

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Planning and Economic Development
June 10, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

Regional Official Plan Update Policy Directions Report

1. Recommendations

1. Council receive the preliminary policy directions summarized in this report and further described in Attachment 1 to support development of draft policies that will be presented to Council as part of the draft Regional Official Plan regarding:
 - a) Proposed Mapping
 - b) Phasing of Urban Expansion
 - c) Housing
2. Council receive the draft Regional Structure Maps illustrated in Attachment 2 for continued consultation as part of the Regional Official Plan Update.
3. The Regional Clerk forward this report and Attachments to the Clerks of the local municipalities, and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

2. Summary

This report focuses on a summary of preliminary policy directions for several Regional Official Plan (ROP) policy areas, mapping updates and an update on continued engagement for the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR).

Key Points:

- This report provides recommended direction on the following ROP policy areas:
 1. Proposed Mapping
 2. Phasing of Urban Expansion
 3. Housing

- Stronger phasing policies for growth over the 30-year planning horizon in the Regional Official Plan necessary for supporting financial sustainability and the logical sequencing of growth
- A Region-wide purpose-built rental housing target of 1,000 units per year distributed between local municipalities proportionate to projected local municipal population
- Online engagement has been effective during the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue in line with Public Health measures
- Indigenous engagement for the MCR is being coordinated with Infrastructure Masterplan updates
- Following ongoing stakeholder and public consultation on the policy directions presented in this report, a draft Regional Official Plan containing updated policies is targeted to be presented to Council in Q4 2021

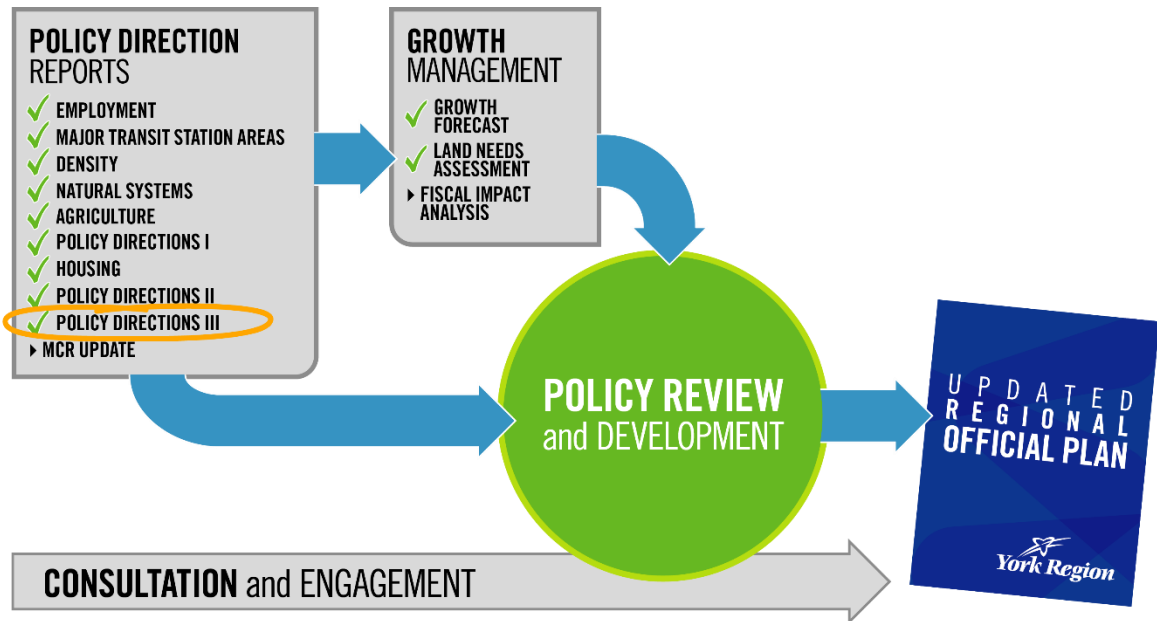
3. Background

Policy directions outlined in this report support development of a draft Regional Official Plan

Significant updates to Provincial plans and policies have been made since adoption of the ROP in 2010. To conform with these updates and new Provincial direction, York Region is required to update the ROP through an MCR by July 2022. Updated Provincial plans direct York Region to support and plan for the highest share of growth in Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) by 2051, accounting for 22% of GTHA population growth and 25% of employment growth. York Region's phased and agile approach to accommodate this growth was introduced in the [Proposed 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment report](#).

This report provides updates and proposed policy directions on several policy areas in a series of Regional Official Plan Update Policy Direction Reports that support development of an updated draft ROP (Figure 1). Draft policies are being developed and an updated draft ROP is anticipated to be presented to Council in Q4 2021.

Figure 1
Municipal Comprehensive Review Components



This report builds on directions presented through past direction reports to Council

To support planning for growth and updating the ROP, a series of background and direction reports for several topic areas have been presented to the Council, including:

- [Planning for Employment Background Report](#) (May 2019)
- [Planning for Agriculture Background Report](#) (June 2019)
- [Planning for Density in New Communities](#) (June 2020)
- [Natural Systems Planning Background Report](#) (June 2020)
- [Major Transit Station Areas Endorsement Report](#) (September 2020)
- [Proposed Employment Area Mapping and Employment Conversions](#) (October 2020)
- [Regional Official Plan Update Policy Directions Report I](#) (December 2020)
- [Regional Official Plan Update Housing Challenges and Opportunit](#) (January 2021)
- [Proposed 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment](#) (March 2021)
- [Regional Official Plan Update Policy Directions Report II](#) (March 2021)

Policy directions in this report are categorized under the following thematic areas:

1. Proposed Mapping
2. Phasing of Urban Expansion
3. Housing

Proposed policy directions summarized in this report build on, but do not reiterate, past directions previously presented to Council. Attachment 1 provides details of updates to Provincial plans and considerations for updated ROP policies.

Public consultation and stakeholder engagement for the Municipal Comprehensive Review has continued virtually during COVID-19

Public consultation is an integral component of the MCR process. Partnerships developed between the Region, the public, and other stakeholders inform ROP policy development. Since the [Update on Public Consultations for the Municipal Comprehensive Review](#) presented to Council in October 2019, technical consultation and public engagement have been undertaken to gather input. Examples include an in-person open house for Major Transit Station areas (MTSA), employment conversion requests meetings with landowners, Local Municipal Working Group sessions and meetings with the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD). Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, consultation has continued virtually and online engagement such as online public information centres (PIC) for employment conversions and agricultural and natural heritage systems planning have been held to reach stakeholders.

4. Analysis

POLICY DIRECTIONS

Regional Official Plan Maps and Figures will be updated to support policies

Maps and figures support the visualization and interpretation of policies in the ROP. Updated maps reflect policy directions previously presented to Council on land use planning, growth management and protection of environmental areas and the agricultural system over the 30-year planning horizon. To align with an updated policy framework in the draft ROP, updated mapping will be based on the following:

- Simplify and relocate mapping content while eliminating duplicative and redundant information to improve overall readability
- Refine and update existing boundaries, delineations, and land use designations to conform with Provincial direction
- Add new maps including Land Use designations, Urban System, and Provincial Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt Plan designations to the Regional Structure mapping series to provide additional clarity on the Regional Structure

- Add an additional Cycling Infrastructure map and an Environmentally Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas map

This report includes the draft Regional Structure mapping series (Attachment 2). For the purposes of consultation, the remaining maps are being updated and will be available as preliminary drafts on York.ca prior to release of the draft updated ROP.

Updated Regional Structure mapping will be simplified and restructured to reflect the proposed policy framework

To align with updated Regional Structure policy directions presented to Council in [December 2020](#), Regional Structure mapping will be refined and enhanced. As a result, a series of maps to display the Regional Structure, as illustrated in Attachment 2, are proposed as follows:

- Map 1 to display the foundational framework for the Regional Structure including the Urban System, Greenlands System, and Agricultural System
- Map 1A to identify land use designations such as Community Area, Employment Area, and Agricultural and Rural area in York Region
- Map 1B to show the land use overlays within Settlement Areas such as the Built-Up Area, the designated greenfield area and MTSAs
- Map 1C to display the Provincial Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan designations in the Region.

Additional phasing policies in the Regional Official Plan will support financial sustainability

The amount of urban expansion to accommodate the population and employment growth to achieve the Region’s 2051 forecast is substantial. As identified in the [Proposed 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment report](#), 80% (3,400 ha) of the Region’s Whitebelt lands is proposed to be added to the urban area as a result of the provincial land needs assessment methodology. Ensuring growth in these new areas materializes in a logical and phased manner will be critical to maintain financial sustainability and deliver complete communities for new residents with timely provision of services such as schools and community centres, roads, transit, and water and wastewater infrastructure. To manage this amount of growth over a 30-year period and across diverse geographies of the Region, strong phasing policies in both Regional and local municipal official plans are required.

At the Regional scale, a policy framework and associated mapping are being considered which require key Regional conditions to be met before secondary plans and development applications are considered for approval in urban expansion areas. Regional conditions being considered include:

- Regional water and wastewater infrastructure being available – preliminary timing for each urban expansion area would be identified through infrastructure Master Plans

and would be re-assessed each year through the Capital Plan and budget process in line with the principles of the Region's Fiscal Strategy and affordable growth

- Region's fiscal sustainability – infrastructure delivery to support growth in urban expansion areas be timed to manage debt
- Region achieving its average 50% intensification target on an annual basis
- Region on track to achieve a specific minimum population target (potentially 1.4 to 1.5 million people)

Proposed ROP policies will also require local municipalities to include policies in their official plans and secondary plans that build on Regional phasing criteria for logical phasing of community development.

Enhanced phasing requirements for local municipalities will promote development of complete communities without delaying the planning process

Phasing policy considerations at the local municipal scale ensure communities are developed in a logical and complete manner. High-level concept plans, or an alternative comprehensive growth management study should be completed for the entire urban expansion area in a local municipality that would identify more detailed phasing of development within new community areas, to the satisfaction of the Region, based on:

- Logical extensions to the existing urban area and initial expansion areas
- Logical and orderly progression of development
- Regional and local municipal infrastructure master plans that illustrate how proposed phasing will be supported from an infrastructure perspective
- Coordination with adjacent municipalities in cases where Regional and/or local infrastructure is shared

To avoid delays in the planning process, completion of high-level concept plans will be encouraged. It is proposed that these plans include lands identified as 'Future Urban' as shown on Map 1B in Attachment 2, although development will not be permitted to proceed until these areas are brought into the urban boundary through a MCR. Once Regional conditions are met, local municipalities can submit secondary plans and development applications based on the phasing strategy outlined in the high-level concept plan.

Building on direction in the ROP 2010, criteria for secondary plan approval are also being reviewed to ensure development of complete communities. Additional potential criteria include, but are not limited to:

- Logical progression of growth based on local infrastructure and local municipal services

- Sufficient Regional servicing capacity assigned to the municipality
- A limit to the number of secondary plans/blocks being approved for development at any given time
- A diverse range and mix of housing and community services
- A ratio of employment growth relative to population

A new Region-wide target for purpose-built rental housing will assist local municipal conformity and implementation

Updated Provincial plans require municipalities to establish, for the first time, a rental housing target in Regional official plans. The proposed Region-wide target for purpose-built rental housing is 1,000 new units per year. This target is based on the rental and affordability requirements identified in the [Regional Official Plan Update Housing Challenges and Opportunities](#) and [Proposed 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment](#) reports and verified by Watson Economists and Associates Ltd. through the Foundational Housing Analysis work undertaken. It is proposed that this Region-wide target be distributed to local municipalities to assist with local municipal conformity and implementation. Purpose-built housing accounts for approximately 40% of total rental housing unit target to 2051. Proposed minimum targets are proposed to be proportionate to forecasted population and are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1
Local Municipal Purpose-Built Rental Unit Targets by 10-Year Period*

Municipality	2021 to 2031	2031 to 2041	2041 to 2051	2021 to 2051 Total Unit Target
Aurora	500	250	250	1,000
East Gwillimbury	750	750	750	2,250
Georgina	250	250	250	750
King	250	250	250	750
Markham	3,000	3,250	3,750	10,000
Newmarket	500	250	250	1,000
Richmond Hill	1,500	1,250	1,250	4,000
Vaughan	2,750	3,250	2,500	8,000
Whitchurch- Stouffville	500	500	750	1,750
York Region	10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000

Source: York Region's Planning and Economic Development Branch

*Numbers presented in this table show minimum purpose-built rental units per municipality.

In addition, as outlined in Attachment 1, the definition of “affordable” for rental and ownership housing is proposed to be revisited. This is in line with previous Council direction through the establishment and update of the [York Region Affordable Housing Measuring and Monitoring Guidelines](#).

ENGAGEMENT TO SUPPORT ROP UPDATE

Online engagement has been an effective method of consultation during the COVID-19 pandemic

The Province established a deadline of July 1, 2022 for upper- and single-tier municipalities to update their official plans through an MCR. This deadline was further confirmed by a letter on April 27, 2021 from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Attachment 4). Public consultation and stakeholder engagement are key components of the ROP update and inform the policy development process. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and due to Public Health Measures put in place in early 2020, in-person public events and meetings were restricted. As a result, consultation shifted to online and other engagement methods including mailouts, emails, and phone calls to reach stakeholders. Virtual public information sessions have been held for employment area mapping and conversions and for a joint session on the natural heritage system and agricultural system. Similarly, other GTHA municipalities have continued their planning-related public engagements through online platforms.

