

Planning for Complete Communities

DISCUSSION PAPER

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

July 2021



Re-Imagine Stouffville





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1 INTRODUCTION

As communities in the Greater Toronto Area continue to experience growth and an increased demand for services, the concept of a Complete Community needs to be implemented with the desire for a high quality of life, ensuring that equitable opportunities for all people is established as a key objective embedded in their planning documents. This Discussion Paper is intended to explore the concept of a Complete Communities and its importance towards achieving the desires and aspirations of the Town through preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions.

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 Official Plan Review, which are identified in Figure 1.

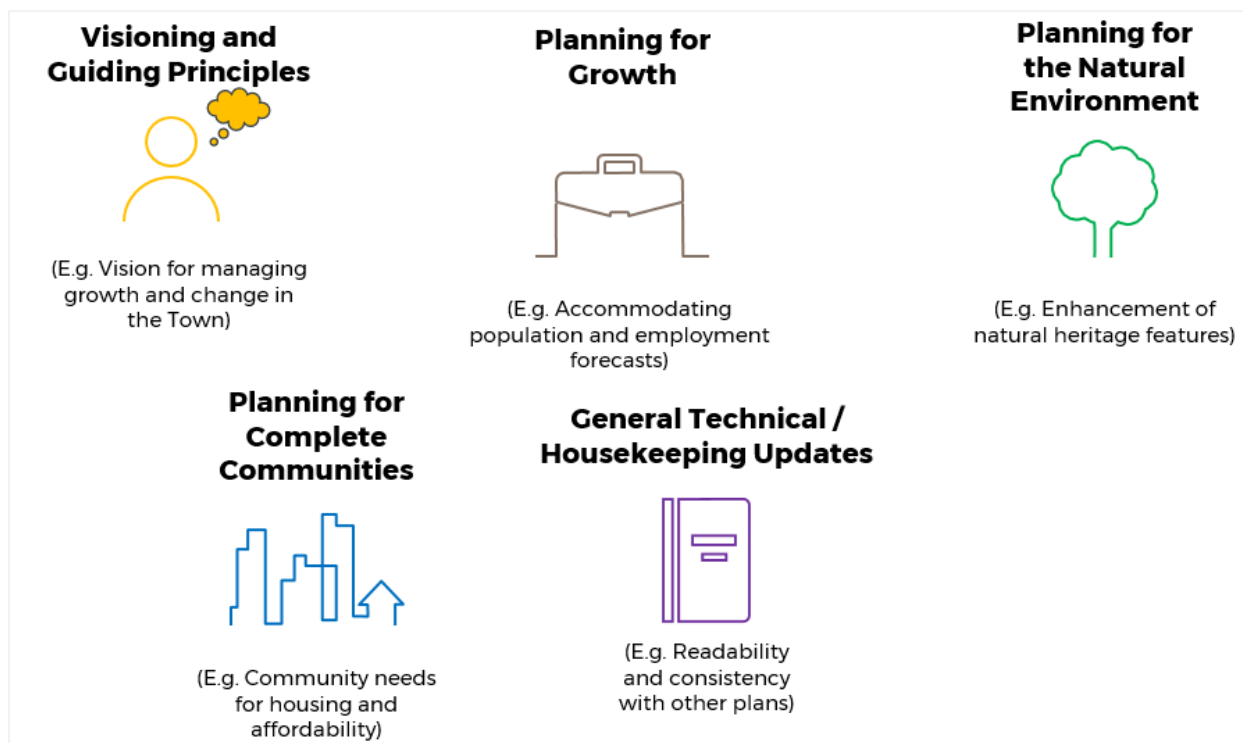


Figure 1: Focus Areas of the OPR

1.1 Purpose of this Discussion Paper

The purpose of this Discussion Paper is to review the opportunities for strengthening the Town as a Complete Community that maintains its unique rural character through future growth management, protecting the natural environment and promoting a healthy community that advances the needs of all residents. Planning for a Complete Community is key to applying 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), through detailed local planning policies in the Town's Official Plan.

This Discussion Paper presents preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions to help implement the Town's vision of creating a safe, healthy and inclusive community. 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 OPR 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 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 OPR 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 OPR work program includes the following phases:

- **Phase 1: Visioning and Consultation** – will result in a community vision and guiding principles summarized in a Community Visioning Report 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 a Policy Directions Report 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.

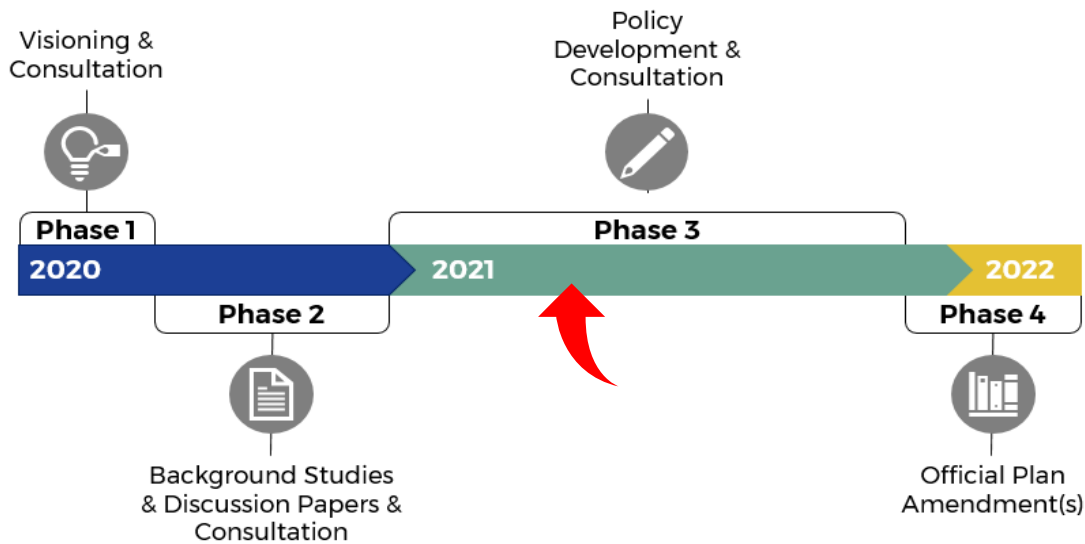


Figure 2: Official Plan Review Timeline

The Town’s OPR process allows for the unique prospect to reimagine existing neighbourhoods and manage change and growth through the lens 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 to achieve a Complete Community 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.

1.5 What is a Complete Community?

The 2020 consolidated Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe defines complete communities as:

“Places such as mixed-use neighbourhoods or other areas within cities, towns, and settlement areas that offer and support opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to conveniently access most of the necessities for daily living, including an appropriate mix of jobs, local stores, and services, a full range of housing, transportation options and public service facilities. Complete communities are age-friendly and may take different shapes and forms appropriate to their contexts”.

For the purposes of this Discussion Paper, key components and features of a Complete Community include:

- Providing a mix of housing types to accommodate a range of incomes and housing needs. The Town’s Official Plan plays a role in ensuring that a range and mix of housing is



planned in the right locations. Economic Development and job opportunities are addressed in the Planning for Growth Discussion Paper.

- Conserving cultural heritage resources, which uphold a community identity and reflect past and present ideals, beliefs and aspirations, including those of Indigenous communities. Cultural heritage resources include:
 - Archaeological resources, which help us to understand our cultural history;
 - Built heritage resources, which provide tangible architectural assets which add to the richness of our streetscapes;
- Cultural heritage landscapes and Heritage Conservation Districts, which offer unique areas that contain a distinct character formed through the relationship of a group of individual heritage resources;
- Integrating high quality urban design features, which involve careful consideration to the form, shape and character of the built environment, communities and Town as a whole. In an effort to make functional and attractive buildings, streets and public spaces, thoughtful planning through a coordinated effort to connect people and places is paramount;
- Supporting quality of life and human health by encouraging the use of active transportation and providing access to high quality parks, open spaces and trail connections, opportunities for recreation and entertainment, and access to local and healthy food. Transportation infrastructure (i.e. roads and transit) is addressed, in more detail, in the Planning for Growth Discussion Paper;
- Recognizing the importance of developing a culture of conservation and addressing climate change. As the Town continues to evolve and grow, so will the overall demand for water, energy, air, and land. The ongoing availability of these natural resources is essential for the sustainability of the community. This topic is also explored in the Complete Community Discussion Paper; and,
- Fostering healthier environments that support people to thrive and be healthy. Complete communities can reduce chronic diseases by creating conditions and opportunities that support people to increase their physical activity in carrying out daily activities by walking, cycling and using public transit. Extensive research on the health benefits associated with community design shows denser, walkable neighbourhoods with services and amenities nearby allow people to more easily incorporate physical activity into their daily activities. Health promotion and wellbeing is also explored and complemented within the Natural Environment Discussion Paper.



Figure 3: Community of Stouffville

There are some underlying topics that knit-together the various themes explored under the Complete Community umbrella such as accessibility, diversity, culture and recreation. Furthermore, while there are four distinct Discussion Papers, the themes within each Paper are not exclusive to one Paper and often connect with concepts or ideas discussed in another.



2 CONTEXT AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Whitchurch-Stouffville, located within the Region of York, is one of Canada's fastest growing municipalities. The Town is located in the heart of the Greater Toronto Area, giving it easy access to transportation routes as well as to recreational and cultural destinations. Highway 404 forms the western boundary of the Town, with links to all of Ontario's "400" series Highways. The Town has access to commuter trains and buses as well as regional transit services.

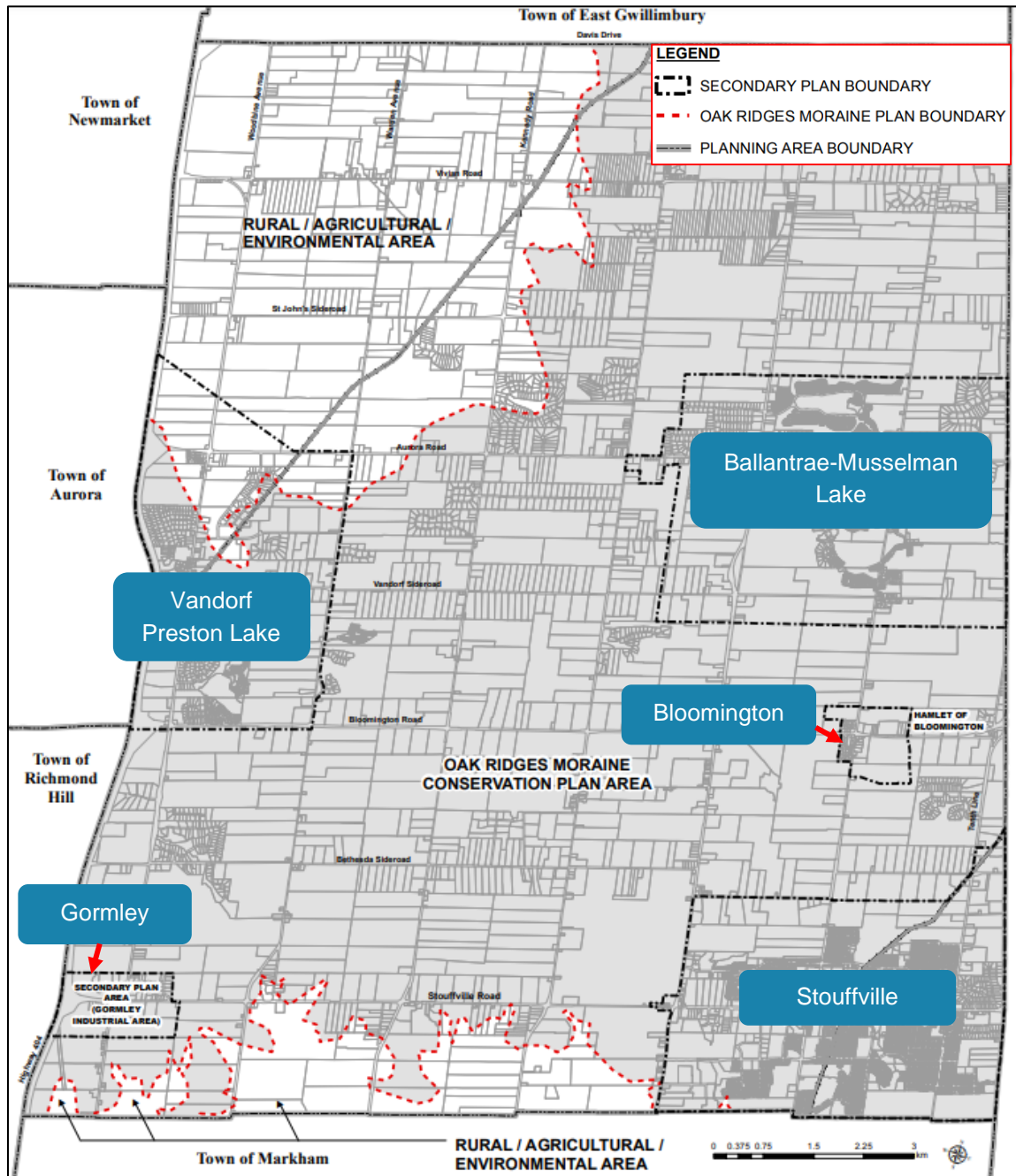


Figure 4: Community Structure, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville



The community is a mix of urban and rural settlements within the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Province's Greenbelt Plan Area, comprised of prime agricultural and rural lands and an expansive natural heritage system.

