

# **The Regional Municipality of York**

Committee of the Whole  
Planning and Economic Development  
April 16, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

## **2019 Development Activity Summary**

### **1. Recommendations**

Council receive this report for information.

### **2. Summary**

Council has delegated authority to the Chief Planner and Director of Community Planning and Development Services to issue approvals for development applications, subject to such approvals being reported to Council semi-annually. Staff have delegated approval authority of routine Local Official Plan Amendments (OPAs), including exemption from Regional approval and approval of works adjacent to Regional rights-of-way and infrastructure. York Region is a commenting agency to local municipalities for draft plans of subdivision and condominium, consent to sever, zoning by-law amendment and minor variance applications.

Information on the 2019 development application activity is included in Attachment 1.

Key Points:

- A number of factors in 2019 impacted development activity: Provincial policy uncertainty due to significant changes through Bill 108, More Homes, More Choice Act, uncertainty in the housing market and Development Charges rate increases in 2017 and 2018
- In 2019, Planning and Economic Development received 451 new development applications for review, a 16% decrease over the previous year (531 development applications)
- 51 Official Plan Amendment applications were reviewed and exempt from Regional approval
- Proposed residential units as part of new draft plan of subdivision applications decreased by 82% to 1,776 and proposed residential units as part of new site plan applications decreased by 48% to 7,428
- York Region Council approved three Secondary Plans that will guide development for new communities in north Vaughan and Markham, housing more than 60,000 people and adding thousands of jobs. The approval of these secondary plans suggests the

Region is well-positioned to receive future development applications that will increase residential housing supply.

### **3. Background**

#### **The authority to approve certain development applications is delegated to Planning and Economic Development staff, subject to such approvals being reported to Council semi-annually**

Council delegated approval authority allows Planning and Economic Development staff to issue approvals for routine Local Official Plan Amendments (OPAs) and exempt Local OPAs from Regional approval, subject to such approvals being reported to Council semi-annually. In addition to reporting on OPA approvals, previous development activity reports summarized the number of applications to which the Region responded and/or conditionally approved as a commenting agency to local municipalities. Development trends were presented to Council on an annual basis for information purposes based on the Region's conditional approvals and responses on draft plans of subdivision, draft plan of condominium, site plan and engineering applications.

#### **All development related data is being tracked in YorkTrax and will be used to report on new development activity in York Region**

Since the release of the YorkTrax development tracking system in 2017, Regional staff, with assistance from our local municipalities, have been collecting and tracking all development related information and data received on each application. Every application location, nature of proposal, number of units, square frontage for non-residential, status, progress and associated applications are captured for information and can be used to analyze development trends for reporting. With more detailed data being collected in YorkTrax, staff can more accurately track proposed new development activity in each local municipality and York Region as a whole.

Starting in 2019, the development activity summary uses data collected by YorkTrax to report on development activity to Council on an annual and semi-annual basis. The total number of new development applications and associated proposed residential units received, together with the total number of residential units registered in a given year are reported. This has changed from the previous method of reporting on the number of responses York Region provided. This new methodology will more accurately depict new development activity in York Region. Staff will continue to report on delegated approval of Local OPAs with no Regional issues and exemption of Local OPAs from Regional approval. With implementation of YorkTrax, this report can accurately compare data from the last two years (2018 and 2019). Future development activity reports will provide a five year trend analysis as more data is collected. Included in the summary are the following:

- Approval of Local OPAs with no Regional issues – Delegated
- Exemption of Local OPAs from Regional approval – Delegated
- New development applications received in 2019

- Proposed residential units received in 2019
- Number of registered plan of subdivision and registered units in 2019
- Approval of works in the Regional right-of-way as part of Site plan applications with Regional interest – Delegated
- Engineering approval on works in the Regional right-of-way – Delegated
- Planning and Development Engineering review fee and Development Charge collection

## 4. Analysis

### **A number of factors impacted development activity in 2019**

Bill 108, More Homes, More Choice Act, received Royal Assent on June 6, 2019 and amended 13 statutes including those dealing with development charges, Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (previously known as the Ontario Municipal Board - OMB), and land use planning. Provincial policy uncertainty caused by Bill 108 and uncertainty in the housing market are contributing factors that impacted development activity in 2019. Additionally, Development Charges rate increases enacted through the Region's 2017 Development Charges Bylaw and 2018 Bylaw Amendment resulted in a significant amount of units paying development charges in 2017 and 2018. As a result, York Region experienced higher than normal development activity in 2017 and 2018.