Recordings of online open houses have been posted for public viewing and can be viewed on demand by users for more information before feedback is gathered. Based on the topic and target audience, various online tools have been used to effectively interact and gather input. These tools generally offer mobile compatibility that can reach a broad range of audience and demographic groups that may not typically attend in-person public meetings. Alternative formats are available for online content, upon request.

Participation through online engagement has been greater than past in-person events

Online consultation has allowed for continued public engagement during the MCR process that will lead to a draft ROP before Council in Q4 2021. During the MCR process, online engagement campaigns were held that included over 60 participants at each event. These campaigns included live or pre-recorded webinars and interactive mapping tools and had higher participation turnout given the ease for participants to access the events remotely. Information on previous online engagements is available on york.ca/haveyoursay. A summary of public and stakeholder consultation undertaken through the MCR since October 2019 can be found in Attachment 3.

Upcoming engagements in 2021 prior to the release of a draft updated ROP include a social media campaign on policy directions and an online engagement for housing and growth management. As the year progresses, opportunities to hold in-person events in addition to virtual engagement will be evaluated in alignment with Public Health restrictions in the Region.

Engagement with Indigenous Communities informs the MCR and is coordinated with Master Servicing Plan updates

Relationships with Indigenous Communities continue to be built through the MCR process. Relationship building is intended to expand on previous efforts including engagements undertaken as part of the Archaeological Management Plan (ROPA 6) and joint consultation in 2015 for the MCR and Markham's Future Urban Area planning. Over the course of the MCR, three phases of engagement have been planned to share information throughout the ROP policy development and provide opportunities to listen and gather feedback from Indigenous communities.

Indigenous community engagement for the MCR is being coordinated with the Water and Wastewater Plan and Transportation Master Plan updates. Summary of proposed direction for the ROP key policy areas including Growth Management, Indigenous Engagement, Cultural Heritage, Natural Environment, Agricultural and Rural areas, Climate Change, Housing, Diversity and Inclusion has been shared with Indigenous Communities for their comments and feedback. To date, staff have met with four communities to introduce the MCR and Master Plan updates, provide information, actively listen, and increase awareness on policy areas of interest. Feedback will inform updates to the ROP.

Extensive consultation will follow release of the draft Regional Official Plan

Following presentation of the updated draft ROP to Council, a comprehensive consultation process to inform the public and gather feedback from stakeholders will be undertaken. A consultation plan is being developed that is anticipated to include engagement through the York Region website, online campaigns with interactive tools, and social media. The proposed consultation methods may include:

- Virtual open houses
- Interactive mapping
- Surveys
- Videos
- Presentations at York Region Planning Advisory Committee and Agriculture and Agri-food Advisory Committee meetings
- Media releases
- Online news story
- York Region Matters newsletter

Interested stakeholders will be notified of these events through social media and the MCR email distribution list. The number of interested individuals on this list has doubled since October 2019. Consultation with targeted groups including the Region's diverse ethnic

communities, youth and newcomers will be explored to facilitate feedback from under-represented groups.

Statutory requirements under the *Planning Act* require the draft ROP be made available to the public, and that at least one open house and a statutory public meeting be held. Written submissions of feedback will continue to be accepted and there will be an opportunity for public input at the statutory public meeting. Detailed legislated requirements will be outlined in the staff report that will accompany the draft updated ROP.

5. Financial

To support growth to 2051, an integrated growth management approach to land use planning and infrastructure delivery is required to manage the capital plan in line with the objectives of the Council approved Fiscal Strategy. To meet population and employment forecasts, timely delivery of growth-related servicing is required. Implications are explored in the [Proposed 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment](#). Developing policies that manage growth in a fiscally sustainable way, including aligning growth with investment in infrastructure, is of paramount importance to maintain the long-term fiscal health of York Region. The policy development process, public consultation and stakeholder engagements being undertaken are within the MCR budget.

6. Local Impact

Local municipalities are key partners in updating and implementing the ROP. Local staff provide expertise and experiential knowledge from implementing ROP policies in their local municipal contexts. Local staff have been engaged on the topic areas presented in this report over the course of the MCR to gather ongoing input and feedback that inform the ROP policy review and update process. Regional staff will continue to work closely with local municipal staff to develop draft policies to be presented to Council in Q4 2021.

7. Conclusion

To conform with updated Provincial plans and policies, ROP policy and mapping updates are required. This omnibus report summarizes policy and mapping directions, further described in Attachments 1, which build on the basis for further consultation as policy development of a draft ROP progresses. Despite the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic conditions, effective engagement will continue with the public, Indigenous communities, and stakeholders throughout the ROP update process and following the release of a draft updated ROP.

For more information on this report, please contact Sandra Malcic, Director, Long Range Planning at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75724. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

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Attachments (4)
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