The Official Plan identifies four Secondary Plan areas which provide more detailed land use direction for specific communities, and complements the policies of the Official Plan:

- **Stouffville** - Represents the largest urban settlement area in the Town and the area where most of the Town's growth will be accommodated. Accordingly, the Stouffville Secondary Plan has been amended several times to address a variety of issues reflective of the increasing level and complexity of new developments.
- **Gormley** - Contains the largest supply of lands in the Town which are designated and available for employment development along the Highway 404 corridor. There are currently no municipal services in the Gormley Industrial area, although non-potable water is available for emergency purposes.
- **Vandorf Preston Lake** - Comprised of the Vandorf-Preston Lake Community existing residential areas, the Ram Forest Drive Industrial Area, existing commercial areas and significant environmental areas. The Secondary Plan provides for development opportunities within the Oak Ridges Moraine portion and Potential Employment, Potential Residential and Potential Mixed-Use areas within the Non-Moraine portions of the Secondary Planning Area, which are located within the Greenbelt Plan.
- **Ballantrae-Musselman Lake** - Area includes a significant amount of adjoining rural/environmental lands. The area is 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.

There are also several rural clusters, including:

- Bethesda;
- Bloomington;
- Cedar Valley;
- Lemonville;
- Lincolnville;
- Pine Orchard;
- Pleasantville;
- Ringwood;
- Vivian; and
- Wesley Corners.



The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has a very diverse local economy with strengths in knowledge-based industries, advanced manufacturing, building and construction and the agriculture and tourism sectors. According to the 2016 Canada Census, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville was the third fastest growing community in Canada, and the second fastest growing municipality in Ontario. The Town has seen an increase in family size, increase in population diversity, and has welcomed a significant increase in new Canadians. With a growing and diversifying population within the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, it is important that the Official Plan is updated to reflect these changes to best serve its evolving communities well into the future.



Figure 5: Community Structure, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville



3 COMPONENTS OF A COMPLETE COMMUNITY

Provincial legislation requires that growth is accommodated by planning for complete communities that meet people’s daily needs throughout their lifetime, with convenient access to a mix of jobs, services, community infrastructure, transportation options, a range of housing, and vibrant public spaces and streets. This Discussion Paper is intended to explore the concept of a Complete Community and its importance towards achieving the desires and aspirations of the Town through preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions. The key components of Complete Communities that are being examined in this Discussion Paper are shown in Figure 6.

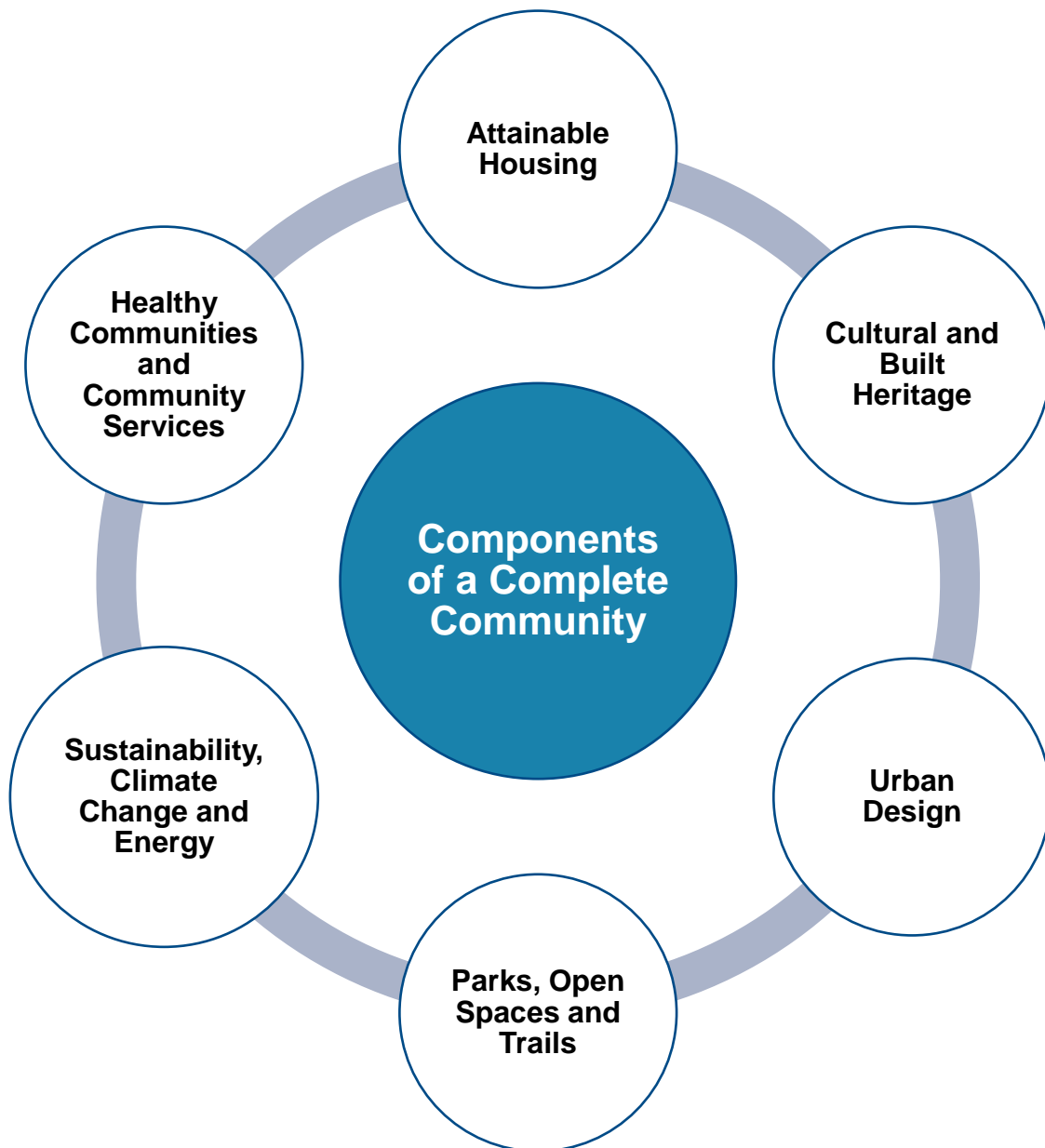


Figure 6: Components of a Complete Community



It is important to understand that Complete Communities are not limited to the list described above, there are underlying topics that knit-together the various themes explored under the Complete Community umbrella such as accessibility, cultural and built heritage diversity, arts and recreation. Other components typically associated with a Complete Community such as active transportation, supporting infrastructure, employment opportunities and economic development will be covered and explored in depth as part of the Planning for Growth Discussion Paper.

3.1 Attainable Housing

Attainable housing is a critical component to supporting the overall growth of a community. As greater disparities continue between individual incomes and the significant cost of living in the Greater Toronto Area and York Region, the need for diverse and attainable housing has emerged as a dire situation that must be addressed in order to promote the evolution of an inclusive and complete community. Housing affordability and diversity allows for individuals to find stable suitable housing, which in return, allows for increased contribution to their community in an evidently more productive and healthy manner. The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville OPR process allows for the opportunity to examine expected growth through the lens of providing existing and future residents the opportunity to thrive and contribute within a diverse range of housing options.

3.1.1. Policy Framework

National Housing Strategy

In 2017, the Government of Canada developed a National Housing Strategy recognizing the right to housing as a human right. This is based on the understanding that Canadians require housing that meets their needs and that they can afford in order to promote sustainable and inclusive communities, which in return will allow the Canadian people and economy to thrive. As part of the National Housing Strategy, the federal government has committed to provide provinces and territories increased flexibility for attainable housing incentives. This includes the \$4-billion Canada Housing Benefit that will provide affordability support directly to families and individuals in housing need, including potentially those living in social housing, those on a social housing waitlist, or those housed in the private market but struggling to make ends meet.

The Planning Act

The *Planning Act* specifies the need for a full range of housing as a Provincial interest in order to promote a strong, healthy and resilient community through efficient residential land use and development patterns. This recognizes the need for municipalities to utilize various tools for implementing a variety of housing to ensure it is available in attainable forms to meet the needs of all people. To achieve this objective, the *Planning Act* further permits local municipalities the opportunity to utilize inclusionary zoning through Official Plans to require the provision of attainable housing in development projects.

Compact urban forms are also promoted by the *Planning Act* which requires all municipalities to establish official plan policies and amend their zoning by-laws to allow second units in detached,



semi-detached, row houses and ancillary structures. In return this provides a foundation for the communities to align with these objectives through establishing and implementing minimum targets for the provision of housing which is attainable to low- and moderate-income households and that aligns with applicable housing and homelessness plans. This also ensures housing considerations are required to meet the social, health, economic and well-being of residents, including special needs requirements and needs arising from demographic changes and employment opportunities.

Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) emphasizes the need for an affordable and market-based range and mix of residential types (single-detached, additional residential units, multi-unit housing, affordable housing and housing for older persons), including policies that sustain healthy, livable and safe communities. Planning authorities are required to establish and implement minimum targets for the provision of housing which is affordable to low- and moderate-income households and which align with applicable housing and homelessness plans. However, where planning is conducted by an upper-tier municipality, the upper-tier municipality in consultation with the lower-tier municipalities may identify a higher target(s) which shall represent the minimum target(s) for these lower-tier municipalities.

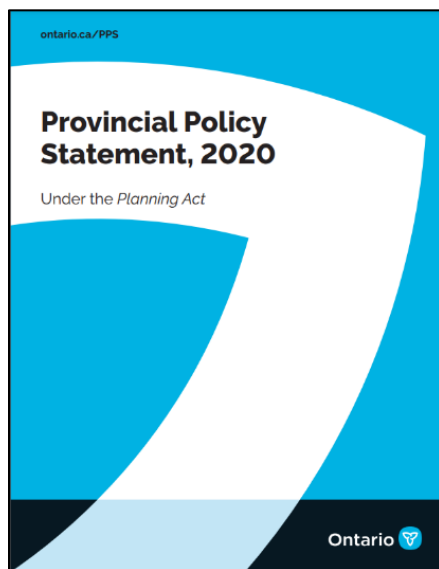


Figure 7: Cover Page, PPS, 2020

Bill 108 – More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019

Bill 108 (*More Homes, More Choice Act*) was introduced by the Provincial government on May 2, 2019. The Act received Royal Assent on June 6, 2019 and emerged from a recognition that the housing people need and want is often unattainable due to availability and cost. A significant opportunity provided through the framework of this legislation includes making it easier to build different types of attainable and market-based housing through streamlining the development approvals process and implementing innovative approaches to homeownership. Changes to the *Planning Act*, introduced as part of Bill 108, extend permissions for secondary suites, by



authorizing up to two additional residential units in detached, semi-detached and row houses dwellings, in both the primary dwelling and an ancillary building or structure.

The Growth Plan

To support the achievement of complete communities, the Growth Plan recognizes attainable and diverse housing as a necessary component to ensuring communities can achieve their fullest potential. This allows for the ability to develop and implement mechanisms for attainable rental and home ownership to accommodate all sizes, ages and incomes of households throughout all stages of life. The Plan also states that applying the policies in local communities will support the achievement of complete communities through featuring a diverse mix of land uses supported by varying housing options, including second units and attainable housing.

Region of York Official Plan

The Region of York Official Plan distinguishes acceptable housing as being suitable in condition, adequate in size and attainable. The Regional Official Plan recognizes the need to provide a full mix and range of housing options in optimal locations that allows residents to contribute positively to the local economy and community.

Through the Municipal Comprehensive Review, York Region is working to understand housing needs of current and future residents and create housing targets to address that need.

Additionally, the Region has implemented the Housing Solutions: A Place for Everyone strategy emphasizing the goal of increasing the stock of attainable and adequate housing, helping people find attainable housing and strengthening the housing and homelessness system. To further reinforce its commitment to promoting a high quality of life, the Region has also implemented the Housing Matters and Seniors Strategies to respond to the everchanging dynamics of the Region that affect the objective of achieving attainable and adequate housing. This ensures the Region's continuous attention to achieving complete communities by promoting values and principles consistent with suitable housing for individuals of all incomes, ages and abilities.

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville – Official Plan

The Town Official Plan specifies that in order to build a healthy community a choice with respect to secure, adequate and attainable housing is necessary. Although there are servicing limitations for housing diversification in rural settlement areas of the Town, more urban settlement areas are expected to encompass a full range of housing. This asserts the Town's interest in providing adequate housing through ensuring various housing typologies and pricing that in return support the functional needs of all current and anticipated residents.

3.1.2 Current Status

The Town's Official Plan notes an interest in securing a range of housing focused primarily within the Community of Stouffville. This is to be facilitated through various forms of development, including housing forms and densities, consistent with the character of the community supported through the Town's Urban Design Guidelines. For the Town to meet the allocation of population by the Region of York Official Plan, the Town Official Plan aims to accommodate a housing unit



target of an additional 9,200 units between 2012 and 2031. The Town anticipates achieving a housing mix target in the Community of Stouffville where the majority of residential is planned to comprise of 50% low density residential units; 27% medium density residential and 23% high density residential units. In addition, this specification is projected to contribute to the Region of York's goal of having a minimum of 25% availability of attainable housing. The intent of this objective which can be further implemented through the OPR is to ensure development enhances the health and vibrancy of the existing and future community through a mix of housing and other uses which contribute to the development of Stouffville as a Complete Community. It should be noted that a full range and intensity of housing types are more limited in other settlement areas where full municipal services are not available.

Furthermore, the Town's Official Plan currently lacks policy and direction related to additional residential units, inclusionary zoning, and housing affordability targets within new developments which will need to be incorporated and addressed as part of this OPR.

In addition to the Region's MCR policy direction regarding affordable housing, a Housing Needs Assessment could be undertaken to do a more in-depth look at housing needs, specifically for the Town. The current OPR scope of work would only allow for a streamlined assessment of housing need so the policy recommendations would be mainly based on background reports and ensuring conformity to new Provincial legislation and Regional policy.

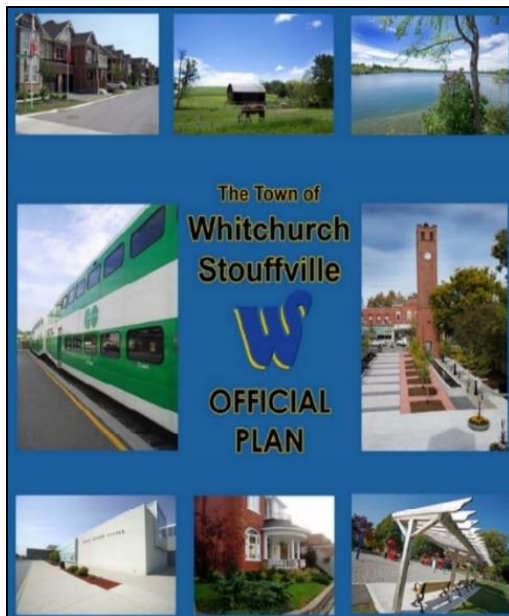


Figure 8: Official Plan Cover, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

3.1.3 Opportunities and Best Practice Review

Best practice examples relevant to attainable Housing are introduced and summarized below. These best practices are a valuable resource for completing this Discussion Paper, as they assist



in directing analysis. Through the review of best practices, policy recommendations and strategic directions relevant to the Town's OPR will be highlighted.

City of Mississauga – Official Plan

The City of Mississauga Official Plan emphasizes a strong commitment to ensuring that the housing mix can accommodate people with diverse housing preferences and socioeconomic characteristics. Recognizing that attainable and diverse housing must be complemented with the appropriate community infrastructure, the City Official Plan identifies that the existing housing stock must be maintained in terms of quality and quantity given its potential for rental conversion. In addition, the City Official Plan specifies that the production of housing for those with special needs, and housing for the elderly and shelters, are key to contributing to a Complete Community. This strong language regarding housing for individuals of all ages and ability is a distinguishing factor that reaffirms the City's commitment to implementing policies considerate of diversity in the community.

City of Toronto – Policy Documents (Official Plan, Housing Now Initiative and Growing Up Guidelines)

The City of Toronto Official Plan recognizes adequate and attainable housing as a basic requirement for everyone within the City. For large development sites, the City requires that a minimum of 30% of the new housing units be in forms other than single-detached and semi-detached houses, such as row housing, triplexes and multi-unit residential buildings. The City Official Plan also enforces protection of existing rental units from new development, along with encouraging secondary units in order to increase the supply and availability of rental housing across the City.

In addition, the City has created the Housing Now initiative to activate City-owned sites for the development of attainable housing. This represents a new city building approach that will promote the creation of complete communities where a range of housing is available near employment and transit for those earning between \$21,000 and \$56,000 per year.



Figure 9: City of Toronto Housing Now Program

The City has also created the Growing Up Guidelines to complement the housing objectives of the Official Plan in order to promote a full range of housing, in terms of form, tenure and affordability. These Guidelines have resulted in measures that provide direction on how new



developments can function better for larger households through recognizing the need to understand the needs of families at the unit, building and community level.

City of Vaughan - Official Plan

The City of Vaughan Official Plan aims to establish diverse and attainable housing to allow for the opportunity to accommodate all those who choose to make the City of Vaughan their home. This includes encouraging a full range of housing options through ownership and rental housing, social housing, housing for seniors, supportive housing, emergency shelters for women and families, and accessible housing that meets the needs of people with disabilities. The City Official Plan requires that all significant developments that include a residential component demonstrate their contribution to meeting the City's housing objectives through the preparation of a housing options statement. In addition, the City proclaims as a key principle the need to consider universal accessibility and accommodations for people with disabilities in the development of attainable new residential developments. This specified focus by the City Official Plan on offering a wider variety of housing choices within existing and new communities is intended to translate into ensuring that children who grow up in the City will be able to stay close to their family as young adults, while seniors who have lived in the community can remain in housing that best meets their needs.



Figure 10: Rendering of Vaughan Metropolitan Centre

Region of Peel - Affordable Housing Active Design Guidelines

The Region of Peel has implemented Guidelines for the consideration of promoting a healthy and active lifestyle among attainable housing residents. This has been notably established as relevant to individuals with lower socio-economic status who experience economic, transportation and other barriers to physical activity, and thus experience higher rates of diabetes, heart disease and other chronic diseases. To achieve the goal of reducing these barriers, the Affordable Housing Active Design Guidelines examine numerous components when considering attainable housing opportunities including site selection, incorporating commercial uses that support healthy choices and increasing the visual appeal and availability of outdoor recreational facilities. In addition, this initiative also focuses on the interior of attainable housing buildings to ensure they promote opportunities for physical wellbeing throughout an individual's daily routines. This includes the



provision of indoor bicycle storage and availability of fitness equipment as a central element to common rooms. To achieve the vision of the Guidelines, the Region has indicated long-term success to be rooted in tenant-led programming partnerships that will help support increased communication among residents and local community groups, build community cohesion, and ultimately encourage behavioural changes towards a sustainable healthy lifestyle.

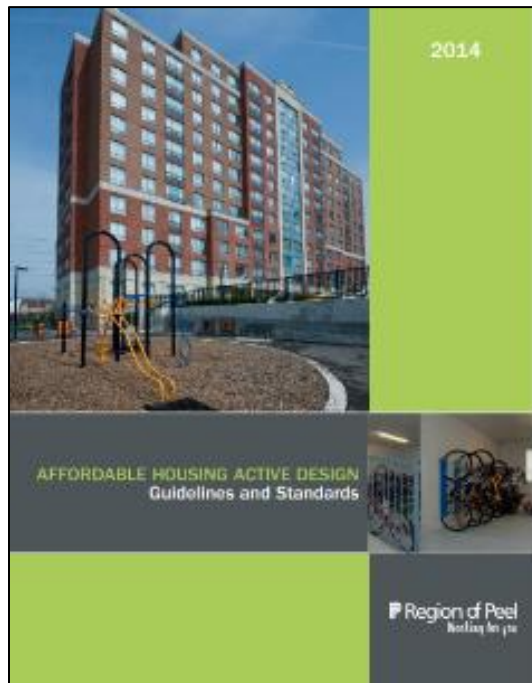


Figure 11: Affordable Housing Active Design Guidelines, Peel Region

3.1.4 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

Preliminary Policy Recommendations

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

- Refine built form policies, such as height/density, compatibility, transition policies, for residential intensification to ensure intensification is contextually appropriate to the Town and ensure that the character of existing stable residential neighborhoods is maintained, while accommodating more gentrification;
- Identify a definition of ‘attainable housing’ that is appropriate for the Town and each respective community, in consideration of the PPS’ requirement for planning authorities to establish and implement minimum targets for the provision of affordable housing;
- Identify targets for rental housing to encourage private sector developers to construct rental housing in new developments. The Town may also consider policy to prohibit and/or regulate the demolition of affordable residential rental properties containing six or more dwelling units



and the conversion of such properties to a purpose other than residential rental in order to help protect rental and affordable housing stock;

- Promote the increase in attainable housing supply to provide a diverse range of accessible, appropriate, and adequate unit types;
- Consider special housing needs, including people with disabilities, senior's housing, ageing in place and supporting age-friendly communities;
- Implement additional residential unit policies to authorize two residential units in a dwelling and a residential unit in a building or structure ancillary to a dwelling;
- Incorporate inclusionary zoning enabling policies within the Official Plan to study inclusionary zoning as a solution to help address the Town's housing needs;
- Promote downtown vitality through considering new development opportunities as a mechanism to incorporate and expand the use of historic buildings as options for attainable and diverse housing;
- Implement targets for affordable housing in major transit station areas; and,
- Consider policies to encourage not just affordable housing in the sense that units are subsidized by the government, but also policies to encourage market rate housing across a range of housing tenures.

Strategic Directions

The Town can undertake initiatives at a corporate level and beyond the scope of the OPR to ensure housing affordability and diversity is promoted to ensure the achievement of a Complete Community. This includes the following:

- Foster partnerships among property owners, non-profit/for-profit residential developers and community agencies to manage attainable units and/or redevelop vacant or underutilized homes and non-residential buildings. This includes heritage buildings which can be used as a tool to increase the supply of attainable and supportive housing particularly in downtown Stouffville;
- Develop a tenant relocation and assistance plan which secures the right to return to a replacement unit at similar rents and offers other assistance to lessen hardship;
- Support community organizations which provide employment opportunities and/or training to youth, persons with disabilities and people with low incomes living in the Town who are residents of attainable housing;
- Continue working with the Region and other housing partners to increase the awareness of housing needs in the Town and the benefits of including attainable and rental housing in all communities;
- Examine the feasibility of implementing inclusionary zoning within the Lincolnville and Stouffville GO Major Transit Station Area's (MTSA's); and,
- Consider undertaking a Housing Needs Assessment to take a more in-depth look at housing needs, beyond the Region's MCR policy direction regarding attainable housing. A Housing Needs Assessment would allow for the development of recommendations that could help address specific housing gaps in the Town, which may include affordable and seniors housing but also the diversity of the housing supply (i.e. tenure, type and size), and any issues with housing conditions.



