

# **The Regional Municipality of York**

Committee of the Whole  
Planning and Economic Development  
November 11, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

## **Draft York Region Official Plan**

### **1. Recommendations**

1. Council receive the draft York Region Official Plan (Attachment 1) for the purposes of ongoing public engagement and review.
2. Council's decision on the Forecast and Land Needs Assessment as considered on October 21, 2021 be reflected in a revised draft Regional Official Plan to be presented to Council November 25 2021; specifically including revisions to Table 1, Table 6 and applicable maps to implement Council's direction for the Phased 50-55% Intensification scenario, additional urban expansion in East Gwillimbury, shift of growth from King Township whitebelt growth to existing settlement areas, shift of Whitchurch-Stouffville whitebelt growth to Stouffville Bethesda Community Area lands and South Gormley Employment Area lands, and reflect the change of Employment Area lands identified south of the Almira Community in Markham to Community Lands.
3. Council direct staff to provide notice to hold an open house and public meeting in accordance with requirements under the Planning Act.
4. The Regional Clerk forward this report and attachments to the Clerks of the local municipalities for comments to be submitted to the Region by March 31, 2022.
5. The Regional Clerk submit this report and attachments to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in accordance with requirements of the Planning Act to provide a copy of the proposed plan 90 days before giving notice of a public meeting.

### **2. Summary**

This report presents a draft York Region Official Plan (ROP) for the purpose of ongoing public engagement and review. It outlines key revisions, policy conformity with Provincial plans, map updates and next steps for public and stakeholder engagement, to inform development of the final draft Official Plan anticipated to be presented to Council for adoption mid-2022 prior to the Provincial deadline of July 1, 2022.

## Key Points:

- This report presents the draft ROP and recommends release for engagement with the public, Indigenous communities, local municipalities, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) and other stakeholders
- The draft ROP outlines the high standards for communities to 2051 including the advancement of complete communities, affordable housing, growth targets, delineation of employment lands and protection of natural and agricultural systems
- The draft ROP has been updated to conform with Provincial policy and mapping, including new Regional requirements for major transit station area delineations, employment area designations and targets for purpose built rental housing
- The draft ROP defines a Regional structure that sets the foundation for future growth areas and protection of natural and agricultural systems and to plan for a population of 2.02 million and 990,000 jobs by 2051
- Prior to consultation, the Draft ROP will be updated to reflect Council's direction on the Land Needs Assessment and Forecast of October 21, 2021
- Public and stakeholder engagement will continue following the release of the draft ROP in alignment with statutory requirements in advance of Council adoption of the draft ROP targeted for mid-2022, followed by submission to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval

## 3. Background

### **York Region has a legislative requirement to update the York Region Official Plan**

The York Region Official Plan guides long-term strategic planning describing how to accommodate future growth and development while meeting the needs of existing residents and businesses working towards the Region's Vision of strong, caring, safe communities. It provides objectives and policies that guide economic, environmental and land-use planning decisions. York Region Council adopted the current [York Region Official Plan 2010 \(YROP-2010\)](#) in 2009.

The Official Plan is reviewed every 5-10 years to align with Provincial plans as required under Section 26 of the Planning Act. The attached draft ROP (Attachment 1) was completed through the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) process, to conform with Provincial policies and Plans and meet the date by which upper and single tier municipalities must have their official plans in conformity with the updated policies in A Place to Grow of July 1, 2022. As part of the MCR process, a series of background and policy direction reports have been presented to Regional Council to support development of the draft ROP and bring it into conformity with Provincial plans as shown in Figure 1. The reports presented to the Council are listed in Attachment 2.

