

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Planning and Economic Development
May 19, 2022

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

Draft Regional Official Plan Consultation Update and Statutory Public Meeting

1. Recommendations

1. Council endorse recommended changes resulting from consultations on the draft Regional Official Plan as outlined in Attachments 1 and 2.
2. Staff report back with an updated draft Regional Official Plan that incorporates the changes recommended in Attachments 1 and 2 and any further changes resulting from feedback heard as part of the May 12, 2022 Statutory Open House and May 19, 2022 Public Meeting.

2. Summary

This report supports the Statutory Public Meeting on the draft Regional Official Plan (ROP) by providing an update on consultations on the draft ROP since its release in November 2021 and recommends changes in response to feedback, as summarized in Attachments 1 and 2.

Key Points:

- Extensive consultation with stakeholders throughout the Municipal Comprehensive Review, and Council direction informed the draft ROP released in November 2021 for public consultation
- Productive feedback was received from the public, stakeholders and local municipalities resulting in proposed modifications to the draft ROP consistent with previous Council direction
- Further refinements to phasing policies and direction on the Regional intensification hierarchy will provide better clarity and improve implementation
- Recommended refinements to agricultural and rural designations are based on Provincial criteria and Regional assessment

- [Urban Area boundary](#) and [Employment Area boundaries](#) are maintained in accordance with Council direction with two exceptions
- Feedback received through public and stakeholder engagement including the May 12, 2022 Statutory Public Open House and May 19, 2022 Public Meeting will inform the updated ROP proposed to Council for adoption in June 2022 prior to the Provincial deadline of July 2022
- Council adoption of the ROP will be followed by submission to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval

3. Background

The ROP 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. A series of background and policy direction reports, as listed in the [November 2021](#) report ([Attachment 2](#)), were presented to Council to support development of the draft ROP and bring it into conformity with Provincial plans. In [November 2021](#), the [draft ROP](#) was presented to Council for the purpose of further consultation working towards Council adoption in June 2022, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1
Municipal Comprehensive Review Process**

MUNICIPAL COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW PROCESS

BACKGROUND REPORTS and COUNCIL TOUCHPOINTS

Engage Council through MCR related background and technical reports and presentations

POLICY WRITING and DEVELOPMENT

Create draft ROP Policies

FINALIZING the DRAFT ROP

Deliver Alternate Forecast Scenarios to Council
Deliver draft ROP to Council - November 2021

DRAFT ROP to ADOPTION

Engage and consult with partners and stakeholders on draft ROP

ROP ADOPTION

Target ROP adoption - June 2022



Council direction and comments throughout the Municipal Comprehensive Review process informed draft ROP policies and designations

The draft ROP was developed after extensive consultation and Council direction, particularly on the [Forecast and Land Needs Assessment](#) resulting in an urban expansion, [Employment Area Mapping and Employment Conversions](#), and [Major Transit Station Areas](#). Key direction from Council and feedback from local municipalities, conservation authorities and stakeholders informed policies and mapping in the November 2021 draft ROP.

Policies of the draft ROP reflect Council's direction that alignment of planning for growth with infrastructure and financial planning is of paramount importance to ensure the Region's communities are supported by infrastructure delivered and operated in a financially sustainable way. The draft ROP emphasizes an integrated approach to growth management through policies that support phasing of infrastructure delivery to align with actual growth and the Region's fiscal realities.

The proposed urban boundary in the draft ROP is based on a land needs assessment that incorporates Provincial growth plan targets, policy objectives, and market demand as described in [March 2021](#), further refined in response to feedback received through the consultation process, as well as direction approved by Council in [October 2021](#).

For the first time, Regional employment lands are designated and major transit area stations are delineated in the draft ROP along with a comprehensive set of policies, mapping and density targets. Council endorsed employment area and major transit station area mapping after consulting with local municipal staff, the public and stakeholders. The policy framework in the draft ROP provides long-term protection of employment lands, supports development of transit supportive communities around higher-order transit stations while ensuring flexibility for local municipalities to develop more detailed policies (including specific land uses, height and density) based on area-specific context.

Extensive engagement followed release of the draft ROP

The draft ROP was shared for review and comment to boards and agencies identified as prescribed bodies under the Planning Act, such as school boards, utilities and the Province, as well as with members of the public and other stakeholders previously engaged in the Municipal Comprehensive Review. As directed by Council, a series of consultation opportunities followed release of the draft ROP in November 2021. This included a public open house hosted in January 2022, followed by an online open house in March 2022 and Statutory Public Open House on May 12, 2022, one-on-one meetings with landowners, local municipalities and conservation authorities, focus group meetings, meetings with Indigenous Nations and presentations to local and Regional Committees of Council. A summary of public engagement and Indigenous engagement activities from November 2021 to March 2022 is outlined in Attachment 3. Engagement builds on prior Council decisions when developing the draft ROP.

