



Policy Directions Report

May 25, 2022

Regional Official Plan Review

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1.0 Introduction

The current, approved Halton Regional Official Plan establishes a comprehensive policy framework that provides the basis for accommodating growth to 2031, protects the natural heritage system and permits and supports agricultural investments in the rural area. The Province requires that going forward, the Regional Official Plan reflects all current Provincial land use planning requirements, including planning to 2051, and also Halton must ensure it continues to meet the needs of the community today and in the years ahead. This Report sets out certain policy changes and enhancements being proposed to be part of a future Official Plan Amendment as part of the Regional Official Plan Review, as well as noting for reference purposes Amendments that have been approved or are already in process in this regard.

Halton's Regional Official Plan determines how and where Halton grows. This includes deciding where new businesses, jobs and housing should be accommodated, as well as which lands are preserved for farming, open space and natural areas. These decisions also help to determine where roads, transit corridors, utilities and other public infrastructure will be considered and constructed.

This Policy Directions Report sets out broad policy approaches to address certain issues that have been considered in the Regional Official Plan Review to date and indicate how they can be reflected in policy development in a future Amendment to the Regional Official Plan. The policy directions set out in this Report are based on the research and analysis and public engagement program that have been undertaken thus far, including Discussion Papers on each relevant theme area. This Policy Directions Report describes key areas where changes to the Regional Official Plan are proposed.

This Policy Directions Report addresses Climate Change, Integrated Growth Management, the Rural and Agricultural System, Natural Heritage, Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations and the North Aldershot Planning Area theme areas, plus General Plan Implementation. This Policy Directions Report addresses matters related to the Integrated Growth Management Strategy to present a comprehensive picture even though they are being addressed via Regional Official Plan Amendments 48 and 49.

The Regional Official Plan Review is being undertaken in three phases.

Phase 1 of the Regional Official Plan Review, which resulted in the [Phase One Directions Report](#), identified key theme areas and outlined the tasks and deliverables to

be undertaken during the next two phases of the Regional Official Plan Review project. By endorsing the approach set out in the Phase One Directions Report Council supported the approach whereby the Regional Official Plan would be updated strategically where there was an identified need for updates, and not a full scale “repeal and replace” approach where a completely new Plan would be prepared.

Phase 2 featured a series of [Discussion Papers](#) for the five theme areas as a means to have a conversation with the community about issues and opportunities related to each theme. Input was sought from the public, industry, agencies, Indigenous People, Communities and First Nations, local municipal partners and other stakeholders. The feedback received to date was valuable in gaining perspectives on a full range of planning matters important to the community. This will ensure that the Official Plan and any future changes are reflective of community perspectives while addressing Provincial requirements. The development of the policy directions set out in this Report are based on the research and analysis that underpinned the Discussion Papers as well as the results from the engagement program in Phase 2.

Phase 3 consists of the identification of policy directions, draft official plan policies, and the adoption of official plan amendments to implement the policy directions, two of which are either approved (Regional Official Amendment 48) or in process (Regional Official Plan Amendment 49).

Regional Council endorsed the recommendation in [Staff Report LPS51-21](#) that the Regional Official Plan be updated via three Official Plan Amendments.

1. Amendment to Define a Regional Urban Structure:

The Province has confirmed that the Region can complete its municipal comprehensive review to achieve conformity with Provincial plans in phases, rather than as one overall amendment to the Regional Official Plan. Based on that confirmation, the Regional Council adopted Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 48, which defines a new Regional Urban Structure, ahead of the overall Integrated Growth Management Strategy. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing approved the Amendment with modifications on November 10, 2021.

2. Amendment implementing the Region’s overall Integrated Growth Management Strategy:
An amendment is required to implement the Region’s Integrated Growth Management Strategy and the Modified Preferred Growth Concept that distributes population and employment growth to the Local Municipalities to 2041 and identifies a framework for planning for growth between 2041 and 2051. This amendment, known as Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 49, will implement changes that support Halton’s growth strategy and address conformity with all relevant policies of the Growth Plan 2019, within the urban area. Regional Official Plan Amendment 49, should it be adopted by Council and approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, will address these matters. This amendment, if approved, would also address housing, and other important policy matters with a close relationship to growth management, including any necessary updates to the Regional Natural Heritage System mapping within the urban area.

3. An Amendment implementing updates to the Rural and Agricultural System, Natural Heritage, Climate Change and other outstanding matters:
Changes to the Regional Official Plan addressing the Rural and Agricultural System, Climate Change, and Natural Heritage policies and mapping for areas outside of the urban area to 2051 are required and will be addressed through a separate amendment that follows the amendments implementing the Integrated Growth Management Strategy. This will allow for additional community engagement, and engagement with the Local Municipalities and other public agencies, prior to finalization and adoption. The Policy Directions set out in this Report will primarily be addressed in this Amendment anticipated in 2023.

The Regional Official Plan Amendment Framework for Policy Directions chart in Appendix A sets out which policy directions have, or will be, included in each amendment. The Policy Directions for the Integrated Growth Management Strategy, which are being addressed through Regional Official Plan Amendments 48 and 49, are included on the chart for reference purposes only.

It should be noted that this Policy Directions Report is intended to set out broad policy directions, in the form of objectives or standards to be achieved, that will be refined further through the preparation of more detailed official plan policies during Phase 3. As such, in most cases what is presented in the Report is not intended to address technical aspects or every component of the Policy Direction being proposed.

2.0 Background

The Background Section provides information on the Provincial legislation and policy planning framework for the policy development work being undertaken in the Regional Official Plan Review. It also includes an overview of the public engagement aspect of the Regional Official Plan Review, and information concerning the climate change lens has been applied to all the policy changes that were being considered.

2.1 Planning Framework

The Region is required to review an existing Official Plan every five years to ensure that the Official Plan reflects current Provincial legislation and policy. Halton Region is undertaking the Regional Official Plan Review in accordance with Provincial requirements established in Section 26 of the *Planning Act*.

The last comprehensive review of the Regional Official Plan, completed in 2009, resulted in Regional Official Plan Amendments 37, 38, and 39, which implemented the policies of the Provincial Policy Statement, 2005, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006, and the Greenbelt Plan, 2005, amongst other key policy initiatives. Many of the policies in the Regional Official Plan remain current today.

Since 2009 there have been a number of updates to the Provincial policy framework. In accordance with Provincial requirements, the current Regional Official Plan Review will ensure consistency with the [Provincial Policy Statement, 2020](#), as well as conformity to [A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019](#), the [Greenbelt Plan, 2017](#), and the [Niagara Escarpment Plan, 2017](#). The requirements in the Growth Plan with respect to planning for growth to the year 2051 and accommodating another 482,000 people and 222,000 jobs to meet the provincial requirement of 1,100,000 people and 500,000 jobs are particularly important.

The Discussion Papers ([Climate Change, Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper - Integrated Growth Management Strategy](#), [Rural and Agricultural System](#), [Natural Heritage System](#), and [North Aldershot](#)) produced in Phase 2 provided an overview of a key considerations for updating the mapping and policies of the Regional Official Plan to ensure consistency and conformity with the updated Provincial policy framework. Building on the Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper, the [Downtown Burlington Urban Growth Centre and MTSA Supplemental Discussion Paper](#) addressed proposed specific changes to the Burlington Urban Growth Centre.

The policy directions in this Report represent proposed policy changes to the Official Plan based on extensive analysis and public engagement on the Discussion Papers. The policy directions identify a path forward for achieving consistency and conformity with Provincial plans and policies while also continuing to implement a vision in the approved Regional Official Plan for the future of Halton that considers the local context (i.e. the type of community Halton residents envision for the future).

2.2 Public Engagement

There has been extensive public engagement that has contributed to the policy directions set out in this report. In engaging with the public, industry, agencies, Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations, local municipal partners and other stakeholders, Regional staff received feedback that will help to ensure the Regional Official Plan meets the community's vision and goals. While the majority of engagement is addressed in the [Initial Consultation Summary Report](#) there has been further engagement on the theme areas.

Regional staff reviewed the input received in response to the Discussion Papers in the context of Provincial policy and determined how the input could be addressed through the development of specific policy directions. This was undertaken by analyzing the input (support for one position or another and relevant technical information) to formulate policy directions reflecting what was heard. More detail is provided in each theme area setting out what was heard and how that input was used in the preparation of specific policy directions.

Regional staff kept detailed records of input received; submissions were categorized based on the topic area and opinions expressed were documented in a central database, as well Public Information Centres, meetings and questionnaire results were fully documented.

A report on the 2020 engagement exercise related to the five Discussion Papers and one Supplemental Discussion Paper, the [Initial Consultation Summary Report](#), was provided to Council February 17, 2021. For each Discussion Paper, high level information was provided on what is being considered and why the theme is important to this Review. The comments received were summarized to provide a high-level overview of the range of comments in a level of detail that was set out to fairly and objectively capture the perspectives of participants. The Initial Consultation Summary Report was an important component of the overall public engagement process in that it gave Council and Regional staff a good understanding of the range of public opinion on the various theme areas. The Initial Consultation Summary Report also set out

information on the public engagement process itself.

A range of methods were used to reach out to notify potentially interested parties about the Regional Official Plan Review project in general and the Discussion Papers in particular. This included newspaper advertisements, social media, letters and postcards, and website postings. Detailed questionnaires were provided online for interested parties to use to provide input. Six themed based Public Information Centres were held, in addition to meetings with Local Municipal Councils, Advisory Committees and stakeholders. Special efforts were made to reach out to people without internet access including having postcards sent to the rural areas of the Region and paper copies of the Discussion Papers being made available at pick-up points.

In total there were 270 participants at virtual Public Information Centres, 364 submissions and inquiries on the Discussion Papers, 4,041 social media clicks and 19,123 website pages views. Based on the level of participation and input in all aspects of the public engagement process, the process was considered successful based on a review of other similar exercises.

Since the release of the Initial Consultation Summary Report there has been further engagement on the theme areas. The activities have consisted of meetings and correspondence with landowners, stakeholders, the Natural Heritage Advisory and Halton Agricultural Advisory Committees, an Agricultural Working Group, and site visits. All of these activities and input have been documented as part of the overall public engagement process. In addition, some of the engagement on Growth Concepts Discussion Paper did touch on the other theme areas, though they were not the focus. The input that has been received by Regional planners has been documented and considered in the preparation of Policy Directions, this was particularly the case for Rural and Agricultural System policy directions.

This Policy Directions Report Submissions and Response Charts, which sets out the content of submissions received and the staff response is available online [here](#) as part of the package of information provided to Council at the Workshop meeting on February 9, 2022 related to the Preferred Growth Concept.

3.0 Policy Directions

The current Regional Official Plan has established a strong foundation for future land use in Halton. It sets out solid, well-reasoned policies to protect the Rural and Agricultural System and Natural Heritage, while facilitating well planned development as set out in Sustainable Halton, the previous Regional Official Plan update. In Halton's land use vision as established in the Regional Official Plan, the Region's future landscape will always consist of three principal categories of land uses: settlement areas, a rural countryside that includes an agricultural system, and a natural heritage system.

This section of the Policy Directions Report sets out the specific areas of policy that are proposed to be updated in the Regional Official Plan related to the theme areas, plus an outline of implementation policy changes that are being proposed. In certain instances, guidelines may be updated in concert with amendments to policy, some of which are mentioned below. Further, certain policy directions may be implemented through other corporate initiatives such as Halton Region Climate Change Response and Rural Agricultural Strategy.

3.1 Climate Change

3.1.1 Overview

The Regional Official Plan sets out a sustainable land use approach with policies implicitly responding to the impacts of a changing climate change. It does so by directing growth towards complete communities and away from natural heritage and agricultural lands. It also promotes a balanced transportation system, water conservation, improving air quality, and facilitating energy conservation. Halton Region has a long history of efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to climate change and environmental sustainability. These efforts are rooted in many of its existing plans and strategies. Local Municipalities have also significantly addressed climate change through multiple plans, initiatives and programs.

In 2019, Halton Region confirmed its commitment to addressing climate change by declaring a Climate Emergency. The Region is working on multiple fronts to respond to the impacts of a changing climate, including through land use policy. Through the review and update of the Regional Official Plan, the Region will enhance the existing policy framework by including policies that address both mitigating and adapting to climate change. Addressing climate change through the Regional Official Plan Review

is important given the significant impact of land use policies. It has been shown that land use planning decisions create a “lock-in” effect whereby past decisions have a long lasting impact on energy use and behavioral patterns that impacts greenhouse gas emission for decades. Corporately, Halton Region’s Climate Change Response is addressing climate change matters that are not appropriately addressed through land use planning, the work includes corporate and community greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and greenhouse gas emission inventories.

The [Climate Change Discussion Paper](#) presented a number of considerations for improving the current climate change policy framework in the Regional Official Plan in accordance with updates to the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and Provincial plans. Further details and background information for the proposed policy directions can be found in the Discussion Paper.

This section of the Report is dedicated to policy directions specifically related to Climate Change. In this section there are recommendations for improving and updating the policies of the Regional Official Plan from a climate change perspective.

Climate Change Lens Being Applied in Other Theme Areas

Through the Regional Official Plan Review, Halton Region is reviewing Regional Official Plan policies for best practices and consistency with and conformity to Provincial plans and policies in addressing climate change. The review offers a great opportunity to build on the sustainability vision of the current Regional Official Plan. In doing so, a Climate Change Lens has been applied to all policy directions.

Addressing climate change covers many different policy areas including growth management, agriculture, and natural heritage. Because of this, many of the policy directions covered in this Report contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.



The symbol to the left has been used to identify the policy directions within the sections dedicated to other Regional Official Plan theme areas (e.g. Rural and Agricultural System) and includes a brief description of how the direction contributes to the Region’s response to climate change.

3.1.2 Policy Directions

This section outlines the proposed policy directions for planning for climate change in Halton Region.

Policy Direction - CC-1 – Strengthen and enhance the Regional Official Plan’s

vision, goals, objectives, policies, and definitions so that the impacts of a changing climate are a key factor to consider in making decisions on growth and development and the protection of the Region's natural heritage, water resource, and agricultural systems.

The Regional Official Plan achieves many of the policy directions identified in the updated Provincial Plans and the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 but there are opportunities to enhance or strengthen the Regional Official Plan in responding to climate change.

Community feedback on the Discussion Paper indicated a strong desire for more direct links in the Regional Official Plan to climate change and stronger language reflective of the urgency of addressing the impacts of a changing climate.

It is recommended that existing goals, objectives, policies, and definitions within the Regional Official Plan be strengthened by highlighting their connection to climate change and providing more specific language throughout the Regional Official Plan. For example, the Region's planning vision will be proposed to highlight the importance of planning for the impacts of a changing climate and existing policies on a sustainable transportation system, compact built form, protection of the natural heritage system, and preservation of the agricultural area that will include references to the relationship with climate change.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation policies within the Regional Official Plan will accomplish the key objective in Halton Region's Strategic Business Plan 2019-2022 related to land use planning regarding responsible growth and quality of life.

Policy Direction – CC-2 – Enhance the policies in the Regional Official Plan that support a culture of conservation.

The Growth Plan requires municipalities to provide and implement land use policies in their official plan that supports a culture of conservation that focuses on water and energy conservation, air quality improvement and protection, integrated waste management, and excess soil. The Regional Official Plan achieves this Provincial policy requirement through policies that support water conservation and efficient use of water resources, but there are no existing references to water recycling and district energy.

This presents an opportunity to enhance existing policies to reflect the updated Provincial plans and policies and promote innovation in the way to manage resources.

Through consultation, Local Municipalities stated they would like to see the identification and implementation of energy-from-waste technology, encouragement for the adaptive reuse of existing building stock, and the reuse /recycling of building materials in the

development process.

It is recommended that existing policies on water and energy conservation and energy-from-waste technology be updated to emphasize the relationship these efforts have on the impacts of climate change. This policy direction would also update an existing Regional Official Plan policy to ensure that municipalities also regulate the management and reuse of excess soil in accordance with Provincial policies and plans. It is further recommended for the Region to also consider encouraging the adaptive reuse of existing building stock and building materials.

Policy Direction – CC-3 – Introduce new policies and enhance existing policies in the Regional Official Plan to undertake stormwater management planning in a manner that assesses the impacts of extreme weather events and incorporates appropriate Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development solutions as part of an Area-Specific Planning Process.

The Growth Plan directs upper-tier municipalities to develop official plan policies that undertake stormwater management planning in a manner that assesses the impacts of extreme weather events and incorporates appropriate green infrastructure and low impact development.

Results of public engagement emphasized the importance of addressing climate change resiliency and adaptation within infrastructure planning. Comments received stated that the Regional Official Plan should include policies that ensure that climate change is considered through the master planning process, particularly for public infrastructure. Policies should address resiliency and adaptation as it relates to infrastructure and stormwater management. The Regional Official Plan should require the implementation of low impact development and green infrastructure stormwater management practices, where appropriate.

It is recommended that the Regional Official Plan introduce new policies and enhance existing approaches to stormwater management that assess the impacts of extreme weather events and incorporates appropriate low impact development, green infrastructure as part of the of the Area-Specific Planning Process.

Policy Direction – CC-4 – Introduce new policies in the Regional Official Plan that require the Region and the Local Municipalities to assess infrastructure risk and vulnerabilities, and identify actions and investments to address these challenges where appropriate.

The Growth Plan requires upper-tier municipalities to develop policies within their official plans that address assessing the risks and vulnerabilities of Regional infrastructure and identify actions and investments to address these challenges. In addition, Halton

Region's Strategic Business Plan 2019-2022 currently outlines an objective to ensure the resiliency of the Region's infrastructure.

Comments from the Local Municipalities indicated support for a risk and vulnerability assessment to identify risks and options for enhancing infrastructure resilience within the Region.

To further the Region's commitment to climate change response, it is recommended that the Regional Official Plan policies follow the direction of the Provincial Plans and address assessing the risks and vulnerabilities of Regional infrastructure, as well as identify actions, investments, and adaptation strategies to address these challenges. It is also recommended that Regional Official Plan policies encourage the use of green infrastructure where appropriate to increase infrastructure resiliency to climate change. This policy aligns with the Region's commitment to respond to climate change, as well as direct Local Municipalities to do the same when planning, designing, and constructing public infrastructure. Regional staff will explore the use of different tools like Community Improvement Plans, as a means to take action and invest in infrastructure resilience.

Policy Direction – CC-5 Introduce new policies in the Regional Official Plan that encourage the Local Municipalities to introduce and/or enhancing existing Green Development Standards for new development.

The Growth Plan requires upper-tier municipalities to develop policies in their official plan to identify actions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change adaptation goals in accordance with Provincial plans and strategies. One action that can assist with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change adaptation goals is the development of green development standards.

Green development standards are voluntary or mandatory measures made by municipalities to encourage to builders and developers to create developments using sustainable design and effectively respond to the impacts of a changing climate. Green development standards encourage the building sector to adapt to climate change by going beyond minimum standards to reduce energy waste and emissions in the built environment. These standards may also help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by promoting electric vehicles and their infrastructure.

Comments from engagement indicated strong support to encourage the adoption of sustainable development guidelines/standards by the Local Municipalities.

It is recommended that the Regional Official Plan include new policies to encourage the use of green development standards for new development that can assist in achieving climate change adaptation goals and objectives. Such policies can further strengthen

and support the efforts of Halton’s Local Municipalities in introducing and/or enhancing existing green development standards and implementing them through local Planning Act applications and tools. The Region will provide the Local Municipalities with green development standard best practices document and other resources in terms of staff expertise where possible to assist with this endeavor.

Policy Direction – CC-6 – To support the transition to low carbon communities, the Regional Official Plan will provide polices to promote renewable and alternative energy systems and require the preparation of a Community Energy Plan as part of an Area-Specific Planning Process.

The Growth Plan directs municipalities to develop and implement official plan policies and other strategies in support of energy conservation and efficiency. Regional staff propose meeting this Growth Plan requirement through the use of Community Energy Plans.

A Community Energy Plan ensures that energy is considered in the land use and infrastructure planning process and identifies opportunities to reduce energy usage and increase the use of renewable energy sources. Community energy planning may include the use of district energy systems, infrastructure to support electric mobility, and the retrofitting of homes and buildings for greater energy efficiency. Some of the key benefits of Community Energy Plans include emitting less greenhouse gas emissions, less strain on energy infrastructure, and improved resilience.

Comments received during the engagement process support community energy planning, and promoting alternative energy systems, district energy, and other sources of local renewable energy.

It is recommended that the Regional Official Plan require Local Municipalities to develop Community Energy Plans as part of the Area-Specific Planning Process. Community Energy Plans will serve to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gases and seek opportunities to use renewable energy sources. It is also recommended that Regional staff provide guidance to assist Local Municipalities in defining requirements for a Community Energy Plan and should show consideration for energy generation, distribution, and storage, renewable energy, and district energy sources. The Region will also develop policies that promote net-zero communities, renewable energy systems, alternative energy systems, and district energy systems.

Consultation with Local Municipalities will be undertaken by Regional staff to confirm how energy and land use planning will be coordinated and implemented within Halton.

Policy Direction – CC-7 – Introduce new policies and enhance existing policies in the Regional Official Plan to promote urban agriculture and locally-sourced food

production.

Provincial Plans outline the importance of integrating climate change considerations into the planning and management of the Rural and Agricultural System to improve resilience and protect carbon sequestration potential. Agricultural lands have the capacity to function as large carbon sinks and therefore, it is important to ensure the resilience of the agricultural sector within Halton Region. Agriculture-related policies will be updated in the Regional Official Plan to ensure the relationship between climate change and agricultural lands is emphasized.

Comments indicated it is important for the Region to promote urban agriculture and locally-sourced food production to enhance food security, reduce transportation needs, and promote the farm-to-table concept.

It is recommended that the Regional Official Plan include policies that strengthen locally-sourced food production to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide for food security within the community through the inclusion of urban agriculture opportunities within settlement areas.

Policy Direction - CC-8 – Update existing subwatershed policies to include the consideration for the impacts of a changing climate as part of an Area-Specific Planning Process.

The Growth Plan requires upper-tier municipalities to develop policies that recognize the importance of watershed planning for the protection of the quality and quantity of water and the identification and protection of hydrologic features and areas. Further emphasis is placed on the importance of using the watershed as the ecologically meaningful scale for integrated and long-term planning, including the evaluation and preparation for the impacts of a changing climate, on the water resource and natural heritage systems, including severe weather events.

Comments supported a regional approach to use watershed planning as a mechanism to address climate change mitigation and adaptation opportunities, extreme weather events, and other climate change impacts to be addressed a watershed scale.

It is recommended that watershed planning (including watershed studies) be used as a mechanism to address climate change mitigation and adaptation opportunities from a subwatershed scale throughout the Regional Official Plan.

3.2 Integrated Growth Management Strategy

3.2.1 Overview

The Integrated Growth Management Strategy is intended to advance municipal planning priorities around transit, growth, and development in the Region. This work will also ensure that Halton Region complies with Provincial planning requirements with respect to population and employment growth and development. The Integrated Growth Management Strategy is a critical component of the Regional Official Plan Review to ensure Halton Region remains a great place to live as our community grows.

The progress and development of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy is detailed in a series of reports:

- 1) [Growth Scenarios: Halton Region to 2041](#) (June 2019);
- 2) [Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper](#) (May 2020);
- 3) [Growth Concepts Discussion Paper](#) (February 2021);
- 4) [Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 48](#) (July 2021);
- 5) [Draft Preferred Growth Concept Report](#) (February 2022); and
- 6) [Draft Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 49](#) (March 2022).

The Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper presented the policy requirements of the Growth Plan 2019 and provided an update on the development of key urban structure elements including Strategic Growth Areas, Employment Areas, and Settlement Areas. It was implemented through ROPA 48 – “An Amendment to Define a Regional Urban Structure”, adopted by Regional Council in July 2021 and approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in November 2021.

The Growth Concepts Discussion Paper described four Growth Concepts which set out how to accommodate population and employment growth in the Region to 2051, and the technical analysis that underpinned them. The Discussion Paper also presented an evaluation completed by technical experts with input from Regional staff, Local Municipalities, Conservation Authorities, and Regional advisory committees. Subsequently, in response to Council direction, an additional Growth Concept designed to accommodate growth to the year 2051 without any urban boundary expansion for both community and employment areas was also evaluated. The findings from the Discussion Paper and the additional Growth Concept evaluation helped to inform the development of the Preferred Growth Concept.

The Draft Preferred Growth Concept Report presented, for Regional Council’s information, a Preferred Growth Concept for the accommodation of population and employment growth in Halton Region. The Preferred Growth Concept also identifies the proposed location of future settlement areas and employment areas based on land needs in the Region.

In February 2022, Regional Council directed staff to prepare a Modified Preferred Growth Concept that accommodates population and employment growth within

Halton's existing Regional Urban Boundary to 2041 and that identifies a framework for planning for growth from 2041. Based on this direction, Regional staff have prepared ROPA 49 – “An Amendment to Implement the Integrated Growth Management Strategy”. The amendment proposes to implement a growth strategy for Halton Region and proposes to implement the results of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy, including Regional Council's direction on a Modified Preferred Growth Concept as well as other changes to policies and mapping that support Halton's growth strategy.

3.2.2 Policy Directions

This section outlines the proposed policy directions related to Growth Management. The directions will address the Regional Urban Structure, Halton's Growth Strategy, Urban Servicing, Area-Specific Planning, Land Use Compatibility, and Housing.

Regional Urban Structure

Strategic Growth Areas

Policy Direction- IGMS-1 – Create a Regional Urban Structure and supporting policy framework to accommodate a significant amount of population and employment growth in Strategic Growth Areas.

The majority of feedback received from public and stakeholder engagement was supportive of directing growth to Strategic Growth Areas where growth can be concentrated. As such, this policy direction recommends that population and employment growth should be focused in specific growth areas for development including: Urban Growth Centres, Major Transit Station Areas (including Protected Major Transit Station Areas), and in Regional Nodes and Regional Corridors.

Major Transit Station Areas/Urban Growth Centres

Regional Official Plan Amendment 48 introduced a new enhanced Regional Urban Structure together with an updated policy framework for Strategic Growth Areas (formerly known as Intensification Areas), including adjustments to the Urban Growth Centre policies and boundaries, a new more-detailed policy framework for Major Transit Station Areas, and in particular the delineation of these areas and the setting of minimum density targets in the Regional Official Plan. This approach ensures that Halton Region can achieve the Provincial minimum density targets and plan for compact, high-density and mixed-use development.

Regional Nodes

Regional Official Plan Amendment 48 introduced a new category of Strategic Growth

Areas known as Regional Nodes. These include Primary Nodes, which are planned to accommodate growth and contain a concentration of public service facilities or transit- supportive high density mixed uses, or which perform a regional transit network function, and Secondary Nodes, which are historic downtown areas or villages, are intended to be a focus for mixed use intensification at a scale appropriate for their context.

Employment Areas in Strategic Growth Areas

The Region must establish a policy framework for planning for employment areas in Strategic Growth Areas. Planning for employment goes beyond just the Regional Employment Areas. The Growth Plan 2019 directs Major Office Employment and appropriate major institutional development to Strategic Growth Areas including Urban Growth Centres and Major Transit Station Areas. The Growth Plan also supports planning for commercial and retail activities in locations that support compact built form, active transportation, transit, and complete communities.

A policy framework was introduced in Regional Official Plan Amendment 48 that directs certain types of employment growth to Strategic Growth Areas through mixed use intensification that supports the area with a pedestrian-oriented urban environment.

Regional Corridors

Regional Corridors are an additional element of the Regional Urban Structure for which policies and mapping are to be developed. Regional Corridors are higher-order transit corridors that perform an important transit network function, but also have a role in accommodating transit-supportive development. Regional Corridors were not addressed in Regional Official Plan Amendment 48, but will form part of the upcoming Regional Official Plan Amendment to implement the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.



A Regional Urban Structure, including assigning density targets in Strategic Growth Areas, ensures that growth supports existing and future transit service. Focusing higher densities in transit supportive, walkable, and well-serviced areas is important because private vehicles account for about 90% of weekday trips in Halton, which further contributes to the Region's greenhouse gas emissions (Transportation Tomorrow Survey, 2011).¹

Employment Areas

Policy Direction – IGMS-2 – Confirm the boundaries of the existing Regional Employment Areas and advance Strategic Employment Land Conversions.

Through the Municipal Comprehensive Review, the Region must designate all

Employment Areas in the Regional Official Plan and protect them for appropriate employment uses over the long-term. The Regional Official Plan Review provides an opportunity to assess the existing Employment Areas identified in the Regional Official Plan and to confirm the location of lands that should be identified and protected as Employment Areas.

Through Phase 2 of the Regional Official Plan Review and as detailed in the Regional Urban Structure and Growth Concepts Discussion Papers, the Region undertook the following review of the existing Regional Employment Areas:

- **Technical Revisions:** Review of existing Employment Area boundaries in the Regional Official Plan to identify any appropriate technical changes that would increase the accuracy and appropriateness of the existing Employment Area boundaries.
- **Conversions:** An assessment of whether any lands within existing Employment Areas are candidates for conversion. Initial recommendations on potential conversions were included in [Appendix C2](#) to the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper and some priority conversions that support the Regional and Local Urban Structures were advanced through Regional Official Plan Amendment 48.
- **Additions:** An assessment of whether any lands within the existing Urban Areas in the Regional Official Plan, but outside the existing Employment Areas, are potential candidates for addition.

This policy direction will be implemented in accordance with the final summary of proposed changes to the Regional Employment Areas as attached to the Preferred Growth Concept Report (Draft). This summary document provides a review of the approach to assessing the existing boundaries and considering employment conversion requests and identifies the conversions, additions, and technical revisions to the existing Regional Employment Areas being recommended as a part of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy. It should be noted that certain conversions have already been adopted by Regional Council through Regional Official Plan Amendment 48.

Policy Direction – IGMS-3 – Update the Regional Employment Areas policy framework to provide clarity on permitted uses and to identify opportunities for intensification of employment uses.

The Growth Plan does not allow employment areas to be planned for residential uses and does not allow for or limits other sensitive land uses that are not supplementary to a primary employment use. Municipalities may also not allow major retail uses within Employment Areas, or where they are permitted, establish a size or scale threshold for such uses.

Feedback and submissions received during the engagement process generally noted the importance of providing clear policies related to planning for employment areas, enabling an appropriate degree of flexibility for uses within employment areas, and supporting opportunities for the intensification of employment uses.

This policy direction recommends updating the policy framework for the Employment Areas designated in the Regional Official Plan to:

- clarify the policy direction for uses that are supplementary to and supportive of primary employment uses, sensitive land uses, and existing uses;
- clarify the policy direction for existing major retail uses;
- recognize the specific contexts of new and established employment areas;
- update the policy direction related to institutional uses; and
- include direction that encourages the intensification of employment uses.

Halton's Growth Strategy

Policy Direction - IGMS-4 — Set an Ambitious and Achievable Intensification Target for the Region and Local Municipalities.

The Growth Plan requires that a minimum of 50% of all residential development occurring annually within Halton Region be located within the delineated Built-up Area, as well as directing growth to existing Designated Greenfield Areas to minimize urban boundary expansions. However, Policy 2.2.2.4 of the Growth Plan permits Regional Council to request an alternative target to the 50% minimum intensification target. This request must be based on a demonstration that: the 50% minimum target cannot be achieved; and, the alternative target will be appropriate given the size, location, and capacity of the Delineated Built-Up Area. Growth should also be accommodated through compact development and directed to Settlement Areas that have a Delineated Built Boundary, existing or planned municipal water and wastewater systems, and locations where complete communities can be created.

During the engagement process feedback received indicated support for directing growth to areas that can already accommodate intensification, such as existing and new urban areas. As such, this policy direction recommends addressing the 'intensification first' intent of the Growth Plan by accommodating over 80% of residential development within the combined Built-Up Area and existing Designated Greenfield Area, thereby minimizing the need for urban boundary expansion. This strategy is based on a proposed alternative intensification target of 45%, as contemplated by the Growth Plan (compared to the minimum intensification target for growth directed to Built Up Area of 50%). This approach includes additional "densification" of Strategic Growth Areas outside the Built-Up Area recognizing planned growth within these areas, particularly within the corridors. The specific intensification target and rate of densification that is achievable was determined through the completion of a Land Needs Assessment as

required by the Growth Plan. The targets will be implemented through an Integrated Growth Management Strategy Regional Official Plan Amendment.



Setting ambitious and achievable intensification targets for Halton Region and its Local Municipalities will result in more efficient use of land and infrastructure, support building compact and complete communities, support active transportation and transit, and reduce the need to expand into agricultural areas. Therefore, establishing ambitious and achievable intensification targets will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support community resiliency.

Policy Direction – IGMS-5 – Update Housing Mix Targets in the Regional Official Plan to establish a broad range and mix of housing in the Region.

The Regional Official Plan currently outlines how many low, medium, density units and high density units should be planned for to the year 2031. The Regional Official Plan should be updated to reflect the establishment of a new appropriate range and mix of housing that both maintains an adequate supply of ground-related housing, while significantly shifting the mix towards higher density apartment housing types.

The Modified Preferred Growth Concept housing mix has considered the provision of a market-based supply of housing as required by the Provincial Land Needs Assessment Methodology. Housing affordability and the protection of rental housing has also been considered through the Regional Official Plan Review and this policy directions report, including strengthening and broadening Regional Official Plan policies related to inclusionary zoning, preventing loss of rental housing, and directing Local Municipalities to achieve an affordable housing mix target. It is also recommended that the Regional Official Plan be updated to include policies to direct Local 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.

Through the engagement process several comments highlighted the importance of providing a diverse and affordable housing mix for current and future residents. This policy direction addresses public and stakeholder feedback related to providing a balance of affordable and diverse housing options that fosters transit-supportive and complete communities.



Updating the range and mix of housing in the Region can support transit growth and ridership and more compact patterns of development that can foster walkability and reduce single-occupancy vehicle-dependence. In addition to helping to reduce auto-dependence, a healthy mix of housing, especially higher density forms, where appropriate, can reduce the Region's greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy Direction – IGMS-6 – Establish a Regional Urban Boundary to support population and employment growth.

The Growth Plan requires municipalities to delineate a settlement area boundary, which includes allowing municipalities to consider urban boundary expansion through a municipal comprehensive review. Feedback from public and stakeholder engagement highlighted the importance of considering whether or not a Regional urban boundary expansion would be needed to support population and employment growth to 2051.

The Regional Urban Boundary has been determined through the development of the Modified Preferred Growth Concept and represents the existing urban areas in Halton. The boundary will be delineated through the Regional Official Plan Amendment to implement the Integrated Growth Management Strategy. To protect prime agricultural areas and natural heritage systems, the Integrated Growth Management Strategy has assessed the potential impacts from Regional urban boundary expansion through technical studies and analyses, including an Agricultural Impact Assessment and Natural Heritage System and Water Resources Assessment.

Through the Regional Official Plan Review, staff reviewed and considered landowner requests for urban boundary expansions that may influence the Regional Urban Boundary area delineation. In accordance with Regional Council's directions the Modified Preferred Growth Concept does not include any additional lands in the urban/settlement area.

Additionally, to address technical errors, minor revisions to the mapping of the Settlement Areas in the Regional Official Plan are necessary.



Delineating a Regional Urban Boundary that protects and enhances the Rural and Agricultural System and Natural Heritage System supports climate change resilience through preserving natural features for important ecosystem functions and natural hazard management, such as wetlands and floodplain areas. Additionally, both systems play an important role in carbon sequestration, which can offset or capture greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy Direction – IGMS-7 – Set Community Designated Greenfield Area Targets for the Region and Local Municipalities.

The Growth Plan establishes the minimum Designated Greenfield Area density target for Halton Region at 50 residents and jobs combined per hectare. The Modified Preferred Growth Concept sets a minimum density target for new Community Designated Greenfield Area, which substantially exceeds the minimum 50 people/jobs per hectare target of the Growth Plan, and is in the range of 65 people/jobs per ha, reflecting densities being achieved in the existing Designated Greenfield Area. The final density targets, established through the Modified Preferred Growth Concept, will

be incorporated into the Regional Official Plan Amendment implementing the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.



Setting Community Designated Greenfield Area density targets will result in more efficient use of land and infrastructure, support building compact and complete communities, support active transportation and transit, and reduce the need to expand into agricultural areas. This will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support community resiliency.

Policy Direction – IGMS-8 – Establish Employment Area Density Targets for Regional Employment Areas.

Through the Municipal Comprehensive Review, the Region must establish minimum density targets for all Employment Areas in accordance with the requirements of the Growth Plan. The Growth Plan directs that the density targets must reflect the current and anticipated type and scale of employment of the area and reflect opportunities for intensification, where appropriate.

The Modified Preferred Growth Concept establishes a minimum Employment Area density target, based on the detailed Land Needs Assessment, which encourages greater densities in Employment Areas. It is recommended that the Region identify an overall density target for the Employment Areas in the Regional Official Plan as well as targets for each Local Municipality that are reflective of the local context. Tables and Employment Area policies in the Regional Official Plan will need to be updated to reflect these targets.

This policy direction ensures that the Region identifies appropriate employment density targets that encourage employment area intensification and provides for a range of opportunities to accommodate employment growth in the long-term.



Setting employment area density targets will result in more efficient use of land and infrastructure, support building compact and complete communities, support active transportation and transit, and reduce the need to expand into agricultural areas. This will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure communities are more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.

Policy Direction – IGMS-9 – Identify and provide sufficient employment land supply based on the Land Needs Assessment to provide a complete range of employment opportunities.

Employment Areas are protected over the long-term for jobs, business and economic activities. Regional Official Plan policies direct employment to Community Areas and Employment Areas and prohibit residential and other non-employment uses within Employment Areas. Currently, the Regional Official Plan maps Employment Areas as an overlay and identifies Future Strategic Employment Areas which are lands

outside the current Settlement Areas, but located nearby major goods movement facilities, transportation corridors. The Province also identifies Provincially Significant Employment Zones within Halton Region for long-term planning for job creation and economic development.

Throughout the engagement, there was general support for shifting the accommodation of employment growth to more compact, higher density forms (i.e. Major Office Employment) in mixed use and transit supportive areas.

To address the evolving nature of employment in Halton and to respond to engagement feedback that Halton should provide diverse job opportunities and employment land supply, a large share of employment will need to be in Major Office Employment (office jobs contained within free-standing buildings that exceed size thresholds identified in the Land Needs Assessment Methodology and Growth Plan). A substantial share of employment growth will need to remain in the Employment Land Employment (jobs found primarily in industrial-type buildings, the vast majority of which are located in business parks and industrial areas).

The Modified Preferred Growth Concept provides a complete spectrum of employment opportunities to accommodate employment growth through:

- a. Shifting employment from the Employment Land Employment category to the Major Office category to both recognize the benefits of fostering Major Office Employment and its role in creating mixed-use, transit-supportive complete communities, and to minimize the need for additional employment land.
- b. Providing an adequate supply of new employment land to accommodate manufacturing, logistics/warehousing (i.e. Employment Land Employment) growth, ensuring that the strong demand for larger sites with highway access can be met in the Region.

It is recommended that the final employment land supply and employment growth allocation identified in the Modified Preferred Growth Concept be incorporated into the Regional Official Plan Amendment implementing the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.



By shifting employment from Employment Land Employment to Major Office Employment, the Region will better connect areas with high employment densities to transit. Focusing office uses to locations that are planned to be active transportation and transit supportive should reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Development Phasing

Policy Direction – IGMS-10 – Strengthen and clarify existing Development Phasing Policies for the Region and Local Municipalities.

