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Town of Aurora

Committee of the Whole Report

No. PDS24-051

Subject: Endorsement of York Region Modifications to the Town's Updated Official Plan

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Manager, Policy Planning and Heritage

Department: Planning and Development Services

Date: May 7, 2024

Recommendation

1. That Report No. PDS24-051 be received;
2. That Council endorse the proposed modifications by York Region to the Town's Updated Official Plan as outlined in Attachment #1 of this report;
3. That Council support the approval of the Town's Updated Official Plan as modified by York Region through Attachment #1 of this report; and
4. That Council authorize any further minor modifications or housekeeping amendments to the Town's Updated Official Plan as may be required, to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Development Services.

Executive Summary

Council adopted the Town's Updated Official Plan on January 30, 2024. Subsequently, the Updated Official Plan was forwarded to York Region for review as the upper tier approval authority. This report outlines York Region's proposed modifications to the Updated Official Plan for Council endorsement prior to ultimate approval.

- Since adoption of the Updated Official Plan, staff have been working closely with York Region to facilitate the review and approval process.
- The majority of York Region's proposed modifications are minor and focus on improving clarity and consistency rather than altering overall policy directions.

Background

Since adoption of the Updated Official Plan, staff have been working closely with York Region to facilitate the review and approval process.

After Town Council's adoption of the Updated Official Plan, it was then forwarded to York Region for review and approval on February 12, 2024. As the upper tier approval authority, the Region has been reviewing the Town's adopted Updated Official Plan to ensure consistency and conformity with the Regional Official Plan (2022) and the applicable Provincial policies and regulations. Town staff have also had meetings with York Region staff to assist their review and ensure efficiency of the process.

The Town's Updated Official Plan ultimately does not take effect until the Region approves it. York Region will be positioned to approve the Town's Updated Official Plan pending Town Council's endorsement of their proposed modifications. The approval decision then becomes final following an appeal period of 20 days after York Region's approval. Staff are optimistic that pending Town Council's endorsement of the proposed modifications, approval by York Region will be granted by June 2024.

Analysis

The majority of York Region's proposed modifications are minor and focus on improving clarity and consistency rather than altering overall policy directions.

The proposed modifications by York Region are primarily minor, as the Region has been thoroughly consulted with and involved in the development of the Updated Official Plan since the inception of the project. The primary focus of the modifications are on ensuring clear conformity and consistency with the following:

- The Planning Act
- The Provincial Policy Statement
- Provincial Plans including the Growth Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan
- The Regional Official Plan

Some of the proposed modifications are intended to mirror language from the Regional Official Plan to ensure consistency of the Regional Official Plan in the local Official Plan as part of the transitioning of Regional planning responsibilities. Additional modifications are related to minor housekeeping or editorial updates.

An overview of York Region's proposed modifications is as follows:

Modified Section	Description
Section 1.1 – Purpose of This Plan	A new introductory context section is proposed to be added, which describes Aurora as part of the larger York Region area. There are no policy implications as a result of this modification, as the language is largely context-setting.
Section 3.1 – Strategic Growth Areas	Wording is enhanced to recognize that strategic growth areas are the preferred location for major office uses. Town staff have no concern with this modification as the policy framework already supports this and this modification is simply a matter of consistency in line with the Regional Official Plan.
Section 3.6 – Agricultural System	Modification to simply make reference to Section 5.1 of the Regional Official Plan as relevant upper-tier policy pertaining to the Agricultural System.
Section 4.2 – Accommodating Growth Projections	A subsection is proposed to be added to clearly state that settlement area boundary expansions may only occur through a Municipal Comprehensive Review process, and that no settlement area boundary expansions are permitted into the Natural Core and Linkage Areas of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. Town staff have no concern with this modification as that policy framework is already established through the Province, Region, and Town Official Plan policies, and the addition of this section is simply intended for clarification purposes only.
Section 7.4.3 – Additional Dwelling Units	Wording is clarified to expressly state the Additional Dwelling Units shall not be permitted in natural hazard areas. Town staff have no concerns with this modification as this remains the intent of the policy and is best practice in line with Provincial, Regional, and Conservation Authority mandates.
Section 9.2 – Aurora Promenade and Major Transit Station Area General Policies	A new section is proposed to be added stating that within the Major Transit Station Area (MTSA), land uses and built forms that would adversely affect the achievement of the minimum density targets will be prohibited. Town staff have no concerns with this, as the defined policies for the Major Transit Station Area already support this and the goal of providing a density of 150 people and jobs per hectare. The modification is simply re-iterating and making it clear that counter-intuitive low density developments

	will be prohibited within the area, as they do not align with the planning of MTSAs as directed by the Province and Region.
Section 9.7 – Public and Private Realm Design	Language around active transportation connections for developments within the Major Transit Station Area is enhanced to align consistently with the Regional Official Plan. There are no major resulting policy implications as a result of this, as this language mirrors that of the Regional Official Plan.
Section 11.3 – Employment Areas	A new bullet is added to re-enforce that employment areas shall be adaptable to allow for redevelopment and intensification opportunities. Town staff have no concerns with this modification as this is a best practice for the wise and efficient use of land, and this language mirrors language and policy that is already in place through the Regional Official Plan.
Section 11.5 – Business Park Designation	Wording is clarified around childcare facilities being specifically “ancillary uses” within Business Parks. Ancillary uses are small scale retail and commercial uses that can locate within employment areas.
Section 12 – Protecting the Greenlands System	A number of minor wording enhancements and policy references are included to appropriately reference and be consistent with applicable Regional and Provincial policies and jurisdictional mandates including that of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Conservation Authorities. Flooding and hazard land policies are clarified to direct to the Conservation Authority permit process, and agricultural uses are recognized as permitted within the Oak Ridges Moraine Natural Core Area as directed by upper tier policy. These modifications do not result in any significant policy implications but are rather largely about clarifying and appropriately referencing upper-tier policies.
Section 16.5 – Wellhead Protection Areas	Language is amended to specifically reference the Region’s requirements for a Risk Management Plan or Source Water Impact and Assessment Mitigation Plan to be provided for development within Wellhead Protection Areas as required.
Glossary	Definitions for certain terms in the glossary are to be updated as appropriate to specifically match the in-force definitions from the York Region Official Plan, and therefore ensure consistency.
Schedules	A number of minor labelling, overlay, symbology, and titling edits/corrections are proposed. Schedules that depict the Aurora Promenade and Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) are proposed

	to be amended to facilitate the required delineation of the Aurora Promenade Secondary Plan boundary within the MTSA relative to the Region's own community area mapping of the lands, to ensure consistency.
Appendices	Watercourse and water body mapping is to be updated based on GIS data from the Region. Also, a new Appendix C is proposed to be added, which is simply the Regional Structure map from the York Region Official Plan inserted in its entirety for context setting. There are no resulting policy implications as a result of this.
Other Minor Formatting and Editorial Modifications	Minor section, subsection, or bullet numbering corrections are to be made. Grammar and document references/titles are also appropriately corrected as needed.

Advisory Committee Review

Not applicable.

Legal Considerations

The Official Plan Review is conducted in accordance with the Planning Act. The Town held the requisite statutory special meeting of Council in February 2020 as part of the development of the Updated Official Plan. Further non-statutory public meetings have also been held at the request of Council.

York Region, as the upper-tier municipality, is the approval authority for the Town's Official Plan. York Region may modify, approve or refuse a plan or part of the plan. Once York Region provides notice of its decision, the Minister or a person or public body that made submissions before the plan was adopted may appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

Communications Considerations

The Official Plan Review has been informed by extensive public consultation over several years. Once approved, the Regional will provide notice of their decision to the public.

Climate Change Considerations

The Town's Updated Official Plan will support the Town's ability to adapt to a changing climate by providing innovative policy directions that promote intensification and encourage the protection of the natural environment and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Town's Updated Official Plan supports the Strategic Plan goal of supporting an exceptional quality of life for all, via the objective of strengthening the fabric of our community, specifically through the action item:

Prepare and update the Town's Official Plan and Zoning By-law in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. That Council provide direction.

Conclusions

The Town's Official Plan Review exercise has represented a major undertaking through a multi-year work program. Council's endorsement of York Region's proposed modifications will support the ultimate approval of the Updated Official Plan to become an in-force document to effectively guide growth in Town to 2051.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – York Region Proposed Modifications

Previous Reports

General Committee Report No. PDS19-198, dated December 3, 2019

General Committee Report No. PDS20-014, dated February 11, 2020

Public Planning Report No. PDS20-077, dated December 8, 2020

Public Planning Report No. PDS21-034, dated May 11, 2021

General Committee Report No. PDS22-001, dated January 11, 2022

General Committee Report No. PDS22-102, dated June 21, 2022

Public Planning Report No. PDS23-041, dated April 17, 2023

General Committee Report No. PDS23-152, dated December 5, 2023

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on April 18, 2024

Approvals

Approved by Marco Ramunno, Director, Planning and Development Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer