

# The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole  
Planning and Economic Development  
September 10, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

## 2020 Mid-Year Development Activity Summary

### 1. Recommendation

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 mid-year 2020 development application activity is included in Attachment 1.

Key Points:

- Planning and development activity continued during the COVID-19 pandemic and Regional staff were able to process applications through the Region's electronic development application tracking system - YorkTrax
- In the first half of 2020, Planning and Economic Development received 235 new development applications for review, a 1% decrease over the previous year (237 development applications)
- While the number of overall new applications slowed slightly due to COVID-19, application resubmissions have increased by 43% to 369 from 258 in 2019
- Twenty four Official Plan Amendment applications were reviewed and exempted from Regional approval, compared to 21 the previous year
- Proposed residential units in new draft plan of subdivision applications increased to 4,801 in first half of 2020 from 1,220 in first half of 2019 and proposed residential units in new site plan applications increased to 5,620 in 2020 from 4,759 in 2019

- Mid-year revenue from planning and engineering application fees in 2020 (\$1,564,584) has increased compared to mid-year 2019 (\$1,379,204)
- Development Charge collections increased by 127% to \$102,448,127 in the first half of 2020 from \$45,051,970 (2019)

### 3. Background

#### **Authority to approve certain development applications is delegated to Chief Planner and Director of Community Planning and Development Services, subject to such approvals being reported to Council semi-annually**

In addition to reporting on OPA approvals, the 2020 mid-year development activity report summarizes the number of new residential applications and associated proposed residential units received, together with the total number of residential units registered. Included in the Development Activity Summary Report are the following for mid-year 2020:

- Approval of Local OPAs with no Regional issues – Delegated
- Exemption of Local OPAs from Regional approval – Delegated
  - The Region has the authority to exempt an OPA from Regional approval if it is determined to be of local significance and there is no Regional interest. The Regional Official Plan sets out criteria to determine if an amendment is eligible for exemption. If the application qualifies for exemption the local municipality will issue a decision for the Official Plan Amendment.
- New development applications received
- Proposed residential units received
- Number of registered plan of subdivision and registered units
- 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

#### **Data collected and tracked in YorkTrax is used to report on new development activity in York Region**

Regional staff, with assistance from our local municipalities, have been collecting and tracking all development related information and data received on each application in YorkTrax. Every application's location, nature of proposal, number of units, square footage for non-residential, status, progress and associated applications are captured for information and can be used to analyze development trends for reporting. As detailed data collection continues in YorkTrax, staff can more accurately track proposed new development activity in

each local municipality and York Region as a whole. A full trend analysis over the past years will be provided in the 2020 annual report in early 2021.

## 4. Analysis

### **Intake and review of development activity continued though the COVID-19 pandemic in the first half of 2020**

In response to the state of emergency due to COVID-19 pandemic, the Province of Ontario passed Ontario Regulation 149/20 (O. Reg. 149/20) on April 14, 2020. The regulation suspended all timelines under the *Planning Act* but permitted municipalities to continue processing development application during the pandemic. The suspension included a pause on non-decision appeals, deeming application complete and other Planning Act timelines. Decision notices for most Planning Act instruments given on or after February 26, 2020 and before April 15, 2020 are deemed not to have been completed. As the Province has been recovering, suspensions of Planning Act timelines were lifted as of June 22, 2020.

Regional staff transitioned to working remotely and continued to intake and review development applications during the COVID-19 pandemic. There was an initial interruption of accepting and processing development applications due to some municipal offices temporary closure and transition to working remotely. [Municipalities](#) quickly transitioned into accepting and circulating electronic submissions through various online processes. Regional staff, working from home and on the road, have been able to continue with business as usual though the use of the Region's application tracking system, YorkTrax. YorkTrax allows staff to fully circulate development applications, share documents and provide comments remotely. Consultation and project meetings are now being held virtually.

### **In 2020, 24 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 26 Local OPA applications in 2020. Of these, 24 local OPAs were exempt from Regional approval and the Region retained approval authority on two local OPAs. A majority of the exempted OPAs 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.

### **New development applications received in 2020 are slightly lower compared to 2019**

Table 1 identifies the number of new applications received by York Region by type in 2019 and 2020 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 235 new development applications. In the first half of 2020 the number of these primary applications

decreased by 1% compared to 237 applications for the same period in 2019. 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. The volume of new primary applications for the first half is similar to last year. While the number of other development applications slowed slightly since COVID-19 effects began, largely due to local municipalities transitioning to electronic submissions and working remotely. A breakdown of new development applications 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)	Mid-Year 2019	Mid-Year 2020	Per Cent (%) +/- change	
<b>Primary Applications</b>	Official Plan Amendments	28	44	57%
	Block Plans	1	1	0%
	Draft Plan of Subdivision	21	18	-10%
	Zoning By-Law Amendments	62	68	10%
	Draft Plan of Condominium	12	8	-33%
	Engineering Review	24	14	-42%
	Site Plans Applications (Minor and Major) <sup>1</sup>	89	82	-8%
	<b>Total Development Applications</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>-1%</b>
<b>Other Applications Reviewed</b>	Site Plan (No Regional Interest) <sup>2</sup>	58	39	-33%
	Pre-Consultation Meetings	268	219	-18%
	Consent to sever Applications	63	44	-30%
	Minor Variances Applications	234	221	-6%
	<b>Total Applications Received</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>758</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 increased by 74% compared to mid-year 2019

In the first half of 2020, the number of proposed residential units received by the Region for review as part of new draft plan of subdivision applications was 4,801; this is significantly higher than 1,220 units received by mid-year 2019, representing a 294% increase. There were 5,612 proposed residential units received for review as part of new site plan applications compared to 4,759 units received in 2019, representing an 18% increase (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 and the increase in proposed units in 2020.

In 2019, York Region Council approved three major Secondary Plans in the City of Markham and City of Vaughan. The Secondary Plans established the policy framework for future development and collectively these new community areas will house more than 60,000 people and add thousands of jobs. New development applications are now being received within the approved Secondary Plan areas, which results in an increase in residential inventory. The Region currently has a [housing supply](#) of approximately 26,900 draft approved units and almost 5,000 registered unbuilt units across all nine local municipalities. The Region has a healthy supply of residential inventory undergoing the development review process.

Approximately 67% of new applications received in 2020 were located in the cities of Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan. 85% of proposed residential site plan units and 79% of proposed residential subdivision units were also located in the southern three municipalities which are experiencing a high amount of intensification.

**Table 2**  
**Proposed Residential units received per Mid-Year in 2019-2020**

	2019	2020	Per Cent (%) +/- change
Proposed Subdivision Units <sup>1</sup> (Single/Semi/Townhouse)	1,220	4,801	+294%
Proposed Site Plan units <sup>2</sup>	4,759	5,612	+18%
<b>Total proposed units</b>	<b>5,979</b>	<b>10,413</b>	<b>+74%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Proposed residential units associated with draft plan of subdivision applications (no apartments)

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

## **The number of resubmitted development applications increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic**

York Region received 369 resubmissions of development applications in the first half of 2020. While the number of new applications slowed slightly resulting from operational and procedural adjustments as public and private sectors responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of resubmitted development applications increased by 43% compared to 258 in the first half of 2019. Regional staff continued to work closely with local municipal partners and applicants on commenting and/or approving existing development applications.

## **The number of residential units registered so far in 2020 has increased from the same time last year**

The number of registered plan of subdivision and condominium applications increased from 23 in 2019 to 29 in 2020 (Table 3). The associated residential units increased from 1,689 registered units in 2019 to 2,956 in 2020, representing a 75% increase.

2019 was a low year for residential registrations. There were a number of factors that resulted in a low number of units being registered and low development charge collection. Factors including Region's Development Charge rate increase in 2017 and 2018, 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. The increase in residential units registering in the first half of 2020 indicates a rebound in development activity from a low point in 2019.

**Table 3**

### **Registered Plans of Subdivision and Condominium Mid-Year 2019 and 2020**

	2019	2020
Registered Plans of Subdivision/units	9 (825 units)	14 (1,696 units)
Registered Plans of Condominium/units*	14 (864 units)	15 (1,260 units)
Total	23 (1,689 units)	29 (2,956 units)

\* Includes apartment units

## **The number of site plan applications receiving Regional approval decreased in 2020**

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 the first half of 2020, 75 site plan applications received Regional approval on matters of Regional interest compared to 91 approvals in 2019, representing an 18% decrease (Table 4). The decrease may be caused, in part, by a lower number of applications being received at the local municipality due to temporary COVID-19 operational shutdowns. Additionally, new site plan applications may have been under review and pending resubmission before Regional approval is issued.