A key principle of the Modified Preferred Growth Concept is the direction related to phasing of development, which ensures that future development proceeds in a manner that prioritizes efficient use of land, as well as financing and construction of infrastructure. This requires a strong commitment from the Province and other agencies to plan, finance, and commission infrastructure to service growth in keeping with the Growth Plan. Regional Council has identified areas of investment in Provincial infrastructure (e.g. schools, transit, and hospitals, etc.) that must be advanced in order to support growth in Halton. To support this policy direction, revisions will need to be made to Regional Official Plan mapping and related phasing policies and tables.

This policy direction relates broadly to feedback received during the engagement process that Halton should plan for compact and complete communities. Achieving this requires the supporting infrastructure and development to be phased and implemented in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Urban Servicing

Policy Direction – IGMS-11 – Direct the growth to Settlement Areas in order to maximize efficient use of existing or planned urban services.

It is important that the Regional Urban Structure identifies the most appropriate areas to accommodate future urban development so that there is sufficient servicing capacity to accommodate existing development and future population and employment growth. Proposed Settlement Area Expansions must be serviced by existing or planned municipal water and wastewater systems capacity without impacting future intensification opportunities in the existing Settlement Area.

It is recommended that the vast majority of growth should be directed to Settlement Areas that have a Delineated Built Boundary, existing or planned municipal water and wastewater systems, and that can support the achievement of complete communities. The final direction for urban servicing will be established through the Modified Preferred Growth Concept and in consultation with Local Municipalities. Urban servicing must also be informed by multi-year master plans. Consultation with the Local Municipalities will be required to ensure alignment with Regional and Local urban service priorities and plans.

This policy direction relates more broadly to feedback received during the engagement process that Halton should accommodate growth in areas that can support intensification. Achieving this requires consideration for existing and planned urban

servicing to ensure there is sufficient capacity to support current and future residents.



The efficient use of land and infrastructure can contribute to climate change resilience through identifying areas where an appropriate capacity of urban services can support both existing communities and future growth. This can provide opportunities for climate change mitigation and adaption through optimized planning for infrastructure, coordinated water and wastewater services, green infrastructure and innovative technologies.

Area-Specific Planning

Policy Direction - IGMS-12 – Clarify study and policy requirements for Area-Specific Plans in the Regional Official Plan to differentiate between Designated Greenfield Area and redevelopment/intensification contexts.

The Regional Official Plan requires the Local Municipalities to prepare Area-Specific Plans (such as Secondary Plans) for major growth areas, including the development of Designated Greenfield Areas or the redevelopment of communities. However, the current list of requirements does not provide detailed study requirements or differentiate between planning for Designated Greenfield Areas and planning for redevelopment / intensification in the built-up area although planning in these contexts is very different. For instance, planning for servicing, environmental study requirements, and land use compatibility considerations vary depending on context.

Planning for potential new growth and intensification areas requires the completion of several studies to inform Area-Specific Plans (such as Secondary Plans). These exercises are important and take time to complete and must await the confirmation of growth allocations through the Regional Official Plan.

As such, it is recommended that the Regional Official Plan be updated to differentiate between Area-Specific Plans (such as Secondary Plans) prepared in the Designated Greenfield Areas and plans prepared in the Built-up Area and provide clear direction on policy and study requirements.

Land Use Compatibility

Policy Direction – IGMS-13 – Update land use compatibility policies in the Regional Official Plan in accordance with Provincial plans and policies.

Recent updates to the Provincial Policy Statement in 2020 introduced additional direction to municipalities for planning for land use compatibility. As a result, the land use compatibility policies in the Regional Official Plan need to be updated in accordance with this direction.

Initial updates to the way the Regional Official Plan addresses land use compatibility were included in Regional Official Plan Amendment 48. In this Amendment, direction is provided on planning to ensure the long-term operational and economic viability of major facilities, and achievement of land use compatibility between major facilities and sensitive land uses within or adjacent to Strategic Growth Areas.

Through the engagement period, submissions were received noting concerns (i.e., air quality impacts) related to sensitive land uses within or adjacent to Strategic Growth Areas and the need for better consistency and alignment with Provincial plans and policies related to land use compatibility. To address land use compatibility comprehensively throughout the Regional Official Plan, it is recommended that these changes be implemented through a future Regional Official Plan Amendment.

Housing

Policy Direction – IGMS-14 – Strengthen inclusionary zoning policies introduced through Area-Specific Plan requirements under Regional Official Plan Amendment 48 by establishing complementary housing objectives and policies.

Inclusionary zoning is a new tool under the Planning Act which allows municipalities to require that a proportion of large-scale new residential developments (10 units or more) within Protected Major Transit Station Areas (and development permit system areas) include affordable housing units. As a part of the recommendations put forward in Regional Official Plan Amendment 48, Local Municipalities are required to establish affordable housing targets and inclusionary zoning policies based on the completion of an assessment report prepared in consultation with the Region. This policy direction will be enhanced by supportive objectives and policies within the housing section of the Regional Official Plan.

During public engagement, input was received that inclusionary zoning should be considered as a tool to achieve housing objectives, including housing affordability. As such, it is recommended that the Regional Official Plan be updated to include policies for Inclusionary Zoning in Protected Major Transit Station Areas to facilitate Affordable Housing. The Regional Official Plan should establish objectives and policies supporting the implementation of Inclusionary Zoning in Local Official Plans to authorize a minimum proportion of affordable units, as well as a depth and duration of affordability, within residential and mixed use buildings.

Policy Direction – IGMS-15 – Broaden policies permitting the creation of additional residential units within and ancillary to detached houses, semi-detached houses, and townhouses.

In 2011, through Bill 140, the *Planning Act* was revised to direct municipalities to permit second residential units within a primary dwelling. Since that time, second residential units have become an important component for enhancing the availability of affordable housing in our community. In 2019, through Bill 108, the *Planning Act* was revised, in part to increase housing options and supply, and the second residential unit policies introduced through Bill 140 were broadened to direct municipalities to permit concurrently additional residential units both within a primary dwelling and an ancillary structure.

Currently, the Regional Official Plan contains few policies related to permitting secondary residential units within an existing dwelling in a residential neighbourhood. It

is recommended that the Regional Official Plan be updated to include policies to permit additional residential units, consistent with 2019 revisions to the *Planning Act*. Choice, affordability, and availability of housing options would be enhanced through policies and zoning bylaws permitting up to three residential units in association with a detached house, semi-detached house or townhouse in urban areas and in rural areas subject to criteria.

It is recommended that the Regional Official Plan be updated to include policies to permit additional residential units concurrently within a primary dwelling and ancillary structure to provide opportunities for a broad range and mix of housing options and to address affordability.

Broadening policies to permit additional residential units addresses comments received during the public and stakeholder engagement process that were supportive of providing more diverse housing options for residents.

Policy Direction – IGMS-16 – Strengthen policies to prevent the loss of rental housing and to mitigate the impacts of rental conversion or replacement on tenants and the rental market.

When rental housing stock ages and requires replacement, communities risk losing the unit sizes, types, and depths of affordability provided through the existing rental units. To ensure affordable options are maintained, Local Municipalities may prohibit the demolition of rental housing units in structures of six or more dwelling units where specific conditions are not met. These conditions may include the requirement that rental units are replaced with units of similar sizes and prices.

When rental housing stock is demolished for replacement or conversion, the local rental market may be strained by a temporary loss of units. Enhanced Local Official Plan policies would enable municipalities to require fulsome tenant relocation and assistance beyond the minimum standards required by the Residential Tenancies Act to mitigate the effects of the demolition on both tenants and the local rental market.

Currently, the Regional Official Plan encourages all levels of government to stimulate the construction of rental Market Housing and requires municipalities to maintain a minimum rental vacancy rate of 3 percent to allow for existing rental housing to be converted to ownership tenure or other uses or the demolition of such housing. However, it is recommended that rental conversion policies be updated to direct and/or encourage the Local Municipalities related to:

- when demolition/replacement is permitted, regulate the demolition of existing residential rental units such that replacement rental units must include the same or higher number of units of comparable sizes, types and affordability
- when demolition/replacement is permitted, require the development proponent to facilitate tenant relocation and assistance programs.

This policy direction relates to feedback from engagement that opportunities should be explored to provide broad range and mix of housing and ensure housing affordability for existing and future residents.

Policy Direction – IGMS-17 – Provide additional direction to Local Municipalities to support the achievement of Halton Region’s 30% affordable unit mix target through Area-Specific Plans.

The Regional Official Plan should be updated to clarify Area-Specific Plan requirements related to affordable housing in order to ensure that the Region can achieve an affordable housing mix across all Local Municipalities. This allows the Region to balance planning to achieve Regional targets with considering Local Municipalities’ needs. While municipalities cannot mandate the creation of affordable housing outside of major transit station areas and development permit system areas subject to inclusionary zoning, Area-Specific Plan policies may be used to create conditions supporting the creation of affordable housing.

This policy direction relates to feedback from engagement that opportunities should be explored to provide a full range of housing options and ensure availability of affordable housing for existing and future residents.

3.3. Rural and Agricultural System

3.3.1 Overview

Halton Region is home to a productive agricultural sector based on outstanding soils, a favorable climate and a community of farmers that have an active and passionate interest in farming. Overall, the majority of the rural area in Halton Region is classified as prime agricultural land.

Halton’s planning vision incorporates the concept of “sustainable development” which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need”. Preserving Prime Agricultural Areas is a critical factor for

sustainable development as well as protecting the natural environment, enhancing economic competitiveness and fostering a healthy society. The goal for the agricultural system as articulated in the current Regional Official Plan is to maintain a permanently secure, economically viable agricultural industry and to preserve the open-space character and landscape of Halton's non-urban areas. Collectively, prime agricultural lands as well as rural lands make up the Rural and Agricultural System.

There are agricultural lands that also form part of the Natural Heritage System. The objectives of the Natural Heritage System support agriculture as a complementary and compatible use outside of Key Features.

The Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper presented a number of considerations for updating the mapping and policies of the Rural and Agricultural System in the current Regional Official Plan to ensure consistency and conformity with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and Provincial plans. Further background information for the proposed policy directions can be found in the Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper.

3.3.2 Policy Directions

This section outlines the proposed policy directions for planning for, enhancing and protecting the Rural and Agricultural System in Halton Region.

Policy Direction – RAS-1 – Create three new mutually exclusive land use designations: Prime Agricultural Areas, Rural Lands and Key Features to provide clarity about land uses in Halton's Rural Area.

At the present time, the Regional Official Plan identifies a Regional Natural Heritage System designation and an Agricultural Area designation which incorporates prime agricultural areas and areas outside of prime agriculture. The Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan now provides clear direction that planning authorities shall designate prime agricultural areas. Further, the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan specify that the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Natural Heritage System should be an overlay outside of settlement areas. Key natural heritage features will be designated where they overlap with prime agricultural areas and rural lands to reflect the policy restrictions that protect these features.

While there were differing opinions across a broad range of stakeholders, through the engagement questions on the Rural and Agricultural System Discussion Paper, there was broad support to include prime agricultural areas and natural heritage features as designations with components (i.e. buffers, enhancements and linkages) of the Natural Heritage System being identified as an overlay. Comments noted that this will increase

clarity, transparency and ease of use for stakeholders to determine applicable policies and permissions that pertain to each designation and overlay in the Regional Official Plan. This approach strikes a balance between the preservation of agricultural land and the protection of the environment, both being important Regional priorities. During Phase 2 of the Regional Official Plan Review, an alternate mapping approach was presented to the Region for consideration.

Regional staff recommend designating lands in the Rural Area as Prime Agricultural Area, Rural Lands and Key Natural Heritage Features (see policy direction NH-6 and Appendix B - Mapping Option 2: Prime Agricultural Area and Key Features are designated with a Natural Heritage System overlay) to clearly identify where agricultural uses can occur, create a continuous land base for agriculture and to provide for long term protection of agricultural land. As described in policy direction NH-6, the Natural Heritage System overlay will overlap with the Key Features designation to continue to achieve a scientifically structured systems approach that will meet the goal of long-term protection and enhancement of natural features and functions within Halton. The natural heritage policies in the Regional Official Plan will apply to both the Key Features as a designation and the system as an overlay, thus maintaining the same preservation and protection to the system as whole.

Establishing a Rural Lands designation also identifies additional lands used for agriculture that are important to the Agricultural System and provides the Region with the ability to consider additional permissions that may not be appropriate in prime agricultural areas. Collectively, prime agricultural areas and rural lands provide a continuous productive land base as part of the Agricultural System.

Prime agricultural areas were determined from the Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) scores completed by Halton Region in 2009 and more recently by the Province, using a slightly different methodology. Areas that did not meet the definition of prime agricultural areas are to be designated as rural lands. The Province has also identified candidate lands that could be considered prime agricultural areas or rural lands and the Region has undertaken an assessment of these lands to recommend which category they should fall within. This determination was based on a number of factors including soil type, current farming on the land, farm infrastructure, lands adjacent, topography and border alignment with neighbouring municipalities where possible. Technical errors were also noted.

Regional staff have recently become aware of an issue related to rural lands that are located in the Niagara Escarpment Protection Area. The Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 1.1.5.2 d) and Greenbelt Plan policy 3.1.4 permits agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses on rural lands. Section 1.4.3 of the Niagara Escarpment Plan permits agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses in prime agricultural areas in the

Niagara Escarpment Protection Area. However, the policy is silent on agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses on rural lands. There have been requests to the Niagara Escarpment Commission from applicants to pursue agricultural-related and on-farm diversified uses on rural lands in both Halton Region and in other municipalities, however, the Niagara Escarpment Commission has taken the position at this time, that the above noted policy does not permit such uses on rural lands. The position of the Niagara Escarpment Commission affects 620 individual properties covering approximately 1,327 hectares. It is expected that the Niagara Escarpment Commission will revisit that policy during a future amendment to Niagara Escarpment Plan to conform to the Provincial policies, however that amendment could take several years before it is in effect.

Given the importance of agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses to farm viability, Regional staff will be initiating an assessment to re-evaluate rural lands that are located in the Niagara Escarpment Protection Areas to determine whether some of these parcels should be designated Prime Agricultural Areas without compromising the scientific methodology for land evaluation that was previously used in Halton Region. This approach will assist some farms in the interim by ensuring that agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses can be pursued where appropriate.



The preservation of Prime Agricultural Areas and Rural Lands will play an important role in addressing climate and building resilient communities. Healthy soils contribute to an ecosystem of nutrient recycling, carbon sequestration, climate regulation, and water filtration. Many farms within the Agricultural System also contain important natural heritage features and components. Greenhouse gas emissions can be offset by natural feature areas that act as carbon sinks.

Policy Direction – RAS-2– Update the Rural Agricultural Strategy to address non-land use related matters to further support and strengthen the Rural and Agricultural System.

The Rural Agricultural Strategy was developed and approved by Regional Council in October 2016 as a means of identifying areas where the Region could assist in strengthening the rural agricultural sector in Halton for the long-term. It specifically identified how the Region can, within its mandate and resources, positively influence the economic climate in the rural/agricultural area, add value to those businesses currently operating while attracting new businesses that are compatible to the objectives of the Region in a manner that will ensure that the area continues to thrive over the long term. Consultation with the agricultural community during the engagement process uncovered significant additional opportunities to address several additional issues or barriers affecting the farming sector. Examples of issues

raised included farm equipment and trucks on roads, traffic safety, farm labour, water for agricultural uses, the need to elevate the profile and importance of agriculture, among many others. While some of these issues can be addressed through land use policy, many of them are best advanced through a renewed Rural Agricultural Strategy that define new or enhanced programs or services that would demonstrate the Region's on-going support of the Rural and Agricultural System.

Policy Direction – RAS-3 – Update the policies of the Regional Official Plan to broaden permissions and allow for more opportunities for agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses as outlined in Provincial policies, plans and guidelines.

Allowing for the full range of agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses across Halton is being considered. The updated definition for agriculture-related uses allows for 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. Halton Region has lost many of these critical supports with the consolidation of farms which has resulted in a corresponding reduction in the number of agricultural support businesses. This policy direction is important in helping to address this issue and is intended to help attract agricultural businesses in areas such as Halton to strengthen the agricultural system.

On-farm diversified uses allow for businesses to occur on a farm without being directly tied to the farm operation, provided that they are of a size and scale that would be considered secondary to the farm operation. Broadened permissions with the introduction of on-farm diversified uses will enable farm operators to diversify and augment their farm income which contributes to farm viability and resiliency. It also accommodates value-added and agri-tourism uses.

The updated policies will also allow local municipalities to provide more detailed policies through their respective official plans, zoning by-laws and additional tools such as special events permitting and business licensing by-laws, site plan control etc. to manage any on-farm diversified uses that have a high potential for impact. The policy direction should primarily follow the direction of the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan, and the [Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas](#) for clear and consistent application of the policies. The current On-Farm Business Guidelines in the Regional Official Plan will be reviewed for consistency with agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses and provide best practices to help minimize conflict.

Comments received through the engagement process generally supported the

inclusion of policies to allow for agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses, however a number of comments suggested allowing for local municipalities to implement more detailed direction. Comments also suggested not putting too much emphasis on the Guidelines on Permitted Uses in policy as they are just guidelines and the local municipalities may want some flexibility. The Region will consider this in drafting policies.



By broadening permissions to include agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses, the Region is increasing opportunities for farms to remain viable, which allows farmers to continue playing an important role as stewards of the ecological function on these lands. The diversification of agricultural operations will provide better access to revenue streams that allow farmers to invest in sustainable practices and promote agricultural and food resilience in response to climate change challenges.

Policy Direction – RAS-4 – Introduce new policies in the Regional Official Plan that may permit cemeteries, subject to criteria, in the new Rural Lands designation.

Prime agricultural areas are a finite resource that need to be protected and it is being recommended that cemeteries be permitted on rural lands, but not in prime agricultural areas. Further details related to size and fit within communities are recommended to be determined by the local municipalities.

Comments received have primarily been in support of clarifying policies on the permitted use of cemeteries. Respondents preferred cemeteries to be directed to settlements areas, although they acknowledged the challenges that may pose and therefore suggested that cemeteries may be permitted on rural lands only when there is an unmet demand, support the development of a complete community, and meet other criteria. Generally, respondents wanted to restrict cemeteries from being a permitted use in prime agricultural areas since the permanent nature of a cemetery will remove lands permanently from agricultural production and prime agricultural lands are such a scarce and valuable resource.

Policy Direction – RAS-5 – Update the policies in the Regional Official Plan to clarify when an Agricultural Impact Assessment is required.

It is recommended that the Regional Official Plan policies implement the direction of the Provincial Plans and guidelines and should specify the requirement for an Agricultural Impact Assessment for urban boundary expansions, new or expanding mineral aggregate operations, infrastructure in the rural area, and any proposed development that removes land from Prime Agricultural Areas. The Regional Official Plan should continue to reference the Region’s Agricultural Impact

Assessment Guidelines, which will clarify, inform, and aid in the implementation of the Plan's policies. Provincial Agricultural Impact Assessment Guidance documents are expected to be released in the near future and may provide additional direction. Once the Provincial Agricultural Impact Assessment Guidance documents are released, the Region will review for consistency with the Region's Agricultural Impact Assessment Guidelines and may update if necessary.

Some comments suggested that current Agricultural Impact Assessment policies are sufficient at addressing applications for non-farm land uses, however, the majority of comments requested clarification and enhancements to current policies to inform what triggers an Agricultural Impact Assessment. Comments were also received about cumulative impact assessments and establishing baseline metrics for agricultural system viability to inform meaningful analysis and evidence-based planning decisions.

Policy Direction – RAS-6 – Update the Regional Official Plan to permit Special Needs Housing in the Rural Area and Additional Residential Units within the Agricultural and Rural Area.

At the present time, the Regional Official Plan does not specifically permit special needs housing outside of the Region's settlement areas. The Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 provides direction regarding the provision of an appropriate range and mix of housing options required to meet the social, health, economic and well-being requirements of current and future residents including special needs requirements. As well, it indicates that healthy integrated and viable rural areas should be supported by building upon the rural character and leveraging rural amenities and assets. It is recognized that some special needs housing is located in rural areas for this reason.

This policy direction recommends the support for special needs housing as a permitted use in the Rural Area, including Prime Agricultural Areas and Rural Lands and settlement areas subject to all other relevant policies. It also aligns with feedback from the Discussion Papers and the 2018 Supportive Housing Study, indicating that certain types of special needs housing will benefit from a rural setting. Comments generally support adopting policies that permit special needs housing anywhere, including Prime Agricultural Areas and Rural Lands, with a few comments adding that this should be addressed at the local municipal level. Further comments explore the need to determine if special needs housing is a residential use or an institutional use and requests clarity on the criteria of this use within the Provincial Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas. These specific comments state that these guidelines should not apply to special needs housing and that they should be a permitted use.

In addition to Special Need Housing, the current Regional Official Plan does not

address permissions related to additional residential units. Based on changes to the Planning Act made under Bill 108 in 2019 and housing policy discussions related to the Integrated Growth Management Strategy, it is also recommended that the Regional Official Plan be updated to address additional residential units in the Agricultural and Rural Area. These proposed policies will be subject to criteria that balance competing provincial policies and priorities such as the protection of agricultural resources, enhancement of the agricultural system, health and safety.

Policy Direction – RAS-7 – Introduce new policies in the Regional Official Plan that support an enhanced planning and development review process at both the Regional and local levels that supports new and expanded agricultural uses and which provides clarity on the Region's role as a commenting agency on Niagara Escarpment Commission applications.

Regulation and “red-tape” have been a key concern that has been raised by Halton’s agricultural community as a barrier to investments being made in agriculture. Applicants may often need to deal directly or indirectly with various agencies including their local conservation authority, Niagara Escarpment Commission, local municipality and/or the Region. The planning process can be complex, involve various agencies, be costly and time consuming. The Region supports the development of new and expanded agricultural uses in appropriate locations and would like to streamline and expedite these kinds of approvals to encourage these investments and strengthen the Agricultural System in Halton.

The preferred outcome of the policies would be to simplify the development review process. The goals of these policies is to decrease costs, encourage co-ordination of regulations with municipalities, the Niagara Escarpment Commission and agencies, and to provide clarity and certainty to the applicant to support agricultural investment in Halton. To further the Region’s commitment to assist the agricultural community, this policy direction allows the Region to pursue the development of a concierge service to provide direct assistance in navigating planning processes when applications to develop agricultural uses are submitted.

Policy Direction – RAS-8– Introduce new policies in the Regional Official Plan that implement edge planning best practices to minimize the impacts of urban development on nearby agriculture.

While farming in the near urban context in Halton has advantages, it also has challenges especially the immediate interface between the urban and agricultural area where farm operations continue to operate. While normal farm practices are permitted, conflicts related to noise, odour, traffic, light etc. often arise between farmers and

residents that are adjacent to an active agricultural landscape. This policy direction is intended to reduce potential conflicts between urban areas and agricultural uses in the rural area through edge planning policies. It is recommended that policies encourage the consideration of edge planning in the context of secondary plans where greenfield development or other large scale non-agriculture uses are adjacent to agriculture when considering urban boundary expansions.

Potential negative impacts on farming operations along with the rise in trespassing in rural areas has been identified by the agricultural community in Halton as being of concern.

3.4 Natural Heritage

3.4.1 Overview

Natural heritage has a central place within the planning vision for Halton as described in the Regional Official Plan. Preserving natural heritage remains a key component of Halton's Planning Vision, which stems from the Region's fundamental value in land use planning: landscape permanence. The goal for the Natural Heritage System will remain as it is articulated in the current Regional Official Plan "to increase the certainty that the biological diversity and ecological functions within Halton will be preserved and enhanced for future generations".

The [Natural Heritage Discussion Paper](#) presented a number of considerations for updating the natural heritage mapping and policies in the current Regional Official Plan to ensure consistency and conformity with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and Provincial plans, clarification on certain natural heritage policies and update the Natural Heritage System mapping with the best available data sources to improve accuracy of the mapping at a regional-scale. Further details and background information for the proposed policy directions can be found in the Discussion Paper.

Comments received generally supported a desire for Regional policies to continue the protection and enhancement of the Key Features and their ecological functions, recognize policies related to natural hazards and identify climate change adaptation and mitigation opportunities within Halton's Natural Heritage System.

3.4.2 Policy Directions

This section outlines the proposed policy directions for the protection and preservation of natural areas and water resources in Halton Region.

Policy Direction – NH-1 – Incorporate mapping and policies in the Regional Official

Plan that implement the new Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan.

In 2017, the Growth Plan was updated to include policies on the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan. In 2018, draft mapping of this system was released by the Province and the mapping of this system has been verified by the Region. Through the Regional Official Plan Review, refinements to the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan were requested by the Region to better align it with the Regional Natural Heritage System mapping, and exclude Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan from lands within settlement area boundaries in Halton. The Ministry of Northern Development, Natural Resources and Forestry approved the request for refinements based on the criteria for refinements outlined in “The Regional Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Technical Report on Criteria, Rationale and Methods” (OMNRF 2018) (the “Technical Report”). This mapping and the associated policy framework must be implemented in the Regional Official Plan and direction on how it will be incorporated in the Plan is provided in Policy Directions NH-3 and NH-6.

Policy Direction – NH-2 – Incorporate and update policies that implement updated policies on natural heritage from the Greenbelt Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

The Regional Official Plan recognizes the requirements and policies of the Greenbelt Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan. In 2017, as part of a provincial coordinated review, natural heritage policies were updated for the Greenbelt Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. In addition, updated mapping was generated by the Province that delineated the extent of lands designated Escarpment Protection Area and Escarpment Natural Area under the Niagara Escarpment Plan. The Niagara Escarpment Plan land use designation for Escarpment Natural Area and Escarpment Protection Area will continue to be mapped as components of the Regional Natural Heritage System. Therefore, the updated Niagara Escarpment Plan mapping will need to be reflected in Regional Natural Heritage System mapping, which may result in additional lands included within the Regional Natural Heritage System.

Policy Direction – NH-3 – Harmonize the mapping and policies for the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System and the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan to create a Provincial Natural Heritage System.

As the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan 2017 and the current Greenbelt Plan Natural Heritage System 2020 are required to be identified in the Regional Official Plan, and both systems are similar and identify the same key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features and vegetation protection zones, it is being recommended that where possible, the policies for the two provincial natural heritage systems should be

combined in an effort to reduce duplication and complexity. Where there are policy discrepancies that cannot be rectified, a clear geographical reference should be included to ensure the policy is only applied in the required Natural Heritage System.

The Regional Natural Heritage System will be mapped as separate and distinct from the Provincial Natural Heritage Systems as it is not subject to these Plans, but rather receives direction from the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020. In circumstances where lands fall within both the Regional Natural Heritage System and Provincial Natural Heritage System, the Regional Natural Heritage System policies will apply except where the Provincial Natural Heritage System is more restrictive.

This policy direction aligns with the feedback received from engagement on the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper that the preferred mapping approach for the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan was to harmonize it with the Greenbelt Plan Natural Heritage System to create a Provincial Natural Heritage System. This approach would simplify policies, create a more streamlined approach and still allow for flexibility to occur for unique policy approaches in the Regional Natural Heritage System.

Policy Direction – NH-4 – Incorporate policies and mapping that implements a Water Resource System.

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, policies in the Growth Plan, 2020 and the Greenbelt Plan, 2017 all require that a Water Resource System (as defined in the Growth Plan, 2020) be identified to provide for the long-term protection of surface and ground water features and their functions. The Regional Official Plan will need to incorporate Water Resource System policies and mapping in accordance with the Provincial policies and plans. The Water Resource System will be based on the definition provided in the Growth Plan with detailed policies that focus around key hydrologic features and key hydrologic areas.

Where policies exist in the Regional Official Plan related to watershed studies and subwatershed studies, these policies should be considered in the context of the Water Resource System and may need to be updated to implement the direction from the Provincial Plans.

Comments during the engagement process generally supported providing distinct policies and mapping for the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System as there could be confusion if key hydrologic areas are incorporated into the policies for the Natural Heritage System. While this distinction is important, the interrelationship between the two must still be considered through a system-based approach to natural heritage and water resource policies.



The identification of a Water Resource System will provide for the long-term protection of surface and ground water features and their functions and recognize their important role in addressing climate change and building resiliency.

Policy Direction – NH-5 – Update existing policies on Natural Hazards to be consistent with and conform to Provincial Policies and Plans.

Conservation Authorities have been delegated responsibilities from the Minister of Northern Development, Natural Resources and Forestry to represent the Provincial interests regarding natural hazards encompassed and defined in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and regulated development within and adjacent to natural hazards through the Conservation Authorities Act.

The natural hazard policies in the Regional Official Plan will need to be updated as well as incorporate new policies that are consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement 2020, and Provincial Plans. The natural hazard policies should be maintained in a distinct section from the natural heritage and water resources policies as the focus of natural hazard policies are to protect public health and safety from natural and human-made risks. Within the natural hazards policies, a policy will be developed to direct the Local Municipalities to include policies and mapping within their official plans and zoning by-laws to prohibit and restrict development within natural hazard lands and be required to consult and be in conformity with Conservation Authority policies. There may need to be additional policies introduced in the Urban Areas section of the Regional Official Plan related to directing new growth away from hazardous lands including wildland fire hazards.

In the current Regional Official Plan, Regulatory Flood Plains identified by the Conservation Authority are a component of the Regional Natural Heritage System. Flooding hazards, which include the Regulatory Flood Plain, are identified as a natural hazard under section 3.1 of the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and Regulatory Flood Plain has not been identified as natural heritage features and areas, surface water features and ground water features within in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020.

