



WHITCHURCH- STOUFFVILLE

Phase 2 Commercial Policy Study

May 18, 2022

Table of Contents

1.0	Whitchurch-Stouffville Commercial Policy Study	1
2.0	Review of Other Jurisdictions	3
2.1	Brantford Official Plan (2021)	4
2.2	Markham Official Plan (2014)	4
2.3	Richmond Hill Official Plan (2010)	5
2.4	Vaughan Official Plan (2010)	6
2.5	Innisfil Official Plan (2018)	7
2.6	Bradford West Gwillimbury Official Plan (2000)	8
2.7	Summary of Observations	9
3.0	Relevant Region of York Planning Policies	10
3.1	The York Region Official Plan (2010)	11
3.2	The 2021 DRAFT York Region Official Plan	12
4.0	The Whitchurch-Stouffville Planning Policy Framework	15
4.1	The Whitchurch-Stouffville Official Plan (December 2020 Consolidation)	16
4.2	Secondary Plans	16
5.0	Key Issues	25
5.1	Introduction	26
5.2	Key Issue 1 - Land Use Competition	28
5.3	Key Issue 2 - Space to Grow	29
6.0	Conclusions	42

1.0 Whitchurch-Stouffville Commercial Policy Study

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of retail and service commercial planning policy frameworks first, with respect to other communities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and second from the perspective of the Region of York Official Plan. Following that understanding, there is a review of the existing Official Plan of Whitchurch-Stouffville, focused on the various Secondary Plans, with reference to how retail and service commercial facilities are currently accommodated and managed.

Following the review of current practices in Whitchurch-Stouffville, a number of key issues are identified and high level recommendations are provided for modifications to the current policies in the Town's Stouffville Secondary Plan. This report makes a number of conclusions intended to assist the Town in making decisions about the accommodation of new retail and service commercial development that is required to service anticipated substantial population growth.

2.0 Review of Other Jurisdictions

This report includes an overview of the retail and service commercial planning policy frameworks from a number of municipalities from across the Greater Golden Horseshoe, including Brantford, Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Innisfil and Bradford West Gwillimbury.

2.1 Brantford Official Plan (2021)

The Brantford Official Plan is new and is one of the first Official Plans to be approved under the most recent Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan. The structure of the Brantford Official Plan is focused on the City's defined Strategic Growth Areas - the Downtown, the Major Commercial Centre and the Mixed-use Corridors.

Importantly, all of the Strategic Growth Area designations are expected to be fully mixed-use and to incorporate varying intensities of new development. Retail and service commercial uses are permitted uses within each of these three designations. The scale of the facilities varies depending upon contextual relationships (compatible development) and the scale of the development blocks. It is important to note that there are no stand-alone commercial designations within the Brantford Official Plan. The approach within the Official Plan focuses on where retail and service commercial uses are:

- > Permitted, versus where they are required.
- > Permitted within either a stand-alone building or, at grade in a mixed-use building, or where they are required to be at grade in a mixed-use building.

Smaller scale retail and service commercial uses are also permitted within the Neighbourhood designation as a way to support complete and healthy community objectives. Permitted uses in Employment Areas are either ancillary or supportive of the primary employment generating uses.

2.2 Markham Official Plan (2014)

The Markham Official Plan places emphasis on moving away from stand-alone, large-format retail development towards more compact mixed-use developments within its defined intensification areas and on locating convenience retail and personal services in proximity to residential areas, provided development criteria are met for compatible development. More specifically:

- > **Commercial Designation:** The Commercial designation provides for a range of uses including retail and service uses, with a focus on redeveloping large-format retail developments that are in proximity to Employment Lands into “more intensive multi-use commercial areas that accommodate complementary retail, service and office employment uses”.
- > **Residential Designations:** The City’s Residential designations (Residential Low Rise, Residential Mid Rise, Residential High Rise) permit convenience retail and personal service uses under General Policies for the Residential Designations, except within the Residential Estate designation.
- > **Mixed-use Designations:** Within the Mixed-use designations (Mixed-use Low Rise, Mixed-use Mid Rise, Mixed-use High Rise, Mixed-use Office Priority, Mixed-use Health Care Campus, Mixed-use Heritage Main Street) retail and service uses are permitted under General Policies.
- > **Employment Lands Designations:** General policies for the Employment Lands designations (Business Park Employment, Business Park Office Priority Employment, Service Employment, General Employment, Future Employment Area) permit retail and service uses, but they are generally limited in size and must be accessory to the primary manufacturing, processing or warehousing use.

2.3 Richmond Hill Official Plan (2010)

The focus for retail and service commercial uses in Richmond Hill is within mixed-use districts, and not through the identification of stand-alone buildings in commercial use districts. The Richmond Hill Official Plan permits a broad range of retail and commercial uses throughout Richmond Hill Centre, Local Centres (Downtown Local Centre, Oak Ridges Local Centre), Key Development Areas, Local Development Areas and Regional Mixed-use Corridors. In addition to those more significant retail and commercial opportunities, the Richmond Hill Official Plan also permits retail and commercial uses in other designations, as follows:

- > **Local Mixed-Use Corridors:** Within the Local Mixed-Use Corridors commercial and retail uses are permitted, provided they are small-scale.

- > **Neighbourhoods:** Within the Neighbourhood designation permitted uses include neighbourhood commercial uses, which include small-scale retail and small-scale commercial uses within existing Neighbourhood Commercial sites.
- > **Employment Areas:** Within Employment Areas commercial and retail uses are permitted as secondary uses (i.e., accessory retail, ancillary commercial uses involving limited types of personal service uses).
- > **Employment Corridors:** Within the Employment Corridor ancillary commercial and retail uses are permitted, provided they are located within an office development, hotel, convention centre or banquet facility.

2.4 Vaughan Official Plan (2010)

The Vaughan Official Plan defines retail to include service commercial, retail and restaurant uses. Policies in the Vaughan Official Plan are aimed at diversifying the retail sector, improving walkability and accessibility, concentrating new retail uses in Intensification Areas, integrating retail within mixed-use developments and accommodating retail spaces of varying sizes.

Retail uses are encouraged/facilitated throughout Vaughan's Intensification Areas, including the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, Primary Centres, Community Commercial Mixed-Use Areas, Local Centres and Intensification Corridors. In addition to those more significant retail and commercial opportunities, the Vaughan Official Plan also permits retail and commercial uses in other designations, as follows:

- > **Employment Commercial Mixed-use Designation:** Within the Employment Commercial Mixed-use designations, retail uses are permitted, provided they do not exceed a GFA of 3400 square metres.
- > **Residential Areas:** Retail uses are permitted throughout the Low-Rise Mixed-Use, Mid-Rise Mixed-Use, High-Rise Mixed-Use designations. Within the Low-Rise Residential and Mid-Rise Residential designations, retail uses are restricted to small-scale convenience retail.
- > **Employment Areas:** Within the General Employment and Prestige Employment designations retail uses must be accessory to and directly associated with an

industrial use. Additionally, retail uses within the Prestige Employment designation must be located within 200 metres of an intersection of two arterial or collector roads.

2.5 Innisfil Official Plan (2018)

The framework for the Innisfil Official Plan lays out a series of goals representing three key focus areas: connectivity, growth and sustainability. To achieve growth the Town promotes intensification providing a range of housing choices, commercial services and employment opportunities. The vast majority of growth is directed towards the Primary Settlement Area and Urban Settlement Areas, with limited growth directed to Village Settlement Areas, greenfield lands and Hamlets.

