

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Planning and Economic Development
October 10, 2019

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

An Update on Public Consultations for the Municipal Comprehensive Review

1. Recommendations

The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the clerks of local municipalities for information.

2. Summary

This report provides an update on the public consultations during 2018 and 2019 for the Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) [Regional Official Plan](#) (ROP) update, review of long range community aspirations articulated in [Vision 2051](#) and outlines the next phases of consultation.

Key Points:

- York Region is currently undertaking a Municipal Comprehensive Review to update the Regional Official Plan and the Region's long term vision document Vision 2051
- A number of engagement methods are being used to consult with community members from all nine local municipalities
- Feedback gained through public consultations helps inform York Region Official Plan policies to reflect community needs, guide long-range planning for growth and development and help to determine the long term vision for York Region
- Consultation to date indicates that residents and workers want compact, walkable communities with affordable housing options that are close to community services and cultural events, desire the protection of green spaces and support continued investment in public transit infrastructure
- Public engagement and consultations will continue to inform the policy development process and future growth and development in York Region

3. Background

The Municipal Comprehensive Review informs the update of the Regional Official Plan

The Provincial government requires York Region to update population and employment forecasts to 2041, undertake a land needs assessment and review official plan policies to conform to Provincial direction. To plan for and accommodate growth and development in York Region, Regional staff are currently undertaking the MCR process to update the ROP. [Council approved a consultation work plan in January 2018](#) that provides the framework to manage and coordinate engagement and communication to a wide variety of external and internal audiences. This work plan takes an integrated approach of combining consultation on the MCR, ROP and Vision 2051 to achieve fulsome input and feedback from the public and other stakeholders. A number of reports are presented to Council leading to the development of a draft updated Regional Official Plan as outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1
MCR Workplan**

| Timing | Status | Report Title |
|---------|--------|--|
| Q1 2019 | ✓ | Employment Land Conversion Criteria |
| Q2 2019 | ✓ | Planning for Intensification - including draft MTSA's |
| | ✓ | Planning for Employment - including trends analysis |
| | ✓ | Implementing the Agricultural System |
| Q3 2019 | ✓ | Growth and Infrastructure Alignment |
| Q4 2019 | | Update on Public Consultation |
| | | Employment Area Conversion Process Update |
| Q1 2020 | | Planning for Growth - including draft forecast and land needs, and employment conversion recommendations |
| | | Major Transit Station Areas Update |
| | | Natural Heritage Planning |
| | | Policy Directions Report |
| Q2 2020 | | Intensification and MTSA's - Final Recommendations |
| | | Climate Change |
| | | Planning for Employment - Final Recommendations |

Public consultation is integral to York Region’s policy development process

Public consultation is an integral component of the MCR process to inform the policies in the ROP. The goal of seeking public input is to help support York Region in building communities that are healthy, safe and complete, where residents are involved in planning the future of their cities and towns. Consultation approaches to date were selected based on the objective of increasing public participation and using researched best practices for effective engagement.

Technical consultations are occurring alongside public consultations

Technical consultations are occurring alongside public engagement efforts for the MCR. This includes staff engaging all internal departments through a number of working groups and presenting to Regional committees on the MCR process. Staff will continue to engage committees and working groups throughout the update of the ROP and policy development process. Staff are also completing technical engagements with local municipalities and the development industry on a topic specific basis. Staff have and will continue to provide regular updates to BILD throughout the MCR process.

In addition to the methods used to date, staff are engaging on consultations for policy specific topics to support the update of ROP policies. This includes landowner engagements, meetings with the development industry, consulting on employment conversion requests and draft Major Transit Station Areas, as well as presentations to local municipal councils by the Chief Planner.

As technical consultations are ongoing, this report focuses on the broader feedback received to date through community engagement with residents and workers, with ongoing and additional consultations planned up until adoption of the ROP. Results from further public consultations and technical consultations will be presented alongside the draft ROP in 2020.

Effective engagement requires a diverse mix of consultation techniques

In order to effectively engage the public, a diverse range of methods are used through the consultation process. These methods have included:

- Online surveys asking residents about what they want for their communities now and in the future
- Guided walks with the Chief Planner to learn about growth and long term plans across York Region
- Interactive mapping to support public awareness of MTSAs, where they are located and what future growth could look like within MTSAs that allows for feedback and public input
- Community Agency Forum to consult with agency staff that serve York Region residents

- Local municipal public information sessions or community events attended by Regional staff for MCR engagement
- Social media campaigns, including online polls and photo contests to engage the public and educate them on planning and development in York Region in an interactive way

A mixture of in-person and online methods are used to engage with residents and workers across the local municipalities. A number of communication tools have helped to inform the public of opportunities to share their ideas and are promoted through a variety of communication channels, including social media, York.ca website, an MCR newsletter, posters and newspaper ads.

4. Analysis

During the public consultation process to date, a number of key themes were identified by residents, businesses and workers in York Region

The following key themes have been identified from the consultations so far. Generally, the public:

- Wants compact, walkable communities that offer employment opportunities, community facilities, services, stores and places for social connection
- Identified affordable housing as one of the most important components for building complete communities, but many residents identify they struggle with housing affordability in the current housing market
- Want their communities to produce fewer emissions and are aware of the impacts of a changing climate on York Region
- Identified the protection of forests, parks, trails and green spaces across communities and protecting agricultural lands from development as key priorities
- Identified transit as the top regional service that will be relied on most in the future and support continued investment in public transit infrastructure, particularly subway extensions and GO transit frequency enhancements

A brochure identifying these themes has been posted on the [MCR website](#) alongside the summary document (Attachment 1) of consultation to date.

The findings to date align with the community result areas and eight goal areas outlined in the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan and Vision 2051. The results from public consultations outlined in this report will help inform the recommended update to Vision and will be used to support development of the policies outlined in the updated ROP.

Consultation and engagement is an ongoing process to inform the Regional Official Plan update

Staff are continuing to consult with the public to support the development of strategic documents and gather input on how to best plan for the future. As a result, public consultation is an ongoing process that will continue alongside technical consultations informing the development of a draft ROP update in 2020.

A series of targeted consultations are planned to augment traditional engagement methods

Staff are planning a series of targeted consultations to engage residents that are often under-represented through traditional engagement methods. A targeted approach is required to ensure awareness and the opportunity for under-represented populations to inform the MCR process. In particular, seniors, youth, newcomers and persons with disabilities are generally under-represented using traditional engagement methods and a targeted consultation approach is required. The MCR consultation work plan is assessed and evaluated to promote representation from a diverse mix of community groups and demographics to ensure inclusive and representative engagement.

Engaging Indigenous peoples is a core component of the MCR

Engagement with Indigenous peoples will be distinct from public and stakeholder communications and engagement plans, operating in a parallel process to other MCR consultations. Building on initial MCR engagement in 2014 and with the assistance of a consultant, engagement with Indigenous peoples will inform the development of the ROP. Staff anticipate facilitating a series of meetings with Indigenous peoples. Throughout this process, staff aim to continue existing relationships and build new relationships with Indigenous peoples across York Region.

5. Financial

All costs associated with public consultations and engagement is addressed within the approved Planning and Economic Development budget.

6. Local Impact

Local municipalities are key partners in planning for the future and engaging with communities. Throughout the MCR process, Regional staff are working alongside local municipal staff to partner in effective community engagement. The consultation results have been presented and shared with local municipal staff through the MCR Local Municipal Working Group, which meets on a regular basis.

In updating the ROP, Regional staff will continue to work in partnership with local municipal staff to address feedback and findings from public consultations. In addition, local

municipalities can use the findings and information to support their local planning initiatives and plans for growth that align with public interests and specific community needs. Regional staff will continue to seek opportunities to partner with local municipalities to engage communities and will continue to participate in community events hosted by local municipal staff.

7. Conclusion

Public engagement across all nine local cities and towns is integral to building communities where residents across every age and stage of life can live, work and play. Public consultations are integral to supporting the development of strategies, policies and plans Regional Council endorses and inform the everyday work of Regional staff. Public consultations and engagement help to develop and affirm the ways that York Region builds complete communities now and in the future.

This report summarizes the findings from the consultation to date and methods used to inform the ROP policy development process. Public consultations remain a key priority and engagement efforts will continue to educate the public and provide opportunities for residents and workers to inform the planning and economic development of York Region through the update of the ROP.

For more information on this report, please contact Danielle De Fields at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71525. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

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Attachments (1)
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