Given the direction provided in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, it is recommended that the Regulatory Flood Plain is removed as a component of the current Regional Natural Heritage System and be included in the natural hazard section of the Regional Official Plan. The intention is not to diminish the goal and objectives of the Regional Natural Heritage System but rather provide clarity and consistency with the definition of natural features in the Regional Official Plan.

Respondents supported the inclusion of natural hazard policies to protect people and the environment from more frequent extreme weather events.



The changing climate has augmented the frequency and changed the predictability of severe weather events in Halton Region. Understanding natural hazards, including their mapped location, can lead to adaptive land use planning decisions that can mitigate the impacts of climate change on members of the community, urban and rural development and the Natural Heritage System as a whole.

Policy Direction NH-6 - Revise mapping to identify the Natural Heritage System as an overlay with Key Features designated in rural areas and within Settlement Areas, the Natural Heritage System will remain a designation.

Map 1 - Regional Structure in the Regional Official Plan will need to be updated to illustrate prime agricultural areas, rural lands and Key Features as mutually exclusive land use designations with the components (i.e. buffers/linkages) of the natural heritage system as an overlay. On the current Map 1 – Regional Structure, the Regional Natural Heritage System is illustrated as a designation, and the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System is illustrated as a constraint overlay for lands outside settlement areas. The change to the mapping is a result of recent changes to the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan that require prime agricultural areas to be designated in official plans. The updated Provincial framework no longer provides the Region with flexibility to map the entire Regional and Provincial Natural Heritage Systems as a designation outside settlement areas.

Outside of settlement areas, the Natural Heritage System overlay will overlap with the Key Features designation to continue to achieve a scientifically structured systems approach that will meet the goal of long-term protection and enhancement of natural features and functions within Halton. The natural heritage policies in the Regional Official Plan will apply to both the Key Features as a designation and the system as an overlay, thus maintaining the same preservation and protection to the system as whole. The current approach to designate the Regional Natural Heritage System should remain within settlement areas, as there are unique factors in urban context that make it difficult to apply a multi-layer approach. The designation of the Regional Natural Heritage System allows for clear delineation between the types of land uses and provides direction on where development and site alteration may occur within settlement areas.

Respondents during the engagement process were interested in strengthening policies to address impacts to the Regional Natural Heritage System. There was support for mapping approach to include a Natural Heritage System overlay with Key Features designated in rural areas as it achieves the best balance between interests of Natural

Heritage System and the Agricultural System in particular, it would provide greater clarity as to where agricultural buildings could be located.

Policy Direction – NH-7 – Update the policies and mapping that build on the existing comprehensive Regional Natural Heritage System policy framework.

A detailed review of current Regional Official Plan policies against the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, related to the natural heritage system indicates strong alignment with provincial direction. There are minor updates to the existing Regional Official Plan policy and language including definitions to improve consistency and alignment with recent updates to the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020.

To inform and aid in the implementation of the natural heritage policies, certain guidelines or protocols will be identified in the policies of the Regional Official Plan that will need to be prepared and maintained to provide more detailed direction including the Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines and Subwatershed Study Guidelines. Further, feedback received through engagement identified the need to provide clarification on how linkages, enhancements to Key Features and buffers are established. It is recommended that a guideline be prepared to provide clarification on the identification and determination of these components that builds on the existing Regional Official Plan policy framework and definitions. The guideline will provide further direction on the identification of these components, outline approaches that can be used to satisfy the relevant policies and used to support restoration and enhancement within the Regional Natural Heritage System that can be achieved through development proposals.

The Region is refining the Natural Heritage System mapping in the Regional Official Plan where updated information is available. The draft Regional Natural Heritage System mapping will utilize updated base data information available from the Province and conservation authorities. Using updated base layers ensures that Natural Heritage System mapping in the Regional Official Plan reflects the most current data available and thus the maps are as accurate as possible. In addition to the base layers updates, a review of the Natural Heritage System mapping was undertaken to recognize planning decisions and updated information since Regional Official Plan Amendment 38 and this includes Ontario Municipal Board decisions, approved planning applications, special Council Permits and staff refinements based on in-field observations.

During the engagement process respondents were supportive of creating and clarifying policies on buffers, enhancements to Key Features and linkages within the Regional Natural Heritage System.

In addition to the engagement process on the Phase 2 Discussion Papers, engagement

with individual stakeholders on the Regional Natural Heritage System mapping continued into 2021 and included 41 individual landowner meetings and 19 site visits to analyze and delineate boundaries of Key Features of the Regional Natural Heritage System. As a result of the Phase 2 engagement, refinements have been made to the draft Regional Natural Heritage System mapping. Any mapping refinements that were made had to align with the Regional Official Plan Natural Heritage System goals, objectives and definitions, were within the context of the technical guidance found in the Sustainable Halton 3.02 Implementation Report and were based on in-field observations made by Regional staff. Consistent with Policy 116.1 of the Regional Official Plan, mapping refinements were also made to recognize any refinements that were accepted by the Region through a planning approval process under the Planning Act (i.e. Secondary Plans/Plans of Subdivision) from July 2018 to June 2021, noting that the previous version of the draft mapping used June 2018 as a benchmark for refinements. Finally, any Ontario Municipal Board or Local Planning Appeal Tribunal decisions that resulted in refinements to the Natural Heritage System mapping were incorporated.

The updated draft 2022 Natural Heritage System mapping will be made available on Regional Official Plan Review Mapping Viewer on Halton Region webpage. The final release of the Halton's draft Natural Heritage System mapping will occur as a part of Stage 3 Phase 3 of the staged Regional Official Plan Amendment.

Based on the stakeholder feedback received on the technical process to update the Natural Heritage System mapping, it is recommended that an update to the policy be made to incorporate refinements to the Regional Natural Heritage System accepted by the Region through an approval process under the Planning Act occur on a more frequent basis than at the Region's statutory review of its Official Plan. This will ensure that Halton's Natural Heritage System mapping reflects the most current data available and thus the maps are as accurate as possible at a regional-scale.



The Regional Natural Heritage System is a critical permanent landscape that can allow Halton Region to continually implement innovative and creative adaptive and mitigative measures to alleviate the impacts from the changing climate. The Natural Heritage System provides for more resilient environments and can allow opportunities to reduce impacts of flooding and other risks associated with extreme weather events. The protection of Key Features can improve carbon sequestration, improve water quality and quantity, provide habitat for endangered species and continue to provide ecosystem functions and services to Halton citizens.

Policy Direction – NH-8 – Update the Regional Plan to address the quality of a woodland in the determination of the significance of woodlands.

The need and justification for protecting and identifying Significant Woodlands is mandated by the Province through the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and Provincial Plans. Significant Woodlands also have been identified as a Key Feature in the Regional Natural Heritage System. There are two distinct components to the Region's policies regarding Significant Woodlands; 1) the definition of "Woodland" and 2) the policies that identify which woodlands warrant protection as Significant Woodland. A group of trees must first meet the definition of "Woodland", and only then it is subject to the protection policies for significance. The Regional Official Plan does not permit the alteration of significant woodlands within the Regional Natural Heritage System unless it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features and areas or their ecological functions. For lands within the Natural Heritage System of the Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan Natural Heritage System, new development or site alteration is not permitted in key natural heritage features (including significant woodlands).

Through Phase 2 engagement, there was support for the inclusion of criteria to provide clarity around the assessment of woodlands that:

- Might be considered lower quality from an ecological perspective (i.e. dominated by non-native plant species such as European buckthorn, Black Locust or Dog Strangling Vine)
- Have been subject to a disturbance such as ice-storm damage, windthrow, or forest pathogens or pests, e.g., Emerald Ash Borer to the point where it is unlikely current tree density will meet the criteria for inclusion as a woodland as a result of deaths related to Emerald Ash Borer.

While there was general feedback from the engagement process to exclude such woodlands from the definition of "significant woodland", there was also feedback to provide a policy framework that would require woodland restoration if consideration was given to remove woodlands deemed to be lower quality from a biodiversity and ecological perspective from the Regional Natural Heritage System.

This policy direction recommends that the Regional Planning staff identify opportunities to address the woodland quality through potential updates to the definitions of significant woodland and woodland within the Regional Official Plan. Further, explore opportunities to provide direction within the Regional Official Plan for enhancement and restoration of woodlands that have been impacted by invasive non-native species and/or have experienced severe disturbance due extreme weather events and the impact of forest pathogens.

Policy Direction - NHS- 9 – Update the Regional Official Plan to include policies that conform to the three Source Protection Plans that apply in the Region.

The current Regional Official Plan contains policies and mapping to protect and enhance the quality and quantity of Halton Region's ground and surface water resources as directed through the Aquifer Management Plan. These policies must be replaced with the Provincial approved Source Protection Plan policies that are applicable to Halton Region in accordance with the Planning Act 2020, Condominium Act, 1998 and the Building Code Act, 1992

Currently there are three approved source protection plans that apply within Halton Region and each contain policy direction for land use planning. Given the complicated nature of applying policies from three different source protection plans that do not align with municipal boundaries, and the added complication of changing policy and mapping within the Source Protection Plans, the direction will be to include general policies that can apply across all three Source Protection Plans where possible with more specific policies as required based on the specific plan and the inclusion of mapping. As a result, planning and development applications will be subject to these Source Protection Plan policies and mapping in specific areas of Halton.

Comments received on the options for how to best incorporate source water protection policies did not appear to have one common preferred approach. Additional consultation was undertaken with the source protection project managers where it was recommended that a simple high level approach should be taken where appropriate.



Source water protection plans help to ensure that water quality and quantity are maintained for the sources of Halton's municipal drinking water systems. Climate change can broadly impact both groundwater and surface water quality and quantity through increased flooding and erosion due to more extreme rainfall, more drought conditions and frequent severe weather.

Policy Direction - NH-10 – Introduce a new policy in the Regional Official Plan that requires the Region to develop a Halton Region Natural Heritage Strategy.

To protect and enhance the natural environment and respond to climate change, the policy direction recommends that the Regional Official Plan include a policy to adopt and maintain a Halton Region Natural Heritage Strategy, similar the Halton's Rural Agricultural Strategy. The Natural Heritