



Staff Report for Committee of the Whole Meeting

Date of Meeting: October 2, 2024 – (deferred to the October 9, 2024 Council meeting)

Report Number: SRPBS.24.078)

Department: Planning and Building Services

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: **SRPBS.24.078 - Request for Direction –
Completion of Comprehensive Official Plan
Update and Secondary Plan Approach**

Purpose:

To seek direction from Council regarding the completion of the City's Official Plan Update and future Secondary Plans for the East Beaver Creek Road/Highway 7 and Bathurst Street/Highway 7 mixed-use centres.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Staff Report SRPBS.24.078 be received;
- b) That the revised timeline to complete the Official Plan Update as set out in Appendix 'A' to SRPBS.24.078 be endorsed;
- c) That staff be directed to explore additional growth and intensification in the Regional Mixed-Use Corridor designation through increases to maximum densities and building heights;
- d) That staff be directed to commence the preparation of a comprehensive Secondary Plan for the area of East Beaver Creek Road and Highway 7 in 2026, subject to budget approval through the 2026 Capital Budget process;
- e) That staff be directed to commence the preparation of a comprehensive Secondary Plan for the area of Bathurst Street and Highway 7 in 2027, subject to budget approval through the 2027 Capital Budget process; and,
- f) That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute any necessary documentation to give effect to consulting services contracts recommended in SRPBS.24.078, upon the recommendation of the Commissioner of Planning and Building Services.

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Contact Person(s):

- Brian DeFreitas, Senior Policy Planner, Extension 5431
- Phoebe Chow, Manager of Policy, Extension 2472
- Maria Flores, Director of Policy Planning, Extension 5438
- Gus Galanis, Commissioner of Planning and Building Services, Extension 2465

Report Approval:

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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Key Messages:

- The City has made significant strides and progress on its Official Plan Update (“OP Update”), with seven out of ten conformity amendments approved and in various stages of implementation;
- Since the OP Update work was initiated, there has been an unprecedented number of Provincial legislative changes, necessitating a recalibration of the approach to the completion of the OP Update;
- The remaining components of the OP Update will focus on addressing Provincial conformity requirements, consolidating York Region Official Plan (“ROP”) policies into the City’s Official Plan, and updating major policy areas.
- The comprehensive OP Update is anticipated to be completed by the end of Q2 of 2026;
- In order to facilitate the City’s evolving city structure and to help meet the City’s housing targets, staff are seeking Council’s direction to review and update the height and density permissions for the Regional Mixed-Use Corridor designation through the OP Update; and,
- To complete the policy framework for all major centres and corridors, staff are requesting that Council direct staff to undertake the preparation of two additional Secondary Plans along Highway 7. Specifically, the East Beaver Creek Local Centre Secondary Plan will begin in 2026 and the Bathurst Local Centre Secondary Plan will begin in 2027.

Background:

Why does the City’s Official Plan need to be updated?

Pursuant to the *Planning Act*, policies in the City’s Official Plan must have regard to matters of Provincial interest, be consistent with the *Provincial Policy Statement*, which will be renamed to *Provincial Planning Statement* after October 20, 2024, and conform to Provincial Plans that are in effect. In addition, Section 26 of the *Planning Act* requires municipalities to review and update Official Plans (“OPs”) within 10 years of a new OP coming into effect, and every 5 years thereafter. This mandatory review ensures that OP policies remain relevant and reflect changes in Provincial Plans and legislation that may occur in and between update periods.

Status of the Official Plan Update and Accomplishments

The City’s in-effect Official Plan (“City’s OP”) was adopted in July 2010. At the time, the City’s OP ushered in a modern approach to urban intensification, consistent with conditions and expectations for growth and intensification within the City’s urbanizing areas, with the objective of “*building a new kind of urban*” unique to Richmond Hill. Since then, the City’s OP has been instrumental in guiding growth and development in Richmond Hill as the City transforms into an urban municipality.

