

Executive Summary

Background and Objective

Since 2007, *Ontario Regulation 608/06* now provides all municipalities with the authority to establish a development permit system (DPS); however, much of this regulatory power and its functions are largely misunderstood by both professionals and the general public, which has led to a lack widespread municipal implementation. One main contributor to the uncertainty is the lack of academic literature. Currently, the most comprehensive document has been produced by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), *Development Permit System: A Handbook for Municipal Implementation*, which provides a broad overview of key features of the land use tool, current planning issues, and how to establish a framework for municipal implementation. Many municipal websites reference the Handbook as an educational resource and guide to policy framework, as such, it is important to properly evaluate the effectiveness of this document for future use in planning. The recommendations put forth by MMAH should be evaluated for their effectiveness in helping municipalities' transition towards a DPS. Therefore, the study's key objective is to identify, analyze, and evaluate the MMAH Handbook in order to effectively provide an updated set of recommendations within the context of Ontario. The study was focused around 2 research questions:

Primary Question: How practical within the planning process are the recommendations provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for municipalities transitioning from a traditional zoning by-law to a development permit by-law system?

Secondary Question: What recommendations would improve the ease of transition for municipalities?

Research Methods

A qualitative approach to the study was undertaken by first reviewing the comprehensiveness of the policy within Section 5.0 - Establishing the DPS in Your Community, that led to the considerations for the key informant interviews. This was then followed by data collection of the key informants interviews with industry professionals. The findings from the methods were then transcribed and evaluated.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The study concludes with a series of 5 recommendations that MMAH may consider as updates to Section 5.0 - Establishing the DPS in Your Community in the document *Development Permit System: A Handbook for Municipal Implementation*.

1. Start with a clear rationale for using a DPS that provides a justification on how it will help achieve the community's vision, supported by background studies.
2. Prioritize education surrounding the DPS within initial public consultation that reveals the policy framework of a DPS in its entirety; this requires more than one mandatory public meeting and one open house, currently mandated within the *Planning Act*.
3. Encourage more provincial oversight to incentivize lower-tier municipalities to break the mold and support a shift in land use planning policy.
4. Create an OPA and development permit by-law in tandem; first by setting up the proper guiding policy, and then through the creation of a zoning by-law that provides a local framework for what a district or neighbourhood will look like.
5. The creation of policy must be responsive and flexible within a development permit by-law.