



## **Staff Report for Council Public Meeting**

**Date of Meeting:** May 18, 2022

**Report Number:** SRPI.22.055

**Department:** Planning and Infrastructure

**Division:** Policy Planning

**Subject:** SRPI.22.055 Draft OPA 18.4 Neighbourhoods – Request for Comments (City File No: D01-22003)

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### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to request comments concerning a municipally-initiated Official Plan Amendment (OPA 18.4) to the City's Official Plan (refer to Appendix 1). The OPA seeks to update the "Neighbourhood" designation policies in the Official Plan to address several key directions contained in the City Plan 2041 Key Directions Report, including recommendations provided in the Affordable Housing Strategy endorsed by Council to expand opportunities for missing-middle housing ("gentle density"), and to facilitate the creation of "15-minute" communities across the City's settlement areas.

### **Recommendation:**

- a) That Staff Report SRPI.22.055 respecting the municipally-initiated Official Plan Amendment 18.4 (refer to Appendix 1) to the City's Official Plan (City File D01-22003), be received for information purposes only, and that all comments be referred back to staff.

### **Contact Person:**

Brian DeFreitas, Senior Planner, phone number 905-771-5431

### **Report Approval:**

**Submitted by:** Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure

**Approved by:** Darlene Joslin, Interim City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

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### Location:

The proposed Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 18.4 is city-wide, and applies to all areas of the City that are designated “Neighbourhood”, pursuant to Schedule A2 (Land Use) of the City’s Official Plan.

### Proposal:

OPA 18.4 is appended to this staff report as Appendix 1. It proposes to amend the City’s 2010 Official Plan by updating the policies of the Neighbourhood land use designation to address several key directions recommended through the City’s [Key Directions Report](#), which was prepared in support of the City’s 2041 Official Plan Update (OP Update). The key directions for the Official Plan Update were endorsed by Council in February 2022, and among other matters, seek to facilitate the creation of “15-minute” communities across the City’s settlement areas. In addition, they aim to address a number of important issues that will be faced by the City’s neighbourhoods over the next 20 years including: housing mix and affordability, neighbourhood commercial uses, and balancing the interests and desire to respect distinguishing features of neighbourhoods. To that end, the OPA proposes to amend the City’s Official Plan by updating various land use and design policies applicable to the Neighbourhood designation and by adding new policies and mapping to the Plan.

The purpose of this staff report is twofold: (1) to provide an overview of the draft official plan amendment and its proposed modifications to the City’s 2010 Official Plan; and (2) to seek feedback from Council and the public on the proposed changes.

Concurrent with OPA 18.4, the City is also considering OPA 18.3 which addresses the Vision and City Structure. A separate staff report, SRPI.22.054, outlines the proposed modifications to the City’s OP respecting this proposed amendment. Collectively, OPA’s 18.3 and 18.4 represent amendments being brought forward to Council at this juncture, and are the first of three batches of amendments that will be undertaken by the City through the OP Update. Batch 2 and 3 OPAs will occur in earnest in 2023. With respect to consultation, City staff will continue to monitor and analyze feedback received on the amendment and will provide a fulsome summary of the comments heard in a subsequent report to Council. Any comments received up until May 18, 2022, which coincides with today’s Council Public Meeting, will be synthesized in a forthcoming What We Heard Report. City Staff will prepare necessary updates to the proposed policies of the amendment for Council to consider its adoption at its Council Meeting on June 27, 2022.

### Background Information:

#### Impetus for the Proposed Official Plan Amendment:

OPA 18.4 implements several important key directions that are outlined in the Key Directions Report which are applicable to neighbourhoods, including:

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- **Key Direction 1F** – *“Respecting character and distinguishing features of neighbourhoods across the City”;*
- **Key Direction 1G** – *“Permitting “gentle density” by allowing a greater mix of housing types and access to day-to-day (including commercial) activities”;*
- **Key Direction 4F** – *“Promoting development that fosters “Work from neighbourhood” community building”;* and
- **Key Direction 7A, B** – *“Updating policies, mapping and definitions to conform with applicable Provincial Plans, and clarifying where there have been implementation or interpretation challenges”*

The aforementioned key directions have served as the impetus and framework for the development of Official Plan Amendment 18.4.

### **Proposed OPA Intent and Rationale:**

OPA 18.4 proposes changes to the City’s OP, and includes new and revised policies that are mainly applicable to Sections 3.3, 4.1 and 4.9 of the Plan (refer to Appendix 1). The proposed modifications cover a number of overarching key themes as follows:

#### **Home Occupations and Live Work Units**

OPA 18.4 proposes several modifications to the policies within Chapter 3 of the City’s OP. These modifications aim to provide additional clarity and certainty respecting home occupations and home-based businesses within neighbourhoods, as well as adding clarity respecting permissions for live-work units.