Comprehensive review by local municipal partners and stakeholders contributed to recommendations which will improve ROP policies

Local municipal and conservation authority expertise and knowledge is integral to maximize alignment on key issues and facilitate implementation of policies in the local jurisdictional context. Local municipalities and conservation authorities conducted comprehensive reviews of the draft ROP and provided recommendations to further improve policies and make them more implementable and clearer. Formal recommendations from local municipalities, conservation authorities and other key partners and stakeholders are summarized in Attachments 1 (all comments) and 4 (summary of key local Council comments). A track changes version of the draft ROP which includes recommended refinements resulting from review of all comments is posted on the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review webpage.

The draft ROP reflects direction to streamline the document and remove redundancies

Based on previous Council direction, the draft ROP has taken a streamlined approach by removing duplicative and redundant policies, including a number of "encourage" or inward facing policies. A number of comments in Attachment 1 do not result in any change to the draft ROP as they are either contrary to this philosophy and not needed in the ROP or would misalign with Provincial policy or previous Council direction. ROP policies ensure planning flexibility at the local municipal level in response to input received throughout the Municipal Comprehensive Review process. This streamlining approach was followed while reviewing comments on the draft ROP, hence comments that require additional policies in the draft ROP that are already addressed in other Regional plans, or will be addressed through implementation efforts, have not been recommended.

4. Analysis

Local municipal Councils support the draft ROP and have expressed additional local objectives

A proactive approach involving local municipal partners to ensure alignment and reflect local municipal interests in the draft ROP has resulted in strong local municipal support. The forecast and population distribution are supported, as is the need for financially sustainable infrastructure delivery, the intensification hierarchy and protection of the Regional Greenlands System. Local municipal Council comments are summarized in Attachment 4.

There are a couple of local objectives not reflected in the draft ROP. This includes the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's and Township of King's interest in additional permissions/designations in the Greenbelt Plan area (Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville) and hamlets (Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and Township of King) since the ROP is constrained by Provincial policy conformity in this regard. As York Region continues to advocate for change at the Provincial level, the costs associated with additional permissions/designations in the Greenbelt Plan area and hamlets have been included in appendices to the Water and Wastewater Master Plan Update.

The Township of King is seeking local flexibility to redesignate agricultural lands within the Village of Nobleton to permit urban uses in advance of a Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review. This is not recommended until a servicing solution is confirmed for additional growth within this community. Servicing options are constrained by Provincial policy in Towns and Villages in the Greenbelt Plan area and can be reviewed at the next Municipal Comprehensive Review.

The draft ROP includes a future urban overlay for remaining Whitebelt lands not required for growth to 2051 in this Municipal Comprehensive Review. The overlay recognizes that at some point these lands will be required to accommodate future growth as the remainder of the Region outside of the Whitebelt is protected by the Greenbelt and/or Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plans. The Town of East Gwillimbury supports and seeks additional use of the future urban overlay, while the City of Markham does not want their remaining Whitebelt lands included within the future urban overlay. Local municipalities support phasing of growth and want to ensure timely approval and delivery of key infrastructure timed and phased with logical growth patterns. These and other key comments are discussed in the following sections.

There is public and partner support for the Regional intensification hierarchy and phasing policies in the draft ROP

Local municipalities, conservation authorities and the public support the need for a well-articulated Regional intensification hierarchy and strong phasing policies to manage growth. Stakeholders recognize the importance of developing communities in a logical and complete manner to maintain financial sustainability of the Region and ensure timely provision of infrastructure and services, such as schools and community centres for new residents. Stakeholders support the Region's goal to create sustainable and mixed-use communities in appropriate locations to maximize efficient infrastructure delivery, human services, and support transit ridership. Based on stakeholder feedback, further enhanced policies, and additional direction through sidebars in these areas is recommended as outlined in Attachment 1.

ROP phasing policies will inform timely delivery of key infrastructure to support local municipal growth

Draft ROP policies support alignment and phasing of growth and infrastructure to ensure that key pieces of infrastructure are in place to support planned growth while maintaining financial sustainability. Policies in the draft ROP require infrastructure and servicing capacity to be monitored to inform regular updates to the Region's forecasts, infrastructure master plans, and 10-year capital plans. The Region's ability to deliver infrastructure sequenced with growth areas is dependent upon timely Provincial approval of critical projects. Draft phasing policies are proposed to be refined in response to local municipal feedback to align with achievement of local intensification targets, rather than Regional targets and population forecasts as a whole.