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The 10-year review of the City’s OP pursuant to the *Planning Act* began in 2020. This OP Update has progressed through a multi-phased approach consisting of separate amendments that have been brought forward to Council for adoption in "batches". The City has made significant strides and progress on its OP Update which has included extensive community engagement. A total of 81 public and stakeholder consultation events have been undertaken, with over half of the engagements consisting of focused stakeholder meetings along with statutory meetings and open houses held in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning Act*.

To date, seven out of ten conformity amendments have been adopted and approved. Batches 1 and 2 of the OP Update which address the OP Vision, City Structure, Neighbourhoods and several mixed-use centres are now complete and in various stages of implementation as outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Batch 1 and Batch 2 Official Plan Amendment (“OPA”) Status

Batch #	Official Plan Amendment No.	Status
Batch 1	OPA 18.2 – Leslie Street Institutional Area	Approved December 2020 In-effect
Batch 1	OPA 18.3 - Vision and City Structure	Approved August 2022 In-effect city-wide with the exception of one appeal which has been scoped site-specifically
Batch 1	OPA 18.4 – Neighbourhoods	Approved August 2022 In-effect city-wide with the exception of one appeal which has been scoped site-specifically
Batch 2	OPA 18.5 – Yonge/16 th -Carrville Key Development Area	Approved March 2024 Under appeal, Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) Case Management Conference scheduled for September 2024
Batch 2	OPA 18.6 – Village Local Centre	Approved March 2024 Under appeal, OLT Case Management Conference held on August 2024
Batch 2	OPA 18.7 – Newkirk Local Centre	Approved March 2024 In-effect
Batch 2	OPA 18.8 – Oak Ridges Local Centre	Approved March 2024 Under appeal, OLT Case Management Conference held on August 2024

The final batch of amendments to complete the OP Update was targeted for completion in Q1 2025. This last batch of conformity requirements was to be implemented through three Official Plan Amendments related to Employment Areas, Protected Major Transit Station Areas (“PMTSAs”) and other housekeeping and technical changes to bring the 2010 OP into conformity with Provincial and Regional policies.

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As a result of shifting Provincial policies and constant changes to legislation, staff have had to recalibrate the OP Update approach and timeline to address the remaining key policy areas comprehensively. The remaining policy areas to be updated are discussed in more detail later in this report.

Changing Circumstances and Policy Drivers Affecting the OP Update

There have been significant changes to the municipal planning landscape since the commencement of the OP Update. The City, alongside other municipalities in Ontario, have had to respond to an unprecedented number of Provincial legislative changes including to the *Planning Act*. Some of the changes have involved proposed policies, while others have included the enactment, repeal and/or reversal of Provincial direction within a short timeframe.

Since 2019, there have been seven omnibus and planning-related legislative bills introduced by the Province affecting municipal land use planning (Bills 108, 109, 23, 97, 150, 162, and 185). The majority of these changes have come into effect within the last two years along with various other statute amendments and regulations affecting municipalities. Legislative changes under Ontario's Provincial policy-led planning system are complex and require considerable time and effort to review and to assess the impacts on the City's policy framework. Each time there is a change in Provincial legislation or policy, staff need to ensure current OP Update work is modified (as necessary) to ensure conformity with Provincial changes. In some cases, this has required staff to reevaluate previous analysis necessitating the involvement of multiple City departments and additional resources.

The Removal of Regional Planning Authority

On June 6, 2024, Bill 185 (*Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act*) received Royal Assent bringing into effect a series of changes to the *Planning Act* as outlined in a memo to Council dated [May 8, 2024](#). One of the changes that directly impacted the OP Update is the removal of planning responsibilities from the Regional municipalities of Peel, Halton and York. Effective July 1, 2024, these Regions no longer have planning responsibilities under the *Planning Act* and are no longer approval authorities of local municipal Official Plans. To that end, York Region is no longer the approval authority of the City's Official Plan, and the York Region Official Plan 2022 ("ROP") is now deemed to be an Official Plan of the City of Richmond Hill.

