



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: February 15, 2022

SUBJECT: Overview of draft Regional Official Plan

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REVIEWED BY: Darryl Lyons, R.P.P., M.C.I.P., Senior Manager, Policy & Research (x. 2459)

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the staff report entitled “Overview of draft Regional Official Plan” dated February 15, 2022, be received;
- 2) And further that staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this staff report is to provide an initial overview of the draft Regional Official Plan (ROP) that was released for public consultation on November 25, 2021, to provide a recap of previous City of Markham input into the official plan review process, and to outline key areas that staff anticipate will be the focus of City comments on the draft ROP that is targeted for Development Services Committee in March 2022.

BACKGROUND:

In accordance with Section 26 of the *Planning Act*, York Region is required to review its Official Plan to conform to Provincial policies and plans including the Provincial Policy Statement 2020, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019 (Growth Plan), Greenbelt Plan, 2017 and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, 2017. The York Region Official Plan guides long-term strategic planning with policies that accommodate future growth and development within York Region municipalities while meeting the needs of existing residents and businesses, and working towards the Region’s vision of strong, caring and safe communities. York Region Council adopted the current, in effect, York Region Official Plan in 2009.

The [draft Regional Official Plan \(ROP\)](#) was released for public consultation at Regional Council on November 25, 2021 and comments are requested from local municipalities by March 31, 2022. The draft ROP has been prepared by the Region and the process has included extensive participation and input from local municipalities throughout the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) process. A virtual statutory open house was held by the Region on January 25, 2022 to obtain input on the draft ROP. The Region will continue to receive feedback on the draft ROP through its website, and a statutory public meeting will be held in May 2022.

York Region is required by the Province to bring their official plan into conformity with the Growth Plan by July 1, 2022. It is understood that York Region staff are targeting

bringing forward a final ROP for Regional Council adoption before the Provincial deadline. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority for the ROP, and the Minister's decision is not subject to appeal, pursuant to the *Planning Act*.

DISCUSSION:**York Region has released a draft new Regional Official Plan for the purposes of ongoing consultation**

The draft ROP contains 7 chapters including an introduction and purpose; the foundation for complete communities; a sustainable natural environment; an urbanizing region; supporting the agricultural system; servicing our communities; and implementation of the Official Plan.

On [November 11, 2021](#), York Region staff had brought forward a report to its Committee of the Whole that highlights the key elements of the draft ROP:

- **Population and employment forecasts to 2051** – York Region is required to plan for a population of 2.02 million people and 990,000 jobs by 2051. This represents approximately an additional 800,000 people and 345,000 jobs between 2021 and 2051. The draft ROP proposes to allocate 256,700 people and 108,500 jobs to City of Markham from 2021 to 2051. By 2051, the draft ROP proposes to allocate approximately 30% of the Region's population and employment to the City of Markham, which is 608,500 people and 301,700 jobs.
- **Updated Regional structure to accommodate growth while protecting agricultural and natural systems** – The Regional structure is updated to accommodate population and employment growth to 2051, while protecting agricultural and natural systems. Policies were refined and enhanced with updated mapping. Map 1 shows the updated Regional Structure made up of Urban System, Greenlands System and Agricultural System. Map 1A proposes land use designations such as Community Areas, Employment Areas, Agricultural and Rural Areas. Map 1B shows the Built-up Area, the designated greenfield area and MTSAs. Map 1C shows the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Greenbelt designations.
- **New policies and map schedules to designate and delineate employment areas and Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) that are now required by the Growth Plan** – Employment area designations are shown in Map 1A and employment density targets for each employment area are outlined in Appendix 1 of the draft ROP. The employment policy framework has been updated to introduce core and supporting employment areas in local official plans. Core employment areas are employment areas that are in proximity to 400-series highways and are incompatible with non-employment uses such as noxious uses and/or land extensive employment uses (manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, etc.) Supporting employment areas are those areas on the periphery of employment areas and maybe candidates for mixed employment uses because of

their location within existing or proposed intensification areas. A total of 78 MTSAs have been identified with minimum density targets in Appendix 2 of the draft ROP. Of those, 24 MTSAs are in Markham.

- **New housing policies include purpose-built rental housing targets for each municipality and consideration of inclusionary zoning** - The draft ROP introduces targets for purpose-built rental housing for each municipality and policies that municipalities consider implementing inclusionary zoning. Minimum affordable housing targets have been changed and, as proposed, will be required to be met in each municipality as opposed to Region-wide. Land supply and additional dwelling unit policies are updated to meet current Provincial requirements.
- **Phasing policies to support infrastructure alignment and accommodate growth in new community areas (urban expansion areas)** – Policies were updated with the intent to align future growth with infrastructure. New phasing policies are proposed for new community areas (urban expansion areas) to accommodate growth to 2051. Lands not required for growth to 2051 are identified as Future Urban Areas as shown on Map 1B of the draft ROP. Existing policies to support implementation of the Region’s Transportation Master Plan (TMP) and the Water and Wastewater Master Plan (WWMP) are updated and refined with the intent to align growth with transportation and servicing infrastructure.
- **Employment conversion requests and MTSA delineations were evaluated in consultation with input from City of Markham** – Throughout the MCR process, over 150 site specific submissions Region wide, related to employment land conversions, inclusion in urban boundary, agricultural and rural designations and MTSA delineations were addressed in reports brought to Regional Council. City of Markham’s input on these requests related to Markham are outlined in the section below.

City of Markham has provided comments on key policy areas to inform York Region’s Official Plan review that is being undertaken through a Municipal Comprehensive Review process

Throughout the Official Plan review process, Markham Council and Development Services Committee (DSC) have provided input on key policy areas, including Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs), employment conversion requests, and the land needs assessment. Extensive consultation was undertaken on each of the key policy areas to inform City input. Below is a summary of the consultation and decisions for each of the key policy areas.

Major Transit Station Areas

The Growth Plan requires upper-tier municipalities, in consultation with lower-tier municipalities, to define the boundaries and assign density targets for MTSAs located on the priority transit corridors identified in Schedule 5 of the Growth Plan in Official Plans. An MTSA is generally defined as the area surrounding a higher order transit station within a 500-800 metre radius, representing about a 10-minute walk.

On [May 14, 2019](#), Markham Council directed staff to host a community information meeting in June 2019 to obtain input on MTSAs to inform the City's comments to York Region. The meeting was held on June 11, 2019, and participants were generally receptive of the draft MTSAs and emphasized the need to continue investing in transit infrastructure and services in Markham.

On [July 14, 2020](#), Markham Council supported the comments and recommendations regarding the draft MTSAs in a staff report to DSC. The staff report also summarized input received through stakeholder and public consultation in June 2019, and included staff comments on the 24 MTSAs within Markham. Staff was generally in agreement with the Region's draft MTSA delineations and minimum density targets but recommended certain revisions to reflect local conditions and site specific concerns. Markham Council also requested York Region to bring forward a ROPA to implement MTSAs and include inclusionary zoning policies in advance of completion of the MCR and adoption of a new ROP to enable local municipalities to require the provision of affordable housing in MTSAs as soon as possible.

In alignment with Markham Council input, Regional Council endorsed for inclusion in the Regional Official Plan the boundary delineations, minimum density targets and preliminary policy directions for the 24 MTSAs in Markham at its meeting on [September 24, 2020](#).

Employment Conversion Requests

The Growth Plan requires that upper-tier municipalities, in consultation with lower-tier municipalities, to designate all employment areas in official plans and protect them for appropriate employment uses over the long-term. The conversion of lands within employment areas to non-employment uses may only be permitted through an MCR subject to specific conversion criteria.

On [May 14, 2019](#), Markham Council adopted a DSC recommendation to invite landowners with employment conversion requests to delegate at a future Committee meeting to provide input on employment conversion requests based on the Region's conversion criteria. The DSC meeting was held on [September 23, 2019](#) and landowners with employment conversion requests made deputations.

On [September 24, 2019](#), Markham Council deferred consideration of the employment conversion requests identified in the staff report following the September 23, 2019, DSC

meeting to receive input on employment conversion requests from landowners. Markham Council also directed that a sub-committee be established to review York Region's Draft Employment Framework. The sub-committee held four meetings between October and early December 2019. At the meetings, both staff and applicants presented their positions on the requests for conversion.

