



YORK REGION **DRAFT** OFFICIAL PLAN
ENGAGEMENT
S U M M A R Y

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Public Engagement Introduction

Have
Your Say

The purpose of public engagement for the draft York Region Official Plan is to create awareness, educate and encourage participation from York Region residents and stakeholders on the release and feedback opportunities of the Region Official Plan from draft to adoption. The public engagement goals for the draft ROP fall under a number of categories laid out by the [IAP2 engagement participation spectrum](#) including Inform, Consult and Involve. The goals throughout the engagement process were to:

- Create awareness amongst York Region’s staff, residents, partners and stakeholders of the opportunity for public feedback to help inform long-range plans;
- Educate the public on policy planning and message using plain language while creating content that is engaging and relatable;
- Solicit feedback from a diverse range of York Region’s residents, partners and stakeholders including traditionally under-represented groups;
- Foster community pride that encourages participation in the public engagement process by making the process accessible, easy and quick; and
- Ensure during the engagement process the public is messaged how their feedback was/is being incorporated and summarized for Regional Council

The engagement plan included several objectives including establishing the york.ca/haveyoursay as an engagement hub, a common digital graphic for recognition, providing accurate and timely information, and generating additional subscribers for the e-newsletter. A key primary and secondary audience list was established to ensure communication tactics were appropriate.

Events Held Prior to the Draft York Region Official Plan Release

Several topic-specific public engagement events were held prior to the release of the draft York Region Official Plan from 2019 to 2021. These events helped to raise awareness about specific areas such as community planning, major transit station areas, natural heritage and agricultural systems and housing. These events also created awareness of how the topics fit into the overall draft York Region Official Plan to create a comprehensive plan. Regular updates on what was heard were communicated to York Regional Council through several reports in [October 2019](#), [June 2021](#) (Attachment 3), and [November 2021](#) (Attachment 3).

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, public engagement shifted to virtual and other methods including mailouts, emails and phone calls to reach stakeholders. Participation through online engagement has been greater than past in-person events given the ease for participants to access events remotely.

Summary of Previous Events

2018 to July 2021



- › **Have Your Say** survey
- › **Guided walking tours** (Walk and Talk) with Chief Planner in:
 - Vaughan Metropolitan Centre
 - Markham Centre
 - Yonge Street in Richmond Hill
 - Aurora Downtown
 - Newmarket
- › **Interactive mapping tool** for feedback on major transit station areas
- › **Community Agency Forum**
- › **#itsyourpicYR photo contest**
- › **Staff booths at:**
 - Richmond Hill Seniors Day
 - Community Open House in East Gwillimbury
 - York Region Family Fun Day hosted by Richmond Hill
 - Aurora Street Festival
 - Markham Open House
 - Lincolnville GO Public Open House
 - Water/Wastewater Master Plan Open Houses
- › **Major transit station area open houses in:**
 - Richmond Hill
 - Newmarket
 - Vaughan
- › **Online Public Information Centre: Planning for Employment**
- › **Online Public Information Centre: Agriculture and Natural Heritage Systems Planning**
- › **15 Minute Neighborhood survey**
- › **York Region Official Plan Update survey**
- › **Focus Group Sessions:**
 - Newcomers to Canada in Richmond Hill
 - Seniors in Whitchurch-Stouffville, Georgina, and Aurora
 - Youth in Aurora
- › **Online Public Information Centre: Housing and Growth Management Engagement**



How We Connected

November 2021 to March 2022

 **157** OPEN HOUSE PARTICIPANTS
JANUARY 25, 2022


5 FOCUS GROUPS
MARCH 2022
4 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

 **280** SURVEY RESPONSES
DECEMBER 2021 to MARCH 2022


social media
OVER 53,000 views, 1,000 survey clicks

 **41** MEETINGS
INCLUDING COMMITTEES of COUNCIL, BILD, LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES, CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES, AGRICULTURE REPRESENTATIVES, COMMUNITY MEMBERS, LANDOWNERS and CONSULTANTS

 **1,112** COMMENTS
FROM 139 SUBMISSIONS

 **PAGEVIEWS**
york.ca/haveyoursay
2,404 campaign page views
2,296 interactive map views

 **578** Official Plan VIDEO
YouTube VIEWS

 ARTICLE in FALL 2021
YORK REGION MATTERS

 **enewsletters**
7 newsletters and 89 new sign-ups

What We Heard

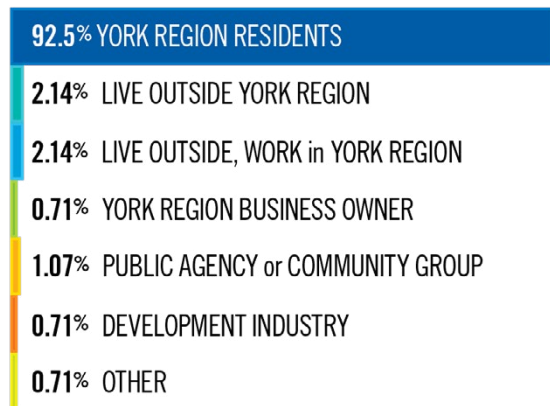
Results of the Draft Official Plan Survey



A survey was launched when the draft York Region Official Plan was released in November 2021 to gather feedback on key policy areas. The survey was promoted through social media, the live and online open houses, focus group meetings, e-newsletters and the York Region Matters publication. The following outlines the survey results up to March 31, 2022.

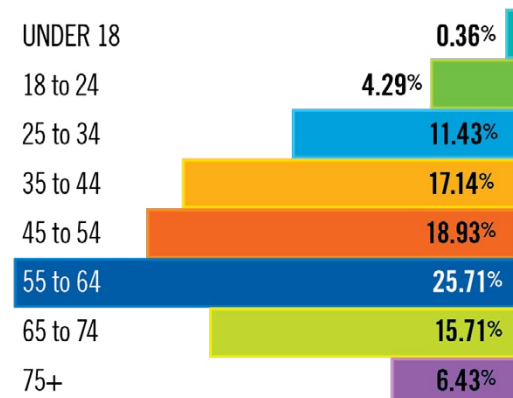
WHO ANSWERED the SURVEY

Select the option that best describes you



PARTICIPANTS AGE

Select your Age



“ This is a modern plan in line with needs expressed by young Canadians. I support it! It’s their future.

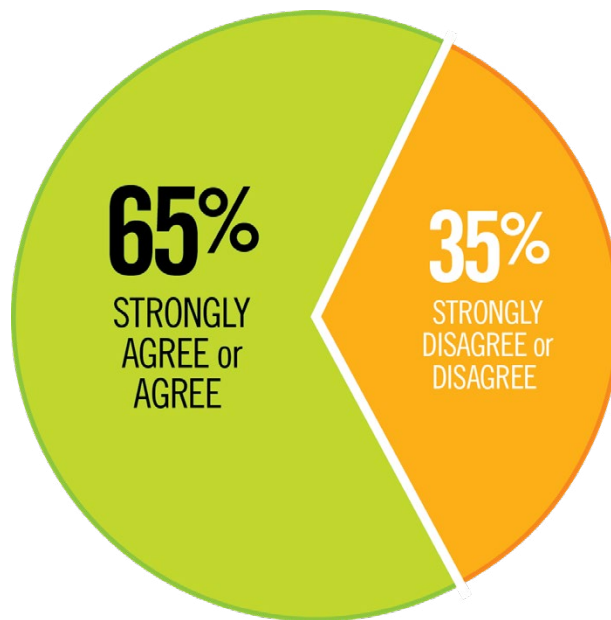
” Intensification should be a priority for the future, and is much better for energy reduction, travel, climate change and future farming needs.



Regarding **growth management**, the draft York Region Official Plan:

- Identifies areas that will accommodate growth into the future
- Focuses intensification in areas where there is existing or planned infrastructure such as transit
- Prioritizes building “complete communities” where people can conveniently access most necessities for daily living
- Prioritizes sustainable growth and financial responsibility by phasing growth, infrastructure and other community services over time

ARE WE HEADED in the RIGHT DIRECTION?



“ Overall, I’m in agreement with the priorities and direction the draft Regional Official Plan is taking the region – complete communities, efficient and cost-effective use of infrastructure, expanded transit, focus on intensification where infrastructure is in place.