In regards to home occupations and home-based businesses within neighbourhoods, OPA 18.4 proposes to:

- Include policies clarifying that home occupations are to be subordinate to a primary dwelling, and that the owner of the home occupation resides in the dwelling as their primary residence;
- Add flexibility in permissions for home occupations to be conducted wholly within a dwelling, including apartment dwellings, thereby eliminating the current OP restriction that limit home occupations to a ground-related dwelling (e.g. single-detached, semi-detached dwelling);
- Include policies clarifying that home occupations are not permitted to operate as a retail storefront, and that any goods or merchandise associated with a home occupation remains incidental and accessory to a dwelling so as to prevent operating as a full-fledged commercial use;
- Add a new policy which would enable the City’s Zoning By-law to specify types of home occupations that may be prohibited within neighbourhoods;

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- Add new policy language which restricts outdoor storage or display of goods, materials and equipment; and
- Add a new policy directing proponents to ensure that a proposed home occupation does not create adverse impacts, and that it complies with all municipal by-laws, including the City’s Zoning By-laws and Municipal Code to address potential concerns related to noise, sign, property standards, and parking, among other matters.

The above-noted changes are intended to respond to the ever-changing working model, while ensuring that the City’s policies are able to respond to the growing prevalence and proliferation of home-based businesses and the recent trends associated with them. City Staff recognize that home occupations can provide benefits and foster entrepreneurship opportunities for residents, while implementing the key direction to support “work from neighbourhood”. Notwithstanding this, Staff are also cognizant of the potential and propensity for certain types of home occupations to grow in size, and/or to generate nuisance and impacts, both of which have the potential to affect neighbourhoods. Accordingly, the proposed amendment includes policies in the Official Plan which reference the City’s municipal by-laws and Municipal Code with which home occupations must comply, to ensure that no unauthorized uses or actions take place on site.

In regards to live-work units, the current policies of the OP permit live-work units as-of-right within the centres and corridors, however this permission presently does not extend to lands within the Neighbourhood designation. To that end, the policy modifications proposed under OPA 18.4 will enable permissions for live-work units to take place within Neighbourhoods where lands have frontage onto an arterial street.

### **Neighbourhood Commercial and Community Uses**

With respect to neighbourhood commercial uses, the current OP criteria limits these uses to occur at the intersection of arterial streets or an arterial and a collector street. OPA 18.4 expands policy permissions for new neighbourhood commercial uses to occur on lands that have frontage onto an arterial street, thereby no longer limiting them only to locations at intersections. This added flexibility creates more opportunities for commercial uses that serve a neighborhood function to become established within close proximity to residential areas.

In addition, OPA 18.4 proposes new policies which seek to address the potential for existing neighbourhood commercial sites to be converted exclusively for residential land uses. In such instances, the policies of the OP would require that applicants seek an amendment to the Zoning By-law and in so doing demonstrate to the satisfaction of the City that certain criteria are met including, among other matters, the completion of a commercial needs study undertaken by a qualified professional justifying that the lands are no longer economically viable for neighbourhood commercial uses. Collectively, the policies seek to ensure that neighbourhood commercial uses are protected wherever

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possible, in recognition of the vital function they provide for residents and their day-to-day activities.

With respect to community uses, the amendment proposes to add additional clarity and land use permissions for public elementary schools to locate anywhere along an arterial street, as well as along collector streets. Currently, the policies of the Plan limit such uses to locate along collector streets only. Similarly, the amendment also introduces enabling policies which would expand permissions for private secondary and elementary schools to locate anywhere along an arterial street, while removing the current location restrictions and minimum site size criteria for these uses.

Collectively, the proposed policy changes related to home-occupations, live-work units, commercial and community uses respond to and support the key directions related to “work from Neighbourhood” and the provision of 15-minute communities. These policy changes aim to provide amenities and services closer to where people live, thereby fostering more opportunities to use active transportation (i.e. walk or bike ride) to these places, and support place-making objectives that improve public health and respond to climate change.

### Priority Infill Areas

Infill development provides opportunities for neighbourhoods to use land and services more efficiently through new lot creation, and incorporate the provision of different housing types within the area. Historically, infilling as a form of small-scale intensification, has occurred within the City by way of comprehensive backlot plans of subdivision. These areas reflect locations where patterns of infill development have become well-established and which have progressed incrementally over the course of several decades.

The current policies of the OP recognize that neighbourhoods will experience infill development, and identify 16 priority infill areas. These areas are characterized as lands that are best suited to accommodate infill either due to their historic infill context, or in recognition of the fact that they have a Council approved study to guide their development. OPA 18.4 proposes a number of changes to the priority infill policies of the OP, including:

- Introducing a new preamble for the section dealing with Priority Infill Areas to provide additional clarity regarding the purpose and vision for these areas;
- Removing the text description of priority infill areas and replacing it with a new Appendix which illustrates their geographic location within the City;
- Revising the policies of the Plan to clarify that priority infill areas are generally for low-density residential uses (e.g. single-detached and semi-detached dwellings) with medium density residential uses (e.g. townhouses) also permitted, subject to area specific analysis; and,
- Clarifying that where development within a priority infill area is subject to a Council approved study, it is to be assessed in accordance with the guidelines

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that have been approved by Council for that area. Conversely, where lands are identified as a priority infill area but have no applicable study, the policies of the amendment enable Council to direct such a study to be undertaken, and/or require that a proponent of development undertake one to guide infill over the long term.

### **“Gentle Density” (Medium Density Residential and Multi-Tached Housing)**

With respect to housing, on November 24, 2021 City Council endorsed the City’s [Affordable Housing Strategy](#), and in doing so, directed City Staff to further explore and implement various proposed tools and incentives to address the housing gaps in Richmond Hill. The implementation of the actions listed in the Strategy will assist the City’s existing and future resident population by way of creating more housing choice within neighborhoods. These actions recommend that the City expand permissions for “gentle density” and “missing middle” housing within neighbourhoods to address the supply and demand challenges for different forms of housing and tenure<sup>1</sup>.

The Key Directions Report defines “missing middle” housing as: “*modest multi-unit housing in forms such as duplex, triplex, walk-up apartments and live-work units*”. The report also defines “gentle density” as: “*new forms of development that can be accommodated through new lot creation within an existing community and/or when “missing middle” housing is introduced to an area where single and/or semi-detached housing is prevalent, in a manner that is contextually appropriate and desirable*”. Moreover, gentle density can also refer to non-residential development being introduced into a predominantly residential area through the provision of modest neighborhood-serving commercial, cultural, institutional and/or recreational uses.

In preparing OPA 18.4, City Staff were cognizant of the growing gaps between the types of housing people want and need versus what is built and available due to shifting household demographics and market demand for housing that supports walkable urban living. These gaps can be mitigated by enabling more opportunities for missing middle housing that fits well within the existing ground-oriented housing context. By doing so, the City can support the creation of a range of housing options for seniors to age in place, and create opportunities for younger households to settle in the community. As noted by the City’s urban visionary David Dixon in his [Planning for Change](#) document, in the five decades following the end of World War II, families with children dominated household growth across North America. This and the proliferation of the automobile spurred suburban growth, including robust growth in Richmond Hill. However, in recent years and continuing through the next two decades and beyond, demographic growth is shifting toward one- and two-person households (without children) and single parents with children. Based on the findings of the Affordable Housing Strategy background

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Recommended Action 2.3, The City of Richmond Hill Affordable Housing Strategy – Strategy Report (May 2021), pg. 17 <https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/shared-content/resources/documents/SRPI.21.089-Appendix-B-Affordable-Housing-Strategy-AODA.pdf>

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report, these groups have housing preferences that are not presently being met by the current supply of housing.

In light of the foregoing, OPA 18.4 specifically proposes to:

- Revise the Plan's policies respecting the permission for medium density residential uses within neighbourhoods by changing the requirement for a study to support the proposed development from a municipally-initiated tertiary plan, to a concept plan that is to be prepared by the development proponent;
- Expand permissions for medium density residential uses within neighbourhoods to allow for this form of development to occur on lands that are adjacent to the centres and corridors designation, in addition to where they are already permitted by the Official Plan (i.e. along arterial, collector and local streets, subject to specific criteria); and
- Add a new policy allowing for the approval of a Concept Plan to occur in advance of, or concurrent with, a proposal for medium density residential development.

OPA 18.4 also proposes to add new permissions for additional residential units in single- and semi-detached housing which would result in permitting more than 2 units within these dwellings. This type of housing is coined: "multi-tached." This policy direction builds upon the City's existing additional residential unit (ARU) policies set out in the Plan. This permission is proposed to apply to the Neighbourhood designation and would be subject to the ARU policies presently set out in the Plan, as well as be subject to zoning standards associated with single/semi-detached housing in terms of setbacks, height, lot coverage, etc.

As noted above, the permission for multi-tached housing responds to a recommended action set out in the City's Affordable Housing Strategy, as endorsed by City Council. As noted in the AHS Background Report, Fact Sheet, and Strategy, this form of housing would respond to the need for more housing options, especially in relation to ground-oriented housing, and also would create new opportunities to provide housing, both ownership and rental, that is more affordable than what is presently available in the City's current housing stock.

Presently, the OPA proposes to permit multi-tached housing by way of a conversion of an existing single or semi-detached home, anywhere within the Neighbourhood designation. However, as noted in the sidebar of the OPA, Staff are considering and seeking input on three other possible options in terms of what form and where these multi-tached homes could be permitted in the City. The options are set out in the sidebar to the amendment (refer to Appendix 1), and are described as follows:

- (Option 1) permitting multi-tached housing only as a conversion of an existing single/semi-detached house, anywhere in the Neighbourhood designation;

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- (Option 2) permitting multi-tached housing only as a conversion of an existing single/semi-detached house, in specific geographic areas of the City within the Neighbourhood designation;
- (Option 3) permitting conversion and new multi-tached housing anywhere in the Neighbourhood designation; or
- (Option 4) permitting conversion and new multi-tached housing in specific geographic areas of the City within the Neighbourhood designation

City Staff are aware that including provisions for multi-tached housing is a key direction that is very much new territory for the City and for Council, and for that reason the above options are proposed. Through consultation, staff propose to determine how best to respond to the demand for this form of housing.

### **Distinguishing Features of Neighbourhoods**

Another important aspect addressed in OPA 18.4 is the key direction to respect the character and distinguishing features of neighbourhoods across the City<sup>2</sup>. The policies of the proposed amendment require that development be context-sensitive and compatible with adjacent and surrounding areas, while acknowledging that communities across the city possess features that distinguish one from the other. This policy direction is intended to balance interests, in light of the aforementioned modifications to the Official Plan that permit change within the Neighbourhood designation, with the desire to ensure that what we value about our communities is not lost.

To address distinguishing features and neighborhood character, OPA 18.4 proposes to amend policies related to Neighbourhood Design. When updating the City's Zoning By-law or when submitting development applications, the proposed policy changes would require taking into consideration the physical aspects of the community, including but not limited to, patterns of streets, blocks and buildings, the size and configuration of lots including setbacks and yards, mature trees and landscaping, and considering the height, scale and density of nearby dwelling types to ensure compatibility of future development with the surrounding area. Through new policies, the amendment would also allow the City to require proponents who propose significant development to consider other aspects of neighbourhood character, which could include consideration of social, cultural and economic qualities and demonstrate how the proposed development would enhance the broader community.

### **Planning Act Requirements Related to the Official Plan Update:**

Section 26 of the *Planning Act* provides specific provisions related to the updating of an Official Plan. The *Act* requires that the update occur no less frequently than 10 years after the approval of the Official Plan; and that the update ensures that the Plan be revised to: (a) conform with provincial plans; (b) have regard to matters of provincial

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to Section 2.1.2.1.3 of the Key Directions Report., pg.12 <https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/shared-content/resources/documents/City-Plan-2041-Key-Directions-Report.pdf>

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interest listed in Section 2 of the *Act*; and (c) be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

With respect to public consultation and the adoption of official plan related amendments, Section 26 is to be read in conjunction with Section 17 of the *Planning Act*, which provides direction related to the adoption of an Official Plan and all municipally initiated amendments to it. In that regard, Section 17 of the *Act* requires that Council hold at least one public meeting, and in the case of a Section 26 amendment, to hold at least one public open house in advance of the public meeting. Section 26 also provides direction regarding the timing of giving notice of a special meeting of Council wherein the public is provided the opportunity to speak to council with respect to proposed revisions to the official plan (i.e. a public meeting).

The City gave notice of a Virtual Open House and Council Public Meeting on April 7, 2022, and again on April 14, 2022 via the Liberal (refer to Appendix 2). The City also updated its [Official Plan Update webpage](#) and the City's calendar to provide notice of these events. The notices provided explanations respecting the purpose of the Open House and Council Public Meeting as a means of receiving comments on the proposed amendment.

Also in accordance with the *Planning Act*, on April 7, 2022 the City posted prescribed information and materials, including a copy of the draft amendment on the OP Update webpage and sent the material to all prescribed bodies, including the Region of York, who is the approval authority for the amendment (41 days in advance of the this Council Public Meeting). Staff note that the details of the public and stakeholder consultation related to this municipally-initiated Official Plan Amendment will be provided in a future report, since at the time writing consultation on the proposed amendment has been initiated but not completed.

### **Background Research:**

Prior to the development of the proposed Official Plan Amendment, and in addition to the work undertaken to prepare the Key Directions Report for the Official Plan update and the City's Affordable Housing Strategy, City Staff undertook some background research with respect to complete communities as well as a jurisdictional scan and review of other municipal official plans to better understand policy direction respecting neighbourhoods. This research also included a review of relevant studies and background work that was previously undertaken in support of the City's Comprehensive Zoning By-law process. The supporting work for the Comprehensive Zoning By-law has included a series of technical papers which cover a range of topic areas that are relevant to neighbourhoods, including: [residential infill development](#), [aging in place](#), the provision of [community uses](#), [home occupations and live-work units](#), and [low-rise building typologies](#) within residential areas.

Collectively, the findings of this work has served as key inputs to the development of the policies outlined in the proposed OPA (refer to Appendix 1). Where such studies are

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nearing completion, Staff will continue to rely on the key directions provided therein to inform the final draft of the OPA as more information and direction from Council on these topic areas become available.

### **Provincial Policy Considerations:**

#### **Provincial Policy Statement (2020)**

The Provincial Policy Statement (2020) (the “PPS”) sets the policy foundation for land use planning in the Province of Ontario. The PPS provides policy direction across the province on land use planning and development, and on matters that are of a Provincial interest (as listed in Section 2 of the Planning Act). The new PPS came into effect on May 1, 2020. When developing Official Plan policy and evaluating planning applications, Staff must ensure that advice to Council on a planning matter is consistent with the PPS.

Section 1.0 of the PPS 2020 deals with “Building Strong Healthy Communities”. To that end, the PPS provides the following provincial policy direction that is relevant to OPA 18.4:

- Promoting efficient development and land use patterns which sustain the financial well-being of the Province and municipalities over the long term (1.1.1(a));
- Accommodating an appropriate affordable and market-based range and mix of residential types (including single-detached, additional residential units, multi-unit housing, affordable housing and housing for older persons) (1.1.1(b));
- Promoting the integration of land use planning, growth management, transit-supportive development, intensification and infrastructure planning to achieve cost-effective development patterns and optimization of transit investments (1.1.1(e));
- Ensuring that necessary infrastructure and public service facilities are or will be available to meet current and projected needs (1.1.1(g));
- Ensuring that land use patterns within settlement areas are based on densities and a mix of land uses which use land and resources efficiently, support active transportation and are transit supportive where transit is planned, exists or may be developed (1.1.3.2(a)(e)(g));
- Promoting economic development and competitiveness by providing for an appropriate range and mix of employment, institutional and broader mix of uses to meet long term needs (1.3.1(a));
- Encouraging compact, mixed use development that incorporates compatible employment uses to support live-able and resilient communities (1.3.1(d));
- Identifying appropriate locations and promoting opportunities for transit supportive development, accommodating a significant supply and range of housing options through intensification and redevelopment where it can be accommodated taking into account existing building stock or areas and the availability of suitable existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities (1.1.3.3.);

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- Providing an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities required to meet projected requirements of current and future residents of the regional market area (1.4.1);
- Providing for an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities to meet projected market-based and affordable housing needs of current and future residents and establishing targets for the provision of housing which is affordable to low and moderate income households (1.4.3(a));
- Permitting and facilitating all housing options required to meet the social, health, economic and well-being requirements of current and future residents as well as permitting all types of residential intensification including additional residential units
- Promoting opportunities for economic development and community investment readiness (1.7.1(a));
- Optimizing the long-term availability and use of land, resources, infrastructure and public service facilities; (1.7.1(c)); and
- Encouraging a sense of place by promoting well-designed built form and cultural planning, and by conserving features that help define character, including built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes (1.7.1(e))

### **A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020)**

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019) (the "Growth Plan") came into effect on May 16, 2019. Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan was brought into effect on August 28, 2020. The Growth Plan builds upon the policy foundation provided by the PPS by providing more detailed land use planning policies for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). The Growth Plan requires that all advice to Council and all decisions made by an authority which affects a planning matter, must conform to the Plan.

Section 2 of the Growth Plan sets out policies respecting where and how to grow, and Sections 3 (Infrastructure to Support Growth) and 4 (Protecting what is Valuable) of the Plan set out supporting policies for how infrastructure is to be coordinated with land use planning, and how resources that make communities unique and attractive places to live should be identified, valued and protected. To that end, the Growth Plan provides the following policy direction that is relevant to OPA 18.4:

- Directing growth to settlement areas, and focusing this growth within delineated built up areas, strategic growth areas, and locations with existing or planned transit, with a priority on higher order transit where it exists or is planned (2.2.1.(2)(b));
- Applying the policies of the Plan will support the achievement of complete communities that feature a diverse mix of land uses and convenient access to local stores, services and public service facilities, improve social equity and overall quality of life for people of all ages, abilities and incomes, and provide a diverse range of and mix of housing options, including additional residential units and affordable housing to accommodate people at all stages of life to meet the needs of all household sizes and incomes (2.2.1.(2)(4));

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- Encouraging intensification generally throughout delineated built-up areas (2.2.2(3)(c));
- Directing that the retail sector is to be supported by promoting compact built form and intensification of retail and service uses, and encouraging the integration of those uses with other land uses to support the achievement of complete communities (2.2.5(15));
- Identifying a diverse range and mix of housing options and densities, including additional residential units and affordable housing to meet projected needs of current and future residents, and to implement this and other housing objectives set out in the Plan through official plan policies, designations and zoning by-laws (2.2.6(1)(a)(i), 2.2.6(1)(e));
- Supporting the achievement of complete communities by considering a range and mix of housing options and densities of the existing housing stock, and planning to diversify the overall housing stock across a municipality (2.2.6(2)(c)(d));
- Leveraging infrastructure investment to direct growth and development in accordance with the policies of the Growth Plan, including the achievement of the minimum intensification and density targets of the Plan (3.2.1(2)(a));
- Directing new public service facilities such as hospitals and schools to be located in settlement areas, with preference given to sites that are easily accessible by active transportation and transit, where this service is available (3.2.8(6)); and
- Requiring that cultural heritage resources be conserved in order to foster a sense of place and benefit communities, particularly in strategic growth areas (4.2.7(1))

The Growth Plan also references the term “compact built form” throughout the policies of the Plan, and defines it as a land use pattern that encourages the efficient use of land, walkable neighbourhoods and a mix of land uses all within one neighbourhood, with proximity to transit and a reduced need for infrastructure. Staff note that these are principles that are supported by the “15-minute community” objective of this proposed amendment.

### **Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (2017)**

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan was amended and came into effect in May 2017. The ORMCP and its policies work to collectively manage and guide land use within the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM). Accordingly, the Plan works together with the Growth Plan and other Provincial policies to identify and provide certainty respecting growth management and urban development, where and how future growth should be accommodated, and where urbanization should not occur so as to provide protection to the agricultural land base and the ecological and hydrological features, areas and functions of the ORM. To that end, the ORMCP relies on municipal official plans to map and delineate agricultural, rural and settlement areas and requires that the policies of the Plan be read in conjunction with all other applicable land use planning policy, regulations or standards. Like the PPS, the policies of the ORMCP are to be implemented through land use planning instruments and decisions.

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Part 2 (Land Use Designations), sub-section 18 of the ORMCP deals with land use permissions within settlement areas. The policies of this section of the ORMCP is germane to OPA 18.4, and identifies the following policy direction that is relevant to the proposed amendment:

- Promoting the efficient use of land with transit-supportive densities, through intensification and redevelopment within existing urban areas (Part 2 (18)(1)(b));
- Promoting strong communities, a strong economy and a healthy environment (Part 2 (18)(2)(c)); and
- Promoting the location of two or more compatible public services in one building or place that is conveniently situated so as to be accessible to local residents by walking, cycling and where available public transit (Part 2 (18)(2)(c.1)).

### **Regional Policy Considerations:**

The Region is undertaking a municipal comprehensive review (MCR) to update the 2009 ROP. The Region's MCR will culminate in an update of the ROP to ensure conformity to the Provincial Plans, and consistency with the PPS. In support of its MCR process, several background studies and supporting documents were undertaken to support the update. Of importance and germane to OPA 18.4 is the Region's policy direction respecting complete communities, which is proposed to be maintained and enhanced through the new ROP update. The Region acknowledges that complete communities can reduce auto dependency, congestion and emissions, and can result in better work-life balance while creating a sense of place for residents. In addition, the "15-minute community" principle identified as being a key direction for the City's OP Update is responsive to the Region's existing policies respecting complete communities. These policies set the framework for how residential areas within the Region should be planned.

In January 2021, the Region reported on its [housing policy directions](#) to support the development of draft ROP policies respecting housing. In its report, the Region highlighted recent trends respecting housing across York Region, and identified the lack of affordable housing options as being a leading factor that has led to slower growth over the last decade. In turn, this has also impacted the Region's efforts to develop robust, healthy complete communities. The Region notes that the term "housing options" reflects a broad range of housing types and housing arrangements, and includes single-detached and semi-detached dwellings, townhouses, multi-plexes, as well as additional residential units and multi-residential buildings. Accordingly, a robust housing supply with a full mix and range of housing options, including those that are affordable and provided in a timely manner, is integral to building complete communities where people of all ages and stages of life and incomes can live, work and play. The ROP update has considered modifications to the Region's Plan to update its housing policies to conform to Provincial policy direction, and to support expanding housing options, including options for affordable housing.

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In light of the foregoing, the following policies of the current ROP are relevant to the draft Official Plan Amendment 18.4:

### ***Chapter 3 (Healthy Communities):***

- Requiring high-quality urban design and pedestrian-friendly communities that provide safety, comfort and mobility so that residents can walk to meet their daily needs (3.1.3);
- Supporting and encouraging the delivery of human services in a manner that respects the diverse needs of residents and workers (3.3.10);
- Designing communities in a manner that facilitates inclusivity and accessibility for residents, workers and visitors (3.3.11);
- Encouraging local municipalities to consider urban design standards in core historic areas that reflect the areas' heritage, character, and streetscape (3.4.8);
- Requiring local municipal official plans and zoning by-laws to permit a mix and range of housing types, lot sizes, unit sizes, functions, tenures and levels of affordability within each community, with the mix and range of housing to be consistent with Regional forecasts (3.5.4); and
- Encouraging building design that will facilitate subsequent conversion to provide additional housing units, such as secondary suites and encouraging the construction of new rental units with a full mix and range of unit sizes, including family-sized and smaller units (3.5.18, 3.5.19).

### ***Chapter 4 (Economic Vitality):***

- Creating vibrant and healthy communities that attract and retain youth, a highly skilled labour force, and quality employers (4.1.3);
- Working with municipalities to promote work-at-home through the adoption of enabling zoning provisions that allow for live-work units where appropriate (4.1.11);
- Requiring that retail be designed to be walkable, transit-supportive, and integrated into communities and pedestrian and cycling networks, with high-quality urban design (4.4.1); and
- Working with municipalities to improve urban design in new retail developments and to identify opportunities for the intensification and revitalization of existing retail (4.4.2).

### ***Chapter 5 (An Urbanizing Region):***

- Providing a balance of residential and employment uses through the Region to improve the possibilities for working and living in close proximity (5.2.5);
- Designing communities to ensure accessibility to people of all ages, cultures and abilities (5.2.7);
- Employing the highest standard of urban design, which provides pedestrian scale, safety, comfort, accessibility, and connectivity and which complements the character of existing areas and fosters each community's unique sense of place, and ensures compatibility with and transition to surrounding land uses (5.2.8(a)(b))(e); and

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- Encouraging retail, commercial and office structures to be carefully designed in a compact form and be pedestrian-oriented, transit-supportive and multi-storey, where appropriate (5.2.9).

### **Chapter 7 (Servicing our Population):**

- Achieving higher transit usage by supporting improvements in service, convenient access and good urban design, including minimizing walking distance to planned or existing transit stops by among other matters, directing medium-density and high density urban development to rapid transit corridors (7.2.25).

This Staff Report recognizes that while the Region is still in the midst of seeking feedback from Regional Council and the public on its proposed ROP policies, the proposed draft policies set out in OPA 18.4 (refer to Appendix 1) are reliant on the in-force policies of the 2009 ROP. Staff have relied on these in-force policies to draft the proposed amendment, and note that they advance and implement the Region's policies respecting housing and the creation of vibrant, healthy complete communities. In addition, City Staff have also considered the policies of the amendment in relation to the updated policy framework under the Draft ROP which was released in November 2021 and note that the modifications set out in the proposed amendment similarly implement the Region's draft policies.

### **Local Policy and Context:**

OPA 18.4 is proposed to apply city-wide, but more specifically, to lands that are designated Neighbourhood, pursuant to Schedule A2 (Land Use) of the City's 2010 OP. The Neighbourhood policies provide policy direction for growth and development within the City's predominantly residential areas. These areas are generally characterized by low density residential uses, but they also provide a range of service uses such as commercial, retail and community uses that serve the day-to-day needs of residents. Neighbourhoods have also been experiencing some growth through infill development for traditional patterns of low density residential development, which has been commonplace since the early 1980's, but also for medium density residential development in areas that are served by transit. The modifications set out in the proposed amendment seek to expand opportunities for housing within neighbourhoods, while also supporting the creation of "15-minute" communities.

As noted in the Key Directions Report for the OP Update, policy and mapping updates to the City's Official Plan are to be undertaken to address the four pillars of the update process: *Growing our Economy, Design Excellence, Green and Sustainable, Protect and Enhance*. These pillars are explained in Section 1.3 of the [Key Directions Report](#). OPA 18.4 addresses these pillars as follows:

The proposed changes to expand opportunities for home occupations, enable permissions for neighbourhood commercial uses and live-work units as-of-right along arterial streets, and the relaxing of locational criteria for community uses provides more employment opportunities within the City which supports economic growth.

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The proposed changes which seek to provide guidance for neighbourhood design that is context-sensitive in terms of physical, social, cultural and economic qualities supports the desire for design excellence in the City.

The Proposed changes to permit gentle density and a greater mix of uses along arterial streets in the Neighbourhood designation supports the City's objective of protecting natural and rural areas from development, and creating more compact, complete communities where services and amenities can be accessed via active modes of travel. Collectively, these outcomes implement the Green and Sustainable pillar.

And finally, the proposed policy changes that reinforce the need to recognize distinguishing features of Neighbourhoods, which can include a combination of physical, social, economic or cultural qualities, and ensuring that significant development enhances those features, addresses the Protect and Enhance pillar.

### **Public Consultation:**

Staff have employed the following methods to consult with the public and stakeholders with respect to this amendment:

In early March 2022, the City organized a *"Take a Walk and Win"* contest. It challenged residents to take a 15-minute walk from their homes to observe local features and amenities. The intent of this event was to prompt residents to think about elements that make up a "complete community" and to assess how their neighbourhood could be improved.

On April 7, 2022, the draft OPA and its associated prescribed material was posted on the [Official Plan Update website](#), and notification about this information and related Open House and this meeting was shared with the public through various means, including: print ads in the Liberal, digital advertisements, social media notices, email notifications, Curbex signs, LED postings at City buildings, and posters within City facilities.

On April 26, 2022, a Public Open House was hosted virtually. At the open house, City Staff provided an overview of the proposed intent and policies under OPAs 18.3 and 18.4. A summary of the Questions and Answers and comments received at the open house will be published on the City's website through a separate "Phase 3 - What We Heard Report". At the time of writing, City Staff have also scheduled meetings with individual key stakeholders who have expressed interest in the proposed amendment. These include meetings with the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), the regional school boards, and Regional Staff. In addition, the City has scheduled meetings with local ratepayer groups to garner feedback on the proposed policies.

### **Notification:**

OPA 18.4 is being developed in accordance with Section 17 and 26 of the *Planning Act*. The *Planning Act* requires public consultation on the proposed amendments to be

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conducted through at least one public meeting with a minimum of 37-days notice issued beforehand. Accordingly, notice for today’s public meeting was issued on April 7, 2022 through the City’s website, social media, and the Liberal newspaper, and re-issued on April 14, 2022 (see Appendix 2).

City staff will continue to monitor and analyze feedback received on the amendment and will provide a fulsome summary of the comments heard in a subsequent report to Council. Any comments received up until May 18, 2022, which coincides with today’s Council Public Meeting, will be synthesized in a forthcoming What We Heard Report.

### **Next Steps:**

Staff will collect comments and analyze all feedback received. Following this, Staff will return to Council with a final draft of the OPA to be considered for adoption on June 27, 2022. Following Council adoption, the City will seek approval of the amendment from York Region as the approval authority.

### **Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:**

The recommendation of this report does not have any financial, staffing or other implications.

### **Relationship to Council’s Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:**

Updating the Official Plan is identified as a Council Priority. The recommendation of this report does not have any direct implications with respect to the City’s Strategic Plan. It can be noted that the proposed OPA 18.4 supports Council’s priority regarding sense of belonging by creating more housing options for Richmond Hill residents and creating conditions to better foster the development of “15-minute” communities.

### **Conclusion:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council and the public with an overview of OPA 18.4. The amendment incorporates proposed modifications to the City’s 2010 Official Plan to expand opportunities for missing-middle housing (“gentle density”), and to facilitate the creation of “15-minute” communities across the City’s settlement areas. Accordingly, this report has been structured for information purposes only, with a recommendation that all comments be referred back to staff for consideration.

### **Appendix Contents and Maps:**

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendices, maps and photographs. All attachments have been reviewed and made accessible. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

- Appendix 1 – Draft Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 18.4

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- Appendix 2 – Notice of Open House and Council Meeting issued April 7 and April 14, 2022 in the Liberal

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### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.22.055 Draft OPA 18.4 Neighbourhoods - Request for Comments.docx
Attachments:	- SRPI.22.055_Appendix 1.pdf - SRPI.22.055_Appendix 2.pdf
Final Approval Date:	May 3, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Patrick Lee - May 2, 2022 - 11:38 AM**

**Kelvin Kwan - May 3, 2022 - 8:44 AM**

**Darlene Joslin - May 3, 2022 - 11:11 AM**