**Table 4**  
**Approval of Regional Interest as part of Site Plan Applications Mid-Year 2019-2020**

	2019	2020
Approved Site Plan Applications	91	75

**Engineering approvals remained consistent**

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. From January 1 to June 30, 2020, Regional staff issued approvals for 13 subdivision-related engineering plans and other projects compared to 15 in 2019. 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.

**Regional staff participate on advisory committees and working groups to plan new development areas with local municipal partners**

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 increasing slightly compared to previous mid-year collection

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 the first half of 2020 increased compared to 2019. Revenue from combined planning and engineering application saw an increased spike in 2017 and 2018. The increase was due to a high number of applications being submitted for approval to pay development charges ahead of development charge increases in 2017 and 2018. 2019 experienced fee revenue decrease significantly but was comparable to 2016 pre development charge rate increase revenues. So far in 2020, the fee revenue has seen an increase due to the number of resubmissions being received during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Table 5**

### Fee Revenue for Development Planning and Engineering Mid-Year 2018 to Mid-Year 2020

	2018	2019	2020
Total	\$3,537,610	\$1,379,204	\$1,574,584

### Development Charges revenue of \$102,448,127 represents a 127% increase from mid-year 2019

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 (Attachment 2). From January 1 to June 30, 2020, \$102,448,127 in development charges were collected. This is an increase of 127% over mid-year 2019 (\$45,051,970). The increase is attributed to a significantly low development charge collection year in 2019. Development charge collections tend to sharply increase in the year of an update or an amendment (2017 and 2018) when rates increased, followed by a sharp decrease in the year after (2019). Table 6 below outlines development charges collected from 2018 to 2020.



**Table 6**  
**Development Charges Collected by Mid-Year 2018 to 2020**

2018	2019	2020
\$254,725,780	\$45,051,970	\$102,448,127

## 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 2020 Mid-Year Development Activity report summarizes delegated approvals and new development applications received by York Region in 2020 with a 2019 comparison, using data collected from YorkTrax, to Council for information.

Planning and development activity continued during the COVID-19 pandemic and Regional staff were able to process applications without interruption through the Region’s electronic development application tracking system – YorkTrax. With the onset of the pandemic in March 2020 the Region and local municipalities made adjustments to ensure development activity processes continued, including working remotely, relying on technology to continue communication and holding virtual public meetings. *Planning Act* timelines were suspended through O. Reg. 149/20 on April 14, 2020 but have been lifted as of June 22, 2020. The Local Planning Appeals Tribunal has resumed Hearings and Mediation sessions.

York Region received 235 primary new development applications with a total number of 10,421 proposed residential units received for review, which is a 74% increase from 2019 (5,979). Twenty four Local Official Plan Amendment applications were exempt from Regional approval by staff and two were retained for Regional approval. Seventy five site plan applications received Regional approval on matters of Regional interest, representing an 18% decrease from 2019.

Registration of plans of subdivision and condominium increased by 75% in 2020, with 2,956 registered units. Development charge collection increased by 127% to \$102,448,127 in 2020 (2019 - \$45,051,970). Units cleared for registration and development charge collections tend to sharply decrease in the year after a bylaw update or amendment. This sharp decrease occurred in 2019. Residential registration and development charge collection will gradually increase from this point on as new development applications are reviewed and existing applications move through the development review process to approval and construction.

The total proposed residential units received as part of new development applications (10,421) exceed the number of residential units registered (2,956). In 2019, York Region Council approved three major Secondary Plans in the City of Markham and City of Vaughan. New development applications are now being received within the approved Secondary Plan areas, which results in an increase in residential inventory. This suggests a healthy supply of residential units currently moving through the development review process and will eventually lead to registration.

Regional staff will continue to work closely with local municipal partners to achieve Regional and local policy objectives. In addition, Regional staff ensures approvals are met within the timelines prescribed by the Planning Act.

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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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Attachment (2)  
eDocs# 11241880