**Figure 1  
Municipal Comprehensive Review Components**

## **MUNICIPAL COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW PROCESS**

### **BACKGROUND REPORTS and COUNCIL TOUCHPOINTS**

Engage Council through MCR related background and technical reports and presentations

### **POLICY WRITING and DEVELOPMENT**

Creation of Draft ROP Policies

### **FINALIZING the DRAFT ROP**

Deliver Alternate Forecast Scenarios to Council - September 2021  
Delivery of Draft ROP to Council - November 2021

### **DRAFT ROP to ADOPTION**

Focus on engagement and consultation from release of Draft ROP in November 2021 to adoption by mid-2022

### **ROP ADOPTION**

Targeted final adoption of ROP by mid-2022



Public engagement is an integral component that supported development of the draft ROP. Staff proactively consulted with the public, local municipalities, Conservation Authorities, Indigenous communities, Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) and other stakeholders to inform development of policies and maximize alignment on key issues. A summary of engagement undertaken through the MCR to date, is outlined in Attachment 3.

### **This Regional Official Plan is the third for York Region since 1994**

York Region adopted its first Official Plan in 1994. In 2010, the Region adopted a new Official Plan which reflected revised Provincial direction as implemented through the 2006 Growth Plan, the 2001 Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the 2004 Greenbelt Plan. This new Official Plan will mark the third Official Plan in York Region’s history.

## **4. Analysis**

### **The proposed draft ROP conforms with Provincial Plans and policies**

Under the Planning Act, the Province is the approval authority for upper-tier Official Plans adopted by a Regional council. The Region is required to update the Official Plan through the MCR process to conform with updated Provincial Plans and be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). Municipalities throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe are required to bring their respective official plans into conformity with the Growth Plan by July 1, 2022. This deadline was further confirmed by a letter dated [April 27, 2021](#) from the Minister

of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Once adopted, the Regional Official Plan is approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, there are no appeals as per the Planning Act.

Since approval of the 2010 ROP, there have been significant updates to Provincial plans and policies, including the Provincial Policy Statement in 2014 and 2020, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe in 2017, 2019 and 2020, Greenbelt Plan in 2017, and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan in 2017 that have been brought to Council through several background and policy direction reports listed in Attachment 2. While the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan (LSPP) was not updated during the time of the other Provincial plans, existing ROP policies that conform to the LSPP were maintained or streamlined with other policies in the draft ROP. Updating the draft ROP to be consistent with the PPS, conform to the latest Provincial policies, mapping, and revised population and employment forecasts are main components of the MCR.

### **Population and employment forecasts to 2051 are the foundation for planning and managing growth and supporting policies in the draft ROP**

York Region is required to plan for Provincial Growth Plan forecasts for a population of 2.02 million and 990,000 jobs in 2051. This represents growth of approximately 800,000 people and 345,000 jobs between 2021 and 2051. As outlined in the [September 2021](#) Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios in Response to Consultation report, population and employment forecasts were developed for all nine local municipalities by applying an integrated and comprehensive approach linking land use planning with infrastructure and financial planning.

At the time of writing this report and the draft ROP in Attachment 1, Council direction on a growth forecast had not been received. The draft ROP reflects the [March 2021](#) forecast released for consultation, and will be updated to reflect Council's direction on the [September 2021](#) forecast scenarios report.

## **KEY ELEMENTS OF THE DRAFT ROP**

### **Structural and design updates to the draft ROP provide clarity for implementation**

Staff applied the objectives of further defining the Regional structure, improving implementation and conformity to Provincial plans when developing the updated draft ROP. The draft ROP was restructured to recognize the planning vision of York Region and moves from higher level, Region-wide policies to more specific policy direction through the overall document and within each chapter. The organization of the Plan allows for easier application of policies and focuses content to provide improved policy clarity to aid in implementation. The draft ROP retains a strong approach to protection and enhancement of agricultural and natural environment systems and reinforces the importance of sustainably managing growth and developing complete communities through implementation of the Regional structure. The Plan has been reduced by one chapter from the 2010 version, as the previous Chapter 4 (Economic Vitality) has sections redistributed to various chapters in the draft Plan.

The draft Regional Official Plan contains 7 chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction and Purpose
- Chapter 2: The Foundation for Complete Communities
- Chapter 3: A Sustainable Natural Environment
- Chapter 4: An Urbanizing Region
- Chapter 5: Supporting the Agricultural System
- Chapter 6: Servicing Our Communities
- Chapter 7: Implementation of the Official Plan

The draft Plan incorporates a digital format including an interactive map for each schedule, pop-up definitions for italicized words and online links to other relevant content. Moving to a digital format modernizes the Plan for users who prefer an online review, however, the format still allows for hard copy usage for all components of the Plan including policies, map schedules and definitions.

