

Planning for Growth DISCUSSION PAPER



As part of the
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville
Official Plan Review

July 2021



Re-Imagine Stouffville





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1 INTRODUCTION

Planning for growth incorporates infrastructure planning and investment, demographic changes, economic development, employment trends, land use planning, and population health to support the Town’s vision for its future. This ensures that communities have the foundation to exceed their potential, while having access to healthy lifestyle choices, suitable housing, economic opportunities and amenities required throughout all stages of life. Effective and coordinated growth is not only essential to our communal and individual wellbeing, but an important responsibility of local planning authorities in ensuring the qualities we value as a society today can be enjoyed by future generations.

This Discussion Paper is one of four Papers, which follow the focus areas of the Official Plan Review (OPR). This Discussion Paper was completed within Phase 2 ‘Background Studies and Discussion Papers’ of the OPR program and was prepared based on background review and research, consultation with the Town and engagement with the public. The four Discussion Papers should be read in conjunction for a comprehensive understanding of the interrelated community planning components that are the focus of the OPR. The four Discussion Papers, in addition to the Community Visioning Report, completed in Phase 1, follow the five Focus Areas of the OPR, which are identified in Figure 1.

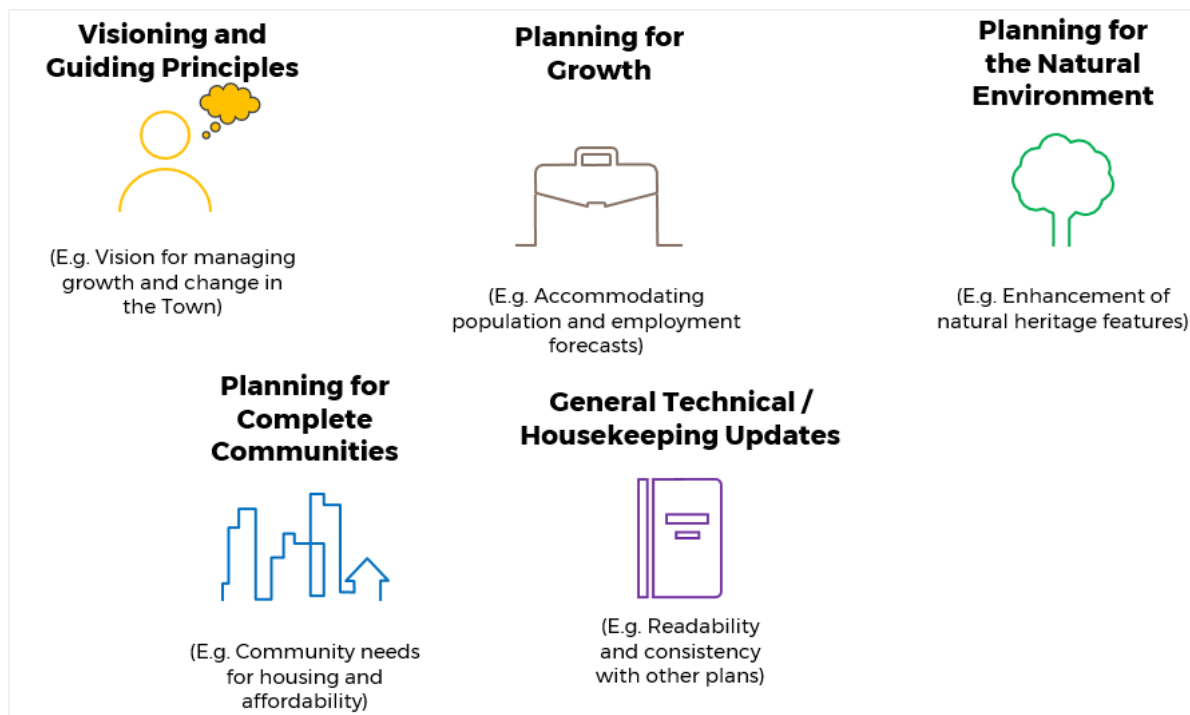


Figure 1: Focus Areas of the OPR

1.1 Purpose of this Discussion Paper

The purpose of this Discussion Paper is to identify opportunities for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville (the Town) in planning for expected growth and investment, while maintaining its unique



rural character by strategically managing growth. Planning for growth is key to achieving and promoting provincial interests as established in the *Planning Act*, the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS, 2020) and A Place to Grow, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020 (Growth Plan), regional interests in the York Region Official Plan, and through detailed local planning policies in the Town's Official Plan.

This Discussion Paper presents preliminary policy recommendations that will implement the long-term vision of the new Town Official Plan and strategic directions that can be undertaken by the Town at a corporate level to promote sustainable growth. This Discussion Paper is a starting point for generating discussion about general policy issues as part of the Official Plan Review (OPR) process. The information contained herein will help formulate a Policy Directions Report and the development of a brand-new Official Plan and Schedules to implement the preferred policy directions and to address policy conformity gaps identified throughout the OPR.

1.2 What is an Official Plan?

Official Plans are guided and developed under a framework established by the Province of Ontario to ensure that short- and long-term growth is coordinated in a manner to meet local social, economic, built and natural environment needs and aspirations. Municipal Official Plans must be consistent with the PPS, 2020 issued under the *Planning Act*, and must conform or not conflict with any applicable Provincial and Regional Plans, including the 2020 consolidated Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, and the Region of York Official Plan, as they relate to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. These overarching policy documents provide direction to the Town on land use planning matters. Overall, Official Plan policies establish:

- Where new housing, industry, offices and shops will be located;
- What community services, such as roads, transportation, utilities, parks, trails and schools will be needed to accommodate growth and develop healthy and sustainable communities;
- Where, and in what order, parts of the community will grow;
- How to promote economic development and develop community improvement initiatives;
- How to protect and conserve cultural heritage resources; and,
- How to protect the Town's agricultural lands and environmentally-sensitive areas.

1.3 Why is the Town undertaking an Official Plan Review?

The Official Plan Review work program consists of four phases which are summarized in Section 1.4 and will result in a detailed review and the preparation of a new Official Plan. The impetus for undertaking a review of the Town's Official Plan is predominantly three-fold:

- First, the Town is required to review its Official Plan in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning Act* to ensure consistency with the PPS, 2020 and to ensure conformity with the 2020, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, including Amendment 1 (2020), applicable Provincial Plans, and the Region of York Official Plan.



- Second, the Region of York initiated a work program in 2018 to undertake a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) to comprehensively implement the policies of the Growth Plan, and guide the Region's population and employment growth to 2051. The Town's Official Plan is required to be updated within one year of the approval of the Region's Official Plan.
- Lastly, the context within which the Town continues to evolve has changed since the current Official Plan was prepared and adopted (adopted in 1980, and last comprehensive update was in 2004).

1.4 Official Plan Review Work Program

The Official Plan Review offers an opportunity to adopt contemporary land use and development policies that will guide growth and development over the planning horizon, and manage and direct physical change and the effects on the social, economic, built and natural environment of the Town.

The comprehensive Official Plan Review work program includes the following phases:

- **Phase 1: Visioning and Consultation** – will result in a community vision and guiding principles to inform future planning directions, by establishing what the community values and how the Town is envisioned to evolve over the planning horizon.
- **Phase 2: Background Studies and Discussion Papers** – will focus on data collection and the review of background information required to advance the OPR. This will involve the critical analysis of policy gaps, such as the need to incorporate updated housing attainability policies, appropriate energy and climate change considerations and emerging urban design policies for example. This phase will also involve the preparation of four Discussion Papers, in addition to the Community Visioning Report completed as part of Phase 1, to address the key themes related to growth management, the natural environment, healthy and complete communities, and general technical and housekeeping matters.
- **Phase 3: Policy Development** – will involve the preparation of Policy Directions Reports and the development of new and updated Official Plan policies to implement the preferred policy directions.
- **Phase 4: Draft New Official Plan** – will involve the technical writing, reviewing, evaluating, and implementing policies for the new Official Plan based on work completed to-date.

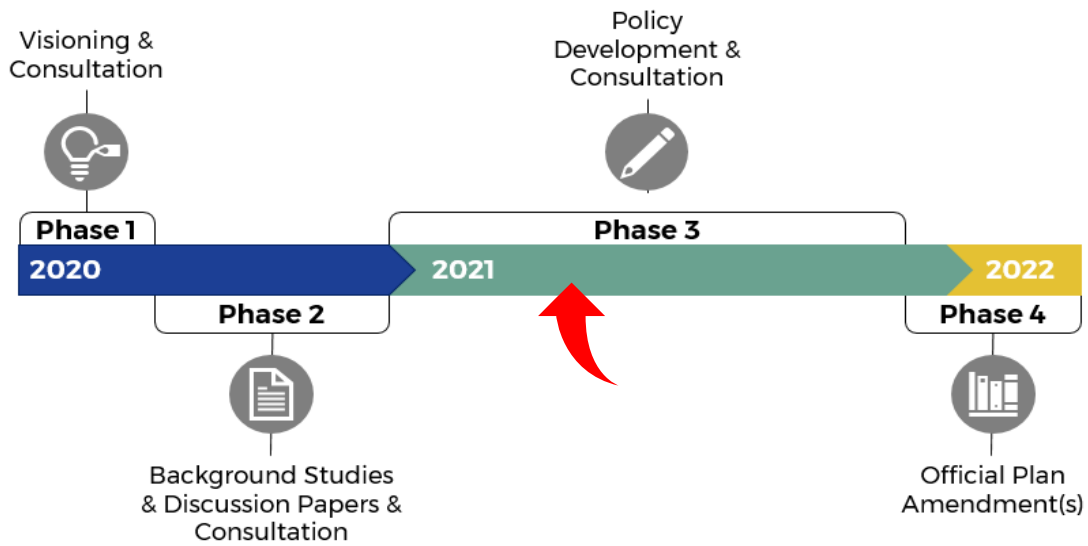


Figure 2: Official Plan Review Timeline

The Official Plan Review process allows the Town to consider future growth and important components to ensuring the creation of a complete community. This will allow the residents and businesses of the Town to engage through meaningful thought and consideration to define how the Town should evolve over the next 25 years. Attention to the need for strategic growth will allow the Town to build on the values and principles that have allowed it to become a desired community, while also recognizing the opportunities for improvement that can further promote a high quality of life.



2 PLANNING FOR GROWTH IN WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville was the third fastest growing municipality in Canada and second fastest growing in Ontario, according to the 2016 Census, with a population of 45,837 persons. The Town is comprised of a number of dynamic settlement areas, balanced with the small-town atmosphere valued by residents and businesses. The Town has experienced a 54.3% population growth rate in recent years, with estimated increase in population of approximately 60,600 people by 2031. In addition, the number of new Canadians living in the Town has increased by a notable 282% between 2006 to 2016. The Town's employment base is also expected to increase by 69% from 2011 to 2031 to accommodate 23,000 jobs. The Town's desirability as a place to live, work and play has made it increasingly important for the need to focus on strategic and planned growth to ensure sustainability in meeting projected needs.

The Town's four settlement areas of Stouffville, Ballantrae-Musselman Lake, Vandorf Preston Lake and Gormley are the primary settlement areas of the Town (Figure 3). The Community of Stouffville will be key to accommodating the projected increases in population and employment, and also will seek to achieve the objectives of a complete community to ensure that the needs of all people, regardless of age, ability or income, can be met. With over 90% of the Town located within the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt Area, compatible growth within the settlement areas will ensure that these natural landscapes are protected from development. This will ensure that the necessary foundations for community growth and a high quality of life that these landscapes provide, including water, food and clean air, will be sustained.

The Town, with its vast natural landscapes and opportunities for strategic growth, has the potential to emerge as a leader in planning for growth through implementing specific policies to ensure a coordinated and balanced approach to meeting the future needs and desires of the community.

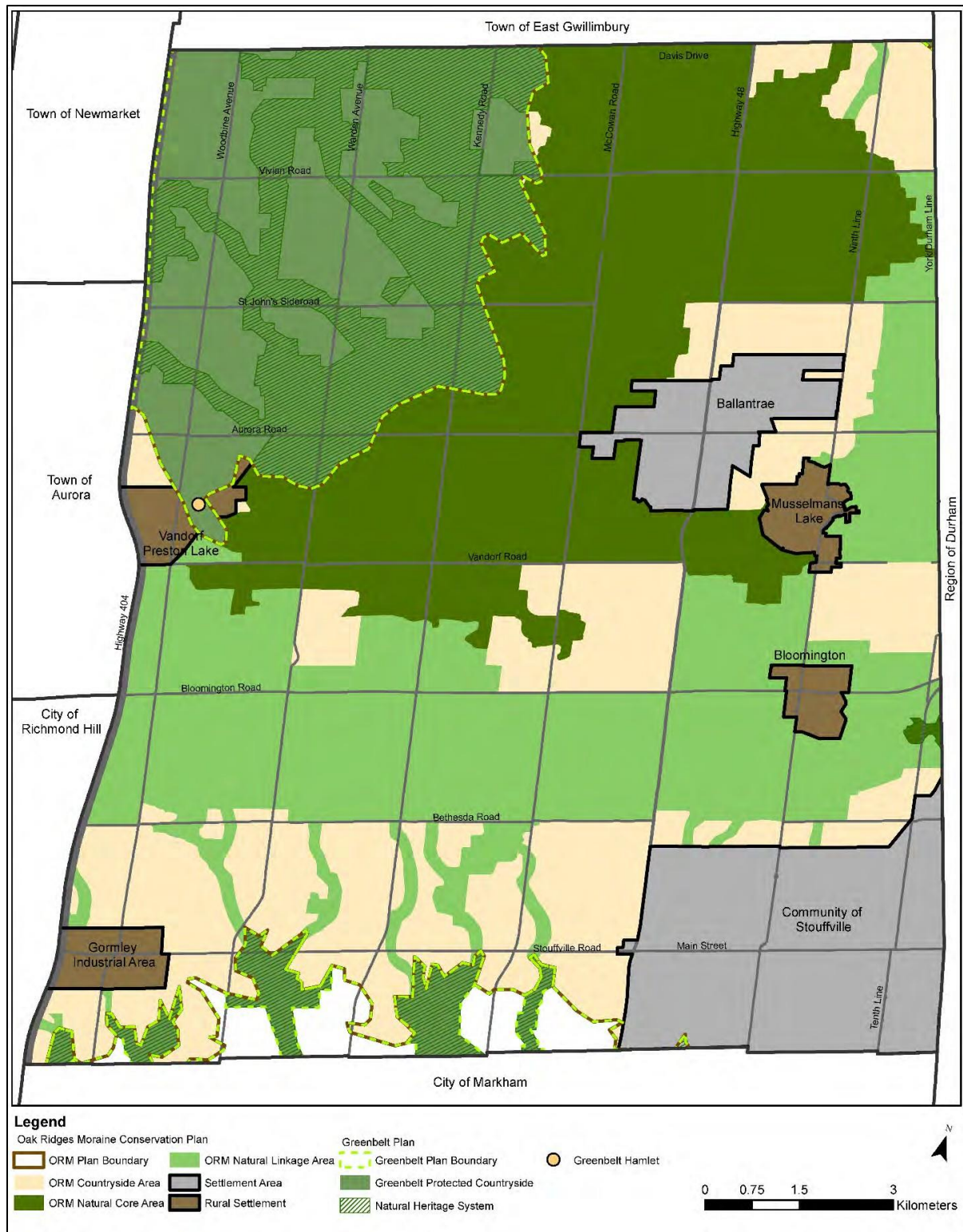


Figure 3: Community Structure Map, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville



3 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Official Plans are guided and developed under a framework of overarching policies and plans established by the Province of Ontario. In cases where there is an upper-tier municipality, such as York Region, Provincial policy is implemented at the regional-level first, through the York Region Official Plan, and then implemented locally through the lower-tier Official Plans, like the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Official Plan.

Ensuring that the Town's new Official Plan will conform with provincial and regional Plans will be an ongoing task, undertaken throughout the Official Plan Review. The Planning for Growth Discussion Paper has been prepared in consideration of the Provincial and regional policy framework set out within this section.

3.1 Planning Act

The *Planning Act* is established in order to promote a land use planning system and future growth led by Provincial policy to be implemented by local municipalities through processes and decisions that are transparent and accessible in seeking to promote strategic growth and sustainable economic development supported by a healthy natural environment. A component to achieving the intent of the *Planning Act* is through establishing provincial interests that are to be integrated by municipal planning decisions. Provincial interests related to managing and directing growth include the following:

- Orderly development of safe and healthy communities;
- Appropriate location of growth and development;
- Adequate provision and distribution of educational, health, social, cultural and recreational facilities;
- Adequate provision of a full range of housing, including affordable housing; and
- Adequate provision of employment opportunities.

In addition, the *Planning Act* directs municipalities to ensure growth through a built form that is well designed. This is to ensure that as communities evolve, they continue to encourage a sense of place and provide spaces that are high quality, safe, accessible, attractive and vibrant.

3.2 Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The current Provincial Policy Statement (PPS, 2020), effective May 2020, replaced the PPS issued April 2014. The PPS, 2020 is issued under the authority of Section 3 of the *Planning Act* and provides direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. Recognizing Ontario's diversity of urban and rural communities, the PPS, 2020 provides for appropriate development while protecting resources of provincial interest, public health and safety, and the quality of the natural and built environment. The PPS, 2020 in conjunction with other Provincial plans, provides municipalities a framework for long-term planning that balances economic growth with a healthy and sustainable environment.



The PPS, 2020 directs growth and development within urban and rural settlement areas while supporting the viability of agricultural areas. It recognizes that the wise management of land use change may involve directing, promoting or sustaining development. Land use must be carefully managed to accommodate appropriate development to meet the full range of current and future needs, while achieving efficient development patterns and avoiding significant or sensitive resources and areas which may pose a risk to public health and safety. Municipalities are encouraged to permit and facilitate a range of housing options, including new development as well as residential intensification, to respond to current and future needs.

The PPS, 2020 also directs municipalities to promote efficient land use and development patterns by advancing strong, livable, healthy and resilient communities, protecting the environment and public health and safety, and facilitating economic growth.

The PPS, 2020 identifies settlement areas as nodes where growth and intensification should be directed. Settlement areas can include urban areas and rural settlement areas, and can vary significantly in terms of size, density, population, economic activity, diversity and intensity of land uses, service levels, and types of infrastructure available. Land use patterns within settlement areas, including the Community of Stouffville, are to efficiently use land and resources in a manner that appropriately uses infrastructure and public facilities, promote environmental sustainability and support various modes of transportation.

3.3 A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020 (Growth Plan) is an overarching strategy with a planning horizon to 2051 that provides clarity and certainty about urban structure, where and how future growth should be accommodated and what must be protected for future generations. This envisions well-supported communities with a strong economy and an approach that puts people first, along with ensuring a cleaner and thriving natural environment. Consistent with the PPS, 2020, the Growth Plan further directs most growth to occur in settlement areas. These are areas identified to have a delineated built boundary, existing or planned municipal services and infrastructure (i.e. road, water and wastewater systems), and areas that can provide healthy and active living options for people throughout an entire lifetime.

The Growth Plan directs municipalities to prioritize intensification and higher densities in identified strategic growth and settlement areas to make efficient use of land and infrastructure and support transit viability. This in return is intended to provide flexibility to capitalize on new economic and employment opportunities as they emerge, while providing certainty for traditional industries, including resource-based sectors. As regional and local growth continues, the Growth Plan identifies a key need to support a range and mix of housing options, including additional residential units and affordable housing, to serve all sizes, incomes, and ages of households. In addition, the Growth Plan asserts that these objectives must be integrated with planning and investment in infrastructure and public service facilities.

To ensure coordinated planning for growth across the Greater Golden Horseshoe and to support the achievement of complete communities, the Growth Plan currently provides population and



employment forecasts for all upper- and single-tier Greater Golden Horseshoe municipalities. For the Region of York, a population forecast of 2,020,000 and employment forecast of 990,000 jobs has been established to be achieved by 2051. The forecasts are a key input into the land needs assessment methodology that municipalities use to determine the quantity of land needed to accommodate growth. The Region of York's Municipal Comprehensive Review is important in allocating these projections and will inform the Town Official Plan growth objectives. This includes developing a strategy to implement targets for the Region of York that consists of ensuring a minimum of 50 per cent of all residential intensification occur within delineated built-up areas and no less than 50 residents and jobs combined per hectare in designated greenfield areas. In addition, the areas surrounding the Stouffville and Lincolnville GO Stations are intended to develop as Major Transit Station Area's (MTSA's). These areas are intended to be developed as high density, mixed-use, transit-supportive neighbourhoods that provide access to local amenities, jobs, housing, and recreation opportunities. The Growth Plan stipulates that growth in these areas that are specifically serviced by GO Transit rail network will achieve 150 residents and jobs combined per hectare.

The Growth Plan recognizes that while significant growth and development is needed to meet the short and long-term needs and objectives within the Greater Golden Horseshoe, preservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage must not be compromised. The Growth Plan achieves this through directing municipalities to protect and enhance natural heritage, hydrologic, and landform systems, features, and functions. This includes supporting the long-term viability and productivity of agriculture by protecting prime agricultural areas and the agri-food network and ensuring considerations are given to adaptive innovations to combating the impacts of climate change. In addition, the Growth Plan guides municipalities to ensure ongoing conservation and promotion of cultural heritage resources to support the social, economic, and cultural well-being of all communities, including First Nations and Métis communities.

3.4 York Region Policies and Strategies

3.4.1 Regional Official Plan

The York Region Official Plan was approved in 2010 and establishes upper-tier policy direction for the entire Region. Local municipal official plans are required to conform with the Regional Official Plan. The Province allocates the Region population and employment targets which it is then required to achieve through planning policy. Municipalities use this information to form growth expectations and the basis of their Official Plans. Once the Region has completed its Municipal Comprehensive Review, the Town will be required to implement the directives of the Regional Official Plan.

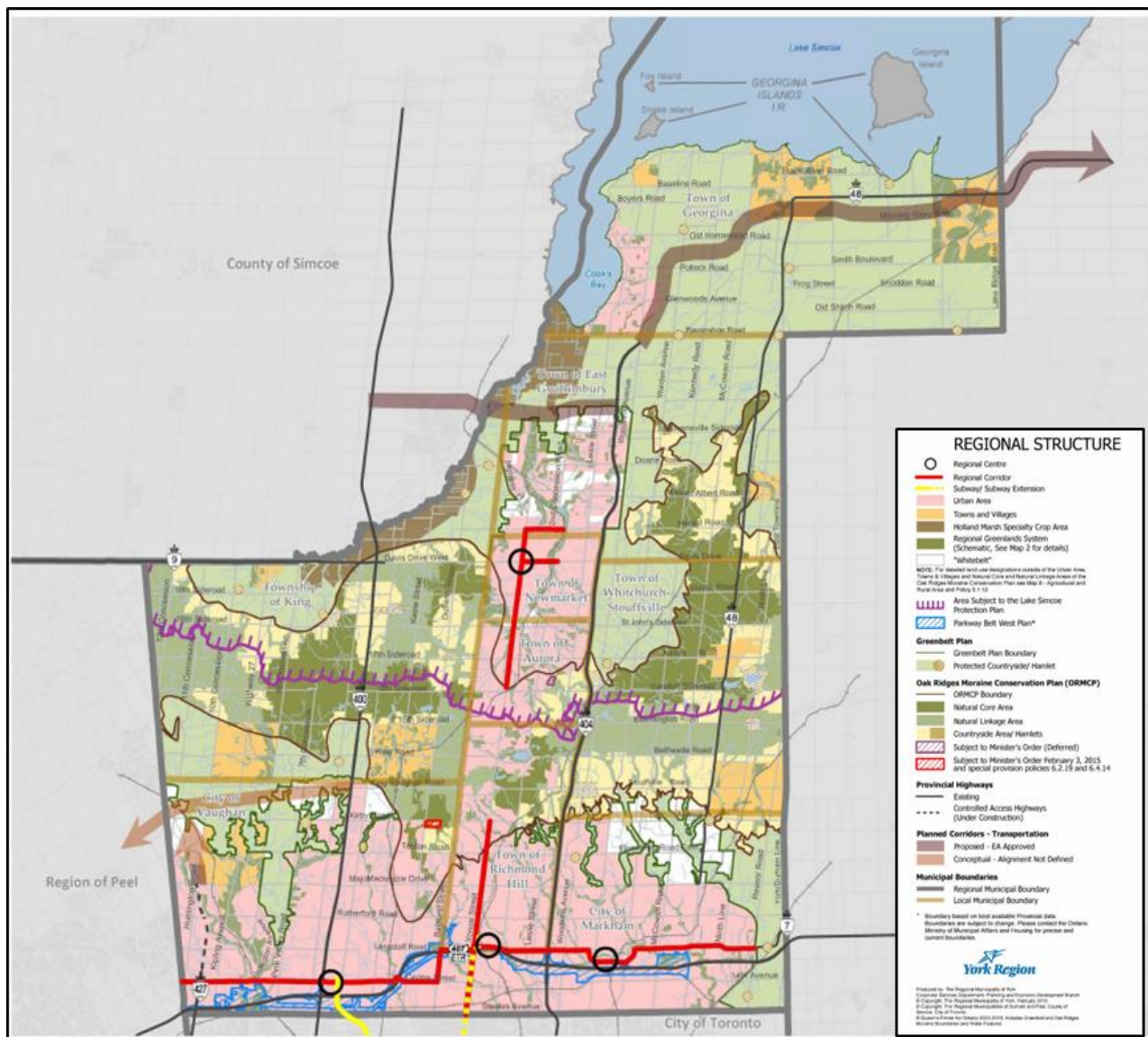


Figure 4: Regional Land Use Structure Map, Region of York

3.4.2 Ongoing Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR)

In 2018, York Region initiated a work program to undertake a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) in order to implement updates of Provincial policies and plans, and to ensure proper guidance related to the Region’s population and employment growth. The MCR is ongoing and it is expected to be completed in 2022.

As per the Growth Plan, the Region of York is forecasted to plan to accommodate 2,020,000 persons and 990,000 jobs by the year 2051. The Region’s MCR will establish policy directions to guide the Region’s population and employment growth, land needs and infrastructure. The MCR process will identify growth forecasts and allocations to the Town, including the identification of



minimum intensification targets for strategic growth areas, density targets for greenfield areas, and identify required land needs to accommodate growth.

Below is a list of topics / policy areas considered as part of the Region's MCR:

- Consultation, Vision, Indigenous Communities Report ;
- Growth Forecasts and Land Budget Report;
- Transportation Master Plan Review;
- Water Wastewater Master Plan Review;
- Intensification Strategy and Major Transit Station Area Report;
- Housing Strategy Report;
- Employment Strategy Report;
- Complete Communities and Healthy Built Environment Report;
- Natural Heritage System, Watershed Planning and Agriculture Direction Report;
- Infrastructure Master Plans Information Report;
- Climate Change Report; and,
- Fiscal Impact Analysis Report.

Additional areas of consideration of the Regional MCR that will inform the Town's Official Plan Review include the following:

- Settlement Area Boundaries / Expansions: The Growth Plan introduces substantive changes to the policies regarding settlement area boundary expansions, which are intended to enable local municipalities to undertake limited expansions or adjustments to settlement area boundaries prior to (or in advance of) the approval of the Region's MCR. Similarly, a new policy may allow minor adjustments to the rural settlement area boundaries in keeping with the rural character of the area, and subject to more limited criteria, in advance of the Region's MCR. However, this policy would not apply where the rural settlement area is in the Greenbelt Area.
- Employment: The Growth Plan introduces significant changes to the employment policies which are intended to ensure that employment lands are appropriately protected for employment uses. This includes the identification of provincially significant employment zones by the Minister (Municipal Affairs and Housing), while providing some flexibility for municipalities to undertake an employment area conversion in advance of the approval of the Region's MCR. The conversion of employment areas to non-employment uses may be permitted through the Region's MCR and subject to satisfying certain criteria. However, the Growth Plan may permit employment area conversions through a one-time window prior to the approval of the Region's MCR, and subject to more limited criteria. The conversion would also need to "maintain a significant number of jobs on those lands." Furthermore, any change to an official plan to permit new or expanded opportunities for major retail in an employment area may only occur in accordance with the employment area conversion policies. Through the Region's MCR, minimum density target for all employment areas and opportunities for intensification within employment areas will be identified.



It is anticipated that the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review and Official Plan update will be adopted by Regional Council in 2022. The Town's Official Plan is required to be updated within one year of the approval of the Region's Official Plan to ensure consistency of policy directives. The Town is currently undertaking a Preliminary Growth Management Strategy to allocate growth to 2051 established by Regional allocations and will subsequently inform the direction of the Town Official Plan.

3.4.3 Housing Solutions Plan, 2019

The Region's Housing Solutions Plan for 2019 to 2023 focuses on working to ensure communities have a full range of housing options that enable people to stay in their communities as they move into adulthood, begin careers and families and grow older. The Plan is aimed largely at continuing to invest in and work with partners to support and encourage an increase of affordable and market-rate rental and affordable ownership housing. This includes planning for a full mix and range of housing options to support achievement of complete communities and promote economic development and services to help people experiencing homelessness to find and keep housing.

In January 2021, the Region issued the *Housing Challenges and Opportunities Report* in recognition that it is not achieving housing affordability targets and in recent years has fallen short of forecasted growth levels. To find solutions to the lack of affordable housing options for current and future residents, Regional Council endorsed a series of housing policy directions to support development of draft policies required for Provincial conformity as part of the Regional Official Plan update. Notable policy considerations included the following:

- Updating the minimum lands required for residential growth from 10 to 15 years;
 - Establishing a single region-wide rental target;
 - Continue to identify housing gaps and mechanisms to address housing needs;
 - Encourage development proponents to incorporate nontraditional building types and materials and innovative design and construction to increase housing options, including affordable options;
 - Incorporate a requirement to work with partners to implement approaches to increase housing options, including affordable and purpose-built rental options; and,
 - Recognition of the importance of inclusionary zoning as a tool that allows municipalities to require affordable housing in new developments as part of the development process.
-

3.4.4 York Region Housing Matters: 2019 Update

The 2019 Update of Housing Matters provides an analysis of the housing market in York Region, including the factors that influence the ability of households to afford housing. The 2019 version updates the original report released in 2012. The update was undertaken as part of the five-year review of the Housing and Homelessness Plan as well as the update of the Regional Official Plan through the Municipal Comprehensive Review process.

The key findings from the analysis presented in Housing Matters are:



- The need for a greater mix and range of housing options;
- The need for more affordable ownership and rental units;
- The need for higher density units that can support a full mix and range of incomes.
- The need for rental units at all price points;
- The demographic shifts in the population, including smaller family sizes, and how a growing aging population impacts the mix and range of housing required to support the changing needs of residents;
- The economic challenges facing residents, including the slow rise in income compared to the exponential growth in housing prices; and,
- The need for homelessness prevention and housing stability services and programs to help residents find and keep housing.

3.4.5 York Region Seniors Strategy, 2016

The York Region Seniors Strategy was prepared in November of 2016. The Strategy's goal of preparing for the growing senior population reflected the long-term goals of Vision 2051 to create a place where everyone can thrive.

The Strategy defined the Region's role in serving seniors and set the course for action to best support the aging population until the year 2031. The Region considered how it serves seniors in four areas:

1. Broad Policy and Finance: Balance the needs of seniors with all residents;
2. Health: Keep seniors healthier, longer;
3. Aging in Place: Support age-friendly, complete communities; and,
4. Staying Safe and Connected: Connect seniors and caregivers to the right programs and services at the right times.

The objective of the strategy was also to be used as a guide for the Region's work with other levels of government and community partners to better target seniors programming and services where there was the greatest need. An implementation strategy was established and areas where further research, policy development, and possible collaboration were identified.

3.4.6 Economic Development Action Plan, 2020

The Region's Economic Development Action Plan, 2020 aims to grow economic prosperity in the Region by fostering an environment that attracts businesses, grows employment opportunities, and attracts talent. Key directives to achieving this goal include the following:

- Undertaking a marketing campaign to showcase York Region as a place for business;
- Undertaking business consulting and talent matching to support business retention and targeted sector growth;
- Developing partnerships with stakeholders to leverage resources and extend the program reach; and,



- Continue to complete employment survey to inform efforts to maintain and improve employment opportunities.

In addition, to attract economic growth, the Region is engaged with the local business community to support services ranging from direct-to-business advice, economic research, innovation initiatives and business placemaking and attraction marketing. Regional Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction (BRE&A) advisory services delivered to established companies are focused primarily on knowledge-based sectors and are customized to client needs. The Region recognizes the role of innovation in leveraging existing economic sections and attracting new talent and economic generators for the Region.

3.4.7 York Region Edge Planning Background Report, 2018

The York Region Edge Planning Background Report was prepared to identify the importance of agricultural resources and farmland as a means of recognizing additional benefits of farmland for providing stormwater storage and runoff control, protection against erosion, water infiltration, carbon sequestering, pollination and habitat. The Background Report asserts the importance and need to protect agricultural lands as a strategic growth objective from urban development and identifies various planning tools and implementation mechanisms that should be considered to reduce adverse impacts of urban development on adjacent agricultural uses along the agricultural-urban boundary.

There is an opportunity for the Town's Official Plan Review to consider edge planning policies, which could be designed to ensure agricultural land is protected by mitigating impacts (to both the agricultural and urban land users).

3.5 Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Official Plan

The current Town Official Plan recognizes the municipality as one of the fastest growing in Canada and the pressures for urban development in and adjacent to local nodes, while also seeking to support the large areas of prime agricultural land. To achieve this the Town Official Plan envisions a community which focuses its development in the Community of Stouffville and to a lesser extent, other settlement areas, to preserve natural and cultural heritage resources. This is further supported by seeking to develop the Town in a manner that provides a wide range of public and private recreation and cultural opportunities and ensures the continuation of all forms of agriculture as important economic contributors.

The Town Official Plan outlines notable strategies related to the growth of the Town, including the following:

- **Land-Use Strategy:** Establishes the general pattern for existing and future uses within the Town. Land use designations and Secondary Plans are established to add a level of policy direction, notably when considering proposals for development. The Community of Stouffville is the main urban growth area of the Town and the focus for social, recreational, cultural, government, commercial and employment uses. Ballantrae-Musselman Lake is envisioned as low-density residential community with small scale commercial, recreational and institutional



facilities. Vandorf-Preston Lake is a residential community with a focus on increasing employment areas. In addition, the Gormley Industrial Area is intended to grow into a distinctive, industrial and commercial area which will promote the development of a “gateway” location within the Town compatible with the established land uses within the Gormley Community.

- **Functional Community Services:** Establishes direction with respect to the provision of functional community services for the Town including transportation, parks and recreation, sewage and water and emergency services. This includes ensuring that areas designated for intensification will have the necessary infrastructure to serve as a foundation for future residential, employment, transit and recreational growth.

The Town is currently undertaking a Preliminary Growth Management Strategy to identify where, when and how future residential and employment growth will be accommodated. This Strategy will take into consideration the Region’s ongoing MCR and will be used to inform the Official Plan Review to direct growth to 2051. Furthermore, as an outcome of the Official Plan Review, and based on forecasted growth, the Town will be updating relevant Town Master Plans used to support growth and infrastructure. Some of these master plans include the Water and Wastewater Master Plan, the Transportation Master Plan, and the Leisure Services and Community Master Plan.

3.5.1 Strategic Action Planning Report, 2020

The Town’s Strategic Action Planning Report provides a set of suggested actions to assist staff in writing an updated Economic Development Strategy. During the Town branding process that took place in 2020, several pillars were established that paralleled the economic development pillars derived from the research.

The following six strategic pillars are recommended as areas where the Town should focus its economic development resources:

- **Prime Location** – Provide a solid base of economic opportunities to promote the Town as a premium location to do business and ensure the necessary infrastructure is available when business is interested in investing;
- **Enriching the Core** (Downtown as the ‘Centre City’) – Consider Downtown Stouffville’s role as important to the economic and social development of the community. The Downtown can be transformed to achieve a critical mass of activities where commercial, cultural, and civic activities are concentrated;
- **Green Roots/routes** (Supporting the Rural Economy While Being Environmentally Sustainable) – Recognize the natural environment as an asset that provides a landscape to offer different economic opportunities;
- **Strategic Growth** (Supporting Existing Businesses & Attracting New Businesses) – Promote investment and business development opportunities to occur through existing businesses currently located in the community and attract industries that could provide employment for those residents that are leaving Town for work;



- **Collective ambition** (Supporting Entrepreneurship and Home-Based Businesses) – Recognize small business as the backbone of the economy and the role of entrepreneurship as an important driver of economic growth; and,
- **Building on Arts, Culture, Tourism as an Economic Driver** – Building on the Arts and Culture as part of the Tourism sector is important to consider as not only an economic driver but a community builder, by enticing local residents to spend their leisure time enjoying the assets the Town has to offer.



4 KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Planning for growth incorporates infrastructure planning and investment, demographic changes, economic development, employment trends, land use planning, and population health to support the Town's vision for its future. The key issues and opportunities related to Planning for Growth discussed in this Paper are shown in Figure 5 below. These issues and opportunities speak to basic principles and opportunities to be explored further, following the completion of the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review process.



Figure 5: Planning for Growth Discussion Paper Considerations



4.1 Directing Growth to Settlement Areas

The *Planning Act* emphasizes that growth and development must occur in appropriate locations as a Provincial interest. The PPS, 2020 further builds upon this directive by focusing growth and development within urban and rural settlement areas while supporting the viability of rural areas. This allows for recognition that growth in built up areas will promote the wise management of land use and involve directing, promoting or sustaining development. Additionally, the PPS, 2020 requires that planning authorities establish and implement minimum targets for intensification and redevelopment within built-up areas, based on local conditions.

The Growth Plan recognizes the importance of built-up areas within settlement areas as the locations where the vast majority of growth will be occurring throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Growth Plan identifies these as areas with the capacity to support and establish complete communities, and as locations with existing or planned transit and municipal infrastructure required for future growth. This specifically includes the Growth Plan assigning the Region of York a population forecast of 2,020,000 by 2051. The Regional MCR will undertake a land needs assessment methodology for the Town to determine the quantity of land needed to accommodate growth. In addition, the areas surrounding the Stouffville and Lincolnville GO Stations are intended to develop as Major Transit Station Area's (MTSA's) as per the requirements of the Growth Plan. These areas are intended to be developed as high density, mixed-use, transit-supportive neighbourhoods that provide access to local amenities, jobs, housing, and recreation opportunities. As such, the Growth Plan requires the Town as part of its Official Plan Review develop a strategy to achieve the minimum intensification targets and intensification throughout delineated built-up areas to strategically focus development.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Greenbelt Plan recognize that growth must be focused strategically to avoid harm to natural and cultural heritage resources. Built-up areas, defined as settlement areas in these Plans, are both within urban and rural contexts and are key to minimizing the encroachment and impact of development on ecological functions and hydrological features. This in return allows for strategic growth to support the continuation of natural systems and agricultural industries.

The current Town Official Plan recognizes identified settlement areas as the focus for intensification in order to preserve natural, rural and cultural resources. This includes the Community of Stouffville as the primary growth center, and Ballantrae-Mussleman Lake and Vandorf-Preston Lake which are to experience more compatible small-scale intensification. Where intensification is proposed, it is required to be undertaken at an appropriate scale and transition to abutting uses and adjacent residential areas, while ensuring a strong street edge and active at-grade uses. The Gormley area of the Town is identified as a focus for economic and industrial growth given its ability to revitalize underutilized lands and attract new sectors with the proximity of Highway 404. However, it should be noted that a notable constraint to growth in the communities of Gormley, Ballantrae-Mussleman Lake and Vandorf-Preston Lake is the adequate provision of municipal water and wastewater services.



Through the OPR, and with the majority of growth expected to occur within the Community of Stouffville, the Town will have an opportunity to implement the Region's forecasted growth projections and decide where and by how much each of the settlement areas within the Town will grow. Specific areas within the Community of Stouffville that are anticipated to accommodate growth are identified on Figure 6, and include the following:

- **Lincolnville GO MTSA:** The purpose of this ongoing study to identify a preferred land use scenario and corresponding Official Plan policies and Urban Design Guidelines to guide future development for the area surrounding the new Lincolnville GO station. The Region of York approved the Lincolnville GO MTSA boundary in September 2020;
- **Stouffville GO MTSA:** The Stouffville GO station and surrounding area is also being considered for identification as an MTSA through the Region's MCR, which will be planned to accommodate more intensive development in a transit-supportive manner; and,
- **Highway 48 Corridor, and the Gateway and Western Approach Area:** The purpose of this project is to address the lands at the intersection of Highway 48 and Main Street which are designated "Gateway Mixed Use Area" in the Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan. Within this area, the Highway 48 Visioning Exercise, which is currently being undertaken on lands within the Town and the City of Markham, has seen increased development interest. For example, recent approvals through two Minister's Zoning Orders and two employment area conversion requests has prompted the Town to re-evaluate the project's scope to encourage a cohesive and comprehensive development approach.

Furthermore, the Town also includes a portion of "whitebelt lands" which encompass approximately 400 hectares along the southern portion of the Town. These lands consist of prime agricultural areas but are not located within the Greenbelt Area, and do not have the same level of protection from urban development. These lands present significant potential for future settlement area expansions in the Town.

Other jurisdictions such as the City of Newmarket for example, have used their Official Plan Review process as an opportunity to allocate growth to its built-up areas in order to revitalize historic downtown cores. In the case of Newmarket, additional development in the historic downtown aims to achieve sustainability of the historic commercial centre by providing an opportunity for people to live close to services without the need to burden the road system. Such revitalizations of the historic downtowns also assist in achieving additional recreational, arts, culture, entertainment and fine dining facilities in the appropriate location. A mix of new development and the design of retail and service, office, institutional, entertainment, recreational and residential uses located along Newmarket's Main Street for example, are intended to foster a sense of vibrancy and economic activity.

By directing growth to its built-up areas, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville would have an opportunity to revitalize its historic centre(s). This policy emphasis has the potential to enact positive change in the Community of Stouffville for example, to both accommodate community growth given the availability of necessary infrastructure, while also contributing to protect and revitalize the main street and adjacent areas.

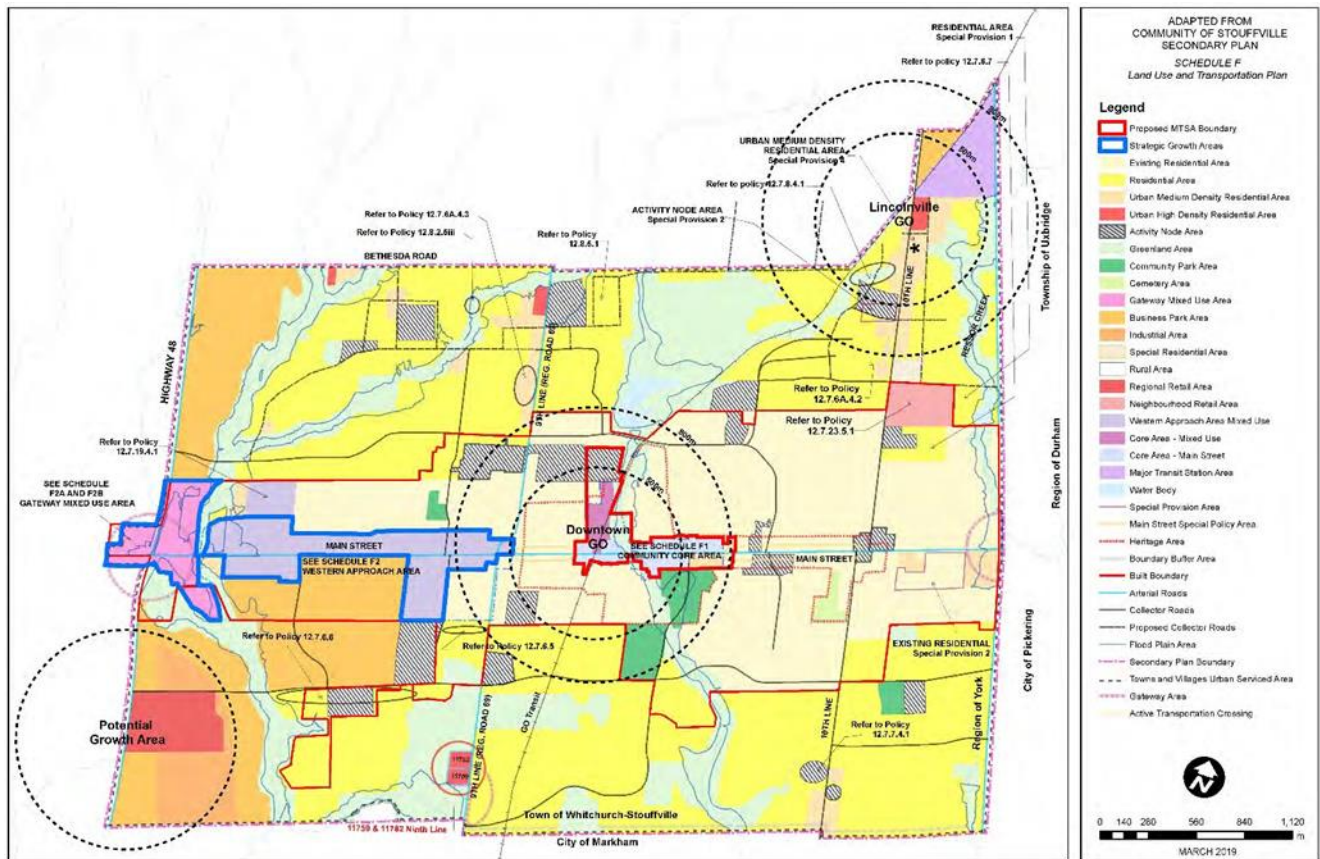


Figure 6: Community of Stouffville Secondary Plan Schedule

4.1.1 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

Preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions for the Town as part of the Official Plan Review include the following:

Preliminary Policy Recommendations:

- Implement intensification targets in built up areas and density targets in designated greenfield areas once established by the Region of York upon completion of the MCR;
- Identify and delineate MTSA boundaries, including the establishment of minimum and/or alternative densities and develop related built form and implementation policies;
- Update policies to reflect growth allocation figures to 2051, as per the Regional MCR and the Town’s Growth Management Strategy;
- Implement phasing policies for intensification areas, and new community areas, to ensure appropriate and sustainable urban development;
- Consider policies to responsibly manage the long-term growth of the Town’s remaining Whitebelt lands;
- Identify a ‘Community Structure’ focused on establishing major nodes and corridors, strategic growth areas, and intensification areas;



- Establish appropriate policies for assessing modest infill and intensification within stable residential neighbourhoods;
- Encourage a wide range of commercial uses and employment opportunities to meet the needs of Town residents close to their homes;
- Encourage further development and intensification within settlement areas, most notably being the Community of Stouffville, as a major retail and service commercial, office, institutional, entertainment, cultural and higher density residential area for the Town;
- Promote redevelopment, infill and intensification in appropriate locations to result in reduced infrastructure costs, more efficient land use, the preservation of natural areas, revitalization of central urban areas and the creation of more transportation choices through easier access to daily destinations;
- Ensure compatibility between land use, and appropriate intensity and scale, a set of principles and urban design policies should be used for assessing any applications for redevelopment, infill and intensification in settlement areas;
- Ensure accommodation of employment intensification on fully serviced employment lands within the built-up area;
- Focus intensification in areas that best utilize existing and planned Town or Regional infrastructure, or which justify investment in new and sustainable infrastructure;
- Promote the provision of live-work opportunities through a combination of flexible zoning permissions and accommodations for combined residential and business or personal services, office uses and home occupations;
- Development within existing and new community areas will be planned as complete 15-minute communities through the creation of a framework for a compact design, mix of uses and densities, a fully-connected street grid, viable options for sustainable transportation modes, and improved pedestrian access to a diversity of uses including commercial, employment, institutional uses;
- Ensure new development is located and organized to fit within its existing and/or planned context;
- Ensure new development is appropriately massed and its exterior façade is designed to fit harmoniously into its existing and/or planned context, to limit its impact on neighbouring streets, parks, open spaces and properties; and,
- Promote residential intensification through innovative methods, including additional residential units and laneway housing where appropriate.

Strategic Directions:

- Consider imposing a vacant land tax to spur development of underutilized sites and promote investment;
- Utilize marketing campaigns to promote resources and supports for live-work accommodations;
- Consider the designation of a Heritage Conservation District to guide future change in downtown Stouffville by adopting a district plan with policies and guidelines tailored to the area's conservation, protection and enhancement requirements;
- Review municipally owned properties to ensure full utilization;



- Consider updating the Main Street Urban Design Guidelines to inform built form/design policies for applicable buildings and developments on, and surrounding, downtown Main Street Stouffville;
- Consider incentives for reuse of historic buildings; and,
- Ensure the provision of adequate public amenity spaces near new developments for adjacent streets and open spaces to make these areas attractive, interesting, comfortable and functional for pedestrians.

4.2 Housing Options and Growth

The *Planning Act* identifies the adequate provision of a full range of housing options, including affordable housing, as a key provincial interest and requires local Official Plans to ensure they are implemented as part of planning considerations. This includes methods for ensuring that affordability is maintained through various tools that promote the development of housing to support the needs of all socio-economic backgrounds. The PPS, 2020 also puts forth housing as key to achieving healthy and liveable communities by ensuring there is an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities required to meet projected requirements of current and future residents. To achieve this, planning authorities are required to maintain the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 15 years through residential intensification or redevelopment and land with servicing capacity.

The Growth Plan similarly seeks to ensure that the Greater Golden Horseshoe will have a sufficient housing supply that reflects market demand and what is needed in local communities. This includes supporting a range and mix of housing options, including additional residential units and affordable housing, to serve all sizes, incomes, and ages of households. Local planning authorities are encouraged to also optimize the use of the existing urban land supply as well as the existing building and housing stock to avoid over-designating land for future urban development, while also providing flexibility to respond to housing need and market demand. The objective of adequate and affordable housing is central to the establishment of complete communities through maximizing connectivity with public transportation, recreation, public facilities and employment.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Greenbelt Plan aim to ensure the protection and enhancement of natural resources through focusing housing intensification within settlement areas, most notably the Community of Stouffville within the Town. This is to ensure that growth occurs in areas with the adequate servicing and resources to accommodate projected needs, while ensuring the protection of environmentally significant lands.

The current Town Official Plan recognizes that an appropriate range of housing types and densities are required to accommodate projected future population for the Town. In addition, the Town strives to ensure choice with respect to secure, adequate and affordable housing. This is done by encouraging housing forms and densities designed to be affordable to moderate- and lower-income households and promoting all forms of residential intensification. Furthermore, this is specifically applied in the Community of Stouffville where there is sufficient existing or planned



infrastructure to create a potential supply of new housing units. Other communities within the Town are also expected to experience some growth, at a lower scale and form.

The Township of King Official Plan serves as an example in demonstrating the importance of adequate and accessible housing through framing it as an important component to social sustainability. The concept reflects on planning authorities' role in improving the quality of life for residents through the development of healthy communities and the provision of necessary human services and programs. This includes providing housing opportunities that offer a range of dwelling types, densities, tenure, and cost to meet the diverse needs of people from various social, cultural and economic backgrounds, including persons with disabilities.



Figure 7: Construction Activity in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

4.2.1 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

The preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions listed below are further complemented and expanded in the Attainable Housing Section of the Planning for Complete Communities Discussion Paper. Preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions for the Town as part of the Official Plan Review include the following:

Preliminary Policy Recommendations:

- Encourage and support the provision of a full range of housing options including ownership and rental housing, social housing, housing for seniors, supportive housing, emergency shelters for women and families, accessible housing that meets the needs of people with disabilities and other types of housing that meets the needs of the Town's diverse population;
- Promote the development of senior's and special needs housing, within existing and new communities where all dwellings are permitted;
- Incorporate enabling policies related to Inclusionary Zoning and examine the feasibility of implementing Inclusionary Zoning within the Lincolnville Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) or Stouffville GO MTSA;
- Ensure universal accessibility and accommodations for people with disabilities in the development of design guidelines and standards for new residential development;



- Promote the appropriate use and provision of additional residential units, consistent with Provincial legislation;
- Require the provision of affordable housing targets as a component of all residential development applications;
- Develop policies requiring a mix of dwelling types and densities in all new residential developments, particularly larger developments. This would include innovative housing forms and construction methods, as feasible;
- Ensure a mix of housing types within neighbourhoods so that they are complete and support aging in place;
- Ensure the existing stock of housing will be maintained, improved and replenished. The Town will encourage the renovation and retrofitting of historic buildings. New housing supply will be encouraged through intensification and infill;
- Consider policies for the transition of existing neighbourhoods adjacent to areas of intensification and infill;
- Support mixed use and multi-unit residential developments, including multi-bedroom apartments for families;
- Consider inclusionary zoning (through a Community Planning Permit System) as an opportunity to increase the provision of affordable housing;
- Strive towards increasing the supply of housing in mixed use environments to create greater opportunities for people to live and work locally; and,
- Consider policies aimed at increasing the rental housing supply, including both, purpose-built rental and additional residential units.

Strategic Directions

- Consider incentives proposed by the Region for the provision of affordable housing, including local purpose-built rental incentives, grants or incentives for infrastructure and second suites as well as for new private, purpose-built rental units;
- Identify opportunities to improve the quality of the existing stock of housing or building a range of new housing;
- Work with seniors' service providers and the Province to address data gaps which will improve coordination of services to seniors;
- Consider providing Town-owned surplus land or buildings at below market value for affordable and special needs housing;
- Explore opportunities for investment, in partnership with agencies, housing providers and the private sector, in new rental housing, particularly affordable rental housing. Such opportunities may involve, fast-tracking of development approvals and building permits, reduction in development application and parkland dedication fees, alternative development standards, and other incentives, etc.; and,
- Advance partnerships and collaboration across the housing spectrum to create innovative and long-lasting solutions to the housing crisis.



4.3 Employment and Economic Development

The *Planning Act* identifies the adequate provision of employment opportunities as a provincial interest by promoting sustainable economic development. The PPS, 2020 defines “employment areas” as areas designated in an official plan for clusters of business and economic activities including, but not limited to, manufacturing, warehousing, offices, and associated retail and ancillary facilities. The PPS, 2020 asserts that planning authorities should promote economic development and competitiveness by providing for an appropriate mix and range of employment, institutional, and broader mixed uses to meet long-term needs. This also includes advancing opportunities for a diversified economic base and encouraging growth through compact, mixed-use development that incorporates compatible employment uses to support livable and resilient communities. In addition, planning authorities are required to plan for, protect and preserve employment areas for current and future uses and ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided to support current and projected needs.

The Growth Plan also promotes economic development and competitiveness in the Greater Golden Horseshoe by making more efficient use of existing employment areas and vacant and underutilized employment lands and increasing employment densities. This includes planning to better connect areas with high employment densities to transit and integrating and aligning land use planning and economic development goals and strategies to retain and attract investment and employment. This means that planning authorities should provide flexibility to capitalize on new economic and employment opportunities as they emerge, while providing certainty for traditional industries, including resource-based sectors.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Greenbelt Plan direct diversified and broad employment sectors within settlement areas that allow for increased density and availability for supporting economic growth. Lands on the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt generally limit the scope of employment uses to ensure protection of natural and agricultural resources. The promoted economic sectors include enabling the agri-food sector and compatible rural and agricultural employment opportunities.

The Town Official Plan establishes the need for an economically sustainable community as a community development principle. This reflects that decisions made regarding the future of the Town will reflect the need to establish an economically sustainable community. The Community of Stouffville is designated as the focus for employment growth in the Town given the availability of required services. These employment areas are intended to provide the potential for the development of the Community of Stouffville as a balanced community with opportunities for both living and working. The Town Commercial Policy Study, which will assess adequacy of commercial land supply, will also promote a downtown policy direction to maintain the historic downtown as a central meeting place and shopping area. In addition, the Gormley Industrial Area and the Community of Vandorf are also key employment areas where economic development will continue to be promoted. The Town Official Plan also intends to promote the rural economy by enhancing the resource-based industries of agriculture and aggregate production.



Figure 8: Construction Activity in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

In addition, consistent with Town Council's resolution of December 11, 2018, and Regional Council's motion of motion of March 21, 2019, the Province was requested to identify provincially significant employment zones within the Town which includes the following areas:

- Existing Gormley Industrial Area and Employment Expansion Area – located at the interchange of Highway 404 and Stouffville Road;
- Existing Vandorf Preston Lake Employment Area and Employment Expansion Area – located at the interchange of Highway 404 and Aurora Road; and,
- Proposed Davis Drive Employment Area – located at the interchange of Highway 404 and Davis Drive.

The identification of provincially significant employment zones, and expansion of the South Gormley Employment Expansion Area, along the Highway 404 corridor and the designation of additional employment areas will be further explored through the Region's ongoing Official Plan Review. The Growth Plan provides that the Province may review and update the provincially significant zones in response to a municipal request. Requests for the identification of additional provincially significant employment zones are currently being reviewed by the Province. Furthermore, the Growth Plan provides that the Minister may identify provincially significant employment zones and may provide specific direction for planning in those areas to be implemented through appropriate official plan policies and designations and economic development strategies. A notable aspect to the requested designations is the recognition for increased servicing to these areas to ensure the necessary infrastructure is available to support employment growth.



4.3.1 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

Preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions for the Town as part of the Official Plan Review include the following:

Preliminary Policy Recommendations

- Encourage a wide range, size and mix of available lands for a variety of economic functions;
- Attract a diverse labour force to accommodate the Town's businesses by ensuring a range of housing options, human and social services, cultural opportunities and parks and open spaces are provided;
- Explore opportunities for the designation of additional serviced employment lands, where appropriate;
- Pursue servicing for employment areas, where appropriate;
- Promote the development of green industries, including industrial uses and environment-focused professional and technical office uses and services;
- Identify criteria for ancillary retail uses in employment areas;
- Maintain employment lands as large and cohesive areas for industrial, manufacturing, warehousing and, where appropriate, targeted office uses. This includes supporting a broad mix of lot sizes that support a diversity of employment opportunities related to the primary function of Employment Areas to support industrial, manufacturing, warehousing and some office uses;
- Identify future strategic employment areas along the Highway 404 corridor for long term protection of employment uses accessible to a major goods movement corridor;
- Encourage and support the remediation and reuse of contaminated lands and brownfield sites in employment areas;
- Encourage clusters of related industries and services to encourage partnerships and innovation, and allow for efficiencies of resource and service sharing;
- Promote the provision of arts and cultural programs, services, events and facilities in new and existing communities as a key economic sector;
- Promote tourism and cultural attractions that enhance the quality of life for Town residents, from day-to-day activities to major events;
- Incorporate employment land conversion policies and criteria to ensure sustained protection of employment lands;
- The ongoing Commercial Policy Study will inform the commercial policy framework for the Town and to ensure commercial development can be accommodated over the planning horizon;
- Protect prime agricultural lands from development to ensure the agricultural sector can thrive; and,
- Promote countryside tourism and agri-tourism opportunities that build on agricultural and/or natural heritage assets.



Strategic Directions

- Ensure the continuous upgrade and provision of high-quality municipal services and infrastructure to support the demand for employment uses;
- Work with the Region and the Province to explore the potential designation of Regional and Provincially Significant Employment Zones within the Town;
- Support economic development through partnerships, strategies and programs, such as business improvement areas;
- Demonstrate the growth and transformation of the Town's development/construction industry as a model for emerging green building technologies and sustainable practices;
- Work with the private sector to ensure the provision of services and products that promote environmentally responsible practices;
- Support and encourage programs in training, business attraction, export development and other areas to support green industries; and,
- Develop municipal funding sources including partnerships with various levels of government and the private sector to support artists, cultural programs, events and facilities.

4.4 Transportation System

The *Planning Act* recognizes the need for promoting growth through development that is sustainably designed to support public transit. The PPS, 2020 further promotes land use patterns that promote active transportation before all other modes of travel. The PPS, 2020 also puts forth that development patterns must promote the integration of land use planning, growth management, transit-supportive development, intensification and infrastructure planning. Transportation systems are recognized by the PPS, 2020 to be provided as safe and energy efficient to more broadly facilitate the movement of people and goods. As part of a multimodal transportation system, connectivity within and among transportation systems and modes must be maintained and, where possible, improved including connections which cross jurisdictional boundaries. Transportation and infrastructure corridors are to be protected to ensure the necessary rights-of-way are available to accommodate expansions of service if necessary. This reflects that the need for a land use pattern, density and mix of uses throughout the Province should be promoted to minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and support current and future use of transit and active transportation.

The Growth Plan prioritizes intensification and higher densities in strategic growth areas to make efficient use of land and infrastructure and support transit viability to advance the creation of complete communities. The transportation system within the Greater Golder Horseshoe will be planned and managed to offer a balance of transportation choices that reduces reliance upon the automobile and promotes transit and active transportation. This includes offering multimodal access to jobs, housing, schools, cultural, and recreational opportunities and accommodating agricultural vehicles and equipment in appropriate settings. To support goods movement, the Growth Plan puts forth a coordinated goods movement network that links major goods movement facilities and corridors to the provincial highway network and areas of significant commercial activity. The intent of these objectives is to ensure sustainability and reduce greenhouse gas



emissions by encouraging the most financially and environmentally appropriate mode for trip-making and supporting the use of zero- and low-emission vehicles. Municipalities are also required to develop and implement transportation demand management policies to reduce trip distance and time, increase the modal share of alternatives to the automobile and to support active transportation.

The availability of multi-modal transportation is primarily directed within settlement areas as defined by the Okay Ridges Conservation Plan and Greenbelt Plan. However, notable transportation systems and linkages such as highways and corridors are identified as important to ensuring rural communities and industries can be sustained through ensuring the efficient movement of goods and services.

The current Town Official Plan establishes a Transportation Plan that allows for the development of a transportation network which provides for the safe, economic and efficient movement of people and goods. In addition, the Town encourages the development a network of trails which will provide other opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle movement. Consideration is also required to be given to the inclusion of bicycle lanes in road right-of-way for new arterial and collector roads. To further promote active transportation, the Town promotes a system of pedestrian and bicycle trails to link the Town together. The Town also advances the use of public transportation systems by encouraging the creation of a regional transit system, through rail and other forms, to link the Community of Stouffville with other communities in the Region and which will provide internal service within the Community itself. The Town will be updating its Transportation Master Plan as an outcome of the Official Plan Review.



Figure 9: GO Train Crossing in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

The City of London provides an innovative example of integrating transit as a central element to strategic growth by implementing the concept of Transit Villages. These serve as nodes that will be exceptionally designed, high-density mixed-use urban neighbourhoods connected by rapid transit to the Downtown and each other. They will be occupied by extensive retail and commercial services and will allow for substantial office spaces, resulting in complete communities. Adding to their interest and vitality, the Transit Villages will offer entertainment and recreational services as well as public parkettes, plazas and sitting areas. All of this will be tied together with an exceptionally designed, pedestrian-oriented form of development that connects to the centrally located transit station.



4.4.1 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

Preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions for the Town as part of the Official Plan Review include the following:

Preliminary Policy Recommendations

- Establish a comprehensive transportation network that allows a full range of mobility options, including walking, cycling and transit;
- Consider further policies to support a comprehensive and integrated active transportation network with connections to destinations and services (employment, commercial). This includes promoting connections to employment areas within a 15-minute walk or bike ride from residential areas;
- Recognize the integrated nature of land use, urban design, and transportation in land use planning decisions that support a full range of transportation options, and specifically prioritize opportunities to enhance walking, cycling and transit options;
- Promote the street network as the basis for enhanced transportation opportunities, including transit, walking, cycling, and placemaking initiatives. Existing rights-of way should be designed to optimize the efficient movement for a variety of modes, potentially resulting in reduced capacity for cars where overall capacity increases can be achieved;
- Develop a connected and continuous, grid-like street network that supports convenient and efficient travel by all modes of transportation and to discourage the development of street types that disrupt the grid network. New development shall be planned to support a grid-like street network with multiple connections to collector and arterial streets;
- Manage growth in ways that support green and active forms of mobility;
- Promote linkages between the environment and health, such as the role of active mobility in improving health, supporting healthy lifestyles and reducing greenhouse gases;
- Ensure within the scope of the Town that public transit is universally accessible, and buses are an attractive choice for travel;
- Consider the re-identification of street classifications, based on existing or proposed land uses through a “complete street” lens;
- Contemplate the definition of the Town’s main “nodes” and “corridors” to further link land use with transportation planning;
- Bring together the various road safety initiatives already in place under a Vision Zero program focused on reducing traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries for the most vulnerable users of the Town’s transportation system, including pedestrians, school children, older adults and cyclists. Potential partnerships with agencies and the Region exist for the coordination of various ongoing initiatives;
- Develop policies to consider technological advances within the transportation industry such as autonomous vehicles, micro-mobility and smart technology applications; and
- Support patterns of growth and a mix of land use that will ultimately require less travel for everyday activities and which encourage travel by transit, cycling and walking.



Strategic Directions:

- Consider the development of public campaigns to promote Transit Demand Management (TDM) strategies and initiatives to promote alternative modes of transportation;
- Consider implementing transit-oriented development, and TDM checklist for use in development reviews and approvals;
- Bring together the various road safety initiatives already in place under a Vision Zero program focused on reducing traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries for the most vulnerable users of the Town's transportation system, including pedestrians, school children, older adults and cyclists. Potential partnerships with agencies and the Region exist for the coordination of various ongoing initiatives;
- Ongoing collaboration with public transit providers (i.e. York Region Transit and GO) to increase service frequency, transit routes, availability and accessibility throughout the Town;
- Undertake a review of the Town's Transportation Master Plan;
- Consider the development of public campaigns related to street safety and Vision Zero initiatives;
- Increase the efficiency of the transportation system by working with the business community to implement TDM such as flexible work hours, telecommuting, and ridesharing; and by managing the parking supply (i.e., maximum parking requirements);
- Explore the development of Complete Streets guidelines and best practices that account for goods movement;
- Incentivize developers to consider the natural heritage policies when planning for transportation facilities in the construction and reconstruction of streets, transit infrastructure, sidewalks and pathways; and,
- Promote municipal street construction and improvements that provide opportunities to advance a progressive transportation agenda in the Town.

4.5 Infrastructure and Public Services

The *Planning Act* establishes as a provincial interest the need to ensure the adequate provision and efficient use of sewage and water services, waste management systems, and communications facilities. This is in addition to promoting the availability, accessibility and distribution of educational, health, social, cultural and recreational facilities as strategic growth throughout the Province continues. The PPS, 2020 further promotes this objective by stating that planning for infrastructure and public service facilities should be coordinated and integrated with land use planning and growth management. This includes community components related to sewage, water and stormwater to ensure the necessary foundations are available for local communities to grow. The PPS, 2020 establishes a hierarchy of servicing, where municipal sewage services and municipal water services are the preferred form of servicing for settlement areas to support protection of the environment and minimize potential risks to human health and safety. Where municipal sewage services and municipal water services are not available, planned or feasible, private communal sewage services and private communal water services are the preferred form of servicing for multi-unit/lot development to support protection of the environment and minimize potential risks to human health and safety. When none of the above options are



viable, individual on-site sewage services and individual on-site water services may be used if site conditions are suitable for the long-term provision of such services with no negative impacts. Planning authorities are also required to consider the role of infrastructure and public service facilities in providing mitigation to the impacts of a changing climate, including the implementation of green infrastructure to complement infrastructure.

The Growth Plan recognizes that well planned infrastructure is essential to the viability of Ontario's communities and critical to economic competitiveness, quality of life, and the delivery of public services. The infrastructure framework established by the Growth Plan requires that municipalities undertake an integrated approach to land use planning, infrastructure investments, and environmental protection. In addition, the Growth Plan identifies a clean and sustainable supply of water as essential to the long-term health and prosperity of the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This signifies that there is a need to co-ordinate investment in water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure to service future growth in ways that are fiscally sustainable and linked to decisions about how these systems are paid for and administered. Water infrastructure planning will be informed by watershed planning to ensure that the quality and quantity of water is maintained.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan states that existing infrastructure must be maintained, and new infrastructure will be needed to continue serving existing and permitted land uses in the Oak Ridges Moraine. New infrastructure corridors or facilities are to be allowed in the Natural Core Areas and Natural Linkage Areas, while maintaining existing public service facilities and adapting them is permitted in Countryside Areas. Similarly, for Protected Countryside lands within the Greenbelt, existing infrastructure must be maintained, and new infrastructure will be needed to continue serving existing and permitted land uses within the Greenbelt. Both the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Greenbelt Plan recognize the role of the landscapes in providing resiliency to the impacts of climate which is to the benefit of public infrastructure. This includes the essential services and functions of water, sewage treatment and stormwater management and opportunities for implementing sustainable practices to leverage the long-term ability and investment of infrastructure.

With growth focused in specified settlement areas, the current Town Official Plan outlines directives regarding infrastructure related to water, sewage and stormwater management. The Town has put forth servicing policies for the Communities of Stouffville, Ballantrae-Musselman Lake, Vandorf-Preston Lake and Gormley to ensure the adequate availability of services to allow the areas to grow in a manner respective of their outlined visions. The current servicing provisions for each community include the following:

- Community of Stouffville – Services by a municipal sanitary sewage collection and municipal water service, and a variety of storm drainage works which range from open ditches to localized storm drainage works in the older area of the Community;
- Community of Ballantrae-Musselman Lake - Serviced by a municipal water system, and most of the community is serviced by private sewage disposal systems. Lands in Ballantrae associated with the Ballantrae Golf and Country Club are serviced by a private sewage treatment facility;



- Community of Vandorf-Preston Lake – Serviced by private septic tank and tile bed systems and private wells; and,
- Community of Gormley - There are currently no municipal services in the Gormley Industrial area, although non-potable water is available for emergency purposes, therefore, only dry-industrial uses are permitted.

In addition, the Town Official Plan recognizes the role of public facilities in being necessary to support increases in population and employment. This also signifies the Town’s interest in providing residents with communal social and cultural spaces to gather and recreate which will further promote the desirability of the Town. As part of the Official Plan Review process, the Town will be updating its Infrastructure Master Plan, once the new Official Plan is adopted.



Figure 10: Stouffville Clippers Sports Complex, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

The City of Ottawa is an example of a municipality that recognizes efficient management, responsible operation and targeted growth of water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure as a key to supporting growth. The City has implemented an Infrastructure Master Plan to achieve this objective and accomplish high-level directions on infrastructure growth, operation, and renewal from relevant long-term planning decisions. Of fundamental importance to the Master Plan is the development of compact development forms which are best for long-term economic sustainability of governments and residents. This is because they allow more people to be serviced with less capital, operating and renewal budget pressures, which in turn maximizes the return on investments. This also includes aligning itself with existing population and growth patterns and using the same future development and growth projections to ensure demand for infrastructure is met in demand for water and wastewater capacity, demand and supply management, and weather trends.



4.5.1 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

Preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions for the Town as part of the Official Plan Review include the following:

Preliminary Policy Recommendations:

- Maximize and optimize infrastructure servicing limitations that promote growth through updates to the Water and Wastewater Master Plan;
- Plan for infrastructure needs beyond the 25- year planning horizon;
- Ensure municipal right-of-ways include space for other street elements, such as utilities and services, trees and landscaping, green infrastructure, snow and stormwater management, required for future growth;
- Ensure public service facilities in rural settlements are co-located and integrated in community hubs;
- Prioritize the use of communal systems in settlement areas where municipal services do not exist or are not planned, particularly for employment areas, and ensure consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement;
- Consider re-evaluating servicing policies for settlement areas (i.e. Vandorf) to ensure policies promote development in a responsible and sustainable manner;
- Ensure adequate provisions and accessibility of institutional services, including schools and childcare services;
- Promote infrastructure for better water quality through water conservation and wastewater and stormwater management based on watershed principles;
- Advance opportunities for green infrastructure including tree planting, stormwater management systems and green roofs;
- Focus intensification in areas that have a reduced impact on Town or Regional infrastructure, or which justify investment in new and sustainable infrastructure;
- Recognize that utilities and infrastructure must be designed to minimize their impact on the environment, while also being designed to respond to the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather events;
- Ensure Town services are delivered efficiently through a growth-supportive infrastructure system;
- Establish a comprehensive solid waste management program to maximize waste diversion for residential and non-residential uses, including limits, diversion targets, program monitoring and awareness; and,
- Establish and implement a Town-wide storm drainage and stormwater management master plan to ensure sustainability of the Town's natural water systems and ecosystem.

Strategic Directions

- Develop programs and activities to maintain and upgrade public amenities and infrastructure;
- Provide adequate facilities to support new development and maintaining the infrastructure in a state of good repair;



- Implement measures and activities which reduce water consumption, wastewater and stormwater flows and improve water quality;
- Undertake a review of the Town's Water and Wastewater Master Plan (post OP adoption);
- Advance strategies for providing new community services infrastructure or improving existing community service facilities. Decisions can be informed through the update of the Leisure and Community Services Master Plan;
- Prioritize and respond to water-related issues caused by global climate change, including impacts that may affect water quantity and quality; and,
- Support public information campaigns opportunities for water recycling, reuse, and on-site collection and storage to reduce demand on municipal infrastructure.

4.6 Environmental Sustainability

The *Planning Act* promotes the need for growth to occur in an environmentally sustainable manner as a provincial interest. This is not only intended to ensure adaptability against the challenges of climate change, but also ensure that communities are well-designed, encourage a sense of place and provide high-quality public spaces. The PPS, 2020 further recognizes that efficient land use and development patterns support sustainability by promoting strong, livable, healthy and resilient communities that protect the environment, public health and safety and promote economic growth. The PPS, 2020 notes that this is important to advancing the resiliency of urban areas experiencing growth and leveraging rural assets and amenities to protect the environment as a foundation for a sustainable economy.

The Greenbelt Plan further identifies environmental sustainability as a shared responsibility among a variety of community stakeholders in balancing the need for community growth and the protection of the natural environment. This is notably key to achieving the desire for a more compact built form that can integrate environmental sustainability, green infrastructure and low energy emissions into new developments. The Growth Plan's attention to environmental sustainability signifies to planning authorities the need to consider air, water and nature as the foundation to a thriving community that has the capacity to grow as the ongoing availability of these natural resources is essential for the sustainability of all communities. This also includes integrating urban and rural communities by supporting opportunities to increase access to healthy, local, and affordable food and promoting the sustainability of agricultural, agri-food, and agri-product businesses.



Figure 11: Bruce’s Mill Conservation Area, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Greenbelt Plan promote environmental sustainability through demonstrating the need for municipalities to consider the impacts of growth on natural heritage resources and functions. The ecological services provided by both landscapes in the water and food they produce are key indicators to the ability to sustain growth and a high quality of life in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. To ensure this continuation the Plan directs that local municipalities must align policies with the objectives and permitted uses of each land use designation within the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Greenbelt Plan to ensure that strategic growth is supported by long-term environmental sustainability. In addition, it is recognized that this can provide for a diverse range of economic and social activities that should be protected and associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses.

The current Town Official Plan envisions a safe and healthy community that is environmentally aware through seeking to protect the resources of rural and agricultural areas by focusing development in designated settlement areas. A notable principle of the Official Plan is ensuring that any change in the Town should be undertaken in a manner which will preserve and enhance the integrity of the natural environment. This principle is intended to ensure that environmental sustainability is considered as a major factor in the future planning of the municipality, and particularly in the assessment of any proposed changes in the community. The Official Plan also details an Environmental Conservation Strategy that establishes policies which recognize the Town’s location in relation to the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Rouge Park North Management Plan Study Area. This is further implemented by requiring that new developments within the Community of Stouffville take place in a manner consistent with the principles of sustainability.



These specifications include a development pattern that encourages and supports transit usage, that is adaptable over time for future generations and promote energy efficiency and promotes environmental quality and the efficient management of energy and waste in the community. The Town will be undertaking a Sustainability and Healthy Community Policy Study, as part of the OPR.

Throughout Ontario, municipalities have recognized the invaluable benefits of promoting environmental sustainability alongside community growth by incorporating assertive Official Plan polices, and specific strategic plans, to achieve this objective. The City of Mississauga Strategic Plan for example, identifies “Living Green” as part of one of the five strategic vision pillars for the City which involves implementing measures that are sensitive to, and complement, the natural environment. This is in recognition that as the City continues to grow, it is imperative this does not compromise the natural environment and the ability to promote sustainable approaches to development. The City Strategic Plan outlines the natural environment as fundamentally critical to human and economic vitality and the overall wellbeing of society given the necessities of life it provides, including clean water, air and land. In addition, this serves as a way to promote community awareness among residents and businesses to ensure that their practices contribute to achieving a sustainable community.

4.6.1 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

The preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions listed below are further complemented and expanded in the Environmental Sustainability Section of the Planning for the Natural Environment Discussion Paper. Preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions for the Town as part of the Official Plan Review include the following:

Preliminary Policy Recommendations

- Encourage the application of sustainable building design and construction practices that reduce stormwater flows, the use of water, waste and the use of renewable energy systems and energy efficient technologies;
- Incorporate the use of innovative green spaces such as green roofs and designs that enhance urban ecology;
- Establish policies to protect, maintain and expand the urban forest to achieve a healthy, sustainable forest with an enhanced urban tree canopy;
- Develop a comprehensive green development standards strategy, with performance incentives to reduce the environmental impact of new developments in the Town;
- Encourage low impact development methods for stormwater management including stormwater attenuation and re-use and the use of green infrastructure;
- Consider updates to the Sustainability Development Guidelines to harmonize language or reference specific objectives of the new Official Plan;
- Recognize the impacts of global climate change on the natural environment and to plan for mitigation of and adaptation to such impacts;



- Promote targets for greenhouse gas reductions by identifying adaptation measures to respond to impacts from climate change and establishing a long-term target of carbon neutrality for Town's facilities, infrastructure and operations;
- Update Rouge Park North Management Plan Area policies, taking into account the Rouge National Urban Park Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan 2019;
- Promote the development of a comprehensive parks, open space and trails network to encourage healthy communities; and,
- Include policies that recognize active transportation as a healthy lifestyle shift toward more sustainable transportation modes for daily needs.

Strategic Directions

- Partner with community organizations to improve boulevards and sidewalks to incorporate sustainable design elements;
- Promote low impact development practices and technologies on municipal property and as part of Town operations to deal with problems related to urban stormwater runoff including erosion, sedimentation and pollution;
- Encourage municipal facilities and infrastructure to be designed to minimize their impact on the environment, while also being designed to respond to the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather events;
- Consider the preparation of a Sustainability and Healthy Community Policy Study, concurrently with the Official Plan;
- Partner with community organizations in local food production in community gardens to reduce the need for long-range transportation of food and associated consumption of fossil fuels; and,
- Leverage the changing demographics of the community to help inform and guide the Town's plans for the provision of high-quality equitable access to natural spaces to ensure the health of all can be advanced.



5 NEXT STEPS

This Discussion Paper is one of four Papers, which follow the focus areas of the OPR. This Discussion Paper was completed within Phase 2 ‘Background Studies and Discussion Papers’ of the OPR program and was prepared based on background review and research, consultation with the Town and engagement with the public.

The critical analysis of policy gaps, such as the need to incorporate servicing and transportation policy considerations, provincial and regional conformity requirements and planning trends related to growth management, in addition to a robust community engagement program, will be integrated to set the stage for drafting the new Official Plan and Schedules.

The information contained herein will help formulate a Policy Direction Report and the development of a brand-new Official Plan and Schedules to implement the preferred policy directions and to address policy conformity gaps identified throughout the OPR.

Discussion Papers detailing each of the Official Plan Review Focus Areas can be accessed online www.cometogetherws.ca/opr.