



# Town of Newmarket Council Information Package

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Date: November 12, 2021

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### **Proclamation, Lighting Requests and Community Flag Raising**

There were no requests during this period.

### **Information Reports**

There were no information reports distributed during this period.

## **Regional Council Decision - Vacant Homes Tax to Support Affordable Housing**

On October 28, 2021 Regional Council made the following decision:

1. Council direct staff to develop a feasibility study and public benefits review of a Vacant Homes Tax in York Region.
2. Any revenues from a Vacant Homes Tax, net of costs, be used to support affordable housing initiatives.
3. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Ministries of Finance and Municipal Affairs and Housing, the local municipalities, and the local Chambers of Commerce/Boards of Trade.

The original staff report is attached for your information.

Please contact Edward Hankins, Director, Treasury Office and Deputy Treasurer at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71644 if you have any questions with respect to this matter.

Regards,

**Christopher Raynor** | Regional Clerk, Office of the Regional Clerk, Corporate Services

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# The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole  
Finance and Administration  
October 14, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Finance, the Commissioner of Community and Health Services and the Chief Planner

## Vacant Homes Tax to Support Affordable Housing

### 1. Recommendations

1. Council direct staff to develop a feasibility study and public benefits review of a Vacant Homes Tax in York Region.
2. Any revenues from a Vacant Homes Tax, net of costs, be used to support affordable housing initiatives.
3. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Ministries of Finance and Municipal Affairs and Housing, the local municipalities, and the local Chambers of Commerce/Boards of Trade.

### 2. Summary

In 2017, the *Municipal Act, 2001* ("Act") was amended to allow municipalities designated by the Minister of Finance and who have an enabling bylaw, to impose a Vacant Homes Tax ("Tax") on the assessed value of vacant residential properties. Given housing affordability concerns in York Region, staff plan to study the potential for a Vacant Homes Tax to improve the availability of rental units in the secondary market and fund affordable housing projects. This report has been prepared to seek Council opinion on the advisability of proceeding with a study.

#### Key Points:

- In May 2021, the Region established the Housing Affordability Task Force with a mandate to identify solutions to housing affordability problems
- Other than the City of Toronto, only municipalities that are 'designated' by the Province are eligible to levy this Tax. To date, no municipality has been designated in Ontario
- Any municipality wishing to levy this Tax must have an enabling bylaw that:
  - identifies the tax rate
  - identifies conditions of vacancy, and



- includes matters considered appropriate such as potential exemptions, rebates etc.
- 1% - 2% Region-wide Tax could potentially generate between approximately \$15 million and \$90 million in gross revenues in the first year

### 3. Background

#### The need for more affordable housing options in York Region is well-established

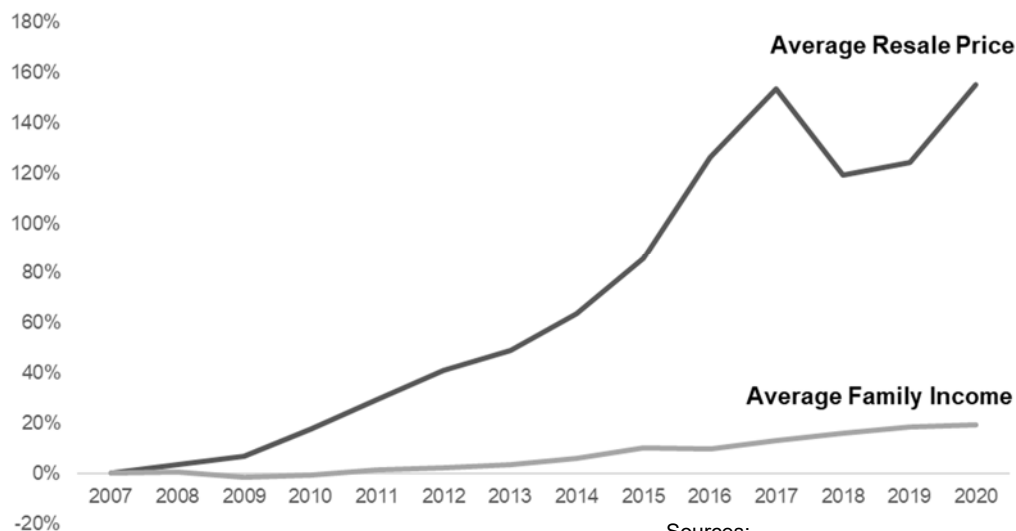
Complete communities include rental and ownership housing options that meet the needs of residents of all ages, stages and abilities. A variety of affordable housing options supports economic development, is a major contributor to individual and community health and well-being, and, as was communicated to Council in [January 2021](#), is required to support growth projections in the Regional Official Plan (ROP).

The annual affordable housing monitoring exercise measures the affordability of new homes against affordability thresholds calculated based on Provincial definitions. The 2020 analysis was presented to Council in [June 2021](#) and identified that only 8% of new housing was affordable, well below Regional Official Plan affordable housing targets of 25% across the Region and 35% within centres and corridors.

Housing costs should not exceed 30% of gross income to be affordable. York Region has the highest proportion of households in the GTHA spending over 30% and over 50% of their income on housing costs. One of the key factors impacting housing affordability is that increases to housing prices have far outpaced increases to average incomes. Since 2007 average resale home prices in York Region have increased by over 150% whereas average family income has increased by less than 20%.

**Figure 1**

#### Average Resale House Price and Average Family Income, 2007 to 2020



Sources:  
TRREB Market Watch Report, 2007-2020  
Bank of Canada, Taxfilers data, 2019 & 2020

Rental housing provides more affordable housing opportunities; however, vacancy rates in York Region fall significantly below rates for a healthy rental market and overall supply is low. At 14%, York Region has the lowest proportion of its housing stock in rental tenure in the GTHA. Staff estimate that over 60% of units within the rental stock are in the secondary market. The secondary market helps address the demand for rental housing, but there is need for more affordable supply. In 2020, the vacancy rate for rental condominiums in York Region was 0.9%, well below the 3% vacancy rate that is typically indicative of a healthy rental market. Additions to the rental stock, including in both the primary and secondary markets, are positive contributions to the York Region housing landscape.

### **Affordability challenges contribute to increasing demand for community housing**

As housing supply has not kept pace with residents' needs, it has become increasingly difficult for many residents to find housing they can afford. Low to moderate income households have other complex needs and barriers that can impact their ability to find and keep housing, placing greater pressure on the housing and homelessness system. As a result, York Region's subsidized housing wait list continues to grow, with 15,810 households waiting as of December 2020. York Region's community housing portfolio consists of almost 7,000 subsidized and market units; however, existing stock is insufficient to meet demand.

Between 2008 and 2019, an average of 335 subsidized units became available each year through a combination of tenant turnover and new construction. During the same period, the wait list increased by an average of approximately 1,050 households per year.

### **In 2021, the Region established a Housing Affordability Task Force to help address housing affordability challenges**

In May 2021, the Region established a Housing Affordability Task Force ("Task Force"). The Task Force [identified](#) housing affordability as its mandate and confirmed its commitment to identify solutions to the housing affordability problem which includes evaluating best practices and tools currently available to municipalities.

### **Bill 127, Stronger, Healthier Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2017 introduces the legislative authority for Ontario municipalities to levy the Tax**

The Vacant Homes Tax was one of 16 initiatives under the Province's Fair Housing Plan in 2017 aimed to address housing affordability concerns. Through Bill 127, *Healthier Ontario Act (Budget Measures)*, 2017, the Province amended the Act by adding a new Part IX.1, section 338.2, which provides that designated municipalities may, by bylaw, impose a tax on vacant residential units in certain circumstances<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The City of Toronto, through the *City of Toronto Act, 2006*, does not need to seek designation.

Other than City of Toronto, municipalities need to be ‘designated’ by the Province to levy this Tax. The Province has indicated that the following steps would be required to seek ‘designation’:

- Provide evidence of public consultation
- Provide evidence of local and upper-tier engagement
- Illustrate revenue yields
- Enable a bylaw which identifies tax rate and conditions of vacancy as well as potential exemptions, rebates, etc.

To date, no municipality has been designated in Ontario.

An upper-tier municipality may implement the Tax in certain local municipalities and may set different tax rates in different local municipalities.

Any municipality wishing to levy this Tax must have an enabling bylaw prescribing the tax rate and the conditions of vacancy which, if met, make a home subject to the Tax. The bylaw may also detail how the tax is administered, potential exemptions and rebates, as well as the establishment/use of a dispute resolution mechanism.

Currently, the Act does not prescribe how funds collected from the Tax are to be used. While Council may decide to use revenues from the Tax for any purpose, staff recommend they be directed towards affordable housing initiatives.

### **The City of Vancouver has levied an Empty Homes Tax since 2017**

The City of Vancouver began levying a vacant homes tax in January 2017, with an initial tax rate of 1% of assessed taxable value on residential properties. In 2019, Vancouver Council increased the rate to 1.25%, and has subsequently increased the rate to 3% for 2021. The recent increase to 3% was put forward to further encourage owners of vacant properties to make them available for the rental market, as “homes are for people, not speculation”.

According to the City’s annual report, since implementation of the tax, the number of vacant homes has dropped by 25%. As of late 2020, \$61.3 million of net revenues from the tax have been used to support affordable housing projects.

### **Toronto and Ottawa anticipate levying the Vacant Homes Tax in 2022**

In July 2021, Toronto Council approved staff’s tax design and implementation plan to introduce a 1% Vacant Homes Tax. It is anticipated the enabling bylaw could come into effect January 2022, where tax could become payable in early 2023 based on occupancy status during the prior reference year.

While the number of vacant homes in Toronto is currently unknown, the City anticipates a tax rate of 1% could generate between \$55 million to \$66 million in revenues in its first year. It will take two years to set up the tax and the start-up cost is expected to be between \$10 million and \$13 million.

Likewise, in June of 2021, Ottawa Council approved a plan to impose a 1% tax on its vacant homes. It is estimated that the tax would generate about \$6.6 million in its first year in 2022 with billing to begin in 2023 with an estimated 1,500 vacant properties. The City anticipates it will take two and a half years to set up the tax and the cost is expected to be approximately \$3.5 million. Ongoing cost is estimated to be \$1.3 million annually to cover staffing costs, billing, printing, communication, audit and dispute resolution expense.

### **Many other Ontario municipalities have either reported on, or intend to report on, this Tax**

In addition to Toronto and Ottawa, many of the Region's neighbouring municipalities have, or intend to, report on this Tax. Table 1 provides further details through an interjurisdictional scan of Ontario municipalities. Internationally, Israel, the United Kingdom, Paris and Melbourne have all instituted forms of this Tax in the past

**Table 1**  
**Interjurisdictional Scan\***

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Reporting Detail</b>
	Reported to Council in January 2021
Peel	Established a working group to undertake a feasibility and benefit study Prepared a RFP for a consultant to prepare a Feasibility Study and Public Benefit Review report
	Memo to Council in October 2021
Halton	Preparing an RFP for a consultant to prepare a Feasibility Study and Public Benefit Review report
Niagara	Reported to Council in April 2020
	Reported to Council in July 2021
Hamilton	Council provided direction to develop a framework Public consultation in progress September 2021
Mississauga	Reported to Council in March 2021 and to report back by end 2021
St. Catharines	August 2019 - Endorsed the concept of a vacant homes tax Resolution submitted to Niagara Region

\* In July 2021, Markham staff were directed by council to investigate and report back in Q4 2021 on options related to a vacant home tax and that this report would include an assessment of the effectiveness of vacant home taxes in other municipalities, the impact of a vacant home tax on affordable housing supply and the resources required to implement a vacant home tax.

## The Region has previously requested additional revenue tools and sources from the Province

Beginning in 2015, Regional Council requested City of Toronto revenue-raising powers, specifically the Municipal Land Transfer tax and the Vehicle Registration Tax. Despite receiving a response from the Province, in 2018, indicating that they could not grant this request, efforts have continued through Council reports (e.g., [Fiscal Sustainability: 2020 Update](#)), letters from the Chair and [Provincial Budget submission](#).

Regional Council, through Council reports ([Draft Rental Housing Incentives Guideline and Community Improvement Plan](#), and [Fiscal Sustainability: 2020](#)) and [Provincial budget submissions](#), has also requested that the Province allocate funds from the Non-Resident Speculation Tax, collected in York Region, to support York Region rental housing incentives. Thus far, no response from the Province has been received.

## 4. Analysis

### Implementing the Tax would require an approach for determining vacancy

Determining and defining what constitutes a vacant home is not prescribed in the Act and is within municipal jurisdiction. Similar to homeowners in Vancouver, it is expected that those in Toronto and Ottawa will be required to make a mandatory declaration, by a specified cut off date, as to whether their property was vacant. Generally speaking, a property would be considered vacant if it has been unoccupied for more than six months during the calendar year, or if a declaration is not made, it is then deemed to be vacant in accordance with the enabling bylaw.

Other models to determine vacancy are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Options to determine Vacancy**

Option	Considerations
Mandatory Declaration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every residential property owner would be required to declare</li> <li>• Homeowners who do not report status would be deemed vacant</li> </ul>
Vacant Property Declaration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only self-identified vacant property homeowners will be required to declare</li> <li>• Those deemed vacant through audit and failed to declare vacant status will be subject to fines or penalties</li> <li>• Onus is placed on vacant property homeowners</li> </ul>
Reported Vacancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying vacant properties through notification and/or complaint to bylaw services</li> <li>• Commonly considered a less effective approach to identify vacant properties</li> <li>• Discourages community environment</li> </ul>

## The enabling Bylaw could also provide for exemptions from the Tax as well as methods for dispute resolution

While not required under the Act, the enabling Bylaw could provide for exemptions (as well as rebates) from the Tax. Looking at what the City of Vancouver has done, exemptions could include:

- If the tenants, previously occupying the home, are in a care facility (e.g., long term care or hospital)
- If the property was empty due to the death of the owner
- Where a court order prohibits occupancy

Finally, the enabling bylaw should provide for methods of dispute resolution. Homeowners, who dispute the levying of the Tax, should have a right of redress, likely through a complaint process. In Vancouver, supplementary evidence to substantiate that the property was not vacant, and was indeed occupied, is required when filing a complaint.

## Staff estimate this Tax could generate between approximately \$15 million and \$90 million in its first year

Assuming vacancy rates ranging from 0.5% to 1.5% and applying a tax rate of 1% to 2%, staff estimate that the first-year, gross revenues of a Region-wide tax could range from approximately \$15 million to \$90 million. Table 3 provides a further breakdown of these revenue estimates.

Several factors were identified that can materially affect the revenue potential from this tax, including:

Tax rates and the assessment value of properties deemed vacant

- How vacancy is defined and assessed
- Vacancy rates in the Region
- Whether the tax is implemented Region-wide
- How the revenues are shared with local municipalities

The estimated Tax revenue is a high-level calculation using an average price per unit and is based on a 100% collection rate. This is the potential gross revenue of the tax and does not take into consideration of start-up and operating expenses.

**Table 3**  
**Estimated Gross Tax Revenues in First Year in York Region**

	0.50%	1.00%	1.50%
	Vacancy Rate	Vacancy Rate	Vacancy Rate
<b>1% Tax Rate</b>	<b>\$14.8 million</b>	\$29.5 million	\$44.3 million
<b>2% Tax Rate</b>	\$29.5 million	\$59.1 million	<b>\$88.6 million</b>

Currently, there is no data readily available to confirm York Region’s vacancy rate in the secondary market. Staff used water consumption levels from 2018 and 2020 as one method to estimate potential vacancy rates. Using 2016 Statistic Canada report that provides an estimate of property units occupied by usual residents, analysis was conducted to isolate vacant units from those that are newly constructed and are unoccupied to determine York Region’s estimated vacancy rate. A 3% vacancy rate was derived. The assumed vacancy rates of 0.5% to 1.5% are being illustrated as a conservative range, which also align with the assumed rates used in Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa’s studies. It is recognized that further work from a consultant will be required to refine estimated vacancy rates in the secondary market.

### **The Tax is intended to be a policy tool and would likely result in declining revenues in ensuing years**

The Tax is a policy tool aimed at changing homeowner behaviors; it is expected to dampen speculative activities and help release more housing units to the secondary market. If successful, the Vacant Homes Tax would likely be a declining source of revenue as homeowners would occupy or lease out their homes to avoid the tax. This is evidenced in Vancouver where the number of vacant properties, as well as revenues collected has declined since their Empty Homes Tax was first implemented in 2017. Table 4 provides additional detail.

**Table 4**

#### **City of Vancouver - Vacant Properties and revenues Collected (2017 – 2019)**

	2017	2018	2019
Vacant Properties	2,538	1,989	1,893
Revenues Collected - net of exemptions (\$ Millions)	33.6	23.3	27.9

Source: Empty Homes Tax Annual Report: 2020

### **Revenue generated through the Tax could help support the Region’s affordable housing initiatives**

The Region is focused on increasing the supply of affordable and rental housing, as articulated in the 2019 to 2023 Corporate Strategic Plan, 10-year housing and homelessness plan and 2021 to 2024 Housing York Inc. Strategic Plan. The Region has been successful in maintaining community housing in a good state of repair, increasing supply and supporting residents’ needs, as well as implementing policies and programs to advance market affordability. However, these plans recognize that more needs to be done to help address the Region’s growing housing challenges. The revenues raised from this policy tool could help fund affordable housing priorities.

### **Public consultation will help explore this policy tool further**

Although the Act does not prescribe a requirement to consult, based on a review of neighboring municipal experiences, best practices would indicate the need to engage

external consultants for a feasibility study and public benefits review. The results of this work would inform a recommendation report to Council and would include key findings from the review report produced by the consultant.

## **5. Financial**

Based on interjurisdictional scan, the cost of a feasibility study and public benefits review to inform next steps should cost less than \$150,000 and can be funded within existing budgets.

## **6. Local Impact**

Local municipalities are key partners in addressing housing affordability. In the past, input received through local municipal collaboration has been instrumental in gaining a better understanding of local housing markets and challenges as well as informing Regional policy direction (e.g., Development Charge Deferral for Affordable Purpose-Built Rental Housing).

If directed by Council to proceed, collaboration with the local municipalities would be a cornerstone in understanding the benefits of this Tax as well as developing a potential framework for it.

## **7. Conclusion**

A full mix and range of ownership and rental housing options is a cornerstone of complete communities and is necessary to support the changing needs of York Region's residents. The Housing Affordability Task Force has identified housing affordability as a core mandate with a need to identify available tools to address this issue. The Tax is one such tool and, given Council direction to proceed, could help address the housing affordability challenges faced by residents, current and future, in the Region.

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For more information on this report, please contact Edward Hankins, Director, Treasury Office and Deputy Treasurer at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71644. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.





Recommended by:

**Jason Li, CPA, CA**  
Acting Commissioner of Finance and Regional Treasurer



**Paul Freeman, MCIP, RPP**  
Chief Planner



**Katherine Chislett**  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services



Approved for Submission:

**Bruce Macgregor**  
Chief Administrative Officer

October 1, 2021  
13281748

## **Regional Council Decision - Results of Pedestrian and Cyclist Pilot Measures**

On October 28, 2021 Regional Council made the following decision:

1. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Clerks of the local municipalities and York Regional Police.

The original staff report is attached for your information.

Please contact Joseph Petrungaro, Director Roads and Traffic Operations, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75220 if you have any questions with respect to this matter.

Regards,

**Christopher Raynor** | Regional Clerk, Regional Clerk's Office, Corporate Services

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Our Mission: **Working together to serve our thriving communities – today and tomorrow**

# The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole  
Transportation Services  
October 14, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Transportation Services

## Results of Pedestrian and Cyclist Pilot Measures

### 1. Recommendation

The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Clerks of the local municipalities and York Regional Police.

### 2. Summary

This report provides Council with results of the pedestrian and cyclist pilot measures implemented at four Regional intersections starting in 2019.

Key Points:

- Operational measures were implemented and evaluated at four Regional intersections to improve pedestrian and cycling safety
- Collisions at the pilot intersections have reduced by more than 60% and angle collisions, which typically result in serious injury, by 75%
- Based on positive results in reducing conflicts and collisions for all road users, these measures will remain in place at the initial four intersections
- These same measures are planned to be installed in 2022, in the Cities of Markham and Vaughan, at six additional intersections with the best opportunity to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, selected using a data-driven approach

### 3. Background





#### **Operational measures were implemented to help improve pedestrian and cyclist safety at four intersections across the Region**

Pedestrian and cyclist trips are growing 4% annually, increasing the possibility of conflicts at intersections between pedestrians/cyclists and vehicles. The Annual Traveller Safety Report identified pedestrians and cyclists as a priority for improving safety as more than 84% of pedestrian and cyclist collisions result in injuries.

As a result of findings outlined in the [2017 Traveller Safety Report](#), in [June 2019](#), Council was presented with the Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety Improvements report and accompanying [Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety Study Summary Report](#). The report included a comprehensive data review, indicating the probability of injury to pedestrians and cyclists in motor vehicle collisions is significantly higher compared to other modes of travel.

Pedestrians and cyclists are at high risk with vehicles turning at signalized intersections on Regional roads. Numerous operational measures to create a safer environment at signalized intersections were evaluated. Four measures (Table 1) were selected for use, based on effectiveness, applicability to Regional roads and feasibility of implementation.

**Table 1**  
**Pedestrian and Cyclist Operational Measures**

Operational Measures		Description	Potential Safety Benefits*
Prohibit right turn on red		Reduces conflicts with pedestrians who are crossing perpendicular to the vehicle direction	Up to 8% reduction in overall collisions
Protected left turn movement		Left turning vehicles are given exclusive right-of-way independent of pedestrian crossing time	68% reduction in all collisions involving left-turning vehicles
Leading Pedestrian Traffic Signal Intervals (pedestrian head start)		Pedestrians can better establish their presence in the crossing by entering an intersection approximately seven seconds before vehicles	59% reduction in pedestrian-vehicle collisions
Additional Warning Signage		Signs informing motorists that pedestrians and cyclists have the right-of-way within the intersection	40% reduction in overall collisions

\* Safety benefits reported through industry analysis and experience (Crash Modification Factors)

Starting in late 2019, measures to help protect pedestrians and cyclists were implemented based on risk assessments, which includes a comprehensive data review indicating the probability of injury in collisions factoring risk characteristics, road user volume, crossing distance, speed limit and roadway environment, among others, at four signalized intersections:

- Major Mackenzie Drive (Y.R. 25) and Bayview Avenue (Y.R. 34), in the City of Richmond Hill
- Yonge Street (Y.R. 1) and Clark Avenue, in the City of Markham/City of Vaughan
- Bathurst Street (Y.R. 38) and Carrville Road/Rutherford Road (Y.R. 73), in the City of Vaughan
- Bathurst Street (Y.R. 38) and Clark Avenue, in the City of Vaughan

### **Preliminary findings on the effectiveness of the measures were presented to Council in 2020 with a commitment to report results in 2021**

In [June 2020](#), Council received the Pedestrian and Cyclist Pilot Measures Update memo. A preliminary review, using video conflict analytics, was conducted before and shortly after implementation to compare conflict rates at each location. Initial results from the pilot, though limited, appeared promising. Recognizing the preliminary assessment was based on limited data collected since January 2020 during the winter and irregular travel patterns due to public health restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff committed to report the results back to Council in 2021.

## **4. Analysis**

### **Intersection operational measures implemented have been successful in reducing conflicts and collisions for all road users**

Video data was collected multiple times before and after implementation of the measures to compare conflict rates at each location. Table 2 provides the results of the before and after studies. Overall, total collisions have reduced by more than 60%, and angle collisions which typically result in serious injury, by 75%. This is comparable to industry experience that reports prohibiting right turns at signalized intersections and implementing protected left turn movements may reduce pedestrian and cyclist collisions by more than 80%. Municipalities across the province, including the Cities of Toronto, Ottawa and Thunder Bay, and Durham Region and the Town of Halton Hills, have implemented all or some of these measures, recognizing the safety benefits.

**Table 2**  
**Conflict Rate Before and After Implementation of Measures**

Intersection	Vehicle-Pedestrian/Cyclist Conflict		Vehicle-Vehicle Conflict	
	Before	After	Before	After
Bathurst Street (Y.R. 38) and Carrville Road/Rutherford Road (Y.R. 73)	12	1	14	0
Bathurst Street (Y.R. 38) and Clark Avenue	35	3	78	0
Major Mackenzie Drive (Y.R. 25) and Bayview Avenue (Y.R. 34)	222	18	32	0
Yonge Street (Y.R. 1) and Clark Avenue	27	2	4	0

\* Conflict rate calculated based on volumes and conflicts observed at the time of studies

### **Feedback from pedestrians and cyclists has been positive**

Staff received feedback from citizens through on-street outreach events, social media and public meetings. Pedestrians and cyclists noticed a positive difference in driver behaviour and indicated they feel safer crossing the road. Motorists have raised concerns about being delayed, primarily due to the all-day, no right turn on red operation when pedestrians are not present. While motorists acknowledge the safety benefits of the measures implemented, they are requesting the Region further explore opportunities to reduce driver delay.

### **Operational measures implemented at the four pilot intersections will be maintained and expanded to six additional intersections, based on data-driven approach**

While turning movement controls may have a potential safety benefits at some intersections, they are not required at all intersections primarily due to pedestrian and cyclist volume, road geometry, sightlines and environment. A data-driven approach is necessary to identify intersections where benefits can be achieved in helping to protect pedestrians and cyclists.

In selecting future intersections with the best opportunity to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, a quantitative and predictive approach is applied. The approach was developed by The National Cooperative Highway Research Program and administered by the Transportation Research Board. The approach not only addresses locations with prior collision occurrence by critical direction, but also determines high impact locations based on risk characteristics, road user volume, crossing distance, speed limit and roadway environment.

Given the success in reducing collisions at the four pilot intersections, the same measures will be expanded in 2022 to the additional intersections identified in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Additional Intersections for Pedestrian and Cycling Measures**

Intersection	Municipality	Directions
16th Avenue (Y.R. 73) and Woodbine Avenue (Y.R. 8)	City of Markham	Northbound and Southbound
16th Avenue (Y.R. 73) and Main Street Markham/Highway 48	City of Markham	Eastbound and Westbound
Highway 7 (Y.R. 7) and Martin Grove Road	City of Vaughan	Northbound and Southbound
Highway 7 (Y.R. 7) and McCowan Road (Y.R. 67)	City of Markham	Northbound and southbound
Highway 7 (Y.R. 7) and Kennedy Road (Y.R. 3)	City of Markham	Eastbound and Westbound
McCowan Road (Y.R. 67) and Carlton Road/Raymerville Drive	City of Markham	Eastbound and Westbound

### **Staff are exploring new technologies that may reduce delay for right-turning vehicles when pedestrians and cyclists are not present**

Motorists have raised concerns about the increase in delay with the no right turn on red prohibition. During critical hours, motorists are experiencing an average of 30 to 75 additional seconds of delay. Staff are exploring adaptive signal technology that would indicate no right turn on red only when pedestrians are present to optimize intersection operation. This innovative technology requires proof of testing and is not currently an industry standard.

### **Another example of effective controlled intersection movement is the Viva rapidway network**

The Region has 160 signalized intersections with turning movement controls, representing 20% of all Regional signalized intersections. Many of these intersections are within the bus rapidways, such as on Highway 7, Yonge Street, Davis Drive and Centre Street. Collisions at these intersections have been reduced by approximately 50% since completion.

## 5. Financial

The cost to implement the pedestrian and cycling measures in this report ranges between \$20,000 and \$60,000 per intersection, depending on the type of improvements required. Costs are included in the approved 2021 Transportation Services Operating Budget and outlook.

## 6. Local Impact

Walking and cycling are two important types of active transportation that have many health benefits. These two modes also indirectly improve the health of the population by reducing motor vehicle trips. Less vehicle trips lowers levels of air pollution, greenhouse gases, noise and traffic congestion.

Improving road safety for pedestrians and cyclists at Regional intersections creates a safer environment to support the growing trend of these two types of active transportation.

The key points contained in this report have been shared with the local municipalities, York Regional Police, Public Health and school boards, and no concerns were raised.

## 7. Conclusion

Operational measures were implemented on a pilot basis at four Regional intersections to help improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists. These measures have been deemed successful in reducing potential conflicts and collisions for all road users by more than 60%, and angle collisions by 75%, which typically result in serious injury. Measures at these locations will remain.

Staff plan to implement the same safety measures at six additional intersections located in the Cities of Markham and Vaughan. These intersections were selected based on pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle conflict and collision data.

Staff will continue to work with the local municipalities, York Regional Police, Public Health and school boards, to identify strategies and measures to address traveller safety for all road users.

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For more information on this report, please contact Joseph Petrunaro, Director Roads and Traffic Operations, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75220. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

**Ann-Marie Carroll**  
Acting Commissioner of Transportation Services



Approved for Submission:

**Bruce Macgregor**  
Chief Administrative Officer

September 24, 2021  
13017249

**Regional Council Decision - Municipal Streetscape and Pedestrian and Cycling Partnership Programs Annual Update**

On October 28, 2021 Regional Council made the following decision:

1. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the local municipalities, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

The original staff report is attached for your information.

Please contact Brian Titherington, Director, Transportation Infrastructure Planning at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75901 if you have any questions with respect to this matter.

Regards,

**Christopher Raynor** | Regional Clerk, Regional Clerk's Office, Corporate Services

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Our Mission: **Working together to serve our thriving communities – today and tomorrow**

# The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole  
Transportation Services  
October 14, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Transportation Services

## Municipal Streetscape and Pedestrian and Cycling Partnership Programs Annual Update

### 1. Recommendation

The Regional Clerk forward this report to the local municipalities, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

### 2. Summary

This report updates Council on the projects approved for funding through the 2021 Capital Budget and provides highlights on the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program (Municipal Streetscape Program) and Pedestrian and Cycling Partnership Program (Pedestrian and Cycling Program).

Key Points:

- The Municipal Streetscape Program and the Pedestrian and Cycling Program benefit local municipalities and other Regional stakeholders by assisting in advancing projects identified by local municipalities through cost-sharing of infrastructure that supports walking, cycling, safe and vibrant communities.
- The Commissioner of Transportation Services has delegated authority to approve projects funded through the Council-approved policies.
- Successful applications must meet the criteria outlined in the respective policies and highlight how the projects will help contribute to Regional objectives.
- Funding is allocated annually with \$1,000,000 to the Municipal Streetscape Program and \$500,000 to the Pedestrian and Cycling Program.
- The Town of East Gwillimbury, the City of Markham, the City of Vaughan and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority received funding as part of the 2021 budget.

### 3. Background

#### **The Partnership Programs provide cost-sharing opportunities for infrastructure projects identified by local municipalities**

The Region commits \$1,000,000 annually to the Municipal Streetscape Program and \$500,000 to the Pedestrian and Cycling Program. The funding is approved through the annual capital budget.

Since the program launch in 2006/2007, 37 projects have been provided funding through the Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program with a Regional contribution of \$10,698,226 and 45 projects through the Pedestrian and Cycling Program with a Regional contribution of \$7,475,650.

The projects are locally-initiated and delivered but must meet Regional priorities to enhance the streetscape of road corridors or build out the Region's pedestrian and cycling network. A full list of projects for each of the programs that have been implemented across the Region are shown in Attachments 1 and 2.

#### **Applications for the Municipal Streetscape Program and Pedestrian Cycling Program must demonstrate the contribution and support of Regional objectives**

To be considered for funding, successful applications must demonstrate how local projects align with broader Regional objectives. Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program objectives aim to promote pedestrian-friendly design, attractive streetscapes and must connect into major transportation infrastructure. Pedestrian Cycling Partnership Program objectives include reducing single occupancy vehicle use, improving pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and enhancing mobility and connections to major transportation infrastructure.

Projects are eligible for funding at 50% of eligible project costs if they are completed with a Region Capital Project, and 33% of funding for eligible costs on projects that demonstrate significant benefit to the community.

All applications that receive funding through the Programs are required to submit a signed maintenance agreement to ensure clear ownership so that any enhanced infrastructure delivered through these Programs is appropriately maintained.

#### **The Commissioner of Transportation Services has delegated authority to approve successful applications and allocate funding**

Applications for funding under the Programs are vetted through the Streetscape and Pedestrian Cycling Review Committee, which recommends projects for consideration, based on the eligibility criteria outlined in the Municipal Streetscape Program and Pedestrian and Cycling Program policies.

The Commissioner has final approval to allocate funding on all partnership program projects and reports on the status of the programs annually.

## 4. Analysis

Continuing to support the build out of the Region's active transportation network promotes non-auto modes of transportation and reduces the strain on the Regional road network during rush hours. Elevated streetscaping design promotes more attractive and pedestrian-friendly right-of ways.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, increased use of the public road network through walking and cycling has elevated the importance of these investments in our Regional corridors to create active and more enjoyable streetscapes for all modes of transportation.

### **Under the Municipal Streetscape Program for 2021, five applications were received and approved for funding**

Each of the five submitted applications for the Municipal Streetscaping Program were approved for funding as part of the 2021 capital budget. Funding was granted to four projects in the City of Vaughan and one in the Town of East Gwillimbury, as they best demonstrated alignment with Regional objectives (see Attachment 1).

**Table 1**  
**Municipal Streetscaping Program 2021 Allocation**

Municipality	Project Name	Project Cost	Regional Contribution
City of Vaughan	Major Mackenzie Drive (Highway 400-Jane Street)	\$506,848	\$253,414
City of Vaughan	Highway 7 (Edgeley- Applewood)	\$294,647	97,234
City of Vaughan	Major Mackenzie Drive and Civic Centre Drive	\$461,565	152,317
City of Vaughan	Major Mackenzie Drive and Station Street (Maple GO)	\$734,414	242,357
Town of East Gwillimbury	Leslie Street and Mount Albert Road (East and West Sides)	\$227,535	65,668
Total Regional contribution			\$810,990

The Major Mackenzie Drive (Highway 400-Jane Street) project in the City of Vaughan received \$253,414 for two bermed and planted landscape gateway features with integrated seating and a unit paved plaza along Major Mackenzie Drive, Amusement Way and Jane Street. The project is integrated with York Region's road widening project and complements the Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital streetscape on the north side of Major Mackenzie Drive.

Highway 7 (Edgeley-Applewood) project in the City of Vaughan received \$97,234 for an enhanced unit paver pedestrian walkway integrated into the Highway 7 rapidway project to encourage active transportation along this major transit arterial.

The Major Mackenzie Drive and Civic Centre Drive project in the City of Vaughan received \$152,317 for a streetscape design including planters faced in the same stone as the Civic Centre with large planted street trees and colourful understorey planting. This project was coordinated with the Region's intersection improvement project.

The Major Mackenzie Drive and Station Street project in the City of Vaughan received \$242,357, building on past streetscaping investment along Major Mackenzie Drive. This partnership focuses on supporting the City in creating an accessible access to Maple GO Station. Streetscape enhancements included new planting and cost-sharing on the part of the accessible ramp that is within the Regional right-of-way.

The Leslie Street and Mount Albert Road (east and west sides) project in the Town of East Gwillimbury received \$65,668 for a gateway design in the community of Sharon. Streetscape enhancements include masonry natural stone walls, fencing, planting, decorative paving, wayfinding signage and a custom-designed town clock. These enhancements will set the tone for the rest of the vision for the Civic Centre Precinct.

Through the programs, local municipalities and Regional stakeholders leverage cost-sharing opportunities for streetscaping enhancements and active transportation connections that meet Regional objectives. Partnering with local municipalities and Regional stakeholders, these partnerships allow for a more seamless and integrative approach to enhancing the Regional road network.

### **Under the Pedestrian and Cycling Program for 2021, six applications were received and three were approved for funding**

A total of six applications were submitted for Pedestrian and Cycling Program funding in 2020. Funding was granted to three, City of Markham, Toronto Region and Conservation Authority and Town of East Gwillimbury (see Attachment 2), as they best demonstrated alignment with Regional objectives.

**Table 2**  
**Pedestrian and Cycling Program 2021 Allocation**

Municipality	Project Name	Project Cost	Regional Contribution
City of Markham	Rouge Valley Trail Connections	\$450,000	\$148,500
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority	The Lake to Lake Route Phase 5	\$488,757	96,288
Town of East Gwillimbury	Holland River Bridge and Lake to Lake Connection	\$1,621,752	255,212
Total Regional contribution			\$500,000

The City of Markham received \$148,500 for two trail connections, providing a link from Highway 7 and Main Street Unionville and Kennedy Road and Austin Drive into the highly-used Rouge Valley Trail.

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority received \$96,288 to construct Phase 5 of part of the Lake to Lake Cycling Route and Walking Trail within the Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve in the City of Richmond Hill, which provides connection to Stouffville Road. Previously, it received \$65,000 towards this project as part of the 2016 Pedestrian and Cycling Program. The total Regional contribution for this project is \$161,288.

The Town of East Gwillimbury received \$255,212 to construct the Holland River Bridge over environmentally sensitive lands between Oriole Drive and Doane Road. The project was approved for an additional contribution through the Pedestrian and Cycling Capital Budget for a total of \$535,178 due to the critical link the bridge provides to the Region's Lake to Lake Cycling Route and Walking Trail alignment.

## 5. Financial

The Municipal Streetscape Program and Pedestrian Cycling Program are funded through 90% development charges and 10% tax levy. The funding for these programs is reviewed annually through the Region's budget process.

In years when total budget for the programs is not spent, funds are re-allocated to other Transportation Services growth-related roads projects. Approved funding is to be spent within a three-year period, or applicants are required to re-apply to ensure program funding is maximized and timely project implementation is achieved.

## 6. Local Impact

Both programs create opportunities for collaborative partnerships between the Region and local municipalities to deliver a common goal. The programs cost share on projects that enhance community aesthetics and help create safer, more enjoyable spaces for pedestrians and cyclists.

A positive outcome from the COVID-19 pandemic is an increase in citizens walking and cycling across the Region. Citizen feedback to date through the Transportation Master Plan Update includes a desire for more active and sustainable transportation infrastructure.

## 7. Conclusion

The Municipal Streetscape and Pedestrian and Cycling Programs are a collaboration opportunity between the Region, local municipalities and other stakeholders to improve community aesthetics and accessibility for pedestrian and cyclist within the Region's right-of-way.

Applications are required to meet the criteria included in the associated policies and demonstrate how a project will support the Region's objectives including creating connections to the Region's transportation systems and/or destinations. The Commissioner of Transportation Services has delegated authority to approve projects funded based on the Council-approved policies.

Staff will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and policies to ensure successful implementation of infrastructure delivered through these partnership programs.

A copy of this report to be forwarded by the Regional Clerk to the local municipalities, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

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For more information on this report, please contact Brian Titherington, Director, Transportation Infrastructure Planning at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75901. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.





Recommended by:

**Ann-Marie Carroll**  
Acting Commissioner of Transportation Services



Approved for Submission:

**Bruce Macgregor**  
Chief Administrative Officer

September 23, 2021  
Attachments (2)  
13149125

# Municipal Streetscape Program Projects

## Town of Aurora

- 1 Wellington Street (Bayview Avenue - Leslie Street)
- 2 Wellington Street (Bathurst Street - Murray Drive & Berczy Street - John West Way)
- 3 Wellington Street (Bathurst Street - Murray Drive)
- 4 Yonge Street and St. John's Sideroad Gateway Feature

## Town of East Gwillimbury

- 5 Leslie Street and Mount Albert Road Gateway
- 6 Leslie Street and Mount Albert Road (East and West Sides)

## Town of Georgina

- 7 Woodbine Avenue (Arlington Drive - Wexford Drive)
- 8 Woodbine Avenue (Glenwoods Avenue - Morton Avenue)
- 9 Woodbine Avenue (Ravenshoe Road)
- 10 Dalton Road Crosswalks

## Township of King

- 11 King Road and Keele Street Gateway
- 12 Highway 27/King Road/Old King Road
- 13 Keele Street Sidewalks
- 14 Keele Street (South of King Road - Station Street)
- 15 King Road (2585 - Dufferin Street)

## City of Markham

- 16 Warden Avenue (16th Avenue - Major Mackenzie Drive)
- 17 Highway 7 (Town Centre Boulevard - Sciberras Road)
- 18 Yonge Street (Colborne Street)
- 19 Highway 7/Warden Avenue Gateway

## Town of Newmarket

- 20 Yonge Street and Davis Drive Gateway
- 21 Bathurst Street and Davis Drive Gateway

## City of Richmond Hill

- 22 Gamble Road (Bathurst Street - Linda Margaret Crescent)
- 23 Yonge Street (Garden Avenue)
- 24 Bathurst Street (Weldrick Road/Shaw Parkettes)

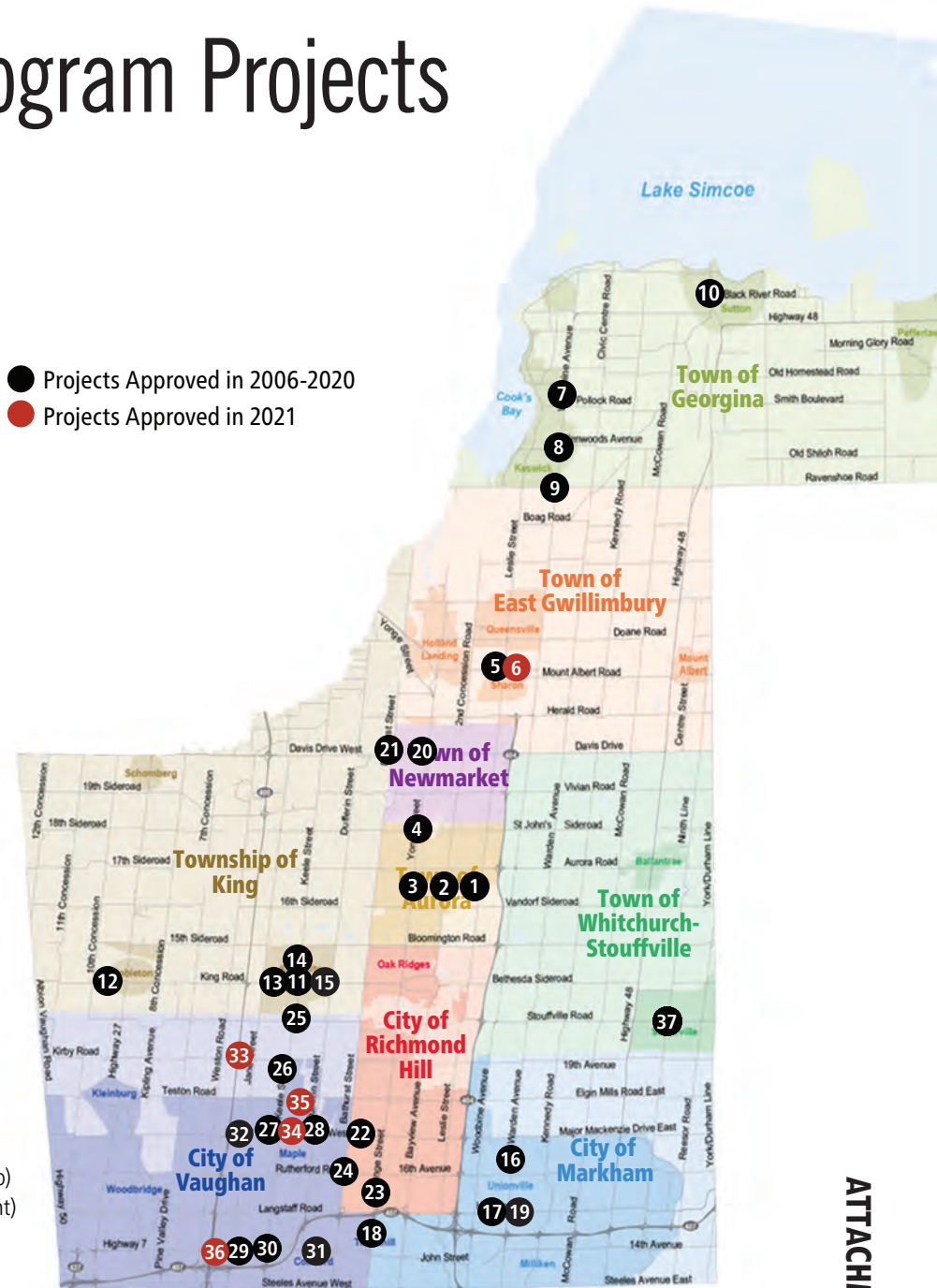
## City of Vaughan

- 25 Maple Streetscape Phase VI
- 26 Keele Street (McNaughton Road)
- 27 Major Mackenzie Drive Enhanced Lighting
- 28 Major Mackenzie Drive
- 29 Highway 7 (Commerce Street - Creditstone Road)
- 30 Highway 7 (Keele Street - Bowes Road)
- 31 Centre Street (Dufferin Street - Bathurst Street)
- 32 Islington Avenue & Major Mackenzie Drive
- 33 Major Mackenzie Drive (Highway 400 - Jane Street)
- 34 Major Mackenzie Drive and Civic Centre Drive
- 35 Major Mackenzie Drive and Station Street (Maple Go)
- 36 Highway 7 (Edgeley Boulevard - Applewood Crescent)

## Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

- 37 Ninth Line and Main Street Gateway

- Projects Approved in 2006-2020
- Projects Approved in 2021



# Pedestrian and Cycling Program Projects

## Town of Aurora

- 1 Nokiidaa Trail Connection
- 2 Bayview Avenue Multi-Use Path: St. John's Sideroad - Wellington Street

## Town of East Gwillimbury

- 3 Pedestrian Bridge: Holland River (Yonge Street - 2nd Concession)
- 4 Nokiidaa Trail Enhancement: Nokiidaa Trail (2nd Concession)
- 5 Trail Enhancement: Green Lane - 2nd Concession
- 6 7 Multi-Use Path Extension: Phase 1 and 2 - Green Lane (Peggy's Wood - Yonge Street)
- 8 Lake to Lake Route: Nokiidaa Trail Extension (Yonge Street)
- 9 Holland River Bridge and the Lake to Lake Connection

## Township of King

- 10 Multi-Use Trail: 2585 King Road - Dufferin Street
- 11 Bike Lane - 15th Sideroad

## City of Markham

- 12 Multi-Use Path: Major Mackenzie Drive (Woodbine Avenue - Prospector's Drive)
- 13 Multi-Use Path: Major Mackenzie Drive (Prospector's Drive - Highway 48)
- 14 Multi-Use Path: Warden Avenue (16th Avenue - Major Mackenzie Drive)
- 15 16 17 Multi-Use Path: Rouge River Valley - Phases 1, 2 and 3
- 18 19 Rouge Valley Trail - Phases 4 and 5
- 20 Rouge Valley Trail Connections

## Town of Newmarket

- 21 22 23 Tom Taylor Trail Extension - Phases 1, 2 and 3
- 24 Tom Taylor Trail at Davis Drive
- 25 Tom Taylor Trail Extension at The Tannery
- 26 Multi-Use Path: Fairy Lake
- 27 28 Multi-Use Path: Davis Drive and Bathurst Street - Phases 1 and 2

## City of Richmond Hill

- 29 30 31 32 Multi-Use Path: Lake to Lake Route, Leslie Street - Phases 1, 2 and 3

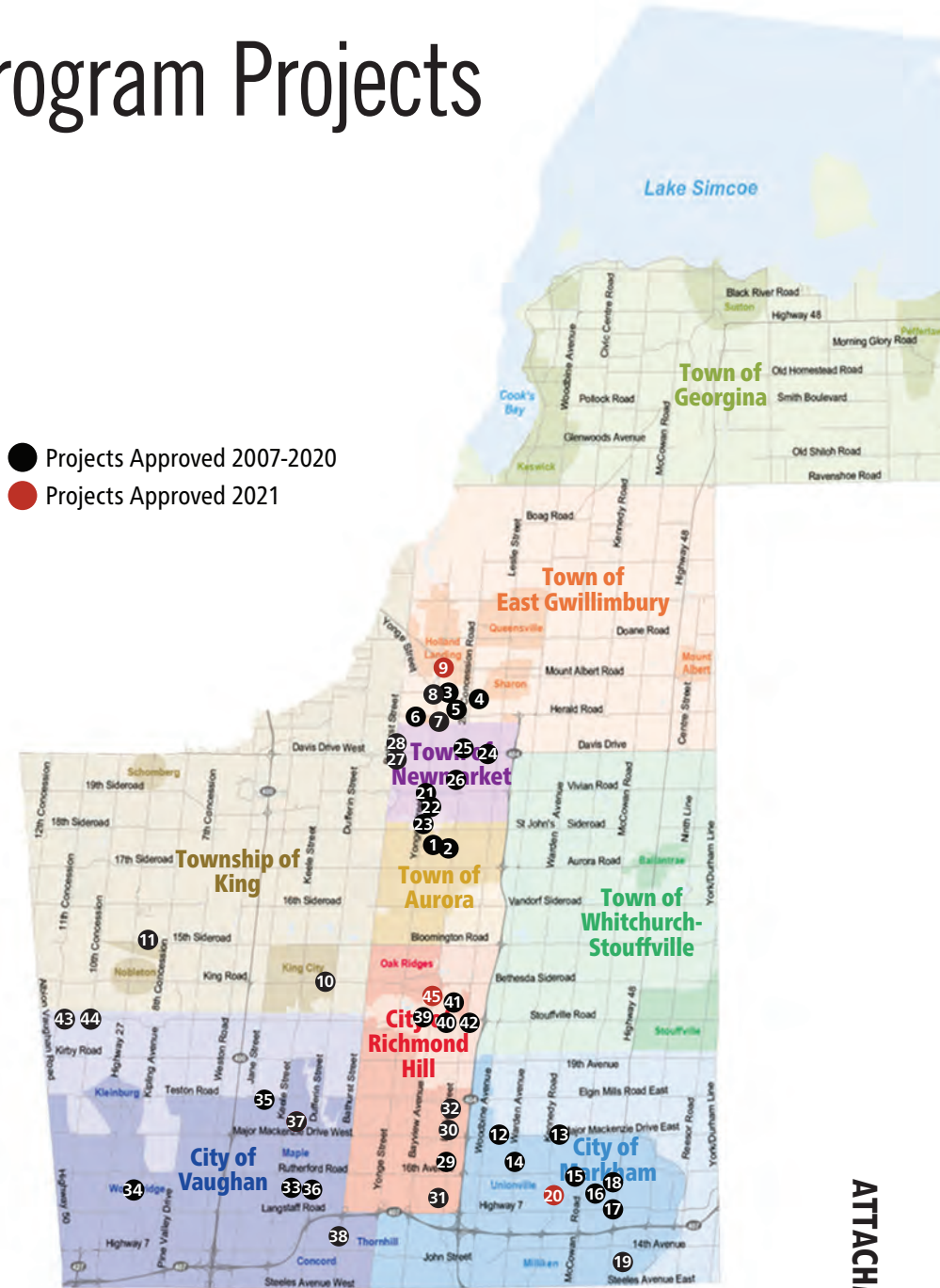
## City of Vaughan

- 33 Bartley Smith Greenway Trail: Planchett Road - Jacob Keffer Parkway
- 34 William Granger Greenway Trail: Rutherford Road - Boyd Conservation
- 35 Multi-Use Path: Teston Road (Jane Street - Keele Street)
- 36 Bartley Smith Greenway Trail: Signage
- 37 Multi-Use Trail: McNaughton Road (Keele Street - Major Mackenzie Drive)
- 38 Clark Avenue Cycle Tracks

## Toronto and Regional Conservation Authority

- 39 40 41 42 Lake to Lake Multi-Use Path: Oak Ridges Corridor - Phases 1, 2, 3 and 4
- 43 44 Nashville Conservation Reserve Trail: Kirby Road - Phases 1 and 2
- 45 The Lake to Lake Route - Phase 5

- Projects Approved 2007-2020
- Projects Approved 2021



**Regional Council Decision - Water and Wastewater Capital Infrastructure Status Update**

On October 28, 2021 Regional Council made the following decision:

1. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Ontario Ministers of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Municipal Affairs and Housing and Infrastructure, Clerks of the local municipalities, Building Industry and Land Development Association, and the Ontario Homebuilders' Association.

The original staff report is attached for your information.

Please contact Mike Rabeau, Director, Capital Planning and Delivery, Environmental Services at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75157 if you have any questions with respect to this matter.

Regards,

**Christopher Raynor** | Regional Clerk, Regional Clerk's Office, Corporate Services

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Our Mission: **Working together to serve our thriving communities – today and tomorrow**

# The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole  
Environmental Services  
October 14, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Environmental Services

## Water and Wastewater Capital Infrastructure Status Update

### 1. Recommendation

The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Ontario Ministers of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Municipal Affairs and Housing and Infrastructure, Clerks of the local municipalities, Building Industry and Land Development Association, and the Ontario Homebuilders' Association.

### 2. Summary

This report updates Council on the status of key water and wastewater infrastructure projects required to meet future system demands and triggers for release of servicing capacity and associated approvals. Staff reported to Council in [September 2021](#) with a capacity monitoring report and will follow up in 2023 with a capacity assignment report.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Environmental Services has continued to deliver essential water and wastewater infrastructure projects identified in the 10-Year Capital Plan. To date, there have been no immediate, major impacts to ongoing environmental assessment, design, and construction work as a result of the pandemic. We continue to monitor for potential impacts to future capital delivery plans due to adjustments in corporate priorities, market uncertainty and external pressures.

Key Points:

- On September 26, 2019, Council authorized a water and wastewater capacity assignment of 108,638 persons to support growth in the York Durham Sewage System to the end of 2026
- As of the end of 2020, the total available capacity for growth in the York Durham Sewage System is 178,132 persons
- The 2021 Environmental Services Budget and 10-Year Capital Plan include \$2.9 billion in water, wastewater, waste management, forestry and energy projects, including \$1.65 billion for growth infrastructure to provide servicing capacity in the Regional water and wastewater systems



- Implementation of works identified in the Environmental Services Capital Plan is critical to deliver capacity needed to service growth and is dependent on collection of forecasted development charge revenues
- With an investment of about \$1.2 billion over the next 10 years, proactive management and maintenance of infrastructure through a comprehensive asset management program ensures short-term and long-term reliability of a multi-billion-dollar asset base
- The Region has been awarded \$100.5 million from Infrastructure Canada in Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Funding for five capital projects with further applications pending

### 3. Background

#### **2019 capacity assignment enabled growth to approximately 1.3 million people**

On [September 26, 2019](#), Council approved a capacity assignment of 108,638 persons to local municipalities serviced by the York Durham Sewage System and the York Water System, bringing the cumulative servicing capacity assigned to support Region-wide growth to over 1.3 million people and total available capacity to 223,249. This is the longest and largest capacity assignment to date.

It is essential that water and wastewater servicing is available for municipal growth to occur. The amount of servicing capacity, expressed in persons, is “assigned” to local municipalities and, in turn, local municipalities allocate that capacity to individual developments to support residential growth.

The 108,638 persons capacity was assigned to King, Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Whitchurch-Stouffville to support forecasted growth including 20,000 persons for Centres and Corridors growth to the end of 2026. Three local municipalities, Aurora, East Gwillimbury and Newmarket, received capacity to grow to 2023 as part of the [2018 Capacity Assignment](#).

The unused capacity in the York Durham Sewage System at the end of 2020 is estimated at 178,132 persons.

#### **Capital Plan focuses on building the Regional water and wastewater network, sustaining infrastructure service levels and managing system risk and resiliency**

Environmental Services is responsible for delivering 38% of the Region’s total 2021 10-Year Capital Plan. Implementation of the works identified in the Environmental Services’ Capital Plan remains critical for delivering capacity needed to service growth within current financial limits. The capital program has 131 active projects with additional project work forecasted as 2022 approaches. These projects focus on building our Regional trunk system, sustaining infrastructure service levels and managing system risk and resiliency. The number of active projects by project delivery phase is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**2021 Active Water and Wastewater Projects by Project Delivery Phase**

Project Delivery Phase	Number of Active Projects
Planning	21
Environmental Assessment	6
Design	36
Construction	44
Warranty	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>

#### 4. Analysis

The 2021 approved budget for Environmental Services identified a 10-Year Capital Plan totalling \$2.9 billion. Forty-four construction projects are now underway and no major construction delays are anticipated at this time. The following sections provide an update on key Environmental Services projects within the 10-Year Capital Plan. A project summary and a location map are included in Attachments 1 and 2, respectively.

#### **DUFFIN CREEK PLANT OUTFALL**

##### **Duffin Creek Plant Outfall upgrades construction to start in late 2021**

In 2010, York and Durham Regions began a Class Environmental Assessment recommending optimization of existing processes at Duffin Creek Plant to increase treatment capacity from 520 megalitres per day to 630 megalitres per day. This Class Environmental Assessment was completed, filed, and released for public comment in November 2013.

To assist with a decision on the Class Environmental Assessment, the Minister issued an order to the Regions on April 4, 2016 outlining requirements to undertake a Phosphorus Reduction Action Plan study at Duffin Creek Plant. In January 2018, the Regions completed the Phosphorus Reduction Action Plan study. After reviewing the Phosphorus Reduction Action Plan and subsequent meetings and correspondence, on November 7, 2019, the Minister decided that with conditions, the Regions could proceed with implementing commitments and recommendations outlined in the Class Environmental Assessment and Phosphorus Reduction Action Plan study. This decision was critical for the Regions as unlocking use of the full plant capacity is key to service future growth.

York and Durham Regions are implementing the recommendations outlined in the Class Environmental Assessment and Phosphorus Reduction Action Plan study. Design for the Phosphorus Reduction Action Plan and outfall upgrades started in Q1 2020 and construction of the outfall upgrades started in September 2021 with completion scheduled in late 2022.

Construction of the Phosphorus Reduction Action Plan upgrades will occur in 2022 through to 2024. Pre-purchase of seventy diffuser check valves was completed in February 2021. Installation of the diffusers will depend on seasonal restrictions with fish spawning timing windows.

## **UPPER YORK SEWAGE SOLUTIONS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

### **Region awaits decision from province on Upper York Sewage Solutions Environmental Assessment despite unprecedented delays**

The Upper York Sewage Solutions project will provide servicing capacity for over 80,000 persons to support provincially approved growth in the Towns of Aurora, Newmarket and East Gwillimbury. The proposed sewage solution includes a new Water Reclamation Centre in East Gwillimbury, modifications to the existing York Durham Sewage System in Newmarket and a project-specific total phosphorus offsetting program. This alternative was added by the then Minister of Environment inserting an additional condition into the Terms of Reference for the Environmental Assessment when these were approved in 2010. This additional condition stipulated that the Region had to consider innovative technologies and facilities located in York Region.

- In July 2014, after more than five years of extensive scientific study and consultation with stakeholders and Indigenous peoples, York Region submitted the Environmental Assessment report to the province for approval. Upper York Sewage Solutions Environmental Assessment was anticipated to be approved by February 2015 with commissioning of the Water Reclamation Centre scheduled for 2024. With delays in approval of the environmental assessment, the Water Reclamation Centre was scheduled for commissioning in 2028 based on the 2021 budget; however, this timing was dependent on approval of the environmental assessment in early 2021 which did not occur. Timing of completion will be updated as part of the 2022 Budget process
- In December 2016, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks informed the Region that it needed to complete its own provincial Crown legal Duty to Consult obligation with Indigenous peoples and advised that this process would delay project approval
- Upon the Ministry's request in March 2017, the Region completed a voluntary Health Impact Assessment, finalized in November 2018, in consultation with the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation
- In July 2020, the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation submitted comments to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks under the Provincial Transfer Payment Agreement. Their submission, in the form of a peer review of the Environmental Assessment, included draft feedback on potential project conditions of approval
- In July 2020, Minister Yurek of the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks advised York Region that the province is considering options, including a potential southern trunk sewer, as an alternative to the preferred solution identified by the Upper York Sewage Solutions Environmental Assessment. The Minister's letter



expressed the urgency of this work and the need to work quickly to have a solution constructed by 2026

- On June 3, 2021, the Ontario government posted its intent to establish an Expert Advisory Panel and introduced Bill 306, proposed legislation titled the *York Region Wastewater Act, 2021*. The Expert Advisory Panel aims to provide advice on options to address wastewater servicing capacity needs in York Region and future growth in both York Region and Durham Region. If the proposed legislation is passed, it would put a hold on the application for the Upper York Sewage Solutions Environmental Assessment
- On June 29, 2021, the Region submitted comments on the proposed legislation to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to express the Region's disappointment with the proposed legislation and requested that the Minister immediately render a decision on the Upper York Sewage Solutions Environmental Assessment, following the process laid out in provincial law, a decision which York Region has been awaiting for over seven years
- Despite the Ministry's satisfaction with the Environmental Assessment and their assurance to deliver a decision in response to the Region's multiple requests, the Region remains waiting for an approval to proceed with the Upper York Sewage Solutions project

### **Water Reclamation Centre and associated wastewater network designs are complete**

Design for the Water Reclamation Centre and associated linear conveyance infrastructure is complete. Applications for all environmental approvals and permits required to implement the work are ready for formal submission to various regulatory agencies upon receipt of environmental assessment approval.

- Performance demonstration of the pre-selected membrane filtration system and a pile testing program were concluded; findings were used to optimize the Water Reclamation Centre treatment process and foundation design
- The Region has successfully secured property required for the proposed Water Reclamation Centre, along with various other properties associated with the linear conveyance infrastructure; staff continue to pursue remaining temporary easements to facilitate construction

### **Region partnered with Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority in preparation for the project-specific total phosphorus offsetting program**

At its meeting of [November 16, 2017](#), Council authorized a partnership with Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority to undertake a performance demonstration project for phosphorus removal by retrofitting two existing stormwater management facilities. This project will better prepare the Region for implementation of the project-specific total phosphorus offsetting program upon approval of the Upper York Sewage Solutions project. Pre-construction monitoring at two stormwater management facilities was initiated in summer

2018 and completed in fall 2019. Construction of the first facility at Tamarac Green Park was substantially completed in July 2021, followed by post-construction monitoring to spring 2022. The second pond facility construction is on hold given environmental assessment approval delays by the province.

The Region is also working with Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority to evaluate other phosphorus offsetting opportunities within the watershed. One specific opportunity is the Holland Marsh Polder Phosphorus Recovery and Recycle Facility. This project is one of the most effective phosphorus removal opportunities within the watershed for the Region to achieve required project-specific total phosphorus offsetting program of the Upper York Sewage Solutions project. The Region and Authority have successfully received funding approval from Infrastructure Canada under the federal government's Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund in the amount of \$16 million.

### **Region completed modifications to the York Durham Sewage System in Newmarket**

On March 7, 2018, the province issued a Declaration Order to exempt modifications to the York Durham Sewage System component of the Upper York Sewage Solutions project from the requirements of the *Environmental Assessment Act*. With the Declaration Order, the Region was able to proceed with twinning of the forcemain and alterations to Newmarket and Bogart Creek Sewage Pumping Stations all in Newmarket. Construction of the modifications started in June 2019, and the new forcemain system was commissioned in May 2021, well ahead of schedule and on budget. Completion of the modification work unlocks 1,500 persons capacity assigned to Town of Newmarket from the 2016 capacity assignment while providing system redundancy and reliability.

### **Interim infrastructure solutions to provide servicing capacity to support growth are progressing in the Towns of Aurora, East Gwillimbury and Newmarket**

At its meeting of [June 28, 2018](#), Council authorized two interim infrastructure solutions to provide water and wastewater servicing capacity for a population of 11,500 persons to support growth in the Towns of Aurora, East Gwillimbury and Newmarket, out of which 10,500 persons were assigned subject to completion of these trigger capital projects. An additional capacity of 1,000 persons is reserved for Centres and Corridors in these three municipalities once the capacity provided by the interim solutions is confirmed as indicated. Both projects have been awarded funding under one agreement with Infrastructure Canada under the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund.

- Upgrades to the Region's Aurora Sewage Pumping Station project are pre-approved under the Class Environmental Assessment process. Design work was completed Q3 2019 and tender awarded Q1 2020. Commissioning is now complete. This unlocks 7000 people in capacity
- The Region completed an environmental assessment to identify the preferred location for a new pumping station near the intersection of Yonge Street and Henderson Drive

in Aurora. Construction commenced in summer 2021 and commissioning is expected in spring 2023. This will unlock 4500 people in capacity

## **VAUGHAN SERVICING PROJECTS**

### **Detailed design for West Vaughan Sewage Servicing is complete**

An environmental assessment for West Vaughan Sewage Servicing to service future growth of 33,200 persons and 50,100 employment population was completed in 2013. The West Vaughan Sewage Servicing project includes approximately 14 kilometres of trunk sewer, with 12 kilometres to be completed by 2028 (last reported: 2028) and the remaining two kilometres to be completed after 2034, as well as expansion of the Humber Sewage Pumping Station to be completed by 2025 (last reported: 2025). The tender for Humber Sewage Pumping Station is to be released in the fall of 2021.

All permit applications are being prepared and, in consultation with permitting agencies, will be submitted prior to construction based on timing of each construction contract. Land acquisition is complete with several properties acquired in 2020 and 2021.

### **Northeast Vaughan Water and Wastewater Servicing design projects are underway to meet advanced construction timelines**

The Class Environmental Assessment Study to provide additional water and wastewater servicing capacity to accommodate anticipated growth in Northeast Vaughan up to 2051 was filed for public review in Q2 2019. This servicing capacity includes approximately 155,000 persons of residential and employment within the wastewater service area and 115,000 persons of residential and employment within the water service area

The preferred water servicing solution includes constructing watermains to connect two new elevated water storage tanks and two new pumping stations. Preferred sites identified for water infrastructure were as follows:

- New pumping station in the Jane Street and Teston Road area
- New pumping station and elevated tank north of the Jane Street and Kirby Road intersection
- New elevated tank west of the Jane Street and King-Vaughan Road intersection

The preferred wastewater servicing solution includes construction of six kilometres of new trunk sewer. The proposed trunk sewer is divided into segments and would begin at Teston Road and connect to the existing York Durham Sewage System at three specific points:

- A 4.5-kilometre section along Jane Street from Teston Road to south of Rutherford Road
- A small (180 metre) relief sewer section located south of Rutherford Road, between Jane Street and Keele Street, in the existing Jane-Rutherford Sanitary Trunk Sewer easement

- A 1.9-kilometre section along Keele Street from south of Rutherford Road to Langstaff Road, and then east crossing Keele Street to an area just south of Langstaff Road

No comments, questions or Part II Orders were received during the 30-day public review period. Requests for Proposals (one for water servicing, one for wastewater servicing) to retain engineering firms to provide services as described in the Class Environmental Assessment were issued in Q3 2019. Contracts were awarded in Q4 2019 to CH2M Hill Canada Limited for wastewater servicing and Associated Engineering (Ont.) Limited for water servicing. The wastewater servicing solution design is progressing towards 60% completion while the water servicing project is at 30% design completion.

In June 2020, Council authorized the Region to execute an agreement with the development community and Block 27 Landowners Group to advance construction of the Northeast Vaughan Water and Wastewater Servicing. For water servicing, two pumping stations and one elevated tank have been scheduled for advanced completion by 2025 with the remaining watermain and elevated tank by 2028. For wastewater servicing the sewer segments along Keele Street and Langstaff Road will be completed by 2025 and the remaining Jane Street sewer segment by 2028. Overall project completion is currently planned for 2028 (last reported: 2028).

## **ADDITIONAL WATER AND WASTEWATER SERVICING PROJECTS**

### **Environmental Study Report for Nobleton Class Environmental Assessment to be filed for public review in Q4 2021**

The Nobleton community is currently serviced by groundwater, since connection to the York Water System (surface water) is not permitted due to the province's long-term plan *A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, that precludes lake-based servicing for communities in the Greenbelt. An Environmental Assessment was initiated in November 2018 to assess water and wastewater servicing solutions and select preferred alternatives to accommodate planned growth (to 10,800 persons) in Nobleton. As part of the Environmental Assessment, groundwater exploration was undertaken and an assimilative capacity study was completed. Input on selection of the preferred solution and design was gathered during three open houses held in-person in Q1 2019 and online in Q4 2020 and Q2 2021. The recommended site for a new well was identified on the existing Nobleton Well 5 property located at 12860 Highway 27 in the Township of King. Approval has recently been received from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks on the parameter limits for treated effluent released to the Humber River. The Environmental Study Report is anticipated to be published for public review in Q4 2021.

### **Richmond Hill Centre/Langstaff Gateway wastewater servicing construction started Q3 2021**

Design of required wastewater infrastructure through a complex utility corridor along Highway 7 is complete, including property acquisition of 22 temporary and permanent easements. Tender documents for wastewater servicing infrastructure were released in Q1 2021 with

construction starting in Q3 2021 to align with construction of Cedar Avenue and advanced in-service timing of 2023 (last reported: 2025). Wastewater capacity is currently available to match transportation growth triggers for the service area through 2025. The new project will provide additional wastewater servicing capacity to accommodate anticipated growth to 2051 in Richmond Hill and Markham, subject to availability of local infrastructure. Additional servicing capacity has been accounted for in the Regional infrastructure. This ensures alignment with higher densities considered in ongoing Secondary Plan Updates and in the province's Transit-Oriented Community program for this area.

### **Sutton Water Resource Recovery Facility average flow well below plant capacity**

The existing Sutton Water Resource Recovery Facility was commissioned in 2003 with an original design capacity to service 7,500 persons. An Environmental Assessment for plant expansion to service up to 13,500 persons was completed in 2010.

The Region continues to monitor plant flows, and a future capacity expansion project will be brought into the 10-Year Capital Plan when flow reaches 70% of plant capacity. Currently, the plant is operating at 50-60% capacity and expansion is scheduled for 2033.

Construction of a plant optimization project is nearing completion. This work includes constructing an equalization tank to address peak flow processing challenges and this tank will serve as a process tank in future capacity expansion. Constructing the equalization tank does not change plant capacity.

Construction was moved from 2019 to 2020 to coordinate this project with construction of a new forcemain and connection from new development to the plant. This coordination required additional time for planning and design and the plant optimization project is scheduled for completion in Q4 2021 (last reported: 2021).

## **PEEL REGION AND CITY OF TORONTO COST-SHARED PROJECTS**

### **York Region's long-term servicing strategy includes Peel and Toronto cost-shared projects**

Provision of water and wastewater services through partnerships with City of Toronto and Peel Region is key to the Region's long-term servicing strategy. York Region staff conduct regular meetings with City of Toronto and Peel Region staff to discuss issues regarding servicing commitments, including cost-shared project delivery schedules.

Every five years, York and Peel Region staff conduct a review of Peel's asset management programming and York Region contributions to ensure sufficient funding for the maintenance and eventual replacement of shared water and wastewater infrastructure. The current review is nearing completion, with approval anticipated in December 2021. In 2020, York Region contributed \$14 million through wholesale rate payments into the Peel Region held York Region reserves for future major maintenance and replacement work.

Per the Toronto York Water Servicing Agreement, York Region provides an asset replacement contribution to the City of Toronto as part of the wholesale rate payment to assist with maintenance and ultimate replacement of the water system. The contribution is based on replacement value, an agreed upon replacement factor and proportionate share of water system flows. In 2020, an asset replacement contribution of \$16 million was made by York Region to the City of Toronto.

Both Peel Region and City of Toronto are on track to meet their long-term water supply and wastewater servicing agreement commitments to York Region.

### **Peel cost-shared projects progressing as expected**

York Region has secured 331 megalitres per day in water supply and transmission capacity from Peel Region. Based on York Region's 2016 *Water and Wastewater Master Plan Update*, water supply from Peel Region combined with water supply from City of Toronto will service growth to year 2041 and beyond. The latest Master Plan update will be finalized in early 2022.

The Lakeview Water Treatment Plant Expansion and Lorne Park Water Treatment Plant Expansion were completed in 2018, with ground restoration work at Lakeview Water Treatment Plant scheduled for 2022. The only active water cost-shared project scheduled for construction is the interconnection of the new 12-kilometer Hanlan watermain to the existing watermain. This final phase of interconnection work is scheduled for completion in summer 2023; during the pandemic, this interconnection was put on hold to minimize shutdowns of the local distribution system and is still awaiting approval for release from Peel Region. Delayed completion of this final contract has no impact to the Region's water supply.

As for wastewater cost-shared projects, the GE Booth Lakeview Wastewater Treatment Plant Capacity Recovery project is underway to ensure York Region's capacity needs into the future. This project entails constructing additional plant tankages and processes to restore the total rated plant capacity of 518MLD and meet 2008 Design Guidelines requirements. Construction is scheduled to commence in 2022 and will be completed in 2028.

### **Toronto cost-shared projects progressing without impacts to capacity commitment**

Toronto Billing Meter Upgrades were successfully completed as planned in Q4 2019 and Rosehill Pumping Station Standby Power Upgrades were completed in June 2020. Construction of Ellesmere Pumping Station Standby Power Upgrades resumed after Toronto resolved contractual issues on the project and was completed in September 2020. Scarborough Watermain was completed in Q3 2021.

The completion date for West Toronto and Richview Pumping Stations was updated by the City of Toronto to Q2 2023 (last reported: Q4:2021) to reflect longer procurement and construction durations based on experience with Ellesmere Pumping Station Standby Power Upgrades. This procurement delay and longer construction duration proposed by Toronto

extend project completion by about one and a half years, though without impact to York Region water delivery or capacity.

## 5. Financial

### **\$2.9 billion of capital infrastructure works approved in the 2021 Environmental Services Budget over next 10 years**

The 2021 Environmental Services Budget and 10-Year Capital Plan include \$2.9 billion in water, wastewater, waste management, forestry and energy projects. Of the total \$2.9 billion of capital works in the approved 10-Year Capital program, \$1.65 billion is for growth infrastructure in the water and wastewater program, \$1.13 billion for rehabilitation and replacement in the water and wastewater program and \$168.0 million for waste management, forestry and energy projects. The 2021 multi-year Capital Spending Authority for Environmental Services infrastructure projects is \$1.6 billion. Additional Capital Spending Authority will be requested annually through the budget process as projects progress and specific requirements are established.

Growth capital work is debt financed and repaid through development charges. Water and wastewater rehabilitation and replacement work is paid for through the water/wastewater rates. Waste management, forestry and energy are primarily paid through the tax levy. As part of the budget process, associated funding and resource requirements for operations and asset management of expanded and complex infrastructure systems are areas of focus informing financial implications of servicing growth. A summary of key infrastructure project costs, based on the 2021 approved budget, is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Cost Estimates for Key Infrastructure Projects**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Estimated Total Project Cost</b>	<b>10-Year Capital Plan Expenditures<sup>1</sup> (2021-2030)</b>
Duffin Creek Plant Outfall and Phosphorus Reduction Action Plan Upgrades	\$21.7M	\$11.4M
York Durham Sewage System Newmarket Forcemain Twinning	\$119.2M	\$14.2M
Upper York Sewage Solutions Water Reclamation Centre <sup>2</sup>	\$638.6M	\$497.3M
Upper York Sewage Solutions Interim Servicing	\$30.4M	\$20.5M
West Vaughan Sewage Servicing	\$400.8M	\$309.9M
Northeast Vaughan Water and Wastewater Servicing	\$281.5M	\$264.5M
Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway Regional Centre Water and Wastewater Servicing	\$33.7M	\$29.4M
Sutton Water Resource Recovery Facility Expansion	\$43.9M	\$4.3M
City of Toronto Cost-shared Projects	\$322.0M	\$23.0M
Peel Region Water Cost-shared Projects	\$532.0M	\$3.9M
Peel Region Wastewater Cost-shared Projects	\$68.7M	\$9.2M
<b>Estimated Total Project Cost and Remaining Budget in 10-Year Plan</b>	<b>\$2,492.5M</b>	<b>\$1,187.6M</b>

1. Costs under review as projects advance and will be updated as part of annual budget process

2. Includes associated linear conveyance work and phosphorus offset program



## Managing longevity of existing infrastructure through comprehensive asset management

One of Environmental Services' key strategic goals involves proactively managing and maintaining infrastructure to ensure reliability and compliance with all regulatory requirements. Accordingly, the department's asset management program monitors condition and performance of Environmental Services' multi-billion dollar asset base. Infrastructure rehabilitation and replacement requirements to maintain current levels of service are estimated at about \$1.2 billion over the next 10 years. Some key projects and programs are as follows: Duffin Creek Incinerator Replacement Project, Southeast Collector Rehabilitation Project, York Durham Sewage System Rehabilitation Program, Ductile Iron Watermain Replacement Program, Inflow and Infiltration Reduction Program, and Elevated Water Tank Rehabilitation Program. A breakdown of estimated costs for this program area is provided in Table 3 along with other components of the entire capital program.

**Table 3**  
**Environmental Services 10-Year Capital Plan Expenditures**

<b>Capital Program Area</b>	<b>Expenditures (2021 - 2030)</b>
Key Infrastructure Projects (detailed in Table 2)	\$1,187.6M
Other Water Growth Capital Projects	\$136.6M
Other Wastewater Growth Capital Projects	\$323.1M
Water Rehabilitation/Replacement	\$407.3M
Wastewater Rehabilitation/Replacement	\$726.1M
Waste Management	\$112.7M
Natural Heritage and Forestry	\$32.5M
Energy Management	\$22.9M
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,948.8M</b>

## Region awarded \$66.4 million through the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund in 2019 and \$34.1 million in 2020

In 2019, the Region was granted approval for three projects submitted for funding through Infrastructure Canada's Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund. This Fund's objective is to support large-scale infrastructure projects helping communities better manage risk of disasters triggered by natural hazards due to a changing climate. The total amount approved is \$66.4 million with 85% going towards two key water and wastewater projects and the remainder towards establishment of natural infrastructure:

1. York Durham Sewage System Newmarket Forcemain Twinning

2. Aurora Sewage Pumping Station Overflow Mitigation
3. Natural Infrastructure - building climate change resilience through enhancement and restoration of the urban forest

The agreement end date to complete these works is March 2028. As of December 2020, \$41.1 million has been received from Infrastructure Canada. Full recovery for these three projects is anticipated by 2023.

In July 2020, the federal government approached the Region regarding two projects that were submitted under the first round of the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund application process in 2018. The Expressions of Interest for these two projects were approved but deferred for future consideration, due to the later timing of construction schedules. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government requested the Region to submit full applications which were successful in obtaining approval in 2020.

A total eligible cost of \$45.3 million was submitted for Groundwater Supply System Improvements and \$40.0 million for the Holland Marsh Polder Phosphorus Recovery and Recycle Facility, of which 40% (\$34.1 million), will be covered by federal funding. The Groundwater Supply System Improvements project is an investment in groundwater facilities, including the addition of iron and manganese treatment. The Holland Marsh Polder Phosphorus Recovery and Recycle Facility project will construct a single storm water treatment facility to remove over 40% of phosphorus from the Holland Marsh canals. This project is contingent on approval of the Upper York Sewage Solutions Environmental Assessment approval.

On July 20, 2021, Infrastructure Canada announced the opening of a new application intake for the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund. Environmental Services is proceeding with the following four project application submissions:

- York Region Municipalities Inflow and Infiltration Reduction Public Infrastructure Projects
- Sewage Pumping Station Repair Program (Bogart Pumping Station Rehabilitation, Leslie Sewage Pumping Station Transformer Upgrades, Keswick Sewage Pumping Station Upgrades and Black Creek Sewage Pumping Station Upgrades)
- Richmond Hill Collector Repair and Twinning
- Georgina Water Treatment Plant Mussel Control and Backwash Outfall Repair

### **Project timelines are contingent on the Region achieving development charge collection projections**

Growth-related water and wastewater projects are funded with development charges. Project timelines established in the 2021 10-Year Capital Plan are contingent on the Region achieving its growth and development charge collection projections. Development charge collections are dependent on market conditions and development approvals, which can vary

significantly from year to year. As reported in the Fiscal Sustainability: 2021 Update report, the continuation of COVID-19 pandemic-related cost pressures remain a risk for 2021 and 2022. Collections were down in 2020 but are forecast to improve in 2021 and 2022 as the economy recovers. The development charge collections forecast is predicated on achieving and maintaining development activities at the pre-pandemic level, which is critical to affording the capital plan.

As part of the 2022 budget process the Region continues to assess development charge collections and project timelines. If forecast development charge collections are not achievable, the Region may need to revisit its capital plan commitments and realign the timing of capital projects. Also, staff are updating the Region-wide Development Charge Bylaw, which is expected to be in place by June 2022.

## 6. Local Impact

### **York Region continues to work closely with local municipalities affected by capital works program to facilitate planned community growth**

Priority projects detailed in this report are crucial to providing timely servicing capacity to municipalities. This water and wastewater capacity is necessary to meet growth expectations while maintaining a high level of environmental and public health protection.

Continued support from local municipalities on inflow and infiltration reduction efforts and commitments to new development standards will help support capacity management in the system.

### **Additional servicing capacity for development is created through timely completion of key infrastructure projects**

Release of additional capacity, as well as granting of approvals in each phase of the approval process, is contingent on projects being completed as planned. Projects are continually monitored to ensure that risk of delay is mitigated where possible and capacity made available. Staff continue to collaborate with local municipalities to ensure impacts to planned community growth are minimized to the extent possible considering any capacity constraints created by the current implementation schedule for these projects. A collaborative approach with local municipalities will continue to assist with reporting on their local capacity allocation in a timely manner to both support their own respective capacity allocation and future growth commitments as well as the Regional capacity assignment to ensure fiscal sustainability.

## 7. Conclusion

### **\$2.9 billion proposed 10-Year Capital Plan includes required projects for current and future capacity assignments**

This report provides Council with a status of priority projects within the 10-Year Capital Plan and its relationship to timing of servicing capacity. Overall, 44 active construction projects are underway and no major construction delays are anticipated at this time. Although the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic remains unclear at this time, an important consideration for recovery planning will be to enact revisions to expedite the lengthy environmental assessment approvals process and maintain project timelines. Continuing to monitor these projects will ensure that both capacity allocation and granting of planning approvals are synchronized with project delivery schedules. At the end of 2020, total available capacity for growth in the York Durham Sewage System was 178,132 persons.

The 2021 10-Year Capital Plan includes critical projects required to provide capacity to service future growth. Staff reported to Council in September 2021 on capacity monitoring. Where applicable, staff will continue to optimize water and wastewater networks through infra-stretching, water conservation, inflow and infiltration reduction and other capacity monitoring programs to ensure the Region maximizes potential from existing Regional systems. The Region will continue to monitor development charge collections. Also, where appropriate, the Region will continue to look for other funding sources.

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For more information on this report, please contact Mike Rabeau, Director, Capital Planning and Delivery, Environmental Services at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75157.



Recommended by:

**Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.**  
Commissioner of Environmental Services



Approved for Submission:

**Bruce Macgregor**  
Chief Administrative Officer

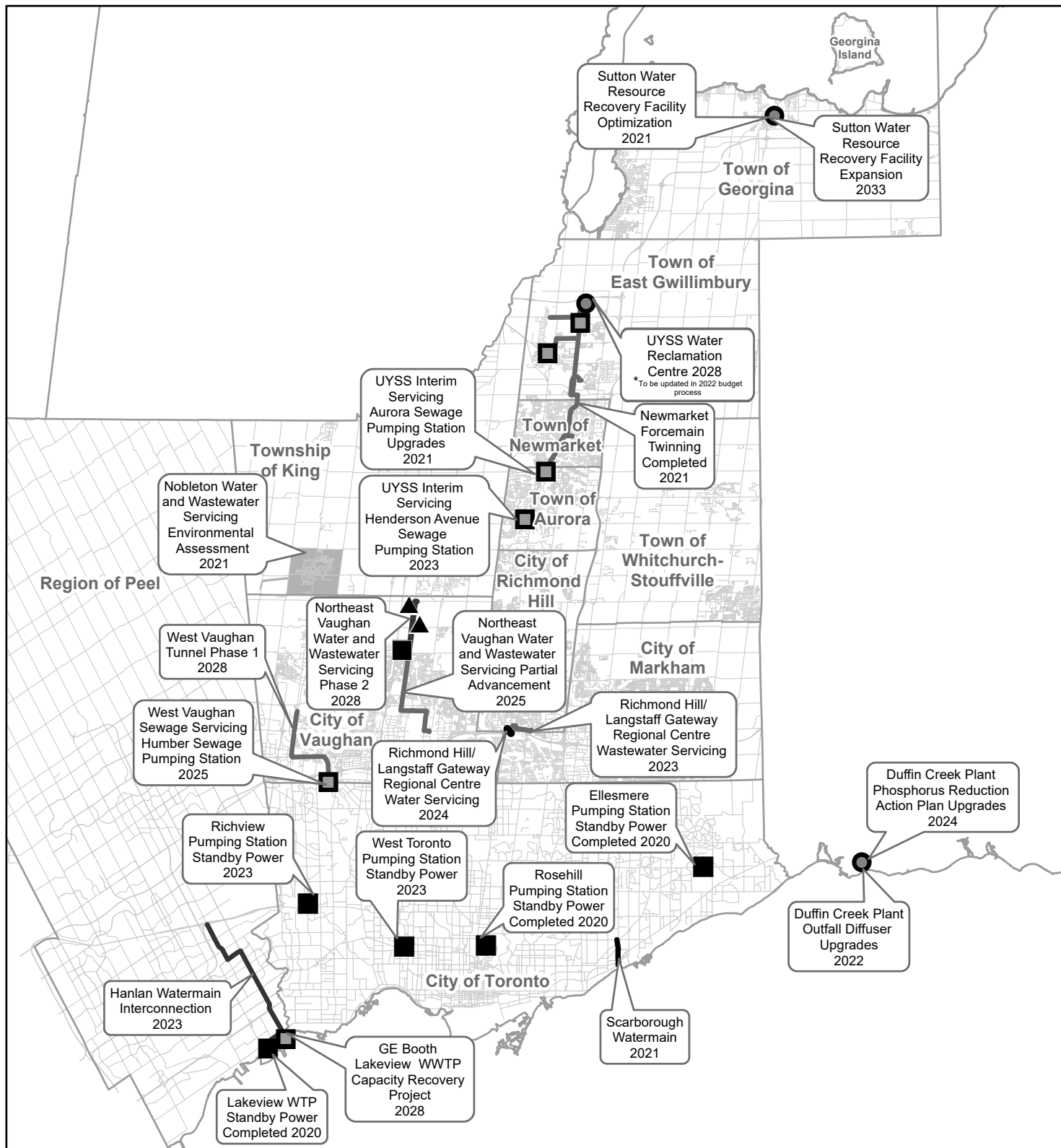
September 15, 2021  
Attachments (2)  
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### Status of Key Infrastructure Projects

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Expected Project Commissioning Date</b>
Duffin Creek Plant Outfall	Diffuser upgrades to increase outfall capacity to 630MLD	Construction	2022
	Phosphorus Reduction Action Plan Upgrades	Tendering	2024
Upper York Sewage Solutions	Water Reclamation Centre with associated linear works and Phosphorus Offset Program	EA/Detailed Design	2028 (Timing dependent on Upper York Sewage Solutions Individual Environmental Assessment approval. Timing will be updated as part of the 2022 Budget process)
	Newmarket Forcemain Twinning	Substantial Completion	2021
	Interim Infrastructure Solutions – Aurora Sewage Pumping Station Upgrades	Construction	2021
	Interim Infrastructure Solutions – Henderson Sewage Pumping Station	Construction	2023
West Vaughan Sewage Servicing	Humber Sewage Pumping Station	Tendering	2025
	Tunnel Phase 1	Detailed Design	2028
Northeast Vaughan Servicing	Water and wastewater servicing solution partial advancement Phase 1	Detailed Design	2025
	Water and wastewater servicing Phase 2	Detailed Design	2028
Nobleton Water and Wastewater Servicing	Class Environmental Assessment	EA	2021 (Timing of EA completion)
Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway Regional Centre	Wastewater servicing solution	Construction	2023
	Water servicing solution	Detailed Design	2024

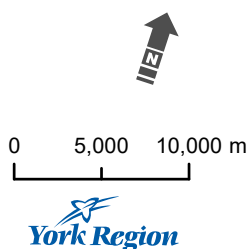
Sutton Water Resource Recovery Facility	New equalization tank and upgrades for plant optimization	Construction	2021
	Expansion of existing facility to accommodate growth in Sutton	Detailed Design	2033
City of Toronto Cost-shared Projects	Ellesmere Pumping Station Standby Power	Warranty	Completed 2020
	Rosehill Pumping Station Standby Power	Warranty	Completed 2020
	Scarborough Watermain	Construction	2021
	Richview Pumping Station Standby Power	Detailed Design	2023
	West Toronto Pumping Station Standby Power	Detailed Design	2023
Peel Region Water Cost-shared Projects	Lakeview Water Treatment Plant Standby Power	Warranty	Completed 2020
	Hanlan Watermain Interconnection	Detailed Design	2023
Peel Region Wastewater Cost-shared Projects	GE Booth Lakeview WWTP Capacity Recovery Project	Detailed Design	2028

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**LOCATION PLAN**  
**Key Infrastructure Projects**  
 Capital Infrastructure Status Update  
 Water and Wastewater October 14, 2021

Produced by: The Regional Municipality of York  
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Legend	
	Water Storage
	Water Pumping Station
	Watermain
	Treatment Plant
	Sewage Pumping Station
	Wastewater Main
	EA Boundary



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Dear Town of Newmarket Council:

On behalf of CUPE Ontario's nearly 125,000 active members of the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS), I am writing today to express our serious concerns with OMERS' investment performance.

In 2020, OMERS posted a net loss 2.7%, representing three billion dollars in losses. This was during a year that comparable defined benefit pension plans and funds in Canada posted substantial investment gains. CUPE Ontario investigated further and tracked investment returns at OMERS for ten years. We found that OMERS has underperformed relative to other large pension plans and funds, as well as relative to its own benchmarks. We also found that OMERS no longer shares this critical information in their annual reporting, making it difficult for plan members to hold their investment managers accountable.

Attached you will find a report detailing OMERS investment underperformance. Also attached, you will find the analysis of a third-party actuary (PBI Actuarial consultants) who confirmed that our reasoning and conclusions were sound.

CUPE Ontario believes plan members and employers have the right to know why OMERS' investments have, over a ten-year period, underperformed other large defined benefit pension plans and funds. If OMERS had performed in line with the average large Canadian public pension plan, it would have a substantial, multi-billion-dollar surplus, versus the deficit it currently faces.

Considering the significant impact such underperformance could have on plan members and on all sponsors who hold the liabilities of the plan, **we are calling on OMERS to cooperate fully with an independent and transparent third-party review of its investment performance** transparent and accountable to plan members, sponsors like CUPE Ontario, other unions, and employers like the Town of Newmarket.

We are hoping that the Town of Newmarket Council will join our call for an independent expert review of OMERS. **We are asking you, and other municipal councils across the province, to debate the following motion or to pass a similar motion calling for a third-party expert review of OMERS.** The terms of such a review would need to be agreed upon by sponsors and they could explore whether reasonable costs could be funded from the plan.



### **Proposed Motion – Independent Review of OMERS' Investment Performance**

1. The Town of Newmarket Council is calling for an immediate, comprehensive and independent third-party expert review of OMERS' investment performance and practices over the past ten years, conducted by the OMERS Pension Plan's sponsors and stakeholders.
2. Such a review would, at a minimum:
  - a. Compare OMERS plan-level, and asset class-level performance to other comparable defined benefit pension plans and funds, OMERS internal benchmarks, and market-based benchmarks.
  - b. Examine OMERS decision-making processes around the timing of various investment decisions.
  - c. Assess the risk management policies and protocols that were in place and determine if they were followed and/or if they were sufficient to protect the plan from undue risk.
  - d. Assess whether the disclosures provided to the OMERS Administrative and Sponsorship Boards were sufficient evidence to allow the Boards to respond appropriately and in a timely manner.
  - e. Examine executive compensation, investment fees and investment costs at OMERS in comparison to other major defined benefit pension plans and funds.
  - f. Examine other relevant issues identified by the third-party expert review.
  - g. Make recommendations for changes at OMERS to ensure stronger returns moving forward.
  - h. Issue their final report and recommendations in a timely manner.
  - i. Publicly release its full report and recommendations to ensure that it is available to OMERS sponsors, stakeholders, and plan members.
3. The Town of Newmarket Council further calls on the OMERS Administrative Corporation to:
  - a. Provide all requested data, documentation and information required of the review panel to fulfill its mandate.
  - b. Establish a step-by-step plan, with OMERS sponsors and stakeholders, to implement any recommendations set out in the review report.



**PBI Actuarial Consultants Ltd.**

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April 27, 2021

To: Fred Hahn, President CUPE Ontario  
 CUPE Ontario

From: Bradley Hough

Subject: **OMERS Performance Review**

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### **Scope of review**

CUPE has asked PBI to review "CUPE Ontario Concerns With OMERS Investment Returns". PBI has reviewed the performance data, methods, and comparisons of OMERS with peer pension plans and funds in CUPE's report.

The intention of our review is to determine:

- a) if comparisons made between the pension plans and funds and their respective benchmarks are reasonable; and
- b) if the analysis completed by CUPE supports the conclusions of their report.

We have reviewed the performance comparisons in CUPE's report by reviewing public information provided by the plans and funds referenced. Statements of investment policies and procedures, actuarial valuation reports, annual reports and other governance documents were reviewed to add as much context around plan performance as possible with the public information available.

### **Summary**

We conclude that the comparisons made by CUPE are reasonable and show that there is a significant gap in performance between OMERS and other comparable public pension plans and funds. In our opinion, public information is unable to fully explain the performance gap. More information is required to truly understand why performance is so different between OMERS and comparable public pension plans and funds.

In our opinion, the comparisons and analysis in the report support CUPE's request for further review of performance.

### **Review**

#### **Is the choice of peer universe reasonable?**

CUPE has chosen a universe of large public sector defined benefit plans ("plans"), or public sector investment managers managing assets ("funds") including, but not exclusively, defined benefit pension plans. Scale gives public plans and funds a different opportunity set versus smaller private sector plans as a result of the size of assets and also investment opportunities. We therefore believe that CUPE's approach of focusing on a limited universe of public sector peers rather than a broader pension plan universe is reasonable and fair.

Of the universe supplied, HOOPP, OTHP, BCMPP and LAPP are easier to directly compare given they are pension plans rather than funds; however, the public sector investment managers referenced by CUPE are still useful



points of reference when looking at comparable performance. Performance of funds such as PSP, CDPQ, BCI and AIMCO suggests that client defined benefit plans are likely to have higher absolute returns than OMERS for 2020.

LAPP and AIMCO have not published full performance information for 2020.

#### Would conclusions change if the universe of plans was expanded?

Defined benefit plans have different benefits, contributions, funding policies, and member demographics. Making comparisons across universes of defined benefit plans requires caution and it is difficult to draw firm conclusions. However, it is worth noting that OMERS performance is significantly below not only public peers, but wider universes of defined benefit plans.

RBC's universe of pension plans shows a median return of 9.2% for 2020<sup>1</sup>. PBI has access to the Northern Trust universe of Canadian defined benefit pension plans<sup>2</sup> and note that the median return is similar to RBC (full year 2020 median return is 9.9%). The lowest return in the Northern Trust Universe is 5% for 2020. We are not aware of an absolute return for PBI clients below 5%.

#### Could 'context' such as different asset mixes driven by Plan demographics or situation explain OMERS performance?

##### a. Asset Mix

We compared asset mixes with HOOPP, BCMPP and OTPP. HOOPP has a liability driven investment strategy and has a higher fixed income allocation. BCMPP and OTPP are return focused like OMERS. OMERS has a higher proportion in real assets and credit than these plans and lower fixed income assets. OTPP has a specific inflation management strategy. However, at a high level, asset allocations between OMERS, BCMPP and OTPP make use of similar asset classes and are comparable.

Asset Class	OMERS	BCMPP	OTPP	HOOPP
Public Equity	31%	33%	19%	23%
Fixed Income	6%	21%	16%	86%
Private Equity	14%	10%	19%	13%
Real Assets	34%	27%	21%	15%
Credit/Mortgages	17%	6%	8%	0%
Inflation Sensitive	0%	0%	17%	0%
Innovation	0%	0%	2%	0%
Absolute Return Strategies	0%	0%	6%	0%
Money Market	-2%	2%	-8%	-37%

Source: annual reports as of December 31, 2020, except for BCMPP, which is as of December 31, 2019.

<sup>1</sup> The RBC pension plan universe is published by RBC Investor and Treasury Services. "All Plan Universe" currently tracks the performance and asset allocation of a cross-section of assets under management across Canadian defined benefit pension plans.

<sup>2</sup> The Northern Trust universe of defined benefit plans is provided to PBI by Northern Trust. It consists of 34 defined benefit plans ranging from \$16.4M to \$8.7B in size. Average plan assets are \$1.9B, median plan assets are \$627M as of December 31, 2020.



As the differences in performance are so large between OMERS and two plans with comparable asset mixes (albeit with some differences), more information on specific strategies within each asset class, such as style of equity manager, exposure to office, retail, and industrial real estate within real assets, use of leverage/overlay strategies and derivatives, currency hedging, and approach to liquidity management would be required to explain differences in performance.

We note that on page 43 of the OMERS 2020 Annual Report, losses were incurred on foreign currency hedging positions due to actions taken to protect liquidity. This contributed \$2.2B to the overall loss. Again, this indicates that a review, significantly beyond simple asset mix comparisons, is required to truly understand performance differentials.

Finally, understanding the role of the 'Total Portfolio Management' approach in determining asset allocations and strategies would be helpful to putting context around the asset mix choices and investment strategies.

#### **b. Membership Demographics**

We note that BCMPP and HOOPP have broadly similar membership demographics to OMERS. OTPP is more mature with a greater proportion of retirees. PBI does not believe plan demographics are different enough to render comparisons between the plans invalid.

#### **Comments on CUPE's five principal findings:**

- 1) **OMERS 10-year annualized performance was below peer group as of December 31, 2019.** PBI believes the comparisons made are reasonable and agree with the conclusion.
- 2) **OMERS performance in 2020 was significantly below peers.** PBI agrees with this conclusion and notes that expanding the peer group adds weight to this conclusion.
- 3) **OMERS does not report comparisons of its annualized long-term returns to its own benchmarks**  
 Page 143 of the 2020 report has a comparison of calendar year returns vs benchmarks to 2011. We could not find a comparison of annualized long term performance vs benchmarks for OMERS.

We understand benchmarks are set annually by OMERS and approved by the Administration Corporation Board. From the information made public by OMERS, we would need more detail on the methodology used to derive the absolute return benchmark to interpret performance.

- 4) **5 to 10-year returns versus 5 to 10-year benchmarks.**

PBI verified the calendar year returns shown by CUPE. We were unable independently to verify the 5 and 10-year performance versus the benchmark as this was provided verbally to CUPE by OMERS and is not published. The peer group of public plans and funds all take different approaches to benchmarking. Some use composites of public market indices/asset class benchmarks according to their target allocations. PSP uses a reference portfolio approach and HOOPP may use a liability focused benchmark. We note that comparisons of relative performance vs stated benchmarks across peer group plans are challenging because of the differences in methodology.

However, in our opinion the analysis is sufficient to show that OMERS is the only Plan underperforming their internal benchmark over a 10-year horizon. Understanding why requires a deeper understanding



of performance and benchmarking methodology beyond the information made public. In our opinion this adds weight to CUPE's request for a review of performance.

- 5) **OMERS 20-year return is not above its 20-year benchmark.** We were unable to independently verify this point as the performance versus the benchmark was provided verbally to CUPE by OMERS and is not publicly available.

### Conclusions

The comparisons made by CUPE are high level and broad by the nature of information made public. However, we believe the comparisons are reasonable and that CUPE has chosen similar public plans and funds as practically possible. Overall, we believe the analysis is sufficient to conclude that OMERS investment performance in 2020 and longer term is significantly lower than other comparable plans.

PBI would require considerably more information than made public on OMERS' total portfolio management approach, investment strategies, third party managers, asset mix policies, liquidity management approach and derivative positions to interpret performance.

In our opinion, the comparisons made demonstrate that the longer-term performance gap between comparable peers is significant and supports CUPE's request for a further, more detailed review of performance beyond the information made public.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradley Hough", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bradley Hough, FIA, ACIA, CAIA

BH:jh

U:\T0001\0001\110\00\2021\0\C1.DOCX

**NOT JUST ONE  
"TOUGH YEAR":  
THE NEED FOR A REVIEW  
OF OMERS INVESTMENT  
PERFORMANCE**

*May 2021*

# Executive Summary

CUPE Ontario represents nearly half of the 289,000 active members of the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) – the province's Defined Benefit (DB) pension plan for municipal, school board and certain other public sector workers.

While most pension plans had strong returns in 2020, OMERS recently reported billions of dollars of losses over the year. This has prompted CUPE Ontario to examine how OMERS investments have performed compared to other large pension plans and funds. We have also looked at how OMERS has performed against its own internal benchmarks.

We find that OMERS underperformance is not a new or a short-term problem. Specifically, we find that:

- 1) OMERS longer-term performance has significantly lagged behind other large pension funds and plans, in periods both before and after 2020 results were in.
- 2) OMERS has now fallen behind even some of its own internal longer-term return benchmarks – a troubling fact that, contrary to industry standards, is not disclosed in OMERS Annual Report.

Since investment returns fund the vast majority of pensions paid from the plan, returns are incredibly important to DB plan members. Lower investment returns may lead to members being asked to pay more into the plan, or could result in additional pressure for more benefit cuts.

Despite requests, OMERS has not committed to an independent, transparent review of its investment decisions.

CUPE Ontario feels these issues are so serious that a fully transparent expert review of OMERS investment strategies, returns, and internal performance assessment is urgently needed. This review should be conducted by the plan sponsors and stakeholders themselves (the risk-bearing parties to OMERS) and should be fully independent of OMERS staff, who have a clear conflict of interest in conducting a review of their own performance. We invite the other sponsors of OMERS, including our employer counterparts and the broader community of the plan's organizational stakeholders, to support this proposal and to work with us to conduct this review.

# Introduction

CUPE Ontario represents 125,000 plan members of the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS). We are the largest sponsor in this defined benefit (DB) pension plan that is – at least in theory – jointly-controlled by plan sponsors like CUPE Ontario and other unions and employers.



**WE CONTINUE  
TO STRONGLY  
BELIEVE THAT  
DB PLANS ARE  
A MODEL WORTH  
NOT ONLY  
DEFENDING,  
BUT EXTENDING  
TO ALL WORKERS.**

CUPE Ontario strongly believes that DB pension plans are the best way to provide a decent and secure retirement for our hard-working members. Large public sector DB plans like OMERS allow for an efficient pooling and sharing of costs and risks between employers and plan members. DB plans allow members to know what their pensions will be in retirement. This security is incredibly important for plan members. However, it is not only retirees who benefit from good, secure pension benefits. DB pension plans have been shown to have positive macroeconomic effects on the economy as a whole.<sup>1</sup> The concerns we raise in this report are not concerns with the DB model itself; we continue to strongly believe that DB plans are a model worth not only defending, but extending to all workers.

For a number of years, we have been concerned with the lower level of OMERS pension fund investment returns in comparison to those of other similar plans. OMERS recently reported that the plan had a very bad year in 2020. This has led CUPE Ontario to perform a more in-depth examination of publicly-available annual reporting documents to determine how, in our view, OMERS is performing compared to the seven other large (\$50 billion+) pension plans and funds in Canada.<sup>2</sup> OMERS themselves refer to this club of large plans and funds as the “eight leading Canadian pension plan investment managers,” and occasionally takes coordinated activity with them.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Conference Board of Canada, “Economic Impact of British Columbia’s Public Sector Pension Plans,” October 2013; Boston Consulting Group, “Measuring Impact of Canadian Pension Funds,” October 2015; Ontario Teachers Pension Plan News Release, “New analysis confirms that defined benefit pensions provide significant benefits to Canadian economy,” October 22, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the data in this document has been compiled from publicly-available annual reporting of the respective plans. With the exception of CDPO, returns are as reported in these documents, and are net. CDPO results were reported gross of some expenses, and have been reduced by 0.2% to best approximate a net return. Longer-term periods are annualized, and are as reported by the respective plans.

<sup>3</sup> OMERS News Release, “CEOs of Eight Leading Canadian Pension Plan Investment Managers Call on Companies and Investors to Help Drive Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth,” November 25, 2020.





**AS BAD AS  
OMERS  
PERFORMANCE  
WAS IN 2020,  
THIS IS NOT A  
NEW OR A SHORT-  
TERM PROBLEM**

Due to their scale, these large pension plans and funds are able to invest in asset classes that are typically not available to smaller investors or individuals. At the same time, we acknowledge that these eight plans are not completely similar: they have their own governance structures, asset mixes, risk appetites, and reporting periods, all of which are described in the public documents of the respective plans. However, we also acknowledge that many of these differences are the result of specific investment decisions made by the respective plans and funds. We therefore believe that there is value in comparing the performance of this small set of large funds, particularly over longer-term periods.

Acronym	Name	Assets Under Management (\$ Billion)	Funded Status in Most Recent Annual Report	Most Recent Annual Reporting Date
<b>CPPIB</b>	Canada Pension Plan Investment Board	410	N/A	March 31, 2020
<b>CDPQ</b>	Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec	366	108% (RREGOP)	Dec 31, 2020
<b>OTPP</b>	Ontario Teachers Pension Plan	221	103%	Dec 31, 2020
<b>PSP</b>	Public Sector Pension Investment Board	170	111% (Public Service Plan)	March 31, 2020
<b>OMERS</b>	Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System	105	97%	Dec 31, 2020
<b>HOOPP</b>	Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan	104	119%	Dec 31, 2020
<b>BC MPP</b>	BC Municipal Pension Plan (investments managed by BCI, the BC Investment Management Corporation)	59 (MPP) 171 (BCI)	105%	Dec 31, 2019 (MPP) March 31, 2020 (BCI)
<b>LAPP</b>	Alberta Local Authorities Pension Plan (investments managed by Alberta Investment Management Corporation)	50 (LAPP) 119 (AIMCO)	119%	Dec 31, 2019

In some cases, the pension funds above manage the investments of several pension plans (CDPQ, PSP, BCI, AIMCO are all such cases). In those cases, we look most closely at the returns at an individual plan level for the respective client plan that most closely compares to OMERS.

We have also looked at how OMERS has performed against its own internal benchmarks.

This review has resulted in some very troubling findings which suggest that, as bad as OMERS performance was in 2020, this is not a new or a short-term problem. We found evidence that OMERS longer-term return performance has significantly lagged behind



**HIGHER  
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BETTER FOR  
OMERS PLAN  
MEMBERS, AND  
FOR OMERS  
EMPLOYERS.**

other large pension funds and plans. We also found that OMERS has now fallen behind even some of its own internal longer-term return benchmarks – a troubling fact that, contrary to industry standards, is not disclosed in OMERS Annual Report.

Investment results are incredibly important to DB plan members because compounded returns typically fund the vast majority of the pensions that are eventually paid. OMERS indicates that investment returns are expected to fund approximately 70% of the pensions paid by the plan.<sup>4</sup> When investment returns are insufficient, it can put upward pressure on required contribution rates for both members and employers. Most other plans have now returned to pension surpluses since the global financial crisis more than a decade ago, but OMERS continues its long climb out of deficit. Contribution levels were a central talking point from OMERS when plan decision-makers removed guaranteed indexation in 2020. And we expect that, in the months to come, OMERS will once again be looking to plan members to bear the burden of plan funding issues that are, in part, a result of these investment returns. Meanwhile other pension plans, who have had better returns, are currently holding significant surpluses, many have lower contribution rates and some are even improving pension benefits.<sup>5</sup> Higher investment returns would have been better for OMERS plan members, and for OMERS employers.

Despite requests<sup>6</sup>, OMERS has not committed to an independent, transparent review of its investment decisions. Any reviews that have taken place have been behind closed doors at OMERS and have not been shared with sponsors or described in any detail. While OMERS has outlined several investment policy changes it plans to make, its overriding message remains: “the fundamentals of our long-term strategy remain sound, and we will continue to advance that strategy.”<sup>7</sup>



**A FULLY  
TRANSPARENT  
EXPERT REVIEW  
OF OMERS  
INVESTMENT  
STRATEGIES,  
RETURNS,  
AND INTERNAL  
PERFORMANCE  
ASSESSMENT  
IS URGENTLY  
NEEDED.**

**CUPE Ontario feels these issues are so serious that a fully transparent expert review of OMERS investment strategies, returns, and internal performance assessment is urgently needed. This review should be conducted by the plan sponsors and stakeholders themselves (the risk-bearing parties to OMERS) and should be fully independent of OMERS staff, who have a clear conflict of interest in conducting a review of their own performance. We invite the other sponsors of OMERS, including our employer counterparts and the broader community of the plan’s organizational stakeholders, to support this proposal and to work with us to conduct this review.**

<sup>4</sup> OMERS 2020 Annual Report, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> HOOPP News Release, “HOOPP posts 11.42% return in 2020, surpasses \$100 billion in assets,” March 31, 2021.

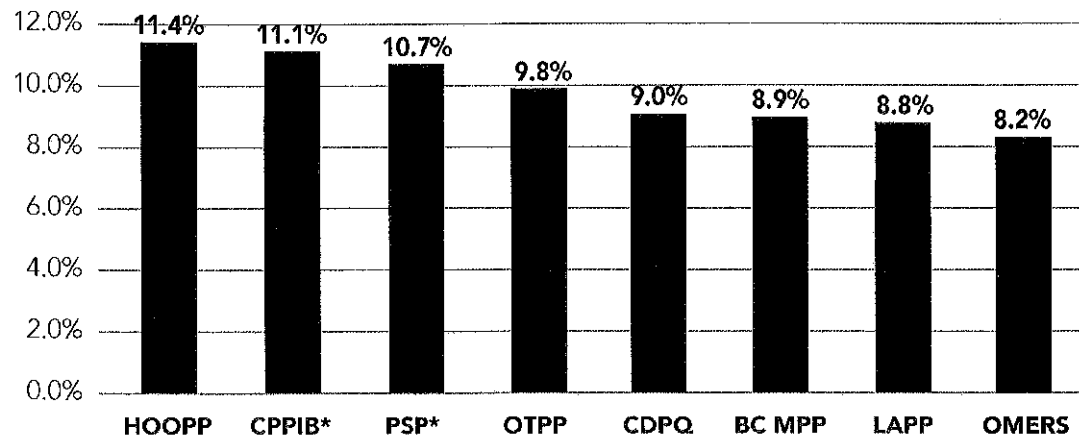
<sup>6</sup> CUPE Ontario Press Release, “We won’t pay for the mistakes of OMERS executives,” February 25, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> OMERS 2020 Annual Report, p. 23.

Our five principal findings are as follows:

- CUPE Ontario's concerns go beyond one "difficult" year in 2020: OMERS 10-year annualized returns trailed those of the other major funds and plans before the COVID crisis hit.**

### 10-Year Annualized Returns at 2019



\*To March 31, 2019, otherwise to Dec 31, 2019  
Source: Respective Annual Reports



**THIS WAS  
A HISTORIC  
ANNUAL  
UNDER-  
PERFORMANCE  
COMPARED TO  
BENCHMARKS.**

- OMERS 2020 investment performance was especially poor**

OMERS 2020 annual return (-2.7%) fell far short of the plan's own benchmark for the year of +6.9%. This was a historic annual underperformance compared to benchmarks.

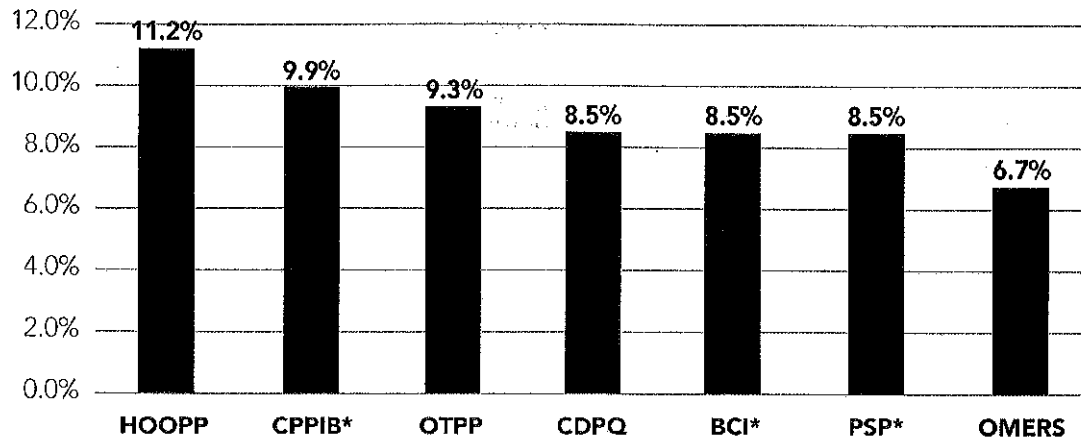
Other plans, however, have reported very strong annual returns for calendar year 2020:

2020 ANNUAL RETURNS	
HOOPP	+ 11.4%
RBC Pension Plan Universe <sup>3</sup>	+ 9.2%
OTPP	+ 8.6%
CDPQ	+ 7.5%
OMERS	- 2.7%

<sup>3</sup> RBC Investor & Treasury Services, "Canadian DB pensions post near-double-digit returns despite historic, turbulent year," January 29, 2021.

This negative result led OMERS 10-year annualized return to fall from 8.2% to 6.7%.

### 10-Year Annualized Returns at 2020



\*To March 31, 2020 otherwise to Dec 31, 2020

The chart above reports the most recent available return information for the respective funds and plans as disclosed in their annual reports. LAPP and BC MPP have yet to report their December 31, 2020 results. AIMCO has also not fully reported its 2020 results. However, BCI (the investment agent for BC MPP and other BC public sector plans) has reported its March 31, 2020 results and has been included here. The chart can be updated as more plans report their 2020 investment returns.



#### OMERS

DOES NOT  
REPORT CLEAR  
COMPARISONS OF  
THE PLAN'S LONG-  
TERM ANNUALIZED  
RETURNS TO ITS  
CORRESPONDING  
LONG-TERM  
BENCHMARKS.

### 3. OMERS does not report comparisons of its annualized long-term returns to its own benchmarks.

Benchmarking is a common practice where an investment *standard or goal* is set, against which *actual plan returns* are compared for ongoing assessment of investment performance. OMERS itself describes a benchmark as "a point of reference against which the performance of an investment is measured."<sup>9</sup> Comparisons of returns vs. benchmarks are typically done on a 1-year basis, but it is very common for long-term annualized comparisons to also be disclosed. Reporting these benchmarks is standard practice for pension plans and third-party investment managers. Even individual investment vehicles like mutual funds and ETFs typically provide details on how their performance compares to both annual and long-term benchmarks.

The OMERS Administration Corporation (AC) sets OMERS benchmarks each year, as described in the "Performance Management" section of the OMERS investment policy document.<sup>10</sup> OMERS Annual Reports describe how these benchmarks are constructed for each asset class. For many years, these reports stated that "Our goal is to earn stable returns that meet or exceed our benchmarks." OMERS Annual Reports compare OMERS single-year returns to the plan's single-year benchmarks. However, in sections describing investment performance, **OMERS does not report clear comparisons of the plan's long-term annualized returns to its corresponding long-term benchmarks.** While the Annual Report does compare performance to the plan's discount rate and a long-term return expectation set by the AC Board, it omits comparisons of the plan's long-term performance against their own long-term benchmarks.

<sup>9</sup> OMERS 2015 Annual Report, p. 131.

<sup>10</sup> OMERS "Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures – Primary Plan," January 1, 2021.



**IN THE ABSENCE OF LONGER-TERM COMPARATIVE DATA, STAKEHOLDERS FACE SERIOUS OBSTACLES IN EVALUATING PERFORMANCE**

OMERS believes that “paying pensions over decades means a long-term approach.”<sup>11</sup> But in the absence of longer-term comparative data, stakeholders face serious obstacles in evaluating performance. A review of historical Annual Reports shows that OMERS had a longstanding practice of reporting these long-term comparisons, but OMERS stopped this reporting, without explanation, in 2013. **This is dramatically out of step with other pension plans and is, in our view, a serious lack of transparency from OMERS.**

	HOOPP	CPPIB	PSP	OTPP	CDPQ	BC MPP	LAPP	OMERS
<b>Does annual report compare annualized longer-term returns to corresponding benchmarks?</b>	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO

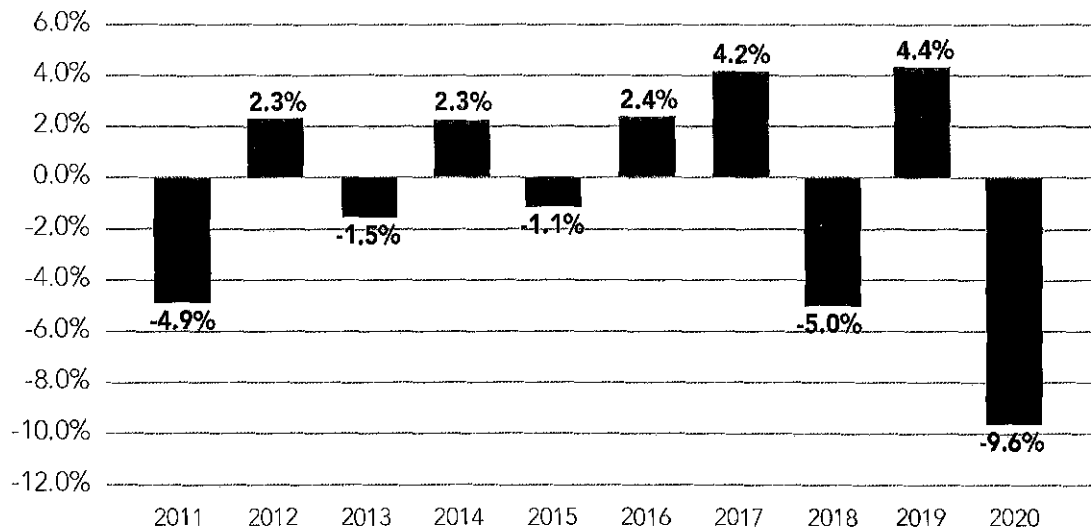


**THIS IS DRAMATICALLY OUT OF STEP WITH OTHER PENSION PLANS AND IS, IN OUR VIEW, A SERIOUS LACK OF TRANSPARENCY FROM OMERS.**

The OMERS Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures states that “performance reporting is consistent with industry recognized practices.”<sup>12</sup> The OMERS Statement of Investment Beliefs says that “articulating our investment goals and performance measures helps ensure clear accountability.”<sup>13</sup> We do not believe OMERS is meeting these standards of reporting and accountability on this point.

#### **4. OMERS 5 and 10-Year Returns are now below OMERS own benchmarks for these periods.**

#### **OMERS Annual Returns vs OMERS Annual Benchmark**



Source: OMERS 2020 Annual Report, Ten-Year Financial Review, p. 142.

<sup>11</sup> OMERS News Release, “OMERS Reports 2020 Financial Results: paying pensions over decades means a long-term approach,” February 25, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> OMERS “Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures,” January 1, 2021. [www.omers.com/governance-manual-policies-and-guidelines](http://www.omers.com/governance-manual-policies-and-guidelines)

<sup>13</sup> OMERS “Statement of Investment Beliefs,” January 1, 2020. [www.omers.com/governance-manual-policies-and-guidelines](http://www.omers.com/governance-manual-policies-and-guidelines)

	OMERS Return	OMERS Benchmark	Difference
5-Year Annualized	6.5%	7.4%	-0.9%
10-Year Annualized	6.7%	7.3%	-0.6%

Source: Returns from OMERS 2020 Annual Report  
Annualized Long-Term benchmarks not referenced in Annual Report and were reported verbally to CUPE by OMERS on our request.

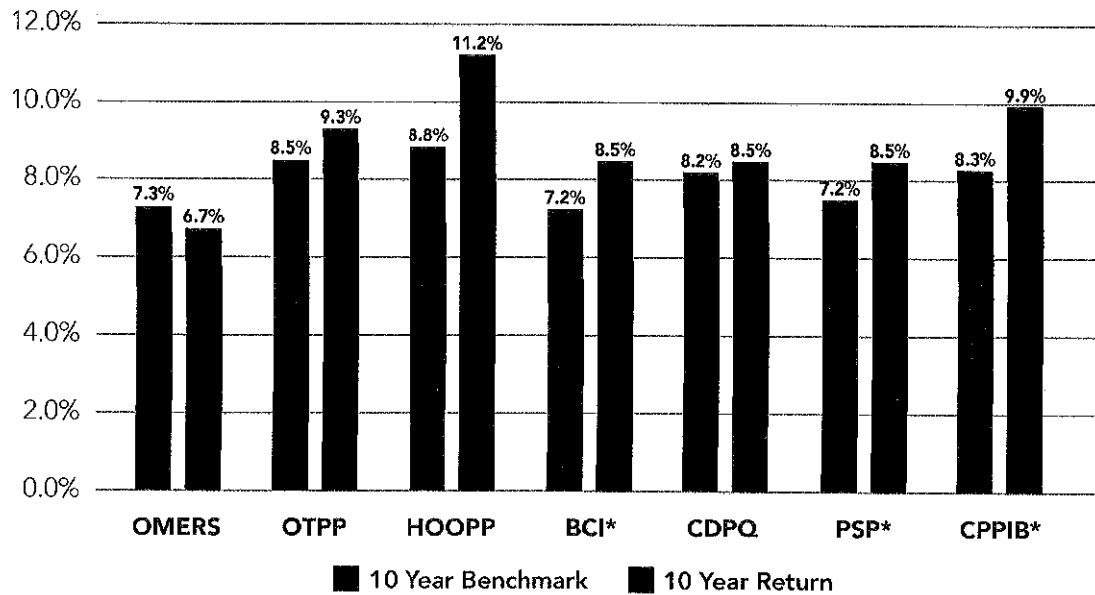
The 5 and 10-year annualized benchmark figures above were not disclosed in the OMERS 2020 Annual Report. OMERS provided these numbers verbally to CUPE Ontario upon our request. Previous OMERS Annual Reports normally included a statement that "Our goal is to earn stable returns that meet or exceed our benchmarks."<sup>14</sup> This statement appears to have been struck from the 2020 Annual Report.

We also note that, OMERS benchmarks are comparatively low over this period when examined alongside other plans. We believe this is due to a different benchmarking methodology for certain investments at OMERS compared to industry standards. The other major plans and funds that have reported 2020 results, however, are all ahead of their 10-year benchmarks as of their most recent annual reports.



**THE OTHER MAJOR PLANS AND FUNDS THAT HAVE REPORTED 2020 RESULTS, HOWEVER, ARE ALL AHEAD OF THEIR 10-YEAR BENCHMARKS AS OF THEIR MOST RECENT ANNUAL REPORTS.**

### 10-Year Returns vs 10 Year Benchmarks to 2020



\*To March 31, 2020 otherwise to Dec 31, 2020

<sup>14</sup> 2010 Annual Report p. 27; 2011 Annual Report p. 25; 2012 Annual Report p. 23; 2013 Annual Report p. 22; 2014 Annual Report p. 12; 2015 Annual Report p. 9; 2016 Annual Report p. 33; 2017 Annual Report p. 33; 2018 Annual Report p. 33; 2019 Annual Report p. 42; 2020 Annual Report N/A.



**HAD OMERS  
ACHIEVED  
THESE BETTER  
RESULTS,  
THE PLAN  
WOULD NOW  
HOLD A VERY  
SUBSTANTIAL  
SURPLUS.**

The impact on OMERS of these longer-term below-benchmark returns has been significant. The difference of 0.6% between OMERS actual annualized 10-year investment returns of 6.7% and its benchmark of 7.3% has meant an absolute return outcome that would have been roughly 6% higher after these 10 years (all other factors being equal). Even achieving just this benchmark return on an annualized 10 year basis would have resulted in an asset base of roughly \$6 billion higher current plan assets.<sup>15</sup> This better result would have brought OMERS reported funding level into surplus.

This difference is even greater if we were to compare the impact of OMERS investment performance to that of any of these other large plans. For example, had OMERS achieved the actual 10-year annualized returns of the OTTP of 9.3% (just below the average of the other six plans listed above), the OMERS asset base would now be (all other factors being equal) approximately 27% higher than OMERS actual asset level. In dollar-value terms, this difference represents roughly \$28 billion more in assets after the 10-year period from 2011 to 2020. Had OMERS achieved these better results, the plan would now hold a very substantial surplus.

#### **5. OMERS 20-year return is not above its 20-year benchmark.**

Upon request from CUPE Ontario, OMERS also verbally disclosed that its 20-year return is equal to its 20-year benchmark of 6%. In our view, it is troubling that the plan has not outperformed its benchmark over this long period, and that this comparison is also not disclosed in OMERS annual reporting.

<sup>15</sup> The alternative scenarios for investment performance results outlined in this section are necessarily approximate as they are based on data that is made publicly available by OMERS, and were generated using the reported OMERS asset base as at December 31, 2010 of \$53.3 billion.

# Conclusion

CUPE Ontario has serious concerns with OMERS investment performance, and with what we believe is a troubling lack of transparency about these issues. In our view, these issues cannot be dismissed as a one-year problem.



**THESE ISSUES CANNOT BE DISMISSED AS A ONE-YEAR PROBLEM.**

We anticipate that these long-term, below-benchmark investment returns are very likely to lead directly to yet another round of proposals to reduce pension benefits payable to current actives and future retirees. OMERS has already eliminated the guarantee of indexation of pension benefits for service after 2022, and OMERS management has indicated it will be examining further changes in plan design. OMERS has recently stated in writing to CUPE that "the OMERS pension plan has been facing sustainability issues for some time now and the investment results of 2020 have amplified the need to address those issues." At the recent 2021 OMERS AGM, OMERS Sponsors Corporation CEO Michael Rolland stated that "There are no guarantees as to what decisions we will have to make based on our performance...it's a long term performance we need to look at...the results of 2020 did have an impact...and that's why we're taking a look at it."



**WE ANTICIPATE THAT THESE LONG-TERM, BELOW-BENCHMARK INVESTMENT RETURNS ARE VERY LIKELY TO LEAD DIRECTLY TO YET ANOTHER ROUND OF PROPOSALS TO REDUCE PENSION BENEFITS PAYABLE TO CURRENT ACTIVES AND FUTURE RETIREES.**

CUPE Ontario is the largest sponsor representing plan members in OMERS, with over 125,000 active members in the plan. It is true that CUPE Ontario appoints representatives to both the OMERS Administrative Corporation and the OMERS Sponsors Corporation. However, because of restrictive confidentiality rules at both boards, our representatives are unable to keep CUPE Ontario fully-informed about what is really happening at OMERS governing boards, and the decisions that are being made about our members' hard-earned retirement savings. We do not believe this is how well-governed jointly-sponsored pension plans are supposed to function. The result is that we feel that we are a plan sponsor in name only. Our members are not being well-served by a structure that effectively cuts them out of playing the oversight function they should over their pension plan.





WE ARE NOT  
CONFIDENT  
THAT **OMERS**  
MANAGEMENT  
ITSELF HAS TAKEN,  
OR IS PLANNING  
TO TAKE,  
SUFFICIENT STEPS  
TO CRITICALLY  
EXAMINE ITS OWN  
PERFORMANCE.

These barriers will not stop CUPE Ontario from doing everything we can to ensure these concerns about OMERS investment performance are addressed. Based on their public comments to date, we are not confident that OMERS management itself has taken, or is planning to take, sufficient steps to critically examine its own performance, nor are we confident that plan members or sponsors and organizational stakeholders will receive a transparent reporting of any such review.

Therefore, CUPE Ontario is calling on other plan sponsors from both sides of the table to work with us to commission a fully transparent and independent expert review of the investment program at OMERS. This review should be conducted in the open by the sponsors and stakeholders themselves, and not behind closed doors at OMERS. Ensuring our pension returns are as strong as they can be is not a partisan issue, nor is it an issue that the member and employer side of the table should have a difference of opinion on. We want to work with other OMERS sponsors and stakeholders to address these issues for the good of all OMERS members.



ENSURING OUR  
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OF ALL **OMERS**  
MEMBERS.

## **Regional Council Decision - Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios in Response to Consultation**

On October 21, 2021 Regional Council made the following decision:

1. Council direct staff to include urban expansion lands based on a 50-55% intensification scenario in the updated Regional Official Plan, specifically 50% intensification annually to 2041 and 55% intensification annually from 2041 to 2051, as outlined in the September 16, 2021 report.
2. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the local municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and to the Region's Members of Provincial Parliament.

Please note four additional related motions affecting the updated Regional Official Plan were adopted and can be found in the [minutes](#) of the meeting (See Items H.1, H.2, H.3, H.4).

The original staff report is attached for your information.

Please contact Paul Bottomley, Manager of Policy, Research, and Forecasting at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71530 if you have any questions with respect to this matter

Regards,

**Christopher Raynor** | Regional Clerk, Office of the Regional Clerk, Corporate Services

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The Regional Municipality of York | 17250 Yonge Street | Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1  
1-877-464-9675 ext. 71300 | [christopher.raynor@york.ca](mailto:christopher.raynor@york.ca) | [york.ca](http://york.ca)

Our Mission: **Working together to serve our thriving communities – today and tomorrow**

# The Regional Municipality of York

Regional Council  
Planning and Economic Development  
September 16, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

## Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios in Response to Consultation

### 1. Recommendations

1. Council direct 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.
2. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the local municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and to the Region's Members of Provincial Parliament.

### 2. Summary

In [March 2021](#), Regional Council was presented with a preliminary 2051 land needs assessment and a distribution of the 2051 York Region forecast to the nine local municipalities. The forecast was prepared using the Growth Plan minimum 50% intensification target and a designated greenfield area density target of [60 residents and jobs per hectare](#). Since March, consultation has occurred with local municipalities, stakeholders, and the public. A key outcome from the consultation was the need to consider different land need scenarios based on alternative intensification and density target assumptions.

This report is to summarize input received through consultation, present an overview of alternate scenarios, and recommend a growth scenario for inclusion in the draft Regional Official Plan.

Key Points:

- Input received from local municipalities, Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), Building Industry and Land Development (BILD), other stakeholders and the public have prompted consideration of five alternative forecast scenarios:
  1. Modifications to the proposed March 2021 50% intensification target and 60 residents and jobs per hectare designated greenfield area density target scenario
  2. Phased 50-55% intensification target scenario
  3. 55% intensification target scenario

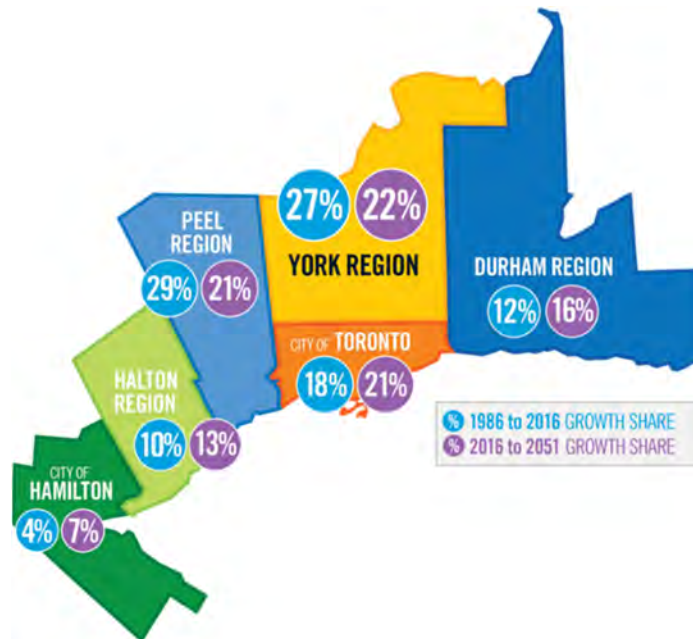
4. 60% intensification target scenario
  5. Designated greenfield area density target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare scenario
- Growth scenarios considered were limited to those that conform with Provincial legislation which constrain where and how the Region can grow, including prohibiting urban expansion within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan areas
  - Municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe are considering intensification and designated greenfield area density targets that exceed Growth Plan minimums
  - Striking the right balance to address stakeholder comments, in the context of good planning and market realities is important
  - Scenarios exceeding a 55% intensification target or that assume a designated greenfield area density of 50 residents and jobs per hectare are not recommended as they are not reflective of what the market is likely to deliver
  - A phased 50-55% intensification scenario is recommended as an achievable growth scenario that best addresses stakeholder feedback

### 3. Background

#### **York Region is required to plan for Provincial Growth Plan forecasts for a population of 2.02 million and 990,000 jobs for York Region by 2051**

The Growth Plan provides long-term direction to municipalities to plan for and manage growth, including where and how to grow as well as population and employment forecasts for upper- and single-tier municipalities. York Region is forecast to grow to a population of 2.02 million and 990,000 jobs by 2051. This represents growth of approximately 800,000 people and 345,000 jobs between 2021 and 2051, the highest of any Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) municipality, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**  
**Distribution of Historical and Forecast Growth by GTHA Municipality**



Municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, including York Region, are required to use Provincial forecasts and policies in the Growth Plan predicated on protecting the Greenbelt and the natural environment and building complete communities that are financially sustainable and well integrated with infrastructure investment as the basis for land use planning and managing growth. The Growth Plan sets minimum targets of 50% intensification and 50 residents and jobs per hectare in the designated greenfield area, respectively. As minimums, higher targets are reasonable based on the urbanizing context and market realities in each municipality. The Regional Forecast presented to Council in March 2021 assumed an intensification rate of 50% and a designated greenfield area density of 60 residents and jobs per hectare. This was based on past reporting and direction by Council through commenting on Provincial changes to the Growth Plan and MCR.

Municipalities are required to use the standardized Provincial Land Needs Assessment methodology to determine land needs to 2051. The methodology defines components, such as achieving the Growth Plan minimum intensification target, that must be assessed on a Region wide basis when determining the quantity of land needed to accommodate forecasted growth, including the need for any urban expansion.

### **A preliminary 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment was received by Council for the purposes of consultation and engagement in March 2021**

In March 2021, Regional Council was presented with a [Proposed 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment](#) based on the 50% intensification and designated greenfield area density of 60 residents and jobs per hectare targets. The report included proposed population and employment forecasts to 2051 for all nine municipalities as well as proposed mapping of the 3,400 hectares of urban expansion, or 80% of the Region's remaining Whitebelt lands,

required to accommodate provincially directed growth. Included in this figure was 2,300 hectares of Community Land primarily for residential uses and 1,100 hectares of Employment Land. Through receipt of the report, Regional Council directed staff to consult on the proposed forecasts and land needs assessment results. Part of the consultation process included a request for local municipal Council endorsed comments on the proposed forecasts by July 15, 2021.

## 4. Analysis

### **Eight local municipalities provided Council-endorsed positions on proposed forecasts**

Between April and June 2021, Regional staff attended seven local municipal Council meetings to present the proposed 2051 forecast and land needs assessment. Staff provided an overview of the results of applying the provincially mandated Land Needs Assessment Methodology at a Regional scale as well as a detailed summary of the assumptions informing proposed growth by local municipality. Through these and subsequent Council sessions, eight of nine local municipal Council endorsed comments on the draft forecast. Markham staff comments were presented to Council but were referred back to staff for supplemental analysis. A summary of local municipal Council positions is presented in Table 1 below while Attachment 1 provides more detailed comments.

**Table 1**  
**Summary of local municipal comments on draft forecast**

<b>Local Municipality</b>	<b>General Direction</b>
Aurora, Georgina	Support forecasts as proposed
King, Richmond Hill, Vaughan	Forecasts likely to be met or exceeded
Markham <sup>1</sup> , Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville	Request for higher growth / intensification
East Gwillimbury	Request for entirety of Town's Whitebelt
Markham <sup>1</sup>	Request for less Whitebelt expansion
King	Request for redistribution of Whitebelt growth to Township's villages

<sup>1</sup> Markham comments reflect staff recommendations, referred back to staff for further consideration

In addition to comments on population and employment forecasts, several local municipalities also noted the importance of key transportation and servicing infrastructure projects that would be required to support growth to 2051.

### **Input from local municipal Councils, York Region Planning Advisory Committee, BILD, agriculture community, and the public has prompted staff to consider alternate forecast scenarios**

In addition to comments received from local municipalities, input on the proposed forecasts has also been received from stakeholders. Comments from BILD request that the Region consider alternative growth scenarios in determining 2051 land needs. Specifically, a consultant technical submission proposed a growth scenario that included the entirety of the East Gwillimbury Whitebelt as urban expansion.

Input from the Planning Advisory Committee, and the agricultural community through the York Region Federation of Agriculture expressed concern with the quantum of agricultural land that would be lost because of proposed urban expansion to 2051 under the 50% scenario. The York Region Federation of Agriculture also expressed concern about the impact on local food supply for current and future York Region residents, particularly considering the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the Region's housing and growth management consultation campaign, input was received from the public regarding potential impacts of proposed growth on climate change, housing supply and affordability as well as on the agricultural system. During the campaign that ran between June 28 and July 30, 2021, 186 people participated in an online survey and over 90 people attended a Public Open House on July 27, 2021. More detailed comments are included in Attachment 1.

The breadth of comments received from local municipal Councils and other stakeholders prompted staff to recommend adjustments to the March 2021 50% intensification scenario as well as assess four additional growth scenarios.

### **Municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe are considering intensification and designated greenfield area density targets that exceed Growth Plan minimums**

Municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), including York Region, are required to use the standardized Provincial Land Needs Assessment methodology to update their Regional Official Plan forecasts to 2051. As municipalities advance through their Municipal Comprehensive Review processes, many have, or are considering the results of, increased intensification and designated greenfield area density targets. Table 2 summarizes the range of scenarios being considered by municipalities across the GGH, where available.

**Table 2**  
**Summary of intensification and density targets being considered by municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe**

Municipality	Intensification (% annually in built up area)	Density (residents and jobs per hectare)
Peel	55%	65
Halton	50%-54%	65
Durham	Not available	Not available
Hamilton	50%-no urban expansion	65-77
Waterloo	55%-60%	60-65
York	50%-60%	50-60

Source: Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario

As shown in Table 2, several municipalities are considering intensification targets higher than the minimum 50% target in the Growth Plan. All municipalities are applying density targets at or above 60 residents and jobs per hectare, exceeding the Growth Plan minimum of 50. This is consistent with the assumption used in the Region's March 2021 proposed forecast following a report to Regional Council in [June 2020](#) indicating that recently built or under construction communities in York Region were achieving an average 62 residents and jobs per hectare. Table 2 confirms that in a number of communities across the GTHA and beyond, communities are being planned at greater than 60 people and jobs per hectare.

Intensification and density targets in other municipalities are informative when recommending a forecast to 2051 for York Region. Apart from the City of Toronto, York Region is the only municipality in the GGH with access to an existing and additional future subway. As evidenced by the recent opening of the Spadina Subway Extension in Vaughan, subway stations are catalysts for intensification and major office development. When planning for growth to 2051, consideration should be given to the risk of the Province prioritizing transit in municipalities who may be planning for higher rates of intensification and/or designated greenfield area densities.

### **Five alternate growth scenarios, including a modified March 2021 50% intensification scenario, were assessed at a Regional scale in response to consultation**

In response to input from stakeholders and the interjurisdictional scan in Table 2, five alternate growth scenarios were prepared and assessed. For the purposes of this report, Scenarios 1 and 2, being the modified 50% scenario and the recommended phased 50-55% scenario, were broken down to the local municipal level while scenarios 3-5 were assessed



from a Regional planning perspective and were prepared by adjusting either the Region-wide intensification rate or the designated greenfield area density assumption in response to comments received.

1. **A modified March 2021 50% intensification and 60 residents and jobs per hectare designated greenfield area density scenario** – this scenario was prepared in response to comments received from local municipalities on the proposed March 2021 scenario. Proposed changes continue to support Regional objectives of supporting and encouraging investment in rapid transit infrastructure and growth management principles of aligning growth and infrastructure. The following highlights the most significant changes in this scenario with further details by local municipality provided in Attachment 2:
  - Additional growth allocated to Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville
  - Revisions to urban expansion mapping to shift approximately 100 Ha (and an estimated 8,000 people) of urban expansion growth from Markham to East Gwillimbury to increase the intensification rate in Markham and provide some additional growth in East Gwillimbury in a manner that would not require the second expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre
  - Minor revisions to population growth in all other municipalities
2. **Phased 50-55% intensification scenario** – a scenario that considers 50% intensification to 2041 and 55% between 2041 and 2051. Developed in response to requests from the Planning Advisory Committee and a number of local municipal Councils requesting higher growth through intensification, observed increases in secondary plan targets and planning applications in intensification areas as noted in the 2021 Capacity Assignment Update report, as well as comments from the York Region Federation of Agriculture and the public expressing concerns over the loss of Prime Agricultural lands. This scenario represents the most modest shift towards higher density structure types of the three higher intensification scenarios considered. Relative to the March 2021 scenario, this scenario results in a reduction in urban expansion in Markham (and increase in Markham's intensification rate) and a net urban expansion reduction overall while also accommodating a slight increase in urban expansion lands within the Town of East Gwillimbury in response to their request for additional urban expansion lands.
3. **55% intensification scenario** – a more significant intensification scenario developed in response to the requests noted above.
4. **60% intensification** – Compared to the phased 50-55% and 55% scenarios above, it represents the most significant shift of the three higher intensification scenarios which contemplate requests from a number of local municipal Councils requesting higher growth through intensification.
5. **Designated greenfield area density of 50 residents and jobs per hectare in urban expansion areas combined with 50% intensification** - developed in

response to a submission from East Gwillimbury landowners recommending this lower designated greenfield area density rate and to support the Town's request to incorporate the entirety of the Whitebelt lands by 2051.

### **Alternate intensification and density target scenarios determine the amount of new community land needed, number of intensification units, and the forecast housing mix**

Table 3 summarizes key outcomes of each alternative growth scenario with respect to community urban expansion land needs, structure type mix, and assumed apartment units per year, providing context to assess the feasibility of each growth scenario.

**Table 3**  
**Results of alternate growth scenarios**

Scenario	Community Land Needs	Structure Type Mix (ground-related/apartments)	Apartments per year (units/buildings)
1. 50% intensification (March 2021 and as modified)	2,300 Ha	58% / 42%	4,000 / 20
2. Phased 50-55% intensification	2,050 Ha	56% / 44%	4,100 / 21
3. 55% intensification	1,500 Ha	54% / 46%	4,300 / 22
4. 60% intensification	700 Ha	51% / 49%	4,700 / 24
5. 50 residents and jobs per hectare and 50% intensification	2,700 Ha	59% / 41%	3,800 / 19

Note – Scenarios 1-4 prepared using a designated greenfield area density of 60 residents and jobs per hectare.  
Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development Branch

While the Region will re-evaluate the distribution of employment land requirements in conjunction with Council's direction on a growth scenario, there is not expected to be significant differences in the amount of employment lands needed between the different scenarios. Under any intensification scenario, the demand for employment area employment is anticipated to remain similar and it will be important for the Region to provide a broad range of choice for existing and long-term future employment land use needs.

### **The recommended growth scenario achieves the right balance to address stakeholder comments and Growth Plan objectives**

The results in Table 3 have been considered in the context of comments received from local municipalities, the public, and other stakeholders as well as the principles for growth management in the Growth Plan, the Regional Official Plan and objectives introduced in the

[March 2021](#) report. Striking the appropriate balance between stakeholder input and broader growth management objectives summarized below is fundamental to staff's recommendation of a preferred growth scenario:

- The market feasibility of each growth scenario in the context of recently built communities, units under application in the development pipeline, the overall shift required in the Region's housing mix, and considerations relating to housing affordability
- Alignment with the provision of infrastructure within the 2051 planning horizon and the ability to pay for infrastructure required to support growth in a financially sustainable manner (including transit infrastructure that will require support from other levels of government)
- Ability for each growth scenario to address local municipal Council requests for higher intensification and balance requests from some local municipalities for more and less Whitebelt growth
- Requests from the agricultural community and the public to consider impacts of growth on Prime Agricultural lands, climate change, etc.

### **Scenarios address local municipal Council positions to varying degrees**

Table 4 compares the five new alternate scenarios with comments received through the consultation process. The table considers how each scenario addresses feedback received from local municipal Councils as well as other stakeholders on the preliminary March 2021 50% intensification and 60 residents and jobs per hectare density scenario.

**Table 4**  
**Addressing stakeholder consultations under alternate scenarios**

Comment on March 2021 scenario	Scenario 1: Modified 50%	Scenario 2: Phased 50- 55%	Scenario 3: 55% Intensification	Scenario 4: 60% Intensification	Scenario 5: 50 res&jobs/ha Density
More Whitebelt expansion in East Gwillimbury	✓	✓	X	X	✓✓✓✓
Less Whitebelt expansion in Markham	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	X
Shift Whitebelt Growth to Villages in King	X	X	X	X	X
Higher growth in Newmarket	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	✓
More intensification in King, Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Whitchurch Stouffville	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	X
Strive toward minimum of 60% intensification in Markham	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓	X
Less impact on Prime Agricultural lands	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓	X

Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development Branch

Note: Scenarios 3, 4 and 5 not forecasted to Local Municipal level to quantify outcome

Rating scale: X = Not Addressed, Slightly Addressed = ✓, Slightly-Moderately Addressed = ✓✓, Moderately Addressed = ✓✓✓, Fully Addressed = ✓✓✓✓

As illustrated in Table 4, each growth scenario addresses stakeholder comments to varying degrees, as indicated by the number of check marks. A higher number of check marks does not mean a more preferable scenario, but rather the degree to which the comment has been addressed. While a modified 50% intensification growth scenario allows for several

comments from local Councils to be addressed, it does not provide as much flexibility as higher intensification scenarios to address comments from municipalities desiring higher intensification and less urban expansion. Scenarios including and exceeding 55% intensification would not provide capacity for additional Whitebelt growth in East Gwillimbury. While higher intensification scenarios may not provide municipalities with their desired intensification rates, it is important to note that the Region's assigned intensification targets can be treated as minimums and local municipalities can plan for higher targets through local Official Plans.

### **Provincial policy prohibits Urban Expansion into the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan Areas**

Several submissions have been received requesting urban designation and/or urban expansion on lands within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan Areas. This includes previous requests from the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and the City of Richmond Hill. As shown in Attachment 1, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has reiterated this request through their Council endorsed comments on the proposed forecast. As outlined in a report regarding potential employment lands along 400 series highways within Greenbelt Plan Area, received by Council [October 2020](#), Provincial Plan policies prohibit the approval of urban designations within the Protected Countryside. As a result, allocation of population or employment growth to these areas has not been considered in any of the scenarios assessed in support of this report.

### **A scenario at or above 55% intensification is not recommended as it is likely to require too significant a shift toward higher density structure types**

Scenarios at or above 55% intensification require less community land urban expansion compared to the proposed March 2021 50% scenario. The 55% intensification scenario results in a need for 1,500 hectares of additional community land, while the 60% intensification scenario requires 700 hectares of urban expansion land for community land purposes. While a higher intensification scenario is desirable to support transit investment and would address desires for higher intensification targets from a number of municipalities, a forecast scenario at or above 55% intensification would require a significant, and potentially unachievable shift toward high density structure types. Specifically, the number of larger sized families forecasted to occupy higher density structure types rather than traditional ground-related product is likely to exceed what the market can currently support. This results in a potentially unrealistic forecasted mix and distribution of growth over the 30-year horizon – particularly in the short term – which presents more risk to the Region from an infrastructure alignment and financial sustainability perspective. Investment in infrastructure is dependent on the forecast assumptions.

### **A growth scenario premised on a designated greenfield area density target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare does not reflect what the York Region market is delivering**

A growth scenario that is predicated on a designated greenfield area density of 50 residents and jobs per hectare is not appropriate for York Region. Forecasted designated greenfield

area density must reflect what the market is likely to deliver as it has implications on infrastructure timing and delivery, determining pipe size, planning for new roads and road improvements, and estimating future transit ridership. It also has impacts on how the Region calculates development charge rates and estimating development charge revenue. As illustrated in the June 2020 [Planning for Density in New Communities](#) report, recently built or under construction communities across York Region are delivering an average density of 62 residents and jobs per hectare. Since the York Region market is delivering over 60 residents and jobs per hectare in existing greenfield areas, planning for the minimum 50 density in the Growth Plan would leave the Region exposed to risk as it does not support infrastructure or financial planning in line with market reality. If planned growth and densities do not match market realities, development charge rates may not achieve effective cost recovery.

As noted in Table 2 above, 50 residents and jobs per hectare would also be lower than what is generally being realized and contemplated in other GGH municipalities. Not only does this suggest that the market is capable of delivering far greater than a 50 people/jobs per hectare density in new community areas but planning to a density target lower than other GTHA municipalities could impact funding decisions by the Province for future transit projects.

A key consideration throughout the Municipal Comprehensive Review has been to ensure that growth proceeds in a manner that is aligned with infrastructure and is financially sustainable. A growth scenario that assumes 50 residents and jobs per hectare in urban expansion areas would require the entire Whitebelt in the Town of East Gwillimbury and would challenge the Region's ability to achieve this principle and therefore carries significant risk. As noted above, given that the market is currently delivering over 60 residents and jobs per hectare in greenfield communities throughout the Region, assuming growth across the entirety of East Gwillimbury's Whitebelt lands would require the second of two expansions beyond the initial construction of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre plant facility. A second expansion project with its own Environmental Assessment approval cannot be anticipated within the 2051 planning horizon. Uncertainty surrounding the timing of the initial construction of the Water Reclamation Centre is a risk given the announcement by the Province to develop a Task Force to determine an appropriate recommendation for the project under Bill 306. Based on current information available, initial construction of the Water Reclamation Centre is not expected until 2029 at the earliest, with the first expansion anticipated for 2041 or beyond. A second expansion, required to support full build out of the East Gwillimbury Whitebelt, is not anticipated to occur before 2051.

### **The modified 50% scenario includes shifting some urban expansion from Markham to East Gwillimbury, while maintaining March intensification and density target assumptions**

The modified 50% scenario provides additional growth to Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville and shifts approximately 100 Ha (and an estimated 8,000 people) relative to the March 2021 scenario of urban expansion growth from Markham to East Gwillimbury in order to increase the intensification rate in Markham and provide some additional growth in East Gwillimbury in a manner that would not require the second expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre. This scenario also includes minor revisions to population growth in the remaining municipalities.

Regional staff have been engaged in discussions with Town of East Gwillimbury staff to explore alternative financing options for the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre. While staff support opportunities to advance development opportunities in the Town's Whitebelt lands, there is continued concern that infrastructure required to address the entire Whitebelt in the Town will not be delivered in time to support full buildout of these lands within the 2051 planning horizon. A fundamental consideration of a preferred growth scenario is that the second expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre, currently planned beyond 2051, is not required for designating land within the planning horizon.

Furthermore, this scenario would result in there being a fragmented piece of Whitebelt land east of the Little Rouge corridor in Markham.

### **A phased 50-55% intensification scenario is recommended as it best supports stakeholder feedback and continues to provide balanced growth**

Following an assessment of the alternative scenarios, as summarized in Table 4, the phased 50-55% intensification scenario provides for an appropriate balance between addressing stakeholder comments, market realities and conforming to the Growth Plan. A phased 50-55% growth scenario provides additional flexibility with respect to intensification and reduces the overall quantum of prime agriculture lands proposed for urban expansion. It also strikes a balance between reducing urban expansion in Markham and some additional urban expansion in East Gwillimbury relative to the March 2021 50% intensification and 60 residents and per hectare jobs scenario. This scenario balances a number of Regional objectives:

- Provides increased flexibility to address comments from local municipal and other stakeholders requesting higher growth and/or intensification targets
- Maximizes the growth potential associated with the initial construction and first expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre under current Environmental Assessment assumptions and proposes 275 hectares of East Gwillimbury Whitebelt expansion, an addition of approximately 100 hectares when compared with the preliminary March 2021 scenario
- Reduces the overall quantum of Whitebelt land required and therefore preservation of more agricultural lands
- Demonstrates to the Province that the Region is committed to supporting intensification and is a key location in the GTHA for additional transit investment
- Reflects what the market is currently delivering and what is proposed in the development pipeline and secondary plans with respect to both designated greenfield area density as well as high density development in the built-up area
- Provides more opportunity for a gradual and reasonable shift toward families locating in townhomes and apartments that are more affordable

- Considers changing demographics and an aging population which is likely to increase demand for higher density structure types as well as result in a number of low-density units “turning over” to younger, larger families
- Aligns with infrastructure planning and Development Charges By-law work undertaken to date
- Aligns with higher rates of intensification and designated greenfield area density target assumptions in other GGH municipalities
- A summary of impacts at the local municipal scale is further shown in Attachment 2

A phased in 55% intensification scenario would continue to be achievable from an intensification perspective and may be more likely to provide additional opportunities for affordable housing types through increased demand for medium and high-density structures that are traditionally more affordable. That said, more detailed Regional plans and programs are required to help address affordability challenges.

### **Allocation of growth based on recommended phased 50-55% scenario can be accommodated without major shifts in infrastructure and financial planning undertaken to date**

The Municipal Comprehensive Review is being undertaken in a comprehensive and collaborative way to ensure alignment of land use, infrastructure, and financial planning. In this regard the ROP update is being coordinated with Infrastructure Master Plan updates and the Development Charges bylaw update, with considerable work having been undertaken to date. The preliminary forecast presented in March 2021 included assessment of infrastructure required to service growth, and how it could be phased to maintain financial sustainability.

Based on preliminary analysis, the recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenario can be accommodated within the infrastructure program being proposed in updated master plans. Given that several MCRs, Master Plan, and DC Bylaw updates will be undertaken between now and 2051, there will be opportunities to monitor and adjust growth projections as necessary at multiple stages in the planning horizon. Identifying the remaining Whitebelt lands as “Future Urban” beyond 2051 in either scenario also acknowledges the reality of the future long-term function of these lands and allows for comprehensive planning in advance of subsequent municipal comprehensive reviews.

As a result of no major shifts in infrastructure being required, Regional Council direction to proceed with the recommended phased 50-55% growth scenario means that local municipal forecasts, presented in Attachment 2, can be included in the draft Regional Official Plan anticipated for Council consideration this year. The 55% and 60% intensification growth scenarios and the full build out of East Gwillimbury lands available for urban expansion under a 50 residents and jobs per hectare scenario would necessitate a significant redistribution of population growth across the Region which would require further analysis and consultation with local municipalities. This and further evaluation of infrastructure needed to support



growth and financial implications would be required, requiring modifications to the current MCR, Master Plan, and DC Bylaw update work plans.

### **Population and employment growth beyond the existing and planned infrastructure capacity in Nobleton is not proposed**

The scenarios considered, including the recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenario, do not address comments from both King staff and a technical consultant submission on behalf of Nobleton landowners to consider additional growth in Nobleton instead of growth in the King Whitebelt lands. As indicated by the Region in March, preliminary estimates indicate that expanding the water and wastewater capacity in Nobleton beyond the 10,800 people currently contemplated in an ongoing Environmental Assessment range from \$100 to \$200 million and therefore would not be financially sustainable given the amount of additional growth that could be realized. While discussions between York Region and Township staff, as well as landowners are ongoing, the current MCR has assumed a maximum population of 10,800 people in Nobleton.

### **Final mapping of urban expansion lands to be determined through further consultation with local municipal staff**

Both the modified 50% and recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenarios propose adjustments to the geography of urban expansion lands as presented in [Attachment 4 of the March 2021 scenario](#). The modified 50% scenario proposes to remove approximately 100 hectares of urban expansion land in east Markham, as shown in Attachment 3, and add it to the 180 hectares of urban expansion initially proposed in East Gwillimbury for a total of 275 hectares of Community Land expansion.

Similarly, the phased 50-55% scenario proposes to remove all of the Whitebelt lands east of the Little Rouge corridor from Markham and include a total of 275 hectares of urban expansion in East Gwillimbury under the phased 50-55% scenario (as shown in Attachment 3). If this scenario is endorsed by Regional Council, the geographic distribution of these lands would be determined in consultation with the Town.

Direction from Council to proceed with the recommended phased 50-55% scenario will require further discussions with Town of East Gwillimbury staff to determine the most appropriate urban expansion lands.

### **Comments on employment and community land designation boundaries were also received through the consultation**

Input from stakeholders on the preliminary March 2021 growth scenario was also received on proposed employment designations in the Region's available Whitebelt lands. Through a local municipally led consultation process, concern was expressed in Markham with the proposed employment mapping adjacent to the existing hamlet of Almira. To address these concerns, Regional staff are proposing to revise the boundary of urban expansion employment land mapping in Markham as shown in Attachment 3 to provide more community lands around the Almira hamlet.

Through Markham's consultation process, concern was also raised about proposed residential uses east of the Little Rouge corridor. It was suggested that noise from the potential future Pickering Airport may prevent residential development on these lands. The Whitebelt lands proposed to be excluded from the urban boundary expansion east of the Little Rouge corridor, in the modified 50% and recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenarios will be identified as Future Urban Area. Decisions surrounding the most appropriate use of these lands can occur through subsequent municipal comprehensive reviews once a firm decision on the airport has been made, and regulations updated.

Concerns were also identified by Vaughan Council about the delineation of employment lands adjacent to the potential GTA-West Highway, given that a decision on the proposed highway is not expected by the Province until after the completion of the Municipal Comprehensive Review. Regional staff will continue to work with Vaughan staff on the appropriate use of these lands through the next Municipal Comprehensive Review.

## **5. Financial**

While no major shifts in financial planning work is anticipated with the recommended phased 50-55% scenario, the March 2021 proposed forecast has been used to inform the update of the Regional development charges bylaw. The current bylaw is set to expire June 16, 2022 and a new development charges bylaw must come into effect on, or before, June 17, 2022 for the Region to continue collecting development charges. Council's direction to proceed with a growth scenario other than the modified 50% scenario or the recommended phased 50-55% scenario would have implications on key inputs to the Development Charges Background Study including the development forecast and infrastructure capital costs that will be reflected in the proposed DC rates.

Although it is difficult to assume the actual rate of growth over time with certainty, the recommended phased 50-55% forecast scenario is most achievable without compromising financial sustainability. It supports alignment of the growth forecast with infrastructure delivery to best match the actual rate and type of built form with the forecast, and more likely alignment between anticipated and actual development charges revenues.

Work associated with updated population and employment forecasts is included within the approved Planning and Economic Development budget.

## **6. Local Impact**

The Region's forecast and land needs assessment to 2051 have direct implications on local municipalities. A key component of the MCR involves distributing updated population and employment forecasts to local municipalities considering assumptions for the level of intensification and amount of urban expansion needed in the Region to plan for provincially assigned population and employment growth. Local municipalities are key stakeholders in their forecast assignments and planning for future communities in growth areas.

Local municipal staff are working alongside the Region to update local official plans to reflect the policies in the Regional Official Plan generated through the Regional MCR once approved. Under the Planning Act, local municipal official plans are required to be updated to conform to the Regional Official Plan within one year of it coming into effect.

## 7. Conclusion

Consultation on the proposed 50% intensification scenario received by Regional Council in March 2021 resulted in Council positions and comments from local municipalities, as well as comments from the public, Planning Advisory Committee, BILD, York Region Federation of Agriculture, and other stakeholders. Comments ranged significantly from requests for higher growth and intensification to desires to include additional Whitebelt lands in the Town of East Gwillimbury. In response to these comments, the Region considered the results of five additional growth scenarios at a Regional scale through varying the key intensification and designated greenfield area density inputs. Through an assessment of alternate growth scenarios, a growth scenario exceeding 55% intensification or one which considered a lower designated greenfield area density are not likely to be realistic outlooks for York Region to 2051. In addition to not being aligned with what the market is currently delivering, or expected to deliver, these scenarios are likely to carry more financial risk.

A phased 50-55% intensification growth scenario is recommended as the most appropriate outlook for York Region to 2051. The phased 50-55% scenario strikes an appropriate balance, responds to feedback from all stakeholders to varying degrees, conforms to applicable Provincial plans, and is expected to be achievable. It also maximizes the capacity of the initial construction and first expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre under current Environmental Assessment assumptions. Allocation of growth for the recommended phased 50-55% intensification growth scenario can be accommodated without major shifts in infrastructure and financial planning undertaken to date.

Regional Council direction to proceed with the recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenario can be included in the draft Regional Official Plan currently targeted for November 2021.

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For more information on this report, please contact Paul Bottomley, Manager of Policy, Research, and Forecasting at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71530. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

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Chief Administrative Officer

September 3, 2021  
Attachments (3)  
13178613

## Summary of Comments on York Region Land Needs Assessment and Growth Forecast

This Attachment, on a site-specific basis, provides a summary of comments, recommendations, and local municipal Council positions.

**Table 1- Summary of comments on York Region 2051 Proposed Forecast as presented to Regional Council in March 2021**

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
<b>Local Municipalities</b>		
<b>Aurora</b>	<a href="#"><u>July 6, 2021</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Region's 2051 growth forecasts for Aurora were peer reviewed by the Town's Official Plan study consultant and were found to be reasonable and realistic targets</li> <li>• The proposed intensification target within the Town's Built-Up Area and the required residential units is appropriate given that growth will shift to the Built-Up Area given that Aurora's Designated Greenfield Area is expected to be built out by 2051</li> <li>• The Region's population targets are less than past growth trends in Aurora and reflect an analysis of market demand</li> <li>• The density target and unit potential on the designated greenfield area as outlined by the Region reflects the actual potential on those lands</li> <li>• At the end of Q2 2021, servicing allocation balances are approximately 5,726 persons or 1,903 units, representing a five-year supply</li> </ul>
<b>East Gwillimbury</b>	<a href="#"><u>July 28, 2020</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of all Whitebelt lands within East Gwillimbury as 'Urban Area' for urban development through the ongoing MCR to facilitate appropriate comprehensive planning (Council endorsed recommendation on <a href="#"><u>December 3, 2019</u></a>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Will ensure coordinated infrastructure planning</li> <li>○ Helps pay for servicing of new local employment uses</li> <li>○ Allows for ensuring adequate housing supply and to build complete communities</li> <li>○ Land supply will be brought to market in a phased manner</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Flexibility for the Town to comprehensively manage the long-term land supply over the entire 2051 planning horizon, to properly respond to the market and to ensure a competitive development environment</li> <li>• East Gwillimbury is well positioned to accommodate employment growth and additional population through a variety of housing types in northern York Region</li> </ul>

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
<b>Georgina</b>	<a href="#"><u>June 3, 2021</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Town of Georgina supports the Official Plan Municipal Comprehensive Review proposed 2051 forecast for the Town of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Population - 71,900 persons</li> <li>○ Employment - 21,900 jobs subject to adjustments to the assumed Employment Land Employment density and the incorporation of assumptions adding appropriate levels of “Major Office Employment”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• That York Region be requested to place the expansion of the Keswick Water Resource Recovery Facility on the 10-year Capital Projects Plan in the earliest possible timeframe as the expansion is critical to meeting the population and employment targets for the Town in the York Regional Official Plan Municipal Comprehensive Review</li> <li>• That Council reiterate its request to York Region to include the expansion of the Sutton Water Resource Recovery Facility in the Region’s 10-year Capital Projects Plan in the earliest possible timeframe as the expansion is critical to meeting the population and employment targets for the Town in the York Regional Official Plan Municipal Comprehensive Review</li> </ul>
<b>King</b>	<a href="#"><u>June 28, 2021</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on recent development interest and activity in the Township, the forecasted population of 49,600 appears to be easily achievable over the 2051-time horizon. With ongoing residential development applications and interest in the Villages of King City and Nobleton, achieving and surpassing the 2051 proposed forecasted population is very much likely</li> <li>• Planning for population growth in the Township’s Whitebelt represents a fundamental divergence in how growth is currently being planned in the Township. Planning staff find it appropriate and preferable to continue to plan for population growth within the Township’s Village Boundaries, as opposed to expanding community uses onto the Whitebelt lands</li> <li>• Staff note that while it is preferable to accommodate population growth within the existing Villages, the opportunity to provide for some additional employment growth in proximity to Highway 400 should be explored further with York Region in accordance with the Township’s Official Plan policy noted above</li> <li>• Planning for the Village of Nobleton should have a longer-term vision than the capacity of existing/planned infrastructure</li> </ul>

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
<p><b>Markham</b> (note: not endorsed by Council – referred back to Markham staff)</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>July 12, 2021</u></a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support development of a forecast scenario by York Region based on higher Region-wide and Markham intensification rates which:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Result in a reduction in the amount of urban expansion (Whitebelt) lands in Markham needed to accommodate growth</li> <li>○ Reflect achievable volumes of high-density development in Markham’s intensification areas over the 35-year planning horizon</li> <li>○ Consider loss of prime agricultural lands and impacts on greenhouse gas emissions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• That the proposed employment area expansion lands be reconfigured to exclude the Almira hamlet</li> <li>• In addition, Markham Council requests:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ That lands east of Almira be designated as Community areas</li> <li>○ Lands on the east of the Rouge corridor not be considered for urban expansion</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Consider impacts of a 60%, 65% and 70% intensification scenario and further consider impact of loss of employment land adjacent to Almira</li> </ul>
<p><b>Newmarket</b></p>	<p><a href="#"><u>June 14, 2021</u></a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town of Newmarket is likely to exceed York Region’s forecasted population and employment growth</li> <li>• Regional staff should carefully reconsider the population and employment growth assigned to Newmarket and ensure that growth is aligned with Newmarket’s needs</li> <li>• Concern with the annual population growth rate of 0.7%</li> <li>• Town of Newmarket will likely Exceed the Proposed Intensification target of 8,700 Units between 2016 and 2051</li> <li>• Planning staff estimate that approximately 10,600 new residential units could be built within the Regional Centre, MTSAs and Regional Corridors between 2021 and 2051, subject to servicing capacity availability</li> <li>• Town of Newmarket will meet or exceed the Proposed Designated Greenfield Area density target of 40 residents and jobs per hectare</li> </ul>
<p><b>Richmond Hill</b></p>	<p><a href="#"><u>June 23, 2021</u></a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Staff are in support of the emerging policy directions respecting the Region’s growth forecast, intensification, and land needs assessment work as it relates to Richmond Hill</li> <li>• Intensification target is likely to be met or exceeded</li> <li>• DGA target of 70 achievable in context of secondary plans for North Leslie and West Gormley</li> </ul>

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
<b>Vaughan</b>	<a href="#"><u>June 22, 2021</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaughan’s experience with growth over the last ten years shows that forecasted growth has the potential to be exceeded, and the city must be prepared to plan for this density</li> <li>• The final amount of land designated as Community and Employment will be affected by the fate of the GTA West. The proposed forecast shows Whitebelt lands adjacent to the proposed GTA West alignment as employment lands. If the GTA West does not move forward, it is uncertain what the total amount of community and employment lands in Vaughan’s Whitebelt would be</li> <li>• Growth management in Vaughan will need to respond to key regional challenges over the next 30 years such as housing affordability</li> <li>• The amount of potential growth that is directed at Vaughan creates a risk that many parts of the City will become underserved for parks, schools, and infrastructure</li> <li>• In consideration of this significant growth - and the need to attract young families to maintain growth, which is connected to affordability - it is imperative that York Region and the City examine effective policy for encouraging family-sized units and amenities in the urban area</li> </ul>
<b>Whitchurch-Stouffville</b>	<a href="#"><u>July 20, 2021</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Region’s minimum draft Growth Forecasts for the Town are fairly conservative. The growth allocation ‘minimums’ need to be highlighted more prominently as some communities are likely to grow at a faster rate than others</li> <li>• Additional growth should be considered in the Town’s intensification areas such as the Gateway/ Western Approach, Lincolnville GO MTSA, Stouffville GO MTSA, etc.</li> <li>• The residential growth forecast allocation for the Town over the 2021 to 2041 period of 350 units per year is significantly lower than the recent housing development trends, while the residential growth within the Whitebelt lands for the 2041-2051 period is overstated</li> <li>• Staff are in support of the assumptions regarding persons per unit and dwelling type</li> <li>• The Region’s employment growth outlook to 2051 is generally appropriate for the Town. However, the amount and location of designated and serviceable employment land remains a significant issue for the Town</li> <li>• Past Council positions on Town’s Employment lands include adjustments to the Greenbelt Area along Highway 404 corridor and addition of lands to the settlement area</li> <li>• Staff recommend that the lands abutting the Gormley Secondary Plan area to the south be considered for settlement area expansion and designated as Employment Area through the Region’s ongoing MCR</li> </ul>



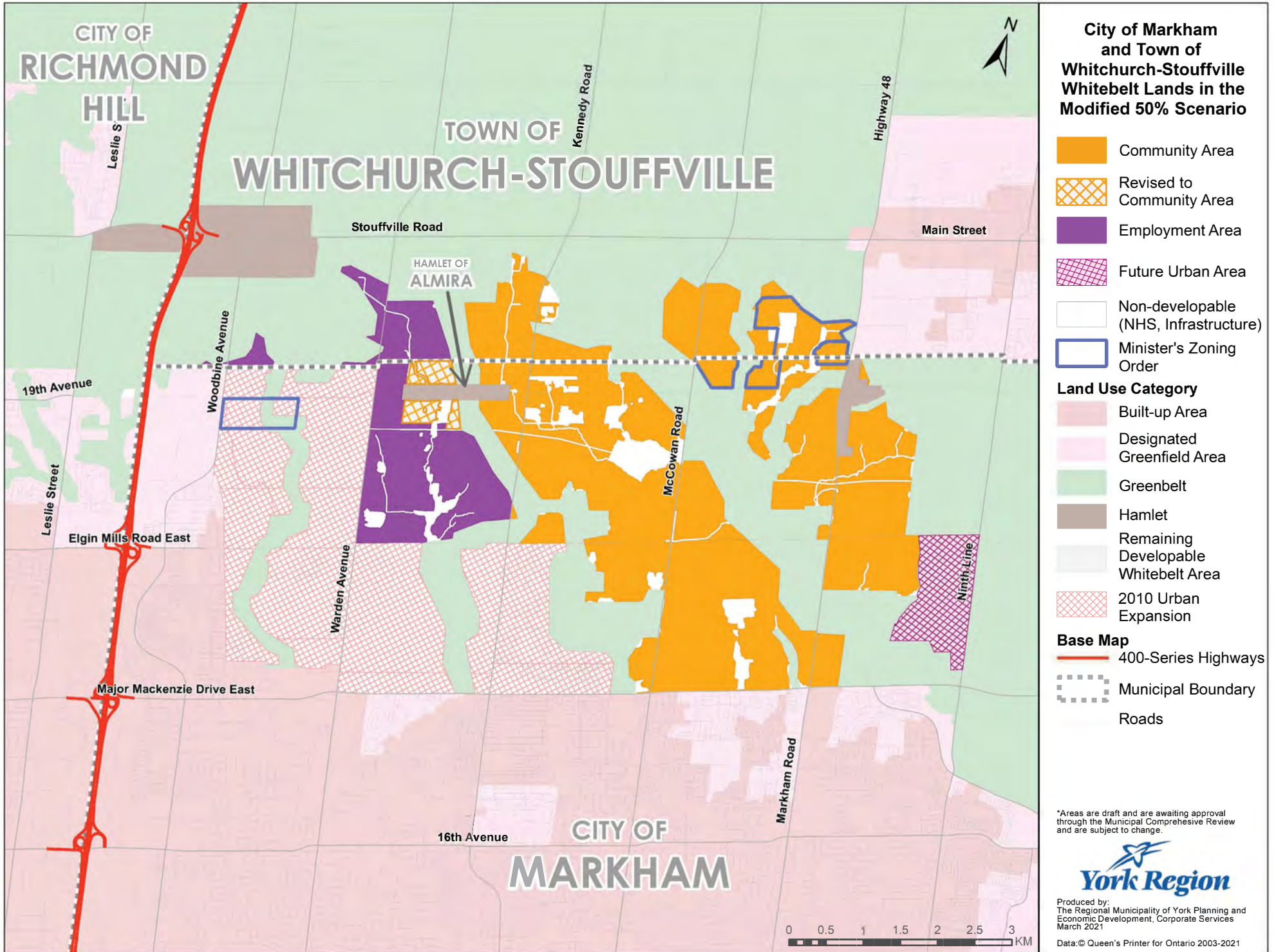
Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Town staff recommend that Strategic Employment lands be identified for employment growth beyond 2051</li> </ul>
<b>Other Stakeholders</b>		
<b>York Region Federation of Agriculture</b>	June 10, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correspondence was sent to the Region in response to redesignation of Agricultural lands to Urban Areas proposed in Policy Directions Report III presented to Council on June 10, 2021</li> <li>Through this letter, York Region Federation of Agriculture questions a complete and detailed analysis of the Agricultural redesignation displayed on draft Map 1A</li> <li>Concerns about loss of the Agricultural lands in the Whitebelt areas (3,400 ac) proposed for urban development by 2051 through the Land Needs Assessment report on March 18, 2021, which impacts local food production</li> <li>The York Region Federation of Agriculture continues to take the position that to protect, support and promote agriculture, the designation of prime agricultural areas in the Greenbelt needs to remain</li> </ul>
<b>York Region Planning Advisory Committee Meeting</b>	May 19, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns raised about the amount of whitebelt land being proposed given the number of applications currently within the built-up area and the development potential through secondary plans in Regional Centres and Major Transit Station Areas</li> <li>Request for staff to consider different intensification scenarios</li> </ul>
<b>York Region Agricultural and Agi-food Advisory Committee Meeting</b>	May 26, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns about amount of whitebelt land being proposed in 2051 forecast</li> <li>Concerns about food security if continue to develop agricultural lands – a risk intensified by the COVID 19 pandemic</li> </ul>
<b>Consultant Technical Submission on behalf of East Gwillimbury landowners</b>	June 11, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed forecasts do not adequately address market demand</li> <li>More weight should be placed on Council resolution in East Gwillimbury to include the entirety of the Town's whitebelt as urban expansion to 2051</li> <li>Regional staff should consider different scenarios</li> <li>Further choice for employment should be provided</li> </ul>

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
<b>Consultant Technical Submission on behalf of Nobleton Landowners Group</b>	August 12, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The location of additional Community Lands should be within the Village boundaries, not in the Whitebelt, with the serviceability explored further at the direction of the Township</li> <li>• Nobleton represents the next logical location for urban expansion within King</li> <li>• The Region's cost estimates for servicing upgrades in Nobleton are overstated – based on a consultant's estimate, regional cost for water and wastewater upgrades would range from \$50.3 - \$82.8 million rather than the \$100 - \$200 as indicated in the Region's LNA.</li> <li>• The Regional LNA proposes to allocate 21,000 residents to King City by 2051 - it is unclear if King City has sufficient land supply to accommodate the additional growth beyond the Village's current 2031 forecast of 15,500 residents</li> <li>• The Region's increase in PPU assumptions, especially in high density units, could lead to an undersupply of housing in the Region</li> </ul>
<b>Public Consultation</b>	June 28, 2021 – July 30, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The York Region Growth Management and Housing Affordability Survey was created to gather feedback from stakeholders. This Survey was available online and included 10 questions on housing and growth management. A summary of survey results from 186 participants is as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Majority of respondents were York Region residents</li> <li>○ Approximately 82% of the participants are living in ground-related housing types (i.e. single and semi-detached, townhouse)</li> <li>○ Most respondents would like to live in the Region for the next 10 years</li> <li>○ The preferred type of housing for participants in 10 years is Legacy Single-Family houses on large lots followed by New Single-Family houses on small lots</li> <li>○ Parks, Public Elementary Schools, and Grocery Stores are the most important amenities for the respondents to be able to access within 15 minutes by foot</li> <li>○ Most important amenities to access within 15 minutes by bike or transit are Employment Opportunities, Shopping Centres, and Community Centres</li> <li>○ Participants believe that Low-income Households followed by Young Families (with or without children) are under-served or not currently served by the existing housing supply</li> <li>○ To meet the housing needs of under-served households, participants believe more New small lot single family, mid-rise, and townhouse options are required</li> <li>○ More than 60% of participants think that the right balance for population growth in the Region is to plan for half of the growth in existing areas through intensification and half to occur in new communities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

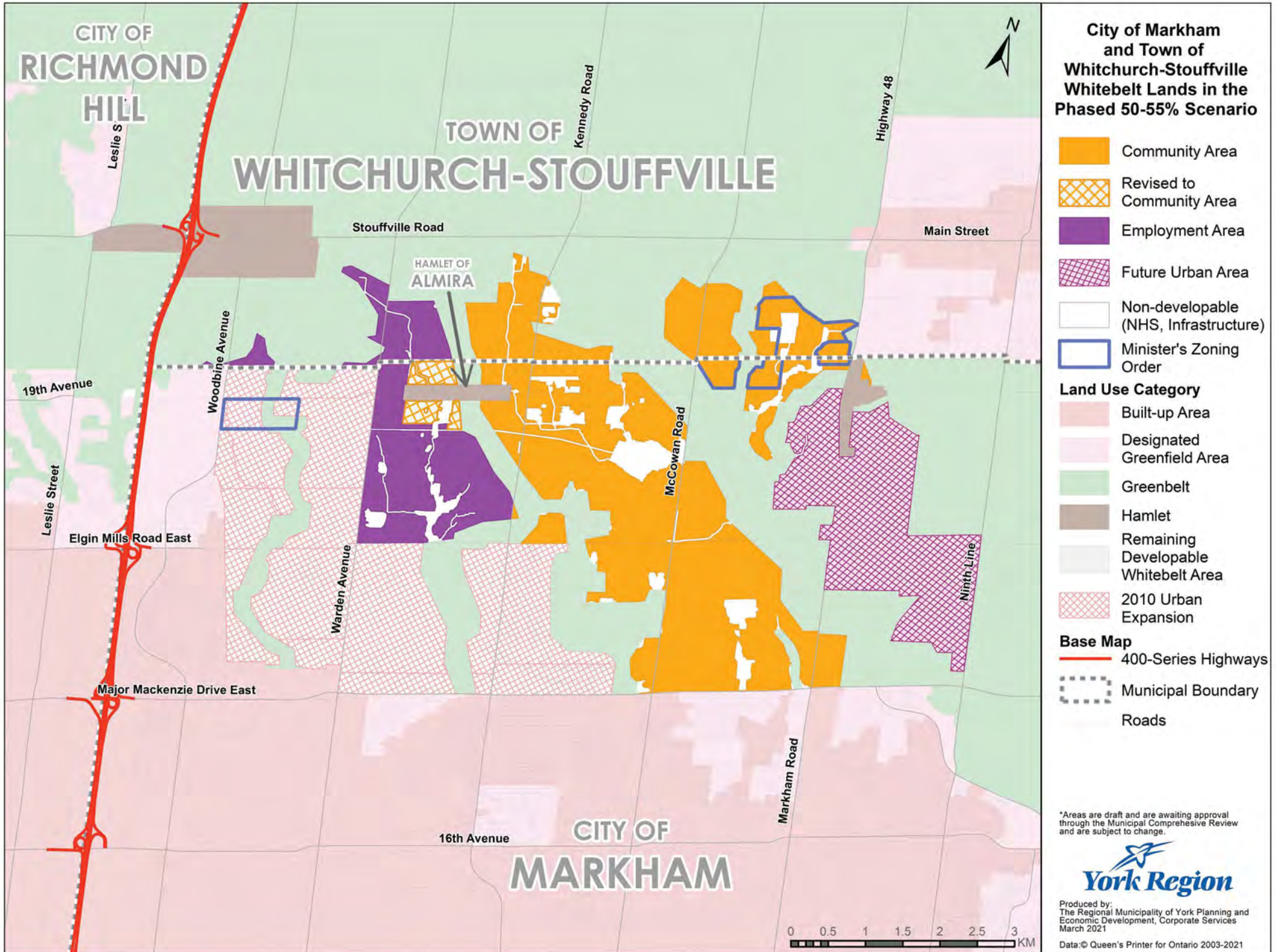
Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="680 240 1875 407">• In addition, an online Public Information Centre (PIC) session for Growth Management and Housing Affordability was held on July 28, 2021 to reach stakeholders – over 90 people attended and over 40 questions were asked and answered by Regional staff. Input was received on a number of topics including potential impacts of proposed growth on climate change, housing supply and affordability as well as on the agricultural system</li></ul>

**Local Municipal Impacts of  
Modified 50% and Recommended Phased 55% intensification scenarios**

Municipality	March 2021 50% Scenario			Modified 50% Scenario			Recommended Phased 55% Scenario		
	2051 Population	Intensification Units (%)	Urban Expansion (hectares)	2051 Population	Intensification Units (%)	Urban Expansion (hectares)	2051 Population	Intensification Units (%)	Urban Expansion (hectares)
Aurora	84,900	4,600 (45%)		84,500	4,400 (45%)		84,700	4,500 (45%)	
East Gwillimbury	105,100	800 (3%)	180	113,700	700 (2%)	275	112,800	700 (2%)	275
Georgina	71,900	2,500 (28%)		70,000	2,600 (31%)		70,100	2,700 (32%)	
King	49,600	2,800 (35%)	70	49,900	2,900 (36%)	70	50,000	3,000 (37%)	70
Markham	619,200	50,300 (52%)	1,270	608,600	49,400 (55%)	1175	602,200	51,000 (56%)	925
Newmarket	110,700	8,700 (86%)		114,900	10,800 (89%)		115,900	11,100 (89%)	
Richmond Hill	317,000	33,100 (77%)		316,800	32,800 (77%)		319,600	33,600 (77%)	
Vaughan	568,700	49,100 (56%)	500	567,400	48,000 (55%)	500	570,400	49,900 (57%)	500
Whitchurch-Stouffville	92,900	3,600 (21%)	280	94,200	3,900 (23%)	280	94,300	4,100 (24%)	280
<b>York Region</b>	<b>2,020,000</b>	<b>155,500 (50%)</b>	<b>2,300</b>	<b>2,020,000</b>	<b>155,500 (50%)</b>	<b>2,300</b>	<b>2,020,000</b>	<b>160,600 (52%)</b>	<b>2,050</b>







\*Areas are draft and are awaiting approval through the Municipal Comprehensive Review and are subject to change.



Produced by:  
The Regional Municipality of York Planning and  
Economic Development, Corporate Services  
March 2021

## **Regional Council Decision - Proposed York Region Official Plan Amendment No. 7**

On October 28, 2021 Regional Council made the following decision:

WHEREAS the Greenbelt Plan, 2017 promotes parks and open spaces as an important component of complete communities and directs municipalities to provide for a full range of publicly accessible, built and natural settings for recreation for all lands falling within the Protected Countryside, including facilities, parkland, open space areas and trails; and

WHEREAS the Greenbelt Plan, 2017 supports a range of recreation uses such as parks and trails, as well as major recreational use such as golf courses and serviced playing fields, within the rural lands of the Protected Countryside; and

WHEREAS the Greenbelt lands in New Community Areas within Vaughan and Markham, designated Prime Agricultural within the York Region Official Plan (Agricultural designation), are planned to be surrounded by urban uses, compromising their ability to be used for farming and other agricultural uses; and

WHEREAS portions of the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan contain lands outside of key natural heritage features or key hydrologic features and their associated vegetation protection zones, where recreation, parks and open spaces may be located and expanded; and

WHEREAS the Region of York Policy Directions Report, dated June 10, 2021, included proposed mapping which identifies the Greenbelt lands in New Community Areas within Vaughan and Markham as Rural as part of the Regional Official Plan Update, which would allow for recreation, parks and open spaces as directed by the Greenbelt Plan; and

WHEREAS the location of, programming, and uses within parks are a local matter, determined through local official plans and local decisions on site-specific development applications;

NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED:

1. That the Council of the Regional Municipality of York receive the staff report
2. That the Council of the Regional Municipality of York supports the redesignation of the Protected Countryside portions of the Greenbelt Lands in New Community Areas within Vaughan and Markham from Prime Agricultural to Rural.
3. That staff prepare a bylaw to give effect to a modified ROPA 7 as proposed by the applicant in correspondence dated October 13, 2021 and listed as Item D.2.2 on the October 14, 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting, designating the subject lands as rural and permitting active parkland and recreational uses which may include serviced playing fields and golf courses, and forward it to the Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, for approval.
4. That ROPA 7 permit Markham and Vaughan to develop the parameters of ROPA 7 in their Official Plans and allows Markham and Vaughan to develop policies including but not limited to park credits, location, programming, and details of parks and open spaces within the rural lands of the Greenbelt.
5. That golf course use and reconfigurations by Angus Glen Golf Courses be permitted within the Bruce Creek Greenbelt lands in the City of Markham.

The original staff report is attached for your information.

Please contact Augustine Ko, Senior Planner at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71524 if you have any questions with respect to this matter.

Regards,

**Christopher Raynor** | Regional Clerk, Regional Clerk's Office, Corporate Services

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# The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole  
 Planning and Economic Development  
 October 14, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

## Proposed York Region Official Plan Amendment No. 7

### 1. Recommendations

1. Council not adopt York Region Official Plan Amendment No. 7 as proposed.
2. In the alternative, staff be directed to develop policies in the York Regional Official Plan through the current Municipal Comprehensive Review to designate the subject lands as “Rural/Major Open Space” permitting passive recreation, environmental management, restoration, and enhancement, and urban agricultural uses, but not active urban parks within the Greenbelt.
3. The Regional Clerk forward this report and Council resolution to the local municipalities and to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

### 2. Summary

A privately initiated application to amend the York Region Official Plan 2010 has been received. The amendment proposes to change the land use designation from Agricultural Area to Rural Area on specific lands that are within the Provincial Greenbelt Plan and within the Cities of Markham and Vaughan to permit active urban parkland and other recreational uses. The proposed Rural designation would permit a broad range of uses allowing active urban parkland in the Greenbelt corridors and also allow for additional non-agricultural uses such as rural residential, commercial, or industrial uses rather than limiting the uses to complementary open spaces uses that meet the intent of the Provincial Greenbelt Plan, the 2010 York Region Official Plan and local Official Plans.

#### Key Points:

- Proposed ROPA 7 Rural designation would permit active urban parks and recreational facilities within certain Protected Countryside “Green Finger” areas of the Greenbelt in the Cities of Markham and Vaughan.
- Markham and Vaughan have consistently planned for the use of these Greenbelt corridors and Natural System lands for ecological, passive recreation and natural open space uses. Richmond Hill has planned similar corridors in the same way.
- Approval of ROPA 7 would have implications on the other Greenbelt lands currently recommended through the Region’s Municipal Comprehensive Review for

redesignation from Agricultural Area, and potentially similar Greenbelt lands beyond York Region.

- Local and Regional municipal staff are aligned that active urban parkland uses associated with urban development were never intended to be permitted in the Greenbelt lands even in a ‘Rural’ designation. The types of parkland uses permitted in Rural lands in the Greenbelt Plan are large land-intensive uses that are normally found in rural areas, e.g. campgrounds, golf courses, ski hills, hiking trails, and large parks or other recreational uses.
- Markham and Vaughan Council’s considered ROPA 7 and provided comments found in Attachment 4.
- Markham Council partially supports ROPA 7 ([link](#) to Council meeting minutes, Item 8.1.1.)
- Vaughan Council did not provide a position ([link](#) to Council meeting minutes, see page 11 of minutes – Item 9, Committee of the Whole Report No. 32)
- Both the Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan policies prohibit expansion of urban settlement areas into the Greenbelt. Inclusion of active urban parks into the Greenbelt could be considered an expansion of the urban settlement area into the Greenbelt contrary to the intent of protecting these areas of the Greenbelt from development.
- A new designation called “Rural/Major Open Space Area” is supported that would contain policies permitting passive recreation, environmental management, restoration, and enhancement, and urban agricultural uses which could complement the adjacent community, but not replace the active parks within the community. This is described in Attachment 2.

### 3. Background

#### **The purpose and intent of ROPA 7 is to permit active urban parkland, trails, and other recreational uses adjacent to residential neighbourhoods**

A group of landowners (Angus Glen Landowners Group (Markham), Robinson Glen Landowners Group (Markham) and Block 41 Landowners Group (Vaughan)) have applied to amend the York Region Official Plan 2010. The proposed Amendment forms Attachment 1 and proposes to change the land use designation from Agricultural Area to Rural Area. The lands subject to this Amendment are within the Protected Countryside designation with a Natural Heritage System overlay in the Greenbelt Plan that extend into the new urban residential community areas. These linear areas are also referred to as the Greenbelt Green Fingers.

The applicant’s Planning Justification Report identifies the purpose and intent of the proposed Amendment is to *“permit parkland, trails, and other recreational uses, which are supportive of creating complete communities in accordance with Greenbelt Plan policies. It will also recognize that these areas are fragmented and will be surrounded by urban development and as such will be incapable of supporting viable farm operations contrary to*

*the Greenbelt Plan. Further, it will support the efficient use of land as required by the Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.”*

The justification report suggests that allowing active urban parkland within the Greenbelt lands should also be applied to future urban expansion lands and other Greenbelt corridors in the Region, particularly within new urban expansion area lands.

### **Proposed ROPA 7 was circulated for review and comment, and the Statutory Public Meeting was held on May 13, 2021**

The *Planning Act* permits requests to amend an Official Plan and prescribes a process for municipalities and applicants to follow. The proposed Amendment was circulated for review and comments to all the prescribed persons and bodies, and the required statutory Public Meeting was held on May 13, 2021. The accompanying [Public Meeting information report](#), [staff presentation](#) and [minutes of the Public Meeting](#) are available on the Region’s website.

### **Comments were received from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing**

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority for the proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment. Comments were received by Ministry staff (Attachment 3). Their comments reiterated the Greenbelt Plan policies permitting parkland, trails, and other recreational uses within the rural areas of the Protected Countryside designation of the Greenbelt Plan.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing was asked for a clear interpretation about urban related parks associated with adjacent settlement area urban development in the context of the ROPA 7 Green Finger corridors. Their comment letter references the policies in the Greenbelt Plan but does not explicitly provide an interpretation of Greenbelt permissions for parks and recreational uses directly associated with urban settlement areas. This implies that the Greenbelt policies are subject to municipal interpretation.

### **Comments were received from the circulation of ROPA 7**

Comments were also received through the circulation of the proposed Amendment. The individual comment letters are contained in Attachment 4 and summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**

#### **Summary of Support and Comments Received**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Position of Support to approve ROPA 7</b>	<b>General Comments</b>
Vaughan	Council no position, staff not supportive	Committee of the Whole supports parks, active and passive recreation and infrastructure in accordance

Organization	Position of Support to approve ROPA 7	General Comments
		with Greenbelt Plan, but Council only received report
Markham	Council partial support, staff not supportive	Council supports ability to decide if active parks for high density developments is permitted in Greenbelt. Staff position is lands better suited for ecological restoration and passive recreation
MMAH	No position	Cited Greenbelt Plan policies that permit municipal parks and recreational facilities
Huron Wendat First Nation	No position	Inquired about whether Archaeological Study was required.
York Region Federation of Agriculture	Not supportive	Lands should continue to be used for farming
Romandale Farms Limited	Not supportive	Did not give consent for redesignation and are non-participating landowners
Friends to Conserve Kleinburg	Not supportive	Lands should be for natural heritage restoration and naturalization
Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance	Not supportive	Lands should continue to be used for farming

### **ROPA 7 was considered by Vaughan and Markham providing input to the Region's consideration of the proposed amendment**

The ROPA 7 lands are adjacent to and surrounded by urban areas in recently approved Secondary Plans in Vaughan and Markham. A key consideration of ROPA 7 is the local municipal input related to the extensive planning and consultation for these secondary plan communities. These urban areas were approved in the York Region Official Plan and local Official Plans in conformity with the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

In Vaughan these urban areas are known as Blocks 27 and 41. Vaughan staff indicated in their [report](#) that ‘Blocks 27 and 41 Secondary Plans have identified the Greenbelt fingers for protection and restoration and do not contemplate urban uses. For instance, in Block 27, the agricultural lands within the Greenbelt fingers are contemplated for natural heritage restoration and naturalization to support and grow the Natural Heritage Network in Vaughan once the agricultural lands are no longer farmed.’ Vaughan staff do not support the redesignation of the ROPA 7 lands from Agricultural to a broad Rural designation since the lands are within the Greenbelt and never intended for urban uses. In Block 41, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issued a Minister’s Zoning Order to implement the zoning, including parks within the urban area of the Secondary Plan. Vaughan Council’s resolution considering this matter is in Attachment 4.

In Markham, these areas are known as the Victoria Glen, Berczy Glen, Angus Glen, and Robinson Glen Blocks. Markham staff also do not support ROPA 7. Their [report](#) to Markham Council noted that Markham staff are of the opinion that active urban parkland uses were never intended to be permitted in Greenbelt lands even in a ‘Rural’ agriculture designation. The types of parkland uses permitted in Rural lands identified in the Greenbelt Plan are large land-intensive uses that are normally found in rural areas, e.g., campgrounds, golf courses, ski hills, hiking trails, and larger parks or other recreational uses. Markham Council’s resolution considering this matter is in Attachment 4.

## 4. Analysis

### **There is a lack of clarity in the Provincial documents about municipal active parkland and recreational facilities directly associated with, and to service new urban development**

The intent of ROPA 7 is to permit active urban parks and recreational uses within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan. To do so, the Greenbelt Plan identifies lands as falling into one of three agricultural designations: ‘Specialty Crop’, ‘Prime’ or ‘Rural’. The Rural designation would permit the broadest range of uses. There is a clear distinction that needs to be maintained between these Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan areas as set out in this report. Urban uses are permitted within the Settlement Area but are not intended within the Greenbelt. There is consensus among Regional and municipal planners on this interpretation.

### **The Ontario Municipal Board and the Divisional Court of Ontario have confirmed that urban uses are permitted within the Settlement Area but are not intended within the Greenbelt**

As part of the history directly relevant to consideration of ROPA 7, Regional and local staff and the Ontario Municipal Board, through a 2006 decision, interpreted the Greenbelt Plan in the North Leslie area of Richmond Hill such that the Green Fingers, adjacent to and surrounded by urban uses, are not intended to accommodate those urban uses associated with the adjacent community. This consensus interpretation of Regional planners, local municipal planners and the OMB was subsequently upheld by a 2007 decision of the

Divisional Court of Ontario. Accordingly, active municipal parks should be accommodated within the urbanized Secondary Plan areas, which does not preclude complementary passive recreational uses in the abutting lands that maintain and enhance the natural heritage lands protected under the Greenbelt Plan.

A decision to adopt ROPA 7 as proposed, risks being contrary to this Ontario Municipal Board decision and Divisional Court ruling.

### **Proposed ROPA 7 conflicts with the intent of the Greenbelt Plan**

The Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2017) identifies where urbanization should not occur to provide permanent protection to the agricultural land base and the ecological and hydrological features, areas and functions. The purpose and intent of ROPA 7 is to move municipal parkland and recreational uses from the urban area into the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan that are outside of the natural heritage features and their associated vegetative protective zones. Permitting the proposed active urban parks and recreational facilities through ROPA 7 is considered to conflict with the intent of the Greenbelt Plan.

### **The intent of the Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan need to be considered equally**

This issue with ROPA 7 is a matter of interpretation about the permitted municipal parks and recreational uses of the Greenbelt Plan which are different from the municipal parks and recreational uses intended for settlement areas under the Growth Plan. The permitted uses between the Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan are not intended to be interchangeable. The integrity of the two Plans necessitates a clear distinction between similar uses, otherwise the goals of one plan supersedes the other. This is not considered a balanced approach to growth management and the protection of the ecological system.

Both the Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan policies prohibit the expansion of urban settlement areas into the Greenbelt. The inclusion of active urban parks in the Greenbelt could be interpreted as an expansion of the urban settlement area into the Greenbelt having the effect of establishing urban uses in the protected Greenbelt lands contrary to the intent of protecting this landscape in the GTA.

### **Proposed ROPA 7 conflicts with the natural heritage policies of the Regional Official Plan**

The lands subject to the Amendment are designated Agricultural Area by the York Region Official Plan. There are several policy overlays that also apply. Table 2 lists the applicable land use designation and policy overlays.

**Table 2**  
**Applicable Designation and Policy Overlays**

Regional Official Plan Map No.	Designation/Policy Overlay
Map 1, Urban Structure	Greenbelt Plan – Protected Countryside
Map 2, Regional Greenlands System	Regional Greenlands System
Map 3, Environmentally Significant Areas and Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest	Natural Heritage System of the Greenbelt Plan
Map 4, Key Hydrologic Features	Provincially Significant and Provincial Plan Area Wetlands
Map 5, Woodlands	Woodlands
Map 8, Agricultural and Rural Area	Agricultural Area

### **ROPA 7 lands are not suited for either an Agricultural or Rural designation**

In conformity with the Greenbelt Plan's Protected Countryside designation, the Regional Official Plan permits public open space uses, passive and active recreation, and associated facilities in certain Agricultural Area designated lands. Given the context of these Greenbelt valley corridors now abutting new communities, they are no longer likely to be farmed supporting agricultural or rural uses. As such, neither the current agricultural or proposed rural designations are appropriate given the context.

As passive recreational trail and ecological restoration, these areas complement the active urban parks that are to be central within neighbourhoods, often designed as urban design focal points integrated with community development. Municipal practice is to acquire as much of the Greenlands System as practical without use of parkland dedication. The lands are likely to be conveyed or acquired into public ownership, in some cases through easements, agreements or purchase. Public use of these lands has been intended to be for passive uses like tree planting, naturalized open spaces, passive trails or perhaps urban agriculture related uses that can be enjoyed by residents. There is no obligation for these lands to be dedicated as part of the abutting development process. Typical active recreational uses would include lit baseball diamonds, soccer fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, and water play areas. Parkland associated with urban area development is dedicated to municipalities through development approvals in accordance with the parkland dedication provisions of the *Planning Act*.

### **As part of the Regional Greenland System, a Rural/Open Space designation would be appropriate for the ROPA 7 lands**

The subject lands are wholly within the Regional Greenland System. This policy overlay protects the natural heritage system by prohibiting development and site alteration (Regional Official Plan Policy 2.1.9). Notwithstanding this policy, certain uses that are supported by approved environmental impact studies are permitted. These permitted uses include stormwater management systems/facilities, passive recreational uses, water and wastewater systems and streets. A full range of agricultural uses are permitted within the Regional Greenland System subject to meeting the requirements of applicable Provincial Plans.

Rather than the current Agricultural or proposed Rural designations, a Rural/Open Space designation would be more appropriate to recognize the intended use of the ROPA 7 lands permitting passive recreational uses, ecological restoration and potentially urban area related agricultural or community gardens. These uses are consistent with local municipal secondary planning for the Green Fingers and are appropriate uses consistent with the intent of the Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan.

### **There are wetland and woodland features within the subject lands**

The Regional Official Plan identifies several environmental (wetland and woodland) features within the subject lands as listed in Table 2. Regional Official Plan Policy 2.2.35 states “development and site alteration is prohibited within evaluated wetlands and all identified wetlands within the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System.” According to Policy 2.2.44, “development and site alteration is prohibited within significant woodlands and their associated vegetation protection zone.” To be clear, the Amendment proposes parkland, trails, and other recreational uses within portions of the subject lands that are outside of these natural heritage features and their associated vegetative protective zones.

### **The ROPA 7 lands are only a portion of the total Greenbelt Green Finger lands contemplated through the Municipal Comprehensive Review**

Through the Region’s Municipal Comprehensive Review, there will be a policy response to the Greenbelt Green Fingers that recognize the unique context of these Greenbelt river valleys extending through, and adjacent to urban settlement areas. Proposed ROPA 7 lands make up only a portion of the potential Greenbelt Green Finger lands in the Region and should continue to be addressed comprehensively. Table 3 below illustrates the affected gross land areas. Attachment 5 contains a map showing the affected lands.



**Table 3**  
**Gross Land Areas of Greenbelt Green Fingers**

Blocks	Area (Ha)
Block 41	151.03
Block 27	46.80
Victoria Glen and Berczy Glen Blocks	144.57
Angus Glen Block	95.94
Robinson Glen Block	<u>155.46</u>
<b>ROPA 7 Subtotal</b>	<b>593.79</b>
All Other Green Finger Areas	949.00
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,542.79</b>

### **A draft new Regional Official Plan will be released later this year and consultation will continue**

A draft of the new Regional Official Plan is scheduled to be released in Q4 of 2021. The policy direction for all Greenbelt Green Fingers will be presented in the draft Regional Official Plan. A consistent approach across all Greenbelt Green Fingers is required and consultation with local Planning staff has been and will continue to contribute to a balanced policy response to these lands. In advance of this release, the Rural/Major Open Space designation is recommended for the ROPA 7 lands permitting passive recreation, environmental management, restoration, and enhancement, and urban agricultural uses building on consultation and previous policy direction reports.

Current farming on the table land portion of the Greenbelt Green Fingers is primarily large crop fields that are anticipated to cease operation when the adjacent fields are developed into urban communities. Previous Council reports on the policy direction of the new Regional Official Plan have indicated that an agricultural designated would no longer be appropriate, however, these Green Fingers also do not exhibit true rural area attributes either. This unique situation presents a policy challenge that needs to balance urban development pressures while preserving the natural environment and determine appropriate uses for these Green Fingers. A Rural/Open Space designation that is more reflective of the natural heritage and open space intention of the municipalities would be more appropriate.

The [Regional Official Plan Update Policy Direction Report](#), dated June 10, 2021, includes a draft of Map 1A – Land Use Designations, showing the ROPA 7 lands, as well as other Greenbelt Green Fingers, as being designated Rural Area. These maps and designations were preliminary drafts for the purpose of review and consultation. Policies in the Official Plan will be proposed to clarify the intended uses in the Greenbelt Green Fingers in conformity with the Greenbelt Plan.

### **Relocating municipal parks and recreational facilities from approved Secondary Plans to the Greenbelt Green Fingers is not necessary to make the community more complete and more efficient**

As discussed throughout this report, the ROPA 7 Greenbelt Green Fingers are adjacent to and surrounded by planned and approved urban residential neighbourhoods. Most of these neighbourhoods have approved Secondary Plans showing locations of municipal parks and recreational facilities. Relocating municipal parks and recreational facilities from these Secondary Plan areas onto the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan is not required to make the future neighbourhood more complete. The approved Secondary Plans already efficiently use land. Replanning the parks in the Secondary Plans would require an amendment and potentially a further delay to realizing development within these communities.

### **A Rural/Open Space designation permitting passive recreation is consistent with a 2006 Ontario Municipal Board decision that prohibited urban related parks in the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan in the Richmond Hill North Leslie Secondary Plan area**

The request to allow active park uses within the Protected Countryside associated with residential urban development in the North Leslie Secondary Plan in Richmond Hill was denied by a previous Ontario Municipal Board decision. Richmond Hill, York Region and the Province did not support this request and provided evidence at the hearing opposing the request to permit active parks within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan. The Board Decision/Order No. 3289, dated November 23, 2006, states, “*the Greenbelt Act should be given a broad and liberal interpretation as a whole and that the intention of this legislation is not to permit active parkland within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt.*”

The Board decision was challenged and a motion seeking leave to the Divisional Court was made. The Divisional Court’s September 29, 2007 decision on Court File No. 614/06, confirmed the Ontario Municipal Board’s decision and found no error in law was made.

North Leslie Secondary Plan continues to locate municipal parks and recreational facilities within the urban areas, where such parks and facilities best meet the needs of local residents, while preserving the natural and ecological function of the Greenbelt Green Fingers. A consistent approach should apply to all local municipalities in York Region.

## 5. Financial

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

## 6. Local Impact

City of Vaughan Council received a [staff report](#) not supporting ROPA 7. Vaughan Committee of the Whole recommended supporting parks, active and passive recreation and infrastructure in accordance with Greenbelt Plan. Vaughan Council only received the report and did not provide a position.

City of Markham Council received a [staff report](#) that was also not in support of ROPA 7. Markham Council indicated partial support for ROPA 7 by supporting golf courses as a permitted use within the Greenbelt Plan area to accommodate the future reconfiguration of Angus Glen Golf Course, and consideration of the acquisition of the greenbelt lands for active parklands to satisfy parkland requirements for high density residential developments when parkland cannot be fully satisfied on site.

## 7. Conclusion

A group of landowners have made an application to amend the York Region Official Plan. The Amendment proposes to change the land use designation from Agricultural Area to Rural Area, primarily to permit parkland, trails and other recreation uses on the table land portions of lands within the Protected Countryside designation of the Provincial Greenbelt Plan.

The intended purpose of ROPA 7 is to relocate urban municipal parks and recreational facilities from approved Secondary Plans into the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan. Municipal planners are aligned on interpretation of the Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan policies that urban uses, including urban municipal parks and recreational uses, are not intended to be permitted to encroach into the Greenbelt Plan area.

The Greenbelt Plan policies do not specifically address active parks associated with urban areas, leaving it to municipal interpretation. Staff has considered the Provincial, Regional and local positions on this request as well as the past Ontario Municipal Board decision to conclude that the amendment as proposed is not supported. In the alternative, a Rural/Major Open Space designation is proposed to be incorporated in the Regional Official Plan as comprehensive policy approach through the Municipal Comprehensive Review that would permit passive recreational uses complimentary to the abutting community areas conforming with the Greenbelt Plan.

The Amendment has progressed through the requisite steps as required by the *Planning Act* and it is recommended that Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7 not be adopted by Regional Council as proposed.

If Regional Council adopts ROPA 7, the Amendment will be forwarded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for a decision.

---

For more information on this report, please contact Augustine Ko, Senior Planner at 1-877-464-9675 ext.71524 or by email at [augustine.ko@york.ca](mailto:augustine.ko@york.ca). Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

**Paul Freeman, MCIP, RPP**  
Chief Planner



**Dino Basso**  
Commissioner of Corporate Services



Approved for Submission:

**Bruce Macgregor**  
Chief Administrative Officer

October 1, 2021  
Attachments (5)  
12965202

**ATTACHMENT 1**

## THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

## BYLAW NO. 2021-XX

A bylaw to adopt Amendment No. X to the Official Plan for The Regional Municipality of York

WHEREAS the *Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13, as amended, permits The Regional Municipality of York to adopt an Official Plan or amendments thereto;

AND WHEREAS Regional Council at its meeting on MONTH, X, 2021 decided to adopt Regional Official Plan Amendment No. X to the York Regional Official Plan – 2010;

The Council of The Regional Municipality of York HEREBY ENACTS as follows:

1. Regional Official Plan Amendment No. X to the York Region Official Plan – 2010 (ROPA No. X) consisting of text and figures in the attached Schedule “A” is hereby adopted.
2. ROPA No. 6, by virtue of Ontario Regulation 525/97, is exempt from approval by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.
3. Schedule “A” shall form part of this Bylaw.

ENACTED AND PASSED on MONTH, X, 2021.

Chris Raynor

Wayne Emmerson

---

Regional Clerk

---

Regional Chair

Authorized by Clause X, Report X, of the Committee of the Whole, adopted by Regional Council at its meeting on MONTH, X, 2021.

**Proposed Amendment  
X to  
the  
Official Plan for  
the  
Regional Municipality of  
York**

AMENDMENT X  
TO THE OFFICIAL PLAN  
FOR  
THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

PART A – THE PREAMBLE

1. Purpose of the Amendment:

This amendment redesignates lands from Agricultural Area to Rural Area within the City of Vaughan and City of Markham to provide opportunities for parkland, trails, and other recreational uses in portions of the Greenbelt Plan that are outside of natural heritage features and their associated vegetative protective zones.

2. Location:

This redesignation applies to the New Community Area lands within the City of Vaughan and City of Markham, as shown on attached Figure 1, being an excerpt of Map 8 of the York Region Official Plan.

3. Basis:

Policies of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020 (“Growth Plan”) support the achievement of complete communities that improve social equity and overall quality of life, including human health and expand convenient access to an appropriate supply of safe, publicly accessible open spaces, parks, trails, and other recreational facilities.

Similarly, the Greenbelt Plan includes policies which permit a range of economic and social activities, including recreation in the Protected Countryside Area, which would contribute to building complete communities. Specifically, Section 3.3.1 of the Greenbelt Plan describes Parkland, Open Space and Trails as: *“A system of parklands, open spaces, water bodies and trails across the Greenbelt is necessary to provide opportunities for recreation, tourism and appreciation of cultural heritage and natural heritage. They serve as an important component of complete communities and provide important benefits to support environmental protection, improved air quality and climate change mitigation”*. Section 1.2.2.3.b also supports this intention by calling for the provision of a wide range of publicly accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, open space areas, and trails in the Protected Countryside.

However, the Greenbelt Plan directs these uses to lands designated as “Rural Lands” in the

Protected Countryside. Section 4.1 of the Greenbelt Plan states: *“The rural lands of the Protected Countryside are intended to continue to accommodate a range of commercial, industrial and institutional (including cemetery) uses serving the rural resource and agricultural sectors. They are also intended to support a range of recreation and tourism uses such as trails, parks, golf courses, bed and breakfasts and other tourism-based accommodation, serviced playing fields and campgrounds, ski hills and resorts”* [emphasis added].

When the New Community Area/Future Urban Area greenfield development blocks were brought into the Urban Area and re-designated to permit urban development, the adjacent Greenbelt Plan Area within each block was excluded and has inadvertently maintained the “Agricultural Area” designation. The Agricultural Area designation is no longer appropriate for these lands and the maintenance of the Agricultural Area designation conflicts with the surrounding urban uses and Greenbelt Plan permissions for parkland, trails, and other recreational uses outside of natural features and their vegetative protection zones.

Today, the majority of urban expansion areas are actively farmed or used for golf course purposes, including lands within the Greenbelt Plan Area. When developed, the adjacent urban expansion areas will transition from farmland to urban uses. The unintended consequence of having a remnant Agricultural Area designation within adjacent Greenbelt Plan Areas will result in small fragmented parcels of lands that are too small to be economically viable and if farmed would create land use conflicts. These lands that are within the Protected Countryside area of the Greenbelt but outside of natural features and their vegetative protection zones will be essentially sterilized, contributing neither to the residents nor providing any agricultural benefit to either the community or municipality.

Redesignation from Agricultural Area to Rural Area will allow opportunities for parkland, trails, serviced playing field, golf courses, and recreational use within portions of the Greenbelt Plan Area that are outside of natural heritage features and their vegetative protection zones, in accordance with existing Greenbelt Plan policies. The proposed redesignation further allows for the accommodation of uses integral to delivering complete communities, as envisioned by the New Community Area and Future Urban Area Secondary Plans and directed by the Growth Plan.

## PART B – THE AMENDMENT

All of the Amendment entitled PART B – THE AMENDMENT, consisting of the attached Figure 1 being an excerpt from Map 8 of the York Region Official Plan, constitutes Amendment X to the Official Plan for the Region of York.

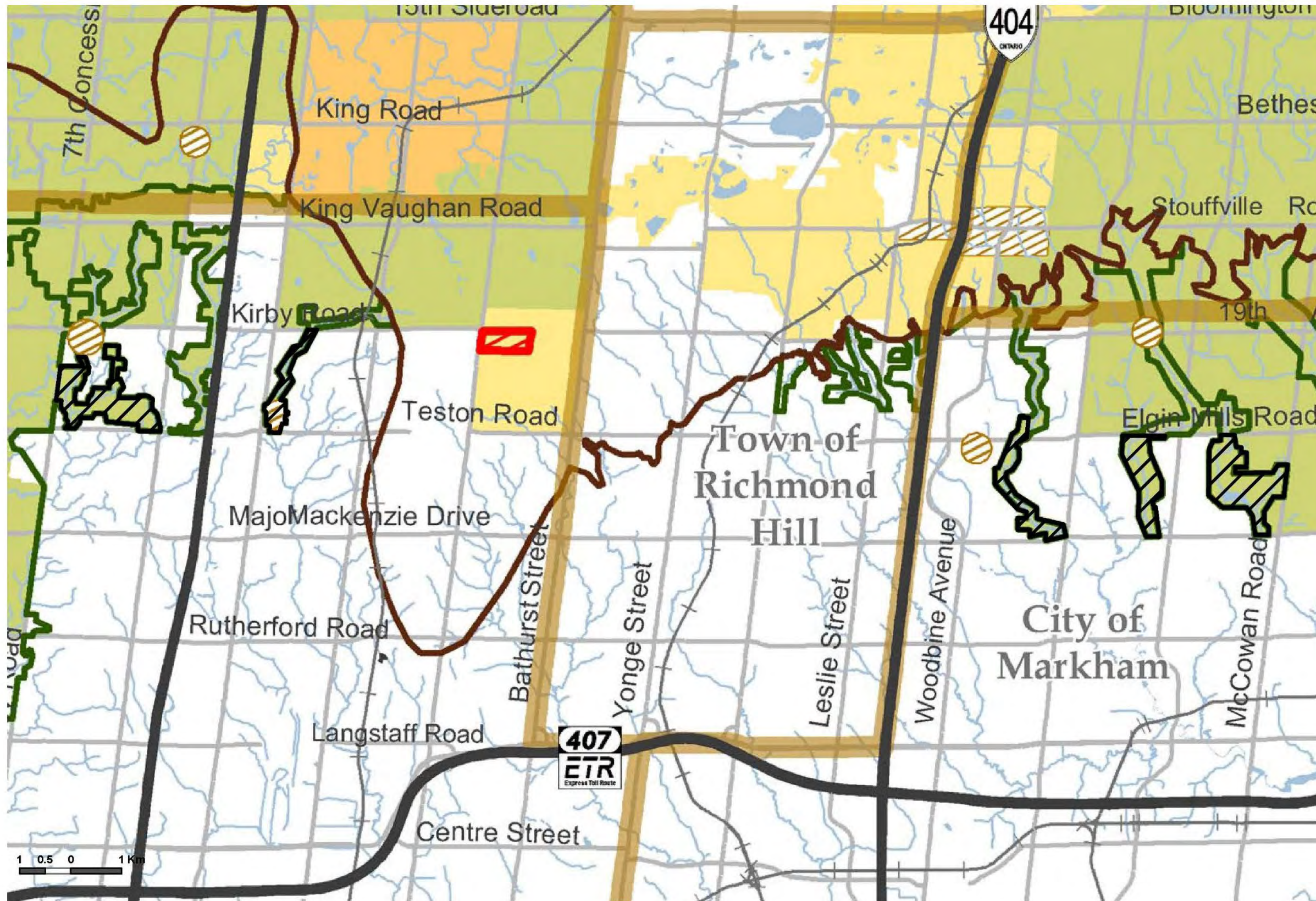
The Official Plan for the Region of York is hereby amended by the following:



1. That Map 8 – Agricultural and Rural Areas as shown on Figure 1 following is amended:

(a) By designating the lands outlined in black within the City of Vaughan and the City of Markham as Rural Area.





**EXCERPT FROM MAP 8**  
**AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL AREA**

- Rural Area
  - Agriculture Area
  - Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Area
  - Towns and Villages
  - Subject to Minister's Order February 3, 2015 and special provision policies 6.2.19 and 6.4.14
- Greenbelt Plan**
- Greenbelt Plan Boundary
  - Hamlet
- Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP)**
- ORMCP Boundary
  - Hamlet
- Provincial Highways**
- Controlled Access Highways
  - Controlled Access Highways (Under Construction)
  - Other Provincial Highways
- Municipal Boundaries**
- Regional Municipal Boundary
  - Local Municipal Boundary
  - Lands Subject to ROPA X



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Figure 1 to ROPA X



**ATTACHMENT 2****Proposed New Designation and Policies for the ROPA 7 Lands****Rural/Major Open Space Designation**

Lands designated “Rural/Major Open Space” are permitted to be used for:

- i. Passive recreation;
- ii. Environmental management, restoration, and enhancement; and
- iii. Compatible urban agricultural uses; and
- iv. Existing uses and reconfiguration in keeping with the Greenbelt Policies.

Ministry of Municipal Affairs  
and Housing

Ministère des Affaires municipales  
et Logement

Municipal Services Division

Division des services aux municipalités

777 Bay Street, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto ON M7A 2J3  
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777, rue Bay, 16<sup>e</sup> étage  
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Téléphone: 416-585-6427



*By email only*

Augustine Ko, MCIP, RPP  
Senior Planner  
Community Planning and Development Services  
Corporate Services Department  
Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

**RE: Regional Official Plan Amendment to Redesignate Prime Agricultural Areas**

---

Dear Mr. Ko,

Thank you for circulating the regional official plan amendment (ROPA) application to the Ministry for our review. We understand the application was submitted by a consortium of private landowners seeking to change an Agricultural Area designation to a Rural Area designation in the Regional Official Plan.

The subject lands are comprised of separate areas of land located in both the City of Vaughan and the Town of Markham. The intent of the proposed change is to accommodate parkland, trails and other recreational uses within the Protected Countryside area of the Greenbelt Plan. Those proposed uses are permitted by the Greenbelt Plan.

We note the subject lands are located entirely within the Protected Countryside, are subject to the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System, and are further identified as part of the provincial Agricultural System – being designated as a prime agricultural area on provincial mapping of the agricultural land base.

**MMAH REVIEW:**

The following comments are provided for your consideration. As part of our review, we have shared the ROPA application with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Approval Authority:

In accordance with the *Planning Act* and O. Reg. 525/97, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority with respect to any amendment that is adopted to designate a prime agricultural area, or amends or revokes a prime agricultural area designation other than for the purposes of including all the applicable land within an area of settlement within the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan Area. Accordingly, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority for such a Regional Official Plan amendment regardless of whether it was initiated under section 17, section 22, or section 26 of the *Planning Act*.

Redesignation of Prime Agricultural Areas:

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (APTG) sets out in policy 4.2.6 that provincial mapping of the agricultural land base is in effect within the Greenbelt Area. As such, municipal decisions within the Greenbelt Area must conform with the Agricultural System policies in APTG. It is noted that the subject lands are within the Greenbelt Area and thus the Greenbelt Plan applies to them.

The refinement can occur either as part of a Municipal Comprehensive Review or outside of that process, provided the policies are properly implemented.

Policy 5.3 of the Greenbelt Plan states, “Within the Protected Countryside, upper- and single-tier municipalities shall refine and augment official plan mapping to bring prime agricultural areas and rural lands into conformity with provincial mapping and implementation procedures. Until the province has completed mapping and the Agricultural System implementation procedures, municipalities shall continue to retain existing designations for prime agricultural areas within the Protected Countryside.” The implementation procedures are discussed below.

The province released Publication 856, being the Implementation Procedures referred to in Policy 5.3 of the Greenbelt Plan, in March 2020. The Implementation Procedures apply to an official plan or official plan amendment which refines the boundaries of the rural areas and agricultural system in the Greenbelt Plan Area.

Section 3.3.2.3 of the Implementation Procedures (Adding Candidate Areas to Rural Lands Within the Agricultural Land Base) states: “By definition, the agricultural land base includes rural lands. The rural lands policies in the PPS, A Place to Grow and Greenbelt Plan apply and allow for a wider range of uses than in prime agricultural areas. This includes cemeteries, fairgrounds, campgrounds and recreation sites. Rural lands provide opportunities to locate rural, non-agricultural uses where appropriate, outside of prime agricultural areas. [...] Identification of rural lands within the agricultural land base is left to municipal discretion, as long as the Agricultural System purpose and outcomes are met.”

Parkland Uses in the Greenbelt Protected Countryside

Parkland and recreational uses are permitted within the rural areas of the protected countryside within the Greenbelt Plan Area. These uses can be an important and essential element of complete communities and provide important benefits to support

environmental protection, improved air quality and climate change mitigation (Policy 3.3.1). They provide essential recreational opportunities for Ontarians. There are many policies in the Greenbelt Plan which permit parkland and recreational uses within Protected Countryside. These policies could permit camping, golf courses, ski hills, hiking trails and larger parks or other recreational uses.

Thank you for circulating the proposed ROPA to Ministry staff for our consideration. If you have any questions or require any further information, please contact Laurie Miller at [laurie.miller@ontario.ca](mailto:laurie.miller@ontario.ca)

Sincerely,



Hannah Evans  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Municipal Services Division

- c. Paul Freeman, Chief Planner, York Region  
Laurie Miller, MSO-C  
Jocelyn Beatty, OMAFRA  
Maria Jawaid, MNRF  
Sean Fraser, PPPB

**Ko, Augustine**

**From:** Maxime Picard <maxime.picard@cnhw.qc.ca>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 5, 2021 1:00 PM  
**To:** Ko, Augustine  
**Subject:** RE: ROPA 7 - Notice of Request for Amendment and Circulation for Review and Comments - Conseil de la Nation Huronne-Wendat

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Thanks for clarifying Augustine.





**NATION HURONNE-WENDAT**  
**Bureau du Nionwentsïo**

**Maxime Picard, B. Sc. A.**  
 Coordonnateur de projets - Ontario  
 255, Place Chef Michel-Laveau  
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**De :** Ko, Augustine [mailto:Augustine.Ko@york.ca]

**Envoyé :** 5 mars 2021 12:59

**À :** Maxime Picard <maxime.picard@cnhw.qc.ca>

**Objet :** RE: ROPA 7 - Notice of Request for Amendment and Circulation for Review and Comments - Conseil de la Nation Huronne-Wendat

Hi Maxime,

Archaeological studies are not required at this time, as the amendment just changes the designation from Agriculture to Rural in our upper tier Official Plan. There are no development applications on these lands.

Archaeological studies for these areas and the surrounding development areas would have been conducted by the local municipalities of Vaughan and Markham when their respective Secondary Plan background studies were conducted.

**Augustine Ko, MCIP, RPP** | Senior Planner, Community Planning and Development Services,  
Planning and Economic Development Branch, Corporate Services Department

The Regional Municipality of York | 17250 Yonge Street | Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1  
O: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71524 | [Augustine.ko@york.ca](mailto:Augustine.ko@york.ca) | [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)

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**From:** Maxime Picard <[maxime.picard@cnhw.qc.ca](mailto:maxime.picard@cnhw.qc.ca)>

**Sent:** Friday, March 5, 2021 12:32 PM

**To:** Ko, Augustine <[Augustine.Ko@york.ca](mailto:Augustine.Ko@york.ca)>; [melanievincent21@yahoo.ca](mailto:melanievincent21@yahoo.ca)

**Subject:** RE: ROPA 7 - Notice of Request for Amendment and Circulation for Review and Comments - Conseil de la Nation Huronne-Wendat

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Good afternoon Augustine,

Could you please let us know if any archaeological studies will be necessary as part of this amendment process ?

Thanks and best regards,

Maxime Picard





**NATION HURONNE-WENDAT**  
**Bureau du Nionwentsïo**

**Maxime Picard, B. Sc. A.**

Coordonnateur de projets - Ontario

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**De :** Ko, Augustine [<mailto:Augustine.Ko@york.ca>]

**Envoyé :** 5 mars 2021 11:59

**À :** [maxime.picard@cnhw.qc.ca](mailto:maxime.picard@cnhw.qc.ca); [melanievincent21@yahoo.ca](mailto:melanievincent21@yahoo.ca)

**Objet :** FW: ROPA 7 - Notice of Request for Amendment and Circulation for Review and Comments - Conseil de la Nation Huronne-Wendat

The Region of York received an application to amend The Regional Municipality of York Official Plan that applies to various New Community Area lands within the City of Vaughan and City of Markham.

Attached is the Notice of Request for Amendment and our circulation for comments.

This amendment proposes to redesignate lands within the City of Vaughan and City of Markham from Agricultural Area to Rural Area to provide opportunities for parkland, trails, and other recreational uses in portions of the Greenbelt Plan that are outside of natural heritage features and their associated vegetative protective zones.

This circulation includes the ROPA application form, the submitted proposed OPA, and the applicant's Planning Justification Report. Please provide your comments by Friday, March 26, 2021.

Best regards,

**Augustine Ko, MCIP, RPP** | Senior Planner, Community Planning and Development Services,  
 Planning and Economic Development Branch, Corporate Services Department

The Regional Municipality of York | 17250 Yonge Street | Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1  
 O: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71524 | [Augustine.ko@york.ca](mailto:Augustine.ko@york.ca) | [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)

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**From:** Kim Empringham <kim.empringham@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, May 13, 2021 6:21 AM

**To:** Regional Clerk <ClerkGeneralLine@york.ca>

**Cc:** MAURO.PEVERINI@vaughan.ca; Karumanchery, Biju <bkarumanchery@markham.ca>; Mayor Frank Scarpitti <MScarpitti2@markham.ca>; Virginia Hackson <vhackson@eastwillimbury.ca>; Maurizio Bevilacqua <Maurizio.bevilacqua@vaughan.ca>; Steve Pellegrini <spellegrini@king.ca>; Rob Grossi <rgrossi@georgina.ca>; Iain Lovatt <iain.lovatt@townofws.ca>; Emmerson, Wayne <Wayne.Emmerson@york.ca>; Banfield, Charles <Charles.Banfield@york.ca>; Hassanali, Meena <Meena.Hassanali@york.ca>; Avia Eek <Aeek@king.ca>

**Subject:** ROPA 7

Attention: Regional Clerk

Yesterday at 4:30 pm the York Region Federation of Agriculture was informed by the York Region Economic Development Department that the Region had received an application for Regional Official Plan Amendment to redesignate certain 'Prime' agriculture lands to 'Rural' agriculture within the Greenbelt in Markham and Vaughan and that a Statutory Meeting for ROPA 7 would be held this morning. The York Region Federation of Agriculture and its 650 farmer members have an interest in any amendments to redesignate prime agriculture lands to rural in the Greenbelt and may provide comments upon review of ROPA 7. The York Region Federation of Agriculture feels it should have been included among the agencies that the proposed Amendment was circulated to.

The Federation wish to be included on the public record as having an interest in this proposed amendment and requests it be provided with notice of any further public meetings, and the opportunity to comment on any draft and final policies pertaining to ROPA 7 and related matters as they become available.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Regards

Kim Empringham  
Secretary/Treasurer/Director  
York Region Federation of Agriculture  
12900 Kennedy Road  
Stouffville, ON  
L4A 4A8  
[york@ofa.on.ca](mailto:york@ofa.on.ca)

# ROMANDALE

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

June 2, 2021

Paul Freeman  
Chief Planner, Planning and Economic Development,  
Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, Ontario, L3Y 6Z1

Mr. Freeman:

I am following up on my call to you this morning.

As I advised you on that call, Romandale is very concerned about what is occurring and who is involved. I can think of no legitimate basis for the Region to proceed with a proposed change to its official plan that clearly affects Greenbelt lands owned by Romandale without any prior consultation with Romandale.

I am extremely disappointed that my effort to reach out to you shows that you – and the Regional Government that employs you – do not recognize, let alone share, Romandale's concerns with excluding Romandale from a process that affects its lands.

Your disinterest in my call appears to contrast with the inside track enjoyed by certain individuals who are clearly identified in the May 10, 2021 letter to Regional Council from Malone Given Parsons. Some of them appear to be also linked to private efforts to advance the proposed Highway 413 through Greenbelt lands west of Highway 400.

Romandale has decades behind it of advancing good planning in York Region and Markham. I remain very interested in learning how any aspect of the proposed ROPA 7 or the process behind it do the same. It seems they really do the opposite.



Helen Roman-Barber  
President  
Romandale Farms Limited

cc: Mayor Frank Scarpitti, City of Markham

ROMANDALE FARMS LIMITED

Suite 204, 212 King St. West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5H 1K5  
Telephone: (416) 971-3330, Fax: (416) 971-5551



**By E-Mail Only**

RJ Forhan and Associates  
 29 Queens Quay East Suite 607  
 Toronto, Ontario, M5E 0A4

June 2, 2021

Paul Freeman  
 Chief Planner, Planning and Economic Development,  
 Regional Municipality of York  
 17250 Yonge Street  
 Newmarket, Ontario, L3Y 6Z1

Dear Mr. Freeman:

**Re: Proposed ROPA 7  
 Conversion of land designated “Agriculture” to “Rural”  
 3975 Elgin Mills Road East (the “Home Farm”)  
 City of Markham (the “City”)  
 Romandale Farms Limited (“Romandale”)**

RJ Forhan and Associates (RJFA) are the land use planning consultants for Romandale, which owns the Home Farm and the Snider Farm located in Markham’s Future Urban Area. Romandale also owns the McGrisken Farm located outside of Markham’s Future Urban Area (shown on Figure 1). Each of Romandale’s properties contain lands that are located within the Provincial Greenbelt Plan Area.

It recently came to our attention, **without notice provided to us by either the Region, Markham, or the applicant’s planner Don Given**, that the Region is considering an application filed by Malone Given Parsons representing various landowners and landowner groups in Markham and Vaughan, that would redesignate the Greenbelt Plan Protected Countryside Areas within the New Community Areas from “Agriculture” to “Rural.” The May 13, 2021 Region staff report, “Information Report for Public Meeting - Proposed Amendment No. 7 to the York Region Official Plan” and presentation to Committee of the Whole, illustrate properties in Markham and Vaughan that are subject to this application. Shockingly, Romandale is shown as a participating landowner to ROPA 7, and Romandale’s Home Farm is shown as lands that would be subject to the ROPA 7 application.

In a professional context, I am concerned that my planning colleague Don Given, knowing full well that I am the land use planner for Romandale, **did not inform me** of the application, and **without consent from Romandale**, would make such a misrepresentation of my client’s lands. It is equally concerning to me that my planning colleagues at the Region accepted this application without verifying the landowners that are the applicants to ROPA 7. Planning staff at the Region and at Markham, know full





well that Romandale is not a participant in the Angus Glen Landowner's Group, and does not support the current planning status and land uses being imposed by Markham on Romandale's Home Farm, including on the Greenbelt Plan Area on Romandale's Home Farm. Further, planning staff at the Region and Markham are fully aware that Romandale and Markham are in litigation on these specific planning matters.

Please remove immediately any reference to Romandale's lands from any schedule to ROPA 7, and any reference to Romandale as a participating landowner in ROPA 7.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Forhan', written over a light blue circular stamp.

Bob Forhan RPP

C.c. client  
Rodney Northey (Gowling)  
Hannah Evans  
Laurie Miller  
Sandra Malcic  
Don Given  
Margaret Wouters









June 9, 2021

Regional Chair and Council  
York Region Administrative Centre  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

**Attention: Clerk**

**Re: Regional Official Plan Amendment 7 - City of Vaughan**

Donnelly Law ("we" or the "Firm") represents the Friends to Conserve Kleinburg ("FTCK") regarding a privately initiated Regional Official Plan Amendment for the purpose of opening up 72 ha (178 acres) of land on Blocks 41 and 27 to urban development in the Greenbelt (the "Subject Lands"). The Friends were founded in order to preserve the East Humber River, the Greenbelt and Natural Heritage Network of Vaughan, Ontario.

The Subject Lands are identified as protected prime agricultural areas within the Provincial Agricultural System of the Growth Plan and the Greenbelt Plan. The OP Amendment No. 7 will affect 201 ha (497 acres) of Greenbelt land designated in the current York Region Official Plan.

Having only recently been advised of these proposed changes, my client wishes to be kept informed in writing of the progress of this landowners' request.

According to the City of Vaughan Committee of the Whole (2) Staff Report, June 8, 2021 the proposed change in the designation could introduce "major development" in these so-called "Greenbelt fingers", resulting in "significant site alteration and disturbance. It is also the opinion of Vaughan Planning Staff and our client the current Agricultural Area designation in the Greenbelt is restrictive, whereas the Rural Area designation permits urban uses such as schools, roads, infrastructure, cemeteries, etc.

Vaughan City Staff do not support ROPA 7 to redesignate the lands from "Agricultural Area" to "Rural Area" in the Greenbelt. There is no indication that the public have been consulted in any meaningful way, or would support such a change.



Equally concerning is the clear precedent this will set. The proposed changes will greatly benefit landowners seeking Parkland Designation credits on lands explicitly protected against active recreational uses and associated infrastructure, a prohibition confirmed by the Ontario Municipal Board in the *Lionheart Enterprises Ltd. vs Richmond Hill (Town)* (PL020446) case in 2006.

In that case, the Ontario Municipal Board held at page 48:

The Town's [Richmond Hill] evidence was that it has never used its parkland dedication that it is entitled to under the *Planning Act* to acquire natural areas. It strives to require dedication of parkland that is suitable for active park use, not compromised by environmental features.

Richmond Hill would not allow protected land to be added to the developable area, even as parkland, because this would mean ultimately having to acquire land that was already protected. This made no sense to Richmond Hill, yet it is exactly what is being proposed by ROPA 7 by "down zoning" prime agricultural land so that the landowners may sell it or obtain credit for parkland, worth millions of dollars.

According to the York Region website:

York Region is home to a vibrant and thriving agriculture and agri-food sector.

From the rich soils of the Holland Marsh to a diverse mix of food and beverage businesses, this sector plays an important role in York Region's economy. The entire agri-food sector in York Region – everything from farms to food processors, grocery stores and restaurants – provides approximately 57,000 jobs and contributes \$2.7 billion dollars to the economy. York Region is committed to supporting and promoting this important sector.

York Region developed an Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy ("Strategy") endorsed by York Regional Council in 2017.

The Strategy lays out opportunities and challenges to ensure that agriculture and agri-food remains a strong and viable sector in York Region. The Strategy was a collaboration between local municipalities and the York Region Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group, a committee that provides advice to Council on the protection and promotion of agriculture and farming in York Region. Nowhere in that strategy is the conversion of prime agricultural land to allow development or parkland mentioned.

Has Council obtained the advice of the York Region Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group? Setting this precedent for removing prime agricultural land from protected status should not proceed without consulting the agricultural community, and certainly not without Agricultural Impact Assessment.

The Government of Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs ("OMAFRA") is opposed to development of the Agricultural System in the Greenbelt:

The Greenbelt Plan, 2017 and A Place to Grow, 2020 policies recognize the importance of both the *Natural Heritage System* and the *Agricultural System* to the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the people of Ontario. The two overlapping systems are mutually supportive. The protection of these resources is vitally important to the long-term vision for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.<sup>1</sup> [emphasis added]

Notwithstanding the fact that the Greenbelt is protected, there is no planning justification provided whatsoever for these proposed changes.

Furthermore, in Block 27 the agricultural lands have been contemplated for many years for natural heritage restoration and naturalization pursuant to Vaughan's Natural Heritage Network and response to the Climate Emergency it declared on June 12, 2019. In addition, York Region's tree canopy targets requires land to be restored and re-forested to meet its environmental objectives. The Block 41 lands are listed as having opportunities for restoration of wetlands, woodlands, fish habitat, significant wildlife habitat and other key natural heritage features.

Re-designating protected land and removing 178 acres from protected status undermines these important provincial, regional and local objectives. Please accept this letter as strong support for keeping Ontario's Greenbelt protected.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 416-572-0464, or by e-mail to david@donnellylaw.ca, cc'ing justine@donnellylaw.ca, should you have any questions or comments concerning this correspondence.

Yours truly,



David R. Donnelly

cc. Client  
A. Ko

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<sup>1</sup> [www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/agsys-sum.htm](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/agsys-sum.htm)

**CITY OF VAUGHAN**  
**EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 22, 2021**

Item 9, Report No. 32, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted, as amended, by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 22, 2021, as follows:

***By receiving the report of the Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management, dated June 8, 2021; and***

***By receiving the following communications:***

- C6. Kim Empringham, York Region Federation of Agriculture, dated June 8, 2021;***
- C31. David R. Donnelly, Donnelly Law, Carlaw Avenue, Toronto, dated June 8, and June 18, 2021;***
- C44. Andre Willi, Strategic Benefits, Steeles Avenue West, Vaughan, dated June 19, 2021;***
- C45. Angela Grella, dated June 20, 2021;***
- C46. David Toyne, Upper Cold Creek Farm, Pine Valley Drive, Woodbridge, dated June 21, 2021;***
- C47. Louisa Santoro, dated June 21, 2021;***
- C54. Irene Ford, dated June 21, 2021;***
- C57. Jean-François Obregón, Laurel Valley Court, Concord, dated June 21, 2021;***
- C60. Frank Troina, Kilmuir Gate, Woodbridge, dated June 21, 2021; and***
- C61. Mary and Ferdinando Torrieri, Kilmuir Gate, Woodbridge, dated June 21, 2021.***

**9. RESPONSE TO YORK REGION'S REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT 7**

The Committee of the Whole recommends:

- 1) **Whereas the Greenbelt lands in Blocks 27 and 41 are designated Agriculture within the York Region Official Plan are planned to be surrounded by urban uses, compromising their ability to be used for farming and other agricultural uses;**

**Whereas the Region of York has requested comments on ROPA 7, which would redesignate these lands within Blocks 27 and 41 from Agriculture to Rural in its Official Plan;**

**Whereas the Greenbelt Plan permits and promotes recreational uses within its Protected Countryside designation;**

**Whereas the City wants Greenbelt lands within Blocks 27 and 41 to be used for parks, active recreation, passive recreation and infrastructure in accordance with the Greenbelt plan;**

**CITY OF VAUGHAN**  
**EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 22, 2021**

Item 9, CW Report 32 – Page 2

and whereas the City does not support the use of lands within Blocks 27 and 41 for uses such as schools, fire halls, cemeteries and places of worship within rural areas in the Greenbelt Plan;

Now Therefore Let It Be Resolved that the Council of the City of Vaughan supports the redesignation of Greenbelt lands from Agriculture to Rural as proposed by ROPA 7 and further direct staff to send a copy of this resolution to the Regional Municipality of York;

- 2) That the report of the Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management, dated June 8, 2021, be received;
- 3) That the following comments and Communications be received:
  1. Mr. Don Given, Malone Given Parsons, Renfrew Drive, Markham and Communications C23 and C29, dated June 7, 2021 and Communication C53, presentation material, on behalf of Block 41 Landowners Group;
  2. Ms. Kim Empringham, York Region Federation of Agriculture, Kennedy Road, Stouffville;
  3. Mr. Richard Lorello, Treelawn Boulevard, Kleinburg; and
- 4) That the following Communications be received:
  - C3. Ms. Jenny Commisso, TACC Group, Chrislea Road, Woodbridge, dated June 4, 2021; and
  - C49. Ms. Irene Zeppieri, dated June 7, 2021.

**Recommendations**

1. That York Region be advised that the City of Vaughan Council does not support Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7 to redesignate the lands in the Greenbelt Plan area located in Blocks 27 and 41 from “Agricultural Area” to “Rural Area”;
2. That an alternative land use designation and the appropriate policies for the Greenbelt Fingers be explored by York Region in consultation with the City; and
3. That the City Clerk be directed to forward a copy of this report to York Region with respect to Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7.



## Committee of the Whole (2) Report

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**DATE:** Tuesday, June 8, 2021

**WARD:** 1

**TITLE:** RESPONSE TO YORK REGION'S REQUEST FOR COMMENTS  
ON REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT 7

**FROM:**

Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

**ACTION:** DECISION

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**Purpose**

To seek Council's endorsement of staff's recommendations with respect to York Region's request for comments on the privately initiated Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7, to amend the York Region Official Plan by redesignating lands located in the City of Vaughan, forming part of the Greenbelt Plan, from "Agricultural Area" to "Rural Area". If redesignated, these lands would provide potential opportunities for (active) parkland, trails, and other recreational uses in portions of the Greenbelt Plan area that are outside of the natural heritage features and their associated vegetative protective zones.

**Report Highlights**

- York Region has received a privately initiated Regional Official Plan Amendment to redesignate lands from "Agricultural Area" to "Rural Area".
- The lands are located in Blocks 27 and 41 and are surrounded by and/or adjacent to New Community Areas.
- The lands are identified as prime agricultural areas within the Provincial Agricultural System of the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan.
- Staff do not support the blanket redesignation of lands from "Agricultural Area" to "Rural Area" as submitted, as these lands are within the Greenbelt Plan boundary which is not intended for urban uses.
- Staff support York Region exploring an alternative designation.
- The City's Parkland Dedication Guideline Study is underway and includes an analysis of parkland considerations within the Greenbelt Area; this study will be presented for Council consideration by Q4 2021.

## **Recommendations**

1. That York Region be advised that the City of Vaughan Council does not support Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7 to redesignate the lands in the Greenbelt Plan area located in Blocks 27 and 41 from “Agricultural Area” to “Rural Area”;
2. That an alternative land use designation and the appropriate policies for the Greenbelt Fingers be explored by York Region in consultation with the City; and
3. That the City Clerk be directed to forward a copy of this report to York Region with respect to Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7.

## **Background**

The City of Vaughan received a Notice of a Request for a Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7 (‘ROPA 7’) from the Regional Municipality of York (‘York Region’), dated March 5, 2021. The privately initiated ROPA 7 proposes to redesignate certain lands in the cities of Vaughan and Markham from “Agricultural Area” to “Rural Area”. The Subject Lands located in Blocks 27 and 41 are within the boundaries of the Greenbelt Area and are immediately adjacent to and/or surrounded by the New Community Areas as shown on Attachment 1.

The New Community Areas were brought into the Urban Area of the Regional Official Plan through ROPA 2, the Vaughan Urban Expansion Area by redesignating the lands in Blocks 27 and 41 from “Agricultural Area” to “Urban Area”. The Subject Lands also referred to as the “Greenbelt fingers” were not included in the redesignation of lands through ROPA 2.

### ***The Subject Lands are immediately adjacent to and/or surrounded by the New Community Areas also located in Block 27 and Block 41***

The individual Secondary Plan studies for both the New Community Areas were initiated in 2015 and have been completed providing specific land use designations for lands in Blocks 27 and 41. The New Community Area of Block 27 is approximately 311.71 hectares in area and comprises part of Lots 26 – 30 of Concession 4, in the City of Vaughan. The Greenbelt Area within Block 27 is approximately 50.06 hectares of which 23.09 hectares is designated “Agricultural” as shown on Schedule 13 – Land Use of VOP 2010. Policies in VOP 2010 require a 30 metre Vegetative Protective Zone (‘VPZ’) from key natural heritage and key hydrological features. Once the VPZs are provided very little tableland remains and therefore the Block 27 Secondary Plan shows the entire Greenbelt Area as Natural Areas.

The Block 27 area includes the Hamlet of Teston in the southwest quadrant of the Block, a reach of the West Don River and an additional central tributary of the West Don River which is a component of the Greenbelt Area and the City's Natural Heritage Network. The TransCanada Pipeline Canadian Mainline crosses the northern portion of the Block in an east-west direction and the GO Railway line runs north-south through the Block. The lands subject to ROPA 7 extend from Teston Road north to Kirby Road on the west side of the Block as shown on Attachment 1.

An appeal to Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) of VOP 2010 Chapter 3 policies by the Block 27 Landowners Group remains outstanding.

The New Community Area in Block 41 is approximately 171.88 hectares in area and comprises part of Lots 26 – 30 of Concession 6, in the City of Vaughan. The Greenbelt Area within Block 41 and subject to the ROPA 7 application is approximately 150.83 hectares of which 48.47 hectares is designated "Agricultural" by VOP 2010.

The Block 41 area includes an existing large lot residential community in the northwest quadrant of the Block and the TransCanada PipeLines Ltd. Maple Compressor Station 130 is located centrally in the north half of the Block, neither of which are part of the New Community Area. The TransCanada PipeLines Ltd. Canadian Mainline traverses the Block in an east-west direction and extends north from the compressor station to Kirby Road.

A Minister's Zoning Order ('MZO') for the Block 41 Secondary Plan area, *O. Reg. 644/20* was approved by the Province. The area zoned by the MZO does not include the lands subject to ROPA 7.

***Staff comments on ROPA 7 were prepared in consideration of the existing Provincial, Regional and Municipal policy context and framework***  
***Planning Act***

Section 2 of the *Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13* ('*Planning Act*') states that the Council of a municipality in carrying out their responsibilities shall have regard to, among other matters, matters of Provincial interest such as:

"... (a) the protection of ecological systems, including natural areas, features and functions;

(b) the protection of the agricultural resources of the Province;

(p) the appropriate location of growth and development; ..."



A privately initiated application to amend the York Region Official Plan, ROPA 7 was submitted under Section 22 of the *Planning Act* to York Region for review and consideration.

### Provincial Policy Statement 2020

In accordance with Section 3 of the *Planning Act*, all land use decisions in Ontario “shall be consistent” with the Provincial Policy Statement 2020 (‘PPS’). The PPS provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development.

Policy 2.3.1 in respect to prime agricultural areas states, “*Prime agricultural areas shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture...*” Permitted uses and activities include “*...agricultural uses, agricultural-related uses and on-farm diversified uses.*”

Although not referenced in the PPS, the Provincial Plans, and related Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System in Ontario’s Greater Golden Horseshoe Supplementary Direction to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Implementation Procedures) do establish a process for refinement of prime agricultural areas in the Greenbelt Area.

### ***Growth Plan (2019) and the Greenbelt Plan (2017) build upon the policies provided by the PPS***

#### A Place to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019)

A Place to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) 2019, as amended, identifies an Agricultural System for the City of Vaughan. Section 4.6 Agricultural System of the Growth Plan (2019) provides policy direction on agricultural land base mapping and protection. This mapping applies to lands that are found within the Greenbelt Area.

Section 3.2 of the Implementation Procedures provides guidance on interpretation and the application of the agricultural land base mapping. Section 3.2 reads, “Within the Greenbelt area, the provincial agricultural land base mapping of prime agricultural areas was in effect as soon as it was issued by the Province on February 9, 2018.”

Policy 4.2.6.9 of the Growth Plan (2019) stipulates the manner in which the agricultural land base mapping can be refined. Section 4.2.6.9 reads, “Upper-and single-tier municipalities may refine provincial mapping of the agricultural land base at the time of initial implementation their official plans, based on implementation procedures issues by the Province. For upper-tier municipalities, the initial implementation of provincial mapping may be done separately for each lower tier municipality. After provincial



mapping of the agricultural land base has been implemented in official plans, further refinements may only occur through a municipal comprehensive review.

York Region is currently refining the Agricultural System mapping and policies through their Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR). City staff are part of the MCR working group and are consulted on the development of the Agricultural System mapping and policies.

#### Greenbelt Plan (2017)

The lands subject to ROPA 7 within the City of Vaughan are designated Protected Countryside by the Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2017). The Protected Countryside designation is intended “to enhance the spatial extent of agriculturally and environmentally protected lands ... while at the same time improving linkages between these areas and the surrounding major lake systems and watersheds”. The Protected Countryside is made up of Agricultural System, Natural System and Settlement Areas. The Protected Countryside Agricultural and Natural Systems in the Greenbelt Plan are intended for non-urban uses.

The Protected Countryside contains an Agricultural System (Section 3.1) that provides “a continuous, productive and permanent agricultural land base and complementary agri-food network ... The agricultural land base is comprised of prime agricultural areas, specialty crop areas, and rural lands.”. Section 4.1.1.1 states that non-agricultural uses are not permitted within prime agricultural areas in the Protected Countryside, with the exception of those uses permitted in section 4.2 to 4.6 of the Greenbelt Plan (2017).

As defined in the Greenbelt Plan (2017), green infrastructure uses that promote natural and human made elements that provide ecological and hydrological functions and processes are permitted within prime agricultural areas subject to meeting policy 4.2.1.2 g) which requires an “agricultural impact assessment or equivalent analysis as part of an environmental assessment shall be undertaken”. It is the interpretation of City staff that the subject lands can be used for natural heritage enhancements, stormwater management systems, tree plantings and permeable surface trails.

The proposed Rural designation would permit a wide range of urban uses including schools, places of worship and fire halls which are not permitted in a prime agricultural area. In addition, municipal active parkland including playing fields and tennis courts are not permitted. Also, any use requiring substantial site alteration to the landscape in the Greenbelt protected lands, would not conform to Section 4.1.1.1 of the Greenbelt Plan (2017).

### York Region Official Plan (2010)

The York Region Official Plan 2010 (YROP) designates the Subject Lands as “Agricultural Area” (Map 8) and identifies overlays that also apply including; Protected Countryside (Map 1), Regional Greenlands System (Map 2), Natural Heritage System (Map 3) within the Greenbelt Plan, Provincially Significant and Provincial Plan Area Wetlands (Map 4), and Woodlands (Map 5) (this overlay applies only to the Subject Lands in Block 41).

In keeping with Provincial Policy, the YROP affords the highest level of protection to Agricultural Areas and the Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Area from incompatible land uses. Policy 6.3.2 identifies, “That within the Agricultural Area and Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Area, normal farm practices and a full range of agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and secondary agricultural uses are supported and permitted.”

ROPA 7 proposes redesignating the Subject Lands to “Rural Area”. The YROP permits the following uses for lands through the “Rural Area” designation, “6.4.3 That existing and new agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, normal farm practices, forestry, conservation, land extensive recreational uses, and resource-based commercial and industrial uses are permitted in the Rural Area, consistent with the policies of the Provincial Plans and local municipal official plans and zoning by-laws.”

Based on the policies of the YROP, a redesignation of the Subject Lands to “Rural Area” would permit the intended uses on the Subject Lands, provided the intended uses (specifically active parkland) are uses consistent with the policies of the Provincial Plans and local municipal official plans. Therefore, an amendment to the YROP is required.

### Vaughan Official Plan 2010

The Vaughan Official Plan 2010 (VOP 2010) designates the subject lands, “Natural Areas” and “Agricultural” on VOP 2010 Schedule 13 - Land Use. Schedules 1 (not including 1B) to 8 and 10 to 13 all identify the Greenbelt Area as an overlay. The Subject Lands are situated within the “Greenbelt fingers” of the Greenbelt Area, refer to Attachment 2. The Greenbelt fingers are contained within Vaughan’s Natural Heritage Network (‘NHN’) identified in Schedule 2. The Greenbelt fingers are composed of long linear valley and stream corridors that contain both key natural heritage features (e.g. significant woodlands, significant valleylands) and key hydrological features (e.g., provincially significant wetlands) protected by the Greenbelt Plan, the VOP 2010 NHN policies and by the Toronto and Region Conservation’s Authority regulation (*O.Reg. 166/06*, as amended), where applicable.

In keeping with the Greenbelt Plan and based on policy 3.5.5.6, “Notwithstanding the above, major recreational uses are not permitted on Agricultural designated lands as identified on Schedule 13 of the Plan.” VOP 2010 includes serviced playing fields in the definition of major recreational uses.

***The Province is the approval authority on changes to the Prime Agricultural Areas within the Greenbelt Area***

The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (‘MMAH’) provided comment on ROPA 7 recognizing the Subject Lands are located entirely in within the Protected Countryside and are subject to the Greenbelt Plan’s Natural Heritage and Agricultural Systems. The portion of the Subject Lands which are part of the Agricultural System are also designated as prime agricultural areas on the provincial agricultural land base mapping.

In consideration of the proposed redesignation, the MMAH comments reference Section 3.3.2.3 of Implementation Procedures, “By definition, the agricultural land base includes rural lands. The rural land policies in the PPS, A Place to Grow and Greenbelt Plan apply and allow for a wider range of uses than in prime agricultural areas. [...] Identification of rural lands within the agricultural land base is left to municipal discretion, as long as the Agricultural System purpose and outcomes are met.” Furthermore, the letter recognizes, “Parkland and recreational uses are permitted within the rural areas of the protected countryside within the Greenbelt Plan Area.” Comments from MMAH do not provide any further clarity on whether active parkland is permitted in the Natural Heritage System overlay of the Greenbelt Plan.

City staff is of the opinion that the proposed redesignation of the Subject Lands to permit active parkland and other uses would not maintain the purpose and outcomes of the Agricultural System. Support for City staff’s opinion is provided in the Analysis and Options section of this report.

Pursuant to *O.Reg. 525/97*, of the *Planning Act*, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority for official plan amendments that:

- relate to lands located within the Greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan area:
- amends or revokes the designation of a prime agricultural area, other than for the purposes of including all of the applicable land within an area of settlement; and
- Is commenced on or after May 16, 2019.

ROPA 7 seeks approval of an official plan amendment within the Greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan area, seeks the amendment/revoking of prime agricultural area designation which is not connected to inclusion in a settlement area and was initiated after May 16, 2019. As such, the MMAH is the approval authority for ROPA 7.

### **Previous Reports/Authority**

Not applicable.

### **Analysis and Options**

#### ***The North Leslie Ontario Municipal Board Case Decision did not permit active parkland within Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan***

The Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) Decision (now known as the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal – LPAT) of November 23, 2006 regarding the appeal of the Secondary Plan for the North Leslie Area in Richmond Hill (Lionheart Enterprises Ltd. v. Richmond Hill (Town) - PL020446) provides further direction specifically to the matter of parks in the Greenbelt Plan.

The issue was raised during the OMB hearings as to whether parts of the Protected Countryside, particularly outside of key natural heritage features and key hydrologic features, could be used for stormwater management ponds, active parkland, and private amenity space. The OMB accepted the evidence of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the local municipality, and other public agencies' positions that the intent of the Greenbelt Act "is not to permit active parkland within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt". The OMB Decision further notes "...because some form of government approval (such as severance, subdivision or condominium) is required in order to permit private amenity space to be appended to a lot or condominium, this sort of use constitutes an urban use and is not permitted within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt".

The North Leslie Secondary Plan includes two land use designations in the Greenbelt Plan area that comprise the natural areas. The Natural Heritage System designation including key natural heritage features and key hydrologic features, and the Protected Countryside designation. The Secondary Plan policies related to the Greenbelt Plan maintain the direction in the OMB Decision of November 23, 2006.

- There are several policies directing that the Natural Heritage System lands and the Protected Countryside lands be dedicated into public ownership at no or minimal cost (see policies 9.5.2.1(j) and 9.5.2.1(k)).
- Natural Heritage System lands shall be zoned in an appropriate environmental protection zone (policy 9.8.6(c)).

- Permitted uses in the Protected Countryside shall be governed by the Greenbelt legislation (policy 9.8.6(f)).
- Protected Countryside lands shall be zoned in an appropriate environmental protection or open space zone and prohibited uses in the Protected Countryside "shall include any urban use or any use associated with, accessory to or serving, an urban use, such as schools, community centres, arenas, libraries, parks, condominiums and subdivisions" (policy 9.6.8(h)).

Policy 9.6.8(g) directs that "dedication of Protected Countryside lands or Natural Heritage System lands in fulfilment of parkland dedication requirements under the *Planning Act*" is not required but may be accepted.

***The York Region review of the Provincial agricultural land base mapping through the MCR did not recommend changes in the City of Vaughan***

York Region retained Planscape to review the Provincial agricultural system mapping. This involved a review of the Region's Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) 2009 report with the Provincial LEAR and in consideration of the Implementation Procedures, in order to determine if there were any necessary changes needed to agricultural lands in York Region as part of the agricultural land base mapping and policy review. Planscape prepared an Agricultural Land Refinements Report (2019) and the study determined that no lands in the City of Vaughan required changes to land use designations, as per the Regional Official Plan Update Policy Direction Report (March 18, 2021). City staff understand that York Region staff are currently reviewing the long-term agricultural viability of the Greenbelt fingers in the City of Vaughan and City of Markham due to its proximity to the urban area. City staff would like to be engaged in this review in order to understand the criteria used to determine the appropriateness of redesignating lands.

City of staff are of the opinion that the "Rural Area" land use designation in YROP for lands in the Greenbelt Area would be overly permissive, as this designation would not only permit active parkland (such as sports fields, playgrounds, courts, etc.) but "...support and provide the primary locations for a range of recreational, tourism, institutional (including cemetery) and resource-based commercial/ industrial uses", as stated in the Greenbelt Plan (2017). Urban uses such as cemeteries, schools, and places of worship would significantly alter the landscape as it would be considered major development under the Greenbelt Plan (2017). Also, the Greenbelt Plan (2017) defines rural lands as those lands outside of settlement areas which are not prime agricultural areas, and which are generally designated as rural or open space within official plans. Therefore, the Subject Lands being surrounded by and/or adjacent to

settlement area (the New Community Areas in Blocks 27 and 41) does not meet the intent of the Rural Area designation, as defined above.

Situating urban uses such as cemeteries, schools, and other permitted uses in the Greenbelt Area, does not conform to the goals of the Greenbelt Plan. The proposed Rural Area designation would introduce major development in these Greenbelt fingers, resulting in significant site alteration and disturbance. Also, introducing urban uses within the Protected Countryside would set a precedent for similar proposals to redesignate Greenbelt fingers in other parts of the City of Vaughan and the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The Implementation Procedures requires an Agricultural Impact Assessment ('AIA') to determine the viability for agricultural uses or production of lands identified as prime agricultural area and to inform a decision to redesignate the lands. To-date an AIA has not been made available for review. Should an AIA be prepared, City staff requests to be engaged as there may be implications on the future development of the existing New Community Areas.

Where an AIA reviewed and supported by the required approval authorities indicates that agricultural uses and practices are no longer viable an alternate land use designation will be required. City staff would support York Region exploring the development of a more appropriate land use designation, policies and associated permitted uses.

***The Subject Lands are contemplated for natural heritage restoration and urban agriculture opportunities***

The Blocks 27 and 41 Secondary Plans have identified the Greenbelt fingers for protection and restoration and do not contemplate urban uses. For instance, in Block 27, the agricultural lands within the Greenbelt fingers are contemplated for natural heritage restoration and naturalization to support and grow the NHN in Vaughan once the agricultural lands are no longer farmed. These initiatives are promoted by City's Green Directions Vaughan 2019 and VOP 2010 but also by York Region natural vegetation and tree canopy targets outlined in York Region's Forest Management Plan. There is also an opportunity within the Greenbelt fingers to transition urban agriculture opportunities such as community and allotment gardens.

In Block 41 the Greenbelt fingers potentially provide opportunities for restoration as there are natural heritage and hydrological impacts identified through the technical studies that require compensation. The expectation is that wetland, woodlands, permanent and intermittent streams, valley and stream corridors, fish habitat and



significant wildlife habitat restoration can occur in the Greenbelt fingers. If the Greenbelt fingers are no longer available for restoration and naturalization, then the proponent would need to examine alternative locations on the tableland portion of the lands.

***City-Led initiative underway in consideration of parkland***

The City of Vaughan is developing a Parkland Dedication Guideline document to inform current practices for the acquisition of parkland and use of future funding from the payment-in-lieu of parkland through the development application approval process. The guidelines will inform how public spaces are developed and will help the City achieve its goals with respect to establishing passive and active parkland in the City of Vaughan.

The guideline document will explore possible park typologies and programming options within the Greenbelt fingers, in conformity with the Greenbelt Plan. Through this study, the project consultant in consultation with City staff and stakeholders will consider opportunities to provide for recreational uses through the review of existing policies and municipal best practices.

Once complete, the Parkland Dedication Guidelines will inform a future Parkland By-law, assist the City in responding to the current and future needs of Vaughan's communities and provide a clear direction to address long-term parkland needs. The guidelines will also identify the types of public spaces required in the City, as recommended in Vaughan's 2018 Active Together Master Plan. The final guideline document completion is planned for the end of Q3 2021, subject to stakeholder consultation and Council approval.

***City staff support York Region exploring an alternative land use designation***

City staff would support York Region exploring alternative land use designations and the appropriate policies for the Greenbelt fingers that support environmental and open space protection consistent with the Greenbelt legislation. This should be done in consultation with the City, as the Parkland Dedication Guidelines can inform this process. Any land use designation and supporting policies in the Regional Official Plan should provide the local municipalities with the opportunity and flexibility to provide for and articulate such uses through the submission of the necessary supporting studies. The Regional Official Plan should allow local official plans to prescribe the nature of any supporting studies, the degree to which any of the specified land uses may be permitted, and the land use designation that maybe applied by the local official plan to provide for conformity with the Regional Official Plan.

## **Financial Impact**

There are no financial impacts associated with this report to the City as a result of the proposed ROPA 7.

## **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

ROPA 7 proposes to redesignate lands in the York Region Official Plan from “Agricultural Area” to “Rural Area” in both Vaughan and Markham. In the City of Vaughan, the subject lands are located within Blocks 27 and 41 and are adjacent to or surrounded by the New Community Areas within those Blocks and in Markham the lands are located adjacent to or surrounded by the Future Urban Areas . A Notice of the York Region Committee of the Whole Public Meeting was provided in the Vaughan and Markham Metroland Media newspapers on Thursday March 18, 2021.

In accordance with Section 22(1) of the *Planning Act*, York Region held a public meeting to inform the public and receive comments on the proposed ROPA 7 on May 13, 2021. At the time this report was prepared Regional Council’s adoption of the recommendations contained in the report titled Information Report for Public Meeting Proposed Amendment No.7 to the York Region Official Plan was not available.

## **Conclusion**

City staff do not support ROPA 7 to redesignate lands from “Agricultural Area” to “Rural Area” in the Greenbelt fingers for Blocks 27 and 41. The proposal does not meet the intent of the Growth Plan (2019) and the Greenbelt Plan (2017). The current YROP and VOP 2010 designations are in keeping with the intent of the applicable Provincial Plans, therefore a Regional Official Plan Amendment is required. However, City staff cannot support the extent of permissions associated with the “Rural Area” designation and the introduction of urban type uses and therefore suggest an alternative land use designations and the appropriate policies for the Greenbelt fingers be explored by York Region in consultation with the City.

**For more information**, please contact Tony Iacobelli, Manager of Environmental Sustainability, ext. 8630

## **Attachments**

1. Context and Location Map New Community Areas.
2. Greenbelt Fingers Location Map.



**Prepared by**

Ruth Rendon, Senior Environmental Planner, ext. 8104.

Tony Iacobelli, Manager of Environmental Sustainability, ext. 8630.

Arminé Hassakourians, Acting Manager of Policy Planning, ext. 8368.

Christina Bruce, Director, Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability, ext. 8231.

**Approved by**



Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

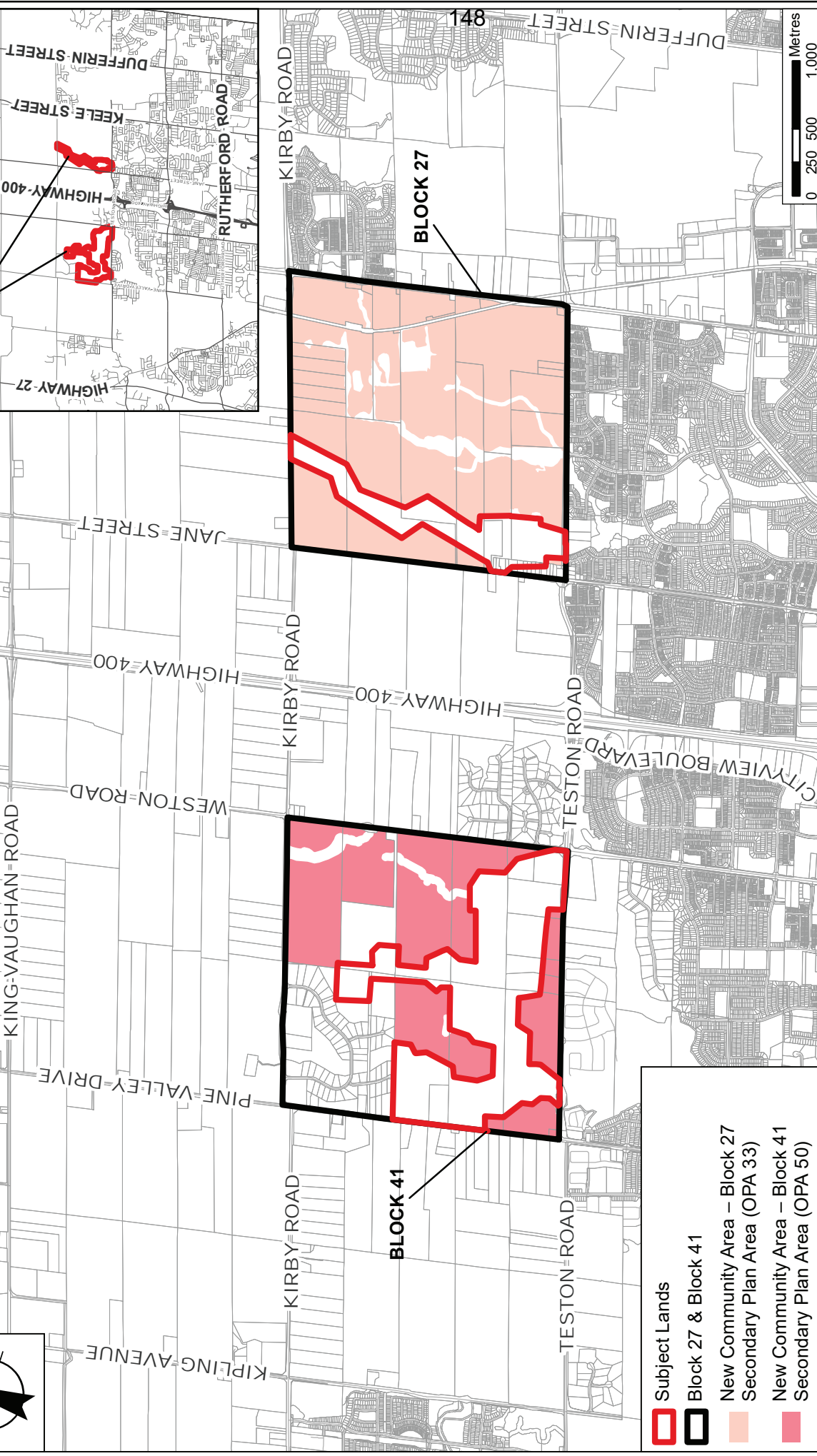
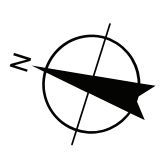
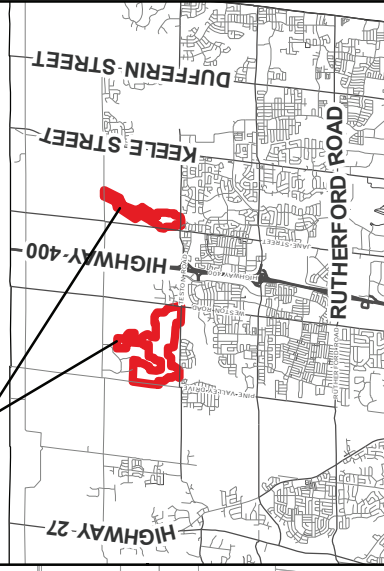
**Reviewed by**



Jim Harnum, City Manager







# Context Map

SUBJECT LANDS



BLOCK 27

BLOCK 41

-  Subject Lands
-  Block 27 & Block 41
-  New Community Area – Block 27
-  Secondary Plan Area (OPA 33)
-  New Community Area – Block 41
-  Secondary Plan Area (OPA 50)



# Context and Location Map

**LOCATION:**  
 Block 41 Part of Lots 26 – 29 Concession 6, City of Vaughan  
 Block 27 Part of Lots 26 – 30 Concession 4, City of Vaughan

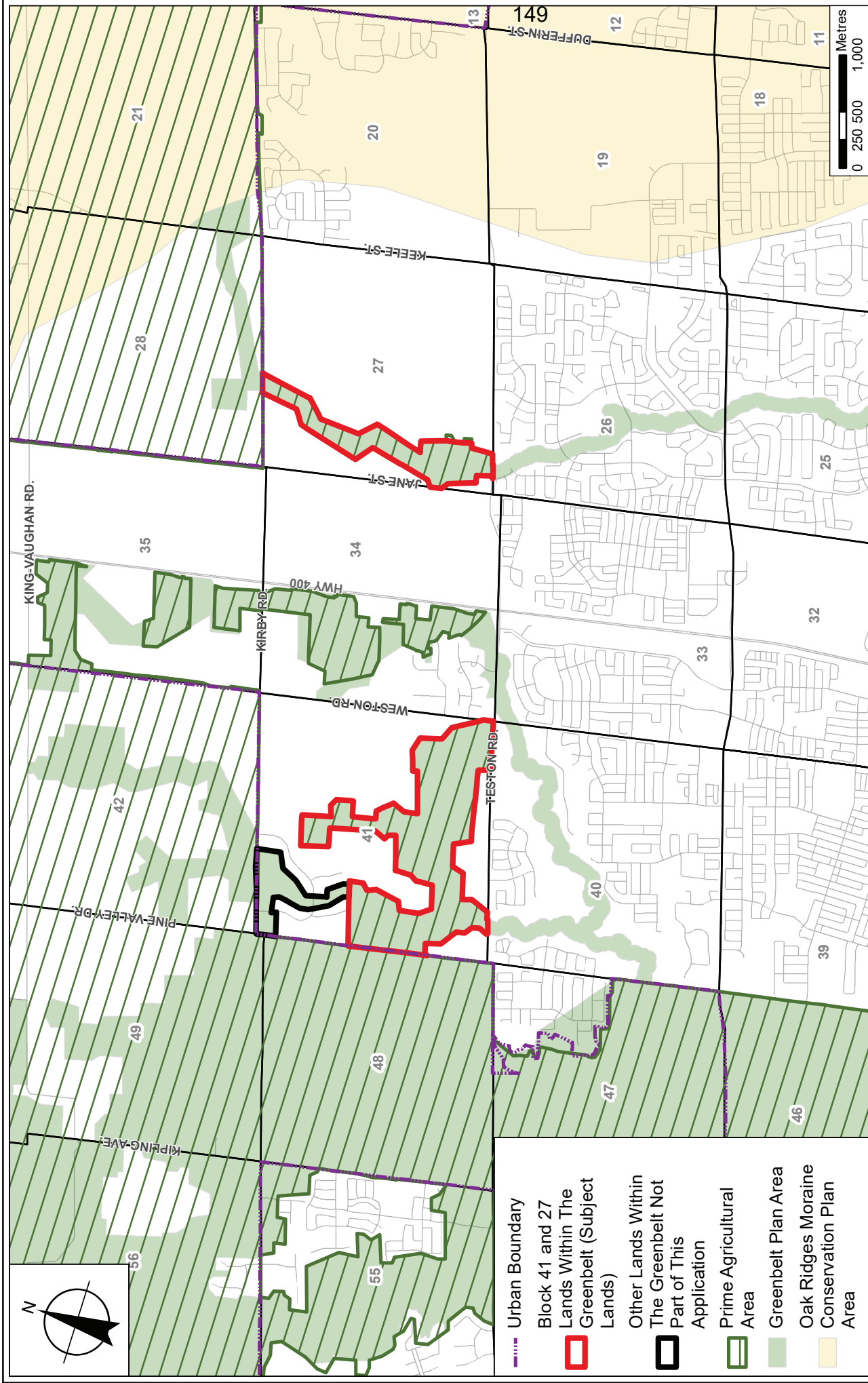
**APPLICANT:**  
 Block 41 Landowners Group, Vaughan; Angus Glen Landowners Group, Markham; Robinson Glen Landowners, Markham

# Attachment 1

**FILE:**  
 ROPA 7

**DATE:**  
 May 14, 2021





# Greenbelt Fingers Location Map

**LOCATION:**  
 Block 41 Part of Lots 26 – 29 Concession 6, City of Vaughan  
 Block 27 Part of Lots 26 – 30 Concession 4, City of Vaughan

**APPLICANT:**  
 N/A



# Attachment

**FILE:**  
 ROPA 7

**DATE:**  
 May 14, 2021

**2**



July 29, 2021

**Mr. Christopher Raynor**  
Regional Clerk  
Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

**RE:** [CITY OF MARKHAM COMMENTS ON PROPOSED REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 7 TO ALLOW URBAN PARK USES IN THE GREENBELT \(10.0\)](#)

Dear Mr. Raynor;

This will confirm that at a meeting held on July 27, 2021 the Markham City Council adopted the following resolution:

1. That the staff report entitled 'City of Markham Comments on Proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7 to Allow Urban Park Uses in the Greenbelt' dated June 21, 2021 be received; and,
2. That York Region be advised that Markham Council supports a limited amendment to the Regional Official Plan (ROPA 7) that:
  - a. Permits golf course uses and re-configurations to the golf course within the Bruce Creek Greenbelt lands that are used for the continuing operation of the Angus Glen Golf Course; and,
  - b. Permits the consideration of active urban parkland/recreational uses within the same secondary plan area and count towards the parkland dedication requirements for high density residential development only; and,
  - c. That the City of Markham retains the authority to accept or reject parkland within the Greenbelt Plan area at its sole discretion for high density residential development; and,
3. That this resolution be submitted to York Region and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment No 7; and further,
4. That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Should you have any questions, please contact Patrick Wong, Senior Planner, Natural Heritage, ([PatrickWong@markham.ca](mailto:PatrickWong@markham.ca)).

Kimberley Kitteringham  
City Clerk

[Attachment A](#)

Cc: Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: June 21, 2021

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**SUBJECT:** City of Markham Comments on Proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7 to Allow Urban Park Uses in the Greenbelt

**PREPARED BY:** Patrick Wong, MCIP, RPP, Senior Planner, Natural Heritage, ext. 6922

**REVIEWED BY:** Lilli Duoba, MCIP, RPP, Manager, Natural Heritage, ext. 7925

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the staff report entitled 'City of Markham Comments on Proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7 to Allow Urban Park Uses in the Greenbelt' dated June 21, 2021 be received;
2. That Council not support the proposed ROPA 7 application to amend the Regional Official Plan to redesignate the Greenbelt Plan corridors in Markham from 'Prime' agriculture to 'Rural' agriculture to allow active urban parkland/recreational uses on lands outside of natural heritage features and their vegetation protection zones;
3. That with the exception of permitting stormwater management facilities, trails and road/servicing infrastructure as provided for in the Markham Official Plan 2014, Council confirm support of the use of all of the Greenbelt Plan corridors in Markham for conservation, natural heritage restoration and passive recreational uses rather than active urban parkland and recreational purposes, consistent with the Markham Official Plan, the Future Urban Area Subwatershed Study, the approved Berczy Glen and Robinson Glen secondary plans and the Rouge North Management Plan;
4. That if the ROPA 7 application to amend the Regional Official Plan to redesignate Greenbelt Plan corridors in Markham from 'Prime' agriculture to 'Rural' agriculture is approved, that Markham Council not support active urban parkland and recreational uses and other non-agricultural uses in any resulting designation that may be required for the Greenbelt Plan corridors in Markham, and;
5. That this report and resolution be submitted to York Region and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as Markham's comments on proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment No 7;
6. And that staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.



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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Landowners in Vaughan and Markham have submitted a Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA 7) to redesignate Greenbelt Plan corridors in the Markham Future Urban Area and in Vaughan from 'Prime' Agriculture to 'Rural' agriculture to allow active urban parkland and other recreational uses. Although the application applies specifically to the Greenbelt corridors in the Future Urban Area (FUA), the redesignation could set a precedent for all Greenbelt corridors in Markham. ROPA 7 will create pressure for not only allowing active urban parkland in the Greenbelt corridors but also for allowing additional non-agricultural uses such as rural residential, commercial, or industrial uses.

Markham staff do not support active urban parkland in the Greenbelt corridors for three main reasons as follows:

1. Markham has consistently planned for the use of the Greenbelt corridor and Natural Heritage System lands for ecological, passive recreation and natural open space uses which are considered to be fundamental to achieving City-wide environmental objectives as well as the development of sustainable communities in adjacent urban areas;
2. The provision of active parkland in the Greenbelt could adversely affect the amount of active urban parkland and greenspace in the FUA communities and elsewhere in Markham if the City is required to provide parkland dedication credit for unanticipated urban parks in the Greenbelt; and
3. The relocation of active urban parkland to the periphery of the FUA neighbourhoods could impact the City's ability to provide active parkland in appropriate locations within walking distance to all residents.

This report provides key considerations and implications relative to natural heritage and parkland planning and recommends that Council not support ROPA 7. In the event that Regional Council or the Province support ROPA 7, staff recommend that active urban parkland uses continue to be prohibited within the Greenbelt corridors lands in the Markham Official Plan.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide comments to York Region on proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment 7 ('ROPA 7'). The ROPA application seeks to redesignate Greenbelt Plan corridors (also known as 'green fingers') in north Markham from 'Prime' agriculture to 'Rural' agriculture thereby allowing portions of the Greenbelt corridors to be used for active urban parkland and other recreational uses.

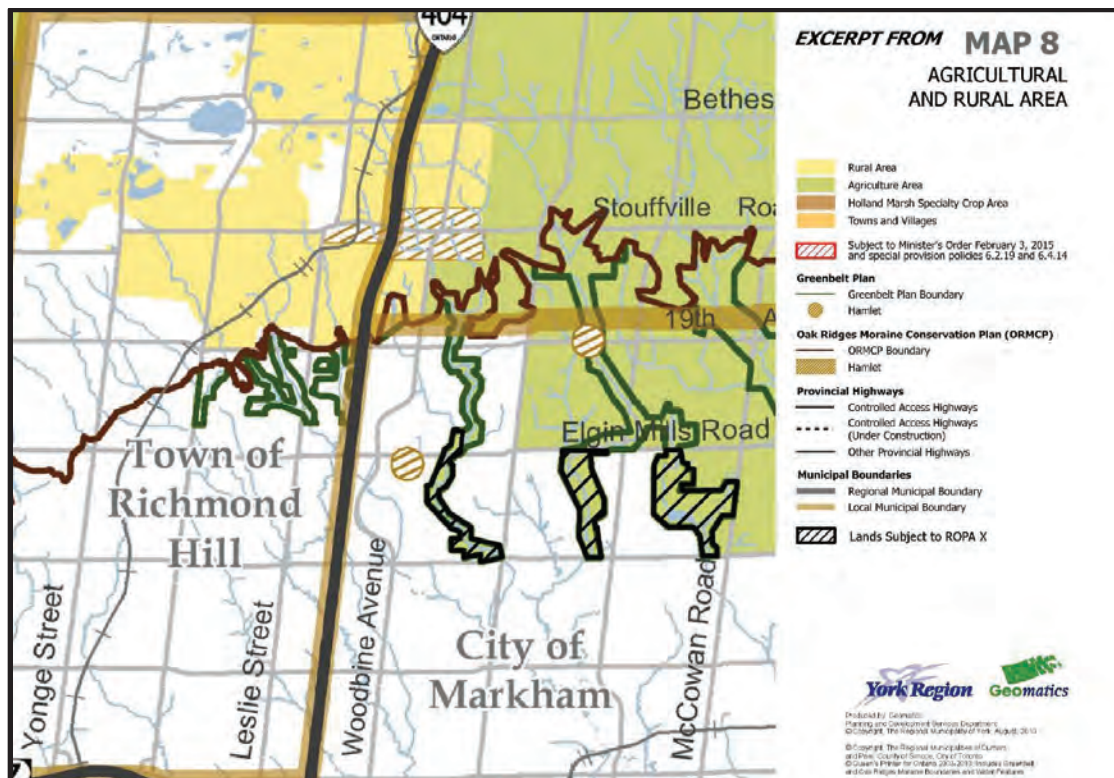
**BACKGROUND:**

The ROPA 7 application was submitted to York Region by the Angus Glen Landowners Group (Markham), Robinson Glen Landowners Group (Markham) and Block 41 Landowners Group (Vaughan) in February 2021, and circulated to the City for comment in March 2021. The statutory public meeting was held by Regional Committee of the Whole on May 13, 2021. It is anticipated that a recommendation report will be brought to Regional Council for a decision in September 2021. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority for this application.

The purpose of the proposed Amendment is to redesignate the Berczy, Bruce and Robinson Creek Greenbelt corridors adjacent to the Markham Future Urban Area from 'Prime' agriculture to 'Rural' agriculture to allow portions of the Protected Countryside – Natural Heritage System of the Greenbelt to be used for active urban parkland and other recreational uses. Figure 1 identifies the lands in Markham that are subject to the application.

The intent of the amendment is to permit active urban parkland within the Greenbelt lands that are outside of natural heritage features and their vegetation protection zones. Staff estimate that approximately 39 hectares out of a total of 261 hectares of the Greenbelt lands in the Future Urban Area Planning District are outside of the natural features and buffers or planned infrastructure as identified in the Berczy Glen and Robinson Glen master environmental servicing plans (see Figure 2). A large portion of these lands are proposed to remain as golf course (i.e., Angus Glen Golf Course) with other areas potentially for stormwater management facilities. The amount of active urban parkland proposed to be provided within the Greenbelt lands is not yet known and would be determined through subsequent Secondary Plan and subdivision application approvals.

**Figure 1: Lands Subject to ROPA 7 Amendment in Markham**



While the application only applies to the lands shown in Figure 1, the applicant's Planning Justification Report suggests that the principle of allowing active urban parkland within Greenbelt lands should also be applied to future urban expansion lands in Markham, which would impact the Greenbelt corridors of the remainder of the Bruce and

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Robinson Creeks, Mount Joy Creek, as well as the entire Little Rouge Creek corridor, representing an additional 720 hectares of Greenbelt lands (see Figure 3).

It is noted that the application includes lands outside of the land holdings owned by the applicants, Angus Glen Landowners and Robinson Glen Landowners. The lands identified as part of the application include additional lands owned by the Victoria Glen Landowners and Berczy Glen Landowners which are identified in support of the application, as well as other lands not owned by the applicants (i.e., Romandale Farms as well as individual non-participating property owners). Romandale Farms Ltd. has informed the Region that they object to being identified as a participating landowner for the ROPA 7 application.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

#### **The designation of the Greenbelt corridors lands as ‘Prime’ agricultural vs ‘Rural’ agriculture in the Regional Official Plan determines which Greenbelt Plan policies apply**

The lands subject to the ROPA 7 application are entirely within the Greenbelt Plan area and are designated Protected Countryside with a Natural Heritage System overlay in the Greenbelt Plan. Within the Protected Countryside, the Greenbelt Plan identifies lands as falling within one of three agricultural designations: ‘Specialty Crop’, ‘Prime’ and ‘Rural’. These agricultural designations are not delineated in the Greenbelt Plan, rather they are delineated in upper-tier official plans (e.g., York Region Official Plan).

The Greenbelt Plan and the Official Plan provide for permitted uses specific to each of these designations. The ‘Prime’ agricultural designation strictly limits non-agricultural uses in the Greenbelt corridor lands (outside of natural heritage features and associated buffers) to municipal infrastructure such as roads and servicing, stormwater management facilities, ecological restoration and passive recreational uses (e.g., walking trails). Active parkland is not permitted within the ‘Prime’ agricultural designation.

The ‘Rural’ agricultural designation allows more flexibility in permitted uses. The redesignation of the lands in Markham from ‘Prime’ agriculture to ‘Rural’ agriculture will create pressure for not only allowing active parkland in the Greenbelt corridors but also for allowing additional non-agricultural uses that are permitted in a ‘Rural’ designation by the Greenbelt Plan. While the ROPA 7 application identifies ‘parkland, trails and other recreational uses’ as the intended permitted uses, a ‘Rural’ agriculture land use designation would also allow consideration of rural commercial, institutional, residential, resource-based uses and other non-agricultural uses intended to support the larger agricultural and rural community. None of these uses are intended land uses for these corridors in Markham.

It should be noted that Markham staff are of the opinion that active urban parkland uses were never intended to be permitted in Greenbelt lands even in a ‘Rural’ agriculture designation. The types of parkland uses permitted in Rural lands identified in the Greenbelt Plan are large land-intensive uses that are normally found in rural areas, e.g., campgrounds, golf courses, ski hills, hiking trails, and larger parks or other recreational



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uses. Both the Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan policies prohibit the expansion of urban settlement areas into the Greenbelt. The inclusion of active urban parkland in the Greenbelt could be interpreted as an expansion of the urban settlement area into the Greenbelt contrary to the intent of establishing a permanently protected landscape in the GTA. Further, allowing active urban parkland that supports adjacent urban development would have the effect of establishing urban uses in protected Greenbelt lands.

In response to a recent request by Regional staff for a definitive decision on this interpretation, the Province has implied that the Greenbelt policies are subject to municipal interpretation. Markham staff's interpretation, which is consistent with the interpretation of planners in other municipalities, is that active urban parkland was never intended in the Greenbelt Plan, and Markham's natural heritage and community planning is based on this interpretation.

Markham staff do not support active urban parkland in Markham's Greenbelt corridors for three main reasons as follows, which are discussed in more detail below:

1. Markham has consistently planned for the use of the Greenbelt corridor and Natural Heritage System lands for ecological, passive recreation and natural open space uses which are considered to be fundamental to achieving City-wide environmental objectives as well as the development of sustainable communities in adjacent urban areas;
2. The provision of active urban parkland in the Greenbelt could adversely affect the amount of active parkland and greenspace in the FUA communities and elsewhere in Markham if the City is required to provide parkland dedication credit for unanticipated urban parks in the Greenbelt; and,
3. The relocation of active urban parkland to the periphery of the FUA neighbourhoods could impact the City's ability to provide parkland in appropriate locations within walking distance to all residents.

### **1. Markham has consistently planned for the use of the Greenbelt corridor lands for ecological, passive recreational and natural open space purposes**

A number of planning initiatives undertaken in Markham over the past 20 years reflect Markham Council's direction for the ecological and passive use of the Greenbelt corridor lands, including:

- Natural heritage, Greenway, and Future Urban Area policies in the Markham Official Plan 2014;
- The Future Urban Area Subwatershed Study and Conceptual Master Plan;
- Secondary Plans for the Berczy Glen and Robinson Glen communities in the FUA (both in effect); and,
- Approval of the Rouge North Management Plan and associated amendment to the 1987 Official Plan (OPA 140)

The policies of the Markham Official Plan 2014 do not support active urban parkland uses in the Greenbelt corridors

The Greenbelt corridors identified in ROPA 7 application are designated 'Greenway' in the Official Plan, 2014. Pedestrian trails and nature-based recreational uses are currently

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permitted in lands designated 'Greenway', while active urban parks containing play structures, sports fields and other active recreational uses are not permitted. The existing Angus Glen Golf Course is recognized as a legal existing use under the Official Plan and the Greenbelt Plan and therefore is permitted to continue to operate notwithstanding the 'Prime' agriculture and 'Greenway' designations. It is noted that expansions to existing uses may be considered under section 4.6 of the Greenbelt Plan.

Markham's Official Plan directs all new active urban parkland and other urban uses to lands outside of the Greenbelt and larger Greenway System.

FUA Subwatershed Study, Conceptual Master Plan and approved Secondary Plans all assume natural heritage and non-active parkland and recreational uses

A key component of the comprehensive planning for the new communities in the Future Urban Area was the Subwatershed Study for the Berczy, Bruce, Robinson and Eckart Creeks. The multi-year, multi-discipline Subwatershed Study assessed the cumulative environmental impacts of the planned new communities and employment lands (45,000 new residents and 17,000 new jobs) with the assumption that the Greenbelt corridors would be used for only natural heritage and passive recreational uses.

The Greenbelt corridor lands are important to the overall ecological health and function of the Rouge Watershed and the subwatersheds. These lands contain significant natural heritage features including Provincially Significant Wetlands, Significant Valleylands, Significant Woodlands, Significant Wildlife Habitat, Habitat for Endangered and Threatened Species as well as buffer and restoration lands necessary to protect and enhance these natural features. The Natural Heritage System in the Greenbelt Plan, including the lands outside natural features, is intended to provide essential ecosystem services, including water storage and filtration, cleaner air, wildlife habitat, support for pollinators, carbon storage and resilience to climate change.

As the lands are conveyed or acquired into public ownership, tree planting and restoration works are intended to transition the Greenbelt corridor lands currently being farmed back into a natural state. The protection of these lands within the Greenway System is important to mitigate and offset the overall impacts of planned urbanization that will result in approximately 45,000 new residents in the FUA. In addition, the Greenbelt corridor lands provide a significant opportunity to increase woodland cover and enhance the City's local biodiversity. Markham currently has the lowest woodland cover (7.8%) of all nine York Region municipalities and it is a Council priority to protect and expand woodland and tree canopy cover.

In recognition of their limited viability for continued farming once development occurs, as well as the ultimate planned function of ecological and passive recreational uses, neither the Berczy Glen or Robinson Glen secondary plans (both currently in effect) identify agricultural uses as a permitted use within the 'Greenway' designation that applies to these corridors. Instead the Secondary Plan policies reflect the intent for these lands to transition over time from agricultural uses to a natural state, incorporating trails and other nature-related recreational uses for the benefit of the local community and the City. To this end the Secondary Plans direct development proponents to prepare a Natural

Heritage Restoration Plan to identify ecological restoration projects to be implemented within the Greenway System, including the Greenbelt corridor lands, concurrent with development. Council has already approved two subdivisions in the Berczy Glen Secondary Plan area which include lands within the Greenbelt corridors and required ecological restoration and trails on the Greenbelt lands as a condition of approval.

As Greenbelt lands are conveyed and acquired into public ownership, it is expected that there will be additional ecological restoration opportunities that could be undertaken by the City, TRCA and other community groups (e.g., Trees for Tomorrow community plantings) to further enhance wildlife habitat and community stewardship of the environment. The City is working with the TRCA to prepare a long-term restoration plan for all of the FUA Greenbelt corridors to help inform the design and location of city-led tree planting and wetland projects. Any new permissions for active urban parkland in the corridor would displace much needed lands for potential open space and ecological restoration.

The use of these lands for natural heritage restoration, passive open space and recreational trails, and potentially community gardens where appropriate, therefore does not represent a 'sterilization' of land as characterized in the applicant's justification report but rather provides substantial ecological and recreational benefits to the local community that are integral to the creation of healthy, sustainable and complete communities in the FUA. These planned uses reflect Markham's environment-first approach to land use planning and the City's commitment to manage and balance growth against the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage system as a green legacy for future generations.

The Conceptual Master Plan for the Future Urban Area, which provided a broad planning framework on which secondary plans are based, also assumed that all active urban parkland would be provided within the developable area of the communities and not at the edges of the communities in the Greenbelt corridors. The delineation of neighbourhoods and neighbourhood focal points (schools and parks) were based on required parkland being located central to the neighbourhoods.

The Rouge North Management Plan does not support active urban parkland uses within the Little Rouge Creek Corridor

The Greenbelt Plan contains specific policies for the Rouge River watershed given the extensive public investment in establishing the Rouge National Urban Park and its predecessor, Rouge Park North. The Greenbelt Plan (section 3.2.7) requires that planning and resource management decisions within the Rouge River watershed within the Protected Countryside comply with the provisions of the Rouge North Management Plan (RNMP). In the event of a conflict between the Greenbelt Plan and RNMP policies, the more restrictive policies apply.

The RNMP provides the policy framework for protected ecological corridors including the 600 metre wide Little Rouge Creek ecological corridor. This corridor is delineated as Rouge Watershed Protection Area (RWPA) in the 2014 Official Plan. The provision of active urban parkland and recreational uses in the Little Rouge Creek corridor would not

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be consistent with the Greenbelt Plan as required by Policy 3.2.7. For the Little Rouge Creek corridor the Rouge Watershed Protection Area boundary includes all of the Greenbelt lands. The approval of ROPA 7 could have major implications to the realization of an interior forest corridor along the Little Rouge Creek if ROPA 7 sets a precedent for allowing active urban parks in other Greenbelt corridors in Markham.

**2. The provision of active urban parkland in the Greenbelt could adversely affect the provision of parkland and greenspace in the FUA and across the City of Markham**

ROPA 7 could result in an overall reduction of greenspace in the FUA

The FUA Conceptual Master Plan and the approved secondary plans identify all active urban parkland to be located within the urban community outside of the Greenbelt corridors, and further identify the Greenbelt corridors as providing a substantial natural ecological corridor with trails on both sides of the watercourse. It is anticipated that 100 percent of the parkland dedication requirement for the ground-oriented development in the new FUA communities will be in form of park land, while cash-in-lieu of parkland will be accepted for a portion of the higher density developments along Major Mackenzie Drive.

Any new active urban parkland provided within the Greenbelt lands would require the City to give up or reduce the size of planned parkland blocks within the community, as the City cannot require the dedication of parkland above *Planning Act* standards. This would lead to an overall loss of planned greenspace and natural open space within the planned FUA communities.

A further consideration is that if urban parkland (e.g., sports fields) meets the definition of ‘development’ or ‘site alteration’ under the Greenbelt Plan, the Natural Heritage System policies of the Greenbelt Plan (Section 3.2.3.3) would require at least 30% of the park site to naturally regenerate into woodlands/meadows/wetlands. This would preclude the ability to use a large portion of the dedicated parkland for recreational facilities and may result in the under-delivery of both usable parkland and facilities. Active parkland conveyed to the City is typically free of encumbrances to allow for maximum flexibility in the design and siting of recreational facilities. Section 4.1.2 of the Greenbelt Plan further identifies the need for vegetation enhancement plans and a conservation plan for new major recreational uses within the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System which may further complicate the delivery of recreational facilities.

In addition, any use of the City’s parkland acquisition fund to purchase additional active urban parkland in the Greenbelt corridors would reduce the City’s ability to acquire new parks elsewhere in the City. The City faces challenges with providing adequate parkland in new community areas and in intensification areas such as Markham Centre and Langstaff Centre. Staff do not support providing parkland credit for Greenbelt lands at the expense of other active, programmable parkland in the FUA communities or elsewhere in the City.

---

The plans for the Greenbelt corridor lands as natural open space provide passive recreational opportunities through nature enjoyment, trails and daily exercise which enhances the overall quality of life for future residents and contributes to the development of complete communities. The passive recreational opportunities afforded by the Greenbelt lands work together with active urban parkland within the communities to provide a full range of recreational opportunities and an integrated parks and open space network.

The City's practice is to acquire as much of the Greenway System as possible without the use of parkland dedication resources. It is recommended that the City continue to exclude the Greenbelt corridor lands from being eligible to meet parkland dedication requirements. Where Greenbelt lands are not conveyed through the development process but are desirable for passive public use, the City could consider other mechanisms to achieve the same result including easements, agreements or purchase through the Environmental Land Acquisition Fund.

### **3. Active parkland in the Greenbelt could impact the ability to provide parkland within walking distance to new residents**

Convenient access to local parks is an important component of creating walkable and healthy communities. The identification of a parks and open space system consisting of a hierarchy of community parks, neighbourhood parks, parkettes and open space was central to the development of the Community Structure Plan for the FUA. Parks are planned to function as focal points for each community and in locations that are easily accessible for all residents (within a 5 minute walk to a neighbourhood park and a 10 minute walk to community parks) which support active lifestyles and daily exercise. Parks are also often co-located with elementary and secondary schools to create neighbourhood/community hubs.

As an increasing proportion of Markham's population will reside in medium or high density housing forms, the importance of public parkland and open space will continue to grow. The relocation of parks from central locations within a neighbourhood to the edge of a neighbourhood within the Greenbelt corridors will lead to an uneven distribution of active parkland, an overall loss of greenspace, and will create greater challenges to meet the City's objectives of providing parkland at appropriate locations for the benefit of all community residents. Opportunities to co-locate park and school sites would also likely be more challenging to achieve.

#### **Additional Considerations**

Should the ROPA 7 application be approved, the City would have to amend the Markham Official Plan to conform with the Regional Official Plan, including a new policy framework to address a 'Rural' land use classification since there are currently no 'Rural' lands in Markham. Notwithstanding the ultimate Regional Official Plan designation, the City has the ability to be more restrictive in terms of non-agricultural land use permissions to reflect local needs and land use objectives.

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### **Summary and Recommendations**

Based on the above considerations, Markham staff do not support active urban parkland in the Greenbelt corridors for the three main reasons outlined:

1. Markham has consistently planned for the use of the Greenbelt corridor and Natural Heritage System lands for ecological, passive recreation and natural open space uses which are considered to be fundamental to achieving City-wide environmental objectives as well as the development of sustainable communities in adjacent urban areas;
2. The provision of active urban parkland in the Greenbelt could adversely affect the amount of active parkland and greenspace in the FUA communities and elsewhere in Markham if the City is required to provide parkland dedication credit for unanticipated urban parks in the Greenbelt; and,
3. The relocation of active urban parkland to the periphery of the FUA neighbourhoods could impact the City's ability to provide active parkland in appropriate locations within walking distance to all residents.

Staff therefore recommend that Council not support the ROPA 7 application. In addition, in the event that Regional Council or the Province support ROPA 7, staff recommend that active urban parkland uses continue to be prohibited within the Greenbelt corridors lands in the Markham Official Plan.

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

There are no financial implications related to the recommendations of this report.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable.

### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

ROPA 7 relates to the City's goal to protect and enhance our natural environment and built form identified in Building Markham's Future Together 2020 – 2023 Strategic Plan under 'Safe, Sustainable and Complete Community'.

### **BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Planning and Urban Design staff were consulted in the preparation of this report.