### **New development applications received in 2019 are slightly lower compared to 2018**

Table 1 identifies the number of new applications received by York Region by type in 2018 and 2019 with percentage change. The primary applications York Region received for review and response are Official Plan Amendments, Block Plans, Draft Plan of Subdivisions, Zoning By-Law, Draft Plan of Condominiums, Engineering and Site Plans, which totaled 451 new development applications. In 2019 the number of these primary applications decreased by 15% compared to 531 applications in 2018. In addition, York Region received other development applications including site plans (with no Regional interest), pre-consultation, consent to sever and minor variances for review and information purposes. A breakdown of new development applications by municipality is provided in Attachment 1.

### **In 2019, 51 Local Official Plan Amendment applications were exempt from Regional approval by the Director of Community Planning and Development Services**

The Director of Community Planning and Development Services issued decisions on a total of 52 Local OPA applications in 2019. 51 Local OPAs were exempt from Regional approval and 1 regionally significant OPA was approved. A majority of the exempted OPA's related to changes to building height, density, built form and urban design. A list of local OPAs with approval status by municipality is provided in Attachment 1.

**Table 1**  
**Number of New Applications Received by York Region by Type in 2018 & 2019**

	Application Type (New Applications)	Year 2018	Year 2019	Per Cent (%) +/- change
Primary Applications	Official Plan Amendments	58	52	-10%
	Block Plans	3	3	0%
	Draft Plan of Subdivision	54	31	-43%
	Zoning By-Law Amendments	168	129	-23%
	Draft Plan of Condominium	28	27	-4%
	Engineering Review	38	41	8%
	Site Plans Applications (Minor and Major) <sup>1</sup>	182	168	-8%
	<b>Development Application Total</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>-15%</b>
Other Applications Reviewed	Site Plan (No Regional Interest) <sup>2</sup>	109	103	-6%
	Pre-Consultation Meetings	472	525	11%
	Consent to sever Applications	174	141	-19%
	Minor Variances Applications	630	459	-27%
	<b>Total Applications Received</b>	<b>1,916</b>	<b>1,679</b>	<b>-12%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Major and minor site plans are determined based on the value of construction work proposed in the Regional right-of-way. More complex right-of-way works require more comprehensive review.

<sup>2</sup> No Regional interest e.g. not adjacent to a Regional Road or infrastructure, source water protection area. Applications are received for information purposes only.

### **The number of proposed residential units decreased in 2019**

In 2019, the number of proposed residential units received by the Region for review as part of new draft plan of subdivision applications was 1,776, which is significantly lower than 9,843 units received in 2018, representing an 81% decrease. There were 7,428 proposed residential units received for review as part of new site plan applications compared to 14,402 units received in 2018, representing a 48% decrease (Table 2). Development Activity fluctuates from year to year and is often dependent on a number of factors that contributed to the decrease of proposed residential units in 2019. These include a higher than normal number of units that moved through the development review process (Figure 1), to pay development charges before the 2017 and 2018 increase. Provincial policy uncertainty

(including significant changes to the *Development Charges Act, 1997* and *Planning Act, 1990* through Bill 108) and uncertainty in the housing market are all contributing factors. The Region still has a healthy supply of residential inventory. Roughly 45,000 units registered and draft approved are waiting to be built with an additional 57,000 units under review.

Approximately 65% of new applications received in 2019 were located in the Cities of Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan. 88% of proposed residential site plan units and 29% of proposed residential subdivision units were also located in the southern three municipalities which are experiencing a higher amount of intensification.

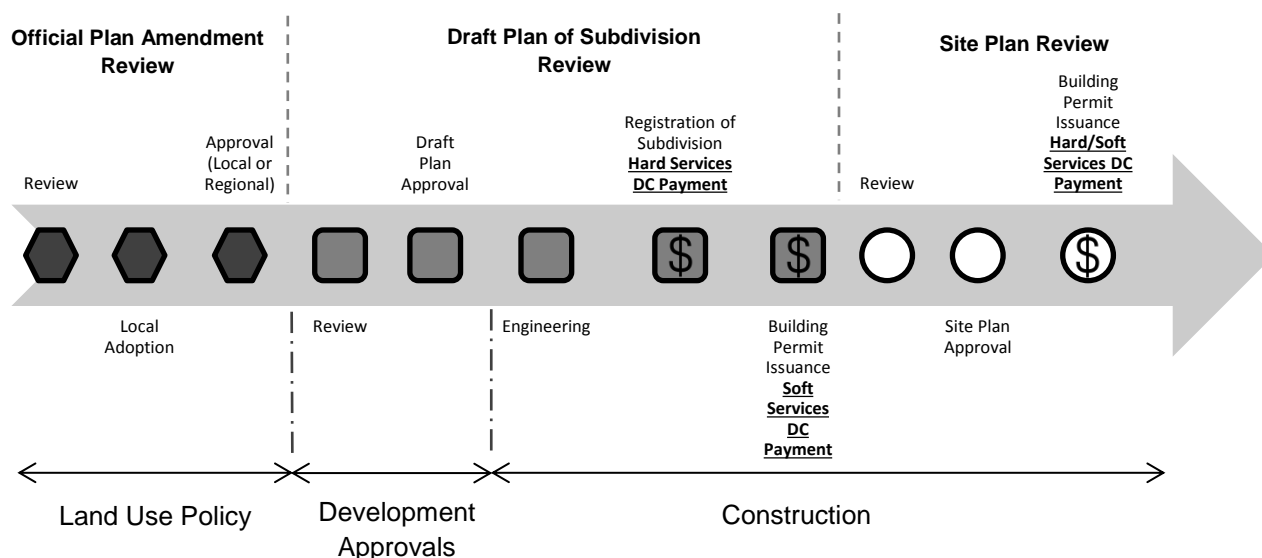
**Table 2**  
**Proposed Residential units received Per-Year in 2018 and 2019**

	2018	2019
Proposed Subdivision Units <sup>1</sup> (Single/Semi/Townhouse)	9,843	1,776
Proposed Site Plan units <sup>2</sup>	14,402	7,428

<sup>1</sup> Proposed residential units associated with draft plan of subdivision applications, registration and issuance of building permits.

<sup>2</sup> Proposed residential site plan units. Units include site plan applications with no regional interest.

**Figure 1**  
**Development Review Process and Development Charge Payment**



## The number of registered units decreased in 2019

The number of registered plan of subdivision and condominium applications decreased from 85 in 2018 to 45 in 2019 (Table 3). The associated residential units decreased to 2,180 compared to 9,412 registered units in 2018, representing a 77% decrease. The reduction in unit registration is due in part to the significant number of registrations preceding the Region's Development Charge rate increase in 2017 and 2018. Residential registrations tend to sharply decrease in the year following enactment of a development charge rate increase.

**Table 3**  
**Registered Plans of Subdivision and Condominium Per-Year 2018 and 2019**

	2018	2019
Registered Plans of Subdivision/units	47 (6,344 units)	21 (1,290 units)
Registered Plans of Condominium/units*	38 (3,068 units)	24 (890 units)
Total	85 (9,412 units)	45 (2,180 units)

\* includes apartment units

## The number of site plan applications receiving Regional approval increased in 2019

York Region approves Regional engineering matters in site plan applications for projects that impact Regional roadways and infrastructure. Site plan applications are reviewed by staff for planning and legal considerations in accordance with the Planning Act, protection of Regional wellheads, property requirements, travel demand management, transit, intersection and access design, road and servicing design, and development implications to the Regional road system and rights-of-way. Site plan applications consist of both small ground related infill proposals and major development applications. Both minor and major site plan applications contribute towards the residential and non-residential inventory.

In 2019, 146 site plan applications received Regional approval on matters of Regional interest compared to 125 approvals in 2018, representing a 17% increase. The number of site plans being approved each year has steadily increased since 2017 with 2019 reaching the highest (Table 4). This reflects increased intensification in the existing built up areas of the Region.

**Table 4****Approval of Regional Interest as part of Site Plan Applications Per Year**

	2017	2018	2019
Approved Site Plan Applications	70	125	146

**Engineering approvals remained consistent over the past two years**

Regional staff issue engineering approvals for works proposed as part of subdivision applications or local municipal capital projects, which involve Regional infrastructure or are to be located in the Region's right-of-way. In 2019, Regional staff issued approvals for 29 subdivision-related engineering plans and other projects compared to 30 in 2018. These applications involve both above-ground and below ground engineering works, including but not limited to, intersection and access improvements, road widening, electrical and signalization, storm, water, and sanitary servicing connections, property grading and construction access.

**Approved Secondary Plans and proposed Block Plans will result in future development applications, increasing residential housing supply**

In 2019, York Region Council approved three major Secondary Plans for Berczy Glen and Robinson Glen in the City of Markham and Block 27 in the City of Vaughan. The Secondary Plans establish the policy framework for future development and collectively these new community areas will house more than 60,000 people and add thousands of jobs.

York Region also received three new block plans for review in the City of Vaughan. Block 34 East is part of the Hwy 400 North Employment Area and will accommodate a wide variety of employment uses. Block 55 will implement OPA's 47 and 48 for development of a new residential community with approximately 675 residential units and additional uses. Block 60 West within the West Vaughan Employment Secondary Plan Area will facilitate development of future employment uses.

The steady stream of new Official Plan amendment applications received in 2019 along with approval of the Secondary Plans and Block Plans enables future development applications (plans of subdivision/condominium and site plans) that will increase the Region's residential housing supply and add supporting uses. Regional staff will continue to work closely with local municipal partners to achieve Regional and local policy objectives.

**Regional staff participate on advisory committees and working groups to plan new development areas**

Planning and Economic Development staff actively participate in Regional and Local Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) and Project Working Groups. This includes urban expansion areas, new Secondary Plans and Key Development Areas. Input to these

committees and working groups is important to ensure Regional interests are identified early in the planning process. Region staff also review pre-consultation requests to provide comments and submission requirements for future development applications.

## 5. Financial

### **Application fee revenues are lower than the previous two years, which experienced Development Charge rate increases**

Development application fees are collected in accordance with Regional Bylaw No. 2010-15, as amended, for land use planning approvals and the plan review function. As shown in Table 5, Regional Development fees collected in 2019 decreased. Revenue from combined planning and engineering application fees has trended upwards over the previous four years with a significant increase in 2017 and 2018. The increased fee revenue in 2017 and 2018 was due to a high number of applications, and the complexity of applications being received. Development Charge rate increases enacted through the Region's 2017 Development Charges Bylaw and 2018 Bylaw Amendment resulted in a significant number of subdivisions, engineering and site plan applications being submitted for approval to pay development charges, resulting in a period of higher revenues.

The reduction in 2019 fee revenue as compared to 2018 is significant but comparable to 2016 pre development charge rate increase revenues as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
**Fee Revenue for Development Planning and Engineering from 2014 to 2019**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	\$1,616,941	\$2,770,104	\$4,033,469	\$4,499,231	\$2,845,515

### **Development Charge collection decreased from 2018 and 2017**

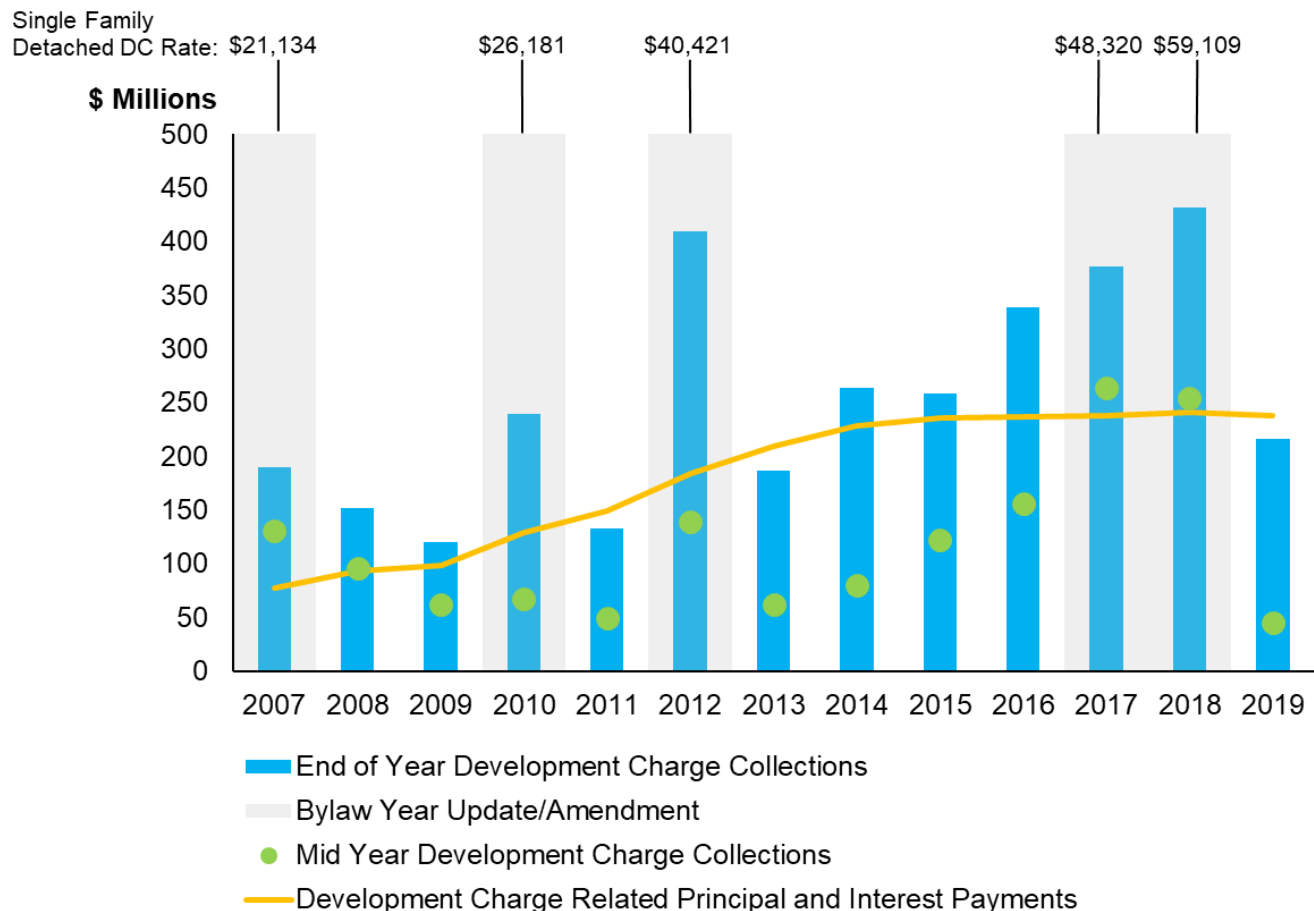
Development Charges are collected through development approvals to pay for growth-related infrastructure. Currently, development charges are collected at subdivision clearance and building permit issuance (Figure 1). As shown on Table 6, in 2019 the Region collected \$216,669,308 in development charges. This is a decrease of 50% compared to the amount collected in the 2018 (\$431,906,331). The 2019 collection was approximately \$21 million lower than the principle and interest payment on the Region's development charge debt for the year.

Development charge collection is a function of development activities and the effective development charge rates. Development charge collections tend to sharply increase in the year of an update or an amendment when rates increase, followed by a sharp decrease in the year after (Figure 2). The reduction in 2019 is due in part to the significant number of



registered units paying development charges prior to rate increases enacted through the Region's 2017 and 2018 Development Charges Bylaw Amendments. Similar trends can be seen in 2011 and 2013, following development charges amendment and update in 2010 and 2012 respectively.

**Figure 2**  
**Development Charge Collections and Timing of Bylaw Updates and Amendments**



There are a number of additional factors at play including a backlog of matters before the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal awaiting hearing, Provincial policy uncertainty (including significant changes to the Development Charges Act, 1997 and Planning Act, 1990 through Bill 108) and uncertainty in the housing market.

In the first half of 2019, the Region collected \$45,051,970 in development charges. The second half of 2019 had a 380% increase in development charge collections with the Region collecting an additional \$171,617,338.

The Growth and Development Review 2019 staff report will be presented to Council later this year, which will highlight key development and population indicators in York Region and report on the competitiveness of York Region's economy within the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), the Province and Canada. The report will include Economic outlook,

population growth, residential market and building activity, industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) market and building activity, and overall construction value

**Table 6**  
**Development Charges Collected from 2014 to 2018**

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
\$264,197,066	\$258,274,065	\$338,547,685	\$376,736,640	\$431,906,331	\$216,669,308

## 6. Local Impact

Regional staff work closely with local municipal staff to timely review development applications, ensure Regional and local policy objectives are met, and approvals occur within the timelines prescribed by the Planning Act.

## 7. Conclusion

The 2019 Development Activity report summarizes delegated approvals and new development applications received by York Region in 2019 with a 2018 comparison, using data collected from YorkTrax, to Council for information.

York Region received 451 primary new development applications with a total number of 9,204 proposed residential units received for review, which is an overall decrease from 2018. 51 Local Official Plan Amendment applications were exempt from Regional approval by staff. 146 major or minor site plan applications received Regional approval on matters of Regional interest, representing a 17% increase from 2018.

Registration of plans of subdivision and condominium decreased by 47% 2019, with 2,180 registered units. Development charge collection decreased by 50% to \$216,669,308 in 2019 (2018 - \$431,906,331). Units cleared for registration and development charge collections tend to sharply decrease in the year after a bylaw update or amendment. In the second half of 2019 there was a 380% increase in development charge collection compared to first half of 2019.

York Region Council approved three Secondary Plans located in the Cities of Markham and Vaughan that will guide development for new communities for approximately 60,000 people and add supporting uses and jobs. The Region will continue to experience growth as residential inventory and supporting uses increase once new development applications are received within the approved Secondary Plan areas as well as from Block Plans in the City of Vaughan. Regional staff will continue to work closely with local municipal partners to achieve Regional and local policy objectives.

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For more information on this report, please contact Asif Abbas, Planner at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 77271. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

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April 3, 2020  
Attachments (1)  
eDocs# 10601599