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Town of Aurora

# General Committee Report

No. PDS22-102

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**Subject:** Town of Aurora Official Plan Review  
DRAFT Official Plan Amendment

**Prepared by:** Edward Terry, Senior Policy Planner MCIP, RPP

**Department:** Planning and Development Services

**Date:** June 21, 2022

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## Recommendation

1. That Report No. PDS22-102 be received;
2. That the Draft Official Plan Amendment be formally released for public review and comment; and
3. That Staff report back to a future General Committee meeting in the next term of Council early 2023 to present the revised Official Plan Amendment based on feedback received.

## Executive Summary

The Town of Aurora's Official Plan Review (OPR) is a conformity exercise which follows the provincially legislated Municipal Comprehensive Review for York Region and a major undertaking. Public consultation continues to be a key component of a successful Official Plan Review process.

- The draft Official Plan Amendment builds on the good policy foundation of the existing OP and is only a refinement of the current Plan, it does not represent a complete rewrite of the existing policies.
- Following the presentation of the DRAFT Official Plan Amendment to Council in June 2022, the draft will be released to the public for review and comment. Stakeholders and members of the public will be invited to comment via the Town's public engagement website - [engageaurora.ca](https://engageaurora.ca).

## Background

Aurora's Official Plan Review was first presented to Council in December 2019, through Report No. PDS19-098 seeking direction to hold a special public meeting prior to officially launching the review in accordance with the Planning Act.

On February 4, 2020, a Special Meeting of Council was held for the Official Plan Review. Council expressed the concern about the lack of consultation that had taken place leading up to the February 2020 public planning meeting. On December 8, 2020 a second public planning meeting was held to introduce the Town's consulting team and to provide an update on public engagement efforts.

At the February 23, 2021 Council meeting, Council approved a motion authorizing staff to initiate a review of the Aurora Promenade Secondary Plan in conjunction with the Official Plan update. The intent of the review would be to implement a new vision for the Yonge and Wellington corridors, with a focus on economic development and downtown revitalization.

On May 4, 2021, Council provided direction to publicly release the themed discussion papers for consultation. Feedback from that consultation process helped to inform the Policy Directions Report and the Promenade/MTSA discussion paper.

On January 11, 2022, Council provided further direction to publicly release the Policy Directions Report and Aurora Promenade/Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) Discussion Paper for public review and comment. The feedback from that consultation period has helped to inform the Draft Official Plan Amendment.

In addition to public feedback, several motions have been brought forward by Council in early 2022 that have all been incorporated into the Draft amendment:

- A Sunset Clause for Site Specific Zoning By-law Amendments
- New policy direction regarding second suites within and outside of the primary dwelling unit
- Enhanced policy direction regarding Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

## Analysis

The draft Official Plan Amendment builds on the good policy foundation of the existing OP and is only a refinement of the current Plan, it does not represent a complete rewrite of the existing policies.

Below is a summary of the proposed changes to the Town's current Official Plan that have been incorporated into the DRAFT Official Plan Amendment:

### Chapter 1 - Introduction

- No major changes to policy text;
- changed planning horizon to 2051; and
- added reference to public consultation forming the creation and update of the Plan.

### Chapter 2 – Vision

- Vision updated to reflect input from the public.
- Updates to Fundamental Principles:
  - References to complete communities, climate change, affordable housing;
  - Recognition that Aurora's stable neighbourhoods are an asset to the Town;
  - Focus on co-locating community facilities; and
  - New principles focusing on parkland and connectivity.

### Chapter 3 – Town Structure

- Reorganized to describe the key functional elements of the Town's Structure.
- Characterization of "Strategic Growth Areas".
- Focus on "gentle intensification" within Existing Residential Neighbourhoods.
- Terminology Changes:
  - Existing Residential Neighbourhoods;
  - Residential Designated Greenfield Area (DGA);
  - Employment Area;
  - Natural Heritage System; and
  - Oak Ridges Moraine Countryside Area.

## Chapter 4 – Growth Management

- Updated growth projections.
- Updated intensification target (45%).
- Updated Designate Greenfield Area (DGA) density target (55 P+J/ha).
- “Direct” growth to Strategic Growth Areas.
  - Maximum heights for strategic growth areas
    - Regional Corridors: 5 storeys
    - Local Corridors: 4 storeys
- Minimum density for Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) (150 P+J/ha).

## Chapter 5 – Design Excellence

- Town-wide applicability.
- Focus on placemaking.
- Focus on high-quality design for public and private realms.
- Public Realm:
  - Blocks/lots, streetscapes, pedestrian environment, views and focal points.
- Private Realm:
  - Built form, site and parking design, neighbourhood design.
- Direction for creating Public Art Master Plan and Cultural Master Plan.

## Chapter 6 – Green Community

- Focus on climate change.
- Removed detail of Green Development and Design Standards to avoid amendments to the Plan.
- Reference to the Region’s Climate Change Action Plan.
- New policies on Urban Forestry Management (including direction to prepare Management Plan).
- New policies on excess soils (direction for Town to identify best practices).

## Chapter 7 – Housing

- General Housing Policies
  - Focus on “missing middle” housing options;
  - Direction for preparation of a housing strategy to address family-sized units;
  - Updated affordable housing targets; and

- Clarification and simplification of policies on various housing types.
- Land Use Designations
  - Streamlined land use designations; and
  - Encouraging and permitting denser housing forms on the edges of Stable Neighborhoods.

## **Chapter 8 – Mixed Use**

- New Chapter.
- Applies a Mixed-Use designation to the Aurora Promenade and MTSA.
- Sets out permitted uses and general design policies, including
  - At-grade commercial uses and active street frontage; and
  - Appropriate transitions in density and height adjacent to low-rise residential areas.

## **Chapter 9 – Aurora Promenade and MTSA Secondary Plan**

- Placeholder Chapter for Updated Aurora Promenade and MTSA Secondary Plan.

## **Chapter 10 – Community Facilities**

- General policies encouraging the co-location of community facilities and high-quality design.
- Re-named “Existing Major Institutional” designation to “Community Services and Facilities” designation.
- Broadened list of permitted uses.
- Policies linked to Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- New “Community Hubs” policies.
- Simplification of policies for schools and places of worship.

## **Chapter 11 – Economy**

- Changes to reflect updated Provincial and Regional policies on employment conversions.
- Consolidated and simplified land use designations (no differentiation between greenfield and non-greenfield areas).
- Applicable land use designations from Secondary Plans have been brought into this chapter.

## **Chapter 12 – Greenlands**

- Removed Public and Private Parkland designations from this chapter.
- Includes list of features included within the Environmental Protection Area designation.
- Policy updates to reflect updated Provincial and Regional policies.
- Requirement for buffers to be determined through Environmental Impact Studies or hydrologic evaluations.
- Delineation of the Environmental Protection Area Designation to be updated based on environmental review ongoing.

### **Chapter 13 – Parks**

- New Chapter on Parkland (using policies within former Greenlands chapter as base).
- Link to parks as placemaking destinations.
- Inclusion of more detailed parkland policies from Secondary Plans.
- Policies for alternative forms of open space (POPS, Strata Parks, and easements adjacent to private parkland to connect open spaces).

### **Chapter 14 – Cultural Heritage**

- Updated to reflect new Provincial policies and regulations (including criteria for heritage resources).
- Requirement for Town to undertake a Cultural Heritage Landscape Study.
- Requirement to engage with Indigenous communities.

### **Chapter 15 – Transportation**

- Focus on “complete streets”.
- Requirement for noise and vibration studies for development adjacent to arterial/collector roads and within 300 metres of a railway.
- New active transportation policies linked to Schedule K.
- Policies to identify GO Station as a transit hub (well connected to all parts of Town).

### **Chapter 16 – Infrastructure**

- Few changes to policies.
- New policy to ensure monitoring of inflow and infiltration reduction measures within the wastewater system (and reporting to York Region).

