



Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Council Report

Item 3

Subject:	Official Plan Review: Draft Visioning Consultation Report (D08)
Staff Report No.	DS-049-20
Department:	Development Services
Date:	November 3, 2020

Recommendation:

1) That Council receive Report No. DS-049-20 for information.

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this Report is to provide Council with an update on the Town's Official Plan Review Phase 1 - Visioning and Consultation activities, present the Draft Community Vision Summary Report, and outline the next steps in the Official Plan Review (OPR) process.

2. Executive Summary:

This Report provides Council with an update on the Town's Official Plan Review Phase 1 - Visioning and Consultation activities. Phase 1 of the OPR includes work associated with developing a new Official Plan Vision Statement and Guiding Principles to inform the preparation of the Town's new Official Plan.

The Phase 1 Visioning and Consultation activities and findings are summarized in this Report, and include the following:

- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting, August 13, 2020;
- Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) Meeting, August 13, 2020;
- Virtual Public Open House, September 23, 2020;

- Online survey and interactive mapping on the OPR webpage: www.cometogetherws.ca/opr. Print copies of the survey were also made available at Town facilities, including Town Hall, WS Leisure Centre/Library, and WS Museum, and in the October edition of the Town's On The Road magazine; and
- Engagement with Indigenous Communities.

A virtual Public Open House was held on September 23, 2020, which was well attended by approximately 50 participants. As of October 9, 2020, 241 people had completed the survey. All additional responses and comments will be considered throughout the OPR process.

Based upon the input received, Town staff and the Town's OPR Consultant (WSP Group Canada) have prepared a Draft Community Vision Summary Report, which is included in Attachment 1 to this Report. The Draft Report provides a detailed summary of the consultation findings and includes a Draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles which will inform the policy directions for the new Official Plan.

3. Background:

The Town's Official Plan Review (OPR) was formally initiated on June 18, 2019, with a Special Meeting of Council, in accordance with Section 26(3) of the *Planning Act*, to solicit public input on the issues that should be addressed through the OPR. Council endorsed an Introductory Discussion Paper, a Communications Plan, a preliminary Work Program and Schedule, and a list of Planning Principles and Directions to guide the OPR process, as outlined in [Staff Report No. DS-003-19](#).

The OPR will address the opportunities and challenges of planning and building in the Town and will result in a new Official Plan that implements Provincial and Regional planning policies in a locally appropriate manner. The new Official Plan will seek to direct and manage growth in a sustainable manner, promote a more complete and healthy community, and continue to protect and enhance our natural environment, and agricultural and rural resources. The new Official Plan will result in a new vision and policy directions for managing growth and development in the Town to the year 2051.

The Town's OPR is being undertaken iteratively with the Region's MCR. The Region's new Official Plan was anticipated to be adopted by the end of 2020, but due to recent changes in Provincial direction, the Region's new draft Official Plan is now tentatively anticipated to be available for consultation in Q2 2021, and adoption by Regional Council by the end of 2021. The timing for completion of the Region's MCR and Official Plan Update has a direct impact on the Town's OPR, as the Town's new Official Plan is required to conform to the Region's new Official Plan, once approved. The Town's Official Plan is required to be updated within one year following the approval of the Region's new Official Plan. The Town's OPR continues to be on track with the Region's schedule.

4. Analysis and Options:

The following sections provide a summary of the Phase 1 consultation and engagement activities undertaken to date which have informed the preparation of a Draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles for the Town's new Official Plan.

4.1 Summary of Phase 1 Consultation and Engagement Activities

Technical Advisory Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

Town staff hosted two separate meetings with the OPR Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) on August 13, 2020. The TAC is comprised of various public agencies and municipal staff which represent a broad range of interests. The SAC is comprised of various organizations and Town Committees, representative of the community. The purpose of these meetings were to update stakeholders on the OPR process, receive technical input, and consult on developing a new Vision Statement for the Official Plan.

Virtual Public Open House

A virtual Public Open House was held on September 23, 2020, which was well attended by approximately 50 participants. Notification for the meeting was provided in the Sun-Tribune (September 10th and 17th), through the Town's social media, and email circulation through the OPR Interested Parties List, which includes members of the public that have expressed an interest in the OPR, the TAC and SAC members, and Indigenous Communities. Invitations to conduct individual meetings with the Indigenous Communities was also provided. The purpose of the virtual Public Open House was to provide an update on the Town's OPR work program and schedule, the current context of the Official Plan, and receive input on matters of importance to the community and what should be reflected in a new Vision Statement for the Town.

During the Open House residents highlighted the following key concerns and interests:

- Manage current and future growth;
- Preserve natural environment and agricultural lands;
- Improve infrastructure;
- Create walkable communities; and
- Apply appropriate densities across the Town and provide good urban design in settlement areas.

A majority of participants were most interested in hearing from the Town about Population Growth and topics related to Housing and Employment, with several other participants interested in speaking about the Natural Environment and Agriculture. A majority of Open House participants **strongly agreed** that settlement areas in the Town have changed significantly since 2016 and that more can be done to develop and improve the Town's settlement areas. A variety of land use planning objectives were presented during the Open House and the top three priorities ranked (in order) by participants were: **improved**

infrastructure, increased density/good design in settlement areas and preserving the natural environment.

Several other priorities were brought forward from members of the public, including:

- Sustainable development;
- Slowing residential growth and maintaining existing settlement area boundaries;
- Farming and local food production and preserving agricultural land, the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt Area;
- Anti-racism approach to planning through new design and development;
- Reconciliation with Indigenous communities;
- Making public engagement more accessible and transparent across Town projects;
- Conforming to the Provincial and Regional Plans; and
- Improving broadband internet in rural areas.

When asked to describe the Town's vision in 25 years using three words or less, members of the public identified with the following key terms the most: **safe, friendly, sustainable, inclusive, walkable, accessible, rural and green.**

The Draft Community Vision Summary Report (Section 3) provides further details, and is included in Attachment 1 to this Report.

Visioning Survey

In addition to the virtual Public Open House, an online Visioning Survey was provided on the OPR webpage: www.cometogetherws.ca/opr to receive further input. Print copies of the survey were also made available at Town facilities (Town Hall, WS Leisure Centre/Library, and WS Museum) and in the October edition of the Town's On The Road magazine. As of October 9, 2020, 241 surveys were received and analyzed, this included 206 online surveys and 35 hand written surveys. The Survey closed on October 9, 2020, and all additional input received will be considered throughout the OPR process.

Based on the responses, it was evident that some of the key issues important for the future of the Town are related to population growth and its impacts to infrastructure, traffic congestion and the preservation and access to natural and open spaces. Generally, survey respondents would like the Town to preserve natural resources and environmental areas, including farmlands, as it contributes to a healthy community. Survey participants highlighted the desire for walkable communities that better reflect the needs of the Town's changing demographics. When asked about the Town's current vision, the most popular term that resonated with respondents was "preserve natural resources and environmental area"

The Draft Community Vision Summary Report (Section 3) provides further details and is included in Attachment 1 to this Report.

Interactive Mapping

The OPR webpage also included an interactive map, where participants were asked to provide comments about what they love about the Town, where and how growth should or should not occur, identify significant natural or cultural heritage features or resources to be conserved, or identify important community landmarks or focal points. This interactive mapping tool allowed participants to place a 'pin-drop' on a map and provide comments or upload photos.

Feedback received from the interactive mapping tool primarily discussed growth management, complete communities and natural areas for the Town. Participants suggested the Town should prioritize the following:

- Walkable communities and pedestrian-friendly measures to slow traffic;
- Preserve the downtown area of Main Street as an economic and cultural hub;
- Promote economic development opportunities in other areas of the Town, such as near Lincolnville GO; and
- Preserve environmental areas and farmland.

4.2 Draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles

Based on the input from the Phase 1 Visioning and Consultation activities, a Draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles has been developed. An online survey will be posted, to present the Draft Vision Statement to the public and to receive feedback from the community and stakeholders.

Section 4 of the Draft Community Vision Summary Report (Attachment 1) summarizes the comments and directions related to planning for growth, planning for the natural environment, and planning for complete communities.

Based on the Phase 1 consultations, the following Vision Statement and Guiding Principles have been proposed for further consultation and feedback:

Community Vision

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville will be a safe, healthy, and inclusive community with rural character, supporting future generations by providing a range of community services, affordable housing, employment and active transportation opportunities.

Future growth will be directed to key settlement areas which will be designed to a high standard of excellence, while respecting cultural heritage resources and neighbourhood character.

The Town will act as a leader in mitigating the impacts of climate change and ensure that existing and future infrastructure services are resilient and meet the needs of a growing community.

The Town will support and enhance the development of parks and open spaces, while providing natural linkages across natural areas, including the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine.

Guiding Principles

1. Public Health and Safety and Community Services

Decisions made with respect to the future of the Town should protect and enhance complete communities by prioritizing public health and safety and ensuring that the Town provides and manages community services (healthcare facilities, seniors care, daycare, recreation and community facilities).

2. Climate Change and Resilience

Any change in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville should consider its impact to greenhouse gas emissions, encourage sustainable design practices, and ensure that infrastructure and development services are resilient to future impacts (i.e. health and safety, climate change, conservation of natural resources).

3. Environmental Protection and Improvement

Any change in the Town should be undertaken in a manner which will preserve and improve the quality and quantity of the natural environment and provide adequate parks, open spaces and natural linkages.

4. Economic Prosperity & Financial Accountability

Decisions made with respect to the future of the Town's economy will be transparent, accountable and financially feasible. Decisions will support economic sustainability by providing a range of employment and agricultural job opportunities and a focus on supporting the local economy while respecting capital and operating costs.

5. Design Excellence and Cultural Heritage Preservation

Decisions made with respect to the future of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville should meet a high level of standard for design, provide for a suitable range of housing options and affordability, while respecting cultural heritage and conserving the rural character of the Town.

6. Accountable, Inclusive and Equitable

Decisions made in the Town will continue to advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and embrace a diversity of cultures, in order to recognize and support a fair, equitable and inclusive community, by providing equal opportunity and accessibility across all dimensions of diversity.

4.3 Next Steps

The Draft Community Vision Summary Report will be made available on the OPR webpage, and will include an online poll to receive feedback on the draft Vision Statement and Guiding Principles, to confirm and refine the Vision, as required. Phase 1 will culminate with the preparation of a Final Community Vision Summary Report including the proposed Vision Statement and Guiding Principles, which is anticipated to be available in Fall 2020. It is anticipated that the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles may be updated and refined throughout the OPR process.

Concurrent with these activities, the Town is advancing work on the Phase 2 Background Discussion Papers related to the following key focus areas:

- Planning for Growth;
- Planning for the Natural Environment;
- Planning for Complete Communities; and
- General Technical/Housekeeping Updates.

Phase 2 consultation activities with the public and stakeholders will occur in Winter 2020 to present the draft Discussion Papers and receive input on the key issues to be addressed and potential policy options for evaluation.

Phase 3 will involve the identification of preferred policy directions and the development of new Official Plan policies through a series of Policy Direction Reports (Q2 2021).

Phase 4 will involve the preparation of the Draft Official Plan and further consultation and engagement with the public and stakeholders. It is anticipated that the draft Official Plan will be available in early 2022 for consultation.

Town staff will continue to provide regular updates and briefings to Council and seek direction at key milestones throughout the OPR, including the release of major deliverables and community and stakeholder consultation activities.

5. Financial Implications:

None

6. Alignment with Strategic Plan:

2. Expanding the tax base through a growing, diversified economy

Building and maintaining a tax base that supports the highest quality program and service delivery.

- Focus on servicing and development of Provincially Significant Employment Zones
- Identify expansion areas for Industrial / Commercial growth

4. Asset Planning, Maintenance and Development

Successful stewardship of the infrastructure and facilities required to support a growing community and vibrant economy.

- Address / plan for maintenance of existing assets & infrastructure; Create new infrastructure

7. Attachments:

Attachment 1 – DRAFT Community Vision Summary Report, WSP, October 2020

8. Related Reports:

[DS-033-19: Official Plan Review – Introductory Report, June 18, 2019](#)

[DS-001-20: York Region Municipal Comprehensive Review Update and Major Transit Station Area Delineation, January 21, 2020](#)

[DS-017-20: Official Plan Review Update, May 5, 2020](#)

[DS-017-20: Official Plan Review Update, August 25, 2020](#)

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