The removal of Regional planning authority is a consequential change that has necessitated that staff undertake a comprehensive review to consolidate applicable policies from the ROP into the City's OP, including modifications that were introduced in the past nine months through Bills 150, 162 and 185. These changes have not yet been incorporated into the City's OP but are under review by City staff as part of the OP Update.

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Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

On April 12, 2024, the Province released draft updates to the proposed *Provincial Planning Statement* (“PPS 2024”) which was initially released for comment in April 2023. The PPS 2024 is intended to repeal and replace the current *Provincial Policy Statement 2020* and the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (“Growth Plan”) with one streamlined Provincial planning document. On August 20, 2024, the Province released the new and finalized PPS 2024 which shall take effect on October 20, 2024, at which time all planning decisions must be consistent with the PPS 2024.

Until recently, it was not known when the proposed PPS 2024 would be approved which has resulted in considerable delays in the update of several policy areas. This uncertainty has posed challenges for the completion of the OP Update due to significant changes in some policy direction. Among the more notable changes were policies related to Settlement Area boundary expansions and Employment Land conversions which were intended to speed up housing supply but would result in major impacts to how growth is managed.

Accelerated Demand for Supply of Housing

Another important set of changes to consider since the adoption of the 2010 OP is Richmond Hill’s changing urban context and the increased demand for housing, especially more affordable housing supply. Changes in development and market conditions have shifted rapidly in the past 10 to 15 years favouring more mixed-use, transit-oriented, compact forms of development. All levels of government continue to commit to increasing the supply of housing, including affordable housing, to ensure there is a diverse supply that meet the needs of different income levels. To that end, municipalities are now required to plan for intensification around Major Transit Station Areas and are committing to building more homes faster while developing strategies to increase housing affordability in line with Provincial and Federal housing priorities. The need to accelerate and provide more housing is a major policy driver for all levels of government and is a key input to the OP Update.

Discussion:

The following sections provide additional details on major policy areas and pressure points impacting the OP Update. It also summarizes how staff intend to complete the comprehensive OP Update.

Revised Comprehensive OP Update Completion Timeline

As previously mentioned in this report, there have been frequent and numerous legislative changes which require staff to recalibrate the OP Update approach and timeline. This recalibration will focus on addressing conformity requirements and responding to major policy areas and pressure points as described in this report. Based on this approach, staff are recommending a revised timeline to complete the comprehensive OP Update which is set out in Appendix ‘A’ to this report.

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The revised timeline anticipates completion of the comprehensive OP Update towards the end of Q2 2026. The remaining matters to be addressed will be brought forward to Council in one consolidated conformity amendment, as opposed to separate amendments in batches as initially envisioned. This is meant to reduce public consultation and engagement fatigue, and to ensure efficiency in the policy formulation process. It also helps to avoid future capacity issues as a result of appeals from previous amendments while staff are still working to complete the next set of policy updates. The revised timeline accounts for the time and effort required to carry out the following remaining scope of work, which includes the following:

1. Include any modifications and/or new directions introduced through Provincial legislation (Bills 150, 162 and 185) into the City's OP;
2. Review, integrate and merge appropriate policies from the ROP into the City's OP;
3. Complete conformity updates to the City's OP to address major policy areas of Employment, Protected Major Transit Station Areas ("PMTSAs") and other housekeeping and technical changes, as described in the Key Directions Report; and
4. Analyze the Regional Mixed-Use Corridor designated lands within PMTSAs and consider changes to corridor permissions related to height and density to bring the same inline with current high-density trends.

Comprehensive OP Update Scope of Work

Addressing Recent Planning Legislation Changes and Integration of the York Region Official Plan

As previously mentioned in this report, York Region became an upper-tier municipality without planning responsibility effective July 1, 2024 and the ROP is now deemed to be an Official Plan of the City. This means the City is operating with two in-force Official Plans at the same time. Under the *Planning Act*, the ROP will continue to remain in effect until the City decides to formally revoke or amend the Plan to provide otherwise.

Through the comprehensive OP Update, staff will carry forward all appropriate in-effect ROP policies into the City's OP. This will ensure there is one central working document as the basis for further updates to the OP.

Addressing Major Policy Area Conformity (Employment, Major Transit Station Areas and Other Technical Changes):

As noted in the Council endorsed [Key Directions Report](#)¹, the City's OP will need to be updated to address a number of policy themes to ensure conformity with the ROP and Provincial policies. Several of these policy themes have already been addressed through updates to the City's OP Vision, City Structure and Neighbourhoods as well as updates to four of the City's mixed-use centres. The remaining policy themes to be

¹ Refer to Agenda Item 13.3, [Council Meeting \(C#04-22\) February 9, 2022](#).

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addressed in this comprehensive OP amendment include Employment, PMTSAs and other necessary technical changes to the OP.

With respect to Employment Area policies, updates will address City Plan Key Directions which aim to attract and retain businesses in Richmond Hill's business parks, reflect lands that have been converted from employment, and to implement employment area direction provided in the ROP. Since a new PPS 2024 will come into effect in October 2024, the comprehensive OP Update will reflect the applicable definition of permitted uses in Employment Areas in the OP amendment.

With respect to PMTSAs, the comprehensive OP Update will identify the 17 Provincially approved PMTSAs and their respective minimum density targets as set out in the ROP in the City's OP. The OP Update will also include intensification policies for all PMTSAs in accordance with the new PPS 2024 and the ROP.

Housekeeping/technical changes will include updates to mapping, population and employment projections, definitions, and conformity updates with respect to affordable housing, climate change, prime agricultural lands, aggregates, wildland fire, excess soil, and engagement with Indigenous communities.

Regional Mixed-Use Corridor Analysis

The Yonge Street and Highway 7 Regional Corridors are key elements of the City's urban structure. These two corridors support various mixed-use centres by providing connections, continuity, and transition between centres, and form a cohesive network of mixed-use lands that serve the broader community and Region as a whole. The corridors are also a primary focus for where growth and intensification are directed in support of the bus rapid transit service that operates along their length. With recent changes in Provincial direction, some sections of the corridor now fall within or are adjacent to a PMTSA.

The City's OP designates lands along the various segments of the Yonge Street and Highway 7 Regional Corridors as "Regional Mixed-Use Corridor". In keeping with the approved City Structure, these lands are intended to support a broad range and mix of uses and high-density mixed-use development in a compact form along linear stretches of the corridors but to a lesser degree than the major mixed-use centres. The Regional Mixed-Use Corridor designation does not apply across the entire length of the corridors and the policies of the City's OP recognize that the character of development will not be uniform along all segments.

To guide intensification, the City's OP sets out permissions related to maximum building heights (represented in storeys) and maximum densities (represented in Floor Space Index "FSI") as outlined in Table 2 below. These permissions have been in place since the adoption of the City's OP in 2010 and, while they have served the City well in ushering in a modern era of high-density residential development, they are due for a review.

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Regional Mixed-Use Corridor Designation: Summary of Official Plan Building Height and Density Permissions

Table 2 Regional Mixed Use Corridor Maximum Height and Maximum Density

Regional Corridor	From:	To:	Maximum Height (storeys) ²	Maximum Density (FSI) ²
Yonge Street	Townwood Dr.	Silver Maple Rd.	6 storeys	2.0 FSI
Yonge Street	Bernard KDA	Townwood Dr.	8 storeys	2.0 FSI
Yonge Street	Levendale Rd.	Bernard KDA	15 storeys	2.0 FSI
Yonge Street	Highway 7	Levendale Rd.	15 storeys	2.5 FSI
Highway 7	Doncrest Rd.	Valleymede Dr.	11 storeys	2.5 FSI

Given the important role of the Regional Mixed-Use Corridors from both growth management and intensification perspectives, it is important to keep the Regional Mixed-Use Corridor policies current and reflective of the City’s need to guide development in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. Staff note that over the last decade the City has continued to experience significant development pressure along the Regional Mixed-Use Corridors for greater building heights and densities. A growing number of developments have been approved site-specifically and have been granted building heights and densities that greatly exceed the thresholds established in the City’s OP.

