PLANNING FOR AN EQUITABLE, RESILIENT & PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

Rod Regier, Commissioner
March 9, 2022
The Regional Official Plan (ROP) is a powerful tool to shape and define our community for generations.

It is roadmap for the future of our regional community. It will help us prepare for the challenges and opportunities that the future will bring and establish a vision for how we live, work and play in the Region.

It matters because we need to make decisions about regional services, like transportation and public transit, water and sewage treatment systems; public health; economic development; and affordable housing, among many others. These regional services are all affected by planning decisions, and by this Plan.

If done well, it can support a higher quality of life for residents across all area municipalities.
A number of strategic imperatives were embedded into the previous Official Plan, and these were transformative decisions that have already impacted us broadly:

- **Light rapid transit** - not only has ION transformed moving around our community, but has attracted over $4B in investment along the Central Transit Corridor
- **Countryside Line** - preservation of our agricultural assets has helped maintain our rural charm, and continues to protect our drinking water
- **Foundations for transformative climate action** were built into policy, including an intensification-first approach
WHY ARE WE UPDATING THE REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN?

- Because we are growing. Our population and jobs are forecasted to grow from 617,000 to 923,000 and 302,000 to 470,000, respectively, by 2051.

- Because new challenges and opportunities have emerged since the ROP’s existing policies were developed.

- Because building the best community in Canada requires thoughtful and collaborative planning.

- The work to update the current ROP will identify how much, if any, the urban area needs to expand to accommodate the Region’s population growth, and what form (shape and density) development across the Region will take.

- How much land may be needed will be the result of the Land Needs Assessment, and the shape and density will be a product of the policy amendments that are also introduced in the ROP update.
WHAT'S CHANGED SINCE THE LAST ROP?

- Housing Affordability
- Transformational Climate Action
- Equity
- Indigenous Relationships and Reconciliation
Waterloo Region will be an inclusive, thriving, and sustainable region of connected urban and rural communities with global reach, fostering opportunities for current and future generations.
USING POLICY TO ACHIEVE ESTABLISHED GOALS AND ADDRESS NEW CHALLENGES

- Policies have the potential to shape planning and thus, the community, moving forward.
- We filter ideas and decisions through the lenses that support:
  - building equitable, thriving, transit-supportive complete communities
  - intensification-first approach to growth management
  - realizing transformational climate action
  - advancing Indigenous relationships and reconciliation
  - continuing to protect water, agricultural and natural systems
The Region is proposing new and/or revised policies in the Regional Official Plan that:

- Maps all 24 MTSAs;

- Designates all MTSAs as “protected” to support the provision of affordable housing through Inclusionary Zoning and the implementation of the Region’s 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan;

- Establishes minimum density targets for each MTSA, so that we can plan to achieve growth that will allow transit to be an attractive and viable option in mixed use communities;

- Provides further guidance to area municipalities on planning for MTSAs; and,

- Introduces draft concepts, such as 15-minute neighbourhoods, in an effort to support transformative climate action.
The Region is proposing new and/or revised policies in the Regional Official Plan that:

- Designate and protect REAs throughout the Region, mostly located near important transportation routes.

- Establish a preliminary minimum density target of 35 jobs per hectare.

- Protect employment lands within REAs from conversion to non-employment uses.

- Provide support for Area Municipalities to protect such areas from conversion to non-employment uses.

- Provide consideration of limited service commercial and ancillary retail uses in appropriate locations, for example, along the periphery of REAs or at intersections of major transportation routes.
The Region is proposing new and/or revised policies in the Regional Official Plan that:

- Strengthens and creates policies that prevent the loss of existing rental housing by:
  - limiting conversion of rental units
  - putting conditions around the demolition of residential units

- Ensures a range and mix of housing types and bedroom mix though:
  - Requiring 30% of units in larger developments to be medium/high density
  - Requiring a justification of the bedroom mix (family-sized)

- Works with area municipal partners to maintain the long-term affordability of units

- Introduces a tiered-approach to missing middle housing by:
  - allow 4 units and up to 4 storeys, as-of-right, on all land currently zoned residential and on any new greenfield land (residential); and,
  - allow a range of 8 to 12 storeys, along specific corridors (e.g., ION corridor, local corridors)

- Supports area municipalities in implementing Inclusionary Zoning
Complete communities = shortened commutes, more opportunities to work/live/play in close proximity
Greater opportunities to walk, roll or cycle to work and amenities = improved quality of life
More vibrant, mixed-use areas
Working towards more housing choice/options for all generations
ENGAGEMENT: OCT 2019 - PRESENT

- EngageWR
- Webinars
- Interactive Mapping
- eBlasts
- Surveys
- Review Committees
- Steering Committee
- Stakeholder Committee
- Technical Team
- Area Municipalities
- Ongoing Staff Meetings
- Presentations to agencies, groups
- Meetings by request
- Ask-a-Planner Series
- Virtual Conversations
NEXT STEPS

Phase 1
Project Launch

Phase 2
Technical Analysis

Phase 3
Analysis of Growth Concepts

Phase 4
Update Regional Official Plan

Ongoing Technical and Stakeholder Consultation

Community Consultation & Engagement
LAND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- The LNA is a document that determines the total amount of land needed (if any) to accommodate forecasted population and employment growth to 2051 as set by the Province.
- An LNA does not determine where additional lands should specifically be located.
- The amount of land needed (if any) and locations will impact how we meet community-building objectives.
- The draft LNA is expected to be released in April for public input, which will take place via EngageWR, open houses and dedicated meetings.
THANK YOU.

Your participation is a crucial part of building a more equitable, resilient and prosperous community for all residents of the Region of Waterloo.

And stay tuned. There's more opportunity for you to contribute feedback throughout this process.

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