



# East Gwillimbury Official Plan Review **Discussion Paper**

August 2021

The **Planning** Partnership

## Discussion Paper Topics

- [2 Vision and Principles](#)
- [3 Complete Communities and Balanced Growth](#)
- [4 Housing](#)
- [5 Community Design](#)
- [6 Sustainability and Climate Change](#)
- [7 Agriculture and Rural Lands](#)

# Contents

- 1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE ..... 1**
- 1.1 Introduction ..... 1
- 1.2 Purpose of the Discussion Paper ..... 1
- 1.3 Discussion Paper Outline ..... 2
- 1.4 York Region Municipal Comprehensive Review..... 2
- 1.5 Levels of Control: Regulate - Manage - Facilitate ..... 3
- 1.6 East Gwillimbury Context..... 4
- 2 VISION AND PRINCIPLES ..... 6**
- 2.1 Consultation and Public Engagement..... 6
- 2.1.1 Engagement with Indigenous Peoples ..... 6
  - 2.1.2 Councillor Interviews ..... 7
  - 2.1.3 Community Visioning Workshop ..... 8
  - 2.1.4 Vision and Guiding Principles ..... 9
- 2.2 Key Topics for Discussion ..... 10
  - 2.2.1 Land Use Planning in Ontario ..... 10
    - 2.2.1.1 Why it’s Important ..... 10
- 2.3 Background..... 11
  - 2.3.1 Town of East Gwillimbury Strategic Plan (2019-2022) ..... 11
- 3 COMPLETE COMMUNITIES AND BALANCED GROWTH ..... 12**
- 3.1 Key Topics for Discussion ..... 12
  - 3.1.1 Residential Uses ..... 13
    - 3.1.1.1 Why it’s Important ..... 13
    - 3.1.1.2 Current Policy Framework ..... 13
    - 3.1.1.3 Things to Think About..... 13
  - 3.1.2 Employment Uses ..... 13
    - 3.1.2.1 Why it’s Important ..... 13
    - 3.1.2.2 Current Policy Framework ..... 15
    - 3.1.2.3 Things to Think About..... 15
  - 3.1.3 Population Related Employment..... 15
    - 3.1.3.1 Why it’s Important ..... 15
    - 3.1.3.2 Current Policy Framework ..... 16
    - 3.1.3.3 Things to Think About..... 16
  - 3.1.4 Urban Separators ..... 16
    - 3.1.4.1 Why it’s Important ..... 16
    - 3.1.4.2 Things to Think About..... 17
  - 3.1.5 What We’ve Heard ..... 17
- 3.2 Policy Background ..... 18
  - 3.2.1 The Provincial Policy Statement (2020)..... 18
  - 3.2.2 A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) ..... 19

3.2.3	Greenbelt Plan (2017 .....	21
3.2.4	York Region Official Plan (2010).....	22
3.2.5	Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan (2010).....	25
<b>4</b>	<b>HOUSING.....</b>	<b>26</b>
4.1	Key Topics for Discussion .....	26
4.1.1	Housing Options.....	26
4.1.1.1	Why it's Important.....	26
4.1.1.2	Current Policy Framework .....	26
4.1.1.3	Things to Think About.....	27
4.1.2	Affordable Housing .....	28
4.1.2.1	What is Affordable Housing? .....	28
4.1.2.2	The Local Demographics.....	29
4.1.2.3	Why it's Important.....	30
4.1.2.4	Current Policy Framework .....	31
4.1.2.5	Things to Think About.....	31
4.1.3	What We've Heard .....	32
4.2	Policy Background .....	33
4.2.1	Provincial Policy Statement (2020) .....	33
4.2.2	A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) .....	34
4.2.3	York Region Official Plan (2010).....	36
4.2.4	Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan (2010).....	36
<b>5</b>	<b>COMMUNITY DESIGN.....</b>	<b>38</b>
5.1	Key Topics for Discussion .....	39
5.1.1	Public Service Facilities and Neighbourhood Nodes .....	39
5.1.1.1	Why it's Important.....	39
5.1.1.2	Current Policy Framework .....	39
5.1.1.3	Things to Think About.....	39
5.1.2	Public Realm Design.....	40
5.1.2.1	Why it's Important.....	40
5.1.2.2	Current Policy Framework .....	41
5.1.2.3	Things to Think About.....	41
5.1.3	Compatibility/Intensification .....	41
5.1.3.1	Why it's Important.....	41
5.1.3.2	Current Planning Context .....	42
5.1.3.3	Things to Think About.....	42
5.1.4	Historic Main Streets .....	43
5.1.4.1	Why it's Important.....	43
5.1.4.2	Current Policy Framework .....	43
5.1.4.3	Things to Think About.....	44
5.1.5	Cultural Heritage .....	44
5.1.5.1	Why it's Important.....	44

5.1.5.2	Current Policy Framework .....	44
5.1.5.3	Things to Think About.....	45
5.1.6	What We've Heard .....	45
5.2	Policy Background .....	47
5.2.1	Provincial Policy Statement (2020) .....	47
5.2.2	Ontario Heritage Act (2021) .....	47
5.2.3	A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) .....	48
5.2.4	York Region Official Plan (2010).....	49
5.2.5	Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan (2010).....	50
5.2.6	Health & Active Living Master Plan (2015) .....	51
5.2.7	Municipal Cultural Plan (MCP), 2011 .....	51
<b>6</b>	<b>SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE .....</b>	<b>52</b>
6.1	Key Topics for Discussion .....	53
6.1.1	Sustainable Development .....	53
6.1.1.1	Why it's Important .....	53
6.1.1.2	Current Policy Framework .....	53
6.1.1.3	Things to Think About.....	53
6.1.2	Healthy Communities and Public Health .....	54
6.1.2.1	Why it's Important .....	54
6.1.2.2	Key Topics and Trends.....	54
6.1.2.3	Current Policy Framework .....	56
6.1.2.4	Things to Think About.....	57
6.1.3	Sustainable Transportation .....	57
6.1.3.1	Why it's Important .....	57
6.1.3.2	Current Policy Framework .....	58
6.1.3.3	Things to Think About.....	58
6.1.4	Climate Change Mitigation and Resilience .....	59
6.1.4.1	Why it's Important .....	59
6.1.4.2	Current Policy Framework .....	59
6.1.4.3	Things to Think About.....	59
6.1.5	What We've Heard .....	61
6.2	Policy Background .....	61
6.2.1	Provincial Policy Statement (2020) .....	61
6.2.2	A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) .....	63
6.2.3	Greenbelt Plan (2017).....	64
6.2.4	York Region Official Plan (2010).....	65
6.2.5	Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan (2010).....	66
6.2.6	Thinking Green Development Standards (2018) .....	68
6.2.7	Community Energy Plan, 2009 .....	69
6.2.8	Community Emissions Reduction Planning: A Guide for Municipalities, 2018 .....	70
6.2.9	Connected Communities: Healthier Together, February 2019 .....	70

<b>7</b>	<b>AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LANDS .....</b>	<b>72</b>
7.1	Key Topics for Discussion .....	72
7.1.1	Agriculture and Rural Lands .....	72
7.1.1.1	Why it's Important.....	72
7.1.1.2	Current Policy Framework .....	72
7.1.1.3	Agriculture-Related Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas.....	73
7.1.1.4	On-Farm Diversified Uses and Agri-Tourism Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas ..	75
7.1.1.5	Large Scale Agricultural Buildings That Take Prime Agricultural Land Out of Production .....	77
7.1.1.6	Things to Think About.....	78
7.1.2	What We've Heard .....	79
7.2	Policy Background .....	79
7.2.1	Provincial Policy Statement (2020) .....	79
7.2.2	A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) .....	81
7.2.3	Greenbelt Plan (2017).....	82
7.2.4	York Region Official Plan (2010).....	84
7.2.5	Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan (2010).....	86
<b>8</b>	<b>NEXT STEPS .....</b>	<b>87</b>
	<b>APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS .....</b>	<b>88</b>

# 1 Introduction and Purpose

## 1.1 Introduction

The Town of East Gwillimbury is completing its Official Plan Review, to develop a modernized planning policy framework to guide the future evolution and development of the Town to 2051. The Town's current Official Plan was adopted on June 28, 2010 and planned to 2031. This Official Plan Review project provides an opportunity to refresh the vision for the Town, recognize and promote East Gwillimbury's unique identity, respond to East Gwillimbury's evolution and changing circumstances as a community, and plan for the future.

The intent of the Official Plan Review is to develop a final Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan that reflects contemporary policies, designations, and schedules that are in full conformity with provincial requirements under the Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, as well as regional requirements under York Region's Official Plan. Moreover, the policy framework will address local issues, priorities, and values that will guide the development of a vibrant, healthy, and complete community into the future.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Discussion Paper

One of the key objectives of this Official Plan Review is to coordinate with the Region of York, through their ongoing Municipal Comprehensive Review, to ensure that East Gwillimbury is allocated an appropriate share of projected population and employment growth to the horizon year of 2051 (based on the Province's recently released Growth Plan proposed projections). It is a stated objective of Council to promote the comprehensive planning of the remaining parts of East Gwillimbury that are currently identified as Whitebelt lands (Long Term Growth Area), and this Official Plan Review will need to provide a clear justification and framework for the accommodation of substantial new growth.

To accommodate this growth, it is also an objective of this Official Plan Review to establish an up-to-date and progressive planning policy framework to guide and shape the future of the community, including preserving what is valued and building on a clear vision for the future, all the while ensuring conformity/consistency with Regional and Provincial policy.

The new East Gwillimbury Official Plan (NEGOP) will be undertaken concurrently with the York Region Municipal Comprehensive Review and the preparation of the new Regional Official Plan, and therefore play a role in informing the growth projections to the 2051 planning horizon, while also implementing the updated Regional policy framework.

One of the primary challenges for the East Gwillimbury Official Plan Review is the growth management exercise and working within the parameters of the ongoing Municipal Comprehensive Review. It will be a crucial element of this Official Plan Review to provide the Region with all of the necessary background data and justification for the allocation of significant greenfield development potential to East Gwillimbury. The key anticipated challenge is to overcome historic reluctance at the Regional level to support significant Settlement Area expansion into all of East Gwillimbury's Whitebelt lands.

The purpose of the Discussion Paper is to identify and review key issues and serve as the basis for obtaining additional public and stakeholder input.

To assist in a more comprehensive understanding of some of the key words and phrases used in this Discussion Paper, a glossary of terms is provided in Appendix A.

## 1.3 Discussion Paper Outline

This Discussion Paper outlines the key issues and opportunities identified in the planning policy background review. The report is organized around six topic areas and includes the existing policy context and discussion points for how any identified issues can be addressed through this Official Plan Review.

The six topic areas are as follows:

- Vision and Guiding Principles
- Complete Communities and Balanced Growth
- Housing
- Community Design
- Sustainability and Climate Change
- Agriculture and Rural Lands

## 1.4 York Region Municipal Comprehensive Review

York Region is currently undertaking a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), which will result in a new, updated Official Plan. Over the course of this Official Plan Review project, the Town and its consulting team will work closely and coordinate and share information with the Region to ensure that the two projects are based on consistent and realistic assumptions and to share relevant information.

The Regional MCR is a substantial undertaking, and it sets the stage for growth management for all of the constituent municipalities. It is ultimately implemented via a Regional Official Plan Amendment. There is a risk that the East Gwillimbury Official Plan Review may get caught up in the Regional process, which will have an impact on getting clear direction on the planning horizon year, the population and employment forecast allocations, and the greenfield/intensification split. Greenfield density targets may also be part of the discussion. These items are fundamental to the Town's growth management exercise.

Further, a Regional MCR that anticipates no Settlement Area expansion, or limited Settlement Area expansion within East Gwillimbury will facilitate a substantially different Official Plan from an Official Plan that anticipates urban forms of development throughout the Town. It will have different policy frameworks, and will impact long-term financial planning and infrastructure planning, among other community building issues. The inclusion of the Whitebelt lands is required to accommodate substantial new growth and will facilitate the Town's ability to comprehensively plan for complete, vibrant, and well-connected communities.

In this report, the existing York Region Official Plan 2010 policies were used, as this is the current in force document. At this time, there are no available draft policies for the new Regional Official Plan which is anticipated to come out of the MCR. As a result, the Regional policies outlined in this report are subject to change prior to the finalization of the NEGOP; any new information which comes out of MCR will be fed directly into the NEGOP process as it is obtained.

## 1.5 Levels of Control: Regulate - Manage - Facilitate

It will be important to consider the specific language of the policies in the NEGOP. Each policy provides direction on how it is to be implemented, how it is situated within the broader Town-wide context, and how it relates to other policies. The choice of language in the NEGOP is crucial.

For each topic to be included within the NEGOP, with a few exceptions, a decision about what to control and the level of control to be exercised will need to be made. The language used in the NEGOP will distinguish between the types of policies and the nature of implementation. The identification of the “level of control” is an important discussion because it will involve decisions about how the NEGOP will be applied throughout East Gwillimbury, particularly in consideration of achieving particular elements of the vision and principles.

- **Regulate** - The Official Plan can include both aspirational and regulatory elements. At the regulatory level, the Official Plan includes policies that specifically identify what is to be done, and how it is to be done. The wording of regulatory policies tends to include words like ‘require’, ‘will’, ‘shall’ and ‘must’, identifying elements of the policy framework that are mandatory, and that compel a landowner to do things in conformity with the policy in a very specific way. When a policy is considered at the regulatory level there is typically little room for interpretive flexibility;
- **Manage** - A policy framework that is somewhere in between the regulatory and facilitative levels is considered to be more focused on a management function. Words used here include ‘permit’, ‘prefer’, ‘may’ and ‘should’. This more permissive approach talks about principles and uses words that have inherent interpretive flexibility. Generally, the less specific and less narrow the policy framework is, there is less control exerted over development and there is more flexibility to allow things to happen; and,
- **Facilitate** - The Official Plan is, by nature, an aspirational document, providing a road map for the Town over a long-term time horizon. Within the NEGOP, there will be town-building elements that are desirable, but more difficult to achieve due to market responsiveness or fiscal constraints. The NEGOP in considering its regulatory and management functions, should also be considered a powerful tool to facilitate positive change. The facilitative element of the NEGOP is expected to use words like ‘encourage’, ‘desire’ and, in some cases, ‘incent’. Where a particular town-building element is desirable, but is typically difficult to achieve, the policy framework needs to move to its facilitation function. The facilitation function generally deals with a spectrum of key elements, including:
  - > Establishing the environment for change;
  - > Reducing the costs associated with development; and,
  - > Reducing the inherent risk of the development approval process.

## 1.6 East Gwillimbury Context

The Town of East Gwillimbury is located south of Lake Simcoe in the north portion of the Region of York, herein referred to as “York Region”. The municipality’s total area amounts to an estimated 245 square kilometres and is generally bordered by York Durham Line to the east, Green Lane and Davis Drive to the south, Bathurst Street to the west, and Ravenshoe Road the north. Surrounding municipalities include Georgina to the north, Whitchurch-Stouffville and Newmarket to the south, King and Bradford West Gwillimbury to the west, and the Township of Uxbridge to the east.

The 2016 population of EG was estimated at 24,700 people, along with 9,500 jobs. In 2016, East Gwillimbury was one of the smallest communities in York Region. It has grown to a population of approximately 34,000 with the focus of development within its five major urban centres; Holland Landing, Queensville, Mount Albert, River Drive Park, and Sharon.

East Gwillimbury’s current Official Plan defines a number of Settlement Areas - that include the Built Up Areas of Sharon, Holland Landing, Queensville, and Mount Albert, as well as Designated Greenfield Areas, some of which are not fully developed. In total, the Built Up Areas and the Designated Greenfield Areas are expected to accommodate a population of approximately 105,213 people and 33,616 jobs by the year 2036.

East Gwillimbury also includes a total of approximately 1,000 hectares of "Whitebelt" lands. Whitebelt lands are considered to be prime candidate areas for long-term urban development because they are adjacent to existing defined Settlement Areas and are, importantly, not designated by the Province as either "Greenbelt" or "Oak Ridges Moraine" lands. York Region has also previously identified approximately 223 hectares of Whitebelt lands would be required to accommodate growth in East Gwillimbury to the year 2041. Further, much of the Whitebelt lands in southern York Region are, or have already been, considered for Settlement Area Expansions which emphasizes a greater market/supply need for the lands within EG.

East Gwillimbury possesses the following key locational characteristics:

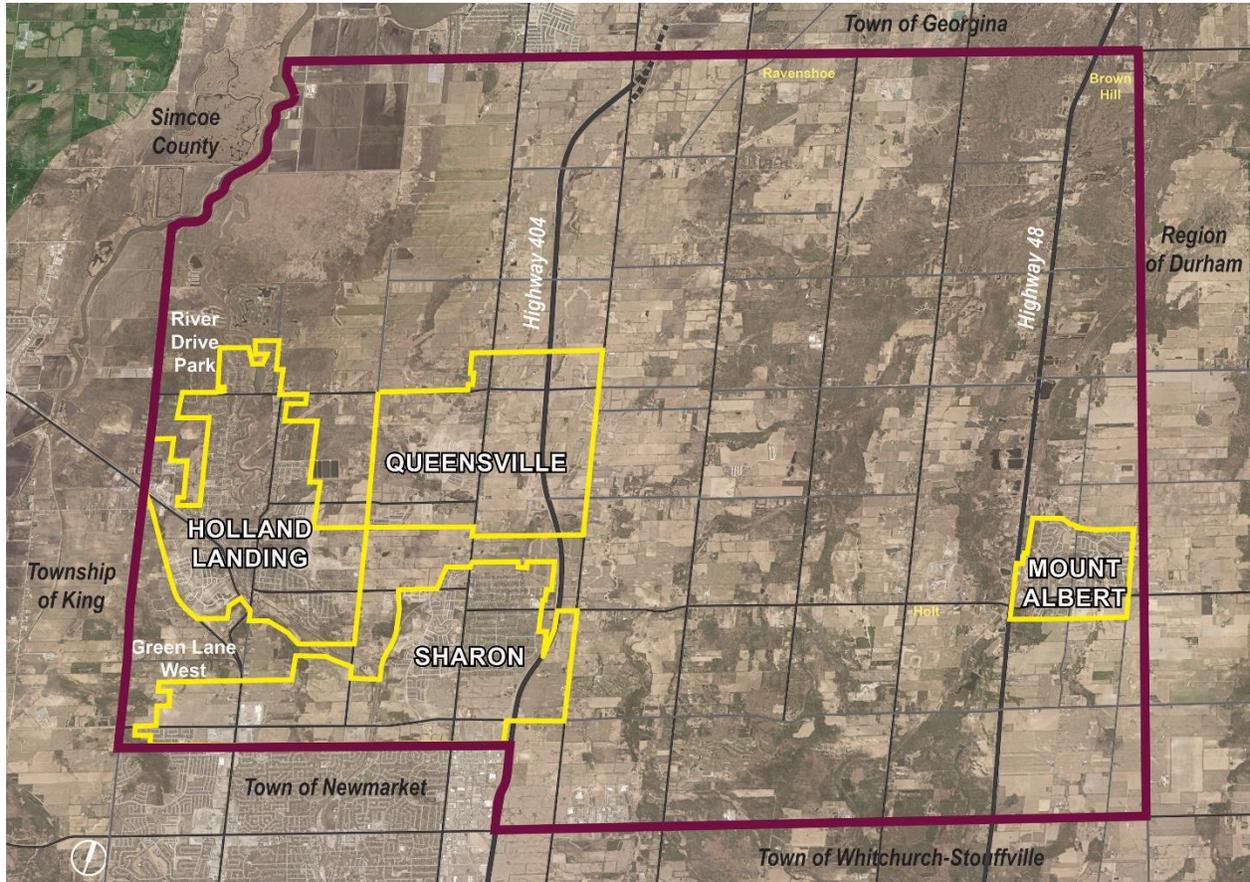
**Transportation Access:** East Gwillimbury is well served by all modes of transportation with more than 350 kilometres of roads that support an inter and intra-regional road network that links the communities. East Gwillimbury is primarily accessed by Highway 48 to the east and Highway 404 which runs through the middle of East Gwillimbury connecting the Town to Toronto to the south. Highway 404 was extended from Green Lane to Ravenshoe Road in September 2014. The 13 kilometre extension includes two interchanges at Queensville Sideroad and Woodbine Avenue. Highway 400 is located in close proximity to the west and will be further connected to East Gwillimbury by the proposed Bradford By-pass. Public transit is operated by York Region and serves the villages of Holland Landing, Mount Albert, and Sharon. The service connects to the GO Terminal at Green Lane. For the most part, East Gwillimbury is an auto oriented community.

**Local Institutions:** East Gwillimbury is home to the Sharon Temple National Historic Site and Museum. Nine historic buildings are found on the 4.5 acre grounds. The Sharon Temple hosts annual events and offers education programs and venue rentals for wedding receptions, and social and corporate events. The Town is also home to six community centres including two library branches, as well as the East Gwillimbury Sports Complex located in Sharon.

**Local Employment and Commercial Uses:** Due to its location along Highway 404, East Gwillimbury has an abundance of employment land opportunities. Residents in East Gwillimbury are primarily employed in construction, retail, manufacturing, health care, educational services, and professional

services. The retail/commercial uses are smaller, main street retail in each village with a diverse range of retail/service commercial offerings along Green Lane and in the neighbouring Town of Newmarket.

**Outdoor Recreation Amenities:** The Nokiidaa Trail is located along the East Holland River and links the three municipalities of Aurora, Newmarket, and East Gwillimbury. East Gwillimbury also includes the Holland Landing Conservation Area, the Rogers Reservoir Conservation Area, and adjacent to the village of Holland Landing is the Holland Landing Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve that protects one of the few remaining remnant patches of tallgrass prairie in Ontario. East Gwillimbury also has over 30 parks, sports fields, and golf courses.



Town of East Gwillimbury Context. Source: YorkMaps, Region of York

## 2 Vision and Principles

### 2.1 Consultation and Public Engagement

A Community Engagement Plan was prepared to set out the framework for engagement with the East Gwillimbury community and stakeholders throughout the preparation of the Official Plan Review. The intent is to fully engage the community, stakeholders, and Council, through comprehensive, inclusive, and innovative engagement techniques.

The Public Engagement Goals are:

- To build awareness and understanding of the purpose of the Land Needs Assessment and Official Plan Review;
- To effectively engage all stakeholders including residents, Indigenous communities, landowners, community groups, and business owners in the process to develop the new Official Plan;
- To generate broad-based support for the Land Needs Assessment and Official Plan Review; and,
- To encourage participation and input through a variety of face-to-face and online forums.

Establishing a Vision and Guiding Principles provides the basis for developing policy directions which reflect the Town's aspirations for managing growth and change in East Gwillimbury. Council has endorsed the inclusion of the Whitebelt lands in the Urban Area, which will serve as a guiding principle for the Land Needs Assessment and Official Plan Review.

#### 2.1.1 Engagement with Indigenous Peoples

The history of Indigenous peoples in East Gwillimbury, both prior to and after contact with Europeans, is reflected in the cultural perspective and oral history of the people who have occupied and harvested these and area lands and waters. There is a rich archaeological record of Indigenous occupation and use in the area. This record readily acknowledges that, although this is one of the more studied areas, the extent of the history of occupation and land use in the area by Indigenous peoples has yet to be fully uncovered. As it stands, the record we do have matches the written accounts of early European contact with Indigenous people that documented settlement by thousands of people living in communities across the area in complex societies with unique social and cultural perspectives. This history is an evolving one and reflects the dynamics of Indigenous land use patterns, the geopolitical and post-colonial legacy of interaction with other cultures and self-determination to the present day.

To recognize the important contributions of Indigenous peoples in East Gwillimbury, each formal meeting of the Town of East Gwillimbury Council begins with an evolving acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples that generally runs as follows:

“The Town of East Gwillimbury recognises and acknowledges the lands originally used and occupied by the First Peoples of the Williams Treaties First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples, and on behalf of the Mayor and Council, we would like to thank them for sharing this land.

We would also like to acknowledge the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation as our closest First Nation community and recognize the unique relationship the Chippewas have with the lands and waters of this territory. They are the water protectors and environmental stewards of these lands, and we join them in these responsibilities.”

This acknowledgement and its spirit extend to the Official Plan Review. The Town recognizes those Indigenous peoples who reside in, have historical connections to and contribute to the community in East Gwillimbury and the surrounding area today. The Town acknowledges the historical and cultural perspective of Indigenous peoples and their unique relationship with the land. As the Official Plan Review focuses on where and how land is used in East Gwillimbury, in this respect, the Official Plan Review can benefit from the unique perspective of First Nations and Metis people. To this end, the Town is reaching out to Indigenous people with connections to the area to seek opportunities for engagement.

The Provincial Policy Statement (the Province's lead policy document on the land use regime in Ontario) sets out and prioritizes matters of Provincial interest and requires that municipalities conform or have regard to these accordingly. Through the Official Plan Review the Town will seek to fulfill the directives of the Province of Ontario as set out in the Provincial Policy Statement by engaging with area Indigenous communities to:

- Coordinate on land use planning matters; and,
- Consider their interests when identifying, protecting, and managing cultural heritage and archaeological resources.

At a time of reflection on the relationship with Indigenous peoples both past, present, and moving forward, the Town seeks to fulfill this direction and, where possible, help continue on the path of reconciliation.

### 2.1.2 Councillor Interviews

The consultation process was initiated with discussions with East Gwillimbury Councillors on September 11, 14, and 16, 2020. The discussion began with the introduction of the work program, the project schedule, and the engagement strategy. The intent of the discussion was to gain an understanding of the key issues that Councillors believe need to be addressed in the development of the new Official Plan.

The following is a summary of the key responses grouped under six theme areas:

#### **Growth Management**

- Responsible growth
- Well-designed and complete communities
- Build out the Whitebelt
- Link between growth and infrastructure and community facilities
- Use of urban separators

#### **Environment/Sustainability/Healthy Communities**

- Leading-edge of sustainability
- Respond to climate change
- Expand trails and active transportation networks
- Explore green building design

#### **Infrastructure**

- Infrastructure key to future growth and phasing
- Need for long term servicing investments
- Promote green infrastructure and sustainable community design

#### **Historic Main Streets**

- Enable the appropriate evolution and success of historic main streets
- Focus on each unique character

- Main street needs to be improved in Holland Landing
- ### **Housing**

- Community is becoming more diverse
- Need a wider range of housing options
- Opportunities for rental and affordable housing
- More medium and higher density housing

### **Employment & Institutional Uses**

- Importance of Highway 400/404 link (Bradford By-pass)
- Need to define role of the Town in the GTHA economy
- What will be the key economic generators?
- Attract large-scale institutional uses

## **2.1.3 Community Visioning Workshop**

On October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020, a virtual Community Visioning Workshop was held to assist with shaping a Vision and Guiding Principles for the Town and set the stage for the East Gwillimbury Official Plan Update. The Workshop was divided into 2 virtual sessions, one at 9:30am and the second at 1:00pm, with approximately 60 participants in total. Each Workshop session began with introductions and a brief presentation by the project team that provided an overview of the Official Plan Update project, the planning policy context, and the preliminary comments from Town staff and members of Council. After the presentation, participants were invited to ask questions and share their thoughts on what ideas or phrases should be included in the Vision and Guiding Principles for the Official Plan.

During the Community Visioning Workshop conversations, a number of topics were raised, including:

- The need for different types of housing options and affordable housing;
- Opening up the Whitebelt lands for development;
- The role of infrastructure planning and capacity in facilitating growth and development;
- The need for policies that can adapt quickly to changing circumstances, including with respect to technology, parking requirements, and market demand;
- Strengthening Town character, including embracing a location-specific aesthetics and stronger commercial main streets;
- Protection of high quality agricultural lands; and,
- Importance of clear communication and outreach with property owners, and transparency throughout the project.

## 2.1.4 Vision and Guiding Principles

Based on the input received through the Community Visioning Workshop, conversations with East Gwillimbury staff and members of Council, and direction from East Gwillimbury's Strategic Plan, the following draft **Vision and Guiding Principles** were developed to help direct the Official Plan Update:

*East Gwillimbury will evolve as a balanced, sustainable, and complete community, with a mix of housing options to meet the needs of a diverse population and a range of employment opportunities, public service facilities and commercial uses supported by appropriate municipal infrastructure and a well connected multi-modal transportation network. The Town's unique villages will be supported as they grow and diversify with new compatible development and a mix of uses, while character giving natural areas and farmland are protected for the long term. East Gwillimbury will continue to support and celebrate a high quality of life for current and future residents and ensure that health, safety, equity, prosperity, and resilience are prioritized.*

This draft Vision is further articulated by the following draft Guiding Principles:

1. To ensure that the growth and evolution of the Town prioritizes the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage system and its ecological and hydrologic functions, including appropriate protection for those lands included in the Greenbelt and the Oak Ridges Moraine.
2. To foster a vibrant agricultural and rural community through support for farming and appropriate agricultural-related and on-farm diversified uses and to protect, maintain and enhance the rural character and function of lands outside of the settlement areas.
3. To ensure that new development contributes to the creation of complete communities, including a diverse mix of uses to easily access daily needs, a range of housing options, a multi-modal transportation system, live-work and local employment opportunities and age-friendly design that provides opportunities for people of all ages, abilities, and incomes.
4. To encourage and support the creation of a full range and mix of housing options to meet the needs of a growing and diversifying population, including a mix of densities, unit types and tenures, as well as affordable, accessible, and attainable housing options.
5. To coordinate new growth with infrastructure planning and investment to support logical and sustainable development patterns, the creation of complete and successful communities and the achievement of the Town's intensification and density targets.
6. To create cohesive, vibrant, and connected urban communities through the promotion of successful, mixed-use historic main streets, attention to urban design and architectural excellence and the protection of the Town's cultural heritage.
7. To promote the creation of resilient and environmentally sustainability communities which recognize and respond to the impacts of climate change, including the promotion of green building technologies, green infrastructure, compact development, and reducing reliance on private vehicles.
8. To provide opportunities for economic development, including support for new and existing economic generators, protection of employment areas, provision of appropriate infrastructure and services and the creation of strong and attractive commercial main streets.

## 2.2 Key Topics for Discussion

### 2.2.1 Land Use Planning in Ontario

#### 2.2.1.1 Why it's Important

Land use planning is the process of decision-making for the management of our land and resources. Land use planning is regulated under Ontario's policy led land use planning system, which is given legal authority under the Planning Act. The Planning Act defines:

- How the land use planning system works;
- Who makes decisions;
- How to resolve disputes and seek public input; and,
- Provincial and municipal roles in planning administration.

Land use planning helps each community to set development goals while keeping social, economic, and environmental factors in mind. It helps decide where in our communities homes and factories should be built; where parks and schools should be located; and where roads, sewers and other essential services should be provided. Good land use planning leads to orderly growth and the efficient provision of services. It impacts all of us and helps us to have the kind of community we want.

#### East Gwillimbury's Role in Land Use Planning

East Gwillimbury has a major role in land use planning. East Gwillimbury uses the Official Plan, Zoning By-law, development application approval processes, and transportation and infrastructure planning, among other tools, to help decide how to grow and develop, while keeping important social, economic, and environmental concerns in mind. The approvals processes for land use planning and land development balance the interests of individual property owners with the wider interests and objectives of the whole community.

#### Role of the Official Plan

East Gwillimbury's Official Plan is a key element of Ontario's policy led planning and development system however it is not the only element.

The East Gwillimbury Official Plan is required to conform with the Region of York Official Plan, and both of those Plans are required to conform be consistent with a host of Provincial legislation, plans, policies, and regulations, not the least of which are the Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement, and the Growth Plan.

The Official Plan provides the overarching policy framework within which growth and development is to proceed over the defined planning horizon. The Official Plan is an important policy document that contains a broad range of community goals, objectives and policies that provide guidance and direction to landowners, potential investors, land developers, home builders, and the community at large. It includes policies related to numerous community-building elements, such as housing, commercial and industrial development, heritage, the environment, parks and open space, transportation, infrastructure, and urban design.

The Official Plan is given a more legal framework through the Implementing Zoning By-law. The Implementing Zoning By-law provides specific regulations and provisions that define what, and where development is to occur, and how it is to be configured (height and massing) on any given property. For

more complex projects, where the Town may wish to exert control even more specifically over the architectural details, colours, and materials, as well as landscape treatments - the Site Plan Approval process is implemented.

The New East Gwillimbury Official Plan (NEGOP) is the most important vehicle for achieving comprehensive, integrated, and long-term planning within the Town. The NEGOP will:

- Provide policy direction on matters of growth and development within the Town. It sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land. It also supports the overarching goal to enhance the quality of life for all residents of East Gwillimbury;
- Provide a framework for comprehensive, integrated, place-based, and long-term planning that supports and integrates the principles of strong communities, a clean and healthy environment and economic growth for the long term;
- Support improved land use planning and management, which contributes to a more effective and efficient land use planning system within the Town; and,
- Coordinate cross-boundary matters to complement the actions of other planning authorities and promote mutually beneficial solutions.

## 2.3 Background

### 2.3.1 Town of East Gwillimbury Strategic Plan (2019-2022)

The New Official Plan will be informed by a number of foundational reports, including the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is developed by Council as the foundation to guide decisions, projects, and initiatives during the four year term of Council. The plan sets forth the core purpose, vision, and strategic priorities of the Town. The four strategic priorities evolved from consultation with the community and are representative of the feedback received.

#### **Community Vision**

To be a balanced community, evolving to meet the changing needs of our residents.

#### **Strategic Priorities**

##### **Responsible growth & environmental protection**

- Ensure responsible and balanced growth management by incorporating progressive standards and a commitment to preserve our environment and heritage as we grow

##### **Quality programs & services**

- Provide affordable programs and services which celebrate our quality of place, culture, heritage, and natural environment while promoting a healthy, inclusive, and safe community

##### **Build complete communities**

- Invest in core infrastructure to connect and serve our growing community

##### **Culture of municipal excellence**

- Foster a culture of service excellence, engagement, and transparency

## 3 Complete Communities and Balanced Growth

Growth Management is a fundamental policy element of an Official Plan in Ontario. Developing a thorough understanding of projected population and employment growth, the land needed to accommodate this growth, and how much commercial space is needed to meet the needs of residents and visitors is crucial to establishing a logical urban structure and ensuring an efficient, complete, and liveable community.

York Region has projected that the Town of East Gwillimbury will grow to 86,500 residents and 34,400 jobs by 2031. Amendment 1 to the new Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) outlines population and employment projections to 2051. However, York Region has not yet completed its Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) work to conform to the new Growth Plan and assign the 2041 and 2051 growth projections to local municipalities.

Complete Communities and Balanced Growth is based on the growth management work being completed for the Land Needs Assessment. The Land Needs Assessment which is an essential component of the Official Plan Review explores growth expectations to 2051 and will contribute to the conversation on growth management both at the local level and at the Regional level through East Gwillimbury's input on the MCR.

The Land Needs Assessment and discussions with the Region are currently ongoing and are therefore not included as part of this Discussion Paper. Key issues that remain to be resolved are absolute growth to 2051, intensification potential, greenfield density target, and utilization of the Whitebelt lands. A brief overview of key topic areas has been identified along with factors affecting residential, employment, and population related uses and the existing policy context.

### 3.1 Key Topics for Discussion

Complete communities as defined by the Growth Plan are:

Places such as mixed-use neighbourhoods or other areas within cities, towns, and *settlement areas* that offer and support opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to conveniently access most of the necessities for daily living, including an appropriate mix of jobs, local stores, and services, a full range of housing, transportation options and *public service facilities*. *Complete communities* are age-friendly and may take different shapes and forms appropriate to their contexts.

To support complete communities, the key principles for growth management in East Gwillimbury should encourage opportunities for intensification and mixed use development, and plan for new communities which are compact, well connected, and provide a range of housing opportunities.

East Gwillimbury is characterized as a multi-centred community where there exists some level of separation among each settlement area. Over time, it is expected that Holland Landing, Sharon, and Queensville will grow into each other as development of the Whitebelt lands continues to 2051 and beyond. Mount Albert will continue to be unique, given its separation from the other communities and its context within the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine features. The Urban Structure for East Gwillimbury will need to consider the natural heritage system, appropriate locations for residential communities,

employment areas and major commercial uses, and, potentially, major institutional uses, as well as some form of urban separator to maintain the identities of the settlement areas.

### 3.1.1 Residential Uses

#### 3.1.1.1 Why it's Important

A discussion about residential growth is a discussion about the future choice's households will have about where to live and how communities will grow. East Gwillimbury has a number of villages and residential neighbourhoods that have established a specific community context that has a unique character and quality. They are also primarily focused on single-detached dwellings.

#### 3.1.1.2 Current Policy Framework

Provincial policy is clear about where and how residential growth should occur. The Growth Plan establishes long term planning objectives related to the location of new growth and allocation of resources. The Growth Plan directs major growth to Urban Growth Centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe which are to be planned for a broad range of land uses, including major transit infrastructure, high-density employment, and population growth.

Other provincial policy documents, such as the PPS, also include policies that shape land use planning throughout the Province, while regional and municipal Official Plans adhere to provincial policy, giving further direction to where growth should occur.

Other Provincial legislation like the Greenbelt Act protects the Greenbelt area in the GTA and has an impact on the overall housing market. The restrictions that the Greenbelt Act puts on outward growth through the protection of the Greenbelt limits the amount of land available for low-density residential development.

#### 3.1.1.3 Things to Think About

1. Given a lack of an established Major Urban Centre, or significant amenity concentrations, competition from more urbanized communities to the south will undermine high-density residential market demand in the Town, at least in the short to mid-terms.
2. In the short-term, the Town will play an important role in the Region by servicing demand for ground-related residential units (single detached, semi-detached, townhouses) by having the land availability and the ability to provide such housing at a lower price comparative to other municipalities within the Region.
3. In the short to mid-term, increasing housing prices in the Town will likely shift demand from single-detached homes to more townhouses, and, in the longer-term, eventually stacked townhouses and apartments.

### 3.1.2 Employment Uses

#### 3.1.2.1 Why it's Important

It is important for East Gwillimbury to grow its employment base in concert with residential growth - to promote a complete community and economic development, to provide employment opportunities for local residents, and to ensure a healthy tax base.



### 3.1.2.2 Current Policy Framework

Provincial and Regional policy frameworks place a strong emphasis on promoting economic development and competitiveness by ensuring that sufficient and appropriate sites are available for employment uses. Further, Provincial policy provides clear direction on the need to protect and promote employment areas for current and future employment uses.

The PPS recommends that municipalities at the time of an Official Plan Review assess employment areas to ensure that the designation is appropriate for the planned function. In addition, the Province and Region direct a significant portion of employment growth to Primary Settlement Areas and encourage the efficient use of employment areas by increasing employment densities.

### 3.1.2.3 Things to Think About

1. Highway 404 and the proposed Bradford By-pass should establish strong demand for well located, accessible Employment Land Employment uses.
2. Given a lack of established Major Urban Centre, competition from more urbanized communities to the south will undermine Major Office market demand in the Town, at least in the short to mid-terms.
3. Protection of Employment Land Employment and continued economic development within Town as promoted through the Official Plan Review will balance residential growth and create more opportunities to work locally.

## 3.1.3 Population Related Employment

### 3.1.3.1 Why it's Important

Population-related Employment (PRE) is defined as employment that primarily serves a resident population and generally grows in line with population growth. PRE is comprised of many sectors and types of work with the significant share of PRE dedicated to institutional which includes healthcare, schools, and government services. In East Gwillimbury, a number of regional government services are located in the Bales Drive Employment Area generating a higher percentage of PRE. The remaining PRE growth is primarily retail, food services, and other personal services that typically locate within residential communities or on commercial lands.

**Yonge Street and Green Lane Centre** –centered on the intersection of Yonge Street and Green Lane and represents the most significant concentration of retail stores in East Gwillimbury. It is designated as a “Major Local Centre” in the existing Official Plan, which is intended to support higher density development and high concentrations of PRE businesses.

The remaining PRE market nodes are significantly less concentrated and include Holland Landing, Mount Albert, and Sharon. The current market suffers from the lack of established corridors and nodes. Without a defined urban centre, the PRE businesses have tended to locate throughout the residential communities.

Commercial development is a fundamental part of a complete community. Retail and service commercial uses, accommodations and restaurants create agglomerations of activity that are both highly utilized by businesses and residents and cherished as social centres. These facilities are important in establishing the character of the Town.

Planning for these uses is an important municipal activity because there is a strong desire to ensure the maximum commercial opportunity and choice for residents, businesses, and tourists, while attempting to manage those opportunities to ensure healthy competition.

### **3.1.3.2 Current Policy Framework**

Provincial policy states that accommodating an appropriate range and mix of employment including commercial is important for creating a healthy and livable community. Commercial land uses need to occur within settlement areas and should be supported by transit and active transportation. In addition, the retail sector will be supported by promoting compact built form and intensification, encouraging the integration of those uses with other land uses to support the achievement of complete communities.

### **3.1.3.3 Things to Think About**

1. Population Related Employment opportunities (institutional uses, retail, and service commercial uses) will grow over time to serve the residential population, and to ensure the Town captures its share of local retail expenditures.
2. The Town's PRE market is healthy - Yonge Street and Green Lane are anticipated to continue evolving. The Town should leverage this node's PRE businesses to function as an urban centre to attract a wider diversity of PRE businesses and economic development, supported by mixed-use development.
3. "Village Core Areas" and "Major Local Centres" have the capacity to accommodate additional PRE businesses and create diversified, unique commercial attractions.
4. It is not recommended to plan for another regional commercial node or encourage development of neighbourhood retail internal to a residential community.
5. The Town could consider identifying a key site for a future Major Institutional use (hospital, college/university).

## **3.1.4 Urban Separators**

### **3.1.4.1 Why it's Important**

East Gwillimbury has an urban fabric that includes communities which are separated by rural/agricultural lands and the Natural Heritage System which has retained their historic identity and character, elements that are highly valued by residents. Growth in East Gwillimbury has identified the desire to see some form of urban separators within the Whitebelt lands to continue to support the separation of the settlements areas and to maintain their identity.

Filling in the gaps of the urban fabric before extending outwards is an approach to community building that has, to date, produced the amorphous suburban pattern of Markham, Richmond Hill, and Vaughan where historic communities have been absorbed by new development, and consequently, their once distinct character and identity virtually lost. Urban separators create a break in continuous development and reinforce the unique identities of communities.

### 3.1.4.2 Things to Think About

1. There are two key issues with the subject of urban separators that will need further discussion and analysis:
  - Where should urban separators be located? and
  - What are urban separators comprised of?
2. Consider urban separators that are corridors of land that define community identities and boundaries, provide visual breaks in the urban landscape, and link parks and open space within and outside the settlement areas providing recreational benefits, such as parks and trails.
3. Create urban separators that link lands that contain significant environmentally sensitive features, provide wildlife habitat or critical resource protection, contain defining physical features, or contain historic resources.

### 3.1.5 What We've Heard

The Phase 1 engagement process, including the first Community Visioning Workshop and consultation with Council, has revealed a range of growth management perspectives.

#### **Growth Management**

- The Town is financially in very good shape and administrative and operational elements of municipal government must keep pace with growth;
- Responsible growth management is a crucial element of this OPR;
- The Town hears the concerns about urban sprawl and overdevelopment. The key is to ensure proper long-term management through the appropriate phasing and sequencing of growth;
- East Gwillimbury is expected to grow to 135k, almost 100k more people;
- The Town has historically done a good job managing change, but there is a desire to explore better management tools;
- There is a need to ensure a link between the expectations for future growth and the delivery of major infrastructure and community facilities. The Town has been in "growth limbo" due to a lack of important infrastructure investments;
- There is a need to identify the benefits of growth, and to overcome the concerns about growth within the community. The Town wants to be a well-designed and complete community, as well as a leader in environmental sustainability;
- There are fabulous opportunities to accommodate future growth in East Gwillimbury. The "Whitebelt" is crucial, as well as Green Lane and the GO Station Area;
- All of the "Whitebelt" is to be considered for future urban growth;
- For Sharon, Queensville, and Holland Landing it is important to recognize that they are "connected, but separate". How will their individual identities be protected? Are urban separators appropriate? Where does one begin and the other end?
- Mount Albert is isolated - while there is some potential for growth, it is effectively hemmed in by the Greenbelt. Key issues are about enhancing community character and the provision of more retail and service commercial uses and community facilities, including local dental/medical options;
- The long-term servicing solution is the key to the future growth of the Town. Infrastructure investment has not kept up with demand for growth;

- How can the Town ensure that infrastructure investments are adequately planned and built to facilitate expected growth? What role can the Official Plan play in coordinating land use decisions and infrastructure investment;
- The phasing and sequencing of future growth is a key issue and must be directly linked to infrastructure availability;
- Mount Albert constraints due to the treatment facility;
- For Whitebelt lands, servicing is major initiative that needs to be addressed; and,
- Concern with the location of the Highway 400/404 link (the Bradford By-pass) and impacts to air quality and noise due to proximity to River Drive Park.

### **Employment & Institutional Uses**

- The Highway 400/404 link (the Bradford Bypass) is considered a crucial investment in support of economic development. There is a need to understand the timing/status of this infrastructure;
- There is a need to understand the Town's role in the broader GTA economy. What will be the key economic generators? Warehousing and distribution centres?
- There is a desire to promote the Town as a key location for large-scale institutional uses. A University or a Satellite Hospital Campus. Where is the appropriate location for these types of facilities?;
- Can the Town consider an expansion of the 404 Employment Area into parts of the east side of the 404 that are currently part of the Greenbelt? and,
- What are the expected impacts of the pandemic on key planning issues? The need to accommodate work from home, the demand for employment lands, the impacts on retail and service commercial uses. What happens when the pandemic is under control? Does life revert back to pre-pandemic patterns? Or are there systemic changes that need to be recognized in the Official Plan?

## **3.2 Policy Background**

### **3.2.1 The Provincial Policy Statement (2020)**

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 1.1 (Managing and Directing Land Use to Achieve Efficient and Resilient Development and Land Use Patterns); Section 1.3 (Employment); Section 1.4 (Housing)

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The PPS provides for appropriate development while protecting resources of provincial interest, public health and safety, and the quality of the natural and built environment. The PPS supports improved land use planning and management, which contributes to a more effective and efficient land use planning system.

The PPS is issued under the authority of Section 3 of the Planning Act and came into effect on May 1, 2020. It is a requirement that the Town of East Gwillimbury's new Official Plan shall "be consistent with" the PPS. The test of "be consistent with" has been interpreted to mean that policies and decisions may vary from the policies of the PPS only if there is a rationale/justification for the variance.

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), under Section 1.1.1, requires municipalities to plan for "efficient development and land use patterns which sustain the financial well-being of the Province and municipalities over the long term"

Further, under the PPS, settlement areas shall be the focus of growth and development, occurring as:

- Intensification and redevelopment within previously developed areas; and,
- New development in designated growth areas, which have not yet been fully developed.

With respect to growth management objectives, the PPS instructs the Town to consider all of the following policies for inclusion in the Town's new Official Plan:

- Maintain at all times the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 15 years through residential intensification and redevelopment and, if necessary, lands which are designated and available for residential development;
- Maintain at all times land with servicing capacity to support at least a three-year supply of residential units available through lands suitably zoned to facilitate residential intensification and redevelopment, and land in draft approved and registered plans;
- Permit and facilitate all types of residential intensification and redevelopment;
- Direct new housing to locations served by existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities;
- Promote residential densities that use land, resources, infrastructure, and public service facilities efficiently, and support the use of active transportation and transit in areas where it exists or is to be developed; and,
- Establish development standards for residential intensification, redevelopment and new residential development that minimize housing costs and facilitate compact form.

The Province requires municipalities to plan for, protect, and preserve Employment Areas, ensure the provision of necessary infrastructure, and protect Employment Areas in proximity to major goods movement facilities and corridors. During an official plan review, municipalities should assess Employment Areas to ensure the designation is appropriate for their planned function, and sensitive land uses shall be prohibited from employment areas planned for industrial and manufacturing uses.

The conversion of Employment Areas to non-employment uses is only permitted through a municipal comprehensive review, and only where it is demonstrated that:

- The land is not required for employment purposes over the long-term; and,
- There is a need for the conversion.

Employment Area conversions may take place prior to an official plan review, in accordance with the criteria outlined in Policy 1.3.2.5.

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

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 2.1.1 (Managing Growth); Section 2.2.2 (Delineated Built-up Areas); Section 2.2.7 (Designated Greenfield Areas); Section 6.3 (Managing Growth)

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) works hand in glove with the PPS, with the distinction that the PPS is applicable to the entire Province of Ontario, whereas the Growth Plan is only applicable to the defined Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006) was the first growth plan to provide a framework for implementing Ontario's vision for building stronger, prosperous communities by better

managing growth in this region. It established the long-term framework for where and how the region will grow, while recognizing the realities facing our cities and smaller communities and acknowledging what governments can and cannot influence. It also demonstrated leadership for improving the ways in which our cities, suburbs, towns, and villages will grow over the long-term.

The new Growth Plan (2020) builds upon the success of the initial Growth Plan (2006) and responds to the key challenges that the region continues to face over the coming decades with enhanced policy directions. Progress has been made towards the achievement of complete communities that are compact, transit-supportive, and make effective use of investments in infrastructure and public service facilities. At the same time, efforts must continue to ensure protection of our natural areas and support climate change mitigation and adaptation as Ontario moves towards the goal of environmentally sustainable communities.

The Growth Plan is issued under the authority of Section 7 of the Places to Grow Act, 2005. It was approved through an Order in Council under that Act to come into effect on May 16, 2019. It is a requirement of current planning legislation that the Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan conform with the Growth Plan, which is a slightly more onerous test than the “be consistent with” test of the PPS. Conformity is a test with limited interpretive flexibility. The Growth Plan is a document that provides an overarching policy framework that is aimed at achieving important Provincial planning objectives. It directs specific actions that must be fully reflected in the Town’s new Official Plan.

On June 16, 2020, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing released for comment proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The proposed changes included updates to the population and employment forecasts (Schedule 3), expanding the planning horizon to 2051, expanding the potential for employment land conversions near transit, and other policy revisions to increase housing supply, jobs, and alignment of infrastructure. Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan came into effect on August 28, 2020.

Three growth forecasts were prepared for review, the Reference Growth Forecast, a High Growth Scenario, or a Low Growth Scenario. The Reference Forecast represents the most likely future growth outlook and is the result of extensive analysis. The High and Low Scenarios are variations of the Reference forecast and are based on different assumptions for comparative purposes.

The extension of the Growth Plan time horizon means larger numbers (population and employment) will need to be allocated and accommodated in the Regional and local planning documents. Under the new Schedule 3, that implements the Reference Forecast, the Region of York is expected to add an additional 430,000 population and 200,000 jobs over the 2031 growth projections.

A change provided under Amendment 1 enables a local municipality to make changes to settlement area boundaries faster. Specifically, under Section 2.2.8 the Growth Plan allows municipalities to undertake settlement area boundary expansions in advance of a municipal comprehensive review that are no larger than 40 hectares, subject to criteria.

There is continued strong growth anticipated, and the change to the planning horizon to 2051 may have significant impacts on East Gwillimbury’s role in accommodating future growth within the Region.

### **Growth within a Defined Community Structure**

One of the foundational elements of the Growth Plan is for municipalities to plan for long-term growth within a defined community structure - a structure that includes the natural heritage system, settlement areas, mixed-use and higher intensity corridors, as well as defined lower intensity residential neighbourhoods and employment areas.

Future housing development in East Gwillimbury will be accommodated within the Settlement Area Boundary and within the centres and corridors that fall within the built boundary, as well as within residential neighbourhoods. Within that community structure, new housing will be delivered in two different contexts: Designated Greenfield Areas and Intensification Areas.

Greenfield Areas that are intended to become residential neighbourhoods will be subject to a minimum density requirement, and that requirement is intended to drive the requirement for a range and mix of housing types.

Intensification Area opportunities are typically associated with new development within the Settlement Area Boundary and the defined mixed-use and higher intensity corridors.

The Growth Plan states that the applicable minimum residential intensification target will be based on maintaining or improving the target contained in the York Region Official Plan. The residential intensification target is currently defined in the York Region Official Plan, a minimum of 40 per cent of all residential development will occur within the built-up area. The future minimum intensification target may be changed, subject to the Municipal Comprehensive Review currently being undertaken by the Region.

The Growth Plan requires that all municipalities develop and implement a strategy to achieve the minimum intensification target, including identifying strategic growth areas as a key focus for development, determining the appropriate built form for strategic growth areas and transitions to adjacent areas, encouraging intensification throughout the delineated built-up area, supporting the achievement of complete communities and prioritizing infrastructure and public service facility investments that support intensification.

The Town is directed to support the retail sector by promoting compact built form and intensification of retail and service uses and areas and encouraging the integration of those uses with other land uses to support the achievement of complete communities.

### **Protecting Employment Areas**

The development of sensitive land uses, major retail uses, or major office uses will, in accordance with provincial guidelines, avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts on industrial, manufacturing, or other uses that are particularly vulnerable to encroachment.

The conversion of lands within employment areas to non-employment uses may be permitted only through a municipal comprehensive review, undertaken by an upper or single tier municipality, unless the conversion to a designation that permits non-employment uses satisfies the Growth Plan criteria.

Upper- and single-tier municipalities, in consultation with lower-tier municipalities, will establish minimum density targets for all employment areas within settlement areas.

### **3.2.3 Greenbelt Plan (2017)**

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 3.4.2 (General Settlement Area Policies)

The 2017 Greenbelt Plan came into effect on July 1, 2017. The Greenbelt Plan is intended to complement the policies of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The purpose of the Greenbelt Plan is to protect against loss and fragmentation of agricultural areas and to support maintenance, restoration and enhancement of natural heritage and water features and systems across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Greenbelt Plan also intends to support appropriate economic diversification within

agricultural areas. The Greenbelt Plan designates and protects more than 2 million acres of environmentally sensitive land surrounding the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area, including lands in the Oak Ridges Moraine and on the Niagara Escarpment. Working in partnership with the Growth Plan, the Greenbelt Plan establishes the limits of the region's urban structure, identifies where urbanization should not occur, and extends permanent protection to agricultural lands and ecological and hydrological features.

Schedule 1 of the Greenbelt Plan designates two major land use types in East Gwillimbury: Protected Countryside; and Oak Ridges Moraine Area. The Protected Countryside lands identified in the Greenbelt Plan are intended to build on the agriculturally and environmentally significant lands that are protected by the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan while providing for linkages between these areas and the surrounding major lake systems and watersheds. The Greenbelt Plan also includes specific policies around the protection of agricultural lands within the Protected Countryside and permits a full range of agricultural uses, agricultural-related uses, and on-farm diversified uses based on the Province's Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas.

Section 3.4.2 states that municipalities shall incorporate policies in their official plans to facilitate the development of community hubs that:

- Enable the co-location of public services to promote cost-effectiveness and service integration;
- Facilitate access through locations served by a range of transportation options, including active transportation and, where available, transit;
- Give priority to existing public service facilities within settlement areas as the preferred location, where appropriate; and,
- Enable the adaptive reuse of existing facilities and spaces in settlement areas, where appropriate.

Municipalities shall collaborate and consult with service planning, funding, and delivery sectors to facilitate the co-ordination and planning of community hubs and other public service facilities.

### 3.2.4 York Region Official Plan (2010)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** 5.1 (Forecasting and Phasing Growth); 5.2 (Sustainable Cities, Sustainable Communities); 5.3 (Intensification); 5.5 (Local Centre and Corridors); 5.6 (Building Complete, Vibrant Communities)

Section 5.1 of the current York Regional Official Plan states that the land use planning horizon for York Region is the year 2031 and that the Town of East Gwillimbury is forecasted to grow from a 2016 population of 34,700 to 86,500 in 2031, and from 11,600 jobs in 2016 to 34,400 jobs in 2031.

Local municipalities are required to develop a phasing plan for new community areas that is co-ordinated with Regional plans and policies and secondary plans must be consistent with this phasing plan. Further, within each local municipality, the development of a phase for a new community area must be substantially complete (i.e., generally 75 per cent of the residential land area which is available for development be built) before a subsequent phase may be registered. Local municipalities must prepare detailed sequencing plans within each secondary plan that provide for an orderly and efficient progression of development to the next sequence, and are supported by water, wastewater, and transportation infrastructure, and the provision of human services.

Policy 5.3.1 requires that by the year 2015 and for each year thereafter, a minimum of 40 per cent of all residential development will occur within the built-up area as defined by the Province's Built Boundary in Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Local municipalities shall complete and adopt intensification strategies based on the York Region 2031 Intensification Strategy and on the Region's Intensification Guide, with specific components listed in the Regional Official Plan. Policy 5.3.3 identifies at target of 1,030 units for East Gwillimbury to 2031, which amounts to approximately 4% as the intensification target for the Town.

The Regional Official Plan directs that the Urban Area be designed to ensure proximity to public transit for most residents and human services and that intensification areas be planned and designed to be transit-oriented with an appropriate transition of built form to adjacent areas.

The Regional Official Plan states that retail, commercial, office, and institutional structures shall be well designed, street-oriented and pedestrian scaled, and shall include, wherever appropriate as determined by the local municipality, mixed-use, multi-storey buildings, and public meeting spaces in order to support the planned urban structure and density targets of this Plan.

Floodplain special policy areas should not be planned for intensification beyond the level of development that is currently provided for in the local municipal official plan, unless it has been demonstrated that no other alternatives exist outside the floodplain. Any change in the level of development within the special policy area must be comprehensively assessed by the municipality in accordance with the Regional Official Plan.

Policy 5.5.1 states that local centres and corridors serve as important neighbourhood focal points and main streets that provide a range of working, shopping, recreation, human services and housing opportunities with appropriate forms and scale that complement the surrounding community. Local Official Plans are required to identify and designate the location of local centres and corridors within the Urban Area and the planning of these local centre and corridors must be consistent with the Region's intensification policies.

The Regional Official Plan requires that the designated greenfield area achieve an average minimum density that is not less than 50 residents and jobs per hectare combined in the developable area and that approved secondary plans within the designated greenfield area that are not completely built should be re-examined to determine if 50 residents and jobs per hectare in the developable area can be achieved.

Policy 5.2.16 encourages secondary and subdivision plans within the designated greenfield area that are not approved, to be developed in accordance with policies 5.6.4 through 5.6.16 (policies for New Community Areas). The policies for New Community Areas generally direct that development supports complete communities, with a full range and mix of housing types, mixed use community core areas with good access to transit and active transportation, live-work opportunities, and high quality urban, streetscape and building design. New Community Areas are also intended to be planned to consider human service needs, maximize passive solar gains, reduce the urban heat island effects, and include a Community Energy Plan.

In New Community Areas, comprehensive master environmental servicing plans must be prepared and implemented. These plans will examine all water systems in a comprehensive and integrated manner to:

- Understand the integration of all water systems to increase efficiencies;
- Maximize water conservation in buildings and municipal infrastructure, including water-efficient landscaping and rainwater collection for reuse; and,

- Minimize stormwater volume and contaminant loads and maximize infiltration through an integrated treatment approach.

Further, New Community Areas are to implement the York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan and mobility plans shall be completed to ensure that:

- Communities are designed to have interconnected and accessible mobility systems, with a priority on pedestrian movement, and on transit use and access;
- Communities are designed to include a system of pedestrian and bicycle paths linking the community internally and externally to other areas, and providing access to the transit system;
- A transit plan is completed in consultation with York Region Transit, which identifies transit routes and corridors, co-ordinates transit with land use patterns and ensures the early integration of transit into the community;
- The distance to a transit stop in the Urban Area is within 500 metres of 90 per cent of residents, and within 200 metres of 50 per cent of residents;
- All schools and community centres shall be integrated into the community mobility system and provide the ability to walk, cycle, transit, and carpool to these locations;
- The street network includes continuous collector streets that run both north-south and east-west and/or a grid system of streets linked to the Regional Street network;
- New community areas are designed to meet the York Region Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines;
- Planned rapid transit corridors, and/or transit terminals that connect to a rapid transit corridor, are included in the community;
- Parking standards, consistent with policy 5.2.10, encourage and support transit use and include reduced minimum and maximum parking standards; and,
- Trip-reduction strategies consistent with the policies of Section 7.1 are promoted.

A Greenlands System Plan shall be prepared for New Community Areas that identifies how the Greenlands System will be managed in an urban environment and new community areas are to include an integrated open space network that includes a range of amenities generally within 500 metres of all residents.

Mount Albert is designated as a Town and Village in the Regional OP. These areas include historic main streets and serve the needs of the surrounding rural and agricultural areas. It is the objective of the Region to ensure the continued vitality of these villages. Development in Towns and Villages must be in accordance with policies 5.6.19 through 5.6.23. These policies ensure that development or expansion of towns or villages within the Greenbelt Plan Area can only be considered at the time of the review of the Greenbelt Plan and that new development areas are subject to a secondary plan. (5.6.21 and 5.6.22). A Local Centre is identified in Mount Albert in the east Gwillimbury Official Plan. The Region requires under Policy 5.6.23 that Local Centres meet the following criteria:

- a. identify the area of the commercial core;
- b. protect the significant natural features of the community such as rivers, lakes, etc.;
- c. recognize the potential for commercial and tourist activity;

- d. recognize the servicing capacity of the community; and,
- e. provide human services for surrounding rural and agricultural areas.

Ravenshoe, Holt, and Brown Hill are identified as Hamlets in the Region OP. These settlement areas are within the Protected Countryside Area of the Greenbelt Plan and Countryside Area designation of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. Future growth is limited under Policy 5.6.24 and 5.6.25 to minor infilling and limited small-scale industrial, commercial, and institutional uses subject to the ability to service by private on-site water and waste systems.

### 3.2.5 Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan (2010)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 3.1 (Forecasting Growth); Section 3.2 (Urban Growth Structure); 3.2.1 (Employment Areas); 3.2.2 (Community Areas); 3.2.3 (Centres and Corridors)

The East Gwillimbury Official Plan provides policies and direction to manage significant growth to 2031. Growth will be accommodated within *Settlement Areas* through the urban structure, which establishes a series of community areas, employment areas and centres linked by corridors. The Official Plan guides planning decision-making towards sustainable growth and creation of a vibrant liveable town.

The growth management strategy set forth under Section 3 will enhance quality of life by providing a mix of uses along centres and corridors promoting transit and ensuring balanced growth by requiring employment be provided concurrently with residential growth (Section 3, iv). While supporting the everyday needs of residents by providing retail and commercial uses within core areas (Section 3, v).

The Plan provides for growth within the *Settlement Area* boundary which is intended to accommodate growth needs to 2031 including existing Secondary Plan Areas (Section 3.2). The Urban Structure provided within the plan identifies the Natural Heritage System, Community Areas, Employment Areas, Agriculture/Long Term Growth Areas, Centres and Corridors as focus for compact mixed-use development serviced by transit and community facilities (Section 3.2). The policy areas within the Urban Structure form the foundation for more detailed land use planning studies.

Employment Areas are lands set aside for business and economic activities such as manufacturing, warehousing, office, and any other uses deemed appropriate for advancing economic competitiveness and vitality. Employment areas are crucial for balancing residential and employment growth in accordance with employment population forecasts (Section 3.2.1). Residential, major retail and non-ancillary uses are not permitted within Employment Areas (Policy 3.2.1.3). Nor is the conversion of employment lands to non-employment land uses (Policy 3.2.1.4).

Community Areas are lands reserved for people to live, shop, learn, obtain services and are the primary location for population related jobs, such as retail stores, offices, and personal services (Section 3.2.2). An effectively planned Community Area should foster a sense of belonging, include a variety of housing sizes, types and provide easy access for residents to meet their daily needs (Section 3.2.2).

Centres and corridors contribute to an urban structure where intersections, community cores and major streets become focal points for building and activity within the community (Section 3.2.3). They will accommodate the widest mix of uses and highest densities, provide the majority of medium and high-density housing while meeting the day-to-day needs of residents. Each centre and corridor will have different functions and forms, provide a community focal point with mixed uses and transit connecting to the rest of Region (Policy 3.2.3, i, ii).

Centres are broken down into Major and Local Centres (Policy 3.2.3.2) serving similar functions but on smaller scales (Policy 3.2.3.2.2). Likewise, corridors are separated into Regional and Local Corridors accommodating mixed uses (Policy.3.2.3.3, ii). Growth management will provide for projected growth within *Settlement Areas* through land designations and focal points supporting greater densities and uses.

## 4 Housing

Ensuring the availability of a full range of housing options is critical in meeting the needs of current and future residents of all incomes, ages, lifestyles, and abilities. A diversity of housing types will assist the Town in welcoming new residents and make it possible for them to stay within their community as their needs and preferences change throughout their lifecycle. Providing for a sufficient supply of affordable housing is also an important goal, and recognized by York Region, with the current Regional Official Plan stating that a minimum of 25 percent of new housing units across the Region must be affordable.

East Gwillimbury has multiple areas that may accommodate some intensification and higher density forms of housing and is currently identified in the Official Plan to accommodate the majority of new growth and intensification, such as the Green Lane Secondary Plan area. Intensification will play an important role in providing a full range of housing forms, while also contributing to more dynamic centres, support for local businesses, and more efficient use of infrastructure. With the introduction of new housing development and intensified housing forms, it will be increasingly important to support measures which ensure that new development builds on and supports the existing community character, provides public benefits, and contributes to a higher quality public realm.

This section will focus on the topic of housing that includes but is not limited to housing mix, affordable housing targets, residential intensification opportunities, second units, and changing demographic trends, that impact the market demands.

### 4.1 Key Topics for Discussion

#### 4.1.1 Housing Options

##### 4.1.1.1 Why it's Important

As noted above, ensuring the availability of a full range of housing options is critical in meeting the needs of current and future residents of East Gwillimbury and will make it possible for residents to stay within their community throughout their lifecycle. A full range of housing is also an important economic development objective. It is important to provide appropriate and adequate housing options to attract the labour force needed to attract new industries and other businesses. Inherent to the objective of providing a full range of housing options, providing for a sufficient supply of affordable housing is also an important goal of the Town.

##### 4.1.1.2 Current Policy Framework

With respect to the policy review, it is clear that there is significant coordination among Provincial, Region, and Town planning documents with respect to the issue of the provision of a full range and mix of housing options. The housing option issue is dealt with in direct policy statements that require a range and mix of housing options, as well as through the provision of a minimum residential greenfield density requirement

and the requirement for a minimum amount of residential growth through intensification. The NEGOP should:

- Encourage the development of a full range of housing types and tenures that balance the predominance of single-detached homes with other forms of housing that meet the needs of the broader population;
- Continue to support the provision of ground oriented lower density housing forms to fulfill a significant and important market demand in the Town;
- Facilitate intensification opportunities in appropriate locations throughout East Gwillimbury through more flexible rules, faster approvals and, potentially, financial incentives;
- Continue to support higher density, mixed-use activity centres in proximity to transit; and,
- Support the adaptive reuse of older/heritage buildings to increase the housing supply.

#### **4.1.1.3 Things to Think About**

1. East Gwillimbury should continue to encourage the provision of a greater housing mix during the development approval process. East Gwillimbury may consider strengthening their policies with respect to the provision of a range of housing options within new developments, including multi-unit residential buildings, which will also play a role in helping individuals live nearer to where they work. East Gwillimbury can also play a stronger role in facilitating redevelopment in the main street areas of the Settlement Areas and other emerging mixed-use areas which involve a residential component to add to its range of housing supply. This can be facilitated with a minimum housing mix requirement in greenfield development areas, the promotion of a higher minimum greenfield density and the promotion of residential intensification. The greater mix of housing and intensification does not preclude the need to include the Whitebelt. The historic areas and stable neighbourhoods of East Gwillimbury lack the physical opportunity to accommodate this form of growth because they have not developed historically in a form that lends itself to intensification.
2. Bill 108/197: More Homes, More Choice Act, in addition to the changes to Section 37 of the Planning Act, introduces the requirement that municipalities authorize in their Official Plans and Zoning By-laws the use of an 'additional residential units' in detached, semi-detached, and row houses and in an ancillary building or structure (e.g., above laneway garages or coach houses), totalling three residential units on the property. The Province has also released regulations on this topic, aimed at removing barriers to the creation of such units, though largely to be applied through an implementing zoning by-law. Notwithstanding that East Gwillimbury will be obligated to implement this new Provincial requirement, the facilitation of additional residential units throughout East Gwillimbury has the potential to help increase the range of housing options and in particular introduce additional rental options in existing low rise neighbourhoods. The NEGOP must update policies on Additional Dwelling Units (ADUs), including introduction of ADUs in detached, accessory buildings, to be consistent with Provincial requirements.
3. As prices continue to increase – particularly for single-detached homes – it could shape what type of housing is being built in East Gwillimbury moving forward. Single-detached lot sizes should become more compact, and demand should grow for townhouse units as a more affordable alternative to single-detached homes. Increased prices could also drive some demand for higher densities like stacked townhouses or even apartments in the longer-term. (Also noted under 3.1.1)

4. By providing a full range of housing types and tenures, the Town will aim to meet the housing needs of all current and future residents throughout their lives, irrespective of income, ability, or lifestyle. This mix and diversity make it possible for households to move within one community as housing needs and lifestyle preferences change.

## 4.1.2 Affordable Housing

### 4.1.2.1 What is Affordable Housing?

To begin the discussion about housing, and more specifically 'affordable' housing, it is important to establish a basis for defining the terms that are commonly used in Ontario. Until the mid 1980's affordable housing was generally defined as housing that costs less than 30% of a household's gross income. In the 1980's various levels of government funded housing programs for low income groups. These housing projects became known as Social Housing Developments. When these developments went to public hearings, there was significant objection from the neighbourhood, and many were rejected. Social housing advocacy groups then changed their approach and began to name them Affordable Housing Projects. Still, many people think the term 'affordable housing' refers only to rental housing that is subsidized by the government. In reality, it is an overly broad term that can include housing provided by the private, public, and non-profit sectors. It also includes all forms of housing tenure: rental, ownership, and co-operative ownership, as well as temporary and permanent housing.

**'Affordable Housing'** - Federally, CMHC defines affordable housing as shelter costs that equate to less than 30% of a household's pre-tax income. According to the PPS, ownership housing is the least expensive of:

- Housing for which the purchase price results in annual accommodation costs which do not exceed 30% of gross annual household income for low and moderate income households; or,
- Housing for which the purchase price is at least 10% below the average purchase price of a resale unit in the regional market area.

Affordable rental housing is the least expensive of:

- A unit for which the rent does not exceed 30% of gross annual household income for low and moderate income households; or
- A unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent of a unit in the regional market area.

In consideration of that definition of affordable housing, the PPS also states that low and moderate income households means:

- For ownership housing, households with incomes in the lowest 60% of the income distribution for the regional market area; or
- For rental housing, households with incomes in the lowest 60% of the income distribution for renter households for the regional market area.

**'Attainable Housing'** - Attainable housing is market-based housing. Attainable housing can be part of the continuum of dwelling types that are also defined as affordable housing. More specifically, where housing is denser (lower per unit land costs), and smaller (lower construction costs) attainable housing may be considered affordable if the price meets the specific definition of affordable.

Where attainable housing is considered to be also affordable housing, it is market-delivered housing that can be either ownership, or rental housing, and is:

- Affordable to households with a range of incomes, at moderate end of the scale (30th to 60th percentile of the income spectrum); and,
- Provided without cost or rent interventions from the public sector or other social housing providers.

Defining attainable housing is therefore contextual to the unique circumstances that make up a community. People's perceptions of housing quality also differ based on personal preference. However, implicit in this definition of attainability is the idea that a range of housing options (type, size, tenure, cost) exist in the local market, allowing households at various income levels to find and secure suitable housing as their needs or means change.

It is also important to note that attainable housing is a wider issue that needs to be addressed for a variety of residents.

**'Special Needs Housing'** - Special needs housing means any housing, including dedicated facilities, in whole or in part, that is used by people who have specific needs beyond economic needs, including but not limited to, needs such as mobility requirements or support functions required for daily living. Examples of special needs housing may include, but are not limited to long-term care homes, adaptable and accessible housing, and housing for persons with disabilities such as physical, sensory, or mental health disabilities, and housing for older persons. Special needs housing does not necessarily have to meet the definition of affordable housing.

**'Social Housing'** - Social housing is purpose built affordable housing that is affordable to households at the lowest end of the household income spectrum of the regional market area (typically at, or below the 30% percentile of the income spectrum) and is provided with ongoing government subsidy. Social housing is almost always rental housing and is typically provided and maintained in the long-term by a government agency and/or non-profit organization.

#### 4.1.2.2 The Local Demographics

It is important to understand some of the East Gwillimbury-specific demographics that are relevant to the discussion of affordable housing. The following are excerpts from the Land Needs Assessment Background Study – Population and Residential Growth. The data illustrates a comparison of East Gwillimbury to the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and Province of Ontario.

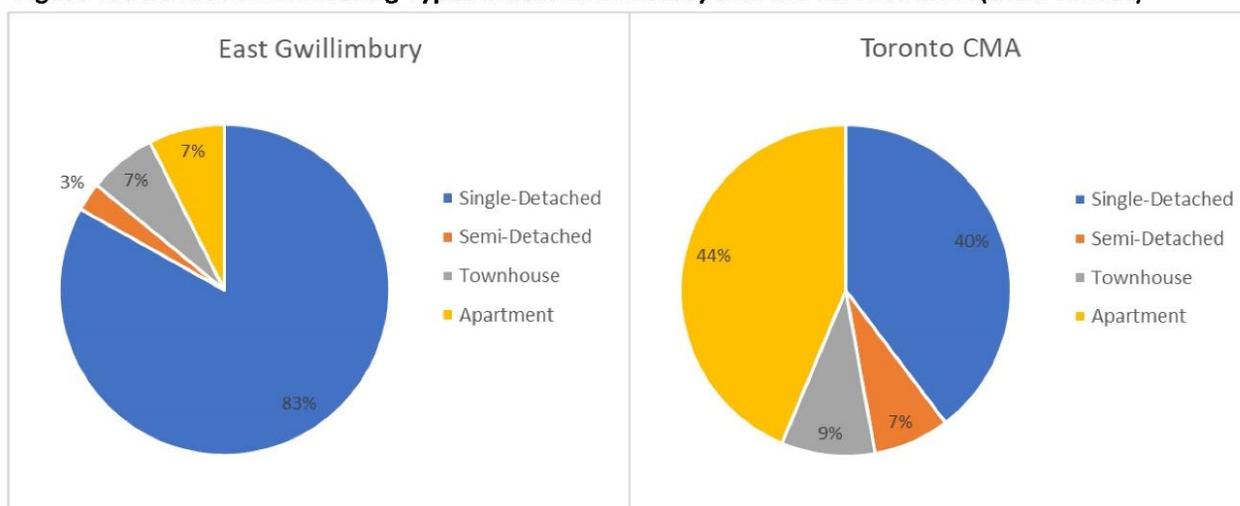
**Incomes are Above Average** - East Gwillimbury had higher average incomes than both the CMA and Ontario for individuals and households at the time of the last Census. For household incomes, the higher average is partially attributed to the high proportion of households of couples with children. East Gwillimbury tends to feature higher incomes almost across the board with incomes between \$100,000 to \$200,000.

**Housing is More Affordable for Residents** - Higher incomes have an impact on housing affordability in East Gwillimbury. Despite a high proportion of single-family homes fewer residents in East Gwillimbury pay a disproportionate amount of income towards shelter than elsewhere in the CMA or Ontario. If housing costs less than 30% of gross income, it is generally considered "affordable" for the household.

**Housing is Primarily Single-Detached** - The existing housing stock in East Gwillimbury consists primarily of single-detached homes – 83% of all housing units. Combined with semi-detached and townhouse units, low-rise housing represents 93% of the housing stock. Apartments represent just 7% of the total housing stock, with most units in duplex homes or buildings with fewer than 5 storeys.

**Freehold Ownership is Predominant Tenure** - Reflective of the housing mix, the large majority of households in East Gwillimbury are homeowners (89%), higher than both the CMA (66%) and in Ontario (70%). Condominium tenure homes are also uncommon in East Gwillimbury, with just 1% of units noted as condominiums in 2016.

**Figure 4: Distribution of Housing Types in East Gwillimbury and the Toronto CMA (2016 Census)**



Source: Statistics Canada

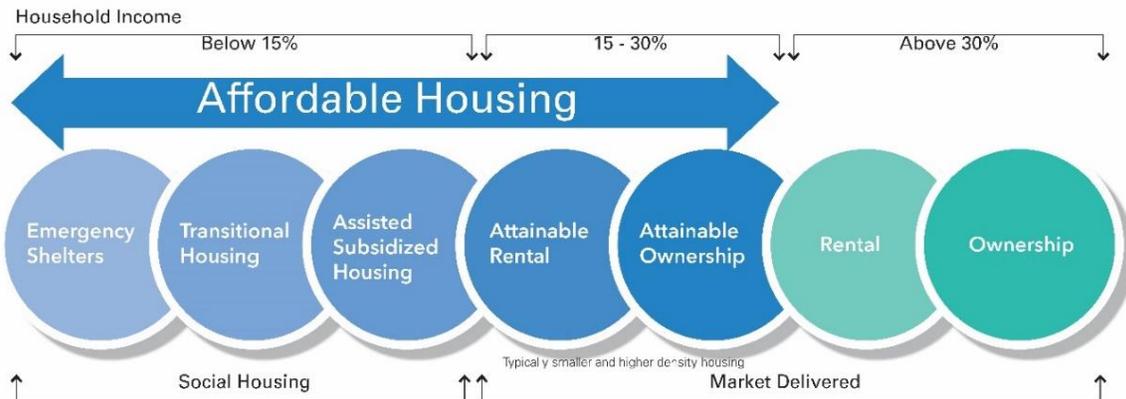
Source: *Land Needs Assessment Background Study: Population and Residential Uses*

### 4.1.2.3 Why it's Important

When the housing sector of the local economy is efficient and well-functioning, the marketplace should be able to meet most people's housing needs. CMHC indicates that almost 80% of Canadian households have their housing needs met through the marketplace. However, not everyone has the financial means to access or compete in the housing market. The marketplace isn't always able to meet the unique housing needs of certain groups, such as people with disabilities, seniors, or the tourism-based workforce. In these cases, governments, community organizations, non-profits and the private sector must work together to provide affordable housing.

The graphic on the next page identifies the 'Housing Spectrum,' and is used to define a host of affordable housing terminology, and identifies which elements require government intervention, and which are typically delivered by the private market.