On [February 25, 2020](#), Markham Council requested that the direction from DSC on the 11 requests for employment land conversion be forwarded to York Region as Markham Council's input on the Region's MCR. In alignment with Markham Council's position, Regional Council approved four site specific employment conversion requests and did not approve two site specific employment conversion requests in [October 22, 2020](#). At the same meeting, Regional Council also referred five site specific employment area conversion requests to City of Markham for a decision.

On [May 26, 2021](#), Markham Council supported the conversion of one conversion request, and did not support the conversion of two conversion requests. Markham Council further requested the Region to continue to defer a decision on the request by Cornell Rouge Development Corporation, Varlese Brothers et al to convert 17.9 hectares north of Highway 7 and west of Reesor Rd (M4), and the request by Norfinch Group (M7) to convert 0.75 hectares at the southwest corner of Highway 7 and Reesor Road from employment area to non-employment area uses until, at latest, the release of the draft Regional Official Plan. Markham Council also requested the Region to initiate the next MCR no later than 3 years following adoption of the ROP. In line with Markham Council's position, Regional Council approved one site specific conversion request, did not approve two site specific conversion requests, and deferred making a decision on the two conversion requests in Cornell pending a decision from City of Markham prior to adoption of the ROP on [June 24, 2021](#).

Land Needs Assessment

The Growth Plan requires that municipalities use the standardized Provincial Land Needs Assessment Methodology to determine land needs to the planning horizon of 2051. The methodology determines the quantum of land needed to accommodate forecasted growth, including the need for any urban expansion. This is completed at a region-wide scale. In March 2021, the Region released its draft land needs assessment based on a 50% intensification target and designated greenfield density of 60 residents and jobs per hectare in conformity with the Growth Plan.

On [May 4, 2021](#), Markham Council directed staff to undertake public consultation on the Region's proposed forecast and land needs assessment to 2051, and to report back to Council with comments for submission to York Region.

On [July 12, 2021](#), Markham staff reported back to DSC with recommended comments to the Region based on input received during consultation. The Committee deferred making a decision on the staff recommendations, and requested further analysis.

On [September 16, 2021](#), Regional Council directed staff to proceed with a phased 50-55% intensification scenario in the updated Regional Official Plan, specifically 50% intensification annually to 2041 and 55% intensification annually from 2041 to 2051.

On [October 18, 2021](#), DSC recommended that Markham Council support a Region-wide 60% intensification scenario. On [October 21, 2021](#), Regional Council endorsed the phased 50-55% intensification scenario and directed Regional Staff to include urban expansion lands based on this target in the draft ROP. On [October 26, 2021](#), Markham Council deferred a decision regarding the October 18, 2021 DSC resolution and referred the item back to staff. Markham staff brought forward an information report on [December 6, 2021](#) that provided an overview of the implications for Markham of the Regional Council decision on October 21, 2021 to base the 2051 growth forecast and lands needs assessment on a phased 50-55% Region-wide intensification rate. The report also outlined the opportunity to provide further Markham Council input through commenting on the draft ROP, and identified next steps in confirming Markham's intensification target.

City of Markham Council will have the opportunity to provide further input, as staff are targeting a report to Development Services Committee with comprehensive comments on the draft ROP in March

In addition to input provided by Markham Council and DSC on the various policy areas as input into the Regional Official Plan Review process, Markham Council will continue to have opportunity to provide further input, as staff are targeting a report to DSC with comprehensive comments in March 2022. Staff anticipate that the March report will provide City comments on the draft ROP, and have a focus on phasing policies to guide and direct growth, including infrastructure in new community areas (urban expansion lands), employment area and mapping policies, and housing policies.

NEXT STEPS:

Staff are targeting a report to DSC in March 2022 with comments on the draft ROP.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The recommendations in this report support Goal 3 – Safe, Sustainable and Complete Community in Building Markham's Future Together, 2020-2023.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Planning and Urban Design, Transportation and Engineering departments have been consulted on this report. All City departments are reviewing the Region's draft Official Plan.

RECOMMENDED BY:

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