

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Planning and Economic Development
April 8, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

2020 Annual 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. The 2020 Development Application Activity Report is attached as Attachment 1.

Key Points:

- Planning and development activity continued during the COVID-19 pandemic and Regional staff were able to process applications through YorkTrax the Region's electronic development application tracking system
- In 2020, the Region received 464 new development applications for review, a 3% increase over the previous year (451)
- There were 5,781 proposed residential units in new draft plan of subdivision applications, a 226% increase compared to 1,776 units in 2019. Proposed residential units in new site plan applications increased 84% to 13,637 in 2020 from 7,428 in 2019
- Development Charge collections increased by 29% to \$279,398,407 in 2020 from \$216,669,308 in 2019. However, 2020 collection is \$83 million below the amount projected in the 2020 budget
- In 2020, York Region Council approved the Township of King (Our King) Official Plan 2019, and Secondary Plans for Block 41 New Community Area in the City of Vaughan and Town of East Gwillimbury's Highway 404 Employment Corridor

- Significant increase in registered units (8,232) will result in construction ready sites and will assist with economic recovery in the near-term
- There is an increased stream of proposed residential units received as part of new OPA applications (44% increase), where a significant majority are associated with intensification areas

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 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. The following information is presented in the Development Activity Summary Report for 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 plans 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 development activity in York Region

York Region, with assistance from our local municipalities, has been collecting and tracking development related information and data received on each application in YorkTrax. Application information on location, nature of proposal, number of units, square footage for non-residential, status, progress and associated applications are captured and development trends can be analyzed for reporting. As detailed data continues to be collected in YorkTrax, staff can more accurately track proposed new development activity in each local municipality and York Region as a whole and assess trends.

4. Analysis

Intake and review of development applications continued though the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020

As Regional staff transitioned to working remotely the intake and review of development applications continued during the COVID-19 pandemic. After an initial interruption at the local level to accept and process development applications due to temporary municipal office closures and transition to working remotely, acceptance and circulation of electronic submissions resumed through online processes. Regional staff, working from home and on the road for inspections, have been able to continue with business through 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 held virtually.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, development activity increased 3% in 2020 compared to 2019

Table 1 identifies the number of new applications received by York Region by type in 2020, compared to the previous two years. 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, and Engineering and Site Plans, for a total of 464 new development applications. These are considered primary applications and in 2020 the number of these applications increased by 3% compared to 451 applications for the same period in 2019. In addition to primary applications, 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 number of these development applications decreased slightly. Approximately 67% of new applications received in 2020 were in the cities of Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan. A breakdown of new development applications by municipality is provided in Attachment 1.

The Region received 75 local Official Plan Amendment applications in 2020, representing a 44% increase compared to 2019. OPAs are required when development proposals do not conform to existing Official Plan policies. A majority of the new OPA's proposed changes to building height, density, built form and urban design. Typically, additional development applications are required after the approval of an OPA, including Zoning By-Law Amendments, Draft Plans of Subdivision and Condominium, Engineering and Site Plan applications. It is anticipated that development activity will remain robust in 2021.

Table 1**Number of New Applications Received by York Region by Type in 2018 to 2020**

| Application Type (New Applications) | Year 2018 | Year 2019 | Year 2020 |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Regional Official Plan Amendments | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Block Plans | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Local Official Plan Amendments | 58 | 52 | 75 |
| Draft Plan of Subdivision | 54 | 31 | 34 |
| Zoning By-Law Amendments | 168 | 129 | 136 |
| Draft Plan of Condominium | 28 | 27 | 26 |
| Engineering Review | 38 | 41 | 36 |
| Site Plans Applications (Minor and Major) 1 | 182 | 168 | 153 |
| Development Application Total | 531 | 451 | 464 |
| Site Plan (No Regional Interest) ² | 109 | 103 | 105 |
| Pre-Consultation Meetings | 472 | 525 | 532 |
| Consent to sever Applications | 174 | 141 | 79 |
| Minor Variances Applications | 630 | 459 | 467 |
| Total Applications Received | 1,916 | 1,679 | 1,647 |

¹ 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.

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

In 2020, 40 Local Official Plan Amendment applications were exempted from Regional approval by the Director of Community Planning and Development Services

The Region received 75 local official plan amendment applications in 2020. Not all applications received a decision within the calendar year and some decisions issued were for amendments from applications received prior to 2020. The Director of Community Planning and Development Services issued decisions on a total of 42 local OPA applications in 2020.

Of these, 40 local OPAs were exempted 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. Approvals of the two routine OPAs were for a residential development in Aurora and a City of Richmond Hill initiated OPA to permit institutional, office, and small-scale retail uses.

Regional Council approved the Township of King Official Plan and two major Secondary Plans

In 2020, York Region Council approved The Township of King (Our King) Official Plan 2019. The new Official Plan directs land use planning for the Township of King Planning Area to 2031 and replaces the Township of King Official Plan, 1970, the Community Plans for King City, Nobleton and Schomberg, and the Hamlet Secondary Plan. Additionally, York Region Council approved Secondary Plans for the Block 41 New Community Area in the City of Vaughan providing for up to 13,000 people and 600 jobs, and the Highway 404 Employment Corridor Secondary Plan in the Town of East Gwillimbury, that will accommodate approximately 4,800 jobs.

The number of proposed residential units increased significantly in 2020

In 2020, the number of proposed residential units received by the Region for review as part of new draft plan of subdivision applications was 5,781. This is significantly higher than 1,776 units received in 2019, representing a 226% increase. There were 13,637 proposed residential units received for review as part of new site plan applications (247 are rental units) compared to 7,428 units received in 2019, representing an 84% increase (Table 2). A majority (81%) of these proposed units were in the southern three municipalities (Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan), which are experiencing a high amount of intensification.

Development activity fluctuates from year to year and is often dependent on several factors contributing to a decrease or increase of proposed residential units. In 2017 and 2018, Development activity sharply increased due to an increase in development charge rates, followed by a sharp decrease in the year after (2019). The Region experienced significantly lower development activity in 2019. The 111% increase in proposed residential units in 2020 indicates an upward development trend, despite the pandemic. The increase in proposed residential units received is a key indicator of strong development activity. The Region has a healthy supply inventory of residential units undergoing the development review process and growth is anticipated to remain strong in 2021.

Table 2
Proposed Residential units received in 2018, 2019 and 2020

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--|--------|-------|--------|
| Proposed Subdivision Units ¹ (Single/Semi/Townhouse) | 9,843 | 1,776 | 5,781 |
| Proposed Site Plan units ² | 14,402 | 7,428 | 13,637 |

¹ Proposed residential units associated with draft plan of subdivision applications (no apartments)

² Proposed residential site plan units. Units include site plan applications with no regional interest.

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

York Region received 794 resubmissions of development applications in 2020. Along with the steady flow of new development applications during the pandemic, the number of resubmitted development applications increased by 28% compared to 621 in 2019. Increased effort was made by public and private partners to advance and complete active development applications throughout the Region during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regional staff worked closely with local municipal partners and applicants commenting on and approving development applications.

Total residential units registered in 2020 increased 278% from 2019

The number of registered plans of subdivision and condominium applications increased from 45 in 2019 to 61 in 2020 (Table 3). Associated residential units increased from 2,180 registered units in 2019 to 8,232 in 2020, representing a 278% increase. This is a key indicator of strong development activity and indicates a rebound in development from a low in 2019.

Table 3
Registered Plans of Subdivision and Condominium in 2018, 2019 and 2020

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Registered Plans of Subdivision/units | 47 (6,344 units) | 21 (1,290 units) | 26 (2,462 units) |
| Registered Plans of Condominium/units* | 38 (3,068 units) | 24 (890 units) | 35 (5,770 units) |
| Total | 85 (9,412 units) | 45 (2,180 units) | 61 (8,232 units) |

* includes apartment units

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

York Region approves Regional engineering matters for site plan applications that impact Regional roadways and infrastructure. Site plan applications are reviewed 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 that contribute towards residential and non-residential inventory.

In 2020, 106 site plan applications received Regional approval on matters of Regional interest compared to 120 approvals in 2019, representing a 12% decrease (Table 4).

Table 4
Approval of Regional Interest as part of Site Plan Applications

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--|------|------|------|
| Approved Site Plan Applications ¹ | 125 | 120 | 106 |

¹ Major and minor site plans with Regional interest e.g. adjacent to a Regional Road or infrastructure, source water protection area. More complex right-of-way works require more comprehensive review.

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 located in the Region's right-of-way. In 2020, Regional staff issued approvals for 25 subdivision-related engineering plans and other projects comparable to 24 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.

York Region reviewed 88 industrial, commercial and institutional applications with a total of 662,709 m² (7,133,340 ft²) of Gross Floor Area

The YorkTrax development tracking system has improved the ability to collect development related data received on each application from the local municipalities. All development application information received by York Region is uploaded into YorkTrax for data capture, analysis and reporting purposes.

In addition to residential units captured, YorkTrax now tracks non-residential related data, including commercial, industrial and institutional Gross Floor Area (GFA). In 2020, York Region received 88 applications with 314,125 m² (3,381,213 ft²) of commercial GFA, 299,478 m² (3,223,554 ft²) of industrial GFA and 49,106 m² (528,573 ft²) of institutional GFA for review as part of new development applications. Non-residential GFA is only collected through new site plan, zoning by-law amendment, minor variance and draft plan of subdivision applications as they are more accurate. Non-residential GFA, proposed in OPA applications are not captured due to their preliminary nature. Future development activity reports will provide trends and analysis on non-residential development applications as more data is collected.

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

Regional 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. Regional staff also review pre-consultation requests to provide comments and submission requirements for future development applications.

5. Financial

2020 application fee revenues increased over 2019

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 2020 increased 15.5% compared to 2019.

Revenue from combined planning and engineering applications spiked 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 rate increases in 2017 and 2018. 2019 fee revenue decreased but was comparable to 2016 pre-development charge rate increase

revenues. The increased revenue in 2020 is a result of the increased number of resubmissions received during the COVID-19 pandemic and new applications received.

Table 5
Fee Revenue for Development Planning and Engineering from 2016 to 2020

| | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|-------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total | \$2,770,104 | \$4,033,469 | \$4,499,231 | \$2,845,515 | \$3,285,566 |

Development Charges revenue of \$279,398,407 represents a 29% increase from 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). In 2020, \$279,398,407 in development charges were collected. This is an increase of 29% compared to 2019 (\$216,669,308). The increase is attributed to a low development charge collection year in 2019. In addition, due in part to the effects of COVID-19, actual collections in 2020 are below the \$362 million projected in the 2020 budget. Development charge collections significantly fluctuate year over year. Collections increased sharply in the year of a Development Charges Bylaw update or amendment (2017 and 2018) when rates increased, followed by a sharp decrease in the following year (2019). Table 6 below outlines development charges collected from 2016 to 2020.

Table 6
Development Charges Collected from 2016 to 2020

| 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| \$338,547,685 | \$376,736,640 | \$431,906,331 | \$216,669,308 | \$279,398,407 |

6. Local Impact

Regional staff work closely with local municipal staff to ensure the timely review of 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 Annual Development Activity report summarizes delegated approvals and new development applications received by York Region in 2020 compared to past years, using data collected from YorkTrax.

Planning and development activity continued during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Region was able to process applications without interruption through the electronic development application tracking system – YorkTrax. With the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, the Region and local municipalities adjusted to ensure development activity processes continued, including working remotely, relying on technology to continue communication, and holding virtual public meetings.

Despite the pandemic, overall development activity increased 3% compared to 2019. York Region received 464 primary new development applications for review with a total number of 19,418 proposed residential units (247 are rental units), a 111% increase from 2019 (9,204). Forty local Official Plan Amendment applications were exempt from Regional approval and two were retained for Regional approval. There were 106 site plan applications that received Regional approval on matters of Regional interest, representing a 12% decrease from 2019.

Regional Council approved the Township of King (Our King) Official Plan 2019 and two major secondary plans, in the City of Vaughan (Block 41 New Community Area) and Township of East Gwillimbury (Highway 404 Employment Corridor), that will accommodate additional residential and employment growth.

Registration of plans of subdivision and condominium increased by 278% in 2020, with 8,232 registered units. Development charge collection increased by 29% to \$279,398,407 in 2020 (2019 - \$216,669,308).

The 111% increase in proposed residential units indicates an upward development trend. The Region has a healthy supply of residential inventory in the development review process and trends indicate that growth within the Region is anticipated to continue in 2021. The Region received 88 applications with over 7 million ft² (662,709 m²) of commercial, industrial, and institutional gross floor area as part of new developments, which will assist in supporting the Region's economy. York Region can accommodate an estimated 46,000 new residents and 14,000 new jobs based on the residential units and non-residential GFA received in 2020.

Regional staff will continue to work closely with local municipal partners to achieve Regional and local policy objectives. Staff endeavor to meet Planning Act development application review timeframes to enable development to be shovel ready to help the economy recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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.



Recommended by:

Paul Freeman, MCIP, RPP
Chief Planner



Dino Basso
Commissioner of Corporate Services



Approved for Submission:

Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

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Attachments (2)
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