# Housing Spectrum



## 4.1.2.4 Current Policy Framework

The policy review identified agreement among the Province, the Region, and the Town on the need to provide affordable forms of housing. Certainly, the Province requires an affordable housing target, the Region establishes the target, and the Town includes it in the EGOP.

The policy frameworks, however, are less clear on planning approaches that define and achieve the provision of affordable housing. This gap in policy direction is a direct result of a lack of planning legislation available to a municipality to compel the private sector to provide affordable housing. Rather, typical planning frameworks focus on a permissive approach as the baseline, while some jurisdictions go further and provide an approach that facilitates/incentivizes the provision of affordable housing by the private sector. It is also important that the Region and East Gwillimbury identify their important role in achieving affordable housing targets.

## 4.1.2.5 Things to Think About

1. The policy framework at the Provincial level is not clear on planning approaches that are specifically intended to achieve affordable housing objectives. There is a clear lack of planning legislation available to East Gwillimbury to compel the private sector to provide affordable housing. In the end, the Planning Act does not provide the Town, or the Region with any legislative authority to control the price, occupancy, or tenure of housing, nor does it provide any legislation that would compel the private sector to build affordable housing, or any of its components.
2. Include policy approaches that are specifically intended to achieve affordable housing objectives, including an affordable housing target. Consider the viability of establishing Inclusionary Zoning.
3. More typical municipal planning frameworks tend to focus on a permissive approach as the baseline for planning policy, while some jurisdictions go further and provide an approach that facilitates/incentivizes the provision of affordable housing by the private sector. Here, the intent is to maximize the use of municipal land resources, and to provide planning policy that supports 'intrinsically affordable' housing opportunities (housing that is generally more affordable because of higher density and smaller units).

4. Plan for Special Needs Housing within the community to anticipate changing housing needs for a changing demographic profile. The population is aging and there is a need to expand housing options and provide for long term care and assisted living facilities.

### 4.1.3 What We've Heard

The Phase 1 engagement process, including the first Community Visioning Workshop and consultation with Council, identified tremendous support for direction in the NEGOP for the provision of housing. Housing options in East Gwillimbury, according to discussions with stakeholders, appears to cover a broad spectrum of housing needs. The stakeholders felt that the Town should:

- Promote smaller housing units that create more affordable options;
- Facilitate additional residential dwellings (e.g., accessory apartments and coach houses) throughout East Gwillimbury's existing and future neighbourhoods;
- Encourage different forms of housing. There is too much focus on high end, single detached housing. There is a desire for developers to build something different, more opportunities for rental and more affordable options;
- The Town is open to ideas to achieve more affordable forms of housing. Better housing mix, including more medium and higher density forms of housing, including smaller units;
- Affordability, how to aid or tackle it, how to offer a more varied product; and,
- Expediting opportunities for rental and affordable housing.
- Importance of reacting to market conditions, being nimble without significant barriers
- The community is becoming much more diverse
- Need reference to alternative housing forms/innovation in housing forms i.e., be more flexible to new ideas by architects, greater range of housing types and built forms;
- Policies that allow a range and mix of housing types, concentrate a wider range especially in intensification areas, but even more flexibility in more suburban areas to give more housing options;
- The Town has been growing and there is resistance to change so when thinking about higher densities need to be careful about where it is proposed, keep some existing components unchanged, take guidance from the Secondary Plans about how to incorporate higher densities
- High rise buildings are not what people want to live in. Will it be a problem with growth management, and will there be flexibility to adapt to market demand?

## 4.2 Policy Background

### 4.2.1 Provincial Policy Statement (2020)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 1.1 (Managing and Directing Land Use to Achieve Efficient and Resilient Development and Land Use Patterns); Section 1.4 (Housing)

#### **Promoting a Market-Based Approach**

The PPS states that healthy, livable, and safe communities are sustained by accommodating an appropriate market-based range and mix of residential types, including single-detached, additional residential units, multi-unit housing, affordable housing, and housing for older persons.

Market-based housing is not specifically defined in the PPS, but, in general market-based economics emphasizes the role of market conditions (the cost of development versus achievable rent) in developing a strategy for housing. In this regard, market-based housing is assumed to mean housing that would normally be delivered by the private sector, without cost or rent interventions from the public sector or other social housing providers.

#### **Defining and Achieving Housing Options**

The PPS calls on municipalities to provide an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities to meet projected requirements of current and future residents. In the PPS, housing options is defined as follows:

*“a range of housing types such as, but not limited to single-detached, semi-detached, rowhouses, townhouses, stacked townhouses, multiplexes, additional residential units, tiny homes, multi-residential buildings. The term can also refer to a variety of housing arrangements and forms such as, but not limited to life lease housing, co-ownership housing, co-operative housing, community land trusts, land lease community homes, affordable housing, housing for people with special needs, and housing related to employment, institutional or educational uses.”*

To achieve the provision of a range and mix of housing options, the PPS instructs the Town to consider all of the following policies for inclusion in the Town’s new Official Plan:

- Establish and implement a minimum affordable housing target - in East Gwillimbury, this target has been established by the York Region Official Plan at 25%;
- Permit and facilitate the development of special needs housing, and housing responding to demographic changes and employment opportunities;
- Permit and facilitate all types of residential intensification and redevelopment;
- Permit additional residential units;
- Direct new housing to locations served by existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities;
- Promote residential densities that use land, resources, infrastructure, and public service facilities efficiently, and support the use of active transportation and transit in areas where it exists or is to be developed; and
- Establish development standards for residential intensification, redevelopment and new residential development that minimize housing costs and facilitate compact form.

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

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 1.2.1 (Guiding Principles); Section 2.2.6 (Housing); Section 6.3 (Managing Growth)

The Growth Plan requires that upper- and single-tier municipalities, in consultation with lower-tier municipalities, the Province, and other appropriate stakeholders, align land use planning with applicable housing and homelessness plans and support housing choice through the achievement of the minimum intensification and density targets in this Plan, as well as the other policies of this Plan by:

- Identifying a diverse range and mix of housing options and densities, including second units and affordable housing to meet projected needs of current and future residents;
- Establishing targets for affordable ownership housing and rental housing;
- Identifying mechanisms, including the use of land use planning and financial tools, to support the implementation; and,
- Implementation through appropriate policies and regulations. (2.2.6)

Municipalities will support the achievement of complete communities by:

- Planning to accommodate forecasted growth to the horizon of this Plan;
- Planning to achieve the minimum intensification and density targets in this Plan;
- Considering the range and mix of housing options and densities of the existing housing stock; and,
- Planning to diversify their overall housing stock across the municipality.

To support the achievement of complete communities, Policy 2.2.6.3 directs municipalities to consider the use of available tools to require that multi-unit residential developments incorporate a mix of unit sizes to accommodate a diverse range of household sizes and incomes.

Municipalities will maintain at all times where development is to occur, land with servicing capacity sufficient to provide at least a three-year supply of residential units. This supply will include, and may exclusively consist of, lands suitably zoned for intensification and redevelopment.

The Growth Plan states that 50% of all new residential development in York Region be within the Built-up Area.

**Designated Greenfield Area Opportunities** - A Designated Greenfield Area is defined in the Growth Plan as:

*“Lands within settlement areas but outside of delineated built-up areas that have been designated in an Official Plan for development and are required to accommodate forecasted growth to the horizon of this Plan. Designated greenfield areas do not include excess lands.”*

In other words, greenfield development opportunities are part of the remaining undeveloped lands within the East Gwillimbury municipal boundary, and currently are, or will be subject to urban development applications at some time in the future. Greenfield areas that are intended to become residential neighbourhoods (and are not subject to current development approvals) will be subject to minimum density requirements, and that requirement is intended to drive the requirement for a range and mix of housing types.

The current residential greenfield minimum density target is for York Region is 50 persons and jobs combined per gross hectare. The Region's Official Plan reflects this target, but the future minimum density target may be changed, subject to a Municipal Comprehensive Review currently being undertaken by the Region.

**Intensification Opportunities** - Intensification is defined in the Growth Plan as follows:

*"The development of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists through: redevelopment, including the reuse of brownfield sites; the development of vacant and/or underutilized lots within previously developed areas; infill development; and the expansion or conversion of existing buildings."*

Intensification opportunities will also play an important role in providing smaller and higher intensity housing forms that are typically considered more affordable, support for local businesses, and support for enhanced transit facilities. Intensification is also intended to make more cost-effective and efficient use of municipal infrastructure investments.

The residential intensification target is currently defined in the York Region Official Plan at 40% of all residential development within the Region. The future minimum intensification target may be changed, subject to a Municipal Comprehensive Review currently being undertaken by the Region.

### **A Guiding Principle for Housing**

Housing, and the provision of affordable housing, is a foundational element of the Growth Plan. A specific guiding principle within the Growth Plan is to "support a range and mix of housing options, including second units and affordable housing, to serve all sizes, incomes and ages of households."

### **A Complete Community**

The concept of a complete community is crucial as it relates to the provision of housing. The Growth Plan defines a Complete Community as follows:

*"Places such as mixed-use neighbourhoods or other areas within cities, towns, and settlement areas that offer and support opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to conveniently access most of the necessities for daily living, including an appropriate mix of jobs, local stores, and services, a full range of housing, transportation options and public service facilities. Complete communities are age-friendly and may take different shapes and forms appropriate to their contexts."*

Within Section 2.2.6 Housing, the Growth Plan stipulates that municipalities will support the achievement of complete communities, and the key element of a full range of housing, by:

- Planning to accommodate forecasted growth to the horizon of this Plan;
- Planning to achieve the minimum intensification and density targets in this Plan;
- Considering the range and mix of housing options and densities of the existing housing stock; and,
- Planning to diversify their overall housing stock across the municipality.

Municipalities must maintain at all times land with servicing capacity sufficient to provide at least a three-year supply of residential units. This supply will include, and may exclusively consist of, lands suitably zoned for intensification and redevelopment. In addition, in order to support the achievement of complete communities, municipalities will consider the use of all available tools to require that multi-unit residential developments incorporate a mix of unit sizes to accommodate a diverse range of household sizes and incomes.

### 4.2.3 York Region Official Plan (2010)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 3.5 (Housing Our Residents)

It is a policy of the York Region Official Plan to ensure an adequate region-wide supply of housing by:

- Maintaining a minimum 10-year supply of land designated for housing through intensification and redevelopment and in designated greenfield areas; and,
- Maintaining a 3 to 7 year supply of registered and draft approved plans of subdivision, condominium plans and/or site plans.

Local municipal official plans and zoning by-laws are required to permit a mix and range of housing types, lot sizes, unit sizes, functions, tenures, and levels of affordability within each community, consistent with Regional forecasts, and intensification and density requirements. Further, policy 3.5.6 states that a minimum of 25 per cent of new housing units distributed across the Region must be affordable, coordinated across applicable local planning areas including secondary plan and block plan areas, and include diverse housing options and barrier free units.

The Region will work with local municipalities, the private sector, and other stakeholders to consider innovative financial arrangements to encourage and support the development and maintenance of non-profit and affordable housing, including giving affordable housing initiatives priority on publicly owned lands. (3.5.10)

Policy 3.5.15 encourages local municipalities to adopt policies for an equitable distribution of social housing types, and the Regional Official Plan further encourages accessibility features in all new housing and that special needs housing, emergency, affordable, and seniors' housing be located in proximity to rapid transit and other human services.

The Regional Official Plan requires local municipalities to adopt official plan policies and zoning by-law provisions that authorize secondary suites as follows:

- The use of two residential units in a house if no ancillary building or structure contains a residential unit; and,
- The use of a residential unit in a building or structure ancillary to a house if the house contains a single residential unit.

*\*The rules regarding secondary suites have since been amended by Bill 108, now requiring permission for secondary suites in both the main building of single-detached, semi-detached and townhouses and an accessory building, for a total of three units.*

### 4.2.4 Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan (2010)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 3.2.3 (Centres and Corridors); Section 4.4 (Residential Land Use Designations); Section 4.4.1 (General Policies); Section 4.4.2 (Low Density Residential); Section 4.4.3 (Medium Density Residential); Section 4.4.4 (High Density Residential); Section 4.4.5 (Estate Residential)

Residential land uses provide for a range of densities enabling price gradients and the provision of various housing types. The Plan provides general policies (Section 4.4.1) and specific policies for Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, High Density Residential and Estate Residential. Residential policy objectives aim to provide an adequate supply of serviced lands for development,

achieve a mix of housing types, densities, sizes, and tenures to meet projected housing market demand, provide housing for all income groups and provide housing opportunities promoting public transit and accessibility to daily needs (Section 4.4).

General residential land use policies provide for transitional densities, maintain a ten-year supply of lands for residential purposes, permit alternative development standards facilitating housing affordability, encourage the production of affordable housing, protection of rental housing and require the adoption of an affordable and special needs housing strategy to achieve a minimum 25% affordable housing target (Policy 4.4.1.6 - 4.4.1.14). All residential areas may be zoned to permit neighbourhood parks, convenience commercial uses, public and institutional uses that complement and are compatible with the residential function of the area (Policy 4.4.1.16).

The Official Plan directs that a minimum 35% of the units in the Yonge Street and Green Lane and 2<sup>nd</sup> Concession and Green Lane Major Local Centres meet the definition of affordable (3.2.3.2.1 i) q, ii) c.). These areas are planned to develop as transit-oriented centres with a mix of higher density housing, mix of uses, and population related employment uses to serve the larger community and support transit.

Low Density Residential areas provide for the creation of neighbourhoods comprised of ground-related housing and compatible uses that provide for the daily needs of residents. Medium Density Residential areas provide for forms of housing conducive for transit and will be integrated into low density residential neighbourhoods to provide a mix of housing types. High Density Residential areas provide for non-ground-oriented housing at the highest densities permitted near centres and corridors to support viability of mixed-use development and facilitate transit (Policy 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.4). Lastly, lands designated Estate Residential allow for single detached dwelling units to develop on private services and any new draft plan of subdivision on vacant land designated Estate Residential will be on municipal services. The Plan aims to phase out Estate Residential where possible (Policy 4.4.5, Policy 4.4.5.4).

Furthermore, pursuant to Section 37 of the Planning Act the permitted height and density may extend beyond that permitted in the Plan and Zoning By-law in exchange for facilities, services or matters of public benefit (Section 8.15). Including the provision of a wide range of housing types extending to assisted, low-income or special needs housing (Policy 8.15.1, i). Housing policies specify the mix and location of housing densities, services required by residents and the provision of affordable housing as defined in the Plan (Section 9.3). While leveraging corridors and centres as focal points for transit and mixed-use development.

## 5 Community Design

Growth will play an important role in providing a full range of housing forms, while also contributing to a dynamic community, and increased support for local businesses. With the introduction of new housing development and intensified built forms, it will be increasingly important to support measures which ensure that new development and infill development fit within the vision for East Gwillimbury.

The Official Plan community design considerations are related to compatible housing forms and appropriate transitions at the edges of residential communities and abutting Natural Heritage Systems. Further, new development must support a built form that transitions from higher to lower densities, promotes a mix of housing sizes, and creates attractive streetscapes. Community design policies are geared towards creating an attractive streetscape, protecting, and enhancing heritage resources and focal features, creating a sense of place, preserving scenic features, and improving pedestrian comfort.

In setting a refreshed direction for community and urban design policies there are several themes which must run throughout the policies in order for them to be relevant, comprehensive, and defensible. Urban design in the context of East Gwillimbury must consider preservation, compatibility, connectivity, legibility, and a sustainable urban form.

**Preservation** – Can occur in a variety of ways and applies to the safeguarding of built and cultural heritage, as well as the natural environment. It encompasses the preservation of views, important places, and landmarks.

**Compatibility** – As more intense forms of development are considered the concept of compatibility becomes important. New development should integrate with the existing context and consider: high quality design; sensitivity to heritage (built and natural); appropriate transitions to stable neighbourhoods; the character of neighbourhoods and community identity; and fit within the streetscape and overall vision for the Town.

**Connectivity** – Should occur beyond the scale of roads and must consider how pedestrians connect to smaller sites, access transit, visit natural systems, and do so safely and in a comfortable manner. New development must play a role in ensuring a high degree of connectivity by enhancing circulation systems and creating clear routes.

**Legibility** – It is important that there is coherence across Official Plan policies and land use classifications to allow for the harmonious integration of new and existing development. A legible urban environment should be easy to navigate, safe, and create opportunities for public interaction.

**Sustainable Urban Form** – The principle of sustainability is found throughout the Official Plan and is a Council priority. Sustainability impacts all aspects of the Official Plan and is used as a lens for policy development. It is essential this approach continue and be reflected in support for new growth that is compact, designed efficiently, avoids ecosystem degradation, creates sustainable systems of transportation, promotes active transportation, healthy communities, and mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

Cultural heritage resources play a valuable role in providing communities with a sense of identity and rooting and reconnecting communities with their past. It is further critical to coordinate and work with Indigenous communities to ensure that they are involved in matters in which they have an interest, and that cultural heritage resources, sites and traditions are properly protected for future generations. The preservation of these resources can make important contributions to placemaking and establish a unique

architectural character in communities, which helps foster a sense of pride and supports a pleasant and interesting public realm.

The intent of this review is to provide an overview of the opportunities for structuring the built environment to support a high quality community that is well designed, compact, and supports people's needs for daily living. Key considerations for good community design are based on a high quality public realm that is reinforced by community structure that supports walkability, street connectivity, streetscaping, parks and open spaces, trails, and building orientation.

The Community Design Section focuses on topics related to urban design, public service facilities, infill development, built form compatibility, and cultural heritage. This section also reviews and summarizes the relevant policies in Provincial Plans, the Region Official Plan, and the existing East Gwillimbury Official Plan, as well as other relevant documents.

## 5.1 Key Topics for Discussion

### 5.1.1 Public Service Facilities and Neighbourhood Nodes

#### 5.1.1.1 Why it's Important

It is important to encourage and facilitate the coordinated development, maintenance, and expansion of public service facilities to meet the needs of residents, regardless of age, physical ability, and financial means. Locating public service facilities in mixed use neighbourhood nodes, where transit is available or planned, or in proximity to higher density residential communities, supports the vitality of those communities, contributes to quality of life/quality of place and facilitates access by all residents. Public service facilities are an important component of creating complete communities, by serving the social, health, educational, recreational, cultural, and other needs of local residents.

In addition to incorporating public service facilities, neighbourhood nodes can also include local commercial uses. These types of local, neighbourhood-supportive uses also play an important role in creating complete communities and healthy lifestyles and can support the use of active transportation for meeting daily needs. However, the integration of local commercial uses/nodes within residential neighbourhoods must be carefully designed to ensure no undue adverse impacts on adjacent uses are created.

#### 5.1.1.2 Current Policy Framework

Provincial policy directs that priority should be given to locating public service facilities in community hubs, such as the main streets or mixed use corridors, where they are easily accessible to a significant population through active transportation and transit. Provincial and Regional policy further emphasize the importance of planning for complete communities, which includes providing a broad range of uses to meet daily needs and which are accessible by a range of transportation options.

#### 5.1.1.3 Things to Think About

1. East Gwillimbury could explore creative approaches to the development of facilities and delivery of public services, with the Town participating in the co-design and co-delivery of services with other government agencies, the private sector and/or non-profit organizations. Planning for public service

facilities should also consider the ease of access by active transportation and transit, the creation of mixed use neighbourhood nodes, proximity to concentrations of residents, equitable access, and the contribution new facilities will make to the success and vitality of East Gwillimbury.

2. The creation of mixed use neighbourhood nodes, including local commercial uses, can play an important role in neighbourhoods by providing convenient access to daily needs. East Gwillimbury could consider incorporating policies/strategies to avoid any undue adverse impacts of local commercial uses on surrounding residential uses, such as locations on higher order roads, built form transitions, buffering, parking location, relation to the street, integration in mixed use nodes, and angular planes.
3. The NEGOP is a good opportunity to strengthen the policy framework to ensure a high quality public realm, easy access to public service facilities and an attractive and welcoming community. Community planning and design can incorporate consideration of wide range of elements which together contribute to a high quality of life. Potential elements that may be considered for a strengthened policy framework may include:
  - Upgrading and maintaining municipal services, active transportation facilities, public utilities, and social and recreational facilities so that they meet or exceed minimum standards and are inclusive and accessible for people of all ages and abilities;
  - Preserving, restoring, or adaptively re-using older buildings and buildings of cultural heritage value or interest;
  - Addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation, such as through building retrofits and new subdivision design for energy efficiency, renewable and district energy systems, water conservation and low impact development strategies; and,
  - Revitalizing existing communities, including through mixed use infill development and redevelopment, streetscaping, beautification projects, façade improvement, and the promotion of tourism activities.

## 5.1.2 Public Realm Design

### 5.1.2.1 Why it's Important

The design of the public realm plays an incredibly important role in defining the community character and presenting an attractive and successful image to residents and visitors. Good design can improve the walkability/bikeability of the Town, attract visitors and customers for local businesses, spur private investment, and generally improve East Gwillimbury's quality of life.

It is important to plan for enhanced infrastructure for alternative transportation modes within the main street areas and to key destinations. East Gwillimbury should ensure that the public realms of the settlement areas showcase the best of the community and consider including stronger and more visible connections between the three settlement areas through trails and other transportation systems. Further, East Gwillimbury should consider the future introduction of transit when demand warrants it. It will be important to ensure that investment in the main streets, with respect to public realm and active transportation infrastructure, as well as new built form, supports the viability of transit service.

### **5.1.2.2 Current Policy Framework**

The Provincial and Regional policy frameworks generally support a high quality of urban design, and particularly emphasize the need for good design in downtowns and other higher density mixed use areas. Additionally, there is significant policy support for ensuring that public rights-of-way are designed in a way that supports active transportation, prioritizes pedestrian comfort and safety, and incorporates green infrastructure where appropriate.

### **5.1.2.3 Things to Think About**

1. The public right-of-way makes up a significant portion of the public realm throughout East Gwillimbury, and therefore plays an important role in community design, creating a pleasing environment and establishing a distinctive character. Addressing factors such as high quality streetscaping, appropriate streets cross-sections/widths for different contexts, ensuring well designed facilities for all modes of travel, incorporating green elements, and creating opportunities for public art can all have a positive impact on moving through East Gwillimbury and encouraging active transportation. To this end, the East Gwillimbury could consider strengthening the policy framework around the streetscape as part of this Official Plan Update.
2. It is also important to link streetscaping with policies for the design and configuration of adjacent buildings, which play an important role in creating a comfortable streetscape. This could include ensuring buildings frame the street.
3. It should be noted that urban and streetscape design policies are not necessarily limited to one type of land use. While some strategies are appropriately implemented across all land use types, the NEGOP could also explore how specific design policies should be applied in each designation to ensure that the objectives of an attractive and walkable community are achieved.
4. East Gwillimbury could consider strengthening policies to provide clearer guidance for public investments and for how development, including its site configuration, access, and parking, should relate to the public realm.
5. In addition to the above elements, the NEGOP should also consider policies and guidelines to address other aspects of good community design including community structure, street connectivity, building orientation, how parking is provided, land use mix, variety of parks and trails, and access to services and amenities. Other considerations may include sustainable design (e.g., passive solar orientation, low impact development), the preservation of important views and vistas, and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

## **5.1.3 Compatibility/Intensification**

### **5.1.3.1 Why it's Important**

The concept of compatible development is critical to appropriately accommodating and encouraging redevelopment and intensification. East Gwillimbury, through this Official Plan Review, will be placing a stronger emphasis on accommodating residential growth through intensification and therefore it will be

important that an appropriate policy framework is in place which ensures that new development provides a positive contribution to the community, without deterring this form of development.

East Gwillimbury has a number of neighbourhoods predominated by lower density housing and long-term changes within these neighbourhoods may need to occur through intensification to accommodate new housing opportunities. However, it is expected that residential intensification in these neighbourhoods will be more minor in nature to allow for a gradual and compatible evolution to increase housing options, such as through additional residential units, and minor infill development and redevelopment.

Further, East Gwillimbury includes a number of existing neighbourhoods with built form characters that are often highly valued by residents, linked to the sense of identity of these areas, and an important asset and attractor for new residents and investment interests. However, at the same time, housing and market trends are continually changing, rendering the evolution and adaptation of existing neighbourhoods an important factor for their continued success. Notwithstanding the broad range of public opinion on the issue, Official Plans frequently include clear principles and policies that are aimed at protecting existing neighbourhoods, while promoting a 'compatible' evolution.

### **5.1.3.2 Current Planning Context**

The Provincial and Regional planning frameworks require East Gwillimbury to plan for new residential units through intensification within the defined Built Boundary and ensure that new development and redevelopment makes efficient use of existing infrastructure and facilities. East Gwillimbury is also required to establish a strategy for accommodating intensification to minimize negative impacts on existing uses and to ensure that the most significant intensification is directed to appropriate locations. Throughout Provincial, Regional, and East Gwillimbury's existing Official Plan, there are also frequent requirements to expand the range of housing types and options available, including in existing neighbourhoods.

The current Official Plan states that intensification in areas designated Village Core Area shall preserve, compliment, and enhance the historical and/or architectural character of these areas. This will be accomplished by the location and buffering of parking facilities; consistency of setbacks and continuity of character, to maintain and restore pedestrian-oriented streetscapes; provision of linkages between the Village Core Area and adjacent areas of residential or other development; and compliance with the heritage policies of the Plan.

### **5.1.3.3 Things to Think About**

1. Consider adding policy guidance for compatible development as well as a definition for "compatible" in the NEGOP. Considering the joint goals of protecting existing neighbourhoods and encouraging appropriate intensification, it will be important for the new Official Plan to include a policy framework that protects existing neighbourhoods from incompatible forms of development, while still permitting them to evolve and be enhanced over time, with flexibility for innovation. It will be important to consider what types of new development are desirable for a reasonable evolution of neighbourhoods and what role these neighbourhoods will play in accommodating growth. All new development must be compatible with the surrounding context.
2. New policies should focus on encouraging appropriate and compatible forms of redevelopment and intensification throughout East Gwillimbury, with consideration of the local context. If it is determined that neighbourhoods are easily defined by specific built form/design attributes and that it is

appropriate to provide additional protection, the preparation of future Neighbourhood-Specific Studies and Design Guidelines could be identified.

3. New policies could support Town-wide architectural control guidelines for new development, which could address elements such as building design, design for priority/high visibility locations, and architectural standards.
4. Establish a clear policy framework for the design issues related to infill and redevelopment in order to ensure compatible development adjacent to existing neighbourhoods.

## 5.1.4 Historic Main Streets

### 5.1.4.1 Why it's Important

East Gwillimbury includes historic main street areas associated with the communities of Holland Landing, Sharon, and Mount Albert. Each of these settlement areas includes a Village Core Area. In addition, Sharon includes the Civic Precinct which includes lands around the Town's Civic Centre and Sharon Temple. The planned function of Village Core Areas is to serve as a hub of activity and the centre of each community, providing the widest range of goods and services warranted by the community in a pedestrian-friendly setting (OP, 2010). These main streets are reflective of the character of the area, include historical and architectural qualities, and are in proximity to the surrounding neighbourhoods offering services within walking distance of residents.

Main streets will be critical to expanding local economic development opportunities throughout East Gwillimbury. More than just fulfilling an economic role however, the main streets should continue to act as the centres and community hubs for the settlement areas, reflecting their unique character, acting as recreational, service and retail destinations, and accommodating increased population densities. New policies will also consider how the main streets should grow and mutually support one another and how to ensure that large format commercial development does not erode the critical role of the downtowns in serving the needs of residents.

Although East Gwillimbury will see considerable growth over the next 30 years, East Gwillimbury is committed to protecting its small town charm and rural character. New development in the Village Core Area will need to be designed in keeping with the character of the area. It is important to continue to protect and enhance the historic character of the main streets and their built heritage, as critical to placemaking within East Gwillimbury.

### 5.1.4.2 Current Policy Framework

The Provincial and Region planning frameworks identify downtowns and main streets as focal points for residential, commercial, and institutional uses, and require East Gwillimbury to:

- Establish safe and pleasant pedestrian environments that encourage movement by foot, bicycle, and transit;
- Provide attractive streetscapes;
- Encourage downtown economic development initiatives; and,
- Provide a range of housing types and costs.

The Village Core Area designation in the Official Plan permits a range of uses under Policy 4.3.3.1 that includes retail stores, personal service shops, restaurants, business and professional offices, medical clinics, mixed uses, residential units, or apartments within commercial buildings, as well as institutional uses and open space.

### **5.1.4.3 Things to Think About**

1. New development shall be designed in keeping with the character of surrounding development.
2. East Gwillimbury should ensure that the Village Core Areas develop into dynamic centres with a full range and mix of uses.
3. It is important to continue to protect and enhance the historic character of the Village Core Areas and their built heritage. At the same time, East Gwillimbury should also explore how to incorporate new development which complements and is compatible with the existing buildings, without attempting to imitate their heritage attributes.
4. A public realm which embraces alternative modes of transportation and celebrates a strong sense of character is critical for a successful main street.
5. Review the extent of the Village Core Areas designations to ensure they reflect the size and extent of the core commercial area and protect stable residential areas.
6. A high quality, and ultimately a beautiful community, includes well designed buildings, streetscapes, parks, and open spaces. A high-quality community includes destinations, landmarks and gateways that distinguish it within its context and establish a sense of place. Crucial to a high-quality community is the attention to the interplay among built form, the public realm, and the natural environment. A high-quality community should engender a sense of pride as a place to live and a sense of stewardship in its long-term care and maintenance.
7. Ensure that the Civic Precinct is recognized in the NEGOP.

## **5.1.5 Cultural Heritage**

### **5.1.5.1 Why it's Important**

Cultural heritage can play a valuable role in contributing to community identity and providing connections to the past. Cultural heritage resources frequently support placemaking and the creation of a unique character, which is especially valuable in areas experiencing intensification, as a way to balance new development. It is further necessary to coordinate and work with Indigenous communities to ensure that they are appropriately involved in matters in which they have an interest, and that all cultural heritage resources, sites, and traditions are properly protected for future generations.

### **5.1.5.2 Current Policy Framework**

Cultural heritage conservation is supported by Provincial and Regional policy frameworks. These policy frameworks require East Gwillimbury to conserve significant cultural heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes, and archaeological resources and identify the important role they play in fostering a sense of

place, particularly in high growth areas. Further, Provincial policy requires that development on lands adjacent to protected heritage property ensure that the heritage resources are conserved.

Provincial policy now also provides important emphasis on the need to engage with Indigenous communities, recognizing and considering their interests in identifying, protecting, and managing cultural heritage and archaeological resources. Provincial policy further encourages municipalities to consider and promote archaeological management plans and cultural plans and consider them in their decision-making.

### 5.1.5.3 Things to Think About

1. It will be important to ensure that the Official Plan policies are updated to be in conformity with the most recent Ontario Heritage Act, so that the appropriate level of protection is provided for cultural heritage resources in the Town.
2. This Official Plan Update will have to consider new policy language which outlines the interests and involvement of Indigenous communities in cultural heritage and archaeological matters, as well as other areas to be determined through further consultation with these communities.
3. Review and if necessary, update the Heritage Conservation Districts policies. A Heritage Conservation District (HCD) is a geographically defined area with distinct heritage character that is protected by a municipal by-law under the Ontario Heritage Act. Through the adoption of a district plan, guidelines and policies, a municipality is able to guide future change in the district through the conservation, protection, and enhancement of the area's special character.

### 5.1.6 What We've Heard

The Phase 1 engagement process, including the first Community Visioning Workshop and consultation with Council, provided the following with respect to community design:

- The Official Plan must include strong language that enables the appropriate evolution and success of all of the Town's historic main streets;
- Need to focus on what makes each of these historic main streets separate and unique;
- Sharon and Mount Albert have identifiable historic main streets that are evolving, but more attention must be paid to promoting a main street in Holland Landing;
- The Town may consider a Heritage Conservation District designation along key parts of Leslie Street, as well as within Mount Albert;
- There is a desire to establish an East Gwillimbury "Downtown".
- Historic main streets (i.e., Holland Landing). It's very hard when there are private homes on main streets, is there any thought to designating these areas for commercial/business uses?
- Other places have a theme to buildings i.e., Arizona, Florida, so it's a bigger impact when you go through a certain area, similar style, colours etc., stronger theme/character. Makes it more inviting and attractive to visit or start a business.
- For Sharon, Queensville and Holland Landing it is important to recognize that they are "connected, but separate" - How will their individual identities be protected? Are urban separators appropriate? Where does one begin and the other end?

- Mount Albert is isolated - while there is some potential for growth, it is effectively hemmed in by the Greenbelt - Key issues here are about enhancing community character and the provision of more retail and service commercial uses and community facilities, including local dental/medical options.

## 5.2 Policy Background

### 5.2.1 Provincial Policy Statement (2020)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 1.5 (Public Spaces, Recreation, Parks, Trails and Open Space); Section 1.6 (Infrastructure and Public Service Facilities); Section 1.7 (Long-Term Economic Prosperity); Section 2.6 (Cultural Heritage and Archaeology)

The PPS advises that healthy and active communities should be promoted by planning public spaces, street, and recreation settings to be accessible, equitably distributed, to foster social interaction and to promote travel by active transportation (1.5.1).

Public service facilities shall be provided in a coordinated and efficient manner, which prepares for the impacts of climate change, and integrated with land use planning and growth management to ensure that they are financially viable over their life cycle and meet projected needs (1.6.1).

The PPS requires that “Infrastructure and public service facilities should be strategically located to support the effective and efficient delivery of emergency management services” and that “public service facilities should be co-located in community hubs, where appropriate, to promote cost-effectiveness and facilitate service integration, access to transit and active transportation” (Section 1.6.4 and 1.6.5).

Economic prosperity should be supported by encouraging a sense of place, by promoting well-designed built form and through cultural planning and conserving features that help define character.

Under Section 2.6, the PPS states that significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved, and that development and site alteration shall not be permitted on lands containing or potentially containing archaeological resources or on lands adjacent to protected heritage property unless the heritage resources have been conserved.

Further, planning authorities should consider and promote archaeological management plans and cultural plans and shall engage with Indigenous communities and consider their interests when identifying, protecting, and managing cultural heritage and archaeological resources.

### 5.2.2 Ontario Heritage Act (2021)

The *Ontario Heritage Act* came into effect in 1975 and was developed to provide municipalities and the provincial government with powers to preserve the cultural heritage resources of Ontario.

The Ontario Heritage Act gives municipalities the ability to pass by-laws to formally designate properties of cultural heritage value or interest. Formal designation is one way of recognizing a property's heritage value to a community. Designation also helps to ensure the conservation of these important places for the benefit and enjoyment of the community.

The Ontario Heritage Act offers three levels of protection for heritage properties. Properties can be:

1. Designated individually (Part IV);
2. Designated as part of a larger area or Heritage Conservation District (Part V); or,
3. Listed on the municipality's Heritage Register of properties of cultural heritage value or interest (Part IV).

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

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 1.2.1 (Guiding Principles); 2.2.1 (Managing Growth); Section 3.2.8 (Public Service Facilities); Section 4.2.7 (Cultural Heritage Resources); Section 5.2.5 (Targets)

The guiding principles of the Growth Plan direct the policies of the Plan and how land should be developed, managed, and protected. Although community design is not directly stated the guiding principles and policies support the foundation for successful community design.

Section 2.2.1 4 states that applying the policies of the Growth Plan will support the achievement of complete communities through a mix of land uses, range and mix of housing options, access to transportation options, co-location of public service facilities in community hubs, parks and open spaces, compact form and vibrant public realm, and green infrastructure and to plan for resilient communities.

Section 3.2.8 of the Growth Plan outlines the policy framework for public service facilities, which includes:

- Planning for and investing in public service facilities will be coordinated with land use planning;
- Public service facilities and public services should be co-located in community hubs and integrated to promote cost-effectiveness;
- Priority should be given to maintaining and adapting existing public service facilities and spaces as community hubs to meet the needs of the community and optimize the long-term viability of public investments;
- Existing public service facilities that are located in or near strategic growth areas and are easily accessible by active transportation and transit, where that service is available, should be the preferred location for community hubs;
- Municipalities will collaborate and consult with service planning, funding, and delivery sectors to facilitate the co-ordination and planning of community hubs and other public service facilities; and,
- New public service facilities, including hospitals and schools, should be located in settlement areas and preference should be given to sites that are easily accessible by active transportation and transit, where that service is available.

Policy 4.2.7 states that cultural heritage resources will be conserved in order to foster a sense of place and benefit communities; that Municipalities consult with stakeholders and Nations and Métis communities, in developing and implementing official plan policies and strategies for the identification, wise use and management of cultural heritage resources; and that archaeological management plans and municipal cultural plans should be prepared.

In planning to achieve the minimum intensification and density targets in this Plan, Section 5.2.5 directs municipalities to develop and implement urban design and site design official plan policies and other supporting documents that direct the development of a high quality public realm and compact built form.

## 5.2.4 York Region Official Plan (2010)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 2.1.5 (Regional Greenlands System); Section 3.1 (Human Health and Well-being); Section 3.3.4 (Cultural Heritage); Section 5.2 (Sustainable Cities, Sustainable Communities)

Policy 2.1.5 requires that Urban Area and Towns and Villages, the Regional Greenlands System shall be identified more specifically in local official plans and secondary plans and integrated into community design. These plans shall contain policies and detail initiatives that encourage remedial works and enhancement opportunities within the Regional Greenlands System.

Under Policy 3.1 the Regional Official Plan recognizes that community design has an important role in increasing levels of physical activity and reducing the amount of automobile dependency to assist with the prevention of obesity and other physical and mental health diseases. The policies of the Official Plan promote active healthy lifestyle choices, require high-quality urban design and pedestrian-friendly communities that are safe, comfortable, and offer mobility choices; the design of communities to be more resilient to the effects of climate change; local food production; citizen engagement to affect decision on individual and community health and well-being.

It is an objective of the Region to create high quality, sustainable communities and under Policy 5.2.8 to employ the highest standard of urban design, which:

- a. provides pedestrian scale, safety, comfort, accessibility, and connectivity;
- b. complements the character of existing areas and fosters each community's unique sense of place;
- c. promotes sustainable and attractive buildings that minimize energy use;
- d. promotes landscaping, public spaces, and streetscapes;
- e. ensures compatibility with and transition to surrounding land uses;
- f. emphasizes walkability and accessibility through strategic building placement and orientation;
- g. follows the York Region Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines; and,
- h. creates well-defined, centrally-located urban public spaces.

The Regional Official Plan encourages local municipalities to compile and maintain a register of significant cultural heritage resources, and other significant heritage resources, in consultation with heritage experts, local heritage committees, and other levels of government. (3.4.1)

Local municipalities are required to adopt official plan policies to conserve significant cultural heritage resources and ensure that development and site alteration on adjacent lands to protected heritage properties will conserve the heritage attributes of the protected heritage property. (3.4.11)

The Regional Official Plan encourages local municipalities to consider urban design standards in core historic areas that reflect the areas' heritage, character, and streetscape and to use community improvement plans and programs to conserve cultural heritage resources. (3.4.8) Local municipalities should further encourage the communication of appropriate archaeological discoveries and/or cultural narratives to residents in development proposals through innovative architectural and/or landscape architectural design, public art, or other public realm projects.

The Region Official Plan also requires under Policy 5.2.9 that retail, commercial, office, and institutional structures be carefully designed in a compact form and be pedestrian-oriented, transit-supportive, and multi-storey where appropriate.

## 5.2.5 Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan (2010)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 3.3 (Urban and Public Realm Design); 3.3.1 (Public Realm); 3.3.2 (Gateways, Edges and Landmarks); 3.3.3 (Urban Design Policies for Institutional, Commercial, and Industrial Development); 3.3.4 (Community Design); 8.2.2 (Community Design Plan)

The Plan aims for excellence in urban and public realm design as key to the delivery of its vision. General urban design policies recognizing the importance of design in community building provide for more specific urban and public realm design guidelines covering a range of uses including mixed-use, employment, open space, centres, and corridors (Section 3.3). Council will develop urban design guidelines at the Community Design Plan stage and implement town-wide Urban Design Guidelines based on the policies outlined in the Plan (Policy 3.3, i, ii).

The public realm forms a key component of community design providing for the character and walkability of urban areas. Extending to publicly accessible public and private spaces such as open spaces, parks, lanes, squares, sidewalks, and streets. Streetscapes are highly visible, express community image, reinforce street network and enhance the visual appeal and use of public space (Section 3.3.1).

Streetscapes should be designed to promote safety and facilitate multiple means of transportation including transit, bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular (Policy 3.3.1.1). And integrate a variety of elements to create a sense of place and visually attractive public areas through landscaping, lighting, signage, street furniture and special corner treatments (Policy 3.3.1.2). While accommodating pedestrian movement, accessibility, comfort and emphasizing streetscapes at major intersections as community focal points (Policy 3.3.1.3 to 3.3.1.6).

The Plan gives special consideration to Community and Town Gateways as opportunities for enhanced urban design at key entry points promoting a sense of place for distinctive areas. Community Gateways consist of entry points into neighbourhoods, while Town Gateways are entry points into historical settlement areas (Section 3.3.2). Gateways should emphasize prominent views, corner condition, and preserve Natural Heritage System frontage abutting major arterial roads (Policy 3.3.2.1, Policy 3.3.2.3). The focal nature of these spaces should be reinforced with the inclusion of public art in urban squares, parks, pedestrian spaces at gateways and use of streetscape elements to enhance character (Policy 3.3.2.5, 3.3.2.6).

Community design refers to how the layout of streets, blocks, homes, and parks contribute to the character of a community (Section 3.3.4). The Community Design Plan provides an overview of the proposed development for a Secondary Plan Area designed to address the policies within this Plan and York Region Official Plan relating to complete communities, environmental protection, community vision, phasing, and public realm design (Section 8.2.2). Once approved the Community Design Plan shall form the basis for the approval of Plans of Subdivision and amendments to the Zoning By-law (Policy 8.2.2.2).

Community design considers compatible housing forms and appropriate transitions at the edges of residential communities and abutting Natural Heritage Systems (Policy 3.3.4.1). Densities should form a gradient from higher to lower densities, promote a mix of housing sizes, create attractive streetscapes, and reduce the prominence of fronting garages (Policy 3.3.4.2, 3.3.4.3, 3.3.4.6, 3.3.4.7). Community design policies are geared towards creating an attractive streetscape, enhancing focal features, creating a sense of place, preserving scenic features, and improving pedestrian comfort.

## 5.2.6 Health & Active Living Master Plan (2015)

The Health & Active Living Master Plan was prepared for the Community Parks Recreation & Cultural Services Department (CPRC) department to understand the opportunities and challenges over the next 10 years in meeting the demand for parks, recreation, culture, and connections to the natural environment with the expected doubling of the population.

The study reviewed the existing Programs and Service Delivery, Recreation Facilities, and Parks and Trails and provided recommendations for the CPRC in the Short-, Medium-, and Long Term. Input was provided by Council, Senior Management, Social Service Agency, and extensive public consultation.

Several Recommendations were set forth under Administration, Programs, and Community Engagement; Indoor Facilities; Parks, Forestry and Trails; Financial; and Implementation.

- Development of facilities and programs that increase the accessibility for persons of varying abilities, residents over the age of 55 years and youth.
- Develop policies and processes that promote culture and heritage preservation and special events expansion.
- The retention of smaller centres, halls and facilities is important given the importance of such facilities to rural and hamlet social and recreational needs.
- The changing demographics of East Gwillimbury will require more flexibility of building operation.
- Implement Parks Design Guiding Principles where practical and applicable.
- Implement Trails recommendations and considerations related to design, construction, maintenance, and operations where practical and applicable.

## 5.2.7 Municipal Cultural Plan (MCP), 2011

In 2011, the Town of East Gwillimbury undertook a Cultural Mapping project which led to the development of the Municipal Cultural Plan. The Plan identifies an overall vision, goals, and strategies to guide cultural development within East Gwillimbury. One of the main goals of the MCP is to expand culture-led economic development as a way to broaden awareness of the economic importance of culture in the municipality.

Associated action items include:

- Developing integrated experience-based tourism offerings
- Developing integrated cultural and agri-tourism offerings and experiences
- Implementing a program to support start-up enterprises in underutilized downtown spaces
- Supporting youth engagement and retention
- Strengthening festivals.

## 6 Sustainability and Climate Change

A high quality, well-designed and environmentally sustainable built environment is valued within East Gwillimbury and contributes to a high quality of life. To support this environment, East Gwillimbury must continue to promote the creation of 'complete communities' that include a diverse mix of land uses, a range and mix of housing types and tenures, employment opportunities, high quality public open spaces, amenities and services, and access to a full range of transportation options. Complete communities create healthier, more desirable, and sustainable environments to live in, while also minimizing negative impacts to the natural environment.

Energy and water conservation, waste reduction, compact development patterns, alternative transportation options, and improved air quality are all components of sustainable design. Introducing sustainability as a lens for future development will lead to communities that are safer, more active, healthier, financially prosperous, and more resource conscious. It is becoming increasingly apparent that updated policies and processes are needed to prepare East Gwillimbury residents and East Gwillimbury's infrastructure for the mitigation and adaption that will be required in future years to deal with climate change. Important considerations include:

- The impacts of climate change are already being felt in Ontario through more frequent and severe weather events that challenge the Town's stormwater management (SWM) capacity.
- Major storm events are increasingly creating risks to public safety and damage to public infrastructure and private property.
- Emerging SWM strategies include reducing the amount of paved surface to reduce run-off flows and using green infrastructure/natural corridors and Low Impact Development (LID) methods to increase infiltration in vegetated areas and SWM ponds before run-off reaches the Town's sewer pipes.
- Designing new development to be efficient, sustainable, and resource conscious.

Provincial and Regional policy directs planning authorities to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate by supporting energy conservation, efficient land use and development patterns, and embracing the use of green infrastructure and natural areas for water infiltration.

This section focuses on the following topics

- Sustainable Development;
- Healthy Communities and Public Health; and,
- Climate Change Mitigation and Resilience.

The following discussions are based on a review of the existing policy context, including Provincial Plans, the Region Official Plan, the existing Town Official Plan, as well as other relevant documents.

York Region is currently undertaking a Community Energy and Emissions Plan and a Climate Change Adaptation Plan as part of its municipal comprehensive review, which will provide further policy direction for the NEGOP.

## 6.1 Key Topics for Discussion

### 6.1.1 Sustainable Development

#### 6.1.1.1 Why it's Important

A sustainable community is environmentally and socially healthy and resilient. It meets the challenges of climate change and other environmental issues through integrated solutions, rather than through fragmented, incremental approaches that meet one objective at the expense of the others. A sustainable community manages its human, natural, and financial resources equitably and takes a long-term view – one that is focused on both present and future generations. Sustainability success relies upon having specific and measurable targets for indicators related to climate change, energy use, water, and waste.

Sustainability has become an issue of ever increasing importance due to, and not limited to, climate change, rising greenhouse gas emissions, aging populations, resource depletion, and increasing public health challenges, all related to the way in which we interact with our built and natural environments. The evidence of the linkage between improvements to both sustainability and public health through meaningful interventions in community design has made significant progress in recent years. The limited supply of land for development within urban boundaries and the current pattern of development in many municipalities is placing a strain on the natural environment and the health of residents. The nature and shape of development needs to change to respond to these limits if we are to achieve any meaningful sustainable measures. This is a priority for the Whitebelt lands should they become urban.

#### 6.1.1.2 Current Policy Framework

With respect to the policy review there is clear direction from the Province and Region to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate by supporting water and energy conservation, planning for efficient land use and development patterns, supporting the use of alternative transportation modes, and embracing the use of green infrastructure and natural areas for water infiltration. It is increasingly recognized by the various policy documents that past and in some cases current development patterns are no longer a sustainable way to grow and that municipalities, including East Gwillimbury, must shift to a more compact built form and find ways to reduce impacts on the natural environment.

#### 6.1.1.3 Things to Think About

1. The development of complete communities through new development is essential for promoting sustainable development, improving air quality, and reducing climate change impacts. This will involve ensuring that a full mix of land uses that meet daily needs are within easy access of residents, without the need to drive, supporting an increased use of active transportation, and reducing parking standards.
2. An important opportunity for moving forward with a sustainability agenda is to continue the promotion and support of the Thinking Green Development Standards and the commitment to sustainable and efficient development in the NEGOP.
3. Energy and resource efficiency measures can also be promoted through design guidelines and strategies for water and wastewater servicing, waste management, and energy supply and distribution.

## 6.1.2 Healthy Communities and Public Health

### 6.1.2.1 Why it's Important

Healthy communities are a priority for East Gwillimbury. A supportive, inclusive, and healthy community ensures the well-being of residents by providing all the pieces they need to thrive and meet their basic needs of food, shelter, water, income, and safety. A healthy community not only meets basic needs but provides a high quality living environment, access to public health services, a variety of experiences, support of cultural heritage, a vibrant economy, and a healthy ecosystem. An important consideration for the Town when developing policies for the Official Plan is to provide a policy framework that supports and nurtures the happiness, health, and well-being of residents.

A healthy community consciously seeks to improve the health of its citizens by putting public health high on the social and political agenda. Physical, social, and mental well-being are the necessary components of public health, and the built environment should be designed to ensure access to healthy food, clean air and water, safe environments, and opportunities for physical activity. A fundamental element of a healthy community is the inclusion of active transportation. Active transportation refers to any form of human-powered transportation – walking, cycling, using a wheelchair, scooters, inline skating, or skateboarding.

Key considerations for healthy community design include community structure, street connectivity, streetscaping, building orientation, how parking is provided, land use mix, variety of parks and trails, and access to services and amenities. Other considerations include sustainable design (e.g., passive solar orientation, Low Impact Development), active transportation, and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

### 6.1.2.2 Key Topics and Trends

#### Healthy Communities and Public Health

Public health and land use planning are intrinsically linked, bringing to the forefront several public health challenges related to the way in which we interact with our built and natural environments. Built environments that encourage physical activity can reduce the incidence of diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, asthma, and respiratory disease and contribute to better overall public health. Public health considerations must become part of policy development and integrated with design and built form policies and guidelines.

#### Chronic Disease

According to Statistics Canada, 1 in 4 or, 25% of Canadian adults, are overweight and child obesity has tripled in the last 30 years. Obesity is one of the biggest health challenges in Canada and is the leading contributor to chronic disease such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada states that childhood obesity is a growing epidemic, and that children and teens must be encouraged to be more physically active, requiring at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.

These diseases are placing a financial strain on our health care system and according to the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the treatment of diabetes alone is expected to cost approximately \$15

billion by 2022.<sup>1</sup> Policies are needed to support lifestyles that are healthy and built environments that encourage daily physical activity, such as accessible and safe active transportation options that include walking and cycling infrastructure, access to healthy food, energy efficient buildings, and access to green space. These measures not only improve climate change mitigation but may assist with reducing the incidence of chronic diseases and contribute to better overall public health.

### **Aging Population**

Our population is ageing and there is a need to contend with this within planning frameworks. Challenges relating to an aging population include ensuring that health and social systems are ready for this demographic shift, establishing policies and programs that support age friendly environments, expanding housing options and the need for long term care facilities, ensuring buildings are accessible, ensuring access to safe, convenient forms of transport to health care and services, and that health and community support services are available.

Responding to this demographic shift will require adaptations across many aspects of citizens' lives, such as how people work; how people care for, communicate, and interact with each other; how the built environment supports how people live and work, how public services are provided; and how mobility supports all age groups.

### **Air Pollution**

Greenhouse gases (GHG) absorb and trap heat in the atmosphere contributing to the atmospheric greenhouse effect. To support a reduction in GHG emissions Canada has committed to meeting the 2015 Paris Agreement GHG emissions reduction target of 30% below 2005 levels by 2030 through The Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, adopted in 2016.

The Canada Energy Regulator (CER) has identified that the three big greenhouse gas emitting sectors in Ontario are transportation at 35%, heavy industry (iron, steel, and chemicals) at 24%, and buildings (residential and commercial) at 22%.<sup>2</sup> Together, transportation and buildings account for over 50% of emissions which are directly related to how we design and operate within our communities.

### **Access to Services**

The availability and access to public services and amenities (recreation, health care, long-term care, education, retail and commercial, etc.) for residents of all incomes, ages, and abilities is also important for maintaining a high quality of life and a sense of community and belonging, which is so valued in East Gwillimbury. The ease of access to these services and amenities is based on both their design and location. The Official Plan should direct new services and amenities to downtowns and other community hubs, where they are easily accessible to a large percentage of residents by a range of transportation modes. Well located public services and amenities will further support the vitality of the community and the efficient use of infrastructure.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada. Link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/chronic-diseases/reports-publications/diabetes/diabetes-canada-facts-figures-a-public-health-perspective.html>

<sup>2</sup> Provincial and Territorial Energy Profiles – Ontario. Link: <https://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/en/data-analysis/energy-markets/provincial-territorial-energy-profiles/provincial-territorial-energy-profiles-ontario.html#s3>

Not everyone can drive or has access to a vehicle. Age, disability, choice, or affordability can all keep people from owning and operating a vehicle. Ensuring everyone has a safe, convenient, accessible way to get to where they need to go is an equity matter; everyone deserves access to health care, services, employment, education, etc. Clustering diverse land uses in neighbourhoods and communities will assist with ensuring the availability, accessibility, and convenience of destinations and facilities within walking distance. Many of the neighbourhoods in East Gwillimbury are favourable for walking and cycling and priority should be given to ensuring that walking and cycling are safe, convenient, viable modes of transportation.

### **Access to Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails**

All residents should have access to parks, open spaces, and trails and this should be a key planning principle. Opportunities to engage with nature has physical, mental, and social health benefits and should be available through trail systems, a variety of parks and open spaces such as municipal parks, community parks, neighbourhood parks, parkettes, sports fields, community gardens, and rooftop gardens, as well as access to the natural environment.

Parks, open spaces, and trails have many benefits such as providing for a healthier urban ecosystem through improved air quality and the reduction of heat islands while also encouraging residents to be physically and socially engaged. As communities become more compact with higher density forms of housing it is critical to ensure a diversity of accessible parks, open spaces, and trails are available for residents to provide areas for both active and passive recreation.

### **Access to Healthy Food**

According to the Canadian Community Health Survey by Statistics Canada, 2017-2018, 1 in 8 households or 4.4 million people in Canada, were food insecure in 2018, where inadequate or insecure access to food is due to financial constraints. This number will undoubtedly increase because of the COVID-19 pandemic due to job losses or decreases in incomes.

Access to healthy food is essential to a healthy community. Opportunities for a sustainable local food system should be explored and include local farmers markets, agri-tourism, Community Shared Agriculture programs (CSAs), diversity of agricultural uses (greenhouses, orchards), and community gardens.

### **6.1.2.3 Current Policy Framework**

Provincial and Regional planning frameworks provide some direction for healthy communities. However, it is not one single action or policy topic that will define or lead to the achievement of a healthy community, but rather an approach to implementation that considers all the policy sections of the Official Plan comprehensively.

A high quality, well-designed built environment is valued within East Gwillimbury. To support this environment East Gwillimbury promotes complete communities that include a diverse mix of land uses, a range and mix of housing types and tenures, employment opportunities, high quality public open spaces, amenities and services, and active transportation options.

### 6.1.2.4 Things to Think About

1. Ensuring that East Gwillimbury evolves and develops in a manner that is accessible to all is critical to creating an inclusive community. Through the NEGOP, it will be important to ensure that the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) are appropriately implemented.
2. The NEGOP should consider including policies that implement:
  - Healthy community and active transportation criteria, including walking and cycling as viable modes of transportation for a variety of trips;
  - Continued protection and future expansion of the Town's trail system;
  - CPTED principles;
  - Green building targets; and,
  - Public art requirements.
3. The natural environment, urban forest, and the open space system are essential components of a healthy, sustainable community and support recreational and cultural opportunities in East Gwillimbury. Ensuring residents have convenient access to a connected and diverse range of open spaces, parks, trails, and recreation facilities offers opportunities for improved public health, including both physical and mental health, and exercise. As part of the NEGOP, it will be important to ensure that the policy framework supports an appropriate parks and open space network, which considers the current needs of residents in addition to future needs as East Gwillimbury continues to grow and evolve. This may include consideration of more urban park typologies. It will further be important that the urban forest, and the tree canopy, is provided with the required protection and that the NEGOP identifies objectives for how it can be enhanced and expanded.
4. There are a number of neighbourhood planning tools which can have important impacts on healthy communities. The NEGOP will need to address elements such as safe streets, walkability, access to healthy food, access to the natural environment and a mix of uses to ensure that healthy community objectives are met.
5. Support opportunities for a sustainable local food system that may include local farmers markets, agri-tourism, Community Shared Agriculture programs (CSAs), diversity of agricultural uses (greenhouses, orchards), educational and on farm experiences, and community gardens. Urban agriculture should be part of a community's character and open space system, while also providing a transitional use between the natural and built environments, and traditional farm areas at community peripheries.

## 6.1.3 Sustainable Transportation

### 6.1.3.1 Why it's Important

Recent trends in land use and transportation planning, as well as public health research, emphasize the importance of ensuring the provision of a well-connected, attractive, and functional multi-modal system to provide more balanced access to alternative transportation modes. Alternative transportation modes, including walking, cycling and transit, will become increasingly important within East Gwillimbury as more intensified development occurs and as a means to increase the accessibility of all residents.

There is the opportunity to support a full spectrum of mobility options for all residents and improved connectivity within a fully integrated network. This is an essential element of planning for sustained transportation methods and healthier lifestyles. Providing enhanced mobility for people of all ages means understanding opportunities to make any type of street a “complete street”. Complete streets provide pleasing pedestrian experiences, improved safety for cyclists and enhanced opportunities for active transportation, all while ensuring the efficient movement of goods, transit, and passenger vehicles within a balanced right-of-way.

Communities are typically designed for vehicles. Climate change mitigation strategies that are focused on reducing the reliance on private vehicles and GHG emissions, promote a supportive, mixed use and compact urban structure, and have multi-modal transportation systems that support active movement – such as cycling or walking.

A Transportation Master Plan (TMP) is being prepared concurrently with the Official Plan Review in accordance with the Municipal Engineers Association Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) and will satisfy Phases 1 and 2 of the MCEA. The TMP will develop a long-range planning and implementing framework based on the identification of a multi-modal transportation network, policies, and phasing strategy for improved accessibility and connectivity. This work will inform the NEGOP policies and support sustainable transportation options in East Gwillimbury.

### **6.1.3.2 Current Policy Framework**

Provincial and Regional policies require that the Town meet the transportation needs of all users, irrespective of mode, including the implementation of a ‘complete streets’ approach. Further, a priority of the Town is to enhance the multi-modal connectivity for residents throughout the Town’s settlement areas and to the wider region, which will better facilitate access to jobs, services, recreation, and housing.

### **6.1.3.3 Things to Think About**

1. The characteristics of rural environments can contribute to unique health challenges. Low densities can increase dependency on driving as active transportation and access to transit are less viable. Amenities are usually further away, contributing to social isolation. When people choose to live in a rural community, they travel more for their daily needs than if they lived in a compact urban area.
2. Prioritize compact street grids, street connectivity, and intersection density to provide more direct routes and reduced travel time for people who walk and cycle.
3. Support an active transportation system that is highly integrated and connected within the community, the adjacent communities, and to transportation systems that serve the broader Region.
4. Ensure trails and pathways are readily accessible within residential areas, and connect them to common areas of work, play and learning;

## 6.1.4 Climate Change Mitigation and Resilience

### 6.1.4.1 Why it's Important

Climate change is a direct consequence of elevated greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere and feedback mechanisms. The largest sources of GHGs are emitted from the combustion of fossil fuels to make energy, including heat and electricity. After transportation, manufacturing is responsible for a significant slice of this pie, followed closely by houses, shops, schools, and other private and public buildings.

Cities consume 78% of the world's energy and produce 60% of all carbon dioxide. Levels of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere are higher than they have been at any time in the past 400,000 years. During the ice ages, carbon dioxide levels were around 200 parts per million (ppm). In 2013, carbon dioxide levels surpassed 400 ppm for the first time in recorded history. If increases continue at this rate, CO<sub>2</sub> levels will reach 800 ppm by 2100.

In correlation with increases in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is the rising of global temperatures. There has already been a 1 degree increase in global temperature to date, and by 2050 it is predicted that the increase may reach 2 or 3 degrees Celsius. It is necessary to keep the global temperature rise to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid potentially catastrophic climate change impacts, as cited in the UN's recent Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report.

To minimize the rise of global temperatures and other climate change related impacts, there is an urgent need to promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and improve community resiliency in land use planning. The need for resiliency is becoming more urgent as communities like East Gwillimbury experience the impacts of a changing climate, such as weather extremes, severe storm events, economic disruption, and resource depletion.

### 6.1.4.2 Current Policy Framework

The Provincial and Regional policy frameworks direct municipalities to plan for the impacts of a changing climate, and Provincial policy in particular has placed a stronger emphasis on this concern with its most recent Growth Plan and Provincial Policy Statement. One of the guiding principles of the Growth Plan specifically cites integrating climate change considerations and minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, and there is also an emphasis on ensuring that the impacts of a changing climate are considered in planning for infrastructure investments. The Growth Plan further directs municipalities to identify actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change adaptation, such as creating complete communities and promoting active transportation, and encourages the development of greenhouse gas inventories and reduction targets.

### 6.1.4.3 Things to Think About

1. Becoming resilient to changing weather patterns and extreme weather events requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses integrated stormwater management, green infrastructure, energy supply and distribution, and precautionary land use planning. A well-rounded approach also incorporates climate change mitigation strategies that are focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions by promoting multi-modal transportation systems, a supportive mixed use and compact urban structure, efficient and sustainable subdivision design, and ensuring the preservation of green

spaces and the tree canopy. These considerations can provide a foundational approach for the NEGOP process.

2. In considering the impacts of a changing climate East Gwillimbury should consider prioritizing a comprehensive multi-modal transportation system and mobility strategy involving reduction in auto use and the promotion of transit and active transportation. With respect to creating a more adaptive and sustainable transportation system, East Gwillimbury could also explore innovations in movement of people and goods in rural areas, mass mobility considering urban and rural needs, the electrification of the private and public auto fleet, and the expansion of charging stations.
3. Municipalities and conservation authorities have historically relied on statutory approaches such as a hazard-based model, that separates people and assets from known hazards. This model uses standards, such as a 100-year flood, as a basis for public infrastructure decisions. The increasing severity and occurrence of extreme weather events and the risks they pose may prove that this approach is costly and unsustainable in the long-term. A combination of approaches to flood mitigation may be required. At the local level, policies for low impact development measures to promote increased evapotranspiration, infiltration and groundwater recharge, and lower surface runoff volumes and flow rates. LID measures include the application of green roofs, bioretention areas, increased pervious cover assist with water infiltration, cisterns, etc. that can be included as adaptation or mitigation measures.
4. Renewable energy sources present the opportunity for a distributed generation model – meaning the energy is produced, stored, and used near where it will be consumed. This approach can create a more efficient and resilient system, and can be applied to residential, commercial, and/or industrial uses. Renewable energy and energy efficiency/conservation models includes the generation and capture of electricity from a variety of sources, including:
  - Photovoltaics;
  - Wind;
  - Biomass;
  - Geothermal;
  - Solar thermal;
  - Combined heat and power;
  - District energy; and,
  - Low impact hydro-electric.
5. Preserving, protecting, and enhancing our natural areas plays a significant role in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Natural areas assist with mitigating the impacts of climate change and providing ecological services that benefit human and environmental health in the following ways:
  - Trees and natural areas sequester vast amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and produce oxygen;
  - Green spaces can provide protection from storms, flooding, and erosion; and,
  - Wetlands filter and regulate water supplies.
6. One of the consequences of a changing climate is the development of heat islands. This term refers to urban areas with higher temperatures, typically caused by heat-absorbing buildings, roads, and other hard surfaces, such as surface parking lots. Responding to heat islands requires strategies related to both the built and natural environment and may include promoting green or white roofs, establishing a tree canopy target, and supporting green building standards.

7. It is recognized that the urban forest provides many benefits to East Gwillimbury, such as reducing air pollution, mitigating the urban heat island effect, energy savings, habitat for urban wildlife, biodiversity, and opportunities for recreation and physical activity. Through the NEGOP, the urban forest policies can be reviewed, considering updates related to a tree canopy target, minimum tree cover requirements, naturalization programs, and species selection to support climate change adaptation.

### 6.1.5 What We've Heard

The Phase 1 engagement process, including the first Community Visioning Workshop and consultation with Council, has indicated support for sustainable development in East Gwillimbury. In particular, people have suggested:

#### **Environment/Sustainability/Healthy Communities**

- The Town wants to be on the leading edge with respect to environmental sustainability and responding to climate change;
- The healthy community concept is an important consideration. Expansions to the trails network and active transportation facilities are important considerations; and,
- East Gwillimbury will remain about 60% "green" due to the Greenbelt Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine. This is a crucial and very unique element of the Town.
- Embracing of technology, creating opportunities to use technology in sustainable initiatives/policies for the municipality:
  - > Can help with different forms of housing and development;
  - > Examples such as solar technology that powers the municipal parking lot, dealing with water and wastewater.
- There is a need to consider long-term resiliency in the Official Plan.
- There is a need to design new communities and subdivisions in a manner that promotes sustainability, efficiency, and wise resource management.

## 6.2 Policy Background

### 6.2.1 Provincial Policy Statement (2020)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 1.1 (Managing and Directing Land Use to Achieve Efficient and Resilient Development and Land Use Patterns); Section 1.5 (Public Spaces, Recreation, Parks, Trails and Open Space); Section 1.6 (Infrastructure and Public Service Facilities); Section 1.7 (Long-term Economic Prosperity); Section 1.8 (Energy Conservation, Air Quality and Climate Change)

An overarching theme of the PPS is the promotion of sustainable, *complete communities* and the careful coordination and management of land uses to accommodate appropriate development to meet the full range of current and future needs of the community, while achieving cost effective development patterns. Stronger emphasis must also be given to preparing for the impacts of a changing climate through maximizing energy conservation, effective management of storm water, and the use of green infrastructure.

The PPS advises that healthy and livable cities are sustained in part by promoting development and land use patterns that conserve biodiversity and by preparing for the regional and local impacts of a changing climate (Policy 1.1.1). Land use patterns within settlement areas is to be based on a mix of land uses which minimize negative impacts to air quality and climate change and promote energy efficiency, as well as a mix of land uses that help prepare for the impacts of a changing climate (Policy 1.1.3.2).

Land use patterns within settlement areas should be based on a mix of land uses which minimize negative impacts to air quality and climate change and promote energy efficiency, as well as a mix of land uses that help prepare for the impacts of a changing climate (Policy 1.1.3.2).

The PPS advises that healthy and active communities should be promoted by planning public spaces, streets, and recreation settings to be accessible, equitably distributed, to foster social interaction and to promote travel by *active transportation* (1.5.1).

The PPS calls for the provision of safe, efficient, interconnected, and multi-modal transportation systems that meet projected needs. Efficient use shall be made of existing and planned infrastructure, such as through the use of transportation demand management.

Planning authorities should promote green infrastructure to complement infrastructure (Policy 1.6.1) and planning for stormwater management shall minimize erosion and changes in water balance and prepare for the impacts of a changing climate (Policy 1.6.6.7).

The PPS recognizes the connection between land use patterns and transportation choices and calls for integrated planning that minimizes the length and number of vehicle trips and supports transit and active transportation (Section 1.6.7.4).

The PPS also requires planning authorities to plan for and protect corridors and rights-of-way for infrastructure, including transportation and transit (1.6.8.1). Major goods movement facilities and corridors, in particular, are required to be protected for the long term (Section 1.6.8.2).

Long-term economic prosperity should be supported by promoting the redevelopment of brownfield sites, minimizing negative impacts from a changing climate, and considering the ecological benefits provided by nature (Policy 1.7.1).

Planning authorities shall support energy conservation and efficiency, improved air quality, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and support climate change adaptation through land use and development patterns which:

- a) Promote compact form and a structure of nodes and corridors;
- b) Promote the use of active transportation and transit in and between residential, employment (including commercial and industrial) and institutional uses and other areas;
- c) Focus major employment, commercial and other travel-intensive land uses on sites which are well served by transit where this exists or is to be developed, or designing these to facilitate the establishment of transit in the future;
- d) Focus freight-intensive land uses to areas well served by major highways, airports, rail facilities and marine facilities;
- e) Encourage transit-supportive development and intensification to improve the mix of employment and housing uses to shorten commute journeys and decrease transportation congestion;
- f) Promote design and orientation which maximizes energy efficiency and conservation, and considers the mitigating effects of vegetation and green infrastructure; and
- g) Maximize vegetation within settlement areas, where feasible. (Policy 1.8.1).

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

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 1.2.1 (Guiding Principles); Section 2.2.1 (Managing Growth); Section 3.2 (Policies for Infrastructure to Support Growth); Section 4.2.9 (A Culture of Conservation); Section 4.2.10 (Climate Change)

Guiding principles of the Growth Plan are to:

- Support the achievement of complete communities that are designed to support healthy and active living and meet people's needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime; and,
- Integrate climate change considerations into planning and managing growth such as planning for more resilient communities and infrastructure – that are adaptive to the impacts of a changing climate – and moving towards environmentally sustainable communities by incorporating approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Section 2.2.1 (4) further supports the achievement of complete communities through encouraging a diverse mix of land uses, access to services, range and mix of housing options, access to transportation options, and use of active transportation, a vibrant public realm, integration of green infrastructure, and climate change mitigation.

Municipalities will assess infrastructure risks and vulnerabilities, including those caused by the impacts of a changing climate, and identify actions and investments to address these challenges, which could be identified as part of municipal asset management planning (Policy 3.2.1.4).

The Growth Plan emphasizes that transportation system planning, land use planning, and transportation investment will be co-ordinated to implement this Plan. Policy 3.2.2.2 requires that the transportation system be planned and managed to:

- Provide connectivity among transportation modes for moving people and for moving goods;
- Offer a balance of transportation choices that reduces reliance upon the automobile and promotes transit and active transportation;
- Be sustainable and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging the most financially and environmentally appropriate mode for trip-making and supporting the use of zero- and low-emission vehicles;
- Offer multimodal access to jobs, housing, schools, cultural, and recreational opportunities, and goods and services;
- Accommodate agricultural vehicles and equipment, as appropriate; and,
- Provide for the safety of system users.

Policy 3.2.2.3 requires that in the design, refurbishment, or reconstruction of the existing and planned street network, a complete streets approach be adopted that ensures the needs and safety of all road users are considered and appropriately accommodated.

Municipalities will develop and implement transportation demand management policies in official plans or other planning documents or programs to:

- Reduce trip distance and time;
- Increase the modal share of alternatives to the automobile, including setting targets;
- Prioritize active transportation, transit, and goods movement over single-occupant automobiles;
- Expand infrastructure to support active transportation; and,
- Consider the needs of major trip generators.

Municipalities will develop stormwater master plans or equivalent for serviced settlement areas that examine the cumulative environmental impacts of stormwater from existing and planned development, including an assessment of how extreme weather events will exacerbate these impacts and the identification of appropriate adaptation strategies; and incorporate appropriate low impact development and green infrastructure, among others (Policy 3.2.7.1).

Municipalities will develop and implement official plan policies and other strategies in support of water conservation, energy conservation for existing buildings and planned developments, air quality improvement and protection, waste management, and soil reuse (Policy 4.2.9.1).

Policy 4.2.9.2 states that municipalities should develop excess soil reuse strategies as part of planning for growth and development. Further municipal planning policies and relevant development proposals will incorporate best practices for the management of excess soil generated and fill received during development or site alteration, including infrastructure development.

The Growth Plan directs municipalities to develop policies in their official plans to identify actions for greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change adaptation goals by supporting complete communities, reducing automobile dependence, supporting transit and active transportation, assessing infrastructure risks, stormwater management planning that incorporates low impact development, protecting the natural environment, and promoting local food (Policy 4.2.10.1).

In planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address the impacts of climate change, municipalities are encouraged to develop:

- Strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- Greenhouse gas inventories for transportation, buildings, waste management and municipal operations; and,
- Interim and long-term greenhouse gas emission reduction targets (Policy 4.2.10.2).

### 6.2.3 Greenbelt Plan (2017)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 3.4.2 (General Settlement Area Policies)

Municipalities should collaborate, where possible, to support components of the Agricultural System (infrastructure, services, and assets) and access to local, healthy food.

Municipalities shall integrate climate change considerations into planning and managing growth in settlement areas in accordance with the policies in subsection 4.2.10 of the Growth Plan.

Municipalities should develop excess soil reuse strategies as part of planning for growth and development.

Municipal planning policies and relevant development proposals shall incorporate best practices for the management of excess soil generated and fill received during development or site alteration, including infrastructure development, to ensure that:

- Any excess soil is reused on-site or locally to the maximum extent possible and, where feasible, excess soil reuse planning is undertaken concurrently with development planning and design;
- Appropriate sites for excess soil storage and processing are permitted close to areas where proposed development is concentrated or areas of potential soil reuse; and,

- Fill quality received and fill placement at a site will not cause an adverse effect with regard to the current or proposed use of the property or the natural environment and is compatible with adjacent land uses.

#### 6.2.4 York Region Official Plan (2010)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 3.2 (Air Quality and Climate Change); Section 5.2 (Sustainable Cities, Sustainable Communities)

Policy 3.2.3 requires the Region to reduce vehicle emissions by ensuring that communities are designed to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists, reduce single occupancy automobile use, and support public transit and Transportation Demand Management initiatives. Further, the Region will establish greenhouse gas reduction targets for York Region in partnership with community stakeholders and local municipalities.

The Region will work with local municipalities, agencies and stakeholders on the development and implementation of clean air initiatives and to identify the links between climate change, community planning and public health. The Region will also work with other levels of government, agencies, and stakeholders to develop climate change adaptation measures that address such issues as urban heat island effect, infrastructure resiliency, emergency preparedness, vector-borne diseases, and extreme weather event responses.

The Region will work with local municipalities and the development community to achieve energy efficiency levels that exceed the Ontario Building Code for residential buildings, and the Model National Energy Code for non-residential buildings, as well as to achieve 10 per cent greater water conservation than the Ontario Building Code (as amended to O. Reg. 315/11, January 1, 2012) for all new buildings.

The Region will encourage new buildings to achieve 20 per cent greater water conservation than the Ontario Building Code (as amended to O. Reg. 315/11, January 1, 2012), and be designed and certified to LEED® Silver, Gold or Platinum standards.

The Regional Official Plan states that development shall include a solar design strategy which identifies approaches that maximize solar gains and facilitate future solar installations (i.e., solar ready).

The Region encourages the retrofitting of existing buildings within the Urban Area for increased water/energy conservation and the inclusion in new buildings of on-site renewable or alternative energy systems which produce 25 per cent of building energy use. Where on-site renewable or alternative energy systems are not feasible, consideration of purchasing grid-source renewable energy is encouraged.

It is the intent of the Regional Official Plan to restrict the use of potable water for outdoor watering, require the installation of rainwater harvesting systems on all new residential buildings for outdoor irrigation and outdoor water use and encourage the use of water conserving, drought resistant landscaping.

Policy 5.2.34 encourages the mitigation of local heat island effects in all development including:

- Green and/or white roofs;
- Locating trees or other plantings to provide shading for at least 50 per cent of sidewalks, patios, and driveways, and within 15 metres of buildings; and,
- Installing light-coloured paving materials including white concrete, grey concrete, open pavers, and any material with a solar reflectance index of at least 29.

The Regional Official Plan encourages the use of locally/regionally sourced building materials seeks to ensure that all new development reduces construction waste and diverts construction waste from landfills.

The Regional Official Plan requires new development applications to demonstrate transit-oriented development principles and that non-residential development include a Transportation Demand Management Strategy.

Local municipalities are required to adopt land use and site design policies that promote sustainable modes of transportation, including walking, cycling, transit, and carpooling, and to design street systems which accommodate supportive facilities. Local municipalities will further coordinate with the Region to provide sidewalks and street lighting on all streets within the Urban Area and to coordinate infrastructure within the Regional rights-of-way to support walking and cycling.

Communities shall be designed to ensure walkability through interconnected and accessible mobility systems. These systems will give priority to pedestrian movement and transit use, provide pedestrian and cycling facilities, and implement the York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan.

Policy 7.2.13 directs the co-ordination of Regional and local pedestrian and cycling networks with trail connections to the Regional Greenlands System trails network, where appropriate.

### 6.2.5 Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan (2010)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 2.0 (Sustainability); Section 7.0 (Sustainable Infrastructure), Section 7.7 (Energy Production and Related Infrastructure); Section 7.9 (Waste Management and Diversion)

The East Gwillimbury Official Plan is predicated on an integrated sustainable approach to planning the Town's future. The three elements of a sustainable community: environmental, economic, and social sustainability are used as a foundation for the policies of the plan.

Under Section 2.1 Environmental Sustainability, the key defining environmental features in East Gwillimbury include the Oak Ridges Moraine, East Holland River, Holland Marsh and large forests and *wetland* areas. The OP requires the protection of these features based on an 'environment-first' approach.

The objectives for Environmental Sustainability include protection of significant natural heritage features and functions; minimizing East Gwillimbury's ecological footprint and the impacts of growth through sustainable development; establishing a connected Natural Heritage System; and promoting the use of leading edge sustainable development and energy conservation policies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. (Section 2.1)

The objectives under Section 2.2 support Economic Sustainability through the protection of employment lands; balanced live-work relationships; promotion of the village cores as centres for commerce; protection of agricultural and rural lands to support the rural economy; and promotion of the tourism industry. Policies are provided to support fiscally responsible growth through the collection of Development Charges and other financial tools to ensure that growth pays for complete community growth.

Section 2.3 establishes objectives and policies to support Social Sustainability to address the basic needs of housing, education, health care, employment, food, safety, security, and cultural and recreational opportunities. East Gwillimbury's objectives are to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage, provide a coordinated provision of human services; support well-being; maintain safe and secure neighbourhoods;

provide recreational and institutional uses at the early stages of growth; and provide for a range housing types, tenure, and cost to support affordable housing and meet a diverse range of needs.

To support the development of sustainable communities and meet the objectives of the three theme areas noted above, the Official Plan directed the development of the Thinking Green Development Standards. The standards will be used to ensure the sustainability goals and policies of the Plan are addressed through development applications. (Section 2.4). The Thinking Green! Development Standards were directed to include standards for:

- Energy efficiency
- Renewable energy generation
- Water conservation
- Waste reduction
- Active transportation
- Diverse and mixed use communities
- Green building materials
- Stormwater management
- Green infrastructure

The Thinking Green! Development Standards have been developed, reviewed, and updated since the development of the Official Plan policies. New policies will be required to ensure that the Official Plan and the Thinking Green! Development Standards align.