The Innisfil Official Plan permits commercial uses across multiple designations, scaling them with their surrounding context and prioritizing the most intensive commercial uses within the Downtown Commercial Area. Commercial uses are limited outside of settlement areas, and those permitted in residential areas are suited towards serving the day to day needs of local residents. Within the employment area designations commercial uses are limited to those ancillary to the primary employment use.

It is an objective of the Official Plan to ensure retail services are made available at an appropriate scale in every primary, urban and village settlement area. Retail and service commercial facilities are accommodated as follows:

- > The Primary Settlement Area (Alcona) will contain the broadest mix of land uses including commercial uses. Urban commercial areas include a range of commercial facilities to meet the needs of the entire Town, while consolidating commercial development within the existing Downtown Commercial Area. Within the Downtown Commercial Area designation a broad range of retail uses are permitted along with personal services and offices, which are encouraged in mixed residential/commercial development.
- > Village Settlement Areas and Hamlets will support commercial uses sufficient to support the convenience and day-to-day needs of local residents.
- > Within the Residential Low Density 1 and Residential Low Density 2 designations convenience commercial uses including live/work units are permitted provided the

commercial or office use is located on the ground floor subject to Zoning By-law regulations.

- > Within the Residential Medium Density designation convenience commercial uses including live/work units are permitted.
- > Within the Residential High Density designation convenience commercial uses are permitted on the ground floor of an apartment building.

Importantly in Innisfil, no new commercial designations outside of the Downtown Commercial Area which serve more than the day to day needs of residents will be considered until the existing Downtown Commercial Area contains an additional 50,000 square metres of retail and service commercial floor space.

In addition, the Major Transit Station Mixed Use Area expands to include mixed residential/commercial buildings and live/work uses, a full range of retail uses and personal services. Within the Major Transit Station Mixed Use Area designation retail and service commercial uses shall provide a maximum of 10,000 square metres of floor space.

2.6 Bradford West Gwillimbury Official Plan (2000)

The Bradford West Gwillimbury Official Plan provides a comprehensive framework for the guidance of future land use and development within the Town. The guiding principles of this Plan are to clearly delineate the boundaries between the Bradford Urban Area and the surrounding agricultural area and accommodate projected growth while protecting the Holland Marsh agricultural area. Retail and service commercial uses are accommodated as follows:

- > Within the Bradford Urban Area, the Residential designation permits neighbourhood commercial facilities. Provided they are appropriate for residential neighbourhoods, have direct access to collector or arterial streets, and are designed to be compatible with the surrounding residential area.

- > The Commercial Core designation permits a full range of retail and office uses, while promoting development of main floor retail and service commercial uses geared to pedestrian traffic.
- > The Service Commercial designation recognizes existing commercial areas outside of the commercial core permitting a mix of service and highway commercial uses, including a full range of retail, office and tourist commercial uses. Retail and grocery uses requiring larger areas than available in the core are permitted in this designation.
- > Within the Industrial/Commercial designation a full range of light industrial and office uses are promoted. Commercial/recreation uses are permitted along with limited convenience commercial uses. Retail uses are not permitted, with the exception of products that are produced or assembled on site.

Overall, this Plan permits commercial uses throughout multiple land use designations, provided they are scaled appropriately and support the primary land use. The widest range of commercial uses are permitted within the Bradford Urban Area (Commercial Core, Service Commercial), with limited opportunities provided in the agricultural and rural areas. Within Residential areas commercial uses are limited to those supporting the surrounding neighbourhood with direct access onto collector or arterial streets.

2.7 Summary of Observations

There is substantial consistency among these Official Plans. Overall, all of these Plans support the delivery of retail and service commercial uses in mixed-use formats and permit retail and service commercial uses within a hierarchy of land use designations, ensuring that the various scales and types of retail and service commercial facilities are supportive of the market they are intended to serve.

3.0 Relevant Region of York Planning Policies

3.1 The York Region Official Plan (2010)

The Region of York Official Plan (2010) provides an overarching policy framework that is important to recognize as Whitchurch-Stouffville considers its approach to planning for expanded retail and service commercial development in step with a growing population. The Region of York Official Plan states that "retail trade is an essential component of a healthy economy." The ROP also recognizes that the retail landscape is "continually evolving."

The ROP is strongly committed to planning for retail and service commercial facilities as "key components of mixed-use communities" with a recognition that municipalities will need to promote and "incorporate effective urban design to ensure the integration of retail uses within the community." Most importantly, the ROP states that "retail facilities should be designed and located to serve the needs of the community and support the Region's urban structure."

The ROP identifies the following objective and policy framework that is instructive:

"Objective: To ensure retail is well-designed and appropriately integrated into communities in a manner that encourages walking, cycling, and transit. It is the policy of Council:

- 4.4.1 To require that retail be designed to be walkable, transit-supportive, and integrated into communities and pedestrian and cycling networks, with high-quality urban design.
- 4.4.2 To work with local municipalities to improve urban design in new retail developments and to identify opportunities for the intensification and revitalization of existing retail.
- 4.4.3 To work with local municipalities to identify and protect the historical main streets in the Region.
- 4.4.4 To direct a significant amount of mixed-uses, including street-related retail, to Regional Centres and Corridors.

- 4.4.5 To require local municipalities to define major retail uses within the context of the local commercial hierarchy.
- 4.4.6 That major retail is not permitted on designated or strategic employment lands.
- 4.4.7 That major retail sites should be designed to support redevelopment or retrofitting.
- 4.4.8 To work with local municipalities to plan comprehensively for all retail uses, including major retail uses, that are integrated and provided for within the community. Planning should include the identification and designation of lands to accommodate these uses. In this regard, a mixed-use designation, or designations, that provides for major retail will serve to meet the intent of the policy."

3.2 The 2021 DRAFT York Region Official Plan

The 2021 DRAFT York Region Official Plan (which is not in-force) is a significant update to the 2010 Plan, prepared to conform with a host of updated Provincial planning legislation and associated policies, with a particular emphasis on:

- > The Growth Plan (2020) forecasts provided for population and employment growth within the Region to the year 2051.
- > Changes to the Planning Act, including Bills 73, 108, 197 and, most recently Bill 109 (not yet in full force).

The 2021 DRAFT York Region Official Plan identifies substantial growth to Whitchurch-Stouffville to 2051, as follows:

	Population	Employment
2021	50,300	16,900
2051	88,100	34,600

In general, the 2021 DRAFT York Region Official Plan:

- > Prioritizes building “complete communities” where people can conveniently access most necessities for daily living.
- > Prioritizes sustainable growth and financial responsibility by phasing growth, infrastructure and other community services over time.
- > Identifies natural areas for protection and supports designing and building communities resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- > Includes affordable housing targets and purpose-built rental targets for each local municipality.
- > Encourages employment close to existing and future transit service and opportunities for people to live and work in their communities.
- > Plans for an interconnected, efficient and safe public transit system for people of all ages and abilities.
- > Identifies and protects agricultural areas and supports economic connections, prosperity, and viability of the agricultural sector.

With more specific relevance to this Commercial Policy Study, the 2021 DRAFT York Region Official Plan continues to promote similar planning and development themes as the 2010 Official Plan, albeit with some changed emphasis and phrasing.

The 2021 DRAFT York Region Official Plan has a substantial focus on the concept of “complete communities”, and support for the evolving “urban system” including a focus for growth and development in Strategic Growth Areas, and in identified transit-supportive centres and corridors.

The 2021 DRAFT York Region Official Plan supports a growing economy and a balance between population and jobs as a key element of a “complete community”. There remains an emphasis on mixed-use development patterns and non-traditional building types, which

is particularly relevant to support for mixing residential development with retail, service commercial and office forms of development at typically higher densities.

4.0 The Whitchurch-Stouffville Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The Whitchurch-Stouffville Official Plan (December 2020 Consolidation)

The Official Plan for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville establishes the framework for the future planning of the municipality. The Official Plan outlines an overall vision, with supporting principles and objectives, and includes policies and implementation approaches that guide decision making with respect to the natural environment and land use.

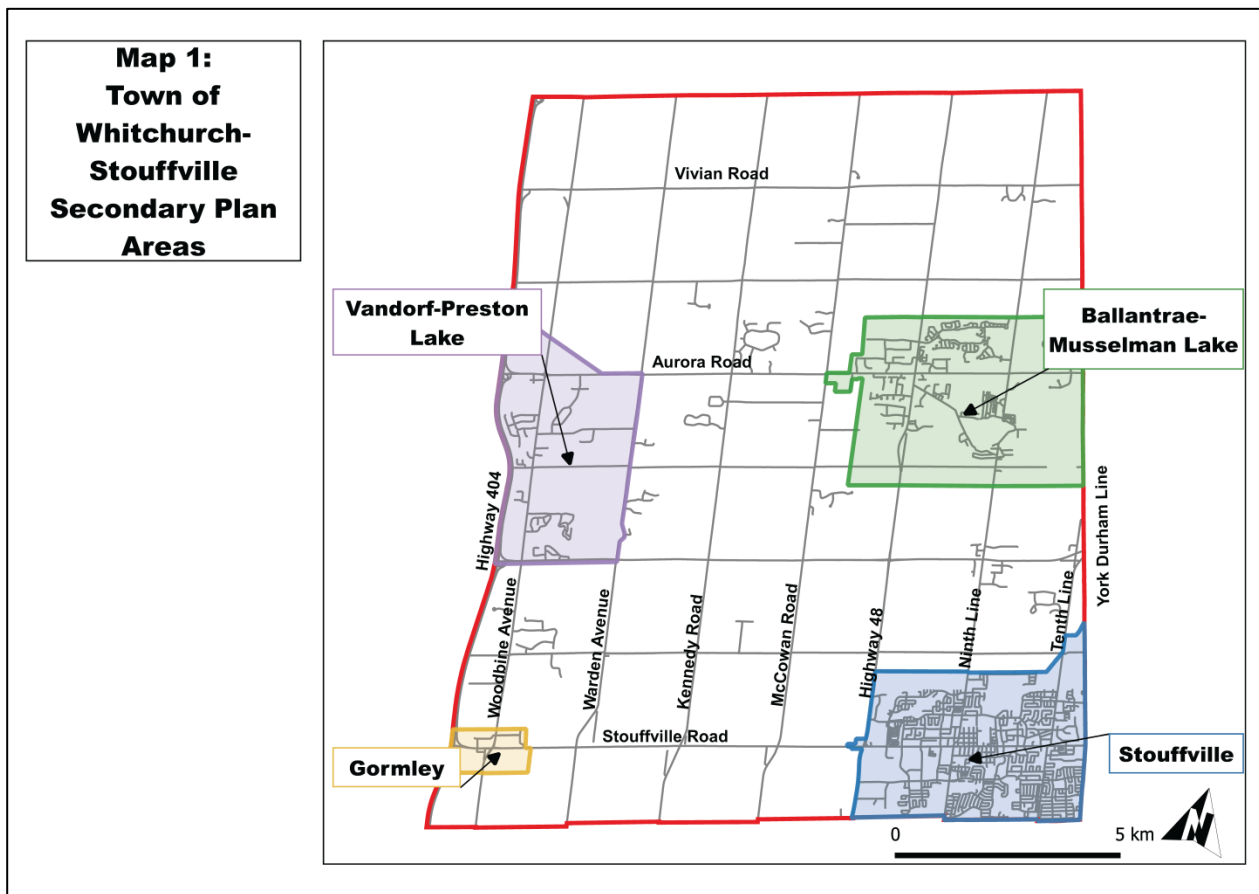
The Official Plan sets the stage, however, the details for urban development are more fully articulated through the Town's several Secondary Plans, which are reviewed below. It is clear, however that the vast majority of population and employment growth will be directed towards the Community of Stouffville, with some moderate population growth in the Ballantrae-Musselman Lake Community, subject to servicing availability. Additional employment growth will be focused within the Gormley Industrial Area and the Potential Employment Area in the Vandorf-Preston Lake Secondary Plan.

Outside of the Secondary Plan Areas, growth and development is limited, recognizing existing uses and promoting appropriate agricultural and aggregate resource opportunities. For the purposes of this study, commercial uses, except those related to agricultural uses, are directed towards Secondary Plan Areas.

4.2 Secondary Plans

As noted, virtually all of urban Whitchurch-Stouffville is subject to more detailed Secondary Plans that articulate permissions for an array of retail and service commercial opportunities. The Secondary Plan Areas are identified on Map 1, attached, and include:

- > Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan.
- > Gormley Secondary Plan.
- > Vandorf-Preston Lake Secondary Plan.
- > Ballantrae-Musselman Lake and Environs Secondary Plan.



The Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan

The Community of Stouffville is the dominant urban centre within the Town, and incorporates most of the retail and service commercial activity, and is expected to be the focus of future population and employment growth. The Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan is subdivided into the following land use designations:

- > Community Core Area.
- > Western Approach Area.
- > Gateway Mixed Use Area.
- > Regional Commercial Centre (Hoover Park).

- > Lincolnville GO Station Area (Subject to ongoing Land Use Study and Official Plan Amendment).
- > Activity Node Area.
- > Neighbourhood Retail Area, including adjacent employment area conversions.
- > Business Park Area.
- > Residential Area.

The Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan establishes the principles, objectives and general policies for the existing urban area and adjacent lands, including the Main Street and Community Core Area. It is a principal of this Secondary Plan to establish an economically sustainable community by supporting existing businesses and attracting new businesses to the community.

The Community Structure outlines the function and direction for retail, employment and residential areas which are further articulated in the Land Use Strategy. It is the intention of the Secondary Plan to provide for a range of commercial uses serving the needs of the region, local communities and promote mixed-use development. The Secondary Plan establishes a commercial hierarchy that does reference function and scale based on context and location - with a clear focus on development compatibility and transitions to adjacent land uses. In general, the commercial land use designations include:

- > **Community Core Area:** Within the Core Area there are a number of sub-designations, including:
 - + Core Area – Main Street - This sub-designation permits retail and service commercial uses, and support the delivery of those uses in a mixed-use built form. The Community Core Area encompasses the historic heart of Stouffville, with a collection of heritage buildings and an array of supportive land uses including small-scale retail, office uses, restaurants, as well as cultural and administrative uses. Residential uses are adjacent, with some intermingled with the commercial and public uses; and,

- + Core Area – Mixed-Use - This sub-designation promotes the redefinition and redesign of the existing industrial/commercial context in and around the existing Stouffville GO Station, in development forms compatible with the intent of the Core Area – Main Street sub-designation.
- > **Western Approach Area Mixed-Use:** The Western Approach Area Mixed-Use designation permits a very broad array of land uses reflecting its existing eclectic development pattern. The designation does permit retail and service commercial uses, and supports the delivery of those uses in a mixed-use built form or as stand alone. This is an evolving commercial district that was, at one time, the location for moderately scaled stand-alone retail facilities, and smaller scale facilities in a plaza format.
- > **Gateway Mixed-Use Area:** The Gateway Mixed-Use Area designation recognizes the prominence of the intersection of Highway 48 and Main Street, making it an ideal location for mixed-use development, other non-residential uses and medium to high density residential uses. Retail and service commercial uses are permitted as part of mixed-use development fronting onto Stouffville Road/Main Street, or as adaptive reuse of designated heritage buildings.
- > **Regional Retail Area (Hoover Park):** Within the Regional Retail Area designation large retail stores are permitted. Within the Regional Retail Area designation residential land uses are not permitted. The focus of the Regional Retail Area is to acknowledge a trade centre and specialty retailing node serving a broad regional market, while insuring compatibility with surrounding land uses. This designation is the primary retail commercial centre in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

In addition to the specific designation of the Regional Retail Area, the Town is supporting two employment area conversions which are abutting or adjacent to this designation. It is logical and appropriate that these two areas be included within the Regional Retail designation to promote comprehensive planning.

- > **Lincolnville GO Station Area:** The DRAFT Lincolnville GO Station Area Land Use Study (September 2020) the High-Density Mixed-Use and Medium-High Density Mixed-Use designations permit mixed-use buildings with permissions for at-grade commercial and office uses, as well as office uses above grade. In both designations, commercial uses are limited to a maximum GFA of 1,500 square

metres. In the High-Density Mixed-Use designation, retail uses are required at-grade in the location identified in the Plan as the Required Retail Frontage Area.

In addition to the larger, geographic commercial areas within Stouffville there are two other key land use designations that provide opportunities for commercial development, including:

- > **Activity Node Area:** The Activity Node Area designation recognizes focal points within the community where clusters of community uses are located. Convenience retail and service commercial uses are permitted alongside residential, institutional, office and park uses. All these uses are intended to serve a community wide service function, compatible with surrounding residential uses.
- > **Neighbourhood Retail Area:** The Neighbourhood Retail Area designation covers the site of a former, large scale Flea Market use. The designation is intended to accommodate retail and service commercial uses appropriate for meeting the day to day needs of nearby residential neighbourhoods. The policy framework generally encourages mixed-use development. The Neighbourhood Retail Area designation provides some additional criteria for permitted retail and service commercial uses:
 - + Small-scale neighbourhood retail and service commercial uses are small scale - generally with a gross floor area of less than 835 square metres; and,
 - + Larger scale neighbourhood retail uses such as grocery stores, drug stores and hardware stores are generally limited to a maximum of 3,950 square metres.
- > **Employment Areas:** Employment Areas include two sub-designations:
 - + **Business Park Area:** The Business Park Area designation provides for a full range of light industrial and office uses. Commercial recreation is permitted, however major retail and service commercial uses are prohibited; and,
 - + **Industrial Area:** The Industrial Area designation accommodates a full range of light industrial, general industrial and office uses. Similarly, commercial recreation is permitted, while retail and service commercial uses are

prohibited with the exception of products that are produced/assembled on the premises, provided the retail operation occupies less than 10% of the main building.

Please note that the two employment area conversions are identified within the Regional Retail Area discussion.

- > **Residential Area:** The range of residential designations, including Residential Area, Urban Medium density Residential Area and Urban High density Residential Area do not have any specific permissions for small scale convenience commercial uses that may be appropriately embedded within residential communities.

Overall, the Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan establishes a reasonable, and relatively traditional hierarchy of permissions for retail and service commercial land uses - from a regional scale to a local scale, including an historic downtown. Over time, this policy framework has generally produced an appropriate level of retail service for the Community of Stouffville, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, and beyond.

It is important to note that the Secondary Plan does promote the ongoing development/redevelopment of the Core Area, the Western Approach and the Gateway Mixed-Use Area as fully mixed-use districts, where the retail and service commercial uses are to be integrated with higher density residential land uses. The Regional Retail Area (Hoover Park) is currently planned as the primary retail centre within the Town, and does not permit the introduction of residential land uses in either stand-alone or mixed-use development projects.

The identification of the Activity Node Areas and the Neighbourhood Retail Area are also positive attributes of the Secondary Plan that with a focus on ensuring retail and service commercial uses are compatible with, and accessible to permitted residential and institutional uses.

Gormley Secondary Plan

The Gormley Secondary Plan establishes the policy objectives for achieving a distinctive, industrial and commercial area promoting the development of a gateway location within the Town compatible with the existing land uses in the Gormley Community. This Secondary Plan incorporates the Prestige Industrial, Industrial, Community Residential, General Commercial, Convenience Commercial and Open Space – Environmental land use

designations from the Official Plan. Existing commercial land uses are recognized allowing limited opportunities for infill and new commercial development. Some of the key policy directions include:

- > **Convenience Commercial:** The Convenience Commercial designation exists within the Secondary Plan, but is not specifically applied. This designation limits the size and scale in order to service the needs of adjacent businesses and employees of the industrial areas and residents of the Gormley Community.
- > **General Commercial:** The General Commercial designation is applied to some substantial areas of land, with a cluster at the Gormley Sideroad and Woodbine Avenue intersection. The General Commercial designation includes policies that refer to the policies of the Western Approach Area - Mixed-Use designation.
- > **General and Convenience Commercial:** Prohibited uses within both the General and Convenience Commercial designations include Accessory Dwelling Units; Clinics; Dwelling Units above permitted uses; Hotels; Personal Service Establishments, discharging significant amounts of water; Printing Establishments; Undertaking Establishments; Dental Offices or Clinics; and residential uses. Further, commercial uses within the General Commercial or Convenience Commercial designations which utilize or discharge significant amounts of water are discouraged and all proposed commercial uses are assessed against the conclusions of the Settlement Capability Study with respect to sanitary sewage disposal.

Development within Gormley, including General and Convenience Commercial uses, is substantially limited in the context of a lack of municipal service infrastructure. The Secondary Plan recognizes the existing commercial land uses, and allows limited opportunities for infill and new commercial development that services the needs of the employees of the Gormley Industrial Area and residents of the Gormley Community. The retail and service commercial opportunities are also not intended to be within a mixed-use built form, and are anticipated to be relatively small in scale and, in fact, the Secondary Plan directs more substantial retail and service commercial facilities toward more accommodating areas elsewhere within Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Vandorf-Preston Lake Secondary Plan

The Vandorf-Preston Lake Secondary Plan establishes the principles, objectives, general policies and community structure of these two communities and adjacent lands. This Secondary Plan considers both lands falling within and outside the Oak Ridges Moraine

Conservation Planning Area. The Community Vision for Vandorf-Preston Lake seeks to create an environmentally aware community, designed to protect and enhance its natural setting. Vandorf will be developed as a village with small scale commercial, recreational and institutional facilities serving the needs of residents, whereas Preston Lake will be maintained as a low-density residential community.

Commercial uses are generally not included as a permitted use throughout most of the ORM area, with the exception of the ORM Employment Area designation which permits small-scale commercial, industrial, recreational and institutional uses. Permitted commercial, industrial, recreational and institutional uses may also include those uses permitted in the applicable zoning by-law on November 15, 2001. Other commercial, industrial, recreational and institutional uses require a zoning by-law amendment and shall generally not require any large scale modifications to terrain nor adversely affect the ecological integrity of the Moraine Area. Relevant land use designations include:

- > **Mixed-Use Area:** Within the Mixed-Use Area designation, recognizing existing and planned mixed-use development, small scale commercial, institutional and offices are among the permitted uses. Similarly, the Potential Mixed-Use Area designation also permits uses permitted in the Mixed-use Area designation, subject to addressing the servicing requirements.
- > **Employment Area:** Outside of the ORM, commercial recreation is among the permitted uses in the Employment Area designation, as long as the permitted use is dry, and retail and service commercial uses be limited to products produced and/or assembled on the premises provided the retail operation occupies less than 20% of the area of the main building. Likewise the Potential Employment Area designation permits uses permitted in the Employment Area Designation, subject to addressing the servicing requirements.

This Secondary Plan seeks to maintain the small-scale character of its existing communities, protect the integrity of the ORM and supporting natural features, recognize existing uses while planning for growth within the potential employment and mixed-use areas. The policies of this Secondary Plan substantially limit retail and service commercial opportunities to those servicing the local low-density residential community, prioritizing the protection and enhancement of the natural environment in recognition of servicing constraints and the ORM.

Overall, the Vandorf-Preston Lake Secondary Plan is focused on servicing the existing community, and is not considered a significant contributor to the overall retail and service commercial inventory within the Town.

Ballantrae-Musselman Lake and Environs Secondary Plan

The Ballantrae-Musselman Lake and Environs Secondary Plan implements the policy framework provided within the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and is focused primarily on environmental protection and recognition of existing uses within environmentally sensitive areas. The Secondary Plan provides a strategy for the conservation and enhancement of existing natural features, while ensuring negative impacts from new development are minimized on natural systems and features. Additional development adjacent to the Kettle Lakes is restricted, while focusing new development within the Ballantrae Settlement Area. Adopted OPA 136 (subject to appeal, and not yet in force and effect) establishes the following designation:

- > **Highway 48 Commercial Mixed-Use Area:** The Secondary Plan does provide permission for "limited convenience and service commercial uses, including food stores, convenience stores, personal service uses, restaurants, offices and coffee shops." There are a number of small and modestly scaled sites identified in the Plan

This Secondary Plan seeks to maintain the small-scale character of its existing communities, recognize existing uses while permitting small scale retail and service commercial opportunities along the Highway 48 frontage.

Overall, the Ballantrae-Musselman Lake and Environs Secondary Plan is not considered a significant contributor to the overall retail and service commercial inventory within the Town, although it is anticipated that the residents of this area will be better served with retail and service commercial uses over time.

5.0 Key Issues

5.1 Introduction

This Phase 2 Commercial Policy Study builds on the findings of the Phase 1 Commercial Market and Policy Study undertaken by urbanMetrics inc. and dated November 18, 2021, which focused primarily on the need for future commercial space in the Town. The principal findings of the Phase 1 Study which guided the policy recommendations include the following:

- > Between 2021 and 2051, the population of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is anticipated to almost double from 51,600 to 101,400.
- > Due to the location of the Town in proximity to a number of major retail areas, including Markham, Richmond Hill and Green Lane (Newmarket/East Gwillimbury), there is considerable outflow from the Town in a number of categories. For example, less than one-quarter of fashion and accessory purchases by Whitchurch-Stouffville residents are made within the Town. As the Town grows, it is expected that it will achieve a critical mass to be able to support more retail space per person than it currently does.
- > E-commerce continues to represent amongst the most disruptive shifts in the commercial retail/services industry to date. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this broader trend. Based on survey research, almost 90% of respondents from the Town indicated that they have increased their spending through online channels as a result of the pandemic.
- > Mixed-use development featuring ground floor retail and services has become an important part of sustainable planning and should be incorporated into future planning by the Town. However, it has not been universally successful. Planning policies should be tailored to ensure that appropriate retail uses can be accommodated where they are needed.
- > Despite the fact that the Community of Stouffville serves as an important commercial node for local and surrounding residents, the Town lacks the full breadth of retail outlets and services that would be expected of a municipality of its size. Survey results indicate that some 45% of residents travel outside of the community to shop on a weekly basis. Population growth and the establishment of a greater critical mass provide the opportunity to address this current shortfall.

- > From the results of a consumer survey and community workshops, Whitchurch-Stouffville residents stated a strong connection with the Historic Downtown core and want to ensure that it is preserved and strengthened as an important community focal point.
- > At same time, residents also recognized a need for more regional scale type shopping opportunities, such as those available at Hoover Park.
- > The currently designated Commercial Areas in the Town will only be able to accommodate a modest amount of commercial space required to support the future population.
- > Based on known and anticipated sources of commercial supply, a shortfall of 1,750,000 square feet of commercial space has been identified.
- > The shortfall in space would need to be accommodated from a number of sources:
 - + Designation of local serving retail sites as part of future Secondary Plans and plans of subdivision;
 - + Intensification, primarily within the Community of Stouffville;
 - + Designation of one or two Regional Commercial sites; and,
 - + Zoning and Official Plan policies permitting certain selected limited commercial uses within employment areas and business parks which may include: specialty building supplies, automotive repair and service, ancillary commercial space, local serving offices, and others as appropriate.
- > Approximately 680,000 square feet of unallocated space should support regional serving retailers, including large-format outlets and specialty non-food retailers. This space would serve residents of the entire Town and beyond.
- > The future white-belt lands in Whitchurch-Stouffville, which will be required to accommodate a large portion of future population growth and commercial space are somewhat fragmented by environmental corridors. As a result, there are limited

available options suitable to accommodate regional scale commercial facilities in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

5.2 Key Issue 1 - Land Use Competition

Competition for commercial spending dollars is a positive part of our society. The best merchandise/service, at the best price, in the best location is the ultimate objective, and to achieve that, there must be opportunities for choice within Whitchurch-Stouffville. In addition, the protection of market share of one retailer or service provider over any other is not considered an appropriate planning policy objective.

The history of market studies in the context of land use planning in Ontario was primarily focused on the avoidance of "substantial urban blight" as that was a response to new retail models being introduced to a municipality that effectively wiped out the retail function of historic downtowns. The purpose of all that work was to "protect" historic downtowns from blight based on the decimation of their retail function.

Downtown Stouffville is considered an historic Downtown that has withstood the introduction of a variety of retail formats in other locations within Whitchurch-Stouffville, and within nearby municipalities. The Downtown's role has changed over time, but it still maintains a very modest retail and service commercial function, although it is no longer the primary retail centre of the community, nor has it been for quite some time.

As noted, In the past, the Town has included some "protections" for the function of the Downtown in the form of imposing minimum floor space requirements for various forms of retail and service commercial uses in other locations, primarily in Hoover Park. At this point in time, and to recognize the anticipated evolution of the Downtown, Western Approach, the Gateway and in Hoover Park into mixed-use districts that will naturally require smaller scale retail and service commercial uses to serve the local population, it is recommended that any "protections" for any form of retail or service commercial uses in the Downtown be removed.

Further, from a planning policy perspective, to support the principle of healthy competition among retail and service commercial businesses throughout Whitchurch-Stouffville in various formats, at various scales, and in various locations throughout the Town it is recommended, that the Town only require the preparation of a retail impact analysis for new retail commercial uses that are in excess of 30,000 square metres of Gross Leaseable Floor Area, in accordance with Section 4.4.9 of the Region of York Official

Plan. As noted within the Regional Official Plan, the focus of the retail impact analysis shall be:

- > Transportation requirements.
- > The impact on existing and approved future retail facilities.
- > Pedestrian, cycling and transit access to the facilities.
- > The manner in which the proposal is supportive of the centres and corridors policies of this Plan.

5.3 Key Issue 2 - Space to Grow

It is planned that Whitchurch-Stouffville will grow substantially in population and jobs by 2051 and, at a minimum, that is likely to generate the need for substantially enhancing the retail and service commercial floor space throughout the Town. A key question to be resolved through this study is where will it all go?

The Role of the Community of Stouffville

The Community of Stouffville is, unquestionably, the dominant growth centre for the Town. It is an appropriate objective to ensure that the largest population centre include the largest concentration of retail and service commercial opportunities. This objective is about creating a complete community and supporting a mixing of uses, or at least proximity among various uses. In Stouffville there are seven existing and/or planned primary retail and service commercial districts identified in the Town's Official Plan/Stouffville Secondary Plan including:

- > The Downtown - Community Core Area.
- > Western Approach Area Mixed-Use.
- > Gateway Mixed-Use Area.
- > Regional Retail Area (Hoover Park).

- > Lincolnville GO Station Area.
- > Activity Node Area.
- > Neighbourhood Retail Area.

In addition, and given the recent activity in Whitchurch-Stouffville that is planning for significant development south of Stouffville Road and west of Highway 48, the McCowan Corridor (both on the east and west sides) is seen as a longer term opportunity for the accommodation of significant retail and service commercial and office uses on lands outside the Oak Ridges Moraine Area.

The Downtown - Community Core Area

The Downtown requires special attention because it is a desirable and historic district that will continue to evolve as a mixed-use area, over time. Historic Downtown Districts require constant attention to ensure the pedestrian and cyclist realms, the historic buildings and their multi-functional attributes remain identifiable and attractive over time. As noted, the experiential elements of an historic downtown district cannot be underestimated as an important character-defining part of the Town.

The current planning policy regime within the Downtown fundamentally promotes it as a "mixed-use" area, with permission for higher intensity forms of residential development. Establishing this part of Stouffville as a mixed-use district is appropriate, and should continue to be promoted, but a strategy through planning policy needs to be considered to ensure that the retail and service commercial functions of these areas can continue to evolve, and to expand as population growth expands.

Zeroing in on the Core Area – Main Street designation, there is a tremendous desire to ensure that the Downtown is improved and is successful. The results from the survey respondents indicated that residents of Whitchurch-Stouffville envision and utilize the Downtown as much more than simply a retail and service commercial centre. Although the commercial function of Downtown Stouffville is important, it is much more than that. It is Whitchurch-Stouffville's primary administrative, cultural and mixed-use centre that includes a range of mutually supportive uses. It has a heritage character that is valued. There is a strong desire to improve the Downtown as a pedestrian-friendly destination, and the only real opportunity for the Town to establish an "experiential" commercial district,

where there is a strong residential community, fully integrated with entertainment and cultural facilities, offices, and restaurants that compliment and support a host of smaller scale retail and service commercial uses. The Downtown needs to be nurtured as a destination because it is beautiful and diverse in experiences.

From a planning policy perspective, the regime for a successful Downtown Stouffville is focused on three key principles:

- > **Establishing the environment for change** - including supportive policies that facilitate change, a commitment to long-term investment in the public realm, as well as the political will to make positive change happen, through strategies that upgrade infrastructure, including building public parking facilities (either in municipal parking lots or on-street).
- > **Reducing the risk of the redevelopment process** - remove red tape, pre-zone the Downtown for the development forms that are desired, support innovation.
- > **Reducing the cost of redevelopment** - reduce Development Charges, identify public realm enhancements and affordable housing as eligible Community Benefits, reduce parkland dedication requirements, reduce parking requirements, provide financial incentive programs.

The policy initiatives that go along with those principles are really all about "facilitating change" within an historic context. Private sector developers will respond to the level of commitment shown by the municipality - it is a symbiotic relationship, rather than an adversarial one, where the natural advantages of the Downtown are improved and enhanced through the noted three principles.

The Downtown has limited land supply available to accommodate new development. One way to alleviate that supply concern into the future is to expand the boundaries of the Downtown into the adjacent community. This may be extremely difficult in Stouffville because Main Street is fully embedded within existing residential neighbourhoods.

Another key issue to consider is how to ensure that retail and service commercial uses remain appropriately accommodated within the Downtown. It is a key role of the planning framework to consider where retail and service commercial uses are simply "permitted" within a mixed-use building, and where they should be "required." In Downtown Stouffville

retail and service commercial uses must be an at-grade requirement for all mixed-use development where the site has frontage on Main Street. Developers should be encouraged to provide a mixture of commercial unit sizes in mixed-use projects to support and attract a broad range of retail and service commercial tenants.

To bolster those policy requirements, it should be clear that stand-alone office or residential buildings are not permitted for new developments with frontage on Main Street in Downtown Stouffville. Similar policy requirements may be appropriate on key intersecting north-south streets.

From a more specific perspective, there is a concern that the policy regime within the Core Area - Main Street sub-designation is too permissive. The phrase "generally be based on conformity" lacks any ability to actually implement. There is a need to strengthen wording: "retail and service commercial uses and institutional uses SHALL be located at-grade in all buildings fronting Main Street..."

With respect to the Core Area – Mixed-Use sub-designation, it is recognized that that it promotes the redefinition and redesign of the existing industrial/commercial context in and around the existing Stouffville GO Station, in development forms compatible with the intent of the Core Area – Main Street sub-designation. It is expected that this area will redevelop, and will include new and updated land uses, including opportunities for retail and service commercial facilities. Future planning work that assists with the redevelopment of this particular area should ensure that some level of appropriate retail and service commercial is required to be located in stand-alone buildings, or as part of a mixed use development, in recognition of the existing GO Station.

Overall, the Downtown is not expected to deliver any significant new retail or service commercial Gross Floor Area. Overall, the goal here is to maintain, or modestly enhance the Downtown's contribution of retail and service commercial Gross Floor Area. Overall, given the limited land area available the Downtown is expected to provide a limited contribution to the Town's new retail and service commercial needs.

The Western Approach Area Mixed-Use

Similar to the Downtown, the current planning policy regime for the Western Approach Area Mixed-Use fundamentally promotes this area as a "mixed-use" area, with permission for higher intensity forms of residential development. Establishing this part of Stouffville as a mixed-use district is appropriate, and should continue to be promoted, but a strategy

through planning policy needs to be considered to ensure that the retail and service commercial functions of these lands can continue to evolve, and to expand as population growth expands.

The Western Approach Area Mixed-Use has been evolving and growing over the past 35 years. It is fairly typical of strip development of small to medium scaled retail and service commercial uses, surrounded by substantial surface parking lots. The Western Approach includes a range of retail and service commercial uses typically in single storey plazas, or single storey, stand-alone retail stores. Aesthetically, the Western Approach Area looks to be ready for redevelopment, notwithstanding that there are some relatively new businesses interspersed throughout the area. It certainly does not share the historic context or charm of the Downtown, but it is functional, providing local residents with important retail and service commercial opportunities.

It does appear that there is some limited area in the Western Approach Area Mixed-Use to build additional retail and service commercial floor space, as well as opportunities for infilling some of the parking areas, but, fundamentally, in much of the district it appears to be time for a more foundational redevelopment, likely as part of more intense, and taller and mixed-use built forms.

The Western Approach Area Mixed-Use is ready for a new comprehensive redevelopment strategy, facilitated through a Secondary Plan/Block Plan process and partially addressed through the DRAFT Main Street Urban Design Guidelines. It is the objective of the Western Approach Area designation to create a diverse, thriving commercial district combined with employment, institutional, cultural, entertainment and residential uses. It should also be a policy that any lost retail Gross Floor Area within the Western Approach Area Mixed-Use be, at a minimum, replaced on the same site, or on another site within the Western Approach Area Mixed-Use. The recommended policy framework includes:

- > Permission for a multitude of complementary uses, including retail and service commercial, which are encouraged as part of mixed-use development, with the integration of residential uses within any new development.
- > Direction for the establishment of an attractive pedestrian realm.

The concept of a fully mixed-use, and higher density district is sound, however, the introduction of residential development will require consideration of an appropriate residential amenity plan - parks, streetscapes and community facilities will need to be part

of the conversation. The role of traffic circulation and access will be crucial, and the issue parking will be a critical component of any redevelopment plan, where the consideration of structured parking (above and/or below grade) may be the key to opening up that potential.

In terms of more specific recommendations for the Western Approach Area Mixed-Use there is a significant concern that Section 12.7.18.3, subsection xiii is substantially focused on ensuring the achievement of residential land uses, with retail and service commercial uses permitted, but not necessarily required. It is recommended that this policy be revisited to change the focus away from residential, with stronger requirements for mixed-use, with retail and service commercial uses as a priority along the Main Street frontage. It is recommended that the policy be reworked to incorporate the following:

- > No permission for stand-alone residential buildings abutting Main Street.
- > All buildings that front on to Main Street to be either stand-alone retail, service commercial and/or office buildings, or mixed-use buildings with retail and service commercial and office uses required at-grade.
- > Permit Live-work units on lands that do not front onto Main Street.
- > Residential uses to be limited to apartment dwellings or live-work units. Prohibit all other forms of lower-density housing.

The Western Approach is expected to evolve with a greater mixture of land uses, in a more urban and pedestrian friendly way. It is not, however, expected to deliver any significant new retail or service commercial GFA, but rather change its role to become more of an extension of Downtown Stouffville.

The goal here is to maintain, or modestly enhance the contribution of retail and service commercial GFA attributable to the Western Approach. The evolving Western Approach is also considered to be the next focal area for smaller scale retail and service commercial opportunities, as an extension of the Downtown. The desired built form and mixture of uses within the Western Approach will also support and integrate smaller scale retail and service commercial land uses.

Overall, given the current desire to see residential development within this corridor, the Western Approach is expected to provide a limited contribution to the Town's new retail and service commercial needs.

The Gateway Mixed-Use Area

The Gateway Mixed-Use District is a relatively new development area located at the corner of Highway 48 and Main Street/Stouffville Road. It is a mixed-use opportunity expected to deliver a range of retail and service commercial uses, and residential uses. In this location it will be important to require retail and service commercial uses at-grade in mixed-use buildings to enhance the GFA potential for retail and service commercial uses in concert with higher density residential built forms.

It is recognized that retail and service commercial uses are permitted and "shall generally front" on to Main Street and Stouffville Road. It is suggested that the wording in planning policy should be stronger, more definitive. For example: "ALL frontage on Main Street, Stouffville Road and Highway 48 SHALL have retail and service commercial uses at grade within the Mixed-Use Area designation."

Overall, the goal here is to modestly enhance the contribution of new retail and service commercial GFA attributable to the Gateway Mixed-Use Area. In this location, smaller to modestly scaled retail and service commercial facilities are expected to serve the local residential community. This new development area will have only a modest impact on the delivery of new retail and service commercial Gross Floor Area Town-wide.

The Regional Retail Area (Hoover Park)

The Regional Retail Area (Hoover Park) is a purpose planned large format retail centre that accommodates large footprint "box" stores. It is relatively new in the community and is functionally an auto-oriented built form. It is successful, and has achieved its intended purpose, which was to stem the flow of retail spending to locations outside of the municipality. It is now the primary retail centre within the community.

First, the Town has established an important opportunity to expand the designated Regional Retail Area through two abutting employment area conversions, as follows:

- > Approximately 11 hectares, located in the southeast quadrant of Hoover Park Drive and Highway 48 – Smart Centres.
- > Approximately 27 hectares (estimated 18 hectares of developable land), located at 12049 Highway 48, the northeast corner of Hoover Park Drive and Highway 48 – Zhawd Corporation.

As part of both these conversion requests, the applicant's propose mixed-use opportunities including residential uses, office uses, retail and service commercial uses. The Zhawd Corporation proposal also includes a hotel/conference space, institutional uses and some industrial space.

These lands are proximate to the Town's designated Regional Retail Area, and as such should be considered under the same policy regime as the Regional Retail Area — a regime that supports the evolution of the Regional Retail Area, and these two areas of conversion, as a diverse and high density mixed-use centre that includes the introduction of more retail and service commercial space, opportunities for office forms of development as well as integrated higher density residential dwellings.

Second, in terms of current planning policy, the existing policy framework has produced the desired result in terms of scale and function of retail formats. Going forward, it is expected that its role, scale and level of importance as a retail centre will continue to grow in relation to population growth. Further, its evolution into a diverse, and high density mixed-use centre is also envisioned with the introduction of more retail and service commercial space, opportunities for office forms of development as well as integrated high density residential communities. From a planning policy perspective, the following objectives are considered to be crucial as the Hoover Park Area evolves:

- > There is a need to manage the evolution of Hoover Park to ensure that its retail and service commercial function can be maintained and significantly expanded over time. Future growth can be accommodated in mixed-use buildings where the retail functions are accommodated and required at-grade. New development proposals should have a minimum of 37 square meters of non-residential floor space per dwelling unit. Retail and service commercial uses, as well as office uses would be permitted in stand-alone buildings. Stand-alone residential buildings should not be permitted.

- > The public realm, including parks, open spaces, public buildings and streetscapes shall be appropriate in function and design for the adjacent built forms and mix of land uses, particularly where a primarily residential community is planned.
- > Where residential uses are introduced they shall be subject to a Block Plan process that identifies an appropriate level of residential amenity, including adequate parks and open spaces, community facilities and a clearly residential sense of character and identity. Special attention shall be given to the areas of interface between areas that are primarily residential in nature and areas that are primarily parking lots and/or primarily retail and service commercial in nature. Block Plans shall be prepared to the satisfaction of the Town.

Overall, it should be the objective of the Town to ensure that the primacy of the retail and service commercial function of The Regional Retail Area (Hoover Park) is maintained over time, and that will require a commitment to both maintaining and growing the retail and service commercial Gross Floor Area. In this regard, the Town should consider a policy that requires any lost retail Gross Floor Area within the Regional Retail Area to be, at a minimum, replaced on the same site, or on another site within the Regional Retail Area. The introduction of residential uses must also include contributions to retail and service commercial developments. Hoover Park must evolve in a way that maintains its important role as the most significant and highest order retail and service commercial area within Whitchurch-Stouffville.

It is expected that as the Regional Retail Area (Hoover Park), including the two employment area conversion properties, continues to evolve through the introduction of residential and other community supporting land uses, it will have a modest impact on the delivery of new retail and service commercial Gross Floor Area Town-wide.

The McCowan Corridor Lands (South of Stouffville Road)

The McCowan Corridor Lands, located south of Stouffville Road, are a potential development area that includes significant land areas where retail and service commercial land uses can be accommodated in the future, in proximity to significant growth areas within the Town to the east. There is the potential for a significant development block for commercial mixed-use development where the provision of substantial retail and service commercial uses can be a requirement of either stand-alone or mixed-use development forms. A significant portion of the lands fronting onto McCowan Road, both east and west

sides, should be identified as mixed-use high-rise, where retail and service commercial land use development must also be required.

Overall, the McCowan Corridor Lands should be planned as the next significant retail and service commercial node within Whitchurch-Stouffville. While not as large as the Regional Retail Area (Hoover Park), it is expected that the McCowan Corridor Lands have the potential to develop in a way that delivers **significant** and high order new retail and service commercial area that will appropriately serve the growing population of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Lincolnville GO Station Area

The Lincolnville GO Station Area is being considered in the context of an up-to-date planning policy regime in proximity to a significant investment in Regional transit. The context for the area is relatively high density and includes permissions for a host of retail and service commercial facilities.

The proposed planning regime includes an area that is conceptually identified as a "Required Retail Frontage Area", which is consider an excellent step to ensure that retail and service commercial land uses are incorporated into mixed-use development proposals. This approach could be utilized in some of the other policy frameworks where mixed-use development is desirable. It is suggested, however, that the "Required Retail Frontage Area" approach could be improved by being much more geographically specific, and could also be further expanded to include all of the frontage along 10th Line within the High-Density Mixed-Use designation.

Overall, it is anticipated that the contribution of the Lincolnville Go Station Area to the inventory of new retail and service commercial needs of a growing Whitchurch-Stouffville would be, at best modest.

Activity Node Areas

As previously identified, the Activity Node Area designation recognizes focal points within the community where clusters of community uses are located. Convenience retail and service commercial uses are permitted alongside residential, institutional, office and park uses.

These Activity Nodes are part of the Town’s inventory of smaller scale retail and service commercial facilities, and are strategically located in proximity to substantive community facilities. Given the limitations on scale, and the limited opportunities to locate substantive community facilities, the Activity Node Area designation is expected to provide a limited contribution to the Town’s new retail and service commercial needs.

Neighbourhood Retail Area

The identification of the Neighbourhood Retail Area is an effort to promote the former Flea Market Site, which is relatively large into a mixed use community that is better integrated into the fabric of development that surrounds it. The Neighbourhood Retail Area designation does permit a host of retail and service commercial development opportunities which can, depending upon the ultimate redevelopment plan, accommodate some of the retail and service commercial needs of future Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Generally, the Neighbourhood Retail Area has the potential to modestly enhance the Town’s ability to accommodate retail and service commercial Gross Floor Area in the eastern part of the Town, depending upon the development plans put in place. However, given its location and the lower density character of the surrounding community, the Neighbourhood Retail Area is expected to provide a limited contribution to the Town’s new retail and service commercial needs.

Residential Areas

Currently, the Official Plan does not anticipate the introduction of small scale Convenience Commercial facilities within residential neighbourhoods. However the Town should consider opportunities to facilitate smaller scale retail and service commercial by establishing permissions for Convenience Commercial forms of development that is more fully embedded within existing and future Residential Areas to better support complete and healthy community objectives. The planning regime for Convenience Commercial development within existing and planned Residential Areas throughout Stouffville, performance criteria should be established, such as:

- > Limitations on the scale of the Convenience Commercial facilities, both individually, as well as the scale of a cluster of Convenience Commercial facilities.

- > Location requirements, potentially requiring Convenience Commercial facilities at an intersection that includes at least a Collector Road.
- > On sites of 0.5 to 2.0 hectares in size
- > Requiring a compatibility test to ensure appropriate transitions from Convenience Commercial facilities to adjacent land uses.

It is anticipated that these policy permissions would be embedded into the Residential Areas designations in the Official Plan, to be facilitated through Site Specific Rezoning and/or Site Plan Approval. In newly planned communities, sites for Convenience Commercial uses need to be clearly identified in the Secondary Plan/Block Plan processes.

Overall, given the limitations on the scale of the Convenience Commercial facilities, this new approach within the Residential Areas is expected to provide a limited, but important contribution to the Town's new retail and service commercial needs.

Business Park/Industrial Areas

Stouffville includes a number of Business Park/Industrial Areas that are at varying levels of development, and have varying levels of attractiveness as locations for the anticipated forms of employment generating land uses. Some of the "Employment Areas" are in proximity to existing retail and service commercial facilities, or near evolving mixed-use districts, while some are virtually undeveloped.

"Employment Areas" are an important resource for any community as a necessary inventory is important to attract new employers in the business park/industrial sectors, as well as to promote a balanced tax base for the community.

It is suggested that the Town, through its land needs assessments, and where a surplus of "Employment Areas" have been identified consider strategic conversions of these lands to permit significant retail and service commercial opportunities in the long-term. Of course, facilitating an "Employment Area" conversion requires substantial long-term planning, and includes a full understanding of the Town's requirements for all types of land use categories. An "employment Area" conversion must be facilitated through a Municipal Comprehensive Review, a process that is carried out by the Region.

As such, and given the anticipated long-term process required to facilitate an “Employment Area” conversion, this approach is expected to provide a limited, but important contribution to the Town’s new retail and service commercial needs in the short and mid-terms. It may be considered with different potential in the longer term, subject to appropriate justification.

The Role of the Other Communities

Outside of the community of Stouffville, the lands subject to the Gormley Secondary Plan, the Vandorf-Preston Lake Secondary Plan and the Ballantrae-Musselman Lake and Environs Secondary Plan are not expected to contribute to the Town’s overall demand for retail and service commercial GFA in any significant way. The role of retail and service commercial uses in those areas is to provide opportunities for the very localized population and business communities.

More specifically, there are lands in South Gormley may have some potential to accommodate new retail and service commercial facilities, however the lands are within the Oak Ridges Moraine Countryside designation and permissions for any new facilities would require Regional and Provincial Approvals.

As such, and given the limited land supply, locational concerns, policy impediments and a lack of a growing population base, the contribution of the other communities within Whitchurch-Stouffville are expected to provide a limited, but important contribution to the Town’s new retail and service commercial needs.

6.0 Conclusions

1. Overall, the Official Plan for Whitchurch-Stouffville is relatively up-to-date and appropriately promotes the concepts of mixed-use development within a structure of higher density centres and corridors. The Plan does need to be reviewed to ensure that policy objectives are better reflected in the wording of some key policies. Generally a strengthening of the wording away from a permissive approach to a more definitive approach - require rather than permit, for example - would be useful in some key circumstances.

2. In terms of the idea of regulating the scale, the location and the type of retail and service commercial uses that are desirable is not overly regulated within Whitchurch-Stouffville, which is a positive attribute of the current planning policy regime. There are multiple opportunities throughout Whitchurch-Stouffville for the accommodation of area appropriate retail and service commercial development. While the Downtown receives a limited level of protection for its smaller scale retail function, and the Plan does identify a number of land use designations with parameters for location and scale, the overall strategy for the delivery of retail and service commercial facilities is considered appropriate, recognizing that more facilities will be required to properly serve a growing community, particularly in Stouffville.

3. The issue of growth, and where the opportunities exist within the Town to accommodate all forms and scales of retail commercial use is complex. It is a positive attribute to be able to identify multiple opportunities within the Town - at different scales, with different levels of opportunity. Quite simply, the Town can rely upon multiple choices, in multiple locations to accommodate various forms and scales of retail and service commercial development to serve a growing community, as follows (and identified on Map 2, attached):
 - > The **Significant Opportunity** to accommodate new larger scale, and greater amounts of retail and service commercial Gross Floor Area is the McCowan Corridor Lands (south of Stouffville Road).

 - > The **Modest Opportunities** to accommodate new and additional retail and service commercial Gross Floor Area:
 - + The Gateway Mixed-Use Area;

 - + The Regional Retail Area (Hoover Park); and,

- + The Lincolnville Go Station Area.
- > The **Limited Opportunities** to accommodate new and additional retail and service commercial Gross Floor Area:
 - + The Downtown;
 - + The Western Approach Area Mixed-Use;
 - + The Activity Nodes;
 - + The Neighbourhood Retail Area;
 - + The Residential Areas; and,
 - + The other communities of Gormley, Vandorf-Preston Lake and Ballantrae-Musselman Lake.

The remaining Employment Areas in the Town, and their potential for future conversion may be, in the long-term significant, modest or limited in their ability to accommodate new and additional retail and service commercial Gross Floor Area. It is currently unknown whether or not Whitchurch-Stouffville is in a position to consider additional strategic Employment Area conversions (in addition to the two already identified) for new and additional retail and service commercial Gross Floor Area until a more extensive assessment of long-term Employment Area need has been carried out by the Town. In addition, Employment Area conversions can only be facilitated through the Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review process.