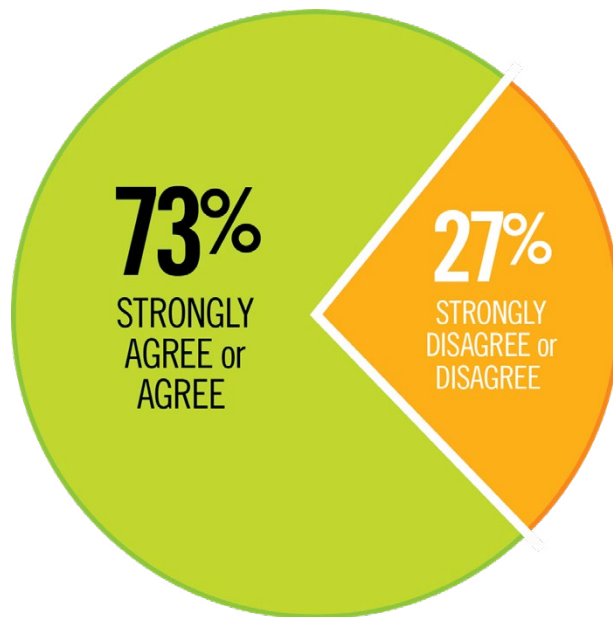
” The concept of complete communities is essential to environmental and sustainable communities.



Regarding the **natural environment**, the draft York Region Official Plan:

- Identifies natural areas for protection
- Recognizes the importance of watershed planning in protecting water quality
- Identifies protected water resources and drinking water sources
- Supports conservation efforts by encouraging reforestation and protection of habitats
- Directs development away from natural hazards such as flooding

ARE WE HEADED in the RIGHT DIRECTION?



“ Continuing to prioritize the natural environment and ensure its long term health is significantly important in creating resilience in the climate emergency and ensuring health and well-being for future generations.

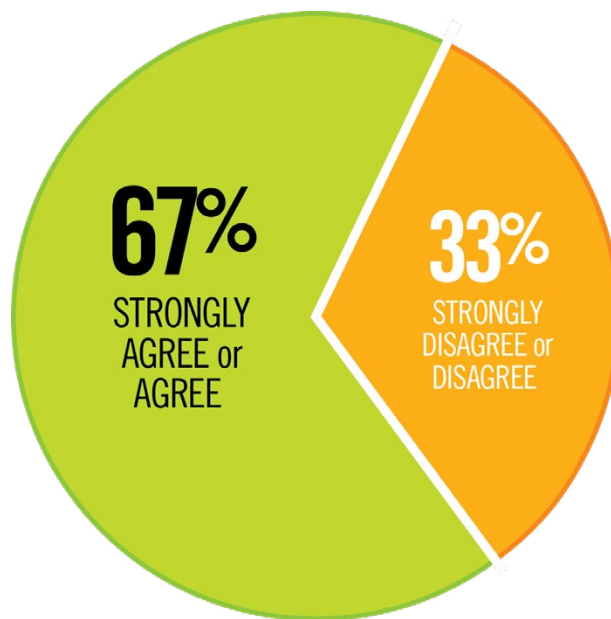
We need to strongly protect, and grow our Natural Heritage System ”



Regarding **climate change**, the draft York Region Official Plan:

- Supports sustainable buildings, energy and water conservation
- Promotes net-zero carbon emissions by 2051
- Supports the reduction of vehicle emissions by building communities that prioritize walking, cycling, transit and provide services and amenities close to home
- Supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and improvement of air quality
- Encourages reforestation which increases ecological resilience and minimizes the impacts of climate change

ARE WE HEADED in the RIGHT DIRECTION?



“ Reducing our carbon footprint and recognizing the need to address climate change to protect the environment for future generations is paramount.

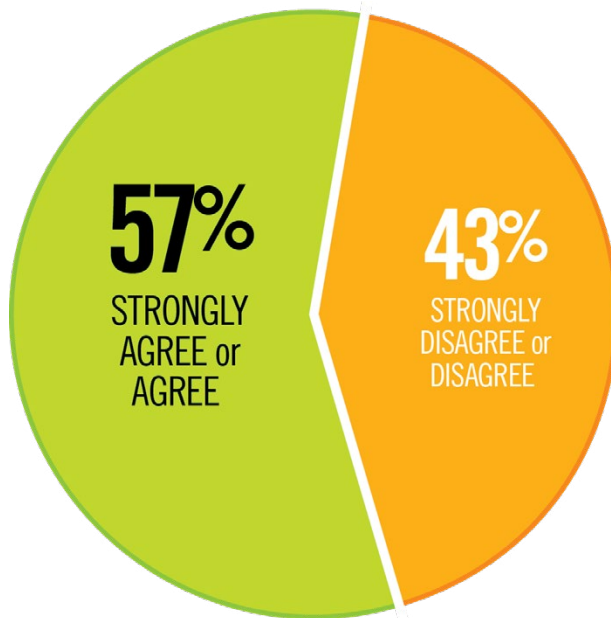
” Agree - reduction of greenhouse gases is a top priority.



Regarding **housing**, the draft York Region Official Plan:

- Promotes an appropriate mix and range of housing options suitable for all ages, household sizes and abilities
- Promotes a range of housing unit sizes, tenure and levels of affordability within each community
- Includes affordable housing targets and purpose-built rental targets for each local municipality
- Prioritizes housing opportunities in locations that support the planned urban system, transportation networks and the environment

ARE WE HEADED in the RIGHT DIRECTION?



“ I was heartened to see references to building “missing middle” housing in the Plan. This needs to be further emphasized.

” Priority should be on affordable housing.

“ We need affordable housing. We need a mix of housing options.

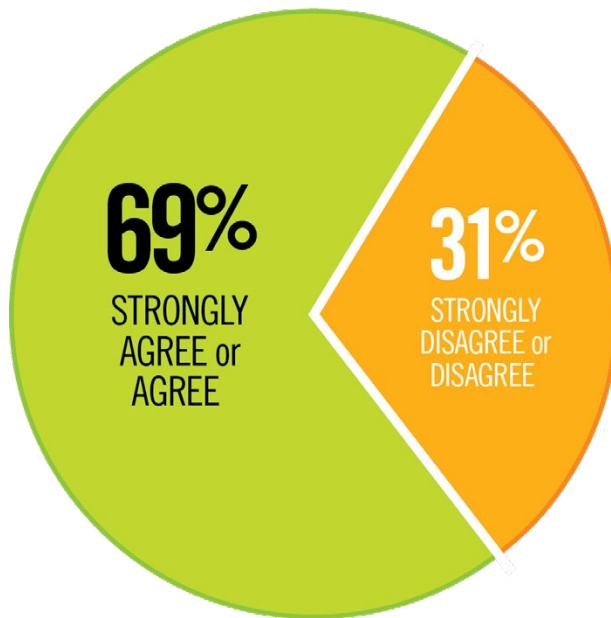
“ A mix of built form housing will not only provide homes that residents of all income levels can afford but will provide for the most sustainable living communities. Affordable housing must be targeted for ownership and rental options.



Regarding **Transportation**, the draft York Region Official Plan:

- Plans for an interconnected, efficient and safe public transit system for people of all ages and abilities
- Prioritizes developments that support a range of travel options including transit, walking and cycling
- Prioritizes building communities where walking, cycling and transit are comfortable and convenient ways to reach employment, educational, recreational and cultural destinations
- Supports street design that accommodates all modes of transportation including passenger vehicles, goods movement, transit, walking and cycling
- Promotes physical activity through design that supports walking, cycling and public transit use

ARE WE HEADED in the RIGHT DIRECTION?



“ Accessibility is key in ensuring transportation meets the needs of the population (now and in the future). ”

Accessibility is critical as we further develop our transit systems. Access to public transit, ease of use for people of various abilities, etc.

“ Overall the goals for transportation in the draft Official Plan are positive. Creating more separate active transportation corridors through pathways away from roads is very important. ”

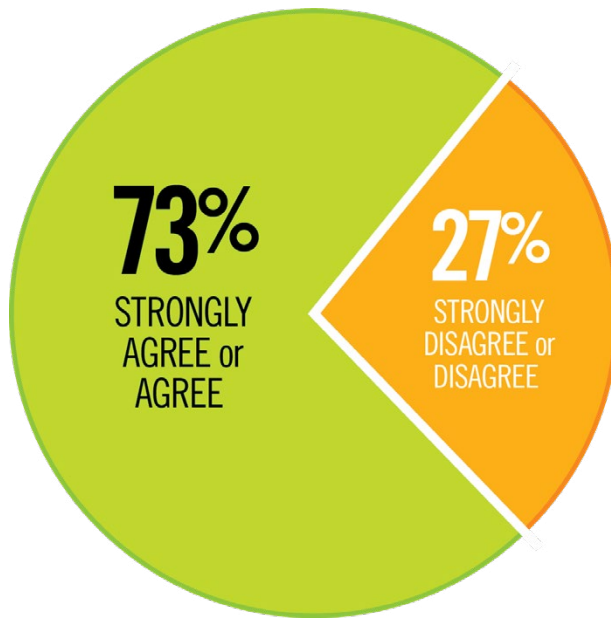
“ Transit-oriented development needs to be prioritized to make sustainable and equitable communities. ”