The policies of Section 7 Sustainable Infrastructure were developed to ensure that East Gwillimbury's infrastructure is sustainable and can support the long term build-out of the community. Specifically, Policy 7.1.3 states that:

“The planning, design and construction of all forms of infrastructure shall incorporate techniques and design elements that support and advance the environmental sustainability and energy efficiency objectives of this Plan, including the use of green building materials and recycled resources, and minimizing the disruption to natural heritage features.”

The objectives and policies for Transportation are based on the delivery of a sustainable transportation system that balances all modes of travel by:

- Establishing an integrated transportation system to provide efficient movement of people and vehicles;
- Promoting public transit and active transit as energy efficient, affordable, and accessible forms of travel
- Protecting transportation corridors; and.
- Ensuring new roads are designed in a grid street network to distribute traffic evenly and support an efficient transit system (7.2)

Under Section 7.4 stormwater management is required for all new development areas, infill, and redevelopment projects to promote and implement effective stormwater management techniques. It is the policy of the Town to develop alternative development standards and Low Impact Development criteria to promote the use of infiltration, bioswales and other alternatives to piped solutions to stormwater management.

Section 7.7.1 sets forth policies for East Gwillimbury to work with the development industry and other partners to undertake district energy feasibility studies as part of the secondary plan or community design plan process for:

- i) GO Transit Station / Major Local Centre
- ii) *Post-Secondary Institution*
- iii) *Employment Areas* adjacent to 400-series Highways
- iv) *Queensville Major Local Centre*

East Gwillimbury will also pursue funding partnerships to encourage district energy services in the Urban Area. (7.7.1.2). Further under Section 7.7.2 East Gwillimbury will explore the potential for renewable energy systems, and encourage the use of wind, solar, geothermal, or other clean technologies. The development of renewable energy systems is categorized under Individual Renewable Energy Generating Systems such as photovoltaic (PV) and Large-Scale Renewable Energy Generating Systems such as solar fields.

Section 7.9 outlines policies for waste diversion requiring new multi-unit and condominium developments and industrial, commercial, and institutional developments prepare waste management plans that demonstrate best practices for waste management through three-stream waste collection capabilities and on-site separation and storage for all recyclables.

## 6.2.6 Thinking Green Development Standards (2018)

The Thinking Green! Development Standards (TGDS) were one of the first green standards to be prepared by a municipality. The standards were developed to support the Official Plan's vision for a complete, healthy, and sustainable community and to respond to the significant growth that is expected in East Gwillimbury. The development of the green standards was a priority initiative of Council to ensure an environmental framework for all projects and plans. Furthering this commitment OP Policy 2.4.1 states that the Town shall develop Thinking Green Development Standards, in consultation with the development industry, to ensure the sustainability goals and policies of this Plan are addressed through development applications. The OP further defines the elements for the standards under Policy 2.4.6 which includes, among others, minimum standards for efficient buildings design, water conservation, and waste reduction; active transportation; diverse and mixed use communities; on-site renewable energy generation.

East Gwillimbury's commitment to sustainable development extended to the preparation of sustainable development standards and sustainability performance checklists for the purpose of evaluating the sustainability of new development. The TGDS supports other Town and Regional Strategic documents including East Gwillimbury's Strategic Plan 2015-2018, the Community Energy Plan, and the York Region Official Plan, as well as York Region's New Communities Guidelines.

The TGDS have evolved since the sustainable strategy was introduced in 2007 and the first iteration of the standards to be applied to the development application process in 2012. The review of the standards was a necessary monitoring strategy to improve the applicability and content of the checklists. The review ensured that the measures for evaluating the sustainable performance of new development were up to date with changing Provincial, Regional, and Town policies, evolving Ontario Building Code regulations, and technology advancement and design innovation.

The TGDS is an online tool that is organized into two Development Review checklists: Draft Plan of Subdivision and Site Plan with the performance measures defined under three theme areas: Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment; Conservation of Energy and Water; and Designing for Complete and Connected Communities. All new Draft Plan of Subdivision and Site Plan applications submitted to the Town are required to address the TGDS at the pre-consultation stage and as part of a complete application.

The Checklists include three Levels of performance measures generally, the higher the Level the more sustainable development.

- Level 1 represents the minimum expectations of the Town
- Level 2 represents an improved standard
- Level 3 represents an optimal achievement

It is a requirement of the standards that all applicable Level 1 targets be met. The Level 1 targets represent the minimum required measures with Level 2 and Level 3 targets allowing flexibility to applicants to select which measures are most appropriate to their application

As part of the development application submission all measures that contain Level 1 targets require a written explanation as to how the measure has been met or why the measure has not been met. The same is required where Level 2 and Level 3 Targets have been selected.

As the TGDS performance measures have advanced since the development of the policies of the existing of the OP, the OPR will ensure consistency between the two documents and the requirements for complete, healthy, sustainable development in East Gwillimbury.

### 6.2.7 Community Energy Plan, 2009

In December 2009, Council adopted the Town's Community Energy Plan (CEP). The CEP sets forth recommendations for supporting successful growth and the reduction of East Gwillimbury's carbon footprint predicted at 6 metric tonnes in 2031 to 4 metric tonnes by 2051. The recommendations are organized under Efficient Homes, Efficient Buildings, Efficient Industry, Efficient Transportation, Efficient Neighbourhoods, Efficient Heating Distribution, Efficient Energy Services. The CEP was a crucial supporting background document for the development of the existing Official Plan. The policies were designed to ensure the implementation of the goals, recommendations, and targets of the CEP related to renewable energy, greenhouse gas reduction, energy efficiency, compact development, etc.

The following includes some of the recommendations from the CEP:

- Recommendation: Ensure effective public transport connecting the GO Station Transit Centre to Queensville Centre and the Employment Corridor.
- Recommendation: Consider increasing in the residential densities in Queensville Village Centre by about 40% and in GO Station Transit Centre by about 100%.
- Recommendation: Within 20 years, source 25% of the overall heating for the Town from non-fossil energy sources.
- Recommendation: Install sufficient Solar Photovoltaic to meet about 20% of the Town's future electricity needs.

## 6.2.8 Community Emissions Reduction Planning: A Guide for Municipalities, 2018

The province released Community Emissions Reduction Planning: A Guide for Municipalities in 2018. The Growth Plan encourages municipalities to incorporate emission reduction strategies into their official plans and the guide is intended to support provincial land use planning direction related to setting interim and long term emission reduction targets and the completion of energy and emissions plans. Municipalities have direct and indirect control over GHG emissions through land use planning policies, infrastructure, and investment.

The Guide provides information on the role of municipalities in climate action planning, resources for collecting data, completing GHG inventories; roles and responsibilities of upper-tier and lower-tier municipalities in setting per-capita GHG emissions reduction targets; and inclusion of sample municipal Official Plan policies.

## 6.2.9 Connected Communities: Healthier Together, February 2019

### **2017 Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario**

Connected Communities: Healthier Together provides an overview and discussion of social connections and the impacts of large systemic pressures and changes on our sense of community. These changes and pressures include many factors such as changes to family and social structures, increasing work and time pressures, urbanization and sprawl, and growing income inequality. Technologies, including television, computers, and smartphones, compete for our attention, reducing our person to person connections. Loneliness and social isolation are serious public health problems that affect productivity, health, well-being.

To rebuild communities, the report includes a section on Creating Built Environments that Encourage Connection. The report notes that it is important to keep social connection and health goals in mind when designing streets and neighbourhoods. Suggestions include wider, barrier-free streets to encourage social interaction and support different ways of moving, such as walking, cycling, and driving; building mixed use walkable neighbourhoods that include homes, retail stores, services; creating good quality public and green spaces with landscaping, lighting, facilities, and pathways that invite people to gather.

The report sets forth three recommendations to make communities more connected and reduce social isolation, stress, and loss of community. The key actions are provided at three levels: provincial and municipal governments, public health units, and individual actions.

1. **Invest in Community:** Actions for municipal governments to assess all policies and initiatives for their impact on community and create built environments/infrastructure that make it easier for people to connect and be engaged in their communities, among others.
2. **Enable Community:** Actions for public health units to make communities aware of the benefits of social connections and social capital, connect communities and governments to influence change, develop partnerships with municipalities and other organizations to (re)build community and address system barriers, policies and practices that drive social isolation.

3. Be Community-Centred and Community-Driven: Actions at the local level, individuals, and organizations, can drive change by being community-centred and community-driven, making community health and well-being a priority.

## 7 Agriculture and Rural Lands

East Gwillimbury has a strong historic, cultural, and economic identity related to agriculture with agriculture expected to continue to play an important role in East Gwillimbury's rural economy and lifestyle. The protection of agricultural lands is a priority in Ontario and this Official Plan Review will examine how to best support a successful farming industry. This includes consideration of agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses, as well ensuring the maintenance of farm parcels capable of functioning in a viable, efficient, and compatible manner. Further, it will be important to explore the range of permitted uses on rural lands and how the rural industry can be supported, without negatively impacting the agricultural character and the growth management goals of East Gwillimbury.

### 7.1 Key Topics for Discussion

#### 7.1.1 Agriculture and Rural Lands

##### 7.1.1.1 Why it's Important

In East Gwillimbury, the Rural Planning Area is defined by the Greenbelt Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. These lands comprise over 75% of East Gwillimbury's land area and are an important component of the agricultural and rural economy. The Prime Agricultural and Holland Marsh Speciality Crop Area are important lands that contribute to food production and East Gwillimbury's economy. The Holland Marsh soils are unique to the area and support speciality crops such as tender fruits and vegetables crops. It is an objective of East Gwillimbury that agriculture is the predominant use of these lands and that they should be protected from loss and fragmentation.

##### 7.1.1.2 Current Policy Framework

Provincial and upper tier planning policy requires local municipalities to identify "prime agricultural areas" in an Official Plan and it is notable that the Provincial/Regional definition of prime agricultural areas is not limited to prime farmlands but also includes lower classes of farmland (Canada Land Inventory Classes 4 to 7) and areas "*which exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture*".

It is noted that the current Official Plan, originally approved in 2010, identified separate rural and agricultural land use designations. This rural/agricultural "split" was prepared through collaboration with local landowners and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and fulfils the prior and current Provincial and Regional policy to identify "prime agricultural areas" in East Gwillimbury.

Given that the creation of this rural/agricultural split is relatively new and given that the current Agricultural land use designation fulfils Provincial and local policy requirements for the identification of prime agricultural areas, substantive changes, or reassessment of this aspect of the Plan should not be a priority for this Official Plan Review. Maintaining the rural/agricultural split is important for considering where a wider range of permitted rural uses may be appropriate and for establishing which lands should receive the highest protection when future settlement area expansions are under consideration.

### 7.1.1.3 Agriculture-Related Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas

The Provincial Policy Statement ('PPS'), 2020 permits a broad range of agriculture-related uses in prime agricultural areas. The PPS now defines the term as set out below:

*Agriculture-related uses: means those farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses that are directly related to farm operations in the area, support agriculture, benefit from being in close proximity to farm operations, and provide direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity.*

The PPS definition now permits these uses to support 'farm operations in the area', as opposed to supporting only the 'farm operation' on the same property. The changes in terminology with respect to agriculture-related uses have also been made in the updated Greenbelt Plan, Niagara Escarpment Plan, and the Growth Plan in 2020.

In the current Official Plan, the Greenbelt Protected Countryside is comprised of five land use designations, all of which constitute the Protected Countryside:

- i) *Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Area;*
- ii) *Prime Agricultural Area;*
- iii) *Rural Area;*
- iv) *Greenbelt Settlement Area;*
- v) *Greenbelt Hamlet.*

Section 4.11.1.5 of the Official Plan identifies secondary uses on farm properties are permitted within the *Greenbelt Protected Countryside* subject to Site Plan Control. The use must be associated with and located on a farm; the retail component has a gross floor area of no more than 500 square metres; and the products offered for sale are produced or manufactured on the farm property.

East Gwillimbury further supports uses that highlight the importance and value of the agricultural economy and under Section 4.11.1.7 permits the following uses in the *Greenbelt Protected Countryside* as an *accessory use*: farm machinery, farm tours, petting zoos, hayrides and sleigh rides, processing demonstrations, pick your own produce, small-scale farm theme playgrounds for children and small-scale educational establishments that focus on farming instruction.

#### **Prime Agricultural Uses**

Section 4.11.1.9 identifies related and supportive uses that may be permitted on existing non-farm lots of record within both the *Prime Agricultural* and *Rural Area* designations. Such uses shall be limited to those that primarily serve the surrounding rural and agricultural community, do not require full servicing, are generally space intensive, and require a location in close proximity to the agricultural community.

Section 4.11.2 outlines the policies for the *Prime Agricultural Areas and the Holland Marsh Speciality Crop Area* designation. These lands provide a continuous and permanent land base necessary to support long term agricultural production and economic activity. The principal uses of land in this designation includes:

- i) *Normal farm practices;*
- ii) *Agricultural uses;*
- iii) *Agricultural related and secondary uses;*
- iv) *A single detached dwelling unit on an existing lot of record.*

The lands in this designation are to be protected as an important agricultural area and a unique and valuable food source.

## **Rural Area**

The Rural Area designation includes the lands that are located outside of the settlement area but are not Prime Agricultural Areas. These lands include existing agricultural operations and agricultural related and secondary uses are permitted. The permissions reflect those of the Prime Agricultural Area and also include institutional and commercial / industrial uses serving the rural resource and agricultural sectors and a range of recreational and tourism uses.

Section 4.11.3.2 notes that recreational, tourism, institutional, and resource-based commercial/industrial uses may be permitted by amendment to this Plan if the use is appropriate for the Rural Area; does not adversely impact adjacent agricultural activities; water and sewer servicing proposed is appropriate for the type of use; and there are no negative impacts on key natural heritage features or key hydrologic features and their functions.

To assist municipalities in making decisions with respect to land use in prime agricultural areas, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) produced a document entitled “Guidelines on Uses in Ontario’s Prime Agricultural Areas” (2016). The OMAFRA Guidelines provide the following examples of agriculture-related uses:

- Apple storage and distribution centre serving apple farm operations in the area;
- Agricultural research centre;
- Farmers’ market primarily selling products grown in the area;
- Winery using grapes grown in the area;
- Livestock assembly yard or stock yard serving farms operating in the area;
- Processing of produce grown in the area (e.g., cider-making, cherry pitting, canning, quick-freezing, packing);
- Abattoir processing and selling meat from animals raised in the area;
- Grain dryer farm operations in the area;
- Flour mill for grain grown in the area;
- Farm equipment repair shop;
- Auction for produce grown in the area;
- Farm input supplier (e.g., feed, seeds, fertilizer (serving farm operations in the area)).

Examples of uses that would typically not be agriculture-related uses because they do not meet PPS definitions or criteria include:

- Large food processing plants, large wineries and other uses that are high-water-use or effluent generators and are better suited to locations with full municipal services
- Micro-breweries and distilleries
- Contractors’ yards, construction companies, landscapers, well drillers, excavators, paint or building suppliers
- Sewage biosolids storage and composting facilities for non-agricultural source material
- Antique businesses
- Art or music studios
- Automobile dealerships, towing companies, mechanics shop or wrecking yards
- Rural retreats, recreational uses and facilities, campgrounds, or fairgrounds
- Conference centres, hotels, guest houses or restaurants

- Furniture makers
- Institutions such as schools or clinics
- Seasonal storage of boats, trailers, or cars
- Veterinary clinics
- Trucking yards

It is noted that some of the above uses could be considered an on-farm diversified use if all criteria are met.

For a use to be considered as an agriculture-related use, it must be a farm related commercial use and/or a farm related industrial use that satisfies all of the criteria below:

- Is directly related to farm operations in the area;
- Supports agriculture;
- Benefits from being in close proximity to farm operations; and
- Provides direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity.

In addition to the above, it is noted that Section 3.1.3.1 of the Greenbelt Plan also permits agriculture-related uses with specific reference to the OMAFRA Guidelines.

#### **7.1.1.4 On-Farm Diversified Uses and Agri-Tourism Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas**

There has been considerable interest expressed to hold a wide variety of events and festivals including wedding and banquet events in a rural setting, with some of these events not necessarily relating to agriculture. To some extent, these events could be considered an on-farm diversified use and an agri-tourism use as broadly defined by the PPS.

Throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), there has been demand for the use of agricultural lands for events such as weddings, corporate retreats, religious facilities, and other quasi-commercial/institutional uses. The issue of permitting these events as on-farm diversified uses has met with a full spectrum of interpretations throughout the GGH.

Approaches to permitting wedding/banquet facilities in other municipalities include permitting them as a temporary use to determine if they can operate in a compatible manner with the neighbouring agricultural uses and rural character of the area (Innisfil, Bradford West Gwillimbury), requiring rezoning and site plan control or not regulating the use and considering the use to be an occasional event in conjunction with a farming operation.

The PPS provides the following definition for an 'on-farm diversified use':

*On-farm diversified uses: means uses that are secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property and are limited in area. On-farm diversified uses include, but are not limited to, home occupations, home industries, agri-tourism uses, and uses that produce value-added agricultural products.*

A new definition for 'agri-tourism' uses is now included in the PPS:

*Agri-tourism: means those farm-related tourism uses, including limited accommodation such as a bed and breakfast, that promote the enjoyment, education or activities related to the farm operation.*

The key element of the above definition of agri-tourism uses is that such a use must 'promote the enjoyment, education or activities related to the farm operation'.

As noted previously, in 2016, OMAFRA published OMAFRA Guidelines. Examples of agri-tourism and recreation uses in the OMAFRA Guidelines are 'farm vacation suite, bed and breakfast, hayrides, petting zoo, farm-themed playground, horse trail rides, corn maze, seasonal events, equine events, wine tasting, retreats, zip lines.'

The following guidance is also provided in the OMAFRA Guidelines:

*A wide variety of uses may qualify as on-farm diversified uses based on the PPS definition, as long as they meet the criteria described below. On-farm diversified uses should be related to agriculture, supportive of agriculture or able to co-exist with agriculture without conflict. On-farm diversified uses are intended to enable farm operators to diversify and supplement their farm income, as well as to accommodate value-added and agri-tourism uses in prime agricultural areas.*

The OMAFRA Guidelines also identify five criteria that need to be met for a use to be an on-farm diversified use:

1. **Located on a farm** – This means that an on-farm diversified use cannot be the primary use of the property and that the farm property has to actively be in agricultural use.
2. **Secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property** – The OMAFRA Guidelines deal explicitly with what is a secondary use on a farm property. In addition to indicating the agricultural uses must remain the dominant use of the property, it is further indicated that this is to be measured in spatial and temporal terms. The OMAFRA Guidelines also indicate that large-scale, repeated, or permanent events are not on-farm diversified uses and should be directed to existing facilities such as fairgrounds, parks, community centres and halls, settlement areas or rural lands.
3. **Limited in area** – The OMAFRA Guidelines indicate that that this criterion is intended to minimize the amount of land taken out of agricultural production, to ensure that agriculture remains the main land use in prime agricultural areas and to limit off-site impacts to ensure compatibility with surrounding agriculture operations. The limited in area standard for the acceptable area occupied by an on-farm diversified use is up to 2 percent of a farm parcel to a maximum of 1 ha (10,000 m<sup>2</sup>).
4. Includes, but is not limited to, home occupations, home industries, agri-tourism uses and uses that produce value-added agricultural products. It is noted that other uses could be considered by virtue of the inclusion of the word 'includes'.
5. Shall be compatible with, and shall not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations.

The OMAFRA Guidelines also indicate that the following uses would typically not be on-farm diversified uses based on the five criteria discussed above:

- *Large-scale equipment or vehicle dealerships, hotels, landscape businesses, manufacturing plants, trucking yards;*
- *Uses with high water and sewage needs and/or that generate significant traffic, such as large food processors, distribution centres, full-scale restaurants, banquet halls;*
- *Large-scale recurring events with permanent structures;*
- *Institutional uses (e.g., churches, schools, nursing homes, cemeteries);*
- *Large-scale recreational facilities such as golf courses, soccer fields, ball diamonds or arenas.*

### **7.1.1.5 Large Scale Agricultural Buildings That Take Prime Agricultural Land Out of Production**

***Should large scale agricultural buildings that have the potential to take prime agricultural land out of production be directed to the urban area only or on rural lands that have lower capacity soils and under what conditions?***

East Gwillimbury is home to a productive agricultural sector based on outstanding soils, a benevolent climate and a community of farmers that have an active interest in farming. From a soil capability perspective, East Gwillimbury contains a significant area of land with Class 1, 2 and 3 soils which have the highest capability.

From an agricultural perspective, the high quantity and quality of soils provides for some unique opportunities in East Gwillimbury. The value of prime agricultural land in East Gwillimbury is enhanced by good climatic conditions and availability of water. Prime agricultural lands are a finite resource that need to be managed and protected for the long-term viability of the agricultural sector.

Climate change has negatively impacted some countries such that they are unable to be self-sustaining in terms of their ability to grow enough food to feed themselves. The recent introduction of a new Food Policy for Canada that focuses on the access to healthy food with an emphasis on Canadian food being top choice locally and globally, and with efforts to diversify Canada's food export markets, there are many opportunities for the agriculture and food sector. Access to the highest capability lands allows for farmers to capitalize on these opportunities.

In October 2018, the Federal Cannabis Regulation SOR-2018-144 ("the Regulation") came into effect. This Regulation was one of a series of regulations that intended to implement the Cannabis Act and established a series of classes of licenses that authorize activities related to cannabis including but not limited to cultivation and processing. Medical cannabis cultivation is an example of a new emerging industry that is purported to yield high revenues and is attracting many investors.

The introduction of the new emerging field in Ontario saw the construction of large medical cannabis cultivation facilities that are extremely large in scale e.g., Canopy Growth Corp, Smith Falls, ON – 2.6 million square feet, Aphria Inc., Leamington, ON – 700,000 square feet. In Niagara, there are a number of greenhouses that have been retrofitted and converted away from ornamental production. Some municipalities have allowed the location of these facilities on rural lands while others have encouraged their location in industrial areas where there is less likelihood of incompatibility issues. Production of cannabis and other emerging crops in the future taking place in large scale buildings or greenhouses on prime agricultural lands could permanently convert and displace prime agricultural lands.

The definition of "agricultural use", in the PPS does not make any distinctions between the types of crops that are grown, as long as whatever is produced is harvestable, which means that the cultivation of cannabis would be regarded as an agricultural use. All on-farm buildings and structures associated with growing of a harvestable crop (such as a greenhouse) would also be a permitted use. The use of native soils is not dealt with in the definition.

Medical cannabis cultivation has drawn attention to large scale buildings that are used to grow product. However, the key issue is that large scale agricultural buildings located on prime agricultural lands regardless of what is grown, and depending on the approach to flooring, can permanently displace production on these valuable lands. This issue can apply to the production of other crops or to large scale greenhouse operations built directly on the highest capability soils.

In British Columbia's Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), local and First Nations governments have taken steps to prohibit cannabis production in the ALR unless it is grown in ways that preserve the productive capacity of the agricultural land i.e., structures that have a soil base. This approach allows for optimization of production on the highest capability soils and protects these soils for the long-term.

### 7.1.1.6 Things to Think About

1. It is important to re-evaluate the range of permitted uses on agricultural and rural lands to ensure the continued viability of the rural economy.
2. Review proposed prime agricultural areas and candidate areas mapping prepared by the Province and compare with the mapping of prime agricultural areas in the ROP currently.
3. **Agricultural Related Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas** - The changes in policy in the PPS need to be addressed in the NEGOP. The following are specific criteria to consider when determining whether a proposed use is an agriculture-related use:
  - *Whether the farm-related commercial and/or farm-related industrial use is directly related to farm operations in the area;*
  - *Whether the farm-related commercial and/or farm-related industrial use supports agriculture;*
  - *Whether the farm-related commercial and/or farm-related industrial use benefits from being in close proximity to farm operations; and*
  - *Whether the farm-related commercial and/or farm-related industrial use provides direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity.*
4. **On-farm diversified use** - A key factor that flows from the PPS and the OMAFRA Guidelines is scale. In this regard, uses such as banquet halls that have high water or sewage needs and/or generate significant traffic would not be considered an on-farm diversified use. However, a banquet hall that did not create these impacts could, provided the building used was also available for agricultural purposes at other times. In addition, if the use were a large-scale event with permanent structures, this similarly would not be considered to be an on-farm diversified use. However, the adaptive re-use of agricultural buildings is supported by the OMAFRA Guidelines meaning again that it comes down to scale and impact.
5. East Gwillimbury could consider permitting on-farm diversified uses and agri-tourism uses in prime agricultural areas and on rural lands. There is a demand for these types of uses and these uses have the potential to contribute to the economic well-being of the agricultural system in East Gwillimbury, particularly if the operators meet local sustainability criteria such as:
  - Sourcing food and beverages locally wherever possible;
  - Sourcing horticulture (flowers, shrubs, and landscaping) locally; and
  - Coordinating demands such as accommodation, transportation, and equipment locally.

To deal with the scale issue, it is suggested that the construction of new permanent structures in the prime agricultural areas for this use not be permitted (thereby encouraging the adaptive re-use of existing farm buildings) and that size limits be placed on temporary structures (tents), as well as a maximum area of the agricultural use to be occupied by the facility (e.g., up to 2 percent of the farm parcel to a maximum of one hectare).

From a business perspective, the Town supports the agri tourism and on farm diversification. Consideration should be given to strengthen the Official Plan to develop policies to support local agri-business and policies that support on farm employee accommodation, since this is an important issue that helps the business side of the farm use.

6. Cannabis production facilities, the protection of the soils, and taking land out of production is a big concern for the Town. An approach to cannabis production and large scale agricultural buildings taking land out of production will need to be considered for the NEGOP. Council passed and extended an Interim Control By-law until June 2022 freezing cannabis production facilities. The Town is considering enclosed cannabis production facilities being permitted within employment areas only.

### 7.1.2 What We've Heard

The Phase 1 engagement process, including the first Community Workshop and consultation with Council, has indicated support for rural lands in East Gwillimbury. In particular, people have suggested:

- Importance of protecting high grade agricultural land (i.e., Class 1 land); and,
- How is the OP going to deal with intervening areas between existing settlements (formerly all the settlements were separated by rural land), since they will begin to merge together?

## 7.2 Policy Background

### 7.2.1 Provincial Policy Statement (2020)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 1.1.4 (Rural Areas in Municipalities); Section 1.1.5 (Rural Lands in Municipalities); Section 2.3 (Agriculture)

#### Definitions

**AGRI-TOURISM USES** means those farm-related tourism uses, including limited accommodation such as a bed and breakfast, that promote the enjoyment, education or activities related to the farm operation. (PPS)

**AGRICULTURE-RELATED USES** means those farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses that are directly related to farm operations in the area, support agriculture, benefit from being in close proximity to farm operations, and provide direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity. (PPS)

**ON-FARM DIVERSIFIED USES** means uses that are secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property and are limited in area. On-farm diversified uses include, but are not limited to, home occupations, home industries, agri-tourism uses, and uses that produce value-added agricultural products. Ground-mounted solar facilities are permitted in *prime agricultural areas*, including *specialty crop areas*, only as *on-farm diversified uses*. (PPS)

**PRIME AGRICULTURAL AREA** means areas where prime agricultural lands predominate. This includes areas of prime agricultural lands and associated Canada Land Inventory Class 4 through 7 lands and additional areas where there is a local concentration of farms which exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture. Prime agricultural areas may be identified by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food

using guidelines developed by the Province as amended from time to time. A prime agricultural area may also be identified through an alternative agricultural land evaluation system approved by the Province. (PPS, PTGP)

PRIME AGRICULTURAL LAND means specialty crop areas and/or Canada Land Inventory Classes 1, 2 and 3 lands, as amended from time to time, in this order of priority for protection. (PPS)

RURAL LANDS means lands which are located outside settlement areas and which are outside prime agricultural areas. (PPS)

The PPS under Section 1.1.4 identifies rural areas as a system of lands that may include include rural settlement areas, rural lands, prime agricultural areas, natural heritage features and areas, and other resource areas.

The permitted uses on rural lands under Section 1.1.5.2 include the following:

- a) *the management or use of resources;*
- b) *resource-based recreational uses (including recreational dwellings);*
- c) *residential development, including lot creation, that is locally appropriate;*
- d) *agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, on-farm diversified uses and normal farm practices, in accordance with provincial standards;*
- e) *home occupations and home industries;*
- f) *cemeteries; and*
- g) *other rural land uses.*

Further, under Section 1.1.5.3 recreational, tourism and other economic opportunities are promoted.

New land uses, including the creation of lots, and new or expanding livestock facilities are required to comply with the minimum distance separation formulae.

The PPS definition for 'agriculture-related use' permits uses to support 'farm operations in the area', as opposed to supporting only the 'farm operation' on the same property. The changes in terminology with respect to agriculture-related uses have also been made in the updated Greenbelt Plan, Niagara Escarpment Plan, and the Growth Plan in 2020.

There is Provincial policy direction to identify and protect prime agricultural land and prime agricultural areas. Section 2.3.1 of the PPS states that "Prime agricultural areas shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture. Prime agricultural areas are areas where prime agricultural lands predominate. Specialty crop areas shall be given the highest priority for protection, followed by Canada Land Inventory Class 1, 2, and 3 lands, and any associated Class 4 through 7 lands within the prime agricultural area, in this order of priority.

This section is mandatory and indicates that prime agricultural areas shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture.

Section 2.3.2 of the PPS then provides further direction indicating that "Planning authorities shall designate prime agricultural areas and specialty crop areas in accordance with guidelines developed by the Province, as amended from time to time."

This section requires that planning authorities designate prime agricultural areas in their Official Plans. While the term 'designate' implies that the creation of a mutually exclusive land use designation is required, other approaches that achieve the same objective could be considered.

The term “designate” is not defined in the PPS. The province’s preferred approach to designating prime agricultural areas in official plans, and one that is followed by most municipalities, is to have “agriculture” or “prime agricultural area” as a category of land use identified on a land use schedule or map with corresponding policies in the official plan. Other approaches that achieve the same objectives of 1) mapping the lands and 2) through policies, provide for their protection and identify permitted uses, may also be acceptable

The PPS identifies the following as permissible uses in prime agricultural areas:

- Agricultural uses;
- Agriculture-related uses; and,
- On-farm diversified uses.

The PPS gives the highest priority to agricultural use and requires that agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses be compatible with surrounding agricultural operations.

Under Section 2.3.4, the PPS prohibits lot creation for new residential uses and allows lot creation in prime agricultural areas only for the following:

- Agricultural uses;
- Agriculture-related uses;
- A residence surplus to a farming operation; and,
- Infrastructure, where the facility or corridor cannot be accommodated through the use of easements or rights-of-way.

Section 2.3.6 of the PPS directs planning authorities to only permit non-agricultural uses in prime agricultural areas for:

- Extraction of minerals, petroleum resources and mineral resources, and,
- Limited non-residential uses if the land is not speciality crop, complies with minimum separation formulae, there is an identified need for additional land to accommodate the use, and there are no reasonable alternative locations to avoid prime agricultural areas or lands.

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

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 1.2.1 (Guiding Principles); 2.2.9 (Rural Areas); 4.2.6 (Agricultural System)

A guiding principle of the Growth Plan to is “support and enhance the long-term viability and productivity of agriculture by protecting prime agricultural areas and the agri-food network.”

Section 2.2.9 of the Growth Plan outlines policies for Rural Areas that include the following:

- Municipalities encouraged to plan for a variety of cultural and economic opportunities within rural settlements to serve the needs of rural residents and area businesses.
- Public service facilities in rural settlements should be co-located and integrated in community hubs.
- Development outside of settlement areas may be permitted on rural lands for:
  - the management or use of resources;
  - resource-based recreational uses; and
  - other rural land uses that are not appropriate in settlement areas;

- Resource-based recreational uses should be limited to tourism-related and recreational uses that are compatible with the scale, character, and capacity of the resource and the surrounding rural landscape; and,
- New multiple lots or units for residential development be directed to settlement areas, but may be allowed on rural lands in site-specific locations with approved zoning or designation in an official plan

Section 4.2.6.2 of the Growth Plan indicates that “Prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, will be designated in accordance with mapping identified by the Province and these areas will be protected for long-term use for agriculture.”

These sections require all municipalities to designate prime agricultural areas in accordance with Provincial mapping and to protect these lands for long-term use for agriculture. It is noted that the policy references the protection of prime agricultural areas for the long term, not permanently. It is also noted that later policies allow for the refinement of the agricultural system before it is implemented in Official Plans.

Section 4.2.6.4 states that the continuity of the agricultural land base and the functional and economic connections to the agri-food network will be maintained and enhanced.

Section 4.2.6.7 states that Municipalities are encouraged to implement regional agri-food strategies and other approaches to sustain and enhance the Agricultural System and the long-term economic prosperity and viability of the agri-food sector, including the maintenance and improvement of the agri-food network by:

- a) providing opportunities to support access to healthy, local, and affordable food, urban and near-urban agriculture, food system planning and promoting the sustainability of agricultural, agri-food, and agri-product businesses while protecting agricultural resources and minimizing land use conflicts;
- b) protecting, enhancing, or supporting opportunities for infrastructure, services, and assets. Where negative impacts on the agri-food network are unavoidable, they will be assessed, minimized, and mitigated to the extent feasible; and
- c) establishing or consulting with agricultural advisory committees or liaison officers.

### 7.2.3 Greenbelt Plan (2017)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 1.2.2 (Protected Countryside); Section 3.1.2 (Speciality Crop Area Policies); Section 3.1.3 (Prime Agricultural Area Policies); Section 3.1.4 (Rural Lands Policies); Section 3.1.5 (Agri-food Network)

Section 1.2.2 of the Greenbelt Plan outlines the goals for the Protected Countryside. Specifically, under Agricultural viability and protection is the protection of the speciality crop area land base as vital fruit and vegetable growing regions. The Holland Marsh is identified as a *specialty crop area*, and a centre of agriculture focused on the agri-food sector related to vegetable production (1.2.2.1 b. ii.)

Further under 1.2.2 the Greenbelt Plan promotes:

- the protection of prime agricultural areas by preventing lot creation and the redesignation of prime agricultural areas.
- the appropriate flexibility to allow for agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses, normal farm practices;
- foster long-term investment in the agri-food network and improvement to and management of the agricultural land base.

Sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 set forth policies for Specialty Crop Areas and Prime Agricultural Areas. The intent of the policies is the same for both Areas with minor modifications regarding the redesignation of lands.

- to ensure that agricultural uses and normal farm practices are promoted and protected, and a full range of agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses are permitted based on the provincial Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas;
- lands shall not be redesignated in official plans for non-agricultural uses in Speciality Crop Areas;
- the redesignation of lands in Prime Agricultural Areas, are only permitted through refinements to the prime agricultural area and rural lands designations or a Settlement area boundary expansion;
- that Towns/Villages are not permitted to expand into specialty crop areas;
- Non-agricultural uses may be permitted in prime agricultural areas only after the completion of an agricultural impact assessment;
- new land uses, where permitted, shall comply with the minimum distance separation formulae; and,
- compatibility must be achieved in the interface between agricultural uses and non-agricultural uses.

Section 3.1.4 policies are related to Rural Lands within the Protected Countryside.

Rural lands provide the primary locations for a range of recreational, tourism, institutional (including cemetery) and resource based commercial/ industrial uses.

- Existing uses such as highway commercial and non-farm residential which are typically directed to settlement areas are allowed to continue.
- Similar to Speciality Crop Areas and Prime Agricultural Areas, agricultural uses and normal farm practices are promoted and protected, and a full range of agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses are permitted based on the provincial Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas.
- Settlement area expansions may be permitted into rural land
- New multiple lots or units for residential development (e.g., estate residential subdivisions and adult lifestyle or retirement communities) shall not be permitted on rural lands;
- new land uses, where permitted, shall comply with the minimum distance separation formulae;
- compatibility must be achieved in the interface between agricultural uses and non-agricultural uses; and,
- public service facilities exist on rural lands should be maintained and adapted as community hubs.

Section 3.1.5 states that integrated planning for growth management, including goods movement and transportation planning, shall consider opportunities to support and enhance the Agricultural System.

Municipalities are encouraged to implement regional agri-food strategies and other approaches to sustain and enhance the Agricultural System and the long-term economic prosperity and viability of the agri-food sector by:

- Providing opportunities to support access to healthy, local, and affordable food, urban and near-urban agriculture, food system planning and promoting the sustainability of agricultural, agri-food and agri-product businesses while protecting agricultural resources and minimizing land use conflicts;
- Protecting, enhancing, or supporting opportunities for infrastructure, services, and assets. Where negative impacts on the agri-food network are unavoidable, they shall be assessed, minimized, and mitigated to the extent feasible; and,
- Establishing or consulting with agricultural advisory committees or liaison officers.

#### 7.2.4 York Region Official Plan (2010)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** Section 6.1 (The Greenbelt Plan); Section 6.2 (The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan); Section 6.3 (Agricultural and Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Areas); Section 6.4 (Rural Area)

York Region has very productive agricultural lands and farming activities that represent approximately 38 per cent of York Region's land use, with Agricultural production an important part of the Region's economy. It is a goal of the Region to protect the Agricultural and Rural Areas are to support the agricultural industry as essential components of the Regional fabric.

Approximately 69% of the land area in York Region is within the Greenbelt Plan. Policy 6.1.1 states that the lands within the Greenbelt Plan are identified as Protected Countryside. These lands are designated as Agricultural Area and Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Area and shall be identified in local official plans (6.1.2 and 6.1.3).

The Region prohibits new residential development of multiple units or lots such as estate residential developments, adult lifestyle, and retirement communities on these lands (6.1.5).

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan protects, restores, and enhances the ecological and hydrological features and functions of the Oak Ridges Moraine. The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan identifies land use designations and permitted uses. Policy 6.2.2 of the Region OP includes the following:

**Natural Core Areas** – high concentration of key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features, and/or landform conservation areas. Permitted uses are limited to low intensity recreation, agricultural uses

**Natural Linkages Areas** – central corridor system that supports movement of plants and animals. Limited new uses include those of the Natural Core Area and mineral aggregate operations and wayside pits.

**Countryside Areas** – contain rural land uses such as agriculture, major recreational uses, major institutional, Hamlets, mineral aggregate operations, recreational and open space.

**Urban Area and Towns and Villages** are intended to be the focus of growth. These areas permit a full range of residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses.

The Region directs local official plans and zoning by-laws to include appropriate policies to support the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. The Region will support the use of development permits or zoning as innovative approaches.

East Gwillimbury includes a significant amount of productive agricultural land including the Holland Marsh. These lands are to be protected within the Greenbelt Plan Area. East Gwillimbury also has agricultural and rural lands that lie outside the Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan Area. It is policy of the Region under 6.3.1, that the Agricultural Area and the Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Area be recognized as natural resources of major importance to the economic and social viability of the Region. Local official plans and zoning by-laws are to designate and protect these lands. Within these Areas, the permitted uses are normal farm practices and a full range of agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, and secondary agricultural uses.

Policy 6.3.3 stipulates that any refinements to the Agricultural Area or the Rural Area outside of the Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan are not permitted unless through a municipal comprehensive review.

Policy 6.3.12 promotes agricultural practices that minimize impacts on air quality and climate change.

It is an objective of the Region that agricultural land be available for growing and producing local food. Policy 6.3.17 supports the agricultural industry by supporting local farm markets; promoting a variety of agricultural products; encouraging agriculture on lands adjacent to all communities; encouraging community gardens and urban agriculture practices; local food sourcing policies; and ensuring that the agricultural industry remains competitive, sustainable, and viable in the long term.

The Rural Area in the Region includes farms, businesses, golf courses, rural settlements, and existing rural and estate residential development. These lands protected by the Greenbelt Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan to ensure that the rural character and agricultural uses remain. Under Policy 6.4.3, the Rural Area designation permits the existing and new agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, normal farm practices, forestry, conservation, land extensive recreational uses, and resource-based commercial and industrial uses.

Applications for redesignation of lands are only permitted if they comply with the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservations Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, and local official plans. Applications must demonstrate:

- a. that the proposed use is appropriate in the Rural Area when considered in the context of Provincial Plans and local official plans;
- b. that the proposed use will not adversely impact the ability of adjacent agricultural activities to undertake normal farm practices;
- c. that the proposed water and wastewater servicing is appropriate for the type of use; and,
- d. that there are no negative impacts on key natural heritage or hydrologic features and functions, biodiversity, or connectivity of the Regional Greenlands System. (6.4.5)

Policy 6.4.12 permits alternative energy systems and renewable energy systems within the Rural Area in accordance with provincial and federal requirements.

## 7.2.5 Town of East Gwillimbury Official Plan (2010)

**POLICY REFERENCE:** 4.10 (Agricultural/Long Term Growth Area); 4.11 (Greenbelt Plan Area); (Protected Countryside); 7.7.2 (Renewable Energy)

One of the essential components of the overall vision for East Gwillimbury is to foster a vibrant agricultural and rural community. Further, it is an objective of East Gwillimbury to support the rural economy through the protection of the agricultural and rural lands (Policy 2.2 v.) and directing growth to the Urban Area. The Official Plan has identified that approximately 75% of the Town will be protected from significant development under the Provincial Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan which will remain.

Policies for agricultural areas are broken into three categories; those falling on agricultural land outside of the Greenbelt Protected Countryside, agricultural land falling under the Protected Countryside provisions and those on Prime Agricultural Land and Holland Marsh Speciality Crop Area.

Agricultural/ Long Term Growth Areas include rural lands outside the Greenbelt Protected Countryside that may be needed to accommodate long term growth. These areas are defined by extensive planned infrastructure supporting future development and proximity to *Settlement Areas*. The *Settlement Area* can accommodate urban use following a boundary extension as part of a municipal comprehensive review (Section 4.10). Lands designated as Agricultural/ Long Term Growth Areas may be zoned to include agricultural uses, normal farm practices, agriculture related and secondary uses and a single detached dwelling on an existing lot of record (Policy 4.10.1). The Plan recommends phasing out livestock operations due to the proximity to *Settlement Areas* and to not permit any new livestock-based operations in the area (Policy 4.10.2).

Within the Greenbelt Plan Area (Protected Countryside) all development proposals will meet the requirements of the Plan and Greenbelt Plan. Where there are discrepancies between these plans the more restrictive policies prevail. Provisions under the Greenbelt Protected Countryside apply to five land use designations constituting the Protected Countryside including Holland Marsh Speciality Crop Area, Prime Agricultural Area, Rural Area, Greenbelt Settlement Area and Greenbelt Hamlet (Section 4.11).

Where agricultural uses are permitted new or expanding livestock facilities should be set back from non-agricultural uses, meet requirements under the Nutrient Management Act and nothing within this Plan will limit the ability of landowners to carry out reasonable farm practices under the Farming and Food Production Act (Policy 4.11.1.3). Accessory Residential Uses are permitted on Farm Properties for the accommodation of full-time farm labour as required by the operation and subject to a Zoning By-law amendment and Site Plan Control (Policy 4.11.1.4). Secondary uses are permitted as long as their use is associated with and located on the farm, and the Plan supports uses that highlight the importance and value of the agricultural economy (Policy 4.11.1.5, 4.11.1.7).

Prime Agricultural and Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Area form the most restrictive agricultural area category adding provisions onto the Protected Countryside. The Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Area is identified separately to highlight the areas unique soil composition ideal for speciality crops; the Plan ensures this area is protected as a unique and valuable food source. Agriculture is the predominant land use within this area, with policies preventing loss and fragmentation, directing uses not supportive of agriculture to the *Settlement Area* and encouraging farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices while limiting disruption of agricultural operations (Policy 4.11.2).

Rural Areas include lands outside of the *Settlement Area* that are not Prime Agricultural Areas. The Rural Area is comprised of various existing agricultural operations and secondary uses are supported. The

Rural Area also provides for a range of institutional and commercial / industrial uses serving rural resources, appropriate tourist, recreational activities, and historical uses that are now directed to *Settlement Areas*. Policy objectives aim to maintain rural character, prevent intrusion of land uses that are incompatible and ensure new development is compatible with the role and function of the Rural Area (Policy 4.11.3).

Rural and Agricultural policies aim to preserve character, direct incompatible uses to *Settlement Areas*, limit livestock operations near *Settlement Areas*, define compatible secondary and accessory uses while maintaining agricultural lands within the Protected Countryside.

Under Policy 7.7.2.8 the Official Plan directs that Large-Scale Renewable Energy Generating Systems using solar energy be encouraged to locate within the Agricultural/Long Term Growth Area. In addition, under 7.7.2.9 renewable energy systems using wind energy are to be directed to Prime Agricultural and Rural Area designations to reduce the potential for land use conflicts in Settlement Areas.

## 8 Next Steps

Collectively, the issues explored through this Discussion Paper will serve as the basis for obtaining additional public and stakeholder feedback and will act as a starting point for preparing a number of options and ultimately, recommendations for the planning framework to be included in the new East Gwillimbury Official Plan.

## Appendix A: Definitions

**Active transportation** means human-powered travel, including but not limited to, walking, cycling, inline skating, and travel with the use of mobility aids, including motorized wheelchairs and other power-assisted devices moving at a comparable speed. (PPS)

**Agriculture-Related Uses** means those farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses that are directly related to farm operations in the area, support agriculture, benefit from being in close proximity to farm operations, and provide direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity. (PPS)

**Agri-Tourism Uses** means those farm-related tourism uses, including limited accommodation such as a bed and breakfast, that promote the enjoyment, education or activities related to the farm operation. (PPS)

**Built heritage resource** means a building, structure, monument, installation or any manufactured or constructed part or remnant that contributes to a property's cultural heritage value or interest as identified by a community, including an Indigenous community. Built heritage resources are located on property that may be designated under Parts IV or V of the Ontario Heritage Act, or that may be included on local, provincial, federal and/or international registers. (PPS)

**Compact Built Form:** A land use pattern that encourages the efficient use of land, walkable neighbourhoods, mixed land uses (residential, retail, workplace, and institutional) all within one neighbourhood, proximity to transit and reduced need for infrastructure. Compact built form can include detached and semidetached houses on small lots as well as townhouses and walk-up apartments, multi-storey commercial developments, and apartments or offices above retail. Walkable neighbourhoods can be characterized by roads laid out in a well-connected network, destinations that are easily accessible by transit and active transportation, sidewalks with minimal interruptions for vehicle access, and a pedestrian-friendly environment along roads to encourage active transportation. (Growth Plan)

**Complete Communities:** places such as mixed-use neighbourhoods or other areas within cities, towns, and settlement areas that offer and support opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to conveniently access most of the necessities for daily living, including a mix of jobs, local stores, and services, a full range of housing, transportation options and public service facilities. Complete communities are age-friendly and may take different shapes and forms appropriate to their contexts. (Growth Plan)

**Conserved** means the identification, protection, management and use of built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes and archaeological resources in a manner that ensures their cultural heritage value or interest is retained. This may be achieved by the implementation of recommendations set out in a conservation plan, archaeological assessment, and/or heritage impact assessment that has been approved, accepted, or adopted by the relevant planning authority and/or decision-maker. Mitigative measures and/or alternative development approaches can be included in these plans and assessments. (PPS)

**Cultural heritage landscape:** means a defined geographical area that may have been modified by human activity and is identified as having cultural heritage value or interest by a community, including an Indigenous community. The area may include features such as buildings, structures, spaces, views, archaeological sites, or natural elements that are valued together for their interrelationship, meaning or association. Cultural heritage landscapes may be properties that have been determined to have cultural

heritage value or interest under the Ontario Heritage Act or have been included on federal and/or international registers, and/or protected through official plan, zoning by-law, or other land use planning mechanisms. (PPS)

**Cultural Heritage Resources:** Built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes and archaeological resources that have been determined to have cultural heritage value or interest for the important contribution they make to our understanding of the history of a place, an event, or a people. While some cultural heritage resources may already be identified and inventoried by official sources, the significance of others can only be determined after evaluation. (Growth Plan, originally from the Greenbelt Plan)

**Delineated Built Boundary:** The limits of the developed urban area as defined by the Minister in consultation with affected municipalities for the purpose of measuring the minimum intensification target in this Plan. (Growth Plan)

**Delineated Built-up Area:** All land within the *delineated built boundary*. (Growth Plan)

**Designated Greenfield Area:** Lands within *settlement areas* (not including *rural settlements*) but outside of *delineated built-up areas* that have been designated in an official plan for development and are required to accommodate forecasted growth to the horizon of this Plan. *Designated greenfield areas* do not include *excess lands*. (Growth Plan)

**15-Minute Neighbourhood:** Complete communities are walkable, well-connected neighbourhoods where you can access your favourite coffee shop, local park, services, and daily needs within a 15-minute walk from home. (York Region)

**Green infrastructure** means natural and human-made elements that provide ecological and hydrological functions and processes. Green infrastructure can include components such as natural heritage features and systems, parklands, stormwater management systems, street trees, urban forests, natural channels, permeable surfaces, and green roofs. (PPS)

**Heritage attributes** means the principal features or elements that contribute to a protected heritage property's cultural heritage value or interest, and may include the property's built, constructed, or manufactured elements, as well as natural landforms, vegetation, water features, and its visual setting (e.g., significant views or vistas to or from a protected heritage property). (PPS)

**Impacts of a changing climate** means the present and future consequences from changes in weather patterns at local and regional levels including extreme weather events and increased climate variability. (PPS)

**Intensification** means the development of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists through: a) redevelopment, including the reuse of brownfield sites; b) the development of vacant and/or underutilized lots within previously developed areas; c) infill development; and d) the expansion or conversion of existing buildings. (PPS)

**Low Impact Development:** an approach to stormwater management that seeks to manage rain and other precipitation as close as possible to where it falls to mitigate the impacts of increased runoff and stormwater pollution. It typically includes a set of site design strategies and distributed, small-scale structural practices to mimic the natural hydrology to the greatest extent possible through infiltration, evapotranspiration, harvesting, filtration, and detention of stormwater. Low impact development can include, for example: bio-swales, vegetated areas at the edge of paved surfaces, permeable pavement, rain gardens, green roofs, and exfiltration systems. Low impact development often employs vegetation and soil in its design, however, that does not always have to be the case and the specific form may vary considering local conditions and community character. (Growth Plan)

**On-Farm Diversified Uses** means uses that are secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property and are limited in area. On-farm diversified uses include, but are not limited to, home occupations, home industries, agri-tourism uses, and uses that produce value-added agricultural products. Ground-mounted solar facilities are permitted in *prime agricultural areas*, including *specialty crop areas*, only as *on-farm diversified uses*. (PPS)

**Population-Related Employment (PRE):** Jobs that primarily serve a resident population, including retail, education, health care, local government, and work-at-home employment. The vast majority is in community areas.

**PPU “Persons per unit”** Represents average household sizes. The PPU is calculated by dividing the number of occupied dwelling units by the total population.

**Prime Agricultural Area** means areas where prime agricultural lands predominate. This includes areas of prime agricultural lands and associated Canada Land Inventory Class 4 through 7 lands and additional areas where there is a local concentration of farms which exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture. Prime agricultural areas may be identified by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food using guidelines developed by the Province as amended from time to time. A prime agricultural area may also be identified through an alternative agricultural land evaluation system approved by the Province. (PPS, PTGP)

**Prime Agricultural Land** means specialty crop areas and/or Canada Land Inventory Classes 1, 2 and 3 lands, as amended from time to time, in this order of priority for protection. (PPS)

**Protected heritage property** means property designated under Parts IV, V or VI of the Ontario Heritage Act; property subject to a heritage conservation easement under Parts II or IV of the Ontario Heritage Act; property identified by the Province and prescribed public bodies as provincial heritage property under the Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Provincial Heritage Properties; property protected under federal legislation, and UNESCO World Heritage Sites. (PPS)

**Public Realm:** All spaces to which the public has unrestricted access, such as streets, parks, and sidewalks. (Growth Plan)

**Public service facilities** means land, buildings, and structures for the provision of programs and services provided or subsidized by a government or other body, such as social assistance, recreation, police and fire protection, health and educational programs, long-term care services, and cultural services. Public service facilities do not include infrastructure. (PPS)

**Rural Lands** means lands which are located outside settlement areas and which are outside prime agricultural areas. (PPS)