3.2 Cultural and Built Heritage

Cultural heritage resources uphold a community identity as they preserve and enhance symbols, places and artifacts important to past and present ideals, beliefs and aspirations. Cultural heritage resources include built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes and archaeological resources. The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville OPR provides an opportunity to highlight the unique legacies of past contributors through the preservation of historical buildings and landscapes. In addition, the economic, social and health benefits of interacting, appreciating and learning with the past allow for a collective enhanced quality of life rooted in a socially aware and inclusive community.

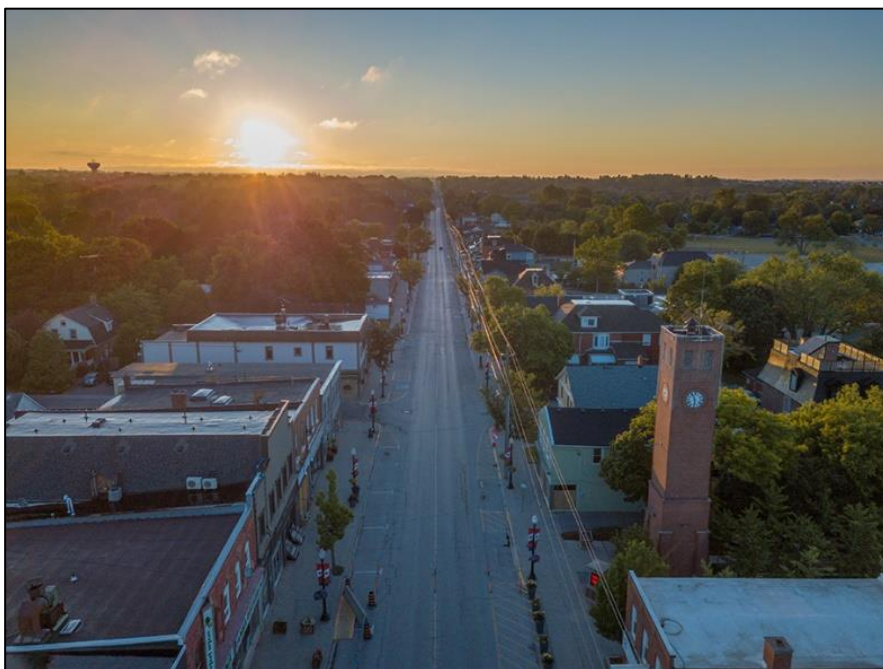


Figure 12: Main Street, Stouffville

3.2.1 Policy Context

Planning Act

The Province of Ontario, through the *Planning Act*, specifies a Provincial interest in recognizing the long-term value of protecting and preserving cultural heritage resources. This includes prohibiting any use of land or erecting buildings on land that is the site of a significant archaeological resource. The *Planning Act* thus requires municipalities to manage and direct physical change through an Official Plan in order to conserve important cultural and archaeological resources, built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes.



Bill 108 – More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019

Bill 108 included amendments to the *Ontario Heritage Act* which establish new, mandatory standards for designation by-laws and new time limits for considering complete alteration and demolition applications, as well as designation decisions. Municipal decisions on designations and alterations are now appealable to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT), whose decisions will be binding (replacing the current, non-binding decisions of the Conservation Review Board).

Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The PPS, 2020 asserts protection of cultural resources through mandating that significant built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes and archaeological resources must be conserved. This includes not permitting development or site alteration on adjacent lands to protected heritage properties until the matter has been evaluated to determine the significance of the resource along with opportunities for conservation. In addition, development and site alteration is not permitted on lands containing archaeological resources or areas of archaeological potential unless significant archaeological resources have been conserved. These measures are implemented to safeguard cultural heritage resources from impeding development, while also recognizing that it is imperative for planning authorities to engage with Indigenous communities and consider their interests when identifying, protecting and managing cultural heritage and archaeological resources.

The Growth Plan

The Growth Plan provides guidance in protecting cultural resources as an element to achieving complete communities. Municipalities are required when developing and implementing an Official Plan to identify strategies for the wise use and management of cultural heritage resources. In addition, this also provides for the opportunity for local communities to engage with Indigenous communities to consider their interests when identifying, protecting and managing cultural heritage and archaeological resources. This in return encourages a sense of place by promoting a well-designed built form and community planning focused on conserving features that help define community character and shared values.

Region of York Official Plan

The Regional Official Plan policies are designed to promote cultural heritage activities and to conserve cultural heritage resources. The Regional Official Plan requires local municipalities to adopt official plan policies to conserve significant cultural heritage resources. This is intended to promote heritage awareness and to encourage local municipalities to consider urban design standards in core historic areas that reflect the areas' heritage, character and streetscape. In addition, the Regional Official Plan requires that the conservation of archaeological resources occurs in situ or in an alternate location by proper excavation, documentation and preservation of recovered cultural materials and site documentation, to the satisfaction of the local municipality in compliance with Provincial requirements, standards or guidelines.



Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Official Plan

The Town Official Plan through its vision, principles and objectives has placed notable emphasis on the role of heritage conservation through protecting, improving and managing those resources, including the potential for their adaptive reuse. This indicates a dedication to including consideration for cultural heritage resources as part of the Town's general planning approach. With over seven hundred built heritage properties identified in the Town's Built Heritage Inventory, the Town values the recognition of individual properties and promotion of opportunities for heritage designation areas.

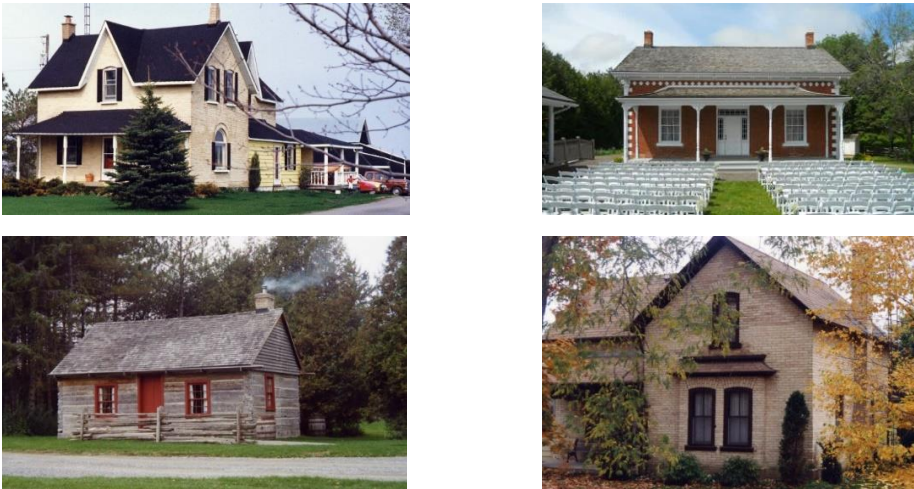


Figure 13: Sample Designated/Listed Buildings with the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

3.2.2 Current Status

The Town has implemented numerous initiatives to ensure the desire of residents to protect and enhance cultural heritage resources is recognized through policy. This includes the following:

Built Heritage Inventory (Municipal Heritage Register)

The *Ontario Heritage Act* requires that every municipality in Ontario maintain a publicly-accessible register of properties of cultural heritage value or interest. The Town's Built Heritage Inventory serves as the official record of all designated and non-designated heritage properties. This tool is utilized to promote knowledge of the Town's cultural heritage, document local history and provide interim protection to historical structures from demolition.

Designated Properties (Part IV): Individual Designation

Property designation, under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, is one tool that municipalities have traditionally employed to protect thousands of heritage properties in hundreds of communities across the province. Designation not only protects but also celebrates and recognizes cultural heritage value of importance to the community. Designation applies a by-law to real property and can include a variety of features, landscapes, sites, and buildings. At present, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has 10 designated properties under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.



Designated Properties (Part V): District Designation

Heritage Conservation Districts are designated areas that contain a concentration of heritage resources that collectively contribute to a distinct, historic neighbourhood character. The cultural heritage value of such areas contributes to a sense of place extending beyond individual buildings or structures. Heritage Conservation Districts are designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* and, through district plans and guidelines, development is guided and regulated. Many municipalities across Ontario have utilized the legislative tools available under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* to protect mature neighbourhoods.

Heritage Conservation District Study for Downtown Stouffville (to undertake in 2021)

In October 2020, Council authorized staff to undertake a Heritage Conservation District Study for Downtown Stouffville to assess opportunities for establishing a Heritage Conservation District, under the Ontario Heritage Act. This Study is planned to be undertaken in 2021.

Heritage-Specific Municipal Guidelines

Since 2012, the Town has maintained Council-approved Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment Guidelines, which were established to identify, protect, and enhance the Town's cultural heritage resources. These guidelines, which were updated in 2020, consider the impact of proposed site development or alteration on an identified heritage resource. Staff have also received Council authorization for the creation of several other heritage-specific guidelines:

- Cultural Heritage Assessment/Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report Guidelines;
- Conservation Plan Guidelines;
- Documentation & Salvage Report Guidelines; and,
- Archaeological Assessment Guidelines.

Collectively, this suite of heritage guidelines seeks to direct and assist private consultants, developers, and homeowners on heritage matters in order to better protect and conserve the community's cultural heritage resources. In addition, the guidelines intend to advise applicants on how to better achieve provincial, federal, and international standards and guidelines on cultural heritage.

Urban Design Guidelines

Through the Town's Urban Design Guidelines and Residential Intensification Urban Design Guidelines specific to the Community of Stouffville, direction is provided on the protection of heritage character and buildings and guidance on the design of appropriate heritage infill. These documents also allow the Town to assign significance to heritage buildings through a criteria-based classification for conservation and alterations in heritage contexts.

Community Improvement Plan

The Town has adopted an Official Plan Amendment to implement updated Community Improvement (CIP) policies, designation of a Community Improvement Project Area to include the entire Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and a Town-wide Community Improvement Plan. The CIP serves as a long-term strategy to revitalize the community, improve the quality of life of the



community's residents, better utilize under-developed properties and to promote private investment in land and buildings.

The Downtown Stouffville Incentives Program allows the Town to direct funds and implement policies towards this targeted area to assist in the redevelopment and enhancement of historic public and private properties. Through facilitating and encouraging community change in a coordinated manner, this program provides the opportunity for the Town to focus public attention on local priorities and municipal initiatives by stimulating private sector investment in improvements to the appearance and function of buildings. This allows for the necessary rehabilitation of the Town's downtown properties within a strategic framework that enhances their historic value within the context of the buildings current function.

3.2.3 Opportunities and Best Practice Review

Best practice examples relevant to cultural heritage are introduced and summarized below. These best practices are a valuable resource for completing this Discussion Paper, as they assist in directing analysis. Through the review of best practices, policy recommendations and strategic directions relevant to the Town's OPR will be highlighted.

City of Mississauga - Official Plan

The City of Mississauga recognizes that the demand for growth may often compete with the need for protection of cultural heritage. As a significant principle, the City directs that preservation for properties and landscapes of heritage value is paramount. The Official Plan ensures that cultural heritage will be an integral part of the planning process; and cultural heritage resources of significant value will be identified, protected, and preserved.

City of Kitchener - Official Plan

The City of Kitchener Official Plan includes policies that strengthen the City's ability to conserve cultural heritage resources. This not only includes built heritage structures, but also notable, a significant focus on cultural heritage landscapes. These are landscapes of geographical heritage significance which has been modified by human activities and are valued by a community such as villages, parks, gardens, cemeteries, etc.



Figure 14: City of Kitchener

To achieve protection, management of heritage corridors and conservation plans through securing funds through the development process is a key tool utilized. The conservation of important cultural landscapes also includes measures for short, medium and long-term protection. A significant component to achieving this policy is the City leading the community by example with the identification, protection, use and/or management of cultural heritage resources owned/leased by the City.

City of Markham - Official Plan

The City of Markham through its Official Plan is known for its well-established best practices for cultural heritage conservation and enhancement through committed policies and strategies. The City requires the use of zoning and open space dedication for protection of significant archaeological sites, while also evaluating applicable demolition permits, building permits, development approvals, land severances and variances based on impact to cultural heritage resources. With a primary focus of retaining built heritage buildings at their original location, the City offers developers incentives through increased building height or density for protecting and incorporating cultural heritage initiatives. For those that cannot be successfully protected, the City has innovatively created Canada's first heritage subdivision known as Markham Heritage Estates. The City's interest in cultural heritage resources as a common element to enhanced economic and social wellbeing is clearly stated in the Official Plan and upheld through actionable strategies.

City of Kingston - Archaeological Management Plan

In 2010, the City of Kingston introduced an Archaeological Management Plan in recognition that most archaeological resources cannot be found until development or site alteration occurs. This Plan allows for the ability to understand patterns of findings to date to understand how the resources are distributed throughout the City. Archaeological resource management procedures have been key to this initiative in order to assist with the determination of whether there is a need for archaeological assessment to form part of the pre-consultation process between a development proponent and the City. This process not only allows for the necessary attention to archaeological considerations in all development applications, but also the opportunity to protect



notable archaeological resources yet to be found that will in return foster a greater understanding relating to the legacy of the land and past peoples.

3.2.4 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

Preliminary Policy Recommendations

The Official Plan Review process provides the Town with the opportunity for policy revisions and implementation as it relates to the protection and management of cultural heritage resources. Preliminary Policy recommendations include the following:

- Discourage the demolition, destruction or inappropriate alteration or reuse of cultural heritage resources;
- Promote downtown viability through considering development incentives, such as increased height and density, for the high-quality retention, incorporation and enhancement of built heritage structures within new developments;
- Identify secondary planning as a key tool for protection of significant concentrations of built heritage structures, notably within the Community of Stouffville downtown area;
- Incorporate policies directing that Council consider the interests of Indigenous communities in conserving cultural heritage and archaeological resources. This includes ensuring Indigenous perspectives are considered in all relevant cultural heritage assessments and reports;
- Clearly articulate that protection of cultural heritage resources will be a key factor when competing interests are present. The Town could establish criteria for evaluation, particularly when dealing with competing interests;
- Enhance policies which support the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage resources, with emphasis on resources which are important to the Town that can foster public education;
- Consideration of development charge exemptions for adaptive reuse or heritage conservation projects; and,
- Incorporate policies for considering the designation of cultural heritage landscapes in accordance with the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Strategic Directions

The Town can undertake initiatives at a corporate level and beyond the scope of the OPR regarding the incorporation of cultural heritage in contributing to a Complete Community. These include the following:

- Foster local partnerships with local historians, community groups, and Indigenous communities to learn and identify historical information which can contribute to the preservation of knowledge and the conservation of cultural heritage resources;
- Utilize Town-owned built heritage properties as an example to showcase conservation protection and enhancement to inspire private investment and interest. This includes ensuring that public heritage buildings are accessible to people of all abilities;



- Support community engagement through frequent walking tours, open-door initiatives and social media to support a common understanding of cultural heritage resources and their contribution to an enhanced quality of life. This can include financial incentives or resources to local community groups to undertake these opportunities supported by the Town through organizational resources; and,
- Encourage other levels of government to enact legislation and develop programs that promote the preservation and rehabilitation of cultural heritage resources.

3.3 Urban Design

High quality urban design involves careful consideration to the form, shape and character of the built environment and community as a whole. To make functional and attractive, buildings, streets and public squares, thoughtful planning through a coordinated effort to connect people and places is paramount. This is accomplished through creating inclusive communities that ensure equal access to public goods and daily necessities as part of a Complete Community for social, physical and mental wellbeing. Urban design allows for communities to transform place making, environmental stewardship, social equality and economic viability into the creation of places with innovative beauty and identity.



Figure 15: Compact design: townhouses in Ringwood, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

3.3.1 Policy Framework

Planning Act

The *Planning Act* identifies the need for a well-designed built form as a Provincial interest, and asserts that existing and planned places must provide high quality public spaces that are safe, accessible, attractive and vibrant.



Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The Province of Ontario further recognizes through the PPS, 2020 that long-term economic prosperity is achieved through a well-designed built form that upholds a sense of place. In addition, municipalities are required to promote design and orientation which maximizes energy efficiency and conservation as a measure to promote healthy communities and resiliency against climate change. This in return signifies that consideration for excellence in urban design form must be a priority given its ability to advance sustainable use and interaction of the community.

The Growth Plan

The Growth Plan implements urban design through policy directives to achieve the creation of complete communities. This includes managing projected growth by ensuring new developments are of high-quality urban form within the context of public spaces that create dynamic and attractive places. Urban design is also recognized as a key component to maximizing public investments in public transportation, along with promoting walking and cycling for everyday activities to promote a healthy lifestyle. This culture of sustainability and conservation is further facilitated by urban and built form through design standards that support opportunities for energy efficiency and innovative use public and private spaces.



Figure 66: Growth Plan Cover Page

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Official Plan

The Town Official Plan promotes urban design as a tool to guiding growth through existing and planned spaces and buildings. The Official Plan recognizes that although it is necessary to complement existing massing patterns, rhythms, character and context of the community, built form evolves over time and that new buildings should not simply replicate existing buildings. This also indicates the Town's understanding for the need to balance important urban design elements



noteworthy to the history and evolution of the Town with innovative approaches to designing and incorporating new spaces.

3.3.2 Current Status

To complement the objectives in the Official Plan, the Town utilizes urban design strategies for residential intensification and sustainable development. The Official Plan implements general Urban Design Guidelines for the Town as well as specific secondary planning areas and identified growth areas, given the understanding of the unique character of each community. The Community of Stouffville, positioned as the Town's focus for growth, is the notable area for applying Urban Design Guidelines. The intent of these measures is to uphold and identify existing areas for enhancing urban design and form, along with future opportunities to promote the Town's envisioned identity that should be in keeping with the character of Stouffville. Included in this is the need for attractive, comfortable and convenient design strategies. This means that new neighborhoods are sought to be designed as distinct neighbourhoods to maintain the pedestrian oriented and rural character of Stouffville while accommodating a larger population. The built form and streetscape are envisioned to be rich in heritage reference and allow for the opportunity to easily interact with the natural environment while undertaking daily routines.

The Town Official Plan also recognizes the role of urban design in promoting the abilities of all people by ensuring all spaces are accessible. This includes pedestrian and transit related realms throughout the Town to support a common sense of safety and belonging by re-evaluating existing spaces and implementing innovative opportunities for future uses. The Community of Stouffville Urban Design Guidelines further build on this objective through requiring that open spaces and recreational opportunities be accessible through deliberate design strategies to overcome foreseen and unintended barriers to accessibility of public spaces.

The Town is currently undertaking an update to the 2002 Urban Design Guidelines including the preparation of a 3-D model with emphasis on Main Street. The updated guidelines will inform the development of updated urban design and built form policies for Stouffville's Main St. and the Stouffville GO MTSA area.

3.3.3 Opportunities and Best Practices Review

Best practice examples relevant to urban design are introduced and summarized below. These best practices are a valuable resource for completing this Discussion Paper, as they assist in directing analysis. Through the review of best practices, policy recommendations and strategic directions relevant to the Town's OPR will be highlighted.

City of Markham – Official Plan

The City of Markham Official Plan establishes the importance of urban design through aligning it with economic vitality and the health of a community facilitated through vibrant and successful public spaces. The City uniquely places significant status on the role of trees in achieving a high-quality urban design through Official Plan policies and the strategies of a Streetscape Manual. This initiative that includes planting a vast number of trees is based on the notion that natural



urban design elements can reduce energy costs, improve mental and physical health and serve as valuable 'green' infrastructure. This includes Official Plan directives regarding the preservation of trees and significant vegetation so they are accommodated on public and private land through requirements that consider the full lifespan of a tree and what will be needed to ensure their long-term health and survival.

In addition, the City considers protection of native soil during the development review process to ensure that vegetation that encompasses the public realm is supported by native soil necessary to promote growth.

City of Richmond Hill – Official Plan

The City of Richmond Hill, through its Official Plan, shapes their approach to urban design through the lens of place-making. This is based on fostering physical forms of development that cultivate the exchange of ideas, contribute to the character of the City, and are compatible with surrounding areas to enhance inherent aspects of the City to create focal points, gateways, landmarks and experiences.

The City achieves placemaking through Official Plan policies by specifying the need for a compact urban form surrounded by walkable public street patterns, landscaping for beautification, use of compatible building materials and colors and incorporation of durable architectural detailing. In addition, the City Official Plan recognizes the role in public art through requiring the dedication of 1% of the capital budget of all Regional and municipal buildings greater than 500m² to public art. This not only signifies the City's leverage in advancing the local economy by supporting community artistry, but also the role it can have in creating an interesting and diverse public realm.



Figure 77: Yonge Street and Hightech Road 'Astronomy Observatory', City of Richmond Hill

City of Toronto– Official Plan

To support a public realm of high quality, the City of Toronto Official Plan enables the notion of complete streets as the tool to promote this progression. Complete streets are designed to consider the needs of all users, including people who walk, bicycle, take transit or drive, and people of varying ages and levels of ability. While not every type of use or user may be



accommodated on every street, the goal is to build a city with a well-functioning street network that supports and sustains a high quality of life.

Complete streets ensure that social, economic and environmental priorities are integrated in street planning and design. This assertive approach to defining a vision through complete streets for the design of public and private spaces is further incentivized through committed funding to promote innovation and excellence.



Figure 88: Market Street, City of Toronto

3.3.4 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

Preliminary Policy Recommendations

The Official Plan Review process provides the Town with the opportunity for policy revisions and implementation as it relates to urban design excellence. Preliminary Policy recommendations include the following:

- Ensure that enhancement of the public realm is a requirement of all new development;
- Promote a complete streets approach for the development of all new streets and enhancement of existing streets that ensures there are no barriers to access or enjoyment regardless of ability;
- Incorporate policies related to year-round landscaping considerations;
- Consider policies which integrate public art into the public realm, including parks, trails, community centres, libraries, streetscapes and infrastructure (bridges, walls, waterworks, etc.);
- Ensure that urban design policies are inclusive and support the needs of vulnerable populations;
- Include policies that encourage year-round use of public facilities, parks and the public realm.
- Ensure sidewalks and boulevards will be designed to provide safe, attractive, interesting and comfortable spaces for pedestrians through providing well designed and coordinated improvements;
- Advance downtown vitality by designing streetscapes that help characterize the Town's existing heritage conservation areas by creating a sense of identity through the treatment of



architectural features, forms, massing, scale, site layout, orientation, landscaping, lighting and signage;

- Incorporate natural and built heritage resources in urban design, such as landmark buildings and open spaces, streetscapes and view corridors, to the overall sense of identity;
- Reinforce the Town's urban form, particularly new neighbourhoods and mixed-use neighbourhoods, and intensification areas, by providing attractive, well-designed streetscapes; and,
- Consideration of housing tenure along Main Street and main roads, i.e. private developments (condominiums with private roads / gated communities, are not encouraged along main roads that fragment access to public spaces).

Strategic Directions

The Town can undertake initiatives at a corporate level to advance urban design objectives towards the achievement of a Complete Community. These includes the following:

- Enable design competitions and advisory design review panels to seek design excellence and promote public interest in design quality for public works, specifically within downtown Stouffville to promote attention to the area and small business vitality;
- Foster creativity and excellence in architecture, landscape and urban design will be encouraged in private developments through programs such as the Urban Design Awards;
- Promote universal physical access to publicly accessible spaces and buildings through consulting with local stakeholder groups;
- Consider opportunities for committing the funds and resources necessary to incentivize the creation and maintenance of high-quality public buildings, structures, art, streetscapes and parks;
- Ensure the Main Street Urban Design Guidelines consider the future development within and surrounding Stouffville GO Major Transit Station Area that consider transit-oriented design. The updated guidelines will inform the development of updated urban design and built form Official Plan policies for Stouffville's Main St. and the Stouffville GO MTSA;
- Foster a partnership between the private and public sector to collaborate on the delivery of excellence and innovation in the planning, design and construction of new development; and,
- Inform the public about appropriate landscaping and/or tree care to engage and foster a community that respects and protects its natural heritage and local tree canopy.

3.4 Parks, Open Spaces and Trails

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has great parks and open spaces that offer a range of amenities such as splash pads, playgrounds, sport courts, sports fields, and dog parks. There are also many trails throughout the community, both local and regional.

Parks and recreation planning are typically directed by a parks and recreation or community services master plan which informs the development of policies and standards that may be included in a municipality's official plan. This Section of the Discussion Paper will identify the policy framework, relevant background material, an analysis of best practices and a summary of



preliminary policy recommendations/strategic directions related to parks, open spaces and trails.



Figure 99: Recreational Trail, Whitchurch-Stouffville

3.4.1 Policy Framework

Planning Act and Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, 2015 (Bill 73)

The *Planning Act* gives municipalities the power to impose parkland dedication requirements as a condition of development or subdivision of land through the enactment of a by-law. Bill 73 included changes to Parkland dedication requirements under the *Planning Act*, including the need to prepare a Parks Plan in order to identify policies for payment-in-lieu of parkland. This applies only to new Official Plan policies. Additionally, the ratio to be used to calculate payment-in-lieu of parkland dedication is 1 hectare for every 500 dwelling units proposed. This is reduced from the requirement of 1 hectare for every 300 dwelling units.

Bill 108 – More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019

Bill 108 aims to address the needs of the Ontario's growing population, its diversity, and local priorities. It includes amendments to several pieces of legislation, including the *Planning Act* and other Acts that affect planning and development. The most significant changes relate to planning appeals, development charges and community benefits charges (formerly known as Section 37 Benefits). Bill 108 established a new Community Benefits Charge Authority to replace the existing density bonusing provisions (Section 37), discounting development charges for soft services and, in some cases parkland dedication (Sections 42 and 51.1). A Community Benefits Charge By-law and associated Parks Plan would be required to implement the new tools.



Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

Section 1.5 of the PPS, 2020 establishes policies for public spaces, recreation, parks, trails and open space, and promotes healthy, active communities by:

- Planning public streets, spaces and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of pedestrians, foster social interaction and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity;
- Planning and providing for a full range and equitable distribution of publicly accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, public spaces, open space areas, trails and linkages, and where practical, water-based resources; and,
- Providing opportunities for public access to shorelines; and recognizing provincial parks, conservation reserves, and other protected areas, and minimizing negative impacts on these areas.

Region of York Official Plan

Section 5.3.8 of the Regional Official Plan notes that it is policy of Council that the Regional Trail Network shall be protected and enhanced and include pedestrian-accessible green spaces and passive parks, where appropriate.

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Official Plan

The Town's Official Plan establishes a parkland hierarchy for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. The hierarchy is used as a guide to the development of the parkland system recognizing that it may not always be possible to attain the proposed standards. Where the optimal size of a park is not attainable through the dedication of land as part of a specific development, the Town should attempt to consolidate lands through the combination of parkland dedications to assemble a park of a suitable size, or shall take "cash-in-lieu" of parkland.

With regards to trails, the Town encourages the development of a system of pedestrian / bicycle trails to link the community together (Section 12.8.4.2). The trail system would be an integral part of the Greenland System and would provide a physical connection to parks and other open spaces in the community and to any Town-wide trail system. The Town shall consider the preparation of a trail master plan for the Community of Stouffville which will among other matters address the issue of ownership and maintenance of the system.

3.4.2 Current Status

The Leisure and Community Services Master Plan (LCSMP), July 2018, outlines directions for the planning and provision of the Town's parks, recreation and cultural facilities and the evolution of services over the next ten years (to 2028). The LCSMP is intended to provide residents with equitable access to programs/events and facilities that enhance and promote healthy and active living. It assists in guiding the location and creation of new facilities, outlines strategies for the optimal use of existing facilities and the development of parks services, and the effective delivery of services.

Updates to the Town's Official Plan to implement the LCSMP will address such matters as: the parkland classification system and design guidelines to support a range of active and passive



park uses; parkland acquisition and dedication requirements, including policies to guide the consideration of cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication, and alternative dedication rates, and policies to support active and healthy communities and lifestyles.

3.4.3 Opportunities and Best Practice Review

Best practice examples relevant to parks, open spaces and trails are introduced and summarized below. These best practices are a valuable resource for completing this Discussion Paper, as they assist in directing analysis. Through the review of best practices, policy recommendations and strategic directions relevant to the Town's OPR will be highlighted.

The way in which parks and trails is categorized and managed within Official Plans varies greatly between municipalities and tends to be reflective of anticipated new development vs management of existing park assets. The new Official Plan will need to address the balance between the desire for high density parkland targets, the contributions of parkland dedication policies, and the Town's ability to procure additional parkland to meet goals. There is a shift in focus from policies around traditional centralized parks/recreation spaces to more flexible, frequent, and accessible amenities. A key item to consider are how existing park spaces will be addressed and how park amenities will be supplied in the context of urban infill/intensification. Policies which support new park spaces in greenfield development continue to focus on larger multi-functioning spaces and can easily achieve the distribution and quantity targets, and this is common among most municipalities. The level of focus and strategic approach for addressing existing spaces, alternative spaces, responding to infill development/intensification, and social aspects of diversity, inclusion and equity, are of particular note within these sample municipalities.

It is also important to consider parks planning in light of COVID-19, in order to provide safe spaces that allow people to socialize and connect within a community.

City of London Official Plan

The City of London Official Plan covers the shift in focus towards inclusion/access and diversifying the functionality of parks and open spaces. In particular, the Plan looks at infill or repurposing space for parks within intensification areas. The Plan includes provisions to encourage identification and repurposing of lands into recreational open space targeting areas with increasing densification and/or areas deficient of recreational open space targets. London has explored identifying targeted parkland acquisition as part of supportive master plans. The plan also encourages the frequency of parks and open spaces, especially in high density areas.

City of Peterborough Official Plan

The City of Peterborough Official Plan provides a hierarchy that balances structured spaces and programming, marketing, and partnerships. Their 2016 Parks and Recreation Functional Planning document covers the shift in focus on towards inclusion/access and diversifying functionality.

Peterborough has an array of small parks identified in their hierarchy including Urban Pocket Parks, Sliver Parks, Courtyards, and Connecting Links. These spaces are often an extension of the pedestrian public realm, associated with business or high-density entities, and can be privately



or publicly owned. The Official Plan has very detailed policies for Parks and Open spaces that explore aspects of a five-part hierarchy, outlining purpose planning and design guidelines for each.



Figure 20: Depave Paradise Urban Park, City of Peterborough

The 10-year strategic plan notes an alternative way to view recreation: ‘A Renewed Definition of Recreation: Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social and intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.’ This supports a more flexible and inclusive definition to broaden the focus from the existing structured sport/activity focus park and recreation programming.

City of Guelph Official Plan / Parks and Recreation Plan

The City of Guelph is in the process of completing a Parks and Recreation Plan, currently scheduled for completion fall/winter 2020. This may be an example of a plan that starts to look at pandemic planning issues that are similarly relevant to this project.

The Official Plan and supporting functional plans address a balance between new development and existing parks and open spaces. The Official Plan has a greater focus on the urban forestry aspect of their parks and open space system and identifies increasing, monitoring, and protecting tree canopy as a priority. The Official Plan also includes provisions to protect, maintain and enhance pollinator habitat within the City’s park and open space systems. Guelph has a strong pollinator and apiculture advocacy, which may lend this as a more community specific policy.



Figure21: Recreational Trail, City of Guelph

Lastly, the Official Plan recommends the development of a City-wide environmental monitoring program to assess the effectiveness of policies, decisions and programs to meet target goals outlined in their Natural Heritage Systems and Urban Forest mandates.

3.4.4 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

Preliminary Policy Recommendations

The Official Plan Review process provides the Town with the opportunity for policy revisions and implementation as it relates to parks, open spaces and trails. Preliminary Policy recommendations include the following:

- Promote the development of a comprehensive parks, open space and trails network to encourage healthy communities, active transportation and mobility;
- Policies related to inclusivity of parks including park structure design for different ages and abilities, and interaction with parks and trails (i.e. information boards);
- Consideration of policies which integrate public art into parks and trails;
- Implement the recommendations of the Leisure and Community Services Master Plan, including: the parkland classification system and design guidelines; parkland acquisition and dedication requirements, and policies to support active and healthy communities and lifestyles;
- Reflect updated Rouge National Urban Park boundaries, align and support achieving the key strategies outlined in the Rouge Park Management Plan, 2019. For example, policies to support the inclusion of visitor-related services such as food and accommodation adjacent to the park may be considered;
- Include definitions and mandates for smaller or linear greenspaces as part of the park hierarchy which would allow for alternative spaces to be incorporated in new and redevelopment areas;
- Include policies to maintain and enhance pollinator habitat to reduce traditional turf and landscape maintenance while still providing interactive open space;



- Include policies related to cultural planning, arts and leisure to facilitate programming for some of these open spaces throughout the Town;
- Include policies which consider connectivity between other trails found throughout the Town and the potential connectivity to new trail systems. This includes: TRCA trails, LSRCA trails, York Regional Forest Tract, Rouge Park, Oak Ridges Trail, Greenbelt Trail, the Great Canadian Trail, Greenbelt Town Cycling route, and trails from adjacent municipalities;
- Consider a comprehensive approach to trails and parkland by taking inventory through a mapping exercise of existing trails and parkland within the Town; and,
- Consider incorporating a Trails and Active Transportation Schedule in the Official Plan to implement the ATSP.

Strategic Directions

The Town can undertake initiatives at a corporate level and beyond the scope of the OPR to advance parks, open spaces and trails towards the achievement of a Complete Community. This includes the following:

- Considering recent Provincial changes to the development charges and parkland dedication regulations and the implementation of community benefits charge authority, an update is required to consider the implications on parkland dedication and acquisition. In order to implement the community benefits charge, the Town will be required to prepare a Community Benefits Strategy and By-law and associated Parks Plan for the acquisition of parkland;
- Opportunity to assess the types of trails and produce a handbook which outlines the types of trails, accessibility level, mapping, etc.; and,
- There is also an opportunity for the Official Plan Review to include policies related to cultural planning, arts and leisure, at a high level. However, the Town could consider a separate study, which could provide specific policy recommendations, which could be incorporated into Official Plan Review process, pending the timing of the studies.

3.5 Sustainability, Climate Change and Energy Conservation

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has a key role to play in climate change mitigation and adaptation, by directing land use in the built and natural environment to support development of efficient sustainable communities. New planning policies are required to address climate change mitigation and adaptation which support energy conservation/efficiency; improve air quality; reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and, contribute to public health and safety objectives. There are also direct linkages to the Natural Environment Discussion Paper, which addresses sustainability and climate change in more depth. This Section of the Discussion Paper will identify the policy framework, relevant background material, an analysis of best practices and a summary of preliminary policy recommendations/strategic directions related to sustainability, climate change and energy conservation.



Figure 22: Waste management, Whitchurch-Stouffville

3.5.1 Policy Framework

The Planning Act

The *Planning Act* states that an Official Plan shall contain policies that identify goals, objectives and actions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and to provide for adaptation to a changing climate, including through increasing resiliency.

Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The PPS, 2020 includes policies and intentions with respect to creating resilient communities and managing climate change. Infrastructure and public service facilities are to consider impacts from climate change while accommodating projected needs (Section 1.6.1). Planning authorities are to support energy conservation and efficiency, improved air quality, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and climate change adaptation through appropriate land use and development patterns (e.g., by promoting compact forms; active transportation; mix of uses; energy efficient design; maximizing vegetation) (S. 1.8).

The Growth Plan

The Growth Plan establishes in Section 4.2.9 that municipalities through their official plan are to establish a culture of conservation. This includes a significant focus on seeking renewable and alternative energy sources, along with land use patterns and urban design standards that support energy efficiency and demand reduction to promote a healthy community.

The Growth Plan considers addressing climate change in order to achieve the goals of the Growth Plan. Section 4.2.10 specifically addresses climate change and requires municipalities to develop policies in their official plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change



adaptation goals. There is also a large focus on the promotion of green infrastructure and low impact development throughout the Plan.

Region of York Official Plan

It is the Region's objective to create high-quality, sustainable communities. These complete communities are meant to be designed to be sustainable by incorporating green building technologies, and renewable and alternative energy options, and over time will evolve into zero carbon and zero waste communities. The policies identified in Section 5 of the Official Plan help to create well-designed communities that have integrated greenspace, pedestrian and transit networks, and that offer a variety of housing, transportation, human services, and employment options.

Policy 5.2.12 notes that renewable energy projects and alternative energy systems shall be permitted throughout the Region in accordance with provincial and federal requirements, and that these permissions be incorporated into local official plans and zoning by-laws. Local municipalities shall specify in more detail where renewable energy projects and alternative technologies that are not exempt from the *Planning Act* will be permitted.

Community Energy Plans are intended to set out a strategy to help the community reach goals of energy conservation, energy efficiency, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions that include:

- Passive solar gains through design;
- On-site generation and district energy options such as solar, wind, water, biomass, and geothermal energy; and,
- Use of green and white roofs, greening to provide shade and light-coloured surface materials.

The ongoing York Region Climate Change Action Plan (Action Plan) builds upon foundational work and key policies that have guided climate-related action at York Region. Through this Action Plan, York Region continues to expand the use of a climate change lens on its own activities and inspires others to do the same. The Action Plan:

- Outlines the projected impacts of climate change on York Region;
- Describes and prioritizes actions needed in three priority areas: Resilient Communities and Infrastructure, Low Carbon Living, and Supporting an Equitable Transition;
- Identifies the role York Region will play in implementing actions, and,
- Provides a framework for all levels of government, businesses and communities to work together.

The intent of these actions is to maintain residents' quality of life, minimize disruptions to the natural environment, avoid significant costs over the coming decades and to ensure communities in York Region continue to thrive under changing climate conditions.



Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Official Plan

It is an objective of the Town's Official Plan that future development and redevelopment take place in a manner consistent with the principles of sustainability. The Town requires that major new development and redevelopment be designed to be sustainable in accordance with the Town's Sustainable Development Guidelines. It is also required that a Sustainability Report be submitted with development proposals to demonstrate how they are consistent with the Guidelines.

The Town's Official Plan currently does not contain any policies or content specifically related to climate change.

3.5.2 Current Status

Town's Sustainable Development Guidelines, 2012

The Sustainable Development Guidelines are used by the Town as a tool for assessing the sustainable features of development applications. The Guidelines have been prepared in the form of a checklist that itemizes the various types of project design features that will be considered in the evaluation process. These are organized under three basic categories:

- Community Design (efficient development and infrastructure design, healthy community design, employment generation/economic enhancement and open space enhancement);
- Buildings (enhanced design features, development standards); and,
- Energy and Water (energy efficient design, water and wastewater reduction).

Minimum standards must be achieved in order to receive servicing allocation, while the maximum sustainability standards are encouraged, and where proposed, will allow the development to be considered for height and density bonuses, or other considerations identified by the Town. The Town recognizes that the specific requirements may not be applicable to all applications. Therefore, the level of compliance will be based only on the percentage of applicable points achieved. In addition, some applicants may wish to phase the use of the checklist and the Town will work with an applicant to consider such an approach.

3.5.3 Opportunities and Best Practice Review

Best practice examples relevant to sustainability, climate change and energy conservation are introduced and summarized below. These best practices are a valuable resource for completing this Discussion Paper, as they assist in directing analysis. Through the review of best practices, policy recommendations and strategic directions relevant to the Town's OPR will be highlighted.

There are a range of policies and tools identified with respect to sustainability, climate change and energy. The municipalities reviewed typically include language for these themes which are important to the municipality and why it needs to be incorporated into Official Plan. Educational opportunities are also commonly identified, describing the context, science, roles and commitments of different orders of government, and social, economic and environmental connections. Commonly found is what sustainability, climate change and energy mean to the municipality and what they see as their role, what they will do, and how they will report on it.



Figure 23: York Region Climate Change Action Plan

Another key finding of the best practices review has been the opportunity for an official plan to reference to specific climate change / sustainability policies within the plan, including how the policies are monitored or impact the implementation of the Official Plan. The York Region Climate Change Action Plan will be a key document to reference in this regard, however, a separate Energy and Climate Change Policy Study can be initiated to develop a Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Framework for the Town. The City of Markham is an example of a municipality that uses several policy documents to communicate the importance of sustainability, climate change and energy.

City of Markham Official Plan

The City of Markham establishes several policies related to sustainable practices through its Official Plan. A specific goal related to building complete communities is to increase adaptability in the community through the introduction of green infrastructure (water, waste, energy), innovative technology, resource conservation and other sustainable practices to address long term climate change impacts (Policy 2.2.2.5). The Official Plan also refers to local policy documents (i.e., Sustainability Plans) which provide more detailed and specific policies. Section 4.3.1.4 f) for example, in the Official Plan notes that it is the policy of Council to design and develop high-quality parks and open spaces that provide for comfortable, safe, accessible, and year-round use and that address objectives related to sustainability to promote and incorporate an ethic of preservation, conservation, and sustainability in the planning, design and maintenance of parks and open spaces including incorporating appropriate low-impact development opportunities and sustainability standards and best practices supported by Markham's Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan.

Reference is also made to the Sustainability Plan in the Implementation Section of the Official Plan where it is noted it is the policy of Council to establish an annual tracking system and data base to include targets identified through the Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan and other plans that may be adopted by Council from time to time.



City of Markham - Greenprint, Markham's Community Sustainability Plan (2011)

The Greenprint is Markham's 50 to 110-year plan created by the Markham community to achieve environmental, economic, social and cultural success. It serves as an umbrella document for integrating Markham municipal plans and decision making with all aspects of community planning. Each objective of the Greenprint is accompanied with initial recommendations to "kick start" actions. The full set of recommendations are organized according to three implementation categories, focused on the short-, medium-, and long-term.

Markham's Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan is a long-term strategy prepared to address climate change mitigation and adaptation in a comprehensive manner and serves as Markham's Climate Action Plan. Priority climate change adaptation and mitigation policies are incorporated throughout the Official Plan.

Specific mention of the Greenprint in the Official Plan occurs within Section 3.4.2 Air Quality and Climate Change, Section 6.2 Sustainable Development, and Section 10.12 Monitoring. The Greenprint also aligns with other decision-making documents, including the Diversity Action Plan, the Integrated Leisure Master Plan, and others. Notably, the Greenprint recognizes that integration reduces redundancy and increases efficiency by identifying similar projects. The Plan is effective in linking with other municipal plans to identify planning and financial tools that contribute to sustainability objectives.

City of Markham Municipal Energy Plan – Getting to Zero (2017)

The Municipal Energy Plan (MEP) is a comprehensive, long-term city-wide energy plan. The primary objective of the MEP is to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. The MEP responds to Markham's Community Sustainability Plan (Greenprint) call to achieve net zero. Policies and interventions recommended in the MEP respond to efforts in existing program areas. Section 4 of the MEP covers implementation tools and actions.

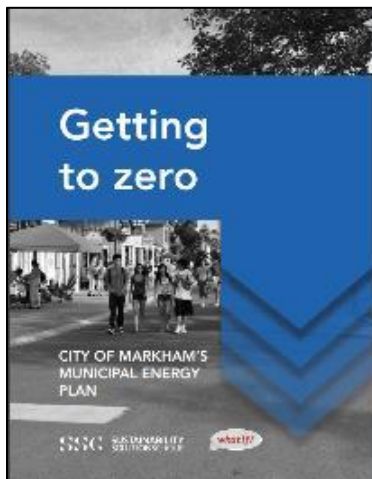


Figure 24: City of Markham Municipal Energy Plan

As indicated in the implementation framework, different policies and mechanisms are used to support the implementation of various actions. The actions scale up over time so that the initial



phases include a period of pilot projects and capacity building as the City learns which approaches are most effective. The implementation framework includes five key aspects: programs, capacity, finance, communications and engagement, and monitoring and evaluation.

The primary goal of the MEP responds directly to the Greenprint call to achieve net zero. Inherently, the MEP is integrated within this major planning document. Additionally, as part of the implementation framework, the MEP directs municipal staff to identify next steps of MEP integration. Recommended courses of action include plan updates and policy revisions.

City of Vancouver's Resilient Strategy (2019)

The Resilient Vancouver Strategy includes a set of 12 strategic objectives and 40 actions that represent tangible steps the City of Vancouver can take to address gaps in knowledge regarding resilience and promote different ways of working with the community to reduce risks. The Strategy focuses on three priority areas: thriving and prepared neighbourhoods, proactive and collaborative city government, and safe, adaptive buildings and infrastructure.

The Strategy is structured according to three priority areas with associated objectives and actions. Actions to implement the plan include elevating community group participation and voices, leveraging existing initiatives, building databases, evaluating existing plans, and establishing targets. In order to implement the actions, the Strategy identifies related/supporting initiatives, lead city departments, and supporting/external groups for each action.

Resilient Vancouver is supported by and will be embedded through a number of initiatives across existing and upcoming strategies. These include the City's Reconciliation Framework, the Earthquake Preparedness Strategy, Housing Vancouver, and many others. The Strategy also identifies overlaps between the actions and related/supporting initiatives. Notably, the document highlights that the success of the Strategy is tied to the degree that it supports and evolves with interconnected strategies. To support this, a brief description of forthcoming strategies from the City of Vancouver are provided.

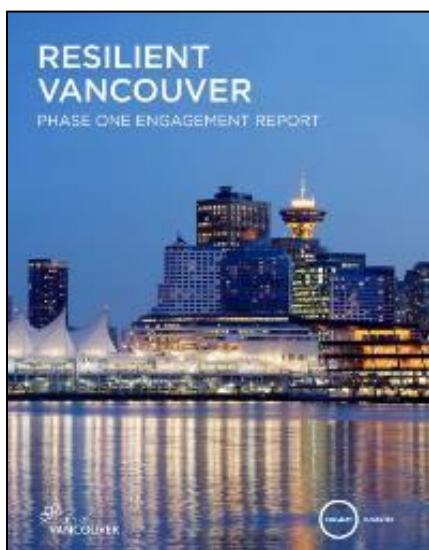


Figure 25: City of Vancouver Resilient Strategy



3.5.4 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

Preliminary Policy Recommendations

The preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions listed below are further complemented and expanded in the Climate Change and Air Quality 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:

- Include policies and tools to support/promote sustainability and energy conservation should be considered, including the implementation of Community Energy Plans to support municipal conservation initiatives;
- Include policies which have regard for the development of energy supply including electricity generation facilities and transmission and distribution systems to accommodate current and projected needs;
- Include policies which promote a culture of conservation among all public, private, and community groups and local citizens and aim to reduce energy use in all sectors;
- Include policies which promote and encourage business and homeowner participation in programs that reward or incentivize investments in energy efficient technologies;
- Include policies to encourage innovative forms of sustainability and energy conservation, including green infrastructure, LEED certified development, and other forms of sustainable development (additional recommendations for sustainable development are also discussed in the Natural Environment Discussion Paper);
- Include policies which support government programs and encourage industries to substantially reduce the production of chemical products known to have negative impacts on air quality;
- Policies which support the undertaking of tree planting, tree preservation, landscaping, and naturalization initiatives, where appropriate, on municipal property to improve air quality;
- Consider policy direction which seeks to mitigate climate change impacts and consider ecological benefits which are enhanced by nature, the development of infrastructure should also consider the impacts of climate change; and,
- Require new or expanded alternative or renewable energy systems to be designed and constructed in a manner which minimizes impacts on adjacent land uses in order to prevent adverse effects from odours, noise and other contaminants and minimize risk to public health and safety.