Regarding **employment areas**, the draft York Region Official Plan:

- Identifies lands protected for uses such as industrial, warehousing, transportation and manufacturing
- Supports employment areas and jobs close to home
- Encourages employment close to existing and future transit service and opportunities for people to live and work in their communities

ARE WE HEADED in the RIGHT DIRECTION?



“ Employment needs to be in a close proximity to housing, transit, entertainment and green spaces in order to create mixed-use communities.

”

“ Yes to jobs close to home and accessible by transit.

”

“ Businesses and industry needs to be encouraged to locate in the region.

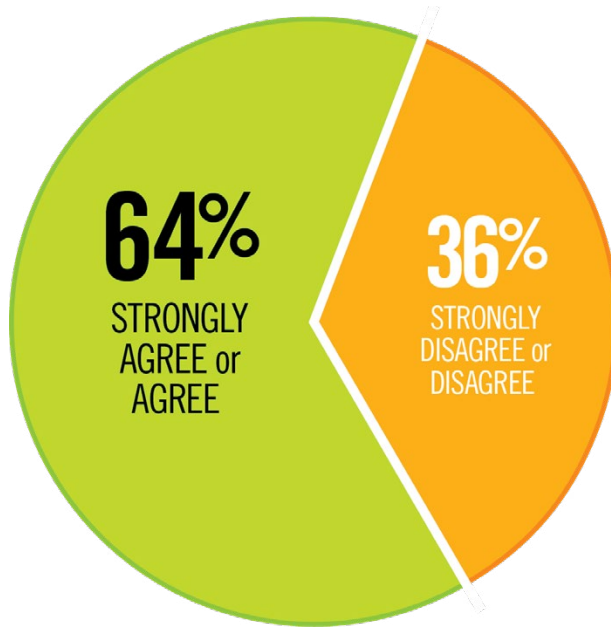
“ Yes! Support jobs close to home and convenient transit.



Regarding **agriculture**, the draft York Region Official Plan:

- Identifies and protects agricultural and specialty crop areas such as the Holland Marsh
- Supports and promotes local agriculture and food initiatives
- Promotes sustainable agricultural practices
- Supports agriculture through multiple types of farm activities
- Promotes access to a safe and secure food supply
- Supports economic connections, prosperity, and viability of the agricultural sector

ARE WE HEADED in the RIGHT DIRECTION?



“ Food security is important. We need to grow healthy food close to home.

” Protection of agricultural land is necessary to guarantee food safety in the future.

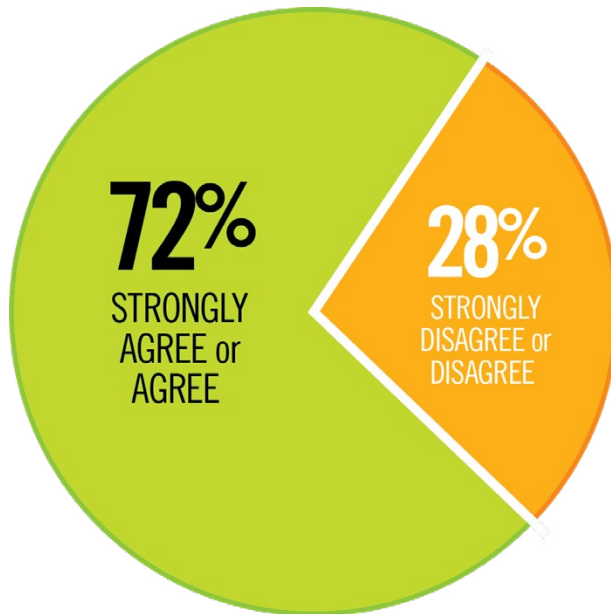
“ Keeping a firm commitment to long-term protection of the agricultural and rural areas provides bonafide confidence to continue to invest in their operations and continue to be a source for local food production.



Regarding **cultural heritage**, the draft York Region Official Plan:

- Promotes cultural heritage activities and conserves cultural heritage resources and archaeological sites to recognize their contribution to community identity
- Includes policy to engage with Indigenous communities on coordination of land use planning matters including conserving cultural heritage and archaeological resources
- Recognizes and celebrates the diverse and rich cultural heritage of the Region’s ethnic and cultural groups

ARE WE HEADED in the RIGHT DIRECTION?



“ Strongly agree. Our culture, ethnicity, heritage and community bonding is of utmost importance. ”

” Protecting and promoting the culture heritage of our Region’s diverse history is of great importance. “

“ We are a diverse population in York Region. It is important to celebrate everyone’s unique culture. Of special importance, is the engagement of our Indigenous communities. ”

Emails and Ask a Planner Feedback

A green speech bubble with a white border containing the text "Have Your Say" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Sending feedback to futureyork@york.ca was promoted during the Municipal Comprehensive Review as a coordinated source of input. Staff monitored this email throughout the campaign and following the release of the draft York Region Official Plan, emails were formally tracked, categorized and followed up, if required.

Feedback emails from the public and Ask a Planner included:

- The inclusion of land use policies surrounding the area of the potential Pickering airport
- Questions, clarifications and suggestions for maps including social infrastructure and MZO's
- Comments on available land supply and other factors contributing to high housing costs
- Comments on higher density development along Yonge Street from 19th Avenue to Industrial Parkway, including both supporting this idea and concerns with it
- Comments regarding the Regional intensification target compared to the local municipal intensification targets

Live Virtual Open House Meeting

Have
Your Say

On January 25, 2022, a live virtual Open House was held for members of the public to provide feedback on the draft York Region Official Plan. The meeting was attended by 157 people where many members engaged in questions and discussion following a staff presentation on the draft Official Plan.

Major topics during the question and discussion portion of the meeting included:

Housing

- › Increased rental housing
- › An affordable housing strategy
- › Reaching affordable housing targets
- › Local zoning to assist in providing different housing types
- › Addressing the missing middle
- › ‘Not In My Backyard’ (or ‘NIMBY’) during development consultation

Transportation, proposed provincial highways

- › Proposed subway alignments
- › The frequency and availability of transit in newer and growing communities
- › One transit fare integration with adjacent transit systems
- › Regional Council support for proposed Highway 413 and Bradford Bypass

Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) 7

- › Permitted uses in ‘green finger’ areas
- › Additional ‘green finger’ areas in York Region

Climate change

- › Greenhouse gas reduction targets

Other

- › Alignment of growth with infrastructure
 - › Status of Upper York Sewage System
 - › Redevelopment of Buttonville Airport
-

Responses to all questions were provided, either at the meeting or afterward through the [Engagement Summary report](#).

Focus Group Meetings

Have
Your Say

Public engagement during the planning process benefits from a wide variety of voices and lived experiences from people who are affected. York Region is striving to build relationships with traditionally underrepresented groups to hear from many different residents and workers to provide input into various Regional engagement opportunities. To build on these relationships, staff held a series of five focus groups in March 2022 to obtain feedback on the draft York Region Official Plan. These focus groups included people with disabilities, the LBGTQ2S+ community, youth and the Black community. Prior to the release of the draft, staff held additional focus groups with youth, seniors and newcomers to York Region.

York Region staff presented content on the draft York Region Official Plan with our consultant facilitating the discussion portion of the meeting.

A summary of feedback from these meetings include:

- › Social infrastructure such as hospitals keeping up with projected growth
- › The recognition that something must be done about housing and educating residents as resistance and concerns about new housing (known as 'Not In My Backyard' or 'NIMBYism') exists in some areas
- › Lack of affordable housing and the assurance that housing will remain affordable
- › The need for commonality across York Region, but respecting differences in the 9 municipalities
- › Housing needs that are dignified and safe for seniors from diverse backgrounds
- › Using Regional and local municipal surplus lands for affordable housing
- › The frequency and availability of transit in newer and growing communities
- › Opportunities to engage diverse communities in planning and other Regional projects
- › Encouraging a mix of uses in the community to promote social and cultural interaction
- › Encouraging employment close to home, and affordable housing near transit, for low-income residents
- › Applying an equity lens for policies in the draft Plan

In addition, feedback was received on topics beyond the scope of the draft York Region Official Plan including systemic barriers, challenges for low-income residents, availability of low or no fee meeting spaces, hiring practices, social program funding and inclusivity of corporate policies.

First Nations and Indigenous Community Engagement

Have
Your Say

York Region is located on the traditional territory of many Indigenous peoples including the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat and Métis peoples and the treaty territories of the Haudenosaunee, the Williams Treaties First Nations, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. York Region falls under the Nanfan Treaty with the Haudenosaunee, Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and the Williams Treaties with the Chippewas of Beausoleil, Georgina Island and Rama First Nations and the Mississaugas of Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha and Scugog Island First Nations. There are also other land claims and treaty rights involving portions of York Region that have not been definitively resolved. The Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation is the closest First Nation community to York Region. We thank these and other Indigenous peoples for sharing their land with us.

The following First Nations, Indigenous communities and Métis Councils were identified at the outset of the project for having historical, aboriginal and/or treaty-rights based interest for the Regional Official Plan review:

- › Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation
- › Chippewas of Mnjikaning (Chippewas of Rama First Nation)
- › Beausoleil First Nation
- › Hiawatha First Nation
- › Curve Lake First Nation
- › Alderville First Nation
- › Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation
- › Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- › Six Nations of the Grand River Territory
- › Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council
- › Kawartha Nishnawbe First Nation
- › Huron-Wendat Nation (if there are potential archeological impacts)
- › Métis Nation of Ontario

First Nations and Indigenous communities were engaged jointly with the Water Wastewater Master Plan and the Transportation Master Plan updates. All project notices, project updates, communications and policy documents were circulated to the above list. Any input received was documented and taken into consideration. A high-level summary of comments received is described below. A more comprehensive attachment will be included in a future report.



Engagement Activities

Engagement with First Nations and Indigenous communities was coordinated with the Water Wastewater Master Plan and Transportation Master Plan updates. The Region coordinated engagement individually based on their interest, capacity and availability as there is currently no provincially approved framework for engaging with First Nations and Indigenous communities. A consultant and Indigenous facilitator supported all engagement activities. The opportunity to engage with and learn from First Nations and Indigenous communities was valuable, as their unique historic and cultural relationship to the land and water gives rise to important perspectives on how to manage the natural environment and water resources. The Region looks forward to continued efforts to build relationships with these First Nations and Indigenous Communities.

The table below summarizes a general timeline of consultation and engagement activities with First Nations and Indigenous communities.

Engagement Phase	Activities
Phase 1: Project introduction and initial meeting January 2020 – December 2020*	Introductory meetings were requested by and held with the following First Nations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation - Curve Lake First Nation - Hiawatha First Nation - Chippewas of Rama First Nation
Phase 2: Information sharing and collaboration January 2021 – November 2021	Two technical briefings were provided to all 13 First Nations, Indigenous communities and Métis Councils identified above to invite feedback and extend an offer to meet. No requests to meet were received during this period.
Phase 3: Finalize and share updated plans November 2021 – July 2022	Meetings were requested by and held with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curve Lake First Nation - Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation - Huron-Wendat Nation - Six Nations of the Grand River Territory - Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation - Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation

* Note: engagements were paused for a time as First Nations, Indigenous communities and York Region responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. When engagements resumed, they occurred in a virtual format



Feedback

Feedback was received from a number of First Nations and is summarized below.

- › First Nations and Indigenous communities encourage York Region to develop lasting, long-term relationships; this would provide a more proactive approach to involve communities in projects and initiatives at the outset allowing time for meaningful engagement and input
- › Many comments focused on protecting and sustaining the natural environment to address impacts arising from growth that may affect traditional Indigenous ways of life:
 - mitigation of environmental threats such as invasive species
 - impacts of climate change and stormwater
 - increased public education on the impacts and ways to reduce emerging contaminants entering waterways
 - ensure Indigenous rights and perspectives are acknowledged in the areas of water and wastewater management and recognizing the sacredness of water
 - identification and protection of archaeological and cultural heritage resources

York Region acknowledges the relationship Indigenous communities have with the natural environment and acknowledges the central importance of water in the culture and lives of Indigenous people. York Region is committed to sustainable management and use of water and protection of the natural environment not only in the present, but also over the long term for future generations.