



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

**Date of Meeting:** June 20, 2023

**Report Number:** SRPI.23.069

**Department:** Planning and Infrastructure

**Division:** Policy Planning

**Subject:** **SRPI.23.069 - Request for Comments - OPA 18.8  
Oak Ridges Local Centre (City File MOPA-23-  
0003)**

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### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to request comments concerning a municipally-initiated Official Plan Amendment (OPA 18.8) to the City's Official Plan for the Oak Ridges Local Centre (refer to Appendix A). The OPA seeks to update the Oak Ridges Local Centre designation policies in the Official Plan to address several key directions contained in the City Plan 2041 Key Directions Report.

### **Recommendation:**

- a) That Staff Report SRPI.23.069 respecting the municipally-initiated Official Plan Amendment 18.8 (OPA 18.8) (refer to Appendix A) to the City's Official Plan (City File MOPA-23-0003), be received for information purposes only, and that all comments be referred back to staff.

### **Contact Person:**

Megan Cobbold, Senior Planner, phone number 905-747-6309

Brian DeFreitas, Acting Manager of Policy, phone number 905-771-5431

### **Report Approval:**

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

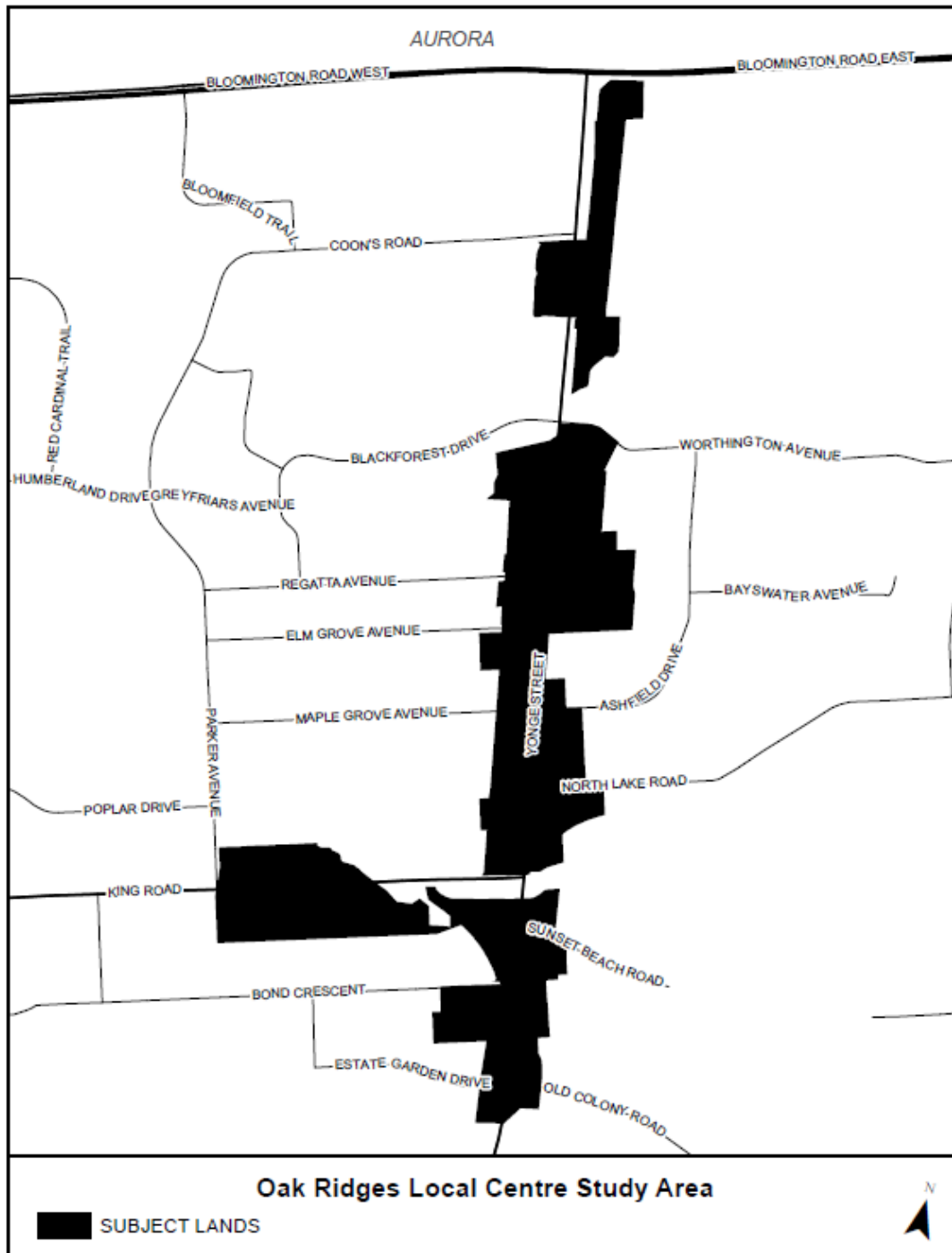
**Approved by:** Darlene Joslin, City Manager

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 Map:

Below is a map displaying the lands subject to Official Plan Amendment 18.8 (“OPA 18.8”). The Official Plan Amendment generally applies to lands as shown below. If you require an alternative format, please call the contact person listed in this document.



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### Proposal:

The purpose of OPA 18.8 is to provide detailed planning policies and schedules related to the Oak Ridges Local Centre (ORLC) as part of the City Plan Official Plan Update process. The OPA, as drafted, aims to address matters that are important to the long-term planning of this area, including the vision for the area, permitted land uses, design elements, public realm, mix of land use, density of development, and recommended adjustments to the boundaries of the Local Centre in order to conform with the Regional Official Plan (2022) and Provincial policies. This OPA implements the City Plan Key Directions endorsed by Council in February 2022, and supports the City's [Investment Attraction Strategy](#), [Affordable Housing Strategy](#), [Parks Plan](#) which have been approved by Council, and the [Transportation Master Plan](#) which is currently in process. The OPA also intends to support economic development and job creation in the City through unique policies that are context-specific to this Local Centre.

### Background Information:

OPA 18.8 for the ORLC has been developed in tandem with three other centre-specific OPAs: OPA 18.5 Yonge and Carrville/16<sup>th</sup> Ave Key Development Area (see SRPI.23.066), OPA 18.6 Village Local Centre (see SRPI.23.067), and OPA 18.7 Newkirk Local Centre (see SRPI.23.068). These four centre-specific OPAs are preliminary drafts that are being brought forward to Council concurrently for information and input from stakeholders, prescribed bodies and the general public. Together, they form the series of Batch 2 amendments to the City's Official Plan Update<sup>1</sup>. These OPAs stem from the Key Directions Report which recommended that, after the City establishes its City Structure (which occurred through the adoption of OPA 18.3 City Vision and Structure in the fall of 2022), several area-specific OPAs would be undertaken comprehensively as a part of the overall OP Update.

### Impetus for the Proposed Official Plan Amendment:

#### Key Directions Report

OPA 18.8 as drafted implements several important key directions that are outlined in the Key Directions Report which are applicable to the ORLC, as noted below:

- Build on the 2010 Official Plan policies for the Oak Ridges Local Centre (ORLC).
- Expand the existing ORLC boundary to support objectives for the Regional Corridor and for building complete communities.
- Support the mobility hierarchy through modern main street design and compact built-form.
- Create a gateway at Yonge and Bloomington.
- Continue to plan with an 'environment first' approach to planning for the Local Centre.

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<sup>1</sup> For more details regarding the City's Official Plan Update, including copies of past staff reports, please see the city's webpage: [www.RichmondHill.ca/OPUpdate](http://www.RichmondHill.ca/OPUpdate).

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- Support broader neighbourhoods by providing local goods and services, as well as community amenities.
- Support tourists/visitors who visit the area to appreciate lakes and forests, through the provision of goods and services related to outdoor recreation.
- Enhance connections to nearby lakes and forest.

### **The Four Pillars of the Official Plan Update**

As noted in the Key Directions Report, policy and mapping updates to the City's Official Plan are to be undertaken to address the four pillars of the update process. The four pillars include: Growing our Economy, Design Excellence, Green and Sustainable, and Protect and Enhance. These pillars are explained in Section 1.3 of the Key Directions Report. The draft OPA 18.8 responds to the Council endorsed four pillars of the Official Plan Update as noted below:

#### **Pillar 1: Growing Our Economy**

OPA 18.8 supports this pillar by providing policies to support and expand business opportunities. It allows non-residential uses throughout the ORLC to support a mix of uses. It also proposes to require non-residential uses at grade along Yonge Street, require the existing amount of gross leasable floor area of non-residential uses be retained, and encourages office uses. Providing these policies will create conditions to attract businesses and opportunities for employment to locate in this area of the City.

#### **Pillar 2: Design Excellence**

OPA 18.8 supports this pillar by providing policies related to the design of public and private spaces and improvements to different modes of travel. It proposes the creation of a gateway focal point that celebrates the identity and character of the community. With the establishment of an entrance feature and new connections in the active transportation network through pedestrian and cycling connections, it will provide a memorable destination in the City and provide access to services through different modes of travel.

#### **Pillar 3: Green and Sustainable**

OPA 18.8 supports this pillar by providing policies that support innovation in "green" building standards. It proposes to carry forward policies related to using low impact development technologies in new development and also the use of native, non-invasive landscaping in surface parking areas to enhance the ecological character of the Oak Ridges Moraine. It also proposes policies to create a complete community that is compact, has a mix of use, pedestrian-oriented and supports the future Bus Rapid Transit network. These policies will help reduce the reliance on automobiles by allowing for opportunities for amenities and services within a 15-minute walk or 5-minute bike ride.

#### **Pillar 4: Protect and Enhance**

OPA 18.8 supports this pillar by protecting and enhancing cherished places and promoting a Richmond Hill identity. Boundary expansions are not proposed within the

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City's Greenway System and intensification is directed outside of and away from hazard lands. In addition, the proposed policies permit medium and high density residential uses with built forms ranging between 2 storeys and up to 6 or 8 storeys, depending on the location. Providing a range in built forms and uses supports a greater mix of housing types, tenures and levels of affordability.

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

#### **OPA Structure**

OPA 18.8 focuses on updating policies in Chapter 4 (Land Use Policies) of the Part I Official Plan (OP), and adds two new Schedules to the Official Plan. This OPA format is a more streamlined approach which embeds policy direction directly into the existing Part I OP when compared to other area-specific secondary plans that were added as new separate chapters to the Official Plan. To improve ease of use, the approach proposed under OPA 18.8 is to have all relevant policies applicable to the Oak Ridges Local Centre in the Part I OP, as was recommended by the Key Directions Report. This would effectively reduce duplication and cross-referencing of Official Plan policies thereby eliminating the use of multiple documents and improving readability. Consequently, matters that are specific to the ORLC are detailed in Chapter 4 of the Official Plan, while all other matters such as phasing, affordable housing, and sustainable design, continue to be addressed by the rest of Part 1 of the Official Plan document.

The following summarizes the draft OPA 18.8 by themes. More details and the rationale for the proposed policies are found in the OPA within Appendix A of this staff report.

#### **Vision**

The OP currently describes the ORLC as a low-rise, pedestrian-oriented, human-scaled, mixed-use centre that functions as a centre for environmental, recreational and tourism activities on the Oak Ridges Moraine. Based on the vision proposed in the Key Directions Report and additional feedback received from the public through the City Plan process, OPA 18.8 proposes to update the vision for the Centre to be “an active community with a ‘modern town’ feel located on the Oak Ridges Moraine that is green, connected to nature, clean and safe with a walkable and sustainable main street.” OPA 18.8 also builds on the current description of the area and includes the identification of the northern stretch of Yonge Street as a Regional Corridor, consistent with the 2022 York Region Official Plan, and that the area will accommodate low-rise to mid-rise buildings with a mix of uses to create a complete community.

#### **Land Use**

The predominant use of land in the ORLC is for mixed-use development. The City's Official Plan currently allows medium density residential and non-residential uses in the Local Centre. OPA 18.8 proposes to expand the land use permissions to also allow for high density residential uses. This change is to address the updated definition of

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medium density residential through OPA 18.4, and to consider permissions for apartments that may be taller than four storeys.

### **Mix of Uses**

In terms of the approach to job creation, the OP currently encourages development to provide commercial, retail, office or community uses at grade. OPA 18.8 proposes to update this policy to require non-residential for the portion of a building with direct frontage on Yonge Street as this is where a future Bus Rapid Transit service is planned. OPA 18.8 also proposes to require development to retain or exceed the existing amount of gross leasable floor area devoted to non-residential uses. These proposed policy updates are to ensure a mixed-use centre is created and to foster an animated, pedestrian-oriented main street character so the area can continue to have opportunities for jobs and services nearby. It is also intended to support the mobility hierarchy through modern main street design and compact built-form, to support broader neighbourhoods by providing local goods and services as well as community amenities, and to support tourists who visit the area.

### **Height and Density**

The City's OP currently permits buildings up to 4 storeys in the ORLC with a maximum density of 1.0 Floor Space Index (FSI). OPA 18.8 proposes to revise the height and density permissions in the Local Centre to create a complete community, and to implement the ROP's direction for the Regional Corridor with the level of intensification needed to support the mobility hierarchy and future bus rapid transit service over the long-term. OPA 18.8 provides a proposed density allocation schedule which identifies densities ranging from 1.0 FSI to 2.5 FSI and proposed height policies that allow up to 6 storeys throughout the ORLC and up to 8 storeys along Yonge Street between King Road and Blackforest Drive/Worthington Avenue. The proposed heights and densities consider a number of factors such as location, recent and in-process development activity, environmental constraints, lot sizes, and above-grade parking structures. The proposed maximum heights of a building are also dependent on not exceeding the allocated density and meeting the application of a 45 degree angular plane requirement, in order to transition new development to the surrounding neighbourhood. The proposed height policies also consider "human scale" urban design through a maximum street wall height policy of 4 storeys, after which a step back for the remaining storeys would be required. Similar to the approach proposed for the other centre-specific OPA areas, it is noted that the maximum building heights in the ORLC should not be considered absolute, rather they represent an upper limit of building height that is informed by site density and the application of angular plane and other urban design and built form requirements. See Schedule F1 in Appendix A for the density allocation schedule.

### **Design**

OPA 18.8 carries forward a number of design policies that enhance the character of the ORLC regarding landscaping, built form, transition, setbacks, connections to natural features, and low impact development technologies. As recommended in the Key

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Directions Report, OPA 18.8 proposes a new policy to create a gateway focal point at the intersection of Yonge Street and Bloomington Road to create a sense of place for the ORLC and an entrance, southbound into the City. This focal point could be established through a combination of architectural design, signage, landscaping, and/or public art to celebrate the identity and character of the ORLC.

### **Public Realm**

OPA 18.8 proposes policies related to the public realm of the ORLC related to creating new streets and publicly accessible interconnections to support a fine-grained network and to support active transportation. It also proposes a number of new parks within and near the ORLC to provide more connections to open spaces and to provide new park space to accommodate growth within this area. OPA 18.8 also proposes to encourage development to create publicly accessible and privately owned urban plazas to enhance the existing park system in the area. See Schedule F2 Public Realm which identifies proposed streets and parks.

### **Boundary Adjustments**

OPA 18.8 proposes several modifications to Schedule A2 (Land Use) to the OP. This includes modifications to redesignate lands presently designated as Neighbourhood north of Blackforest Drive/Worthington Avenue to be added as part of the ORLC. This change supports the direction from the Key Directions report to expand the existing boundary to support the objectives for the Regional Corridor and for building complete communities by including vacant or underutilized lands for potential redevelopment to provide a mix of uses in this area. OPA 18.8 also proposes a boundary expansion of the Local Centre for lands located west of Yonge Street, and north of King Road. This proposed update is to formally recognize past boundary interpretation of Local Centre lands located on the north side of King Road, existing zoning permissions, and to better align with the location of low and medium density residential areas identified in the expansion to the Puccini Drive Infill Study, while also avoiding intensification within the floodplain. Additional minor boundary adjustments south of Regatta Avenue are also proposed to address past land use approvals or existing development that supports the ORLC vision.

### **Technical Amendments**

OPA 18.8 includes technical amendments relating to requirements for Secondary Plans, redesignations, and schedules. Since OPA 18.8 constitutes the secondary planning for this Centre, OPA 18.8 proposes to amend section 5.1 of the OP to remove the requirement to prepare a Secondary Plan for this area and related policies as the amendment would fulfill this requirement. There are also several other technical amendments proposed to OP schedules in order to implement redesignations, changes to land use permissions, identification of new streets, and the addition of proposed new schedules.

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### **Background Research and Context:**

The preparation of OPA 18.8 included background research with consideration to current and past development applications and concept plans, data on various matters (e.g. MTSAs, employment, housing, built form), and site visits. It also involved a 3D modelling and density analysis to understand how built form in the Local Centre could be shaped over the long term. This analysis considered the overall growth forecast for the City and estimates made by the Region and the City, the intensification prioritization hierarchy, OP Chapter 3 policies, the Key Directions Report, and urban design policies. The OPA is also informed by the findings from several other City initiatives related to the Official Plan Update such as the Parks Plan, the emerging Transportation Master Plan, and the updating of the Urban Master Environmental Servicing Plan. Finally, the public consultation and engagement undertaken to date has also helped shape the proposed policies.

### **Provincial Legislation and Policy Considerations:**

The following summarizes how OPA 18.8 complies with provincial policies. More details are provided in Section 1.3 (Basis) of the OPA in Appendix A to this staff report.

