

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION and PURPOSE of the OFFICIAL PLAN

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## YORK REGION: 50 YEARS in the MAKING

The Regional Official Plan (the Plan) coincides with the marking of York Region's 50th anniversary in 2021. Over the past five decades, York Region has grown more than seven-fold to 1.2 million people, becoming one of Canada's most diverse and fastest-growing communities. This was achieved by planning for complete and inclusive communities and delivery of innovative services and infrastructure for roads, transit, water and wastewater systems, forest trails and bike lanes, senior services and childcare, public health, police and paramedic services.

All of these important accomplishments set the stage for the next 50 years, as York Region matures with vibrant intensified cities and downtowns connected with inter- and intra-Regional transit. The existing Regional structure and supporting infrastructure provides a solid foundation to continue planning for complete communities, a strong economy, walkability, transit, and a recognizable sense of place and identity.

With good planning, York Region will continue to be a destination of choice to live, work and play. The Plan builds on this progressive track record and plans forward into the future to 2051 to find new and better ways to build communities and urbanize areas coinciding with transit, while protecting the environment and preserving agricultural and rural areas.



# 1.0 INTRODUCTION and PURPOSE of the PLAN

## A PLAN FOR YORK REGION'S COMMUNITIES

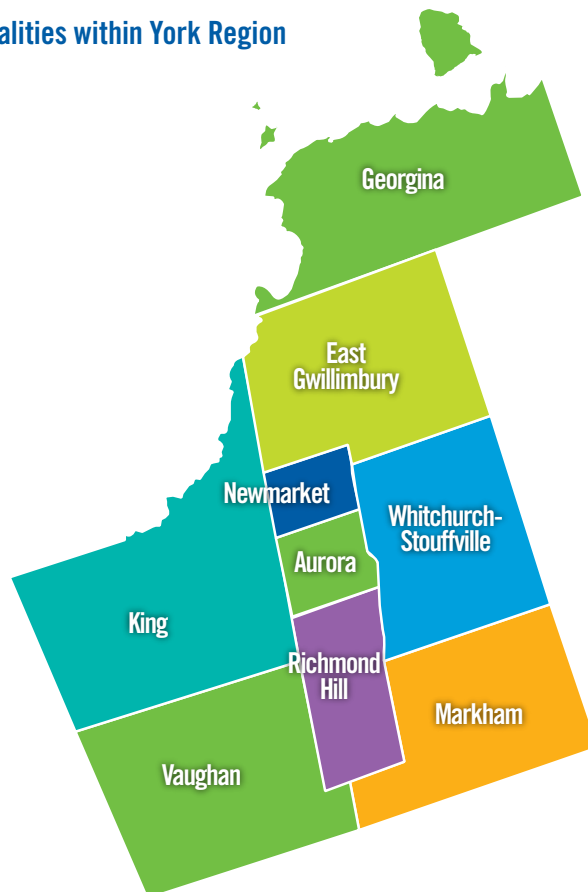
### *Why the Plan Matters*

The Regional Official Plan (the Plan) sets the direction for growth and development across nine local municipalities impacting how your community grows and changes now, and in years to come. It addresses provincially mandated growth for York Region being sensitive to important priorities, key opportunities, and challenges facing our communities and residents. It focuses on sustainability, protection of the natural environment, economic growth, and success, while working to meet the needs of and deliver important human services to residents. It does this through policies that set out planning goals which meet the vision and direction set through Provincial and Regional planning documents.

### *An Evolving Plan*

The past two iterations of the Regional Official Plan have assisted in setting the framework for the Plan. York Region's first Official Plan was approved in 1994, and set the foundation for the urban, agricultural and natural systems identified in the current Plan. In 2010, the Regional Official Plan was updated to reinforce a triple bottom line approach that focuses on maintaining a sustainable natural environment, creating healthy communities and ensuring economic vitality across York Region. Maintaining this legacy, York Region continues to focus on building an intensified urban system, a dynamic economy, providing integrated and responsive human services and protecting and enhancing York Region's agricultural and natural systems.

Map of Municipalities within York Region



# 1.0 INTRODUCTION and PURPOSE of the PLAN

## ***Building on Regional Objectives***

York Region's Vision expresses Council's commitment to strong, caring, safe communities. It guides Regional Council's decision making towards achieving the kinds of communities York Region residents envision now and for the future, in alignment with four areas of focus: Economic Vitality, Healthy Communities, Sustainable Environment and Good Government.

The Regional Official Plan describes how York Region will accommodate 810,000 residents and 325,000 jobs by 2051. A strategic approach to growth management and aligning land use, financial sustainability, infrastructure and phasing has been integrated into the Plan to manage this magnitude of growth.

York Region continues to build strong, caring and safe communities, adopting best practices and reflecting changing responsibilities to the community to plan for complete and inclusive communities.

## ***Planning for Complete and Inclusive Communities***

Building complete communities means every person, regardless of age, lifestyle or stage of life and background, can live, work, play and thrive in York Region. We plan so that everyone can bring their unique identities and work together to create the strong, caring, and safe communities that make up York Region. Building complete and inclusive communities is the objective of the Plan.

## ***York Region: Our Heritage***

York Region's rich cultural heritage goes back thousands of years and remnants of this heritage have been preserved as archaeological sites, historic village core areas, heritage buildings and cultural landscapes. Traditionally, home to many Indigenous peoples, York Region is now home to diverse populations including many Indigenous peoples. York Region's diversity is a source of strength, vitality and economic opportunity. With its partnering agencies, York Region shares a common commitment to create an inclusive environment for all who work, live and play in York Region.

York Region's rich soils make agriculture a central part of York Region's heritage. Today, York Region has evolved into both an agricultural-based economy as well as a broad-based modern business economy including technology, manufacturing, smart healthcare, retail and personal services.



Main Street, Unionville, City of Markham

Photo credit: City of Markham



# 1.0 INTRODUCTION and PURPOSE of the PLAN

While growth continues to attract a strong knowledge-based economy, it is essential to maintain agriculture roots, and a vibrant agri-food sector, producing a wide variety of locally grown and made products, and recognize and celebrate York Region's heritage.

York Region's expansive greenspace includes an integrated Greenlands System that links greenspaces across its nine municipalities. An extensive network of trails and over 50km of Lake Simcoe Shoreline provide for quality and accessible outdoor recreation. This natural beauty is complemented by rich cultural heritage, Indigenous heritage sites and archaeological resources that contribute to York Region's unique, local identity.

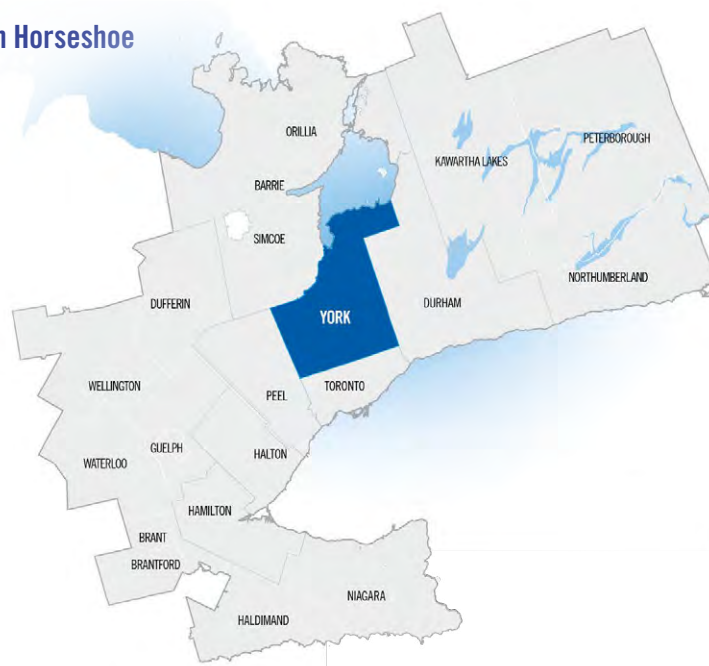
Indigenous communities continue to be stewards of the land and York Region shares in this commitment to make decisions that benefit future generations.

This Chapter sets the framework for the Plan including the Purpose, Provincial Policy Directions, Regional Vision and Goals, and Key Guiding Planning Principles, as well as the Organization of the Plan.