Strategic Directions

The Town can undertake initiatives at a corporate level and beyond the scope of the OPR to advance sustainability, climate change and energy conservation towards the achievement of a Complete Community. This includes the following:

- Consider undertaking a separate Energy and Climate Change Policy Study to develop a Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Framework. This Study could describe specific measurable actions and program areas for improving climate adaptation and resilience and identify implementation tools and financing mechanisms (e.g. funding or partnerships). The



framework will provide the Town direction and policy recommendations for implementation through the OPR, pending timing of the study;

- Consider undertaking an inter-departmental corporate strategy to address the full spectrum of matters that can contribute to reducing GHG emissions (operating/maintenance, infrastructure, etc.);
- Consider updates to the Sustainability Development Guidelines to harmonize language or reference specific objectives of the new Official Plan, or the development of a new Green Development standard. Updates should also incorporate policies related to energy and climate change adaptation (i.e., strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions);
- Consider undertaking a Sustainability and Healthy Community Policy Study that could go beyond the Sustainable Development Guidelines to develop an integrated policy framework and strategy to address challenges with environmental and public health implications. This Study, in concert with the Sustainable Development Guidelines could be used to provide direction and to evaluate secondary plans, block plans, and draft plans of subdivision and site plan applications to ensure that both a high level of urban design and the intended level of sustainability is achieved;
- Support taking part in federal and provincial government initiatives and grants to support new and emerging climate change mitigation measures and/or strategies; and,
- Collaborative approach with neighbouring municipalities to ensure mitigation and adaptation strategies may be coordinated.

3.6 Healthy Communities and Community Services

According to the World Health Organization, health is about more than just the absence of disease; being healthy is about complete physical, mental and social well-being. Health is shaped by much more than access to the health care system. Our health is shaped by the conditions in which we live, learn, grow, work, and age. The Official Plan plays an important role in establishing how communities are planned. Through policy, it can influence healthier environments that support people to thrive and be healthy. The implementation of the Official Plan can affect the way people socialize and connect within a community as well as influence structural opportunities for people to interact. Healthy communities incorporate features such as active transportation as well as accessibility. This Section of the discussion paper will identify the policy framework, relevant background material, an analysis of best practices and a summary of preliminary policy recommendations/strategic directions related to healthy communities and community services.



Figure 26: Outdoor skating, Whitchurch-Stouffville

3.6.1 Policy Framework

Planning Act

The *Planning Act* provides polices for the orderly development of safe and healthy communities. It ensures accessibility for persons with disabilities to all facilities, services and matters, and promotes sustainable economic development in a healthy natural environment. Planning decisions and Official Plans must have regard to the promotion of built form that is: i) well designed, ii) encourages a sense of place and; iii) provides for public spaces that are of high quality, accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe.

Provincial Policy Statement

The PPS, 2020 supports strong, livable and healthy communities which promote and enhance human health and social well-being; are economically and environmentally sound; and are resilient to climate change. Section 1 of the PPS, 2020 notes that efficient land use and development patterns support sustainability by promoting strong, livable, healthy and resilient communities, protecting the environment and public health and safety, and facilitating economic growth.

The PPS also provides policies which support the provision of community facilities and public service facilities to be co-located in community hubs, to promote cost effectiveness and facilitate service integration and access to active transportation and transit. Public service facilities include the provision of services or programs provided by a government agency, and includes social assistance, recreation, emergency services and cultural services. Such services are to be planned to be accessible to all residents and strategically located to support the delivery of community services.

Region of York Official Plan

Chapter 3 of the Regional Official Plan provides policies related to human health and well-being, air quality and climate change, the provision of human services, the preservation of cultural heritage and archaeological resources, and the provision of a mix of housing and affordability.



It is noted that the definition of a healthy community (as adopted by the World Health Organization) is one that is “continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential.”

The Healthy Communities Goal identified in the Regional Official Plan is to improve the health and well-being of residents and workers in the Region by planning and developing sustainable active communities.

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Official Plan

Section 2.3 of the Town’s Official Plan identifies “Healthy Community” as a community development principle. The intent of this principle is to encourage a broad-based planning approach which will maintain and, where feasible, enhance the health of the community and its residents. Determinants of this healthy community include a sense of belonging to the community, and social and safety features found in a caring community, as well as environmental qualities.

Section 12.5.6 of the Town’s Official Plan encourages development which enhances the health and vibrancy of the existing and future community through a mix of housing and other uses which contributes to the development of Stouffville as a Complete Community.

3.6.2 Current Status

Active Transportation Servicing Plan 2018

In 2018, the Town updated their Active Transportation Servicing Plan (ATSP). The ATSP identifies and guides Town staff in the development of new infrastructure including sidewalks, multi-use paths and on-road cycling facilities. This Plan is focused on the communities of Stouffville and Musselman’s Lake.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: 2020-2025

The 2020 to 2025 accessibility plan outlines the policies and actions that the Town will put in place to improve opportunities for people with disabilities in accordance with the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards, *Ontario Regulation 191/11*.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Multi-Year Accessibility in Action Plan provides the opportunity to demonstrate current achievements and establish an implementation framework and future priority initiatives. Objectives and initiatives identified within the plan are both long and short-term; many are ongoing actions or could require implementation over several years. Regular monitoring is necessary to ensure that relevant initiatives are included in the Plan and that progress is identified. The focus of the Accessibility in Action Plan is dedicated to implementing the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11. Target areas reflect the five core standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act: Customer Service, Information & Communications, Transportation, Employment and Public Spaces.



3.6.3 Opportunities and Best Practice Review

Best practice examples relevant to healthy and sustainable communities are introduced and summarized below. These best practices are a valuable resource for completing this Discussion Paper, as they assist in directing analysis. Through the review of best practices, policy recommendations and strategic directions relevant to the Town's OPR will be highlighted.

With regards to healthy communities, predominant findings from the reviewed official plans highlighted the opportunity for the Official Plan to reference the Town and Region's accessibility and active transportation policies as guiding principles. This includes the establishment of detailed objectives when considering healthy communities and how public/private development proposals must include the considerations of incorporating of improving resident's quality of life regardless of age or ability.

City of Markham Official Plan

The accessibility and active transportation policies noted in the City's Official Plan use assertive language to describe policy. The Plan establishes strategic objectives of overall increases to transportation efficiency and supporting patterns of growth/land use that require less travel for everyday activities by encouraging travel by transit, cycling and walking (Policy 2.2.3). The Plan effectively differentiates transit supportive development that creates an attractive urban environment for active forms of transportation in the long-term, and Official Plan objectives as a narrower set of transportation demand management initiatives that can be introduced for more immediate effect (Policy 7.1.4). Lastly, the Plan enables walking and cycling throughout Markham as competitive mobility choices for everyday activities such as work, school, shopping, business and leisure (Policy 7.1.4.2).



Figure 27: Recreational Trail, City of Markham

City of Vaughan Official Plan

The City of Vaughan's Official Plan uses strong language regarding accessibility/active transportation policies and its correlation to land-use planning. The Plan notes that intensification



and mixed-use development will make active transportation more viable and bring people and amenities closer together to encourage a healthy community (Policy 4.2.3). The Plan defines expectations for promoting walking and cycling for commuting and leisure purposes (Policy 4.2.3.1). The Plan is effective in recognizing the need to support a pedestrian and bicycle network that addresses the needs of all residents and employees, including children, seniors and people with disabilities, and that bicycle and pedestrian facilities are supported through appropriate design, signage and consistent safety enforcement (Policy 4.2.3.2). The Plan defines measures for maximizing connectivity of the street network for pedestrians and cyclists and enables the provision to include sidewalks on both sides of the street on all arterial and collector streets, and streets in designated Intensification Areas. Where sidewalks are currently not provided on both sides of the street, sidewalks will be considered during major redevelopment or substantial reconstruction of the right-of-way (Policies 4.2.3.3 and 4.2.3.4).

City of Mississauga Official Plan

The active transportation policies identified below use assertive language to describe policy with notable consideration to individuals with disabilities. The Plan defines opportunities for physical fitness, leisure and social interaction as essential to establishing a Complete Community (Policy 7.1). The Plan recognizes that the design of streets must facilitate alternative modes of transportation such as public transit, cycling, and walking as supportive to public health (Policy 7.1.3). The Plan is effective in establishing the need for transportation choices that encourage a shift in lifestyle toward more sustainable transportation modes, such as transit and active transportation, and addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities (Policies 8.1.1 and 8.2.4).

York Region's Report on Public Health Benefits of Complete Communities

The Region's report on Public Health Benefits of Complete Communities presents research to be considered as part of the Municipal Comprehensive Review to support the Region's Official Plan policy direction to create complete communities. The report notes the following key points:

- Chronic diseases are the leading causes of premature illness and death among York Region adult residents;
- Complete communities can reduce chronic diseases by creating conditions and opportunities that support people to increase their physical activity in carrying out daily activities by walking, cycling and using public transit;
- Extensive research on the health benefits associated with community design shows denser, walkable neighbourhoods with services and amenities nearby allow people to more easily incorporate physical activity into their daily activities;
- Public Health is working with regional and municipal planning and transportation partners to create mixed-use walkable neighbourhoods that can reduce the incidence of deaths from chronic diseases in York Region attributable to physical inactivity;
- Council and the Region's city building initiatives are committed to the development of complete communities as can be seen through recent growth in the Region's Centres and Corridors which are examples of complete, active, mixed use communities; and,
- Update, policies supporting the development of complete communities will be maintained and, where appropriate, enhanced.



3.6.4 Preliminary Policy Recommendations and Strategic Directions

Preliminary Policy Recommendations

The preliminary policy recommendations and strategic directions listed below are further complemented and expanded in the Promoting Health and Wellbeing 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:

- Consider further policies to support a comprehensive and integrated active transportation network with connections to destinations and services (employment, commercial);
- Incorporate policies that ensure active transportation options and facilities meet the needs of people with disabilities;
- 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, resulting overall capacity increases;
- Include policies that recognize active transportation as a healthy lifestyle shift toward more sustainable transportation modes for daily needs;
- Encourage the development of “complete streets” which support pedestrian and cycling activity, and accessible public spaces;
- Support the development of walkable and pedestrian oriented communities;
- Official Plan policies may further promote active transportation and connections through the review of development applications;
- A new Section may be included in the Official Plan to promote active transportation within the Town and implement the Active Transportation Servicing Plan. The Town may consider including a new Schedule in the Official Plan to identify the active transportation network;
- Review and update the route network mapping on an annual basis, with comprehensive updates planned every five years. The most up to date mapping will be reflected in the new Official Plan. The Official Plan Review will review opportunities to encourage walking and cycling and improve comfort and safety in all communities of Whitchurch-Stouffville. Updates to the Active Transportation Servicing Plan will be undertaken outside of the Official Plan Review project;
- The Official Plan Review will incorporate policies and actions to align with the Accessibility Plan;
- Promote the development of seniors housing, retirement homes, and alternative housing forms that are accessible to seniors to support aging in place and accommodate this demographic of the community;
- Include policies related to accessibility to ensure that new development and public spaces are accessible to seniors and those with disabilities;
- Co-ordinate and assist other levels of government and public and private agencies in providing community services and facilities; and,
- Encourage the development and promote the enhancement of facilities that satisfy the health, education, and cultural needs of the community.



Strategic Directions

The Town can undertake initiatives at a corporate level and beyond the scope of the OPR for the development of healthy communities. This includes the following:

- Target trail upgrading through repair and maintenance, better lighting and clear signage to promote safety and higher usage volumes;
- Target public space improvement through sidewalk presence, pedestrian-level street lighting, public seating, tree plantings, cycling paths, traffic calmers, textured rights-of-way and guiding pathways and public art to improve access, comfort, safety and cultural activities;
- Consider playground development or refurbishment of neighbourhood activity spaces for young children, including seating to accommodate supervising adults to enhance safety and social interaction;
- Organize and promote Jane's Walks to enhance civic participation and forge a stronger sense of identity and belonging; and,
- Ensure that the construction of public infrastructure, or expansions to existing infrastructure, occurs in a manner that is compatible with adjacent land uses, incorporates healthy oriented design and minimizes environmental impacts.



4 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 updated housing attainability policies, appropriate energy and climate change considerations and emerging urban design policies for example, 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.