Site-specific requests for agricultural or rural designations were assessed against Provincial system criteria and Regional and local context and direction

The agricultural system in the draft ROP refines the [agricultural system mapping](#) released by the Province in 2017. A key objective of the systems approach is the consistent protection and continuity of the agricultural land base, recognizing that pockets of non-agricultural uses are included. The intent is that legally existing uses continue to be permitted while included within the agricultural area designation, rather than being removed from the agricultural designation. The Region received several submissions requesting site specific redesignation of certain lands from agriculture to rural, or to maintain the existing 2010 ROP rural designation to allow for a greater range of land uses. Sites have been assessed based on information submitted by landowners, analysis by the Region's consultant, and Regional and local municipal context. Site-specific changes are recommended for some sites as detailed in Attachment 2.

The urban boundary endorsed by Council has been maintained with two exceptions

Several requests for urban expansion were received following release of the draft ROP for consultation. Recognizing extensive analysis, consultation, and consideration by Council to finalize the forecast and growth management strategy, further urban expansion requests have not been supported except for the Willowgrove Farm request in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Willowgrove Farm, located north of 19th Avenue between Highway 48 and McCowan Road, abuts several areas subject to approved Minister's Zoning Orders representing a 'hole' in this future new community area. Given the MZOs approved on abutting properties, the landowner and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville request the Region redesignate the Willowgrove Farm as urban area in the ROP. It is recommended that the landowner's request be supported as it provides for a more logical planning boundary. The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville identified some additional minor parcels in the same new community area, the addition of which is also supported.

In addition to these minor additions, the Town of Markham has requested the removal of two relatively small areas of urban expansion, which is also supported.

York Region population and employment forecast by local municipality shown in Table 1 of the draft ROP will be updated in the ROP brought forward to Council for adoption in June 2022 to reflect the final growth boundary including the minor refinements discussed above.

New employment area conversion requests are not supported and can be assessed through the next Municipal Comprehensive Review

Council established November 2019 as the deadline for employment area conversions through this Municipal Comprehensive Review. Following release of the draft ROP for consultation, several new requests were received for redesignation of lands from employment area to community area, including two requests supported by City of Vaughan Council. Employment area mapping in the draft ROP aligns with Region's employment

forecast and was developed after extensive consideration and direction by Council through the Municipal Comprehensive Review process, recognizing the role of employment areas in the long-term prosperity and viability of the Region. It is recommended that employment area boundaries in the draft ROP be maintained, reflecting Council's direction from [October 2020](#).

The Province has not yet responded to Council's request for urban expansion into the countryside area of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

In [October 2021](#), Council endorsed a growth management strategy that included expanding the settlement area boundary into the Oak Ridges Moraine countryside area east of Highway 404 in Gormley and north of the Community of Stouffville in lieu of Whitebelt lands in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville (Council resolution included in Attachment 5). As indicated in [October 2021](#), expansion of the settlement area into the countryside area of the Oak Ridges Moraine requires an amendment to Regulation O. Reg. 140/02: Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing prior to Provincial approval of the York Region Official Plan. Following Council direction, the November draft ROP schedules depict both urban expansion scenarios (i.e. the countryside area as well as Whitebelt expansion lands in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville). Should there not be a Provincial response to this request by the time the draft ROP is considered by Council for adoption in June, it is proposed that the draft ROP submitted for Provincial approval depict Council's desired urban expansion in the countryside area, with the alternative Whitebelt scenario removed. In the event the Province does not support amending O. Reg. 140/02 to approve the settlement area expansion into the countryside area of the Oak Ridges Moraine, staff will work with the Province to reflect Council's alternative position for urban expansion on the Whitebelt lands in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville as directed by Council in November 2021.

Housing affordability was a focus of participants in the consultation process

Housing affordability is a key challenge for the Region and was identified throughout consultations with stakeholders. The best opportunity to address concerns expressed is through subsequent work identified in the draft ROP to develop a plan to increase housing options, including affordable and purpose-built rental options. The [Affordable Private Market Housing Implementation Plan](#) will be developed in collaboration with local municipalities, senior levels of government, the development industry, community partners and other stakeholders. The [Affordable Private Market Housing Implementation Plan](#) and [Community Housing Master Plan](#), the latter addressing public and non-profit community housing, are complimentary comprehensive plans that have been initiated to enhance, focus and streamline support, and fund housing needs.

Concerns have been raised about the impact of Minister's Zoning Orders and proposed transit-oriented communities on planned growth in the ROP

The draft ROP was prepared using an integrated growth management approach focused on aligning infrastructure and financial planning with land use planning. The draft ROP was coordinated with updates to the Water and Wastewater and Transportation Master Plans and the Development Charges Bylaw. Phasing of future development is critical to this integrated approach to growth management allowing the Region to leverage existing

infrastructure investments and align infrastructure investments with the ability to recover development charge collections. Aligning infrastructure and growth is an important principle in the Growth Plan.

Concern was expressed regarding Minister's Zoning Orders approved in locations where Regional infrastructure does not currently exist and is not planned in the near term. Comments also focused on the transit-oriented community proposals that are well beyond densities and population growth considered for these areas in the Municipal Comprehensive Review, and local Secondary Plans. These Provincial tools present a challenge to the Region's comprehensive approach to integrated growth management as required by the Growth Plan. Given the amount of proposed growth, it is anticipated that full buildout of the transit-oriented communities will occur beyond 2051. As the Province unveils further details on the transit-oriented community proposals and timing of development as subway construction takes place in the future, additional analysis will inform infrastructure capital plans, master plan updates and future Municipal Comprehensive Reviews.

The proposed policy framework for rural areas and hamlets conforms with Provincial plans and should be maintained

Local municipalities have requested policies that apply to rural green fingers (associated with ROPA 7 adopted by Council and not yet approved by the Province) be applicable to rural areas outside the green fingers to allow for additional parks and recreation uses in these areas to support adjacent urbanization. There is also interest in hamlets playing an expanded role in the Regional structure to accommodate more growth. Changes to the draft ROP policy framework for rural areas and hamlets are not recommended to avoid conflict with Provincial policy which limits growth to minor infilling on the basis of private servicing. It is recommended the draft ROP be amended as necessary to include a site-specific policy to address the Community of Ballantrae once a decision has been made by the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Draft ROP policies recognize refinements to the Regional Greenlands System will occur through subsequent planning approvals

The Region has received several requests and comments to refine the Regional Greenlands System mapping in the draft ROP. Where appropriate, some comments have resulted in mapping corrections while others have resulted in no change to the map. This approach recognises that the Regional Greenlands System is an overlay (i.e. there is a separate underlying designation) and policies in the draft ROP allow for refinements to the system through subsequent local planning approvals. The Regional Greenlands System is built on approved local municipal natural heritage systems, data from conservation authorities and the Provincial natural heritage system. Efforts have been made to ensure the Regional scale mapping reflects updated local municipal natural heritage systems, however draft ROP policies acknowledge subsequent changes may occur to the system at the local municipal level (as does the current 2010 ROP).

Draft ROP to be considered for adoption by Council will reflect changes in Attachments 1 and 2 and any additional changes identified by Council in response to the Statutory Public Open House and Public Meeting

The Region continues to receive comments on the draft ROP. Comments received since release of the draft ROP for consultation in November 2021 until March 31, 2022, are summarized and responded to in Attachments 1 and 2. Staff will update the draft ROP in line with the preliminary draft ROP posted on the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review webpage based on recommendations in Attachments 1 and 2, and consider any additional changes based on feedback received through statutory meetings prior to bringing the draft ROP to Council for adoption in June 2022. The updated draft ROP will be accompanied by a summary of what was heard at the Statutory Public Meeting and Open House.

Following adoption, the ROP will be submitted to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval prior to the July 1, 2022 deadline. The Minister has reinforced this deadline with no indication that an extension will be provided.

5. Financial

An integrated growth management approach is required to support growth to 2051, that aligns land use planning and infrastructure delivery through the capital plan with the objectives of the Council approved fiscal strategy. The draft ROP policies are intended to manage growth based on financial sustainability, aligning actual growth and development charge revenue before investing in new infrastructure to maintain the long-term fiscal health of the Region.

York Region's growth target of approximately 790,000 residents and 341,000 jobs over the next 30-years requires close to \$20 billion of growth-related infrastructure to service population and employment growth. A detailed fiscal impact analysis on the ROP growth forecast to 2051 will be presented to Council in June along with the final ROP for adoption.

All costs associated with the policy development process, public consultation and stakeholder engagements are addressed within the approved Planning and Economic Development budget.

6. Local Impact

Local municipalities are key partners in updating the ROP, providing expertise and knowledge implementing ROP policies in their local municipal context. A proactive and cooperative approach has been taken involving local municipal partners in the development and review of draft ROP policies. It is 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, once approved. Under the Planning Act, local municipal official

plans are required to be updated to conform to the ROP within one year of its approval by the Province. The Region will continue to work with local municipalities from draft to final adoption of the ROP, particularly in response to areas of new Regional jurisdiction (e.g. employment area mapping and major transit area stations delineation). Once the ROP is approved by the Province, the Region as the approval authority of local official plans will be able to bring forward local official plans to Council for approval.

7. Conclusion

Since the release of the draft ROP for public consultation in November 2021, the Region has engaged in several stakeholder consultation sessions including a public open house, meetings with landowners, local municipalities, Indigenous Nations, and conservation authorities, focus group meetings and presentations to Committees of Council. The Region is hosting a Statutory Public Open House and Statutory Public Meeting in May 2022 in accordance with requirements of the Planning Act. Staff propose that an updated draft ROP that reflects the recommended changes in Attachments 1 and 2 and considers comments heard during statutory meetings and engagement process be brought forward to Council for consideration and adoption in June 2022.

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 (5)
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