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## Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner **2023 Annual Development Activity Summary**

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### **1. Recommendation**

Regional Clerk forward this report to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, local MPP's, and local municipalities for information.

### **2. Purpose**

Council has delegated authority to the Chief Planner and Director of Development Services to issue approvals for development applications, subject to such approvals being reported to Council semi-annually. Delegated approval authority includes routine local Official Plan Amendments (OPAs), including exemption from Regional approval and approval of works adjacent to Regional rights-of-way and infrastructure. York Region is a commenting agency to local municipalities for draft plans of subdivision and condominium, site plans, consent to sever, zoning by-law amendment, and minor variance applications on matters related to Regional interests.

Development activity and approvals will be reported to Council during the transition period for Bill 23 until planning approval authority has been transferred to local municipalities.

#### **Key Points:**

- Region received 1,740 development applications and pre-consultations in 2023, a 17% decrease over 2022 (2,092)
- 37 Official Plan Amendment (OPA) applications were exempt from Regional approval and 13 notices of decision were issued by the Director of Development Services on local OPAs
- Proposed residential units received as part of new draft plan of subdivision applications increased 48% to 4,688 in 2023 from 3,168 in 2022 and proposed residential units in new site plan applications decreased 15.6% to 15,650 in 2023 from 18,547 in 2022

- Development charge collections decreased by 58% to \$240.4M in 2023 from \$568.1M in 2022, which was anticipated as a result of changes from Bill 23 and slowdown in housing activity, due to economic conditions
- Fee revenue for development and engineering applications increased 3% to \$5,267,462 in 2023 from \$5,130,069 in 2022
- York Region ended 2023 with an approved housing supply of approximately 73,100 units, or based on the Region's approved Regional Official Plan forecast, a supply of more than 7 years of growth and within the Provincial requirement of 3 to 7-year supply of draft approved and registered plans

### 3. Background

#### **Bill 23 proposed changes to the Planning Act including removal of Council's planning approval authority**

*More Homes Built Faster Act* (Bill 23) proposes changes to the *Planning Act* which removes Council's approval authority for local official plans and amendments and removes the Region's right to appeal land use planning decisions. These provisions in Bill 23 are not yet in force and awaiting proclamation through regulation.

A facilitator has been retained to work with Regional and local staff to clarify roles and responsibilities given the shifting role of Regional planning services. Local municipal input will facilitate a comprehensive understanding of local needs and perspectives and provide the basis for a final transition plan to be presented to Council once information is made available by the province.

#### **Authority to approve certain development applications is delegated to the Chief Planner and Director of Development Services, subject to such approvals being reported to Council semi-annually**

The annual Development Activity Report summarizes the number of new residential applications, associated proposed residential units, and number of residential units registered. The following information on delegated approvals is presented in the Development Activity Summary Report:

- Approval of local OPAs
- Exemption of local OPAs from Regional approval
  - The Region has authority to exempt an OPA from Regional approval if it is determined to be of local significance and there are no Regional requirements. The Regional Official Plan sets out criteria to determine if an amendment is eligible for exemption. If the application qualifies for exemption, the local municipality issues the decision for the OPA
- Approval of works in the Regional right-of-way as part of site plan applications with Regional requirements

- Engineering approval of works in the Regional right-of-way

Additionally, the following information is presented in the Development Activity Summary Report:

- New development applications received
- Proposed residential units received
- Number of registered plans of subdivision, draft approved and registered units
- Planning and development engineering review fee and development charge collection

### **All nine local municipalities provide data to ensure accurate development activity data and reporting**

Since 2017, York Region has been tracking development-related information and data received on each application in YorkTrax. Application information on location, nature of proposal, number of units, non-residential gross floor area, status, progress, and associated applications are captured, and development trends can be analyzed for reporting. As data continues to be collected in YorkTrax, the Region can more accurately track development activity in each municipality and on a region-wide basis to assess trends.

Development application data is vital to track wastewater capacity needs, assess growth trends and plan for the next generation of infrastructure. Future connections of local application tracking systems with YorkTrax through data exchange will improve accuracy and timing. Data and trends will continue to be reported to Council regularly and York Region will provide live dashboards and products to assist the local and Regional understanding of development trends and housing activity.

### **Collaborative Application Preparation (CAP) process has been developed with local municipalities for quality development application submissions**

In 2022, the Province passed Bill 109, *The More Homes for Everyone Act* and Bill 23, *The More Homes Built Faster Act* introducing several changes to streamline development approvals to support building 1.5 million homes in Ontario within the next 10 years. Some of the more impactful changes to municipalities include reduced timeframes for approvals and requirement for municipalities to refund planning fees if statutory timelines are not met. A new consistent process, the Collaborative Application Preparation (CAP) process, was developed with the local municipalities and Conservation Authorities for accepting development applications in response to these new Provincial requirements.

The Region formed a working group to develop common planning data standards and processes through multiple workshops. BILD members were involved in the development of this new process. The Collaborative Application Preparation process applies a consistent standard for intaking development applications to ensure high-quality, complete submissions. Applications undergo an advance review to ensure quality submission and design standards set out through the consultation are incorporated in the applications prior to deeming the application(s) complete. York Region is

committed to continuous improvement of the planning process to ensure faster review and approval of development applications.

## 4. Analysis

### **Consistent number of OPA applications received in 2023 and 2022 indicates development continues to remain strong within the Region**

York Region received 73 local OPA applications in 2023, representing a 3% increase from 2022. OPAs are required when development proposals do not conform to Official Plan policies. A majority of OPAs proposed changes to building height, density, built form and urban design matters the Region defers to local decision making. Typically, additional development applications are required after the approval of an OPA, or submitted concurrently, including Zoning Bylaw Amendments, Draft Plan of Subdivision and Condominium, Engineering and Site Plan applications.

Director of Development Services issued decisions on 50 local OPA applications in 2023; approval authority for 37 local OPAs was delegated to the local municipalities and 13 notices of decision were issued on local OPAs. Not all applications received a decision within the year and some decisions issued were for applications received in 2022. The Region retained approval authority for 8 local OPAs to ensure conformity with provincial policies, Regional Official Plan and local secondary plans. One local OPA was reported to the Regional Council for approval (Richmond Hill Centre).

37 OPAs exempt from Regional approval, determined to be of local significance, had no Regional requirements, and conformed with Provincial plans and Regional Official Plan policies. The majority of local OPA approvals were exempt from Regional approval to streamline the planning approval process. A consistent number of OPA applications received in 2023 and 2022 indicates development continues to remain strong.

List of local OPAs with approval status by municipality is in Attachment 1.

### **Number of development applications received in 2023 decreased by 17% compared to 2022**

Table 1 identifies the number of new applications received by the Region by type in 2023, compared to the previous four years. Primary applications (OPAs, Block Plans, Draft Plan of Subdivision, Zoning Bylaws, Draft Plan of Condominiums, Engineering Review and Site Plans) account for 402 of new development applications, which decreased compared to 509 applications in 2022. Other development applications the Region received for review and information purposes include site plans pre-consultation applications, consent to sever and minor variances, accounting for 1,338 applications. These are important for tracking purposes to monitor housing trends and servicing needs. In total, the Region received 1,740 new applications in 2023, compared to 2,092 in 2022. The decrease in new development applications may be a result of uncertainty around provincial policy changes/process and a slowdown in housing activity due to economic conditions.

Approximately 64% of new applications received in 2023 were in the Cities of Markham, Richmond Hill, and Vaughan. A breakdown of new development applications by municipality is in Attachment 1.

**Table 1**  
**Applications Received by York Region by Type in 2019 to 2023**

<b>Application Type</b>		<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
<b>(New Applications)</b>						
<b>Primary Applications</b>	Regional Official Plan Amendments	0	1	1	0	0
	Block Plans	3	3	4	0	0
	Local Official Plan Amendments	52	75	78	71	73
	Draft Plan of Subdivision	31	34	29	53	29
	Zoning Bylaw Amendments	129	136	154	150	123
	Draft Plan of Condominium	27	26	25	27	32
	Engineering Review	41	36	47	39	46
	Site Plans Applications (Minor and Major) <sup>1</sup>	168	153	174	169	99
	<b>Development Application Total</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>402</b>
<b>Other Applications Reviewed</b>	Site Plan (No Regional Requirements) <sup>2</sup>	103	105	122	162	126
	Pre-Consultation Meetings	525	532	679	567	494
	Consent to sever Applications	141	79	104	102	119
	Minor Variances Applications	459	467	633	752	599
<b>Total Applications Received</b>		<b>1,679</b>	<b>1,647</b>	<b>2,050</b>	<b>2,092</b>	<b>1,740</b>

<sup>1</sup> Major and minor site plans are determined based on the value of construction work proposed in the Regional right-of-way. More complex right-of-way works require more detailed review.

<sup>2</sup> No Regional requirements e.g., not adjacent to a Regional road or infrastructure, source water protection area. Applications are received for information purposes only.

**Proposed residential units received through new applications in 2023 decreased by 6% from previous year**

There were 4,688 units received as part of new draft plan of subdivision applications in 2023 compared to 3,168 units received in 2022, representing a 48% increase. There were 15,650 proposed residential units received for review as part of new site plan applications compared to 18,547 units received in 2022, representing a 19% decrease (Table 2). Overall, the total number of proposed residential units received by the Region in 2023 for review decreased by 6%. Development activity fluctuates and is dependent on factors, many outside the Region’s control. Multiple high-density residential development applications were received for Richmond Hill and Vaughan, increasing proposed residential units as part of site plan applications. In 2023, proposed residential units as part of site plan applications were lower than 2022, which experienced a spike in units, but were higher than 2019-2021 totals.

**Table 2  
Proposed Residential Units Received in 2019 to 2023**

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Proposed Subdivision Units <sup>1</sup> (Single/Semi/Townhouse)	1,776	5,781	1,692	3,168	4,688
Proposed Site Plan units <sup>2</sup>	7,428	13,637	12,353	18,547	15,650
<b>Total proposed units</b>	9,204	19,418	14,045	21,715	20,338

<sup>1</sup> Proposed residential units associated with draft plan of subdivision applications (no apartments).

<sup>2</sup> Proposed residential site plan units. Units include site plan applications with no regional requirements.

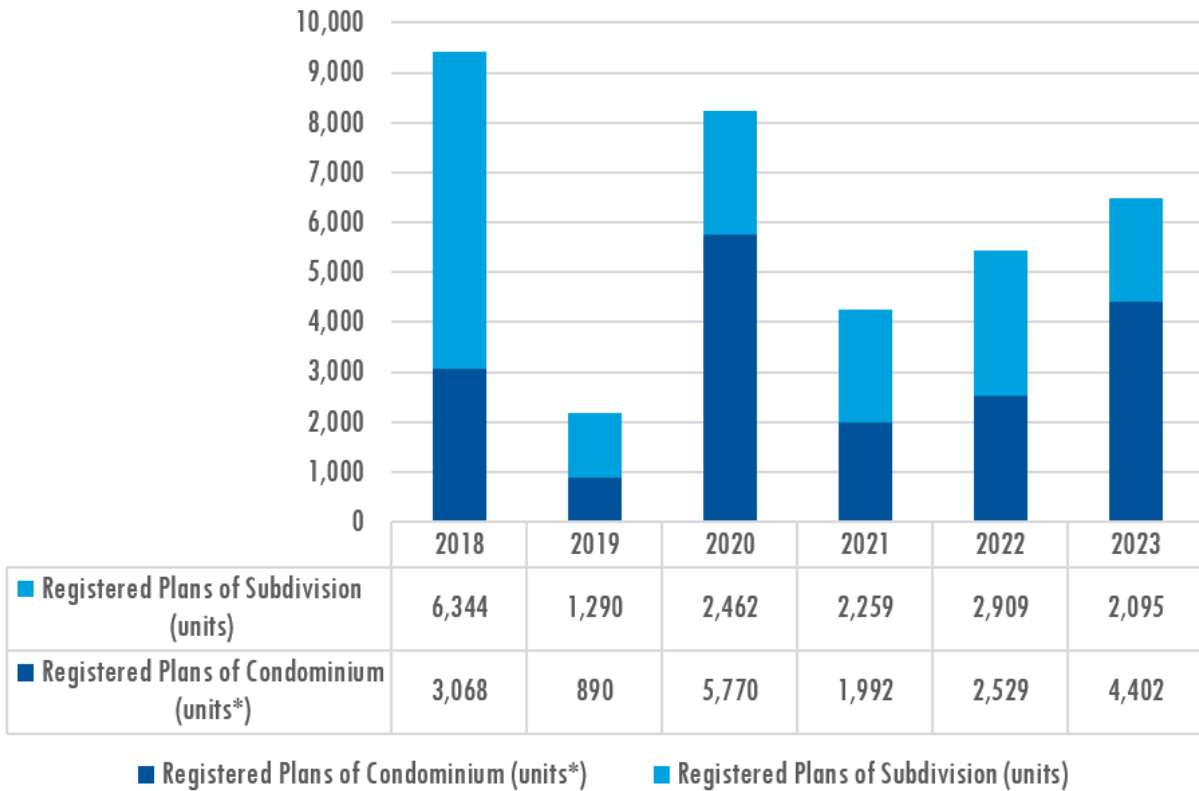
**Total residential units registered in 2023 increased by 17% from 2022**

In 2023, 36 registered plans of subdivision and condominium applications were submitted compared to 64 in 2022 (Table 3). The associated residential units registered from those applications increased from 5,438 registered units in 2022 to 6,497 in 2023, representing a 17% increase (Figure 1). The number of registered units fluctuates year to year. In 2023, the Region received an increased number of proposed apartment/condo units through draft plan of condominium applications. There are 76,800 residential units under review, approved and registered.

**Table 3**  
**Registered Plans of Subdivision and Condominium in 2019 to 2023**

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Registered Plans of Subdivision	21	26	30	44	26
Registered Plans of Condominium	24	35	18	20	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>36</b>

**Figure 1**  
**Registered Plans of Subdivision and Condominium Units 2018 to 2023**



\*Includes apartment units

## Site plan applications requiring and receiving Regional approval decreased slightly in 2023

Site plan applications are reviewed for planning and legal considerations in accordance with the *Planning Act*, including approval of engineering works within the Region’s road right of way, Regional infrastructure connection, protection of Regional wellheads, property requirements, travel demand management, transit, intersection and access design, road and servicing design, and development implications to the Regional road system and rights-of-way. Site plan applications range from small ground related infill to major development proposals. Minor and major site plan applications contribute towards residential and non-residential inventory.

York Region provides conditions of site plan approval to local municipalities and enters into agreements to ensure Regional requirements and interests are protected. Appendix A shows the development review process along with *Planning Act* timelines versus applicant driven timeline.

In 2023, 123 site plan applications received Regional comments and approval compared to 135 approvals in 2022, representing a 9% decrease (Table 4). The number of new minor and major site plan applications received in 2023 (Table 1) decreased significantly compared to the last five years. The reduction of new site plan applications is in part a result of Bill 23 where residential developments with no more than 10 residential units do not require site plan applications. Similarly, the number of site plan applications with no Regional requirements decreased by 22% from last year but are higher than 2019-2021 totals. These types of site plans include, but are not limited to, site alternation, additions to existing structure, infill development not on a Regional road, utility projects and access modifications. The number of site plans approved remained consistent since 2019 (Table 4) and reflects steady intensification in built-up areas of the Region.

**Table 4**  
**Approval of Regional Requirements as Part Site Plan Applications**

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Approved Site Plan Applications <sup>1</sup>	120	106	126	135	123

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

## Engineering approvals remained consistent compared to 2022 and 5-year average

Engineering approvals are issued for works proposed as part of subdivision applications or local municipal capital projects involving Regional infrastructure or located in the Region’s right-of-way. Engineering applications remained consistent with 46 applications received in 2023 compared with the previous four years (Table 1). There was a slight increase from the 39 engineering applications received in 2022.



Approvals were issued for 25 subdivision-related engineering plans and other projects in 2023, consistent with the 5-year average (Table 5). These applications involve above-ground and below ground engineering works, including intersection and access improvements, road widening, electrical and signalization, storm, water, and sanitary servicing connections, property grading and construction access. The number of engineering applications is tied to approvals required for subdivision applications to proceed to clearance for registration. Given the new engineering applications received and a consistent number of engineering approvals, steady growth is expected to continue as these applications proceed to registration and construction.

**Table 5**  
**Approval of Regional Requirements as Part Engineering Applications**

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Approved Engineering Applications	29	25	41	25	25

**Region has an approved housing supply of an estimated 73,100 units**

Development application data is monitored by the Region’s development tracking system YorkTrax. At the end of 2023, York Region had an approved housing supply of approximately 73,100 units. 56,500 units are either draft approved or registered. Based on the Region’s approved Regional Official Plan forecast, this represents a housing supply of greater than 7 years of growth, which is within the Provincially mandated 3-to-7-year supply of draft approved and registered units.

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

Development Services staff participate in Regional and local Technical Advisory Committees and Project Working Groups. This includes local Official Plan updates, Secondary Plans for urban expansion areas and Major Transit Station Areas. Input to these committees and working groups helps to identify Regional interests early in the planning process. Additionally, Region staff review pre-consultation requests to provide comments and submission requirements for future development applications.

## 5. Financial Considerations

### Application fee revenues slightly increased over the past year

Development application fees are collected in accordance with Regional Bylaw No. 2020-04, as amended, for land use planning approvals and commenting for the plan review function. As shown in Table 6, Regional development fees collected in 2023 remained consistent compared to 2022.

**Table 6**  
**2022-2023 Fee Revenue for Development Planning and Engineering**

2022	2023
\$5,130,069	\$5,267,462

### Development charge collections of \$240.4M in 2023 is a 58% decrease from 2022

Development charges (DCs) are collected from approved development to recover costs for growth-related infrastructure. Currently, DCs are collected at subdivision registration and building permit issuance (Appendix A). In 2023, \$240.4M in DCs were collected (Table 7), a 58% decrease compared to 2022 (\$568.1M). A decrease was anticipated as part of the 2023 budget as this type of reduction in the year following a development charge bylaw update is typical. High interest rates, labour shortage and material costs are also influencing the slower housing market and construction activity.

On November 28, 2022, *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* (Bill 23), made changes to the Development Charges Act, 1997, including removing Housing Services as a development charges eligible service and introducing new phasing provisions. The new phasing provisions, which applied to DC Bylaw 2022-31, provide that when a new DC bylaw is passed, the full DC rates must be phased-in, beginning at 80% of the new rate in the first year of the bylaw, 85% in the second year, 90% in the third year, 95% in the fourth year and 100% of the rates in the fifth and subsequent years of the bylaw.

Historical development charge collections for the past 5 years are shown in Table 7. Further details related to development charges can be found in the 2023 Development Charge Reserve Fund Statement.

**Table 7**  
**Development Charges Collected from 2019 to 2023**

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
\$216.6M	\$279.3M	\$457.3M	\$568.1M	\$240.4M

## 6. Local Impact

### **Region and local municipalities collectively advance work to streamline development review process**

Regional and local municipal staff work closely to streamline processes and ensure timely review of development applications, Regional and local policy objectives are met, and approvals occur within the timelines prescribed by *the Planning Act*. Development application data is shared and is vital for assessing growth to plan for growth-enabling infrastructure and monitoring development trends. In 2021, the Region received funding from the Province through the Audit and Accountability Fund to investigate opportunities to modernize the development approval process in the Region. A consultant was hired to identify efficiencies and time savings that could be achieved through data standardization and integration with local municipalities and commenting agencies (e.g. School Boards). As a result, a new consistent process known as the ‘Collaborative Application Preparation’ process was implemented by the Region and local municipalities to ensure high-quality applications were received to be deemed complete for review and decision.

Region and nine local municipal partners and Conservation Authorities are working together to develop planning data standards that include a common application form, common terms of reference and a consistent process to streamline application submission requirements. This work will improve the customer experience and provide a more efficient process to support the Province’s target to build 1.5 million homes in Ontario over the next 10 years.

## 7. Conclusion

2023 Annual Development Activity report summarizes delegated approvals and new development applications received by the Region in 2023 compared to recent years, using data collected from YorkTrax, to inform Council.

Regional staff will continue to work closely with local municipal partners to achieve Regional and local policy objectives, implement the provisions of Bill 23, once proclaimed, and implement opportunities to streamline the approval process to ensure approvals are met within the timelines prescribed by *the Planning Act*.

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For more information on this report, please contact Asif Abbas at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 77271.  
Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

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March 25, 2024  
#15999242

Appendix A - Development Process and DC Collection  
Attachment 1 - 2023 Annual Development Activity Summary by Local Municipality

Development Process and DC Collection

