



*Corporate Services*

June 1, 2022

Andrew Crawford  
Planner  
Policy Division  
Planning & Regulatory Services Department  
City of Richmond Hill  
225 East Beaver Creek Road  
Richmond Hill, ON, L4B 3P4

Dear Andrew Crawford,

**Re: Proposed Official Plan Amendment  
City of Richmond Hill  
City File No.: D01-22002 (OPA 18.3)  
York Region File No.: LOPA.22.R.0027**

This is in response to your circulation and request for comments for the above-captioned municipally initiated Official Plan Amendment (OPA).

OPA 18.3 updates the in-force Richmond Hill Official Plan by adding a City Vision to the Official Plan and by extending the planning horizon to 2041. The proposed vision states, "By 2041, the City of Richmond Hill will be the centerpiece of York Region and one of the most prominent, complete communities in the Greater Toronto Area".

Regional staff notes that this Amendment is one of the many pending amendments that will update the Richmond Hill Official Plan to conform with current provincial policy documents and the Region's new Official Plan. Should OPA 18.3 proceed ahead of an approved new York Region Official Plan, only the policies that conform with the in-force 2010 York Region Official Plan can be considered for approval. As such, references to 2041 or 2041 planning horizon, which has no status, in the Vision statement and elsewhere in the draft OPA, should not be made at this time and deleted.

When the new York Region Official Plan is approved, subsequent local Richmond Hill conformity Amendments will need to extend the planning horizon to 2051, in conformity with the provincial A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020, and with the new York Region Official Plan.

As local Official Plans are required to conform to the upper-tier Official Plan (Regional Official Plan) and appreciating draft ROP policies and mapping can change right up until approval, a decision by a local municipality to adopt a plan, or part of a plan, in advance of approval of the updated ROP may cause conformity issues, potentially resulting in additional modifications. Further, Section 34.1 of the *Planning Act* may impact the Region's ability to approve some Official Plan Amendments. Section 34.1 provides:

- 34.1 Despite subsection (34), an approval authority shall not approve any part of a lower-tier municipality's plan if the plan or any part of it does not, in the approval authority's opinion, conform with,
- (a) the upper-tier municipality's official plan;
  - (b) a new official plan of the upper-tier municipality that was adopted before the 120th day after the lower-tier municipality adopted its plan, but is not yet in effect; or
  - (c) a revision of the upper-tier municipality's official plan that was adopted in accordance with section 26, before the 120th day after the lower-tier municipality adopted its plan, but is not yet in effect.

Given the above concerns, we strongly recommend and continue to encourage municipalities to adopt their new/updated Official Plans after the ROP has been approved by the Province and demonstrate conformity at that time.

#### **Purpose and Intent of OPA 18.3**

OPA 18.3 will update the City's urban structure framework to include additional Centres and Corridors, and to reflect changes in Employment Areas. A mobility hierarchy is introduced through this OPA, which prioritizes modes of travel within the City. Lastly, the OPA updates a number of policy areas, including: affordable housing, infrastructure planning, climate change, sustainable design, parks, and urban design.

OPA 18.3 proposes to add two new Local Centres: at Bathurst and Highway 7, and at East Beaver Creek and Highway 7. In addition, the Newkirk Local Development Area is proposed to be re-designated as a Local Centre, and its boundary will be expanded to include lands within and near the Richmond Hill GO Station area at Newkirk Road and Major Mackenzie Drive. OPA 18.3 also proposes to extend the Yonge Street Regional Mixed-Use Corridor north to Bloomington Road. These policies conform with the in-force 2010 York Region Official Plan. Specifically, Section 5.5 Local Centre and Corridors, directs local Official Plans to define their area specific local intensification centres.

The Amendment also updates the City's Employment Areas to reflect the Regional Council approved employment land conversions and provincial Minister's Zoning Orders. Once the new Regional Official Plan is approved, full conformity of the employment land designations and policies is expected in a future OPA.

The Amendment clarifies that Richmond Hill Centre, as a Regional Centre, continues to be at the top of the intensification hierarchy. At the bottom, the hierarchy continues to recognize limited growth potential in Neighbourhoods through infill development and additional residential units. Area specific development density will be based on the local context, including considerations such as the amount of developable lands, compatibility with the surrounding area and its planned growth and development, and existing and planned infrastructure capacity. These new policies conform with Section 5.4 Regional Centres and Corridor policies of the in-force 2010 Regional Official Plan.

The Richmond Hill Official Plan will be updated by the addition of a Mobility Hierarchy. Policies will be added to prioritize walking and active transportation at the top, while single occupant vehicles are at the bottom of the hierarchy. These policies conform with Regional Official Plan policy contained in the Active Transportation section of 7.2 – Moving People and Goods.

The Housing section of the Richmond Hill Official Plan will be updated with a policy to require 5% of new units to be 3 or more bedroom in a multi-residential development with 20 or more proposed units. OPA 18.3 proposes to further reinforce the protection of existing purpose-built rental housing by preventing their demolition or conversion, unless certain criteria are fulfilled. These housing policies conform with Regional Official Plan policies found in Section 3.5 – Housing Our Residents.

OPA 18.3 will strengthen policies that align infrastructure planning with land use planning and emphasizes the importance of phasing development while optimizing existing infrastructure. Phasing of Development is proposed to be added to the Official Plan. This section requires that the infrastructure necessary to support the future residents, businesses and users of new development must either be in place or identified in the City or Region's Capital Plans and/or Development Charges Background Study before any new development applications requiring that infrastructure can proceed. The York Region Official Plan contains several references to integrating infrastructure planning with land use planning. Policy 4.5.7 speaks to co-ordinating the 10-year capital plan with phasing policies. Policies 5.1.6 to 5.1.9 requires local municipalities to prepare phasing plans that is co-ordinated with the Region's 10-year capital plan, the Region's Water and Wastewater and Transportation Master Plans. Local phasing plans ensure an orderly and efficient progression of development, and are supported by water, wastewater and



transportation infrastructure, and the provision of human services. OPA 18.3 conforms with this suite of Regional policies.

OPA 18.3 adds two new targets to address issues related to climate change. The Official Plan will contain a policy setting a target for the City to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and aim to increase the City's Forest canopy target from 25% to 30%, and to add a new target for woodland cover of 15% by 2041. These policies provide longer term goals in keeping with the Regional Official Plan objective contained in Section 3.2 Air Quality and Climate Change "to improve air quality, and mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change". These should be referred to as long term targets with specific targets geared to 2031 until the substantive conformity OPAs are brought forward after the Regional Official Plan is approved with the 2051 planning timeframe.

The Amendment will update Official Plan policies by acknowledging the use of the Sustainability Assessment Tool in evaluating development applications. The Amendment also proposes to add urban agriculture policies, by allowing community gardens, rooftop gardens, and vertical agriculture.

OPA 18.3 introduces two new park typologies: Destination Parks and Urban Plazas and respond to emerging urban design trends that support inter-connection of public and private spaces, walkability, connectivity, and placemaking. In particular, the proposed amendments have a strong emphasis on streetscapes and the public realm, with the goal of improving how people experience and interact with places and built form.

#### **Conformity with the York Region Official Plan**

The upper tier York Region Official Plan provides broad policies directions, directing local Official Plans to provide greater detailed policies that are reflective of local socio-economic, cultural and natural heritage systems. Generally, OPA 18.3 proposes policy modifications and additions that refine, clarify and strengthens Richmond Hill's city building efforts and conforms with the current 2010 Regional Official Plan. Those sections referring to the 2041 timeframe need to be modified to reflect the timeframe of the current in-force Regional Official Plan of 2031. The Region continues to encourage a comprehensive approach with adoption of conformity amendments following the approval of the new Regional Official Plan.

In accordance with Section 26(6) of the *Planning Act*, conformity Amendments cannot be exempt from approval. York Region will retain the approval authority for all conformity Amendments. Substantive Official Plan Amendments to bring the Local Official Plans into conformity with the new Regional Official Plan will also be subject to Regional Council approval.

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Please contact Augustine Ko, Senior Planner, at 1-877-464-9675, ext. 71524 or at [augustine.ko@york.ca](mailto:augustine.ko@york.ca) should you have any questions or require further assistance.

Sincerely,



Karen Whitney, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.  
Director of Community Planning and Development Services