

Whitchurch-Stouffville Commercial Policy Review

Public Meeting

March 9, 2022

Planning Policy Review – Other Jurisdictions

The review of commercial policies from other jurisdictions focused on:

- > City of Brantford Official Plan (2021)
- > City of Markham Official Plan (2014)
- > City of Richmond Hill Official Plan (2010)
- > City of Vaughan Official Plan (2010)

The overarching message from the review of these Official Plan documents is the focus on accommodating commercial land uses within **mixed use centres and corridors** that include higher intensity residential uses, along with a range of retail and service commercial facilities

Where stand alone commercial facilities exist, there is a general objective to see those areas **redevelop as more intensive multi-use commercial areas** that accommodate complementary retail, service and office employment uses, as well as, in most cases, residential uses

Typically, these Official Plan also promote the idea that retail and service commercial uses should be **embedded within residential neighbourhoods** to promote active transportation and healthy community development

Planning Policy Review – Region of York Official Plan

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

The Region of York Official Plan:

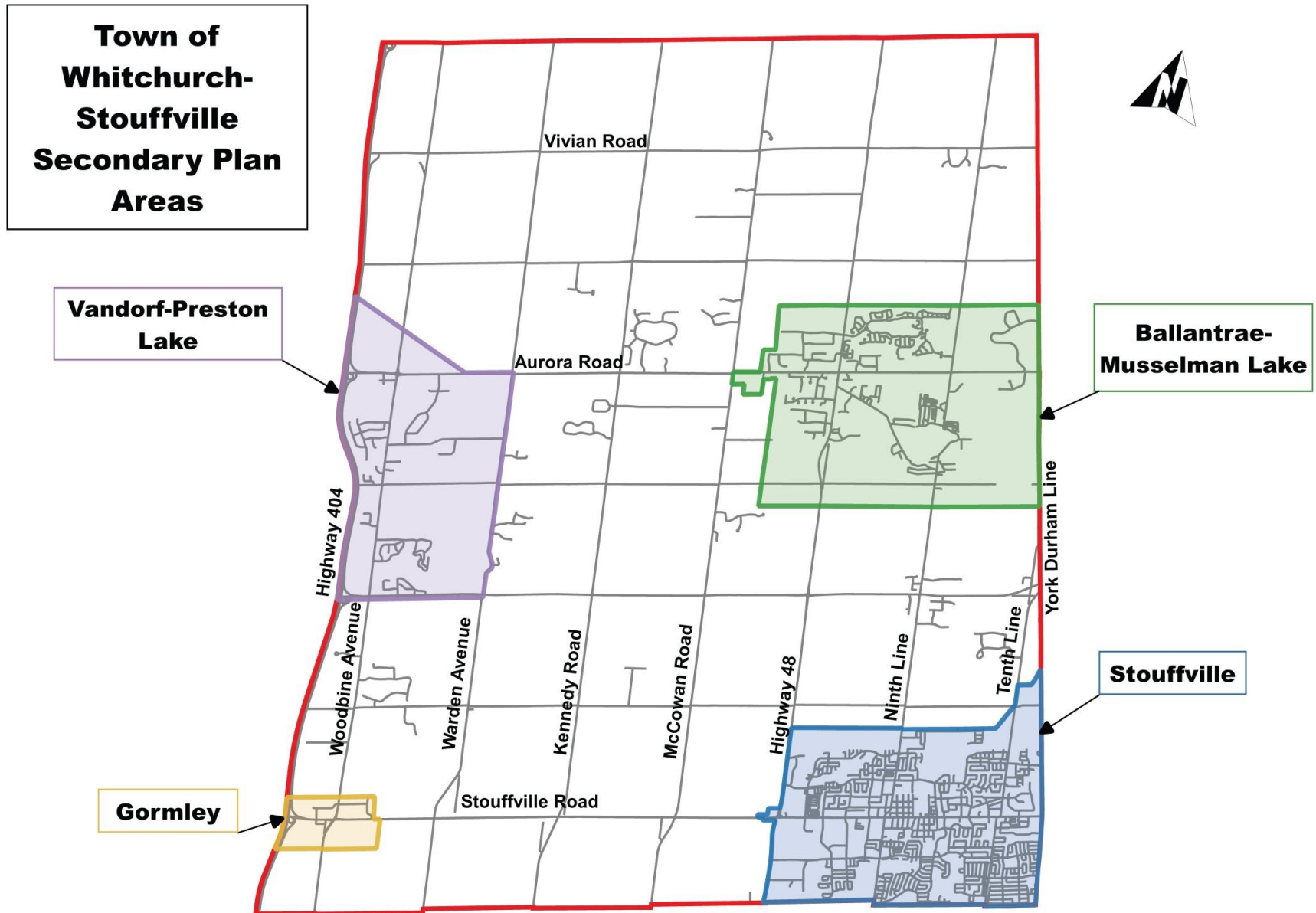
- > Provides an overarching policy framework based on the principle that ***retail trade is an essential component of a healthy economy***
- > Recognizes that the retail landscape is ***continually evolving***
- > Committed to planning for retail and service commercial facilities as ***key components of mixed-use communities***
- > Recognizes that municipalities will need to promote and ***incorporate effective urban design to ensure the integration of retail uses within the community***
- > States that ***retail facilities should be designed and located to serve the needs of the community and support the Region's urban structure***

Planning Policy Review – Whitchurch-Stouffville Official Plan

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Official Plan:

- > Establishes the framework for the future planning of the municipality
- > Outlines an **overall vision**, with **supporting principles and objectives**, and includes policies and implementation approaches that **guide decision making** with respect to commercial land use
- > The details for **urban development** are more fully articulated through the Town's several **Secondary Plans**
- > Commercial uses, except those related to agricultural uses, are **directed towards Secondary Plan Areas**
- > The **vast majority** of population and employment growth will be directed towards the Community of **Stouffville**

Planning Policy Review – Whitchurch-Stouffville Secondary Plans



Planning Policy Review – Secondary Plan Areas

Gormley Secondary Plan:

- > Includes General and Convenience commercial land use designations
- > Is focused on servicing the existing and modestly expanded community,
- > **Is not considered a significant contributor to the overall retail and service commercial inventory within the Town**

Vandorf-Preston Lake Secondary Plan:

- > 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 - Preston Lake will be maintained as a low-density residential community
- > **Is not considered a significant contributor to the overall retail and service commercial inventory within the Town**

Planning Policy Review – Secondary Plan Areas

Ballantrae-Musselman Lake Secondary Plan:

- > Implements the policy framework provided within the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Plan and is focused primarily on environmental protection and recognition of existing uses within environmentally sensitive areas
- > New development is focused within the Ballantrae Settlement Area
- > **Is not considered a significant contributor to the overall retail and service commercial inventory within the Town**

Planning Policy Review – Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan

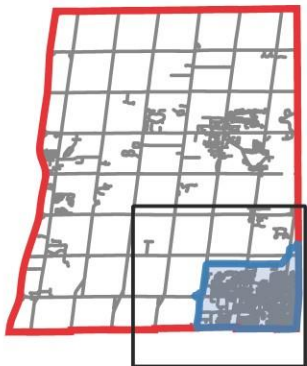
It is a principle of this Secondary Plan to establish an economically sustainable community by supporting existing businesses and attracting new businesses to the community

The Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan:

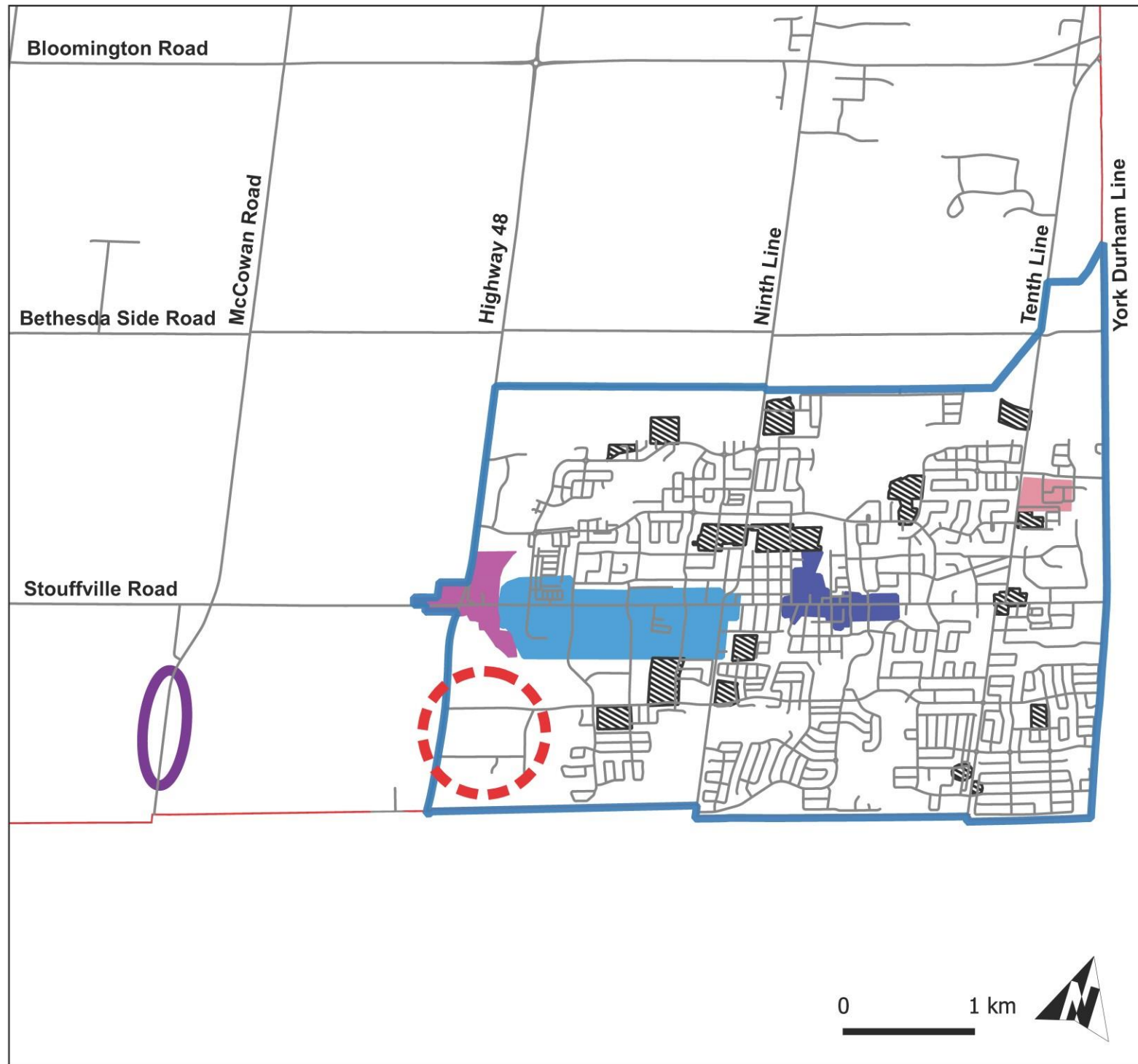
- > Provides for a range of commercial uses serving the needs of the region, local communities and promote mixed-use development
- > Establishes a commercial hierarchy that does reference function and scale of commercial uses based on context and location - with a clear focus on development compatibility and transitions to adjacent land uses:
 - + The Regional Retail Area (Hoover Park)
 - + The Gateway Mixed Use Area
 - + The Core Area
 - + The Activity Node Area
 - + Neighbourhood Retail Area



Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan Land Use



-  Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan Area
-  Roads
- Land Use**
-  Activity Node Area
-  Gateway Mixed Use Area
-  Neighbourhood Retail Area
-  Community Core Area
-  Schedule F1
-  Western Approach Area
-  Schedule F2
-  Regional Retail Area
-  Hoover Park
-  McCowan Corridor

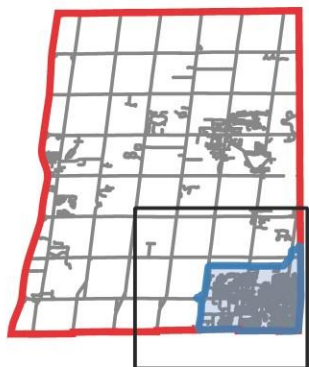


Key Issue 1 – Space to Grow

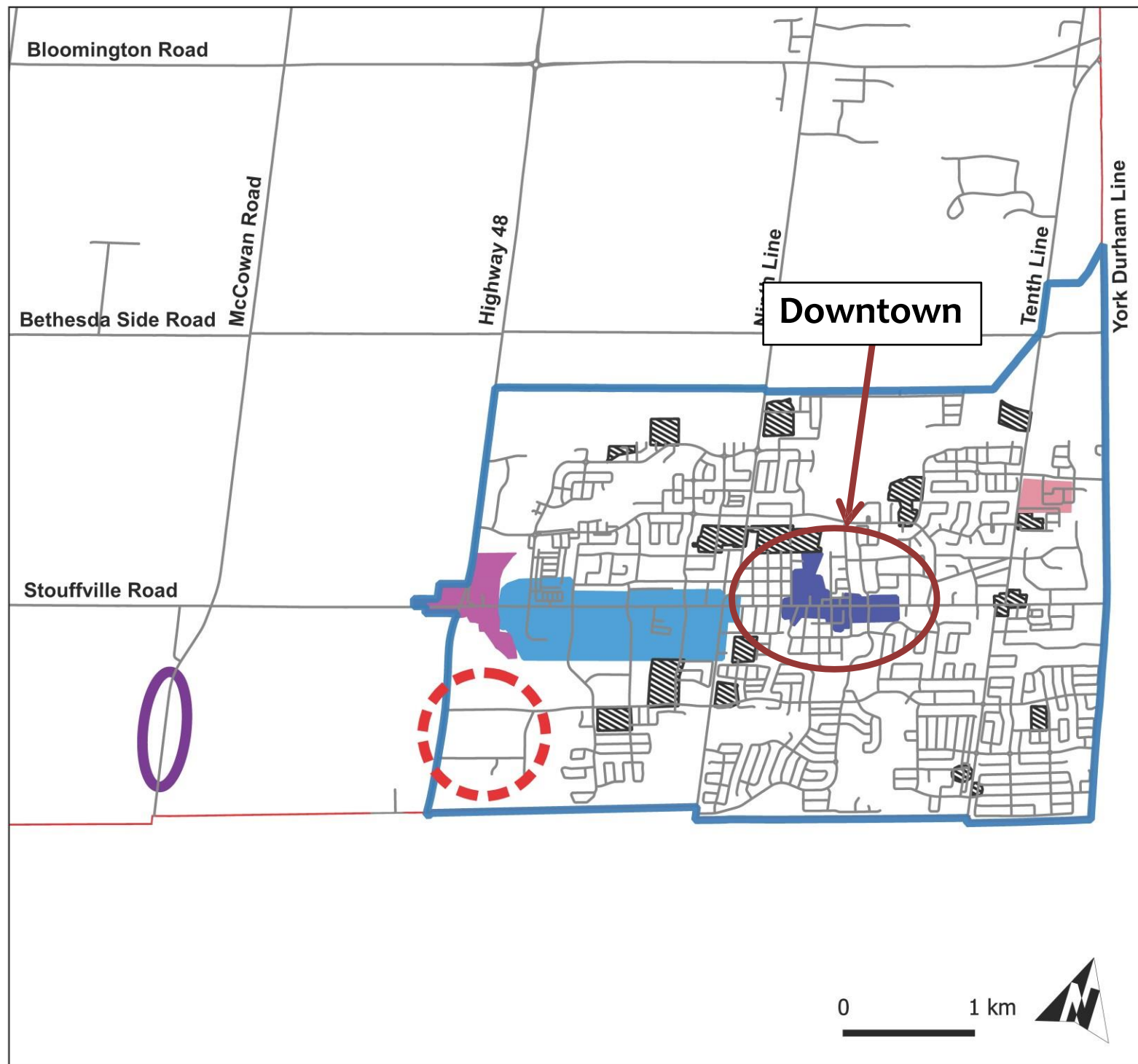
Whitchurch-Stouffville will almost double in population by 2051 and, at a minimum, that is likely to generate the need for at least double the retail and service commercial floor space throughout the Town - Where will it all go?

- > 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
- > In Stouffville there are a number of existing and/or planned primary retail and service commercial districts, including:
 - + The Downtown
 - + The Western Approach
 - + The Gateway Mixed-Use District
 - + Hoover Park
 - + The McCowan Corridor Lands

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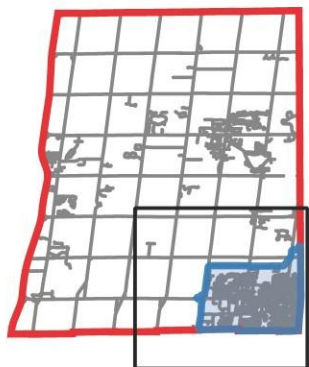
The Downtown is much more than simply a retail and service commercial centre. It is the Town's primary administrative, cultural and mixed-use centre that includes a range of mutually supportive uses. It has a heritage character that is valued.

- > There is a tremendous desire to ensure that the Downtown is improved and is successful
- > The regime for a successful Downtown Stouffville is focused on three key principles:
 - + Establishing the environment for change
 - + Reducing the risk of the redevelopment process
 - + Reducing the cost of redevelopment

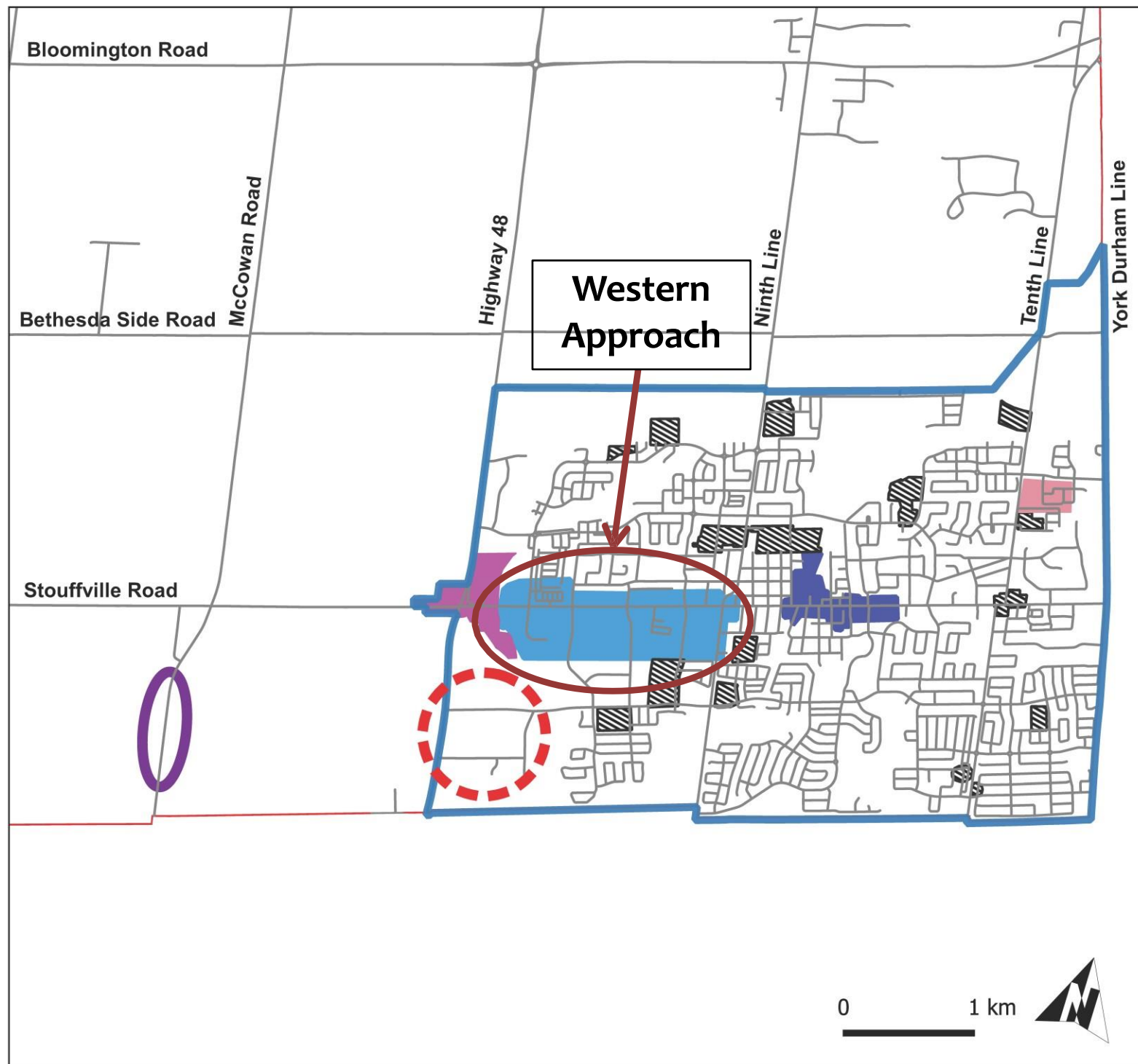
The Downtown is not expected to deliver any significant new retail or service commercial GFA. Overall, the goal here is to maintain, or modestly enhance the Downtown's contribution of retail and service commercial GFA.



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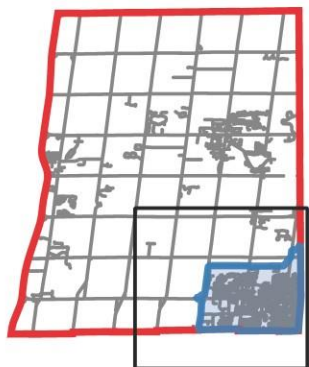
The Western Approach has been evolving and growing over the past 35 years. It is fairly typical of strip development of small to medium scaled retail and service commercial uses, surrounded by substantial surface parking lots. The Western Approach is ready for a new comprehensive redevelopment strategy, facilitated through a Secondary Plan/Block Plan process.

- > 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. The policy framework includes:
 - + Permission for a multitude of complimentary 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

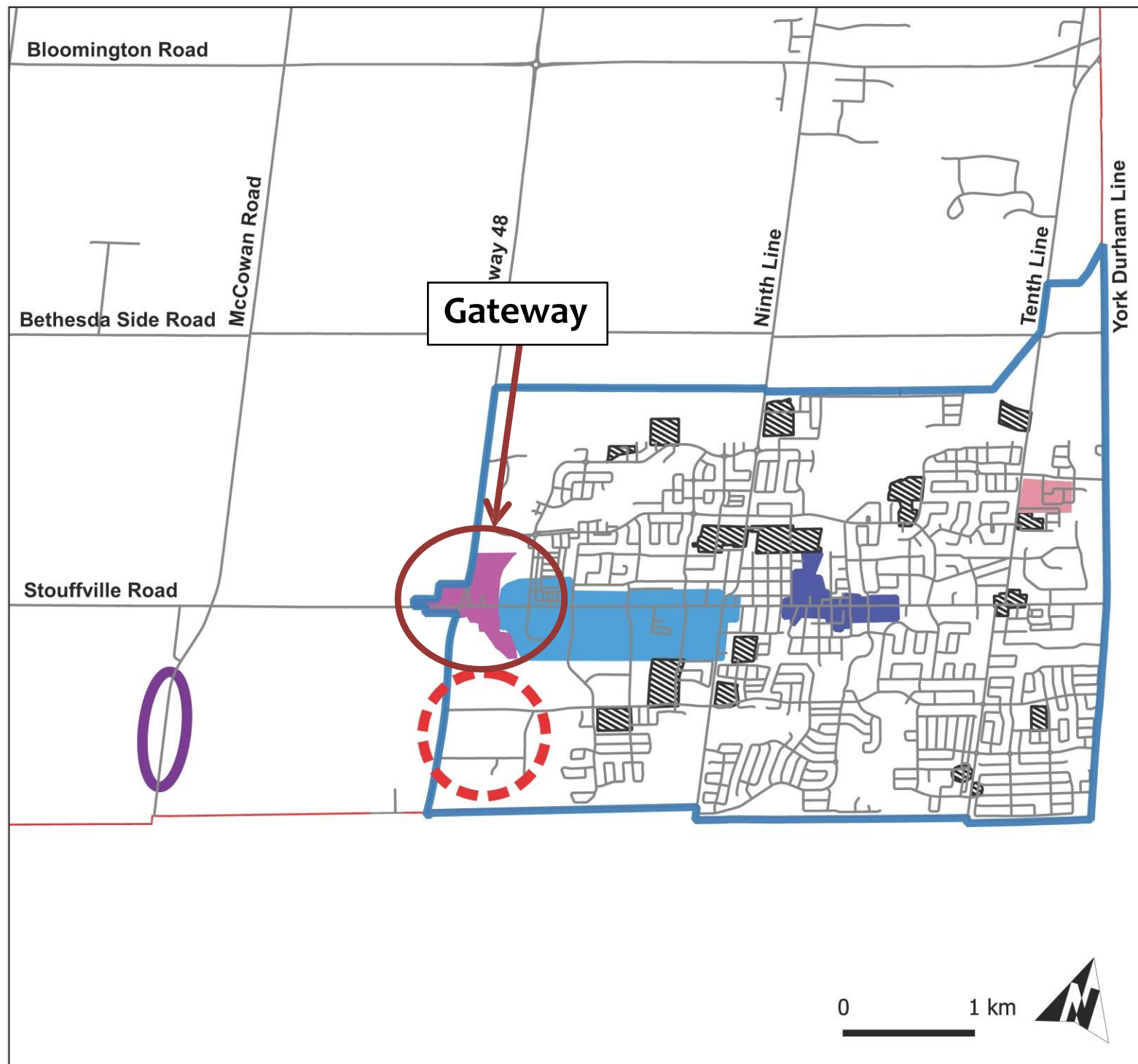
The Western Approach is not expected to deliver any significant new retail or service commercial GFA, but rather change its role to become more of an extension of Downtown Stouffville - The goal here is to maintain, or modestly enhance the contribution of retail and service commercial GFA



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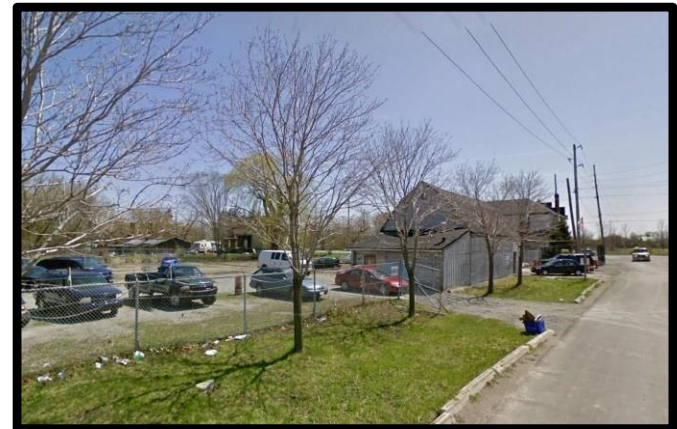


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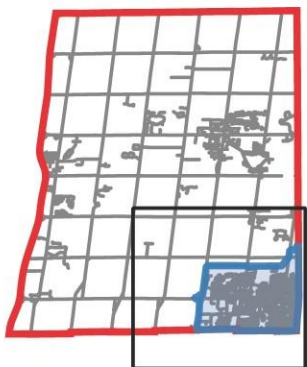
The Gateway Mixed-Use District is a mixed-use opportunity expected to deliver a range of retail and service commercial uses, and residential uses

- > 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 house forms

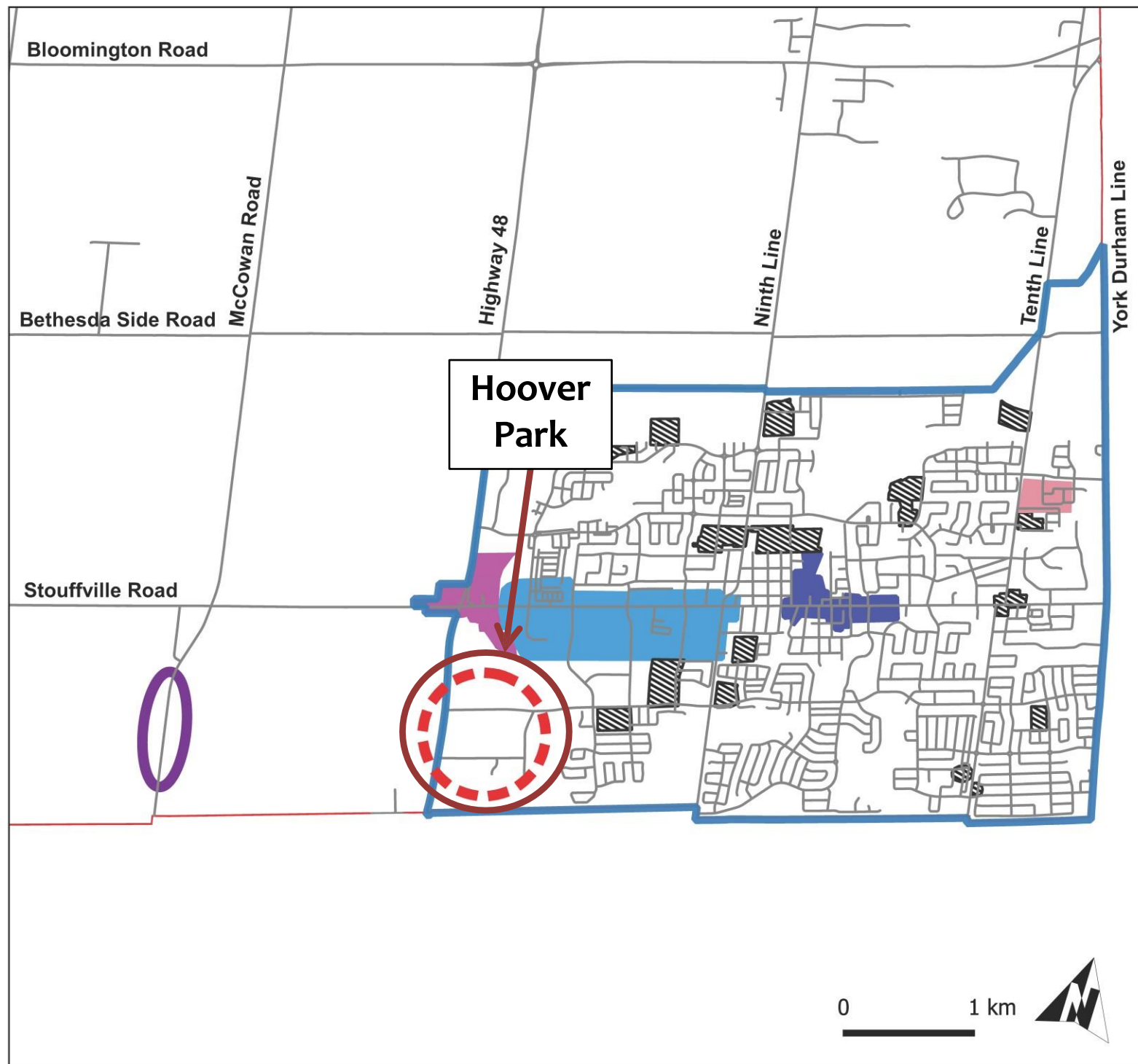
The Gateway Mixed-Use District will have only a modest impact on the delivery of retail and service commercial GFA town-wide



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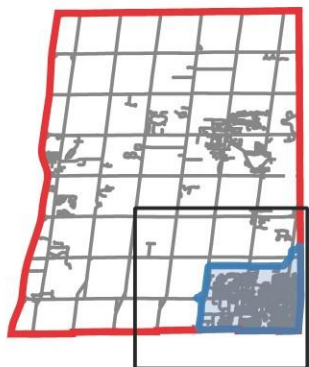
Hoover Park is a purpose planned large format retail centre that accommodates large footprint "box" stores. It is relatively new in the community and is functionally an auto-oriented built form. It is now the primary retail centre within the community.

- > The existing policy framework has produced the desired result in terms of scale and function of retail formats
- > It is expected to evolve into a diverse, and high density mixed-use centre. From a planning policy perspective, the following objectives are considered to be crucial:
 - + There is a need to manage the evolution to ensure that its retail and service commercial function can be maintained and significantly expanded over time
 - + Where residential uses are introduced they shall be subject to a Block Plan process that identifies an appropriate level of residential amenity. Parks, public buildings and streetscapes shall be appropriate in function and design for the adjacent built forms and mix of land uses

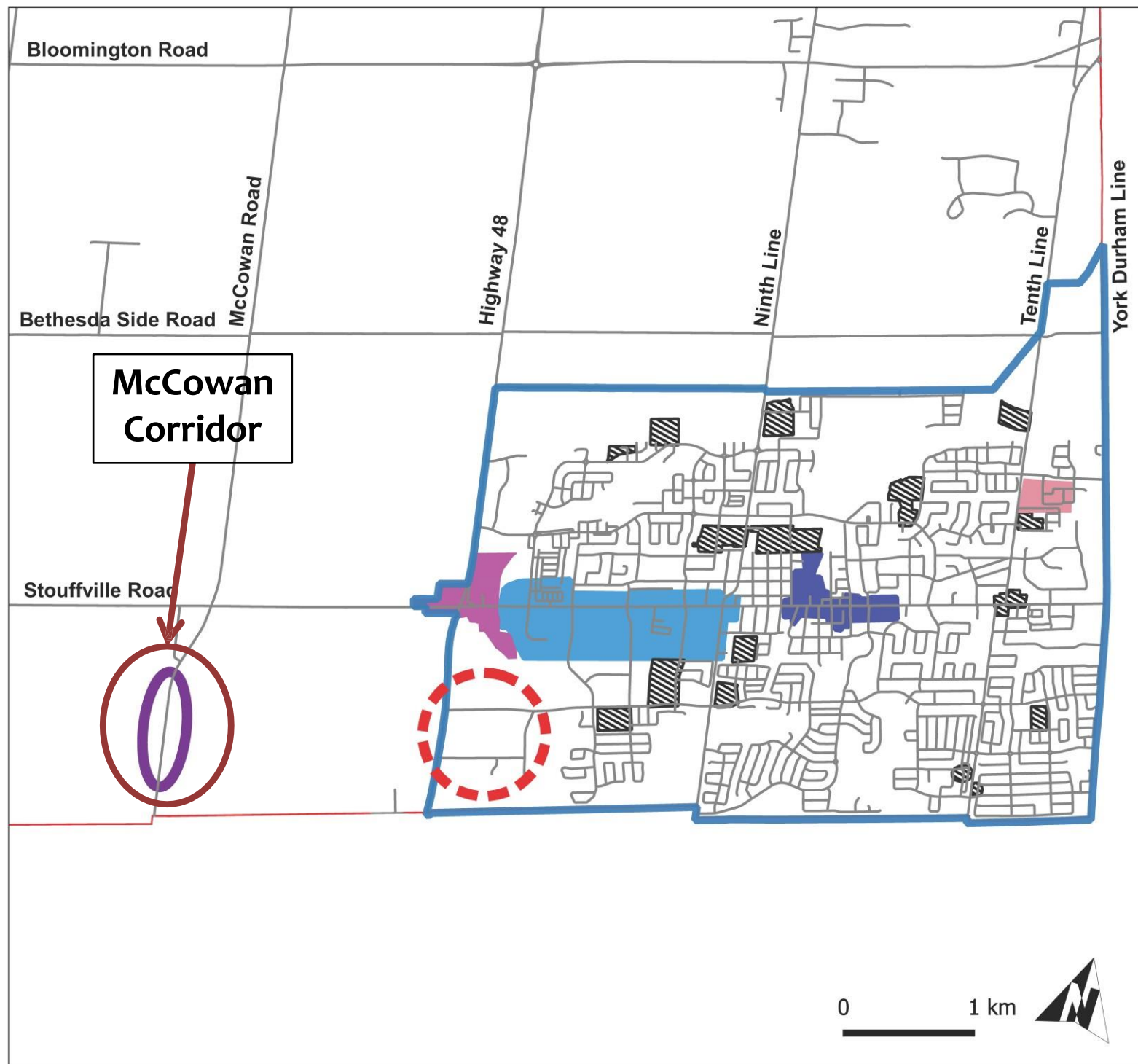
It is important for the Town to ensure that the primacy of the retail and service commercial function of Hoover Park. Hoover Park must evolve in a way that maintains its important role as the most significant and highest order retail and service commercial area within Whitchurch-Stouffville.



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Key Issue 1 – Space to Grow

The McCowan Corridor Lands are a new development area that includes significant land areas where retail and service commercial land uses can be accommodated in the future

- > There is a significant development block for commercial mixed-use development where retail and service commercial uses will be a requirement of mixed-use development forms
- > A significant portion of the lands fronting onto McCowan Road are identified as mixed-use high-rise, where retail and service commercial land use development will also be permitted

The McCowan Corridor Lands should be planned as the next significant retail and service commercial node within Whitchurch-Stouffville. It is expected that these lands will develop in a way that delivers significant and high order retail and service commercial area

Key Issue 2 – Land Use Competition

- > The history of market studies in the context of land use planning in Ontario was primarily focused on "protecting" historic downtowns from blight based on the decimation of their retail function
- > Downtown Stouffville is an historic Downtown that has withstood the introduction of a variety of retail formats in other locations. It's role has changed over time - It is no longer the primary retail centre of the community
- > 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
- > To recognize the anticipated evolution of the Downtown, Western Approach, the Gateway and in Hoover Park into mixed-use districts that will require smaller scale retail and service commercial uses to serve the local population, "protections" for any form of retail or service commercial uses in the Downtown should be removed

Key Issue 2 – Land Use Competition

- > The Town should only require the preparation of a retail impact analysis for new retail commercial uses that are in excess of 30,000 square metres of GFA, 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

Conclusions

- > Based on the policy review, and the overarching direction of the Regional Official Plan, it appears that the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has, within its Official Plan, an appropriate planning policy framework guiding future retail and service commercial planning
- > The focus on mixed-use development forms, rather than exclusive use designations and built forms, is appropriate, and corresponds well to the planning frameworks identified in the other jurisdictions reviewed
- > In terms of where new retail and service commercial uses will be appropriately accommodated:
 - + **Significant Opportunity** – The McCowan Corridor Lands
 - + **Modest Opportunities** – Hoover Park District, the Gateway Mixed-Use District and the various Neighbourhood Retail Areas
 - + **Limited Opportunities** – The Western Approach and the Downtown, the Gormley Secondary Plan, the Vandorf-Preston Lake Secondary Plan and the Ballantrae-Musselman Lake and Environs Secondary Plan

Questions for Consideration

- > Does Whitchurch-Stouffville currently have an appropriate range and mixture of retail and service commercial development?
- > Are there specific retail or service commercial uses that are missing from the existing range a mixture?
- > Is it appropriately focused on Stouffville, or should it be better distributed throughout the entire Town?
- > Are there locations anywhere within the Town that should become a focus for retail and service commercial uses?

This study is part of the TWS Official Plan Review