From a growth management and infrastructure planning perspective, current density permissions in the Regional Mixed-Use Corridor designation are sufficient to meet the City’s population forecast, and when coupled with planned growth identified for the Richmond Hill Centre, Key Development Areas and Local Centres, there is enough land designated in the City Structure to achieve and exceed the intensification objectives set out by the Province and York Region. However, recent development approvals seem to suggest the current OP height and density regime may no longer be reflective of current industry trends respecting high density development along rapid transit corridors.

Allowing developments to exceed the established thresholds set out in the City’s OP on a site-by-site basis can pose risks for infrastructure demand and may require developments to be paused temporarily or phased until such time as improvements to infrastructure are in place. Proponents of intensification are required to submit supporting studies for all site-specific development applications in support of development; however, since these studies are prepared on a site-specific basis over many years, the cumulative impacts of these developments over time may not be fully recognized without a comprehensive assessment. On this basis, it is recommended that Council direct staff to undertake an update of the established height and density thresholds in the Regional Mixed-Use Corridor and that any increases be assessed

² Maximum figures represent current permissions set out in the Richmond Hill Official Plan 2010, as amended.

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comprehensively through the OP Update to understand cumulative impacts on the City’s infrastructure. Thresholds should also factor in recent development pressure and consider the local context.

A review of Regional Mixed-Use Corridor permissions will require an update to the OP growth forecast. Potential unit yields resulting from the height and density review will need to be generated and modelled to understand if there are any transportation and water and wastewater infrastructure impacts. In that regard, staff recommend that Council direct staff to retain qualified consultants to update the City’s growth forecast, and to model growth impacts resulting from the corridor intensification review. Where revisions are recommended to update the maximum height and density permissions in the OP, they will be included in the comprehensive OP amendment. The cost associated with conducting the additional assessment for each component of the Regional Mixed-Use Corridor analysis along with the timing and funding source for each are outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Costs Associated with the Regional Mixed-Use Corridor Analysis

Regional Mixed-Use Corridor Analysis to be completed in 2025		
Component	Estimated Amount	Funding Source
Planning – Growth Management Forecast Update	\$70,000	Funded from existing capital project approved through 2023 Capital Project Financial Status process
Transportation Sensitivity Analysis	\$200,000	Funded from existing capital project approved through 2023 Capital Project Financial Status process
Water/Wastewater Sensitivity Analysis	\$300,000	Funded from existing capital project approved through 2023 Capital Project Financial Status process
Total		\$570,000

Highway 7 Secondary Plans (East Beaver Creek Road and Bathurst Street)

Official Plan Amendment 18.3 added a new vision statement for the OP and updated the City Structure to include two new mixed-use centres along Highway 7 at the East Beaver Creek Road and Bathurst Street intersections. The Key Directions Report endorsed by Council recommended that each area be planned comprehensively as future amendments to the OP, in recognition of their location within PMTSAs. Staff request that Council direct staff to retain qualified consultants to develop two Secondary Plans for East Beaver Creek Road and Highway 7 and Bathurst Street and Highway 7 Local Centres. Staff recommend that these matters be outsourced to qualified planning

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consultants as the Policy Planning Division does not have the capacity and resources in-house to manage the required workload while maintaining service levels in other corporate priorities and projects. The estimated cost for completing these two Secondary Plans along with the timing and funding source for each component are detailed in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Estimated Costs Associated with the Two New Secondary Plans

Component	Estimated Amount	Funding Source
East Beaver Creek Road and Highway 7 Secondary Plan to begin in 2026		
Planning Consulting Services	\$270,000	To be funded from the Development Charges Reserve Fund through 2026 Capital Budget request
Transportation Sensitivity Analysis	\$200,000	Funded from the Development Charges Reserve Fund
Stormwater/Water/Wastewater Sensitivity Analysis	\$275,000	Funded from the Development Charges Reserve Fund
Total Estimated Cost		\$745,000
Bathurst Street and Highway 7 Secondary Plan to begin in 2027		
Planning Consulting Services	\$360,000	To be funded from the Development Charges Reserve Fund through 2027 Capital Budget request
Transportation Sensitivity Analysis	\$200,000	Funded from the Development Charges Reserve Fund
Stormwater/Water/Wastewater Sensitivity Analysis	\$175,000	Funded from the Development Charges Reserve Fund
Total Estimated Cost		\$735,000

East Beaver Creek Road and Highway 7

With respect to the East Beaver Creek Road and Highway 7 mixed-use centre, a Secondary Plan will be required to consider land use changes in the area. The Secondary Plan will need to account for lands that have been converted from Employment and properly plan for infrastructure, roads and parkland requirements. In addition, development of the Secondary Plan will also need to acknowledge the existing mixed-use condition of the area which includes both residential and employment uses within a formerly well-established segment of the Beaver Creek business park and PMTSAs shared with the City of Markham. This will require more technical analysis and

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public and stakeholder consultation to develop policy and mapping that will appropriately guide future development to address both current and future conditions and development pressure.

At the time of writing this report, there is an Official Plan Amendment application under review for 650 Highway 7 East, which is located within the Secondary Plan area. The applicant is proposing a significant redevelopment of the lands currently occupied by the Sheraton Parkway Toronto North Hotel and Convention Centre. The proposed heights and densities are at a scale proposed for Key Development Areas, which is not contemplated in this area of the City at this time, and comprehensive planning for the centre has not yet been initiated. As such, this area would therefore benefit from having an updated policy framework that is advanced expeditiously to guide redevelopment proposals. Before a framework can be completed, the City will need to assess the cumulative impacts of growth in this area on City infrastructure.

Bathurst Street and Highway 7

With respect to the Bathurst and Highway 7 mixed-use centre, a Secondary Plan will also be needed to consider changes to the land use designations in the area, and to properly plan for infrastructure including roads, parks, and open space. Presently, the City's OP envisions this area to remain as a place for recreational uses and natural heritage protection in accordance with the Province's *Parkway Belt West Plan* (PBWP); however, several site-specific requests to remove lands from the PBWP have been approved by the Province since 2020. Comprehensive planning for the area can only advance should the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing amend the PBWP to remove all lands in this Centre from the PBWP area. Given that a forthcoming Official Plan Amendment would be proposing a significant shift in land use by redesignating lands that are removed from PBWP, additional consultation, technical studies and analysis will be required. There are also active development applications proposed in this centre that would benefit from an updated policy framework to guide future developments.

Financial Implications:

As noted in Table 3, should Council direct staff to explore height and density permissions in the Regional Mixed-Use Corridor designation as outlined in this report, the cost to complete the 2025 Regional Mixed-Use Corridor analysis (\$570,000) can be facilitated through exiting approved capital budgets for additional OP Update work and associated transportation and servicing sensitivity analysis. The total estimated costs to facilitate East Beaver Creek Road and Highway 7 Secondary Plan in 2026 (\$745,000) and the Bathurst Street and Highway 7 Secondary Plan in 2027 (\$735,000) will be funded through Development Charges Reserve Fund.

Relationship to Strategic Plan 2024-2027:

The completion of the City's Official Plan Update relates to Pillar 1 of the City's Strategic Plan: Growing a Livable, Sustainable Community. The City's Official Plan supports this

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pillar specifically by managing growth comprehensively which enables choice and connections for the City, its residents and businesses now and in the future.

Attachments:

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' – Revised Comprehensive Official Plan Update Completion Timeline

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPBS.24.078 - Comprehensive Official Plan Update and Secondary Plan Approach.docx
Attachments:	- SRPBS.24.078 - Appendix A_OP_Timeline_AODA Finalized.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Sep 13, 2024

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

Maria Flores - Sep 11, 2024 - 2:21 PM

Gigi Li - Sep 12, 2024 - 8:08 PM

Gus Galanis - Sep 12, 2024 - 8:09 PM

Darlene Joslin - Sep 13, 2024 - 7:40 AM