### **Updated Regional structure delineates areas for growth and protection through new map schedules**

The Regional structure provides the foundational framework for how and where population and employment growth is accommodated in the Region, while protecting valuable agricultural and natural systems. The Regional structure also ensures infrastructure plans support growth and complete communities and gives direction on future urban areas. New Provincial requirements also necessitated a clearly outlined Regional structure.

Key updates to the Regional structure framework include the designation of Employment Areas, the delineation of boundaries and identification of minimum density targets for major transit station areas (MTSAs), and the incorporation of updated agricultural system and natural systems mapping.

Building on the Regional structure policy framework in the 2010 ROP, policies were refined and enhanced along with updated mapping. A series of maps that display the elements of the Regional structure is included in the draft ROP:

- Map 1 outlines the foundational framework for the Regional structure including the Urban System, Greenlands System, and Agricultural System
- Map 1A identifies land use designations such as Community Areas, Employment Areas, Agricultural and Rural areas

- Map 1B shows land use overlays within the Urban System such as the Built-Up Area, the designated greenfield area (DGA) and MTSAAs
- Map 1C outlines the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Greenbelt designations

### **Employment area designations are now required at the Regional level to protect lands for economic development**

Employment areas play an important long-term economic role in the Region, supporting the Regional structure and broader Regional and Provincial economy. While formerly only designated at the local municipal level, designation of Regional employment lands is now required in the ROP.

Key updates include the establishment of an Employment Area designation on Map 1A and minimum density targets for each employment area zone, as shown in the draft ROP Appendix 1. New policies relating to land use permissions in employment areas have been introduced and existing policies were enhanced to provide greater long-term protection of employment lands. The updated employment policy framework provides flexibility for local municipalities to develop more detailed employment policies based on area-specific context, to permit a broader mix of employment uses and to differentiate between core and supporting employment areas in their local official plans.

### **Transit supportive communities will be shaped by the new Provincial requirement of MTSA delineations and density targets**

The draft ROP introduces a new MTSA framework to support the development of transit-supportive communities around higher-order transit stations and to strengthen the Region's planned urban structure.

After an extensive consultation process with local municipal staff, the public and stakeholders, a total of 78 MTSAAs have been identified. Boundary delineations and minimum density targets for MTSAAs are provided in Appendix 2 of the draft ROP. Of the 78 MTSAAs identified in the draft ROP, 72 were endorsed by Regional Council in [September 2020](#). An additional six conceptual MTSAAs have been included in the draft ROP in the City of Vaughan. These MTSAAs and others proposed along the Yonge North Subway Extension or GO lines with station locations not yet confirmed, will require finalization through a subsequent Regional official plan amendment once station locations are finalized.

A comprehensive set of policies, mapping and density targets are included to help guide local municipalities on planning for MTSAAs. Local official plans will provide more detailed policies to guide the appropriate land uses, building heights, built form, public realm, and other planning considerations to achieve the overall minimum density target for each MTSA outlined in the draft ROP.

## **Housing policies help address affordability by including purpose built rental targets, inclusionary zoning provisions, and partnerships with stakeholders**

Housing affordability continues to be a major challenge in York Region. In recent years, housing affordability and growth targets set out in the 2010 ROP have not been met, impacting Regional efforts to achieve the building of complete communities. To address this challenge, housing related policies in the draft ROP were refined and updated building upon the 2010 ROP framework.

Major policy updates include introducing a Region-wide target for purpose-built rental housing, updating the minimum residential land supply requirement, and incorporating updated secondary suite parameters. Existing policies are strengthened to identify housing gaps and mechanisms to address housing needs and to encourage approaches to increase affordable housing options throughout the Region. New policies were also introduced to address the coordination and delivery of affordable and purpose-built rental housing in a timely manner and to encourage implementation of inclusionary zoning in partnership with local municipalities. Policies promoting collaboration among local municipalities, the development industry and other partners have been included in the draft ROP to support increased housing options, including affordable options. Definitions related to housing, including affordable housing, have been reviewed and updated to reflect Provincial requirements.

Future housing work will incorporate a partnership approach to identify tactics to increase housing options. Staff are exploring targeted incentives and programs post MCR through the Affordable Housing Task Force and the York Region/Local Municipal Housing Working Group.

## **The draft ROP contains strengthened policies on infrastructure alignment and phasing of future communities to support financial sustainability**

Policies throughout the draft ROP were updated to highlight the importance of integrated land use, infrastructure, and financial planning. Key updates include refining the existing policy framework to ensure that infrastructure is built in an integrated manner, emphasizing the need for an agile and adaptive approach to growth management and strong phasing policies for urban expansion areas.

Aligned with phasing policies, lands not required for growth to 2051 have been identified as Future Urban Areas, as shown on Map 1B, to be transparent regarding the long-term need for future development in the Region and to allow for comprehensive planning beyond urban expansion areas. These updates help maintain financial sustainability by establishing stronger coordination with infrastructure Master Plans while providing for stronger alignment between planned population and employment growth and vital infrastructure to service the growth.

## **Servicing policies were enhanced to support implementation of the Region's Servicing Master Plans**

Existing policies were refined to support implementation of the Region's Transportation Master Plan (TMP) and Water and Wastewater Master Plan (WWMP). This includes strengthening existing transportation policies to ensure that an interconnected system of mobility with multiple transportation options can meet current and future needs of residents and businesses in the Region. The existing policy framework for water and wastewater servicing has also been enhanced to better support servicing and growth requirements set out in the draft ROP. Other servicing policy areas, including source water protection, private communal servicing, waste management and stormwater management were also updated to reflect Provincial requirements, approved source water protection plans and Regional guidelines, plans and strategies.

## **The draft ROP builds on the existing comprehensive Regional Greenlands system framework**

Natural systems planning includes both the natural heritage and water resource system. Reorganized natural systems policies focus on conformity while continuing to strengthen and connect the Regional Greenlands system through enhancement and restoration policies. New and updated data from conservation authority partners and the Province have been used to update and add new mapping to conform to Provincial direction, including new Provincial Growth Plan Natural Heritage System mapping.

Other key updates to natural systems include an enhanced approach to the identification and mapping of water resource systems, updated watershed and natural hazards policies, updated woodlands targets and streamlining and integrating existing policies to align with Provincial directives. The policy framework continues its flexible and collaborative approach allowing for further refinement to natural features mapping within settlement areas through the local municipal planning process and supporting environmental studies.

## **Draft ROP policies protect agricultural and rural areas and support the agricultural industry and agri-food sector in the Region**

The draft ROP continues to protect the agricultural and rural land base and supports the agricultural industry and agri-food sector by implementing a systems approach.

Through the MCR, updated Provincial agricultural mapping was refined to better reflect Regional and local municipal context in accordance with Provincial implementation procedures. Agricultural system mapping shown on Map 1 and Map 1A represent refinements to the Provincial mapping informed by input from an agricultural consultant, local municipalities, the Agriculture and Agri-Food Committee, stakeholders, members of the public and impacted landowners.

Updated terminology and land use permissions have been introduced to support on-farm diversified and agricultural-related uses and criteria for new and existing non-agricultural



uses in agricultural areas. Strengthened agri-food network policies have been included in the draft ROP to align with Provincial policy changes.

