes)

Applicant: The Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie

Purpose

The purpose of Official Plan Amendment No. 260 is to revise the Urban Settlement Area boundary in eight locations to better reflect existing development patterns and to identify lands that may be appropriate for urban development over the long term.

In some cases, the proposed changes recognize lands that are already partially developed, serviced, or function as logical extensions of the existing urban area. In other cases, the changes are intended to ensure that the City has a modest supply of additional land available to accommodate future housing, employment, and other urban development needs in locations that can be efficiently integrated with the existing settlement area.

In total, the amendment would add approximately 279 hectares (691 acres) of land to the Urban Settlement Area.

Proposed Change

The proposed amendment would revise Schedule C (Land Use) of the Official Plan by changing the Urban Settlement Area boundary in eight locations. These changes are proposed to recognize logical boundary adjustments, reflect existing development conditions, improve long-term land use continuity, and identify lands with potential for future urban development.

Inclusion within the Urban Settlement Area does not by itself approve development or extend municipal services, but it does identify the land as being within the area where urban uses may be considered through future planning and infrastructure processes.

The full text of Official Plan Amendment No. 260 and its associated map changes may be viewed on the City webpage: saultstemarie.ca/OP_Amendment or by contacting the Planner on file.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Input on the proposed Official Plan amendments is welcomed and encouraged. You can provide input by making a written submission or by making a public presentation.

MORE INFORMATION

The application may be reviewed in the Planning Division, Level 5, Civic Centre, 99 Foster Drive. The Report of the Planning Division will be available as part of the Council Agenda on the City's website at 4:30 p.m. on **Thursday, April 9, 2026** and in person on **Friday, April 10, 2026**, during regular office hours in the Planning Division. Digital and physical copies of the report are available upon request. Inquiries should be directed to Jonathan Kircal, Planning Division, at 705.759.6227 or j.kircal@cityssm.on.ca please refer to the application file number.

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

To provide input in writing, or request notice if the proposed application is approved, please submit a letter to Jonathan Kircal, Planning Division, 99 Foster Drive, Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A 5X6, or e-mail to j.kircal@cityssm.on.ca with your name, address and application file number on or before **Monday, April 13, 2026**.

If you wish to be notified of the Council of the City of Sault Ste. Marie decision to adopt or refuse the approval of an application, you must make a written request to the Planning Division at the address noted above.

LEGAL NOTICE CONCERNING YOUR RIGHT TO APPEAL

Pursuant to Section 17 and 22 of the Planning Act, 1990

As per the Planning Act, appeal rights are only provided to specified persons, public bodies, applicants, registered owners of any land to which the by-law and/or plan would apply to, the Minister, and the appropriate approval authority.

If a specific person, public body, registered owner of a subject property does not make oral submission at a public meeting or make written submission to the City of Sault Ste. Marie before the By-law is passed, the specified person, public body or registered owner of a subject property may not be entitled to appeal the decision of the Council of the City of Sault Ste. Marie to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

If a person or public body does not make oral submissions at a public meeting or written submissions to the City of Sault Ste. Marie before the By-law is passed, the person or public body may not be added as a party to the hearing of an appeal before the Ontario Land Tribunal unless, in the opinion of the Tribunal, there are reasonable grounds to add the person or public body as a party.