

Town of Whitby

Staff Report

whitby.ca/CouncilCalendar



Report Title: Town-Initiated Official Plan Review – Final Recommended Official Plan Amendment 139: Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors, File OPA-2024-W/05

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: January 13, 2025

Report Number: PDP 02-25

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**

For additional information, contact:

John Taylor, MCIP, RPP
Director of Planning
904.444.2908

Lori Tesolin, MCIP, RPP
Principal Planner, Policy and Heritage
904.444.2858

1. Recommendation:

1. That Council adopt Amendment 139 to the Whitby Official Plan, regarding Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors as outlined in this Report, PDP 02-25;
2. That the Clerk forward the necessary documentation for Official Plan Amendment 139 to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as the approval authority in accordance with Section 26 of the Planning Act; and,
3. That the Clerk send a Notice of Council's adoption of Amendment 139 to those persons and agencies who have requested further notification regarding Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors, as part of the Town-Initiated Official Plan Review.

2. Highlights:

- As part of the Town-initiated Official Plan Review, the purpose of the final recommended Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 139, is to achieve consistency with changes in Provincial legislation and policy, and to implement Envision Durham, with respect to intensification targets, increasing housing supply and providing transit-supportive development within Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors.

- The final recommended amendment will also assist the Town in achieving the Municipal Housing Target assigned by the province of 18,000 homes by 2031 and support the Town's commitments to the Federal Housing Accelerator Fund, by updating policies that support increasing housing supply.
- The final recommended amendment will:
 - adjust and refine existing Central Area boundaries and Intensification Corridors to align with similar areas identified in Envision Durham, and to better reflect the existing built form conditions in these areas and corridors that were first identified in the 2018 Whitby Official Plan;
 - introduce and/or update policies that support, in appropriate locations within Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors, increased building heights, and the removal of the cap on maximum density, where density will be a product of built form;
 - introduce and/or update policies that provide for appropriate transitions from buildings with higher heights and densities, to other established uses and mature neighbourhoods; and
 - meet Provincial and Envision Durham intensification targets, by increasing housing supply and planning for future population growth through transit-supportive redevelopment and intensification.
- The final recommended amendment has been informed by background studies and analysis, as well as several engagement opportunities, including community open houses and public meetings, online engagement surveys, and written comment submissions from the public and commenting agencies and departments.

3. Background:

Overview

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. 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 Town has also made commitments to the Federal Housing Accelerator Fund to undertake efforts to increase housing supply, including updates to relevant Official Plan policies.

The new Envision Durham Regional Official Plan was approved by the Province on September 03, 2024 and sets a new planning horizon to 2051. Envision Durham provides a forecasted 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 Area lands (residential/commercial, institutional, community and public service uses) and Employment Area lands (industrial, warehousing), within the new 2051 Urban Area Boundary.

The Province has also amended the Planning Act and other legislation several times since the 2018 Official Plan was adopted, and recently introduced a new Provincial Planning Statement in 2024, which sets out policy direction for all land use planning in Ontario.

Official Plan Review Focus Areas

The Official Plan Review has been led by SGL Planning and Design and partner Dillon Consulting. The 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 policies made by the Province of Ontario, and implementing the intent of Envision Durham.

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 below:

Focus Area/OPA	Target Council Adoption
<p>1. Whitby GO Protected Major Transit Station Area (PMTSA)</p> <p>PMTSAs are areas planned to accommodate greater densities around a major transit station, such as the Whitby GO train station.</p>	Q1 2025
<p>2. Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors (SGAs)</p> <p>Several SGAs are already identified in the Whitby Official Plan and further refined by Envision Durham, These are the areas of the municipality that are planned for increased population and employment intensification within the Built Boundary.</p>	Q1 2025
<p>3. Brooklin Urban Expansion Area</p> <p>Updates related to the expansion of the Brooklin urban area as set out in Envision Durham, mainly west of Ashburn Road toward Lake Ridge Road.</p>	Q3 2025
<p>4. Official Plan General</p> <p>Other policy updates in conformity with Provincial legislation and policy and Regional policy, as well as technical and housekeeping amendments.</p>	Q1 2026

The final recommended amendment, OPA 139, is related to Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors (Focus Area 2 in the table above) and the focus of this report.

The Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors to which the final recommended amendment generally applies include:

- Brock/Taunton Regional Centre (Envision Durham) / Major Central Area (Whitby Official Plan);
- Rossland/Garden Urban Central Area (Whitby Official Plan);
- Dundas East Urban Central Area (Whitby Official Plan);
- Dundas Street Rapid Transit Corridor (Envision Durham);
- Taunton Road Regional Corridor (Envision Durham and Whitby Official Plan);
- Brock Street Regional Corridor (Envision Durham and Whitby Official Plan); and,
- Victoria Street Regional Corridor (Envision Durham and Whitby Official Plan).

Refer to Attachment #1 for the Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors Study Area Map. Please note that minor revisions will also be made to the Downtown Brooklin Major Central Area Boundary and the Downtown Whitby Major Central Area Boundary to reflect these Regional Centres as identified in Envision Durham. The revised boundaries generally remove natural heritage features and mature neighbourhoods from the boundary. These two Central Areas are not the focus of this amendment to the Official Plan and will continue to be guided by the policies in each relevant Secondary Plan.

Refer to previous Staff Report [PDP 42-24](#) for further information on the other focus areas described above, or visit the project web page at: connectwhitby.ca/OPreview.

Background Summary

The final recommended amendment has been informed by a Background Summary and Analysis Report pertaining to PMTSAs, Strategic Growth Areas and Nodes and Corridors (refer to Attachment #2). Section 5 of the Background report identifies policy changes to be incorporated into the updated Whitby Official Plan and the rationale for policy recommendations informing the final recommended OPA 139.

A description of existing land uses and built form within each Strategic Growth Area, Node and Corridor is provided in the Background report, followed by an analysis of sites that have potential to be redeveloped over time. This is called “infill.” This infill analysis was further compared against recent and active developments and development applications within these areas. The analysis excluded sites that are not intended to redevelop (e.g. institutional sites, existing open spaces and parkland). The infill analysis was used to ascertain an estimated amount of increased height and density in appropriate locations that would be consistent with Provincial policy and implement the established minimum density targets of 100-150 jobs and people per hectare provided by Envision Durham for certain Strategic Growth Areas including Regional Centres and the Rapid Transit Corridor identified along HWY 2.

Refer to previous Staff Report [PDP 42-24](#) for further information on the other focus areas described above, or visit the project web page at: connectwhitby.ca/OPreview.

Engagement

A kick-off Community Open House on the Official Plan Review was held on May 29, 2024, with an accompanying online engagement survey on the project webpage. A second in-person Community Open House specifically focused on Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors was held on June 26, 2024, and attracted over 40 participants. Further online surveys were provided on the project web page as an alternative way for the public to provide feedback. Over 70 respondents provided feedback. All Community Open House materials are available on the project page at: connectwhitby.ca/OPreview.

Engagement also included staff meetings with property owners and prospective development proponents, to answer questions about the process, proposed changes, and future implementation. Written comment submissions and comments from public commenting agencies have also been reviewed and taken into consideration, as well as input from relevant internal departments and the Official Plan Technical Advisory Committee.

4. Discussion:

Engagement Themes

The Comment-Response Matrix provided in Attachment #3, summarizes comments from the October 16, 2024, Statutory Public Meeting, written Public Comment Submissions and comments from external commenting agencies, on the previous draft proposed OPA 139. Refer to Report [PDP 47-24](#) for the Public Meeting Report on the draft proposed amendment.

While the comments have been paraphrased for the purposes of the Comment-Response Matrix, all comments have been reviewed and taken into consideration for the final recommended amendment. Comments from internal Town of Whitby departments have also been taken into consideration.

Other feedback obtained through the earlier Community Open House, online engagement surveys and engagement with the Official Plan Review Technical Advisory Committee are summarized below by key themes, which have further informed the final recommended amendment.

Building Height and Density:

- Consider the impacts of building heights and how that aligns with existing residential development.
- Consider the benefits of more height and density if planned well (e.g. walkability to uses that serve daily needs/increased social interaction, etc.)
- Provide clarity on policies requiring a transition in heights to lower height/density areas.

Housing Options:

- Provide for a range of housing types and forms.
- Provide for a variety of rental vs ownership housing.

Land Uses:

- Ensure infrastructure, schools, and libraries are available to support growth.
- Encourage integrated development with ground-floor retail areas rather than strip plazas.
- Maintain and plan for more commercial and employment areas to support the growing population.
- Develop complete communities that have adequate parks and retail spaces to support new residents and more walkable neighbourhoods.

Parking and Traffic:

- Provide adequate parking as surface parking lots redevelop over time.
- Manage traffic impacts.
- Manage the amount of paved land and integrating more natural spaces to support stormwater management.

Active Transportation:

- Improve cycling and other active transportation infrastructure and connections to these areas and across Whitby.

Most commenting agencies did not raise concerns with the draft proposed OPA 139. Agencies such as the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority and the Region of Durham have been involved in the Official Plan Review as members of the Technical Advisory Committee.

Policy Framework

Provincial legislation and policy related to land-use planning in Ontario has been amended several times over the past five years, with the principal objective of increasing housing supply and access to affordable housing. Key changes made by the Province are summarized below and have informed the final recommended amendment:

- Bill 23 – the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* removed Planning Authority from certain upper-tier municipalities, including the Region of Durham effective January 01, 2025, causing lower-tier municipalities to inherit the policies of the upper-tier Official Plans, including policies related to PMTSAs, into lower-tier Official Plans.
- The new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), which came into force on October 04, 2024, supersedes the previous Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The new PPS continues to refer to supporting intensification in key areas, achieving complete communities, and offering a

range and mix of housing options, providing for intensification and more mixed-use, and providing transit-supportive development in Strategic Growth Areas, to support the growth forecasts to 2051.

The Region of Durham adopted Envision Durham, the new Region Official Plan, which was approved by the Province on September 03, 2024. Envision Durham sets out a minimum requirement of 50% of growth required to occur in the existing built-up area of the municipality and directs intensification to Strategic Growth Areas and Corridors, in addition to PMTSAs.

Envision Durham provides for the delineation of Regional Centres such as Brock/Taunton, as well as a Rapid Transit Corridor along Dundas Street. Envision Durham policies require a minimum density target of 100-150 people and jobs per hectare across the entire Brock/Taunton Regional Centre and a minimum density target of 150 people and jobs per hectare across the entire Rapid Transit Corridor along Dundas Street. However, the new Provincial Planning Statement more recently increased the Rapid Transit Corridor density target to 160 people and jobs per hectare.

While Downtown Brooklin and Downtown Whitby are also Regional Centres that contribute to the overall 50% intensification target for the broader municipality, with parts of Downtown Whitby also located along the Rapid Transit Corridor, they will continue to be subject to the height and density restrictions in their related Secondary Plans. However, these Secondary Plans have been recently updated to allow appropriate levels of intensification, while continuing to protect the unique heritage character of these areas. The Downtown Brooklin and Downtown Whitby Major Central Area boundaries will be slightly refined to reflect the new boundary identified in Envision Durham for these Regional Centres, which has generally removed natural heritage features and mature neighbourhoods from these Central Areas.

Envision Durham also requires identifying and planning for intensification along other local Nodes like the Rossland Garden Urban Central Area, and along other Regional Corridors, to contribute to the overall 50% intensification target within the built-up area to provide more housing and increase transit-supportive development.

Other policies include providing for appropriate transitions in building heights to surrounding areas and public spaces, supporting pedestrian friendly development and active modes of transportation, and encouraging placemaking, sustainability and good urban design principles.

The Whitby Official Plan currently identifies the location of Major and Urban Central Areas on Schedule A - Land Use, and Intensification Areas and Corridors on Schedule B - Intensification. Some areas are further refined through Secondary Plans, like the Brock/Taunton Major Central Area Secondary Plan. The Official Plan states that intensification is intended to occur in these areas through higher density development, to support transit use and to lessen dependence on the automobile.

The goal of the Brock/Taunton Major Central Area Secondary Plan is to provide for the development of a prominent, intensive, multi-functional Major Central Area located at the intersection of Brock Street and Taunton Road to provide a focal point of mixed-use

activities including major commercial, office, institutional, residential, recreational and entertainment activities.

Final recommended amendment

The final recommended amendment adjusts and refines the boundaries of existing Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors in the Whitby Official Plan, as well as related policies, where appropriate, to increase building height and remove maximum densities. Maximum densities will be a product of built form including factors such as building height and building set backs, step backs and the use of 45-degree angular planes to adjacent, lower height/density uses.

The final recommended amendment largely maintains the overall municipal structure of Central Areas and Intensification Areas and Corridors as currently identified in the Whitby Official Plan on Schedules A – Land Use and B – Intensification. These Areas and Corridors are planned for increased intensification across the municipality in areas that are well-served by transit and services, while continuing to protect for transition to mature neighbourhoods and other important features of the natural and built environment. These Areas and Corridors generally align with the Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors identified in Envision Durham and in the final recommended amendment.

The final recommended amendment increases height permissions from 18 to 25 storeys in the Brock/Taunton and Rossland/Garden Central Areas, on lands that are already designated for the highest heights and densities within these Areas, abutting major arterial roads. This policy change meets the intent of the Envision Durham minimum density requirements of 100 -150 people and jobs per hectare within SGAs, and better supports overall intensification within the built boundary and encourages increased transit-oriented development.

A Rapid Transit Corridor as identified in Envision Durham will replace portions of the current Intensification Corridor identified in the Whitby Official Plan along Dundas Street. The Rapid Intensification Transit Corridor will also replace the Dundas East Urban Central Area identified on relevant Schedules of the Whitby Official Plan, as it is now a higher order Intensification Area, but generally occupies the same lands and provides for the same land use categories. To meet the requirement for 160 people and jobs per hectare across the Rapid Transit Corridor, increased height permissions to 25 storeys are provided for appropriate land use designations, for buildings abutting Dundas Street, subject to providing a transition in height and density where the development abuts existing low rise residential development, adjacent to the Rapid Transit Intensification Corridor.

Further policies are provided to address transitions in heights and built form in general, such as the use of 45-degree angular planes as an urban design tool to better implement new buildings in proximity to mature neighbourhoods.

Feedback from the public and stakeholders related to preserving existing parks and open space has been maintained in the final recommended amendment. Managing traffic impacts and improving active transportation and transportation connections are

ongoing matters across the broader municipality that are being addressed separately through the Planning Department Transportation and Engineering Services division.

Additional, minor revisions have been made since the earlier draft proposed amendment to improve clarity and consistency with existing Parent Official Plan policies and provide increased flexibility for implementation.

Conclusion

The final recommended amendment is consistent with the Planning Act and Provincial Planning Statement 2024, implements the intent of the Envision Durham Regional Official Plan, and meets the overall goals and intent of the Whitby Official Plan, as it relates to increasing housing supply and planning for future population growth through transit-supportive redevelopment and intensification in Strategic Growth Areas, within Nodes, and along Corridors.

A copy of the final recommended amendment OPA 139 is provided in Attachment #4 and generally includes:

1. Policy (text) changes to the Official Plan and Secondary Plans, including:

- Clarification of policies;
- Consistency/alignment of policy language, terminology, phrasing, land use permissions and anticipated built form, etc., with Envision Durham, where appropriate; and
- Changes to land use designations, maximum building heights, and maximum density caps, where appropriate, to better meet the intent of the Envision Durham and Provincial policies.

2. Schedule (maps) changes, including:

- Delineation of Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors;
- Select land use designation changes on various Schedules; and
- Legend updates to reflect the above changes.

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:

The applicable agencies and departments have been circulated the draft proposed amendment and copies of the associated supporting materials for their review and comment.

A comprehensive Engagement Plan provided the framework for engagement and communications activities for Focus Area 2 – Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and

Corridors, as well as meetings with the Core Staff project team and Technical Advisory Committee (Refer to Section 7 of this report).

Both in-person and virtual consultation opportunities were provided and offered 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;
- Community Open House held on June 26, 2024, at Heydenshore Pavillion and related online engagement survey;
- Outreach to Indigenous Communities;
- Meetings with stakeholders and the public as requested;
- Consultation with relevant Town Departments, commenting agencies, Regional staff, and the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority;
- Statutory Public Meeting held October 16, 2024; and,
- Presentations and updates to Committees of Council and Council Members.

An Interested Party list has been 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.

The Town of Whitby hosted a Special Meeting of Council required under Section 26(3) of the Planning Act on May 29, 2024, to kick off the Official Plan Review, introduce the key focus areas, including Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors, and provide information to the public on how to provide feedback and stay informed, followed by a Public Meeting on October 16, 2024.

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, including staff from the Region of Durham and the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority. Input from various commenting Town departments and external agencies have informed the Final recommended amendment.

8. Strategic Priorities:

The Whitby Official Plan Review and final recommended amendment 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.

The process informing the final recommended amendment has involved 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 also supports the Town's efforts to improve Accessibility and Sustainability.

9. Attachments:

Attachment #1: Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors: Study Area Map

Attachment #2: Background Summary and Analysis Report

Attachment #3: OPA 139 Comment-Response Matrix

Attachment #4: Final Recommended Official Plan Amendment #139: Strategic Growth Areas, Nodes and Corridors