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

The *Provincial Policy Statement (2020)* (PPS) includes policies which encourage compact, mixed-use development to support liveable and resilient communities while considering housing needs. Accordingly, OPA 18.8 directs for residential development within the Local Centre in the form of low- and mid-rise development with residential and non-residential uses to support a mix of land uses.

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

The *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020)* includes policies which support the achievement of complete communities. It prescribes a minimum density target of 160 residents and jobs per hectare in areas that are served by bus rapid transit (BRT). Accordingly, OPA 18.8 plans for a complete community by integrating a mix of uses in a compact form that provides for amenities and services within a 15-minute walk or 5-minute bike ride. Although the ORLC is not within a Protected Major Transit Station Area, it is located along a future BRT route on the Yonge Street corridor, and as such, the OPA proposes a more compact urban form of development within the Centre when compared to the surrounding lower density neighbourhood.

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

The *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (2017)* includes policies which focus and contain urban growth within settlement areas through a mix of uses, transit-supportive densities, and minimizing impacts to ecological functions and hydrological features. Accordingly, OPA 18.8 directs higher density development within the Local Centre and requires a mix of uses with higher densities aligning with future BRT stations to support



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transit. Density allocations take into consideration environmental constraints in this area including the presence of the Moraine, key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features and functions, and hazard lands.

### **Regional Policy Considerations:**

#### **Region of York Official Plan, 2022**

The York Region Official Plan (2022) identifies the ORLC and portions of lands presently designated Neighbourhood along Yonge Street north of Blackforest Drive/Worthington Avenue as being located along the Yonge Street Regional Corridor. The ROP directs that regional corridors function as urban main streets and be planned with a compact, mixed use, well designed, pedestrian friendly and transit supportive built form and allow for active transportation. The policies of the ROP also direct that the scale and form of development address the local context, features and functions of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Accordingly, OPA 18.8 permits low- and mid-rise development to meet the minimum density target, while including policies related to enhancing the natural features and ecological character of the Moraine through urban design. Also, OPA 18.8 permits non-residential uses throughout the ORLC and requires development to provide non-residential space for properties that front Yonge Street and that the existing amount of non-residential gross leasable floor area be retained.

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

Section 3.1.3 of the Official Plan outlines the City Structure, as well as the intensification hierarchy which provides clarity and certainty respecting the City's priorities for where new growth and intensification is directed to occur within the City. OPA 18.8 encompasses an area identified in the OP City Structure as a Local Centre. In accordance with the City Structure, the ORLC will accommodate intensification at a scale and intensity less than the Key Development Areas and generally less than the Regional Corridor. Local Centres will be important community focal points and will develop as revitalized, mixed-use centres with pedestrian-oriented, human-scaled main streets.

In addition to the foregoing, the OPA also takes into consideration policy direction from the Official Plan wherein it states that all relevant policies of the Official Plan must be considered when reviewing and evaluating changes to land use, including an amendment to the Official Plan. The focus of this OPA is to supplement or amend existing policies of the Official Plan as it relates to the ORLC by employing modern approaches to city building and good planning principles. Future decisions regarding development in this area will rely not only on policies provided in this OPA, but also on relevant policies within the whole of the Official Plan. As such, when considering the appropriateness of this OPA to guide development within this designation, it is important to recognize that the balance of Official Plan policies regarding City Vision, City Building, Implementation and Interpretation, must also be taken into consideration and applied as necessary.

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### **Public Consultation:**

In addition to the consultation during Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the OP Update process, an extensive stakeholder and community engagement program was used during Phase 3 to raise interest and awareness and to help shape the City's vision and goals for the future. The Phase 3 engagement involved public workshops, an online survey, and landowners meetings, and additional engagement via email. LURA Consulting summarized this feedback and prepared the Phase 3 Batch 2: What We Heard – Employment and Intensification Areas Engagement Summary Report. This report summarizes feedback received on employment, Major Transit Station Areas and Corridors, the four growth centres – Yonge Street and Carrville Road/16<sup>th</sup> Avenue Key Development Area, Village Local Centre, Newkirk Local Centre, ORLC, as well as housekeeping matters. The details of key messages received are outlined below.

### **Workshop**

On November 24, 2022, City staff hosted a virtual workshop related to the ORLC to inform the development of OPA 18.8. At the workshop, participants were able to hear from City staff about the Key Directions for the area, share their insights and personal experiences about the area and engage in interactive discussions about how the area can be further developed to address the community's current and future needs. At the workshop, slides were shared on the purpose of the workshop, background information on the Official Plan update, and the policy context for planning the ORLC. The workshop also included interactive breakout activities on the area's vision, land use and character areas, considerations unique to the area, and public realm elements such as streets and parks.

### **Online Survey**

On October 27 to November 30 2022, a public online survey was available on the City's website to gather feedback from the public to further inform the development of OPA 18.8. The OP update project webpage, social media posts, and emails included a link to the questionnaire. It included questions on employment lands, mixed use development, the four centres, and matters considered most important when evaluating Official Plan Amendments.

### **Stakeholder and Landowner Meetings**

Stakeholder meetings with prescribed agencies (York Region, Metrolinx, School Boards, Alectra, and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority) took place in October/November 2022. Likewise, a landowner meeting was held on November 30, 2022 to collect feedback from land owners in the ORLC. Similar to the workshop, an overview of the Key Directions for the area was provided and opportunities were given for participants to provide additional input. Focused follow-up meetings with landowners and stakeholders, including the Town of Aurora, took place in March/April 2023 to discuss elements of the proposed policy direction for the Oak Ridges Local Centre.

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### Key Feedback Received

The comments and feedback from past surveys and the workshop are synthesized in the two “what we heard” reports: [Phase 2: What We Heard – Centre-Specific Workshops Engagement Summary Report – July 2021](#) and [Phase 3 Batch 2: What We Heard – Employment and Intensification Areas Engagement Summary Report](#).

Key messages received on the Oak Ridges Local Centre were as follows:

- General support for proposed vision statement;
- Need to prioritize environment protection over other social and economic considerations;
- Support for mostly low-rise development; very little support for high-rise development within the Local Centre;
- Support for mixed-use buildings, especially in a terraced form, to create a low-profile street wall, with commercial, community and office uses at grade and above, especially along King and Yonge frontages; and
- Support for new active transportation connections within and outside of Centre, and provision of parkland to support growth and create opportunity for social connections.

### Draft OPA for Public Comment

An Official Plan Update Committee meeting was held on May 2, 2023 to provide a high level overview of the proposed OPA 18.8 for the Oak Ridges Local Centre. The Draft OPA 18.8 was posted to the City’s website on May 11, 2023 for public review and comments. An in-person Open House was held on June 7, 2023 to allow members of the public to view information boards about each of the centre-specific OPAs, learn about the Comprehensive Zoning By-law project and speak to staff directly.

City staff will continue to monitor and analyze feedback received on the amendment and will provide a full summary of the comments heard in a subsequent report to Council. Any comments received up until June 20, 2023, which coincides with today’s Council Public Meeting associated with this OPA, will be synthesized in a forthcoming What We Heard Report.

### Notification

OPA 18.8 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 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 May 11, 2023 through the City’s website, social media, and the Liberal newspaper, and re-issued on May 18, 2023 (see Appendix B).

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### 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 in the fall of 2023. 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. OPA 18.8 supports all four of Council's Strategic Priorities by directing the majority of growth to strategic growth areas, such as this Local Centre. The proposed OPA also helps to create a strong sense of belonging by diversifying housing choice and enhancing the public realm in this Local Centre. With regards to getting around the City, the proposed OPA provides for a fine-grained street network, along with facilities for active transportation and transit expansion. Lastly, the proposed OPA promotes fiscal responsibility by coordinating the secondary planning process with infrastructure planning through the Parks Plan, the Transportation Master Plan, and other important City initiatives.

### Conclusion:

The purpose of this report is to request comments concerning a municipally-initiated Official Plan Amendment (OPA 18.8) to the City's Official Plan (refer to Appendix A). The OPA seeks to update the Oak Ridges Local Centre designation policies in the Official Plan to address several key directions contained in the City Plan 2041 Key Directions Report endorsed by Council in February 2022 and to implement provincial and regional policy directions regarding complete communities. 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 appendixes, 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 A: Draft OPA 18.8 - Oak Ridges Local Centre
- Appendix B: Notice of Council Public Meeting issued on May 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023 in the Liberal

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### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.23.069 - OPA 18.8 Oak Ridges Local Centre.docx
Attachments:	- Appendix A - Draft-OPA-18.8---Oak-Ridges-Local-Centre.pdf - Appendix B - Notice.pdf
Final Approval Date:	May 31, 2023

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

**Maria Flores - May 31, 2023 - 9:18 AM**

**Kelvin Kwan - May 31, 2023 - 11:54 AM**

**Darlene Joslin - May 31, 2023 - 12:36 PM**