## Key Facts:

- › York Region includes nine local municipalities and in 2021 had 1.2 million residents who speak over 120 languages and come from 230 distinct ethnic origins
- › York Region is made up of 1,776 square kilometres or 686 square miles
- › York Region is strategically located in the Greater Golden Horseshoe
- › In 2020 York Region had 655,000 jobs
- › The Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt legislation help define York Region by governing 69% of its land base
- › Woodlands cover more than 23% of York Region and an extensive network of trails provide quality outdoor recreation for walking and cycling
- › York Region has a rich cultural heritage, heritage sites and archaeological resources, as well as art galleries, museums and cultural events
- › Indigenous communities have a long history and connection to the lands in York Region
- › York Region's agricultural industry and agri-food businesses provide an important role in delivering locally sourced food and other products for our residents and beyond

## Map of the Greater Golden Horseshoe





## 1.1 THE PURPOSE of the PLAN

The Regional Official Plan is adopted by the Council of the Regional Municipality of York to provide clear direction with respect to long-term growth management balancing the protection and enhancement of its agricultural and natural systems. The Plan builds upon the important planning foundations enshrined in previous iterations, while responding to societal, environmental, and economic changes that have occurred and continue to evolve.

The Plan provides a long-term vision for York Region's physical form and community structure. To pursue the vision, it sets goals and objectives, describes a regional structure for accommodating growth, states the policies to be followed, and provides guidance on implementing policies.

Through the policies in the Plan, York Region shall work in partnership with the local municipalities to coordinate and set the stage for more detailed planning through implementation of local municipal official plans and secondary plans. The Plan provides a framework for coordinated planning with adjacent municipalities, as well as with other jurisdictions. These efforts provide certainty on how to approach environmental, economic and community issues when creating sustainable communities. York Region shall work with those that play an integral role in the development of York Region's communities.

All of the policies in the Plan shall be considered together to determine conformity. Individual policies should not be read or interpreted in isolation. The Plan is intended to be read in its entirety and the relevant policies applied to each situation.

For the purpose of the *Planning Act* and the *Municipal Act*, Chapters 1-7 of the Plan, inclusive of Preambles, Goals, Objectives, Policies and Tables 1-7, Definitions, Maps, and Appendices, shall be considered the Official Plan of York Regional Municipality of York.

The Plan has been prepared pursuant to *The Planning Act* and other pertinent Provincial legislation.



# 1.2 PROVINCIAL POLICY DIRECTIONS



In accordance with Provincial planning direction, the Plan implements the *Provincial Policy Statement* (2020) and all relevant Provincial plans including: *A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (2019), the *Greenbelt Plan* (2017), *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan* (2017) and the *Lake Simcoe Protection Plan* (2009). A brief summary of the broad policy directions includes the following:

- › A planning horizon to the year 2051
- › An intensification target of 50% phased to 55% that requires a minimum of 50% of residential development to occur annually within existing urban areas to 2041, and 55% from 2041 to 2051
- › Development of complete communities
- › Identification and protection of employment lands
- › An Urban System based on an hierarchy of intensification areas including but not limited to Strategic Growth Areas, Regional Centres, Corridors and major transit station areas
- › A phased approach to accommodating growth in New Community Areas
- › Protection of the Agricultural System and support for Agricultural and Agricultural-related and On-Farm diversified uses
- › Protection of the Regional Greenlands System and water resource system
- › Protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt Plan areas

The Plan includes comprehensive policies in each of the Chapters that are consistent with the Provincial Planning Policy and conform with Provincial plans.





## 1.3 THE REGIONAL VISION and GOALS of the PLAN

York Region's Vision is to create "Strong, Caring, Safe Communities". The Plan provides for long-term growth and development based on the planned urban structure. The Goals of the Plan represent the ideal or end to which a planned course of action is directed.

The Plan incorporates seven major goals that provide overall high-level direction for specific objectives and policies contained in each Chapter. These Goals include:

1. To provide an overview of the Purpose, Regional Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Key Guiding Principles of the Plan.
2. To enhance York Region's urban structure through a comprehensive integrated growth management process that provides for healthy, sustainable, complete communities with a strong economic base.
3. To protect and enhance the natural environment for current and future generations so that it will sustain life, maintain health and provide a high quality of life.
4. To enhance York Region's urban system through city building, intensification, and compact and complete communities including employment areas.
5. To protect the Agricultural, Rural and Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Areas and support the agricultural industry as essential components of the Regional fabric.
6. To provide the services required to support York Region's residents and businesses to 2051 and beyond, in a financially and environmentally sustainable manner.
7. To ensure resiliency and the ability to adapt to changing economic and environmental conditions and increasing social diversity.

York Region's landscape consists of three principal land use policy areas:

- › Urban Areas with identifiable communities,
- › An Agricultural System where agriculture is the preferred and predominant activity; and
- › A Natural Heritage System that is integrated with the Urban System and Agricultural System, to preserve and enhance the biological diversity and ecological functions of York Region.



# 1.4 KEY GUIDING PLANNING PRINCIPLES



This Official Plan represents York Region’s ongoing engagement efforts to confirm the way communities are designed, serviced and supported as “complete communities”. The major elements of the Plan are based on the following Key Guiding Planning Principles:

1. A sustainable approach to managing growth to 2051 that integrates land use planning with infrastructure and financial planning while protecting the Natural and Agricultural system.
2. Development of new community areas based on a logical, organized progression supported by sound infrastructure planning, land need and the objective of planning for complete communities.
3. A minimum of 50% of residential development between 2021 to 2041, and 55% from 2041 to 2051 to occur through intensification within the built-up area as well as a resident to job ratio of 2:1 focusing on Regional Centres and Corridors and major transit station areas.
4. Identification and protection of employment lands for the long-term in a well-designed and intensified built form primarily for goods and services producing business and industrial developments.
5. Enhanced mobility systems using a “people and transit first approach” to connect land use and transportation planning utilizing York Region Master Plans for all modes of transportation including, transit and active transportation.
6. Standards that advance requirements for sustainable communities and buildings, water and energy conservation and management, low- or no-carbon energy systems, waste reduction, compact and mixed-use development, green building, and urban design in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change including striving towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.
7. Provision of a full range of housing types with a region-wide target of 25% of all new housing units being affordable to low and middle-income households and in addition, a minimum of 35% of all new housing units within Regional Centres and major transit station areas.
8. Protection of the Agricultural System including protection of specialty crop, agricultural, and rural lands.
9. A natural heritage legacy based on protection, enhancement and restoration of York Region’s Natural Systems including the complementary Regional Greenlands System and water resource system.
10. A full cost/benefit accounting approach to land use and infrastructure planning that considers economic, environmental and social costs.

# 1.5 ORGANIZATION of the PLAN



Building on the key planning principles, the policies of the Plan will guide economic, environmental and community building decisions to manage growth. A series of regional strategies, plans and guidelines will support and implement the policies in the Plan.

The policies in the Plan will help coordinate and set the stage for more detailed planning by the local municipalities. The Plan will also provide the framework for coordinated planning with adjacent municipalities, as well as other jurisdictions. These efforts can provide certainty on how to approach environmental, economic and community issues when creating complete communities.

Chapter 1 sets out the purpose of the Plan, summarizes the major Provincial policy directions and key guiding planning principles as well as the organization of the Plan. Graphics and illustrative content are provided for information only. Italicized terms contained in the Plan are included in the Definition section.

Chapter 2 identifies the Regional structure and establishes an integrated growth management approach. Chapter 2 policies apply broadly across most of York Region and reinforces the concept of complete communities, supporting a multi-faceted robust economy and providing continued support for cultural heritage.

The Natural System policy framework is contained in Chapter 3 and provides direction on protecting and enhancing a Regional Greenlands System and water resource system within and beyond York Region's urbanizing areas.

Chapter 4 provides detailed policy direction to guide the various types of urban communities that comprise the Urban System, phasing of growth and a hierarchical approach to intensification.

Chapter 5 provides policy direction to support the protection of agricultural, rural and specialty crop areas and the viability of the agri-food sector. Chapter 5 also provides policy direction for Hamlets.

Chapter 6 provides detailed policies to support a wide range of services including the necessary infrastructure to support the Urban System.

Chapter 7 contains implementation policies for engagement and partnerships, monitoring and measuring success, the planning process and how to interpret the Plan.

## HOW TO READ THE PLAN

**Functional Part of the Plan.** Chapters 1 through 7 (including Preambles, Goals, Objectives, Policies and Tables 1 to 7), Definitions, Maps, and Appendices.

**For Illustrative Purposes Only.** Graphics and illustrative content (indicated by two vertical bars before and after the content).