### **RECOMMENDED BY:**

Marg Wouters, MCIP, RPP  
Senior Manager, Policy & Research

Biju Karumanchery, MCIP, RPP  
Acting Commissioner, Development Services

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

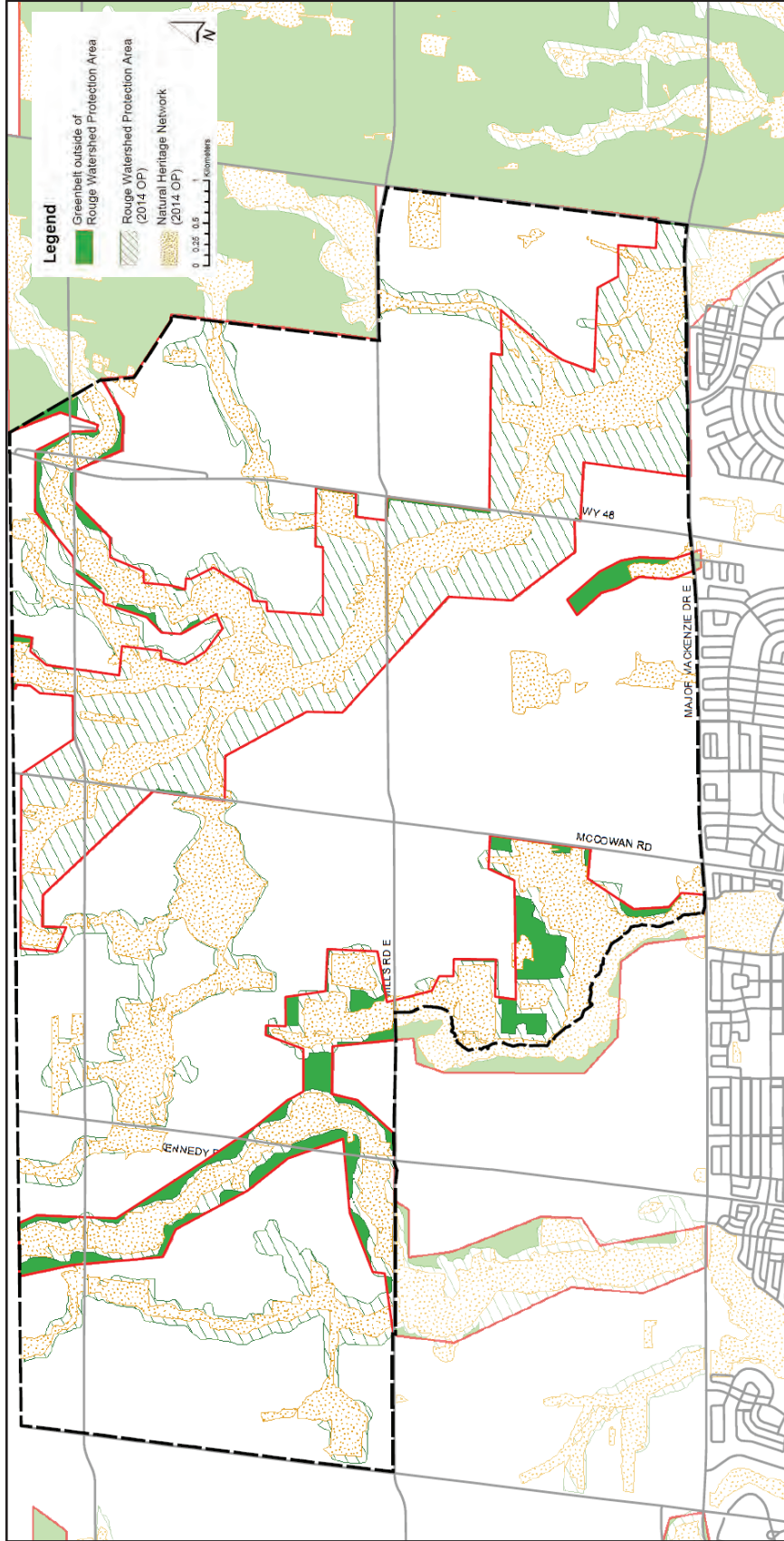
Attachment 'A': Draft ROPA 7 submitted by the applicant  
Figure 2: Greenbelt Plan corridors in the Future Urban Area  
Figure 3: Greenbelt Plan corridors in the Whitebelt



Figure 2: Greenbelt Plan corridors in the Future Urban Area



Figure 3: Greenbelt Plan corridors in the Whitebelt







July 16, 2021

Mr. Augustine Ko,  
Senior Planner  
York Region  
[Augustine.Ko@york.ca](mailto:Augustine.Ko@york.ca)

Dear Mr. Ko,

**Re: Comments to York Region re: Proposed ROPA 7 Amendment**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding the proposed ROPA 7 Amendment on behalf of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA).

The GHFFA is a partnership between the Regional Municipalities and the Federations of Agriculture in Niagara, Peel, Halton, York and Durham and the Cities of Hamilton and Toronto, Conservation Authorities, the Greenbelt Fund, Durham College, Niagara College, the Holland Marsh Growers and members of the food industry. The Board and staff of the Alliance identify and implement pathways for a more integrated and coordinated approach to food production, processing and distribution in Canada's leading food and farming cluster. Councillor Avia Eek from King Township is the York Region representative to the Alliance.

As mentioned at your public meeting, there have been only 6 Amendments in the past to the York Official Plan for some major issues that were facing the Region. As also mentioned in the meeting, whatever is done with this OPA, will have far reaching implications and is precedent setting for Agricultural lands in the Region. In addition, it has the potential to be precedent setting for all municipalities of the Greenbelt. This move is serious one.

It is no secret that Agricultural Lands in the Greater Golden Horseshoe are diminishing at a rate of at least 3.4 million acres a year. Ontario's prime agricultural lands, the lands we depend upon for locally produced food and key to underpinning our food security, have been in a steady decline for over a quarter of a century. The continuing loss of the key resource that underpins Ontario's agriculture and agri-food sector is unsustainable and short-sighted.

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To at least maintain the sector's contributions to Ontario's economy, the steady conversion of prime agricultural land for urban uses must be halted, not only in the Greater Golden Horseshoe area but beyond as well. The stark reality facing Ontario is that less than 5% of its land base can support any form of agricultural production. Of that mere 5%, a smaller portion contains our most productive Class 1, 2 or 3 soils. Much of the agricultural land in the Greater Golden Horseshoe is Class 1, 2 or 3 soils. Converting evermore of Ontario's finite and shrinking agricultural land to urban uses is not a solution that benefits any sector of Ontario's economy, including the development sector.

A lack of land available for development is not the problem. Three decades of provincial planning have mandated that municipalities have a minimum of a 25-year supply of land available for development within their urban boundaries. Ontario's "provincial plans", including the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, are built upon this principle. Land assessment studies repeatedly demonstrate the availability of ample land for urban growth across the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe as well as beyond, sufficient to accommodate projected growth to at least 2041, if not further.

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This amendment, proposed by a private landowner group, if passed, has far reaching implications for not only the urban communities of Markham and Vaughan but for communities in the Greenbelt right across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Growth Plan encourages the development of "complete communities" and those complete communities should have open space, natural heritage features and corridors and where feasible, and lands that are able to grow food. While it may be true that someday, it may become too difficult for farmers with large equipment to farm these agricultural lands, agriculture can still co-exist with developed urban areas to provide food, and ecological goods and services that cannot be supplied by parking lots and tennis courts.

Smaller plots of agricultural land within more dense urban spaces can be utilized effectively for community gardens, urban agriculture and vertical farming. Covid has demonstrated clearly that a strong integrated food system is essential for physical and mental health of our residents. Communities can come together and learn about each other as they work together on the soil. Jobs are created for young people and a greater appreciation for a healthy diet and lifestyle is promoted as people learn to grow their own food.

As stated by the Planners at the Cities of Markham and Vaughan, if the "fingers" that are proposed to be converted from Agricultural Lands to Rural Lands were to become sites for soccer fields and other active recreation sites, they would not be located where population density and demand would exist. The approval of ROPA 7 would compromise the ability to collocate schools and other public institutions with active recreation facilities. Years of good planning would be undone by developers trying to offload their parkland designations to these Agricultural Lands that promote open space and do not allow for parkland.

The current Natural Heritage designation allows for agriculture, trails, natural green space and protects streams such as the Berzy from excessive run-off from built environments. Well-planned communities need these natural spaces to help with health and wellness of their

residents. Natural tree cover provides essential cooling to the urban area and trails are already permitted and planned on both sides of the Greenbelt Valley corridors.

Our Alliance is deeply concerned that the approval of ROPA 7 will lead to significant increased pressure on the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt. Since 2005, the implementation of the Greenbelt has proven to be effective in the protection of agricultural and natural heritage lands. This move would strike a blow to the demonstrated effectiveness of this Provincial Plan and lead the Golden Horseshoe down a slippery slope.

In addition, the proposed re-designation of the Agricultural land to Rural in the other Greenbelt Fingers in Markham and Vaughan through the MCR should not be considered. As stated above, a move to redesignate the lands will have significant consequences for agricultural lands throughout the region. Development pressure will escalate in the conversion of agricultural lands to other uses.

We strongly urge you not to bow to private interests in this matter and to take the guidance and advice of the professional planners in your communities who are opposing this move. Please do not approve ROPA 7.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below.

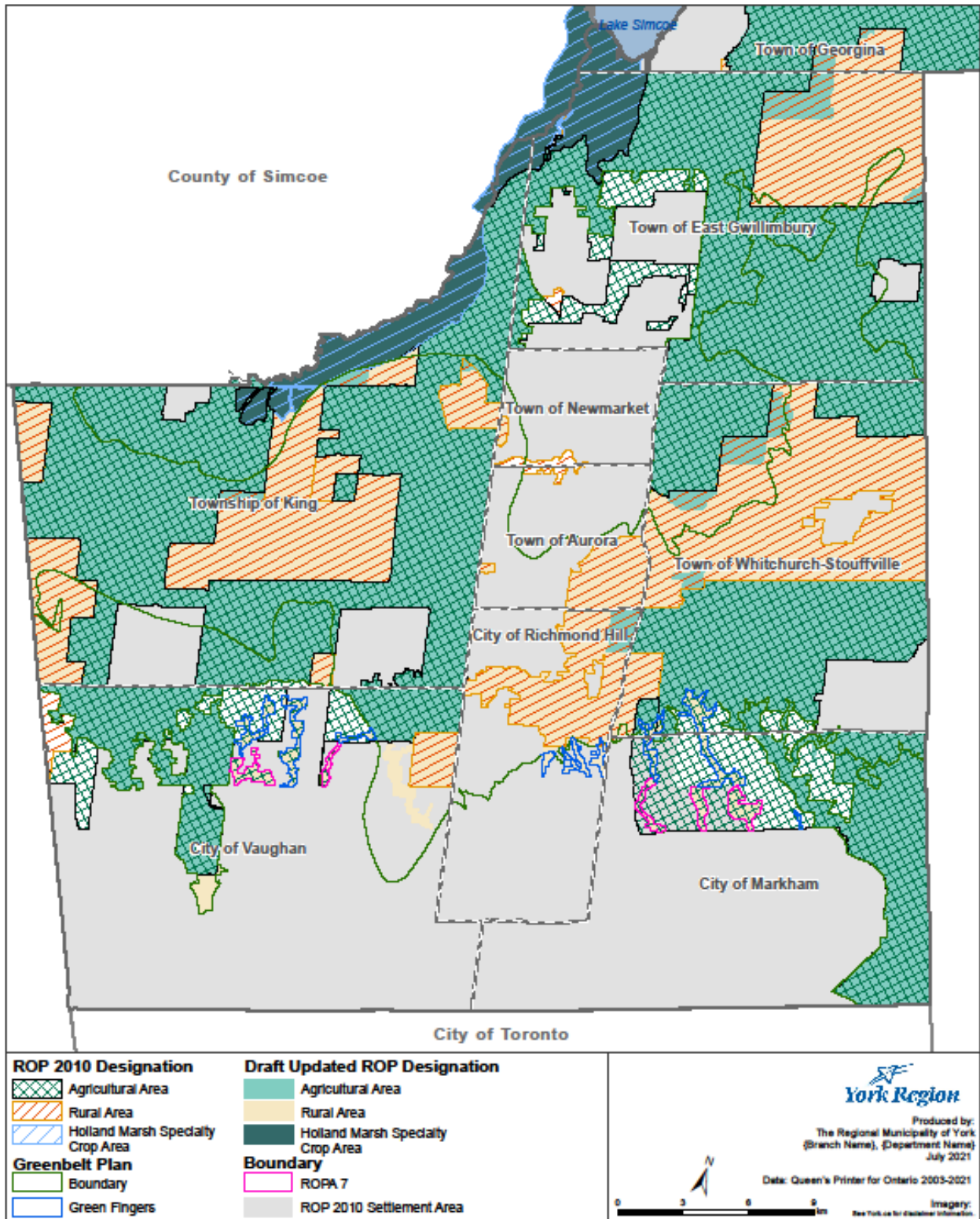
Sincerely,



Albert Witteveen  
Chair  
Golden Horseshoe Food  
and Farming Alliance  
Niagara Regional Councillor  
Albert.witteveen4@gmail.com

**ATTACHMENT 5**

**York Region Agricultural System | 2010 ROP and Draft Updated ROP Changes**





November 8, 2021

**Re: Item for Discussion – Request for Action Related to “Renovictions” (Councillor, C. Wilson)**

At its meeting of October 20, 2021, the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Bracebridge ratified motion 21-GC-251, regarding Request for Action Related to “Renovictions”, as follows:

“WHEREAS “Renovictions” happen when a landlord evicts a tenant by claiming they will complete major renovations (or demolish the unit or convert it to commercial use);

AND WHEREAS Citizens and communities are hurt by these unscrupulous practices which can and does directly impact the affordable housing crisis, as well as inflict damage (both financially and mentally) particularly on our most vulnerable citizens;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Bracebridge request that the Government of Ontario take additional and meaningful steps to address the ever-increasing problem of “Renovictions” in The Province of Ontario;

AND FURTHER THAT this resolution be sent to other Municipalities in Ontario for their consideration and endorsement.”

In accordance with Council’s direction, I am forwarding you a copy of the resolution for you reference.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional clarification in this regard.

Yours truly,

Lori McDonald  
Director of Corporate Services/Clerk

1000 Taylor Court  
Bracebridge, ON  
P1L 1R6 Canada

telephone: (705) 645-5264  
corporate services and finance fax: (705) 645-1262  
public works fax: (705) 645-7525  
planning & development fax: (705) 645-4209





**RESOLUTION NO. 21-247**

Moved by: Marc Dupuis  
Seconded by: Steve Brousseau

WHEREAS the government of Ontario recently announced the continued postponement of the province-wide assessment update for the 2022 and 2023 taxation years, and;

WHEREAS this means that property values will continue to be based on the January 1, 2016 valuation date until at least 2024, and;

WHEREAS the Municipality of Mattice – Val Côté is aware of the important increase in property values throughout the province and within its own jurisdiction and;

WHEREAS the continued postponement of property valuation translates into a significant loss of taxation revenue for Municipalities;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council for the Municipality of Mattice – Val Côté urges the government of Ontario to reconsider its decision and to direct MPAC to proceed with a province-wide assessment update in order for Ontario Municipalities to be able to collect property taxes based upon actual property values, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario, to MPAC, to AMO, to all Ontario municipalities and to our federal and provincial government representatives, Carol Hughes and Guy Bourgouin.

**- CARRIED -**

I, Guylaine Coulombe, CAO/Clerk of the Municipality of Mattice – Val Côté, do hereby certify this to be a true and complete copy of Resolution 21-247, passed by the Council of the Municipality of Mattice – Val Côté at its meeting held the 8th day of November 2021.

DATED at Mattice, Ontario  
This 10th day of November 2021

Guylaine Coulombe



T 705-635-2272  
 TF 1-877-566-0005  
 F 705-635-2132

TOWNSHIP OF LAKE OF BAYS  
 1012 Dwight Beach Rd  
 Dwight, ON POA 1H0

November 9, 2021

Via email: [mbarnier@adelaidemetcalfe.on.ca](mailto:mbarnier@adelaidemetcalfe.on.ca)

Township of Adelaide Metcalfe  
**Attention: Mike Barnier, Manager of Legislative Services/Clerk**  
 2340 Egremont Drive  
 Strathroy, ON N7G 3H6

Dear Mr. Barnier:

**RE: Correspondence – Resolution requesting Support for Federal and Provincial Funding of Rural Infrastructure Projects**

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On behalf of the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Lake of Bays, please be advised that the above-noted correspondence was presented at the last regularly scheduled meeting on November 9, 2021, and the following resolution was passed:

**“Resolution #7(b)/11/09/21**

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Lake of Bays hereby receives the correspondence from Mike Barnier, Manager of Legislative Services/Clerk for the Township of Adelaide Metcalfe and supports their request for the Federal and Provincial Government to provide more funding to rural municipalities to support infrastructure projects related to major bridge and culvert replacements, dated September 13, 2021.**

**AND FURTHER THAT this resolution be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario, Provincial Minister of Finance, Federal Finance Minister, AMO, and all Ontario municipalities.**

**Carried.”**

Sincerely,

Carrie Sykes, *Dipl. M.A., CMO, AOMC*,  
 Director of Corporate Services/Clerk.

CS/cw

Copy to: Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario  
 Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Provincial Minister of Finance  
 Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance  
 Association of Municipalities of Ontario  
 All Ontario Municipalities

**TOWNSHIP OF ADELAIDE METCALFE**

2340 Egremont Drive, Strathroy, ON N7G 3H6

T: 519-247-3687 F: 519-247-3411

www.adelaidemetcalfe.on.ca

October 8, 2021

Township of Scugog  
181 Perry Street  
PO Box 780  
Port Perry, ON  
L9L 1A7

**ATTENTION: BECKY JAMIESON, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES/MUNICIPAL CLERK****RE: SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION – FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL FUNDING OF RURAL  
INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

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Please be advised that the Council of the Township of Adelaide Metcalfe, at the regular meeting of October 4, 2021, supported and passed The Township of Scugog resolution as follows.

**THAT the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada be encouraged to provide more funding to rural municipalities to support infrastructure projects related to major bridge and culvert replacements.**

**CARRIED.**

Kind regards,

Mike Barnier  
Manager of Legislative Services/Clerk





T 705-635-2272  
 TF 1-877-566-0005  
 F 705-635-2132

TOWNSHIP OF LAKE OF BAYS  
 1012 Dwight Beach Rd  
 Dwight, ON P0A 1H0

November 9, 2021

Via email: [Christine.Miller@smdhu.org](mailto:Christine.Miller@smdhu.org)

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit  
**Attention: Anita Dubeau, Chair, Board of Health**  
 15 Sperling Drive  
 Barrie, ON L4M 6K9

Dear Ms. Dubeau:

**RE: Correspondence – Request for Additional COVID-19 Funding**

On behalf of the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Lake of Bays, please be advised that the above-noted correspondence was presented at the last regularly scheduled meeting on November 9, 2021, and the following resolution was passed:

**“Resolution #7(c)/11/09/21**

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Lake of Bays hereby receives the correspondence from Anita Dubeau, Chair, Board of Health, for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and supports their request to Minister Christine Elliott for additional COVID-19 funding, dated October 21, 2021;**

**AND FURTHER THAT this resolution be forwarded to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and to all Ontario municipalities.**

**Carried.”**

Sincerely,

Carrie Sykes, *Dipl. M.A., CMO, AOMC*,  
 Director of Corporate Services/Clerk.

CS/cw

Copy to: Hon. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
 All Ontario Municipalities



October 21, 2021

Honourable Christine Elliott  
 Ministry of Health  
 777 Bay Street, 5th Floor  
 Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Minister Elliott:

On behalf of the Board of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU), I commend the strong progress being made in bringing COVID-19 under control through the public health measures and the vaccination campaign directed by the provincial government of Ontario. We continue to work collectively to complete the “final mile” of vaccination of the population while simultaneously continuing all activities of COVID-19 surveillance and case management/contact tracing.

The COVID-19 work has required an unprecedented quantity of resources, particularly human resources. Accordingly, boards of health have had to significantly augment their staffing specifically for the Mass Immunization Clinics. Salaries and related expenses of this greatly enhanced workforce (including transportation, supplies and equipment) have only been partially managed by the funding received from the province on July 22, 2021. SMDHU only received 42% of its COVID-19 funding request and costs to date have far exceeded that funding. To add to 2021 cash flow pressures, SMDHU would require the hiring of nursing and administrative staff to implement the provincially mandated vaccine clinics for 5–11-year-olds in Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka as well as implement the “booster” clinics for specific populations. With no immediate COVID-19 funding, these pressures for the end of 2021 compound finance issues for SMDHU and will potentially impede our ability to finance the human resources required.

The SMDHU Board of Health via management staff have been in active communication with Ministry of Health staff specifically related to the one-time funding COVID-19 requests. Unfortunately, the Board of Health experienced cash flow issues in July due to the lack of COVID-19 funding from the Ministry of Health to the point, that the Board was forced to seek approval from its four obligated municipalities to borrow from a bank up to \$5M to cover salaries and expenses for COVID-19 activities. SMDHU also sought and received from the Ministry of Health an advance in funding for the Ministry portion of the cost-shared budget to ensure that payroll commitments and the payment of vaccination expenses could be met. On October 20, 2021, the Board of Health approved a motion requesting that boards of health immediately receive the *COVID-19 Extraordinary Costs* and COVID-19 Vaccine Extraordinary Costs funding as articulated in SMDHU’s Q2 financial statement and that the Ministry of Health commit in writing to:

- (1) extend COVID-19 funding in 2022;
- (2) establish funding in 2022 for public health recovery activities; and,

**Barrie:**  
 15 Sperling Drive  
 Barrie, ON  
 L4M 6K9  
 705-721-7520  
 FAX: 705-721-1495

**Collingwood:**  
 280 Pretty River Pkwy.  
 Collingwood, ON  
 L9Y 4J5  
 705-445-0804  
 FAX: 705-445-6498

**Cookstown:**  
 2-25 King Street S.  
 Cookstown, ON  
 L0L 1L0  
 705-458-1103  
 FAX: 705-458-0105

**Gravenhurst:**  
 2-5 Pineridge Gate  
 Gravenhurst, ON  
 P1P 1Z3  
 705-684-9090  
 FAX: 705-684-9887

**Huntsville:**  
 34 Chaffey St.  
 Huntsville, ON  
 P1H 1K1  
 705-789-8813  
 FAX: 705-789-7245

**Midland:**  
 A-925 Hugel Ave.  
 Midland, ON  
 L4R 1X8  
 705-526-9324  
 FAX: 705-526-1513

**Orillia:**  
 120-169 Front St. S.  
 Orillia, ON  
 L3V 4S8  
 705-325-9565  
 FAX: 705-325-2091

- (3) increase provincial funding for public health base budgets proportional to the municipal levy increase needed in 2022 to maintain capacity for public health program delivery.

The financial pressure from not having access to the required amount of COVID-19 funding from the province, with the simultaneous requirement to respond to the pandemic through surveillance, case and contact management, outbreak response, education and enforcement of the changing requirements of the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act*, and the vaccination of the population has placed the Board in a precarious financial situation. If there is not sufficient funding from the province, there is also a sizeable risk that SMDHU will have a large year-end deficit moving into 2022 based on 2021 COVID-19 expenses that may require a large municipal levy increase to eliminate the deficit and to address the response needs in 2022.

For these reasons the SMDHU Board of Health urges the provincial government to approve and immediately flow the amount required by each health unit of one-time *COVID-19 Extraordinary Costs* and *COVID-19 Vaccine Program Extraordinary Costs*.

Thank you for considering this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL Signed By:**

Anita Dubeau  
Chair, Board of Health

AD:CG:cm

cc: Ontario Boards of Health  
MPPs of Simcoe Muskoka  
City of Barrie Mayor and Council  
City of Orillia Mayor and Council  
The District Municipality of Muskoka District Chair and Council  
County of Simcoe Warden and Council  
Dr. Kieran Moore, Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Graydon Smith, President, Association of Municipalities of Ontario

## CITY OF VAUGHAN

### EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 20, 2021

Item 9, Report No. 43, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on October 20, 2021.

#### 9. TREAT ACCESSIBLY

**The Committee of the Whole recommends:**

- 1) **That the recommendations contained in the resolution submitted by Regional Councillor Jackson dated October 5, 2021, be approved; and**
- 2) **That the presentation by Mr. Richard Padulo, Prince William Drive, Burlington, be received.**

#### Member's Resolution

**Submitted by Regional Councillor Linda Jackson**

**Whereas**, the City of Vaughan is committed to fostering an inclusive community where people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can thrive; and

**Whereas**, to recognize the City's efforts to fulfil this goal, the Rick Hansen Foundation awarded multiple City of Vaughan and Vaughan Public Libraries facilities with Gold Certification for accessibility – the highest achievement the foundation can bestow; and

**Whereas**, the mandate of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is to help guide the City in removing and preventing barriers in policies, practices, programs, and services to meet the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This includes reviewing Vaughan's Accessibility Plan and other accessibility reports, identifying accessibility opportunities and challenges within the community and advising Council on requirements to implement accessibility standards across Vaughan; and

**Whereas**, during a Sept. 28, 2021, meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Local and Regional Councillor Linda Jackson introduced the Treat Accessibly – a grassroots movement started in 2017 by the Padulo family at their home with the goal of making trick-or-treating at Halloween accessible and inclusive for families; and

**Whereas**, by some estimates, 400,000 children in Canada, and 4 million in the United States identify with having a disability that may prevent these children from trick-or-treating with their siblings and other kids because something as simple as stairs; and

**Whereas**, the Treat Accessibly initiative recommends several ways households in Vaughan, and in communities throughout North America, can distribute items in a safe and accessible way. For more information, the public can visit [treataccessibly.com](http://treataccessibly.com); and

**CITY OF VAUGHAN****EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 20, 2021****Item 9, CW Report 43 – Page 2**

**Whereas**, mindful of annual Halloween festivities, the public should continue to follow health and safety protocols in place because of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic and consider how these protocols may impact those participating in Halloween festivities.

**It is therefore recommended:**

1. THAT the City's Corporate and Strategic Communications department promote awareness of the Treat Accessibly initiative, on an annual basis, on the appropriate corporate communications channels, while also communicating health and safety protocols in response to COVID-19; and
2. THAT this resolution is shared with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee; Ontario's Minister for Seniors and Accessibility; York Region Council; York Region lower-tier municipalities; and all York Region-area Members of Provincial Parliament and Members of Parliament.

## MEMBER'S RESOLUTION

### Committee of the Whole (1)

---

**DATE:** Tuesday, October 05, 2021

**TITLE:** Treat Accessibly

**FROM:**

Regional Councillor Linda Jackson

---

**Whereas**, the City of Vaughan is committed to fostering an inclusive community where people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can thrive; and

**Whereas**, to recognize the City's efforts to fulfil this goal, the Rick Hansen Foundation awarded multiple City of Vaughan and Vaughan Public Libraries facilities with Gold Certification for accessibility – the highest achievement the foundation can bestow; and

**Whereas**, the mandate of the Accessibility Advisory Committee is to help guide the City in removing and preventing barriers in policies, practices, programs, and services to meet the requirements of the Accessibility for *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. This includes reviewing Vaughan's Accessibility Plan and other accessibility reports, identifying accessibility opportunities and challenges within the community and advising Council on requirements to implement accessibility standards across Vaughan; and

**Whereas**, during a Sept. 28, 2021, meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Local and Regional Councillor Linda Jackson introduced the Treat Accessibly – a grassroots movement started in 2017 by the Padulo family at their home with the goal of making trick-or-treating at Halloween accessible and inclusive for families; and

**Whereas**, by some estimates, 400,000 children in Canada, and 4 million in the United States identify with having a disability that may prevent these children from trick-or-treating with their siblings and other kids because something as simple as stairs; and

**Whereas**, the Treat Accessibly initiative recommends several ways households in Vaughan, and in communities throughout North America, can distribute items in a safe and accessible way. For more information, the public can visit [treataccessibly.com](http://treataccessibly.com); and

**Whereas**, mindful of annual Halloween festivities, the public should continue to follow health and safety protocols in place because of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic and consider how these protocols may impact those participating in Halloween festivities.

**It is therefore recommended:**

1. THAT the City's Corporate and Strategic Communications department promote awareness of the Treat Accessibly initiative, on an annual basis, on the appropriate corporate communications channels, while also communicating health and safety protocols in response to COVID-19; and
2. THAT this resolution is shared with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee; Ontario's Minister for Seniors and Accessibility; York Region Council; York Region lower-tier municipalities; and all York Region-area Members of Provincial Parliament and Members of Parliament.



**CITY OF VAUGHAN****EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 20, 2021**

Item 6, Report No. 46, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted, as amended, by the Council of the City of Vaughan on October 20, 2021, as follows:

*By receiving Communications C111 from Hiten N. Patel, Thornhill Woods Drive, Vaughan, dated October 13, 2021.*

**6. ATHABASCA COMMUNITY TRAFFIC STUDY PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee of the Whole recommends:

1. That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Deputy City Manager, Public Works, dated October 13, 2021, be approved;
2. That an all-way stop be approved and installed at the eastern intersection of Athabasca and Hunterwood Chase;
3. That staff bring forward the necessary by-law at the Council meeting of October 20, 2021 to enact the all-way stop;
4. That City staff initiate a one-year pilot project by purchasing a number of "Slow Down/Children at Play" signs, and have them available at cost to residents upon request;
5. That the Director and Chief Licensing Officer, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services comes back with the necessary documents to amend the current sign by-laws, as applicable, to allow for temporary lawn signs; in particular, that "Slow Down/Children at Play" type language be allowed to be placed by residents for the duration of the pilot project;
6. That the notice requirements, as contained in Bylaw 394-2002, as they relate to the passing of amendments to the City's Sign By-law, be waived for the purposes of allowing temporary lawn signs by residents for the pilot project;
7. That upon conclusion of the pilot project, staff report back to the appropriate Committee of the Whole, and make recommendations on the feasibility of continuing the program;
8. That Council requests the prompt assistance of all local MPPs in devolving the operation of photo radar (or similar capabilities) to local municipalities, as a necessary priority in addressing speeding motorists in local residential areas;
9. That this resolution be shared with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and its member-municipalities;

**CITY OF VAUGHAN****EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 20, 2021**Item 6, CW Report 46 – Page 2

**10. That the following speakers and communications be received:**

- 1. Robert Kenedy, MacKenzie Ridge Ratepayers' Association, Georgia Crescent, Maple, and Communication C9, dated October 8, 2021; and**
- 2. Elizabeth Lincoln, Athabasca Drive, Vaughan, and Communication C44, dated October 13, 2021; and**

**11. That the following communications be received:**

- C14 Tiziana Goldberg, Hunterwood Chase, Maple, dated October 10, 2021; and**
- C15 The Vukmans, dated October 10, 2021.**

**Recommendations**

- 1. That this report be received for information.**



## Committee of the Whole (2) Report

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**DATE:** Wednesday, October 13, 2021

**WARD(S):** 1

**TITLE: ATHABASCA COMMUNITY TRAFFIC STUDY PROGRESS REPORT**

**FROM:**

Zoran Postic, Deputy City Manager, Public Works

**ACTION:** FOR INFORMATION

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**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide a progress update for the Athabasca Community Traffic Study, as approved by Council at the June 22, 2021 meeting.

**Report Highlights**

- At the June 22, 2021 Council Meeting, Council directed staff to commence a neighbourhood traffic and speed management study for the Athabasca area aligned with the directions, programs and plans outlined in the MoveSmart Mobility Management Strategy (MoveSmart).
- A traffic study has been completed and has confirmed that the Provincial warrant for an all-way stop is currently not met at any of the studied intersections.
- As part of the City's standard traffic review process, an internal traffic operational review has been conducted in accordance with Provincial guidelines and has determined that there are currently no deficiencies on Athabasca Drive. A further consultant study will commence this fall to conduct a comprehensive neighbourhood traffic and speed management study, inclusive of community engagement.
- Specific measures aligned with the City's Pavement Markings and Signs program have been considered and will be implemented by November, 2021 to further raise public awareness of the presence of pedestrians and to promote walkability to the park.

## **Recommendations**

1. That this report be received for information.

## **Background**

The residents of the Athabasca area have raised concerns regarding traffic in their neighbourhood centering around speeding, the need for traffic calming measures, and stop signs, and have requested that a traffic study be completed.

### **Council provided direction to commence a neighbourhood traffic and speed management study aligning with MoveSmart.**

At the Council meeting of June 22, 2021, Council directed staff to commence a neighbourhood traffic and speed management study for the Athabasca area aligned with the directions, programs and plans outlined in the MoveSmart. The recommendation also included that any improvements recommended in the study be deemed a pilot project that could potentially benefit other subdivisions in the future. Furthermore, direction included a request for York Region to install a temporary photo radar unit in this subdivision and/or surrounding vicinity as a pilot project. Details of the Council direction are outlined in Item 23, Report No. 29, of the June 22 Council Meeting.

## **Previous Reports/Authority**

Council Meeting of June 22, 2021 – Committee of the Whole (Working Session)  
Report No. 31, Item 1:

<https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=78914>

Council Meeting of June 22, 2021 – Committee of the Whole (1) Report No. 29, Item 23:

<https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=77772>

Council Meeting of March 10, 2021 – Committee of the Whole (Working Session)  
Report No. 10, Item 1:

<https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=63323>

Council Meeting of November 19, 2019 – Committee of the Whole (1)  
Report No. 34, Item 8:

<https://pub-vaughan.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=24126>

## **Analysis and Options**

**The traffic operations review is completed, and in accordance with standard guidelines and practices, has determined that there are currently no deficiencies on Athabasca Drive.**

The Athabasca area roadway network is shown in Attachment 1. The local road network has a typical roadway pavement width of 8.5 metres and the roads within this community are classified as local roads. Sidewalks are present on one side of the street on Athabasca Drive, Hunterwood Chase, and Beakes Crescent.

The following intersections within the Athabasca area have all-way stop controls in place:

- Athabasca Drive and Appalachian Way
- Athabasca Drive and Kootenay Ridge
- Hunterwood Chase and Georgia Crescent/Celeste Drive

Staff have conducted site investigations and met with area residents to get an understanding of community concerns, and to identify specific enhancements that can be considered to further raise public awareness of the presence of vulnerable road users.

A signage and pavement marking inventory for the neighbourhood has been completed.

**A traffic review at selected intersections concluded that the Provincial warrant for all-way stop controls is currently not met.**

In response to resident concerns, staff undertook an all-way stop control analysis at selected intersections.

The City's warrant analysis for all-way stop controls takes into consideration the minimum vehicular volumes required, accident hazards, and sight restrictions at the intersections. The warrant analysis is generally based on the thresholds established in Book 5 of the Ontario Traffic Manual.

The following locations were requested by the residents to be reviewed for all-way stop controls:

- Appalachian Way and Kootenay Ridge
- Laurentian Boulevard and Foot Hills Road
- Athabasca Drive and Hunterwood Chase – north intersection

- Athabasca Drive and Hunterwood Chase – south intersection
- Athabasca Drive and Beakes Crescent
- Athabasca Drive and Beakes Crescent/Greystone Gate
- Hunterwood Chase and Germana Place

Data was collected from September 14 to 16, 2021 to assess the feasibility of implementing all-way stop controls. A summary of study findings is summarized in the table below:

Intersection	Warrant #	Warrant Description	Study Results
Appalachian Way and Kootenay Ridge	Warrant 1	Minimum Vehicular Volumes	8%
	Warrant 2	Accident Hazards	0%
	Warrant 3	Sight Restrictions	0%
Laurentian Boulevard and Foot Hills Road	Warrant 1	Minimum Vehicular Volumes	25%
	Warrant 2	Accident Hazards	0%
	Warrant 3	Sight Restrictions	0%
Athabasca Drive and Hunterwood Chase (north intersection)	Warrant 1	Minimum Vehicular Volumes	8%
	Warrant 2	Accident Hazards	0%
	Warrant 3	Sight Restrictions	0%
Athabasca Drive and Hunterwood Chase (south intersection)	Warrant 1	Minimum Vehicular Volumes	28%
	Warrant 2	Accident Hazards	0%
	Warrant 3	Sight Restrictions	0%
Athabasca Drive and Beakes Crescent (south intersection)	Warrant 1	Minimum Vehicular Volumes	12%
	Warrant 2	Accident Hazards	0%
	Warrant 3	Sight Restrictions	0%
Athabasca Drive and Beakes Crescent/Greystone Gate	Warrant 1	Minimum Vehicular Volumes	16%
	Warrant 2	Accident Hazards	0%
	Warrant 3	Sight Restrictions	0%
Hunterwood Chase and Germana Place	Warrant 1	Minimum Vehicular Volumes	18%
	Warrant 2	Accident Hazards	0%
	Warrant 3	Sight Restrictions	0%

Based on the study findings, the intersections do not meet warrant requirements for the installation of all-way stop controls and therefore, all way stop controls are not recommended.

The Ontario Traffic Manual outlines that an all-way stop control should not be used as a speed control device. The installation of an all-way stop control when unwarranted may

result in compliance problems, and increased vehicle speeds due to the inconvenience that all-way stop controls introduce.

**There are opportunities to implement specific measures that are aligned with existing municipal programs within MoveSmart along Athabasca Drive and its surrounding road network by November 2021.**

The City continues to strive to raise awareness and improve public safety for all road users and to support active and sustainable transportation options. As part of this effort, the City launched MoveSmart in March 2021. MoveSmart builds upon existing municipal programs City wide, including the optimization of road delineation and pavement markings, enhanced signage and pedestrian crossings and accessibility upgrades in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. The City is seeking to implement specific measures contained in the programs within MoveSmart along Athabasca Drive and its surrounding road network. The presence of the Maple Trails Park and Nevada Park located within the Athabasca area presents an opportunity to promote walking and other forms of active transportation in the community and to further raise public awareness with respect to road safety and the presence of vulnerable road users. As such, the following signage and pavement markings are proposed to be implemented on Athabasca Drive and Hunterwood Chase:

Traffic Measures	Purpose	Anticipated Timeline
"Pedestrian Ahead" sign with "slow" tab will be installed at appropriate locations on Athabasca Drive	To provide guidance to motorists that pedestrians may be in the area.	November 2021
"Playground Ahead" sign with "slow" tab will be installed near Maple Trail Park.	To provide guidance to motorists of a park in the area.	November 2021
Speed boards have been scheduled for this Fall on Athabasca Drive near Maple Trail Park.	To serve as community education tools to remind drivers to manage their traveling speeds in compliance with the posted speed limits.	September 2021
In-road flexible sign will be installed on Athabasca Drive, west of Appalachian Way.	To raise public awareness of the speed limit when entering the subdivision.	November 2021



Traffic Measures	Purpose	Anticipated Timeline
A yellow centreline will be installed on Athabasca Drive and Hunterwood Chase.	To guide motorists and provide roadway delineation.	November 2021
All stop bars will be refreshed as part of the annual pavement marking program.	To guide motorists of the intersection control.	November 2021
The pedestrian crosswalk on Athabasca Drive at Kootenay Ridge will be enhanced with painted ladder (zebra) markings.	To facilitate pedestrians crossing to the park	November 2021

**A further consultant study will commence this fall for a comprehensive neighbourhood traffic and speed management study. Community engagement will be an integral component of this study.**

A consultant assignment will be undertaken for the neighbourhood traffic and speed management study for the Athabasca area. This review will determine the feasibility of introducing and designating a community-wide 40 km/h neighbourhood area in accordance with Bill 65, *amending the Highway Traffic Act* and the City's newly developed Speed Limit Policy. The study will also seek to identify additional measures beyond those currently identified by staff that could be implemented as a pilot and then utilized for other areas in the future. A community engagement will form part of the study and it is anticipated that will be conducted in Q4 of 2021, with the overall study completion planned in Q2/Q3 2022.

## **Financial Impact**

The capital cost associated with the signage and pavement marking installation is estimated to be \$2,800 and is supported in the approved 2021 Operating Budget.

The ongoing maintenance cost for the sign and pavement markings is estimated to be \$600.00 per annum and will be incorporated in future year Operating Budget through the budget process.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Qty.</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Total cost</b>
<b>Signage</b>			
Warning signs	9	\$ 75 each	\$ 675
In-road flexible sign	1	\$275 each	\$ 275
<b>Pavement Markings</b>			
Centreline	2,500m	\$0.5/m	\$ 1,250
Stop bars and Crosswalks	30 stop bars, 1 ladder crosswalk	\$0.5/m	\$ 600
<b>Total Cost</b>			<b>\$ 2,800</b>

## **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

**The Province allowed the operation of automated speed enforcement technology in school and community safety zones.**

The Province enacted Bill 65, the *Safer School Zones Act*, 2017, to allow the operation of automated speed enforcement (ASE) technology in school and community safety zones. Currently, the Province requires that ASE offences be processed, settled, and disputed using the Provincial Offences Court system. The Region's Provincial Offences Court system has indicated that it will not be able to absorb the additional charge volume from the ASE program with current facility and judicial resources.

**York Region has commenced a two-year ASE pilot project (with limited use) at selected Regional road locations.**

A meeting was held with York Region to discuss the possibility of installing a temporary photo radar unit (ASE) this year in the Athabasca community subdivision and allow it to be moved every three months as a pilot project. The Region has indicated that the current mandate provided by York Region Council for the implementation of ASE only includes the installation along the Regional road network at selected locations.

Regional staff will share their data and experience with local municipalities to support them in building their respective ASE program. The Region's pilot project is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2022.

**The City of Vaughan and York Region continue to advocate the Province to consider implementation of an AMPS Program for ASE to help align road safety initiatives and enforcement.**

The Ontario Traffic Council (OTC) ASE Municipal Working Group (MWG) has requested the Province to allow ASE charges to be administered through an Administrative Monetary Penalty System (AMPS), instead of through *Provincial Offences Act* Court system. AMPS is a municipally administered alternative to the Provincial Offences Court system's judicial process for matters authorized by the Province that enables a more expedient alternative to addressing by-law violation disputes. The City has enacted AMPS for parking disputes and business licensing offences. City staff will continue to work with the OTC to facilitate the development of the framework allowing ASE charges to be administered through an AMPS program. It is anticipated that this framework will be developed in 2022. City staff will also work to develop guidelines to create and operate community safety zones to facilitate the implementation of ASE in the future.

Staff will be working in collaboration with Regional staff as the Athabasca study progresses, as it relates to impacts on regional roads.

## **Conclusion**

Residents in the Athabasca area have raised concerns related to traffic and speeding issues in their community, and they have requested that the City investigate implementing measures to address these concerns. Council directed staff, at the June 22, 2021 meeting, to commence a neighbourhood traffic and speed management study for the Athabasca area aligned with the directions, programs, and plans outlined in the MoveSmart.

A traffic review of seven key intersections within the neighbourhood has determined that none of the intersections meet the warrant criteria for the installation of all-way stop controls at this time. There are opportunities to implement specific measures along Athabasca Drive and its surrounding road network by November 2021 that are aligned with existing municipal programs associated with MoveSmart. This includes signage and pavement markings along Athabasca Drive and Hunterwood Chase.

A further consultant study will commence this Fall to complete a comprehensive neighbourhood traffic and speed management study to identify additional measures that can be considered to raise awareness and improve public safety for all road users that support active and sustainable transportation options. Community engagement will form an integral part of the study process. The final report is anticipated to be completed in Q2/Q3 2022.

**For more information**, please contact:

Peter Pilateris, Director, Transportation and Fleet Management Services, ext. 6141

Margie Chung, Manager, Traffic Services, ext. 6173

### **Attachments**

1. Location Map of Athabasca Community area street network

### **Prepared by**

Sunil Kumar, Senior Traffic Technologist, ext. 6125

Mark Ranstoller, Senior Traffic Technologist, ext. 6117

### **Approved by**



Zoran Postic,  
Deputy City Manager, Public Works

### **Reviewed by**






Nick Spensieri, City Manager

# ATTACHMENT No. 1



## STUDY AREA - ATHABASCA COMMUNITY

### LEGEND

-  Current All-way Stop control location
-  Current Speed Limit sign location
-  Location to review potential All-Way Stop control



NOT TO SCALE