### **Final designation and policy framework for Greenbelt river valley lands extending through urbanizing areas will be informed by the Provincial decision on ROPA 7**

The draft ROP includes a preliminary designation and policy framework for narrow, linear river valleys designated Protected Countryside in the Greenbelt, commonly known as Greenbelt Fingers, which extend through the urbanizing and proposed new community areas in the Cities of Vaughan and Markham. The draft ROP proposes a rural designation which limits permitted uses to:

- Passive recreational uses
- Environmental management
- Restoration and enhancement
- Compatible urban agriculture
- Municipal parks in accordance with the Greenbelt Plan and local municipal secondary plans on the basis of appropriate technical studies and natural systems planning

Portions of these lands are subject to a privately initiated proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment, ROPA 7, which was considered by Council in [October 2021](#). ROPA 7 as adopted by Regional Council results in a rural designation and permissions that include active park and recreational uses. The draft ROP reflects the intent of direction received from Council on ROPA 7 for the extent of narrow, linear river valleys land designated Protected Countryside in the Greenbelt identified in ROPA 7 and similar rural lands within the urban boundary proposed to 2051.

### **Draft ROP maps and figures were streamlined and updated with current data**

Maps, figures, and appendices support interpretation and implementation of the policy framework in the draft ROP. Existing ROP maps and figures have been updated to conform with provincial plans and to reflect policy directions previously presented to Council.

New and updated spatial data from local municipalities, conservation authorities, the Province and within the Region have been used to update draft ROP map schedules. Key updates and enhancements to draft ROP maps include boundary refinements and changes to the urban system, agricultural system, natural heritage system, environmental features, mineral aggregate resource areas, cycling network, street network, and transit network.

New maps and features have also been introduced. Additional features added to existing maps include Employment Area designations, Hamlet delineations, and key hydrologic areas within the Region. A total of seven new maps have been added including Land Use Designations, Urban System, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Greenbelt Plan Designation, Regional Trail Network, Regional Cycling Network, Significant Groundwater

Recharge Areas and Recharge Management Areas, Significant Surface Water Contribution Areas & Ecologically Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas. Three new technical appendices have been added to display the Employment Area Zones with respective minimum density targets, detailed MTSA boundaries and urban growth centre delineations. To eliminate redundancies and duplication, five maps and figures from the 2010 ROP have been streamlined into other maps.

Staff continue to work with local municipalities and other partners to update and enhance the information displayed on the draft ROP map schedules and appendices. Attachment 4 provides updates and rationale for changes of the draft ROP map schedules and appendices in detail.

### **Site-specific requests were evaluated to determine Regional and local impacts**

Site-specific submissions allow landowners to request a review of land use designations of their property as identified in the ROP. Over 150 site specific submissions were received since 2017. Most site-specific requests relating to employment land conversions, inclusion in the urban boundary, agricultural and rural designations, and major transit station area delineations were addressed in reports brought to Council in 2020 and 2021. Attachment 5 outlines site-specific requests that will be considered through further engagement of the draft ROP.

Site specific requests were analyzed to review current Regional land use designations, applicable Provincial Plan policies and context of the site and surrounding areas to determine local, Regional and Provincial impacts. Where applicable, evaluations of site-specific requests included detailed criteria such as employment conversion criteria, major transit station area delineation process, land needs assessment methodology and Provincial implementation guidelines. Site specific requests with land use designations within the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Greenbelt Plan are under Provincial jurisdiction and were not considered as part of the MCR.

Landowners who made submissions on employment land conversions, urban or agricultural designations and major transit station area delineations were notified of staff's recommendation for their site-specific request through meetings, phone calls or email notifications and Council reports. Remaining site-specific requests related to agriculture and other topic areas will be evaluated during the consultation phase of the draft ROP.

## **PROACTIVE AND CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT**

### **Innovative options for engagement have reached diverse audiences and increased public participation rates**

Engagement is an integral component of the MCR process and informs draft ROP policy development. Technical, Indigenous, stakeholder and public engagement has continued since staff reported to Council in [June 2021](#). A detailed review of public, Indigenous, and stakeholder engagement throughout the MCR is outlined in Attachment 3.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, engagement has continued virtually. While planning and implementing online content, staff have adapted online tactics to engage different audiences. Live online sessions were held, and recordings were posted on the MCR webpage for viewing. The innovative use of interactive maps for site-specific engagement was efficient for evaluating feedback. Participation through online engagement has been greater than past in-person events given the ease for participants to access events remotely and at a time that works for them.

### **Extensive engagement will follow release of the draft ROP aligned with statutory requirements**

Following presentation of the draft ROP to Council, a comprehensive engagement process to inform and gather feedback from the public, Indigenous communities and stakeholders will be undertaken. Opportunities to hold in-person events in addition to virtual engagement will be evaluated with Public Health COVID-19 recommendations in York Region, however virtual engagement will continue given greater levels of participation experienced.

Statutory requirements under the Planning Act require the draft ROP be made available to the public, and the following meetings be held:

- Statutory open house to allow the public to review and ask questions about the draft ROP
- Statutory public meeting to allow the public to make representations in respect to the draft ROP. This meeting will be held during Committee of the Whole or a Special Meeting of Council

Prescribed timelines will be followed; they include the 90-day Provincial review period for the draft ROP and notification of the statutory open house and public meeting. Throughout the process, written submissions of feedback will be accepted and an opportunity for public input will be provided at the statutory public meeting through delegations.

Attachment 6 displays the timeline for engagement milestones between the draft ROP release and proposed adoption. Proactive feedback will be the emphasis and considered to potentially revise the draft ROP prior to the statutory open house and public meeting. Staff will also receive comments during the statutory open house and public meeting.

### **Vision serves as a guiding document for the Regional Official Plan**

Vision is the Region's commitment to the community, outlining the quality of life our residents envision now for the future. The Corporate Strategic Plan is a four-year road map to achieve Council's Vision through specific, measurable, achievable and time-based objectives and action plans framed around four Community Result Areas:

- Economic Vitality
- Healthy Communities

- Sustainable Environment
- Good Government

Vision serves as a guiding document for the Region's legislated plans such as the ROP. The draft ROP update aligns with Council's Vision of strong, caring, safe communities and works to advance each of the Community Result Areas.

## **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 aligning with the objectives of the Council approved Fiscal Strategy. To meet population and employment forecasts, timely delivery of growth-related servicing is required. The population and employment forecasts identified will be used to inform the Development Charges By-law update in 2022. The draft ROP policies are intended to manage growth in a fiscally sustainable way, aligning growth with investment in infrastructure and maintain the long-term fiscal health of York Region.

The policy development process, public consultation and stakeholder engagements being undertaken are within the Planning and Economic Development budget.

## **6. Local Impact**

Local municipalities are key partners in updating and implementing the ROP by providing expertise and knowledge implementing ROP policies in their local municipal context. A proactive approach has been taken involving local municipal partners in the development and review of proposed policy directions. It was important to work closely and regularly with local municipalities with the goal of creating alignment with policy direction, having regard for implementation of Regional policies at the local level and promoting collaboration across jurisdictions.

Many local municipalities are in the process of updating their local official plans to reflect the policies in the draft ROP generated through the Regional MCR once approved. Under the Planning Act, local municipal official plans are required to be updated to conform to the Regional Official Plan within one year of its approval.

Staff will continue to work with local municipal staff throughout the MCR process from draft to final adoption of the ROP, particularly in response to areas of new Regional jurisdiction. Receiving local municipal Council comments on the draft ROP by March 31, 2022 is required to consider and address prior to presenting an updated draft to Council for adoption before the July 1, 2022 Provincial deadline.

## 7. Conclusion

The draft ROP introduces updated policies and mapping required to conform to Provincial plans and policies. Staff propose the draft ROP be forwarded to local municipalities for comment by March 31, 2022 and submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to begin the statutory Provincial 90-day review period.

A series of background and direction reports presented to Council throughout the MCR process have supported the development and release of the draft ROP. Staff will continue to engage with the public, local municipalities, Indigenous communities, and stakeholders throughout the engagement process.

Extensive engagement including statutory consultation requirements will follow release of the draft ROP until final adoption of the Plan targeted by mid-2022. Staff will report back to Council on feedback received and changes recommended to the draft ROP at the adoption stage of the MCR.

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For more information on this report, please contact Sandra Malcic, Director, Long Range Planning at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75274. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

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Attachments (6)  
13285341