## **Chapter 17 – Interpretation**

- Few changes to policies.
- Clarification of where population and employment forecasts come from.
- Deletion of policy permitting conversion of employment lands only through a Regional MCR process.

## **Chapter 18 – Implementation**

- New enabling policies for the implementation of a Community Planning Permit System.
- Simplification of list of required studies to be submitted through development applications.
- New policies regarding maximum timeframe for construction to occur after approval of site-specific Zoning or CPP By-law Amendments.
- New policy permitting the Town to deem old plans of subdivision as lapsed.
- Updated parkland dedication policies in line with Provincial requirements.

## **Chapter 19 – Glossary**

- Many new or updated definitions.
- Updated definitions for many environmental features.
- New definitions:
  - Community Hub;
  - Complete Streets;
  - Cultural Heritage Landscape;
  - Market Based Housing;
  - Parkland; and
  - Short-term Residential Accommodation.

## **Next Steps for the OP Review and the Promenade Secondary Plan**

Following the presentation of the DRAFT Official Plan Amendment to Council, the draft will be released to the public for review and comment. Stakeholders and members of the public will be invited to comment via the Town's public engagement website - [engageaurora.ca](http://engageaurora.ca).

Following this public engagement, and based on all feedback received, the project team will revise the DRAFT amendment before holding a statutory public meeting and then formally presenting them for Council's consideration in 2023.

Project Milestone	Proposed Date
Present Draft to GC	June 21, 2022
Public/Stakeholder Review of Draft OP	June – December 2022
Council Orientation	December 2022
Statutory Open House	January/February 2023
Statutory Public Meeting	January/February 2023
Council Adoption	March 2023
Regional Approval	June 2023

## Advisory Committee Review

Not applicable

## Legal Considerations

The Town held the requisite statutory special meeting of Council in February 2020 to discuss the revisions that may be required to the Official Plan. Further non statutory public meetings have been held at the request of Council. Council is required to have regard to any written submissions received as to what revisions may be required to the Official Plan. A statutory public meeting will be required to present the draft Official Plan amendments for public review and comment.

## Financial Implications

To date Council has approved a total of \$434,000.00 in support of the Town's Official Plan Review, including the Aurora Promenade and MTSA consultation components. The final scope of this project will continue to be monitored as it progresses.

Upon its completion the updated Official Plan will become a key reference document that will continue to inform the Town's long-term capital planning.



## **Communications Considerations**

The Town will engage the public broadly in the Official Plan Review. Staff, in partnership with the project's engagement consultants, will involve the public and work directly within them throughout the process to ensure that public concerns are consistently understood and considered.

The Town will work to ensure community concerns are reflected in recommendations and alternatives public feedback will be considered as part of the decision-making processes. The Town will also make sure to close the feedback loop with citizens to share feedback received, and action taken as a result of the feedback.

Notice was provided for this meeting emailing identified interested parties, posting an ad in the local paper, advertising on local mobile signs and via social media.

## **Climate Change Considerations**

The recommendations from this report will increase the Town's ability to adapt to a changing climate by exploring new policy directions that promotes intensification of the Promenade and encourages the protection of the Natural Environment and reduces green house gases.

## **Link to Strategic Plan**

The Municipal Comprehensive Review and review of the 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 Provincially legislated MCR conformity exercise, together with the review of the Town's Official Plan, represents a major undertaking that has resulted in a multi-year work program scheduled to tentatively conclude in 2023 with the adoption of an updated Official Plan and Aurora Promenade Secondary Plan.

Staff are seeking Council direction to proceed with the public release of the Draft Official Plan Amendment that will be presented with revisions to a future Council meeting in the next term.

## **Attachments**

Attachment 1 – DRAFT Official Plan Amendment

## **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

## **Pre-submission Review**

Agenda Management Team review on June 2, 2022

## **Approvals**

Approved by Marco Ramunno, MCIP, RPP, Director, Planning and Development Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer