

# Town of Whitby

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: Town Initiated Official Plan Review – Background Summary and Preliminary Engagement Results

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**Report to:** Committee of the Whole

**Date of meeting:** September 16, 2024

**Report Number:** PDP 42-24

**Department(s) Responsible:**

Planning and Development Department  
(Planning Services)

**Submitted by:**

R. Saunders, Commissioner of Planning  
and Development

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,  
Chief Administrative Officer**

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#### 1. Recommendation:

**That Report PDP- 42-24 be received for information.**

#### 2. Highlights:

- The Town of Whitby, along with its retained Consultants, SGL Planning and Design, and Dillon Consulting, initiated the five-year legislated review of the Whitby Official Plan in early spring of 2024.
- The review builds upon the current Whitby Official Plan, last reviewed and updated in 2018. It will focus on updates that achieve consistency and conformity with recent changes in Provincial land use planning legislation and policies, as well as new Regional land use policies, specifically the new Region of Durham Official Plan (Envision Durham).
- Key components of the Official Plan Review include: updated mapping to depict the delineation of a Protected Major Transit Station Area (PMTSA) around the Whitby GO Station and updates to related policies; the identification of other Strategic Growth Areas where increased growth and intensification is to occur within the Built Boundary; and an Urban Area Boundary expansion to the year 2051, particularly around Brooklin.

- To inform the Official Plan Review, Background Summary and Analysis Reports have been prepared that provide a summary of relevant legislative changes, as well as an analysis of Envision Durham and the impact on current Whitby land use policies. The reports further provide a review of constraints and opportunities in the Brooklin Urban Expansion Area, in addition to background analysis regarding transportation, natural heritage, cultural heritage and future land uses. Highlights are provided in Section 4 of this report.
- Initial stakeholder and public engagement have also occurred to inform the Official Plan Review, including: hosting a Special Meeting of Council required under Section 26(3) of the Planning Act; in-person Community Open Houses; online engagement activities; and outreach and update meetings with stakeholders.

### **3. Background:**

#### **Official Plan Review**

Municipalities are required to review and update their Official Plans every five years in accordance with Section 26 of the Planning Act.

The Town of Whitby's Official Plan underwent a comprehensive review and update in 2018 to provide policies that address important land use and community-building matters, such as where housing, industry, offices, shops, and new roads should be located, where population growth and intensification should be concentrated, and what important features of the natural and urban environment should be protected and maintained.

Since the 2018 Whitby Official Plan came into force, the Province has assigned a Municipal Housing Target for the Town of Whitby of 18,000 homes by 2031, towards the Province's goal of 1.5 million new homes by 2031.

The new Envision Durham Regional Official Plan was adopted by Regional Council in May of 2023 and sets a new planning horizon to 2051. Envision Durham provides a forecasted population growth for Whitby of approximately 244,000 people and over 95,000 jobs. Envision Durham identifies existing, as well as approximately 500 hectares of new Community Living Area lands (residential/commercial, institutional, community and public service uses) and Employment Area lands (industrial, warehousing), within the new 2051 Urban Area Boundary. Refer to Attachment #1 for an excerpt of Envision Durham Map 1. Regional Structure – Urban & Rural Systems.

This Official Plan Review builds upon the 2018 Whitby Official Plan, while planning for increased housing and employment lands to the year 2051, conforming to changes in legislation and policy made by the Province of Ontario

(e.g. new Provincial Planning Statement), and conforming to the new Envision Durham Regional Official Plan.

While the Official Plan Review is being undertaken as one comprehensive project, the updates will happen via four “focus areas” that will result in four Official Plan Amendments (OPAs), as outlined in the following table:

| <b>Focus Area</b>   | <b>Description of OPA</b>  | <b>Targeted Council Adoption</b> |
|---|--|----------------------------------|
| <p><b>1. Whitby GO Protected Major Transit Station Area (PMTSA)</b></p> <p>PMTSAs are areas planned to accommodate greater densities around a major transit station, such as Whitby GO train station.</p> <p>Refer to Attachment #2 for the Whitby GO PMTSA Study Area Map.</p>   | <p>Delineate the PMTSA and meet conformity requirements of Provincial policy and legislation and Envision Durham.</p> <p>Consider where it is appropriate to increase height and density to expand the housing supply within the PMTSA in accordance with the Planning Act.</p> <p>Consider Inclusionary Zoning to support the provision of affordable housing units. The Province permits Inclusionary Zoning within a PMTSA.</p>   | <p>Q4 2024</p>                   |
| <p><b>2. Strategic Growth Areas (SGA), Nodes and Corridors</b></p> <p>Several SGAs, Nodes and Corridors are already identified in the Whitby Official Plan and further refined by Envision Durham, as the areas of the municipality that are planned for increased population and employment intensification within the Built Boundary.</p> <p>Refer to Attachment #3 for the SGA Study Area Map.</p> | <p>In addition to the PMTSA, consider where it is appropriate to increase height and density in other SGAs, Nodes and Corridors to conform to Envision Durham intensification targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brock/Taunton Regional Centre;</li> <li>• Rossland/Garden Urban Central Area;</li> <li>• Thickson/Dundas Urban Central Area; and,</li> <li>• Major Transit Routes.</li> </ul> <p>While Downtown Brooklin and Downtown Whitby are also considered SGAs, they will continue to be subject to the height and density restrictions in their related Secondary Plans to continue to protect the unique heritage character of these areas.</p> | <p>Q4 2024</p>                   |

| Focus Area   | Description of OPA   | Targeted Council Adoption |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| <p><b>3. Brooklin Urban Expansion Area</b></p> <p>Updates related to the expansion of the Brooklin urban area as set out in Envision Durham.</p> <p>Refer to Attachment #4 for the Brooklin Urban Expansion Area Study Area Map.</p> | <p>Delineate the Brooklin Urban Expansion Area per the 2051 Urban Area Boundary identified in Envision Durham</p> <p>Update the Brooklin Community Secondary Plan to include more detailed planning for the new Employment Area (industrial) lands and Community Area (residential/commercial) lands shown within the 2051 Urban Area Boundary.</p> <p>Review other policies/designations and refine as necessary (e.g. Natural Heritage; Transportation) to ensure consistency and alignment.</p> | <p>Q2/Q3 2025</p>         |
| <p><b>4. General Official Plan Updates</b></p>   | <p>All other updates required to conform to upper-level policy and legislation.</p> <p>Other technical and housekeeping amendments as necessary.</p>   | <p>Q1 2026</p>            |

**4. Discussion:**

**Background Summary and Analysis Reports**

Two (2) Background Summary and Analysis Reports have been prepared to inform policy updates related to the four (4) focus areas of the Official Plan Review:

**Focus Areas 1 and 2: Whitby GO PMTSA and other Strategic Growth Areas**

Envision Durham recently introduced several changes that are required to be reflected in the Town of Whitby’s Official Plan, including the delineation and establishment of policies for a Protected Major Transit Station Area (PMTSA) around the Whitby GO Station (Refer to Attachment #2) and the identification of other Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors (Refer to Attachment #3). These are all areas where growth and intensification are planned to occur within the Built Boundary, some of which are already included in the Whitby Official Plan, while others need updating. In particular, other Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes

and Corridors identified in Envision Durham and/or the current Whitby Official Plan include:

- Brock/Taunton Regional Centre;
- Rossland/Garden Urban Central Area;
- Dundas East Urban Central Area as identified in the Whitby Official Plan;
- Dundas Street Rapid Transit Corridor [reflecting the planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)];
- Taunton Road Regional Corridor;
- Brock Street Regional Corridor; and,
- Victoria Street Regional Corridor

Highlights of Official Plan updates required for these Focus Areas #1 and #2, based on Provincial legislation and policy changes, as well as the new Envision Durham Regional Official Plan include:

- Mapping updates to depict the delineation of the Whitby GO PMTSA;
- Requiring a minimum density target of 150 people and jobs per hectare across the PMTSA;
- Mapping updates to depict the delineation of other Strategic Growth Areas, and requiring minimum density targets ranging from 100 to 150 people and jobs per hectare;
- A minimum requirement that 50% of all new residential units across the Region are to occur through intensification within the built-up area; the greatest amount of intensification is directed to the Strategic Growth Areas (SGA), Protected Major Transit Station Areas (PMTSAs), and Rapid Transit Corridors, followed by other nodes, centres and corridors already established in the Whitby Official Plan;
- Enabling Inclusionary Zoning as a tool to require affordable housing units within the Whitby GO PMTSA;
- Restricting any parking requirements within PMTSAs;
- Designating appropriate land uses, identifying permissible built forms, and providing minimum and maximum building heights;
- Planning for public service facilities, parks and recreational space, and other social and cultural amenities;
- Identifying urban design policies, guidelines, or approaches to promote placemaking, active transportation, pedestrian and transit-oriented land uses and built form (Policy 5.2.6e); and,

- Adopting policies and zoning by-laws that permit additional residential units and adhere to development limitations and natural feature setbacks.

Refer to Attachment #5 for a full copy of the Background Summary Report for the Whitby GO PMTSA and other Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors.

### **Focus Areas 3 and 4: Brooklin Urban Expansion and General Official Plan Updates**

The Background Summary Report identifies policy changes required to be incorporated into the Whitby Official Plan, based on a review of Provincial legislation and policies, Regional policies and local policies, and other applicable documents. The report also summarizes background information related specifically to Focus Area 3 and 4, being the Brooklin Urban Expansion Area (Refer to Attachment #4 for Study Area Map) and any other general official plan updates.

Highlights include updating the Official Plan to reflect:

- The new population and employment forecasts for Whitby, and new planning horizon to 2051;
- Settlement Area Boundary Expansions and Employment Area conversions;
- Planning for the new Brooklin Urban Expansion Area to 2051;
- Transportation, servicing and natural heritage analysis to support the expansion area;
- Changes in parkland dedication, cultural heritage, housing, and site plan approval policies, in addition to other relevant changes under to Provincial Bill 23 and more recently, Bill 185;
- Updates related to provincial and regional policy matters such as climate change and sustainability, roads and active transportation, and rural planning, as well as the recently introduced changes to create a new Provincial Planning Statement; and
- Technical mapping and other housekeeping updates.

Refer to Attachment #6 for a full copy of Background Summary Report for the Brooklin Urban Expansion Area and Other General Official Plan Updates.

## Preliminary Engagement Results

Preliminary engagement on the Official Plan has included both in-person and online engagement opportunities, promoted through the local newspaper (e.g. Brooklin Town Crier), through the Town's social media, digital advertising and other communication channels, in addition to notice sent to the Interested Parties List. Outreach with Indigenous communities, as well as initial meetings with key stakeholder groups has occurred since the OP Review commenced earlier this year. Preliminary engagement results are summarized below. Refer to Attachment # 7 for a full copy of the Engagement Summary.

### In-Person Engagement:

On May 29, 2024, the Town hosted a Special Meeting of Council required under Section 26(3) of the Planning Act, combined with Community Open House #1, to provide background information on the overall scope and timing of the Official Plan Review. Refer to [Report PDP 35-24](#) for information. Council and members of the public raised comments during the evening related to:

- integrating more housing options into new buildings for those with disabilities;
- considering additional dwelling units to gently increase density in existing and new development;
- considering the benefits of more height and density if planned well (e.g. walkability to uses that serve daily needs/increased social interaction, etc.); and,
- increasing general education and awareness on why and how planning for long-term growth and intensification occurs during an Official Plan Review, and how it informs future development applications.

On June 25, 2024, Community Open House #2 was held at the Brooklin Community Centre and Library. The purpose of this open house was to provide information and discuss future land uses to be included in the Community Living Areas and Employment Land Areas of the Brooklin Urban Expansion Area, as identified in Envision Durham. [Refer to Attachment #1 for an excerpt of Envision Durham Map 1, and Attachment #4 for the Brooklin Urban Expansion Area Study Area map]

Approximately 15 participants attended in person and roundtable discussions focused on questions and considerations for:

- future road connections;
- future land use designations like low, medium and higher density residential, parks, and local commercial uses;
- concern with the amount and pace of new development occurring in Brooklin;
- timing for completion of the Official Plan Review and when development applications may follow; and
- how planning in adjacent areas of Pickering and Oshawa may impact the Brooklin Urban Expansion Area.

On June 26, 2024, Community Open House #3 was held at Heydenshore Pavilion in Whitby. The purpose of this open house was to provide information and discuss input on planning for increased population growth and local job opportunities within the Whitby GO PMTSA, as well as other Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors within the Built Boundary, as identified in Envision Durham. (Refer to Attachment #2, and Attachment #3 for Study Area maps)

Approximately 40 participants attended in-person, with roundtable discussions focusing on themes such as:

- considerations for building heights that align with existing residential development;
- managing traffic impacts;
- preserving the waterfront and other green spaces;
- providing more opportunities for affordable housing close to the GO Station;
- maintaining and planning for more commercial and employment areas to support the growing population;
- ensuring adequate parking remains as surface parking lots redevelop over time; and
- improving pedestrian, cycling and other active transportation infrastructure in these key growth areas.

### **Online Engagement**

In addition to in-person engagement opportunities, an initial online engagement survey was available on the Connect Whitby Project Page: [connectwhitby/OPreview](#), from the beginning of June to mid-July. The survey garnered 74 participants, with 70% identifying that they live in Whitby, along with a few people who work in Whitby (12%) and the remainder own businesses, are frequent visitors, or have a professional interest in growth and planning in



Whitby. Survey questions focused on general challenges and opportunities with planning for growth across Whitby and returned the following results:

- The highest rated topics of interest for the Official Plan Review included planning for the future Whitby hospital, waterfront/parks and recreational spaces, natural spaces like local forests and trails, taller buildings and intensification (more people living in Whitby's urban areas), transportation (transit, roads, cycling, and pedestrian facilities) and the GO Station and development around it; and
- Other types of community infrastructure people would you like to see more of include parks, medical facilities, and retail shops/restaurants/cafes.

Additional comments focused on:

- Developing complete communities that have adequate parks and retail spaces to support new residents and more walkable neighbourhoods;
- Maintaining the historic feel of some neighbourhoods while also integrating new development, taller buildings, and more facilities and amenities for residents;
- Providing a diverse range of housing types and forms, and a need for more affordable rental and ownership housing options;
- Managing the amount of paved land and integrating more natural spaces to support stormwater management; and
- Providing ongoing communication with the community on decisions regarding the Official Plan Review.

Over half of survey respondents indicated that their preferred method of engagement is through online surveys and recorded presentations at their convenience.

Recorded videos and copies of all Community Open House presentations and engagement materials are available on the project web page. Further online engagement surveys specific to Open House #2 and #3 were provided through August to mid-September, to provide feedback opportunities for those who could not attend in person. Results of the next round of online engagement will be provided in future staff reports on the Official Plan Review.

### **Indigenous Outreach**

With guidance from the project consultants, planning staff sent initial outreach letters to Indigenous representatives situated within the Lands of the Great Mississauga Nations who are signatories to the Williams Treaties, and other Indigenous organizations as identified on previous project engagement lists. The initial letters provided information on the general scope and timing of the Official Plan Review and offered meetings with Planning staff to discuss questions and provide input.

### **Other Stakeholder Engagement**

Initial updates on the scope and timing of the Official Plan Review have been presented to stakeholders such as the Brooklin Landowners group, Committees of Council (e.g. Heritage Whitby Advisory Committee), and through other meetings requested by residents, landowners and business owners. Ongoing updates will be provided.

### **Next Steps**

A Statutory Public Meeting has been scheduled for October 16, 2024, to present the draft recommendations for the Whitby Major Transit Station Area (Focus Area 1) and other Strategic Growth Areas (Focus Area 2).

An additional Community Open House is being planned for the Brooklin Urban Expansion Area (Focus Area 3) to review alternative land use options, followed by a Statutory Public Meeting on the draft recommended amendment in 2025.

Further engagement on other Official Plan conformity updates (Focus Area 4) is planned for 2025.

## **5. Financial Considerations:**

The Whitby Official Plan Review is approved as part of the 2022-2026 budget and is a priority item in the Corporate Business Plan. Components of the Whitby Official Plan Review are further supported by the Housing Accelerator Fund.

## **6. Communication and Public Engagement:**

A detailed Engagement Plan has been developed that seeks feedback from the public and stakeholders and includes reporting to Council at key milestones for each of the four (4) Official Plan Review focus areas outlined in Section 2 of this report.

Both in-person and virtual opportunities are being provided and offer access to project information, including how to stay informed, as well as platforms for submitting feedback, including:

- A dedicated Official Plan Review project page on Connect Whitby: [connectwhitby.ca/opreview](https://connectwhitby.ca/opreview);
- Community Open Houses (in-person and virtual);
- Outreach to Indigenous Communities;
- Meetings with stakeholders as needed;
- Consultation with relevant Town Departments, Regional staff, and the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority;
- Statutory Public Meetings and circulation to Commenting Agencies in accordance with Planning Act requirements; and,
- Presentations and updates to Committees of Council and Council Members.

Interested Party lists are being maintained by Town Planning and Development staff. Interested Parties receive notifications at key project milestones. The Official Plan Review is also being promoted more broadly through the Town's various communication channels.

## **7. Input from Departments/Sources:**

A Core Staff Team from the Planning and Development Department, Strategic Initiatives, Community Services (Parks Planning) and Communications will guide and provide input into the Whitby Official Plan Review. A Technical Advisory Committee has also been established, with representatives from the Region of Durham (Planning and Economic Development Department; Public Works), and the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority. Input will also be sought from various commenting Town departments and external agencies throughout the Official Plan Review process.

## **8. Strategic Priorities:**

The Whitby Official Plan Review will support and advance the Town's strategic pillars of the Community Strategic Plan, by providing policy updates that manage growth and development of the Town in a sustainable manner, resulting in safely designed and inclusive neighbourhoods that support a range of housing options, as well as protecting space for important community amenities, such as parks, schools, healthcare services and more resilient built and natural environments.

The Official Plan Review will provide for increased access to Employment Area lands that will assist Whitby in being more economically innovative and competitive.

The Official Plan Review will involve community and stakeholder consultation to ensure Whitby's government is accountable and responsive to the community's needs as the Municipality grows over time. It will also support the Town's efforts to improve Accessibility and Sustainability and will ensure that all materials are provided in an accessible format.

**9. Attachments:**

- Attachment #1 Excerpt Envision Durham Map 1. Regional Structure – Urban & Rural Systems
- Attachment #2 Whitby GO PMTSA Study Area Map
- Attachment #3 Strategic Growth Areas Study Area Map
- Attachment #4 Brooklin Urban Area Expansion Study Area Map
- Attachment #5 PMTSA and Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors – Background Summary and Analysis Report
- Attachment #6 Brooklin Urban Expansion Area and Other General Official Plan Updates – Background Summary and Analysis Report
- Attachment #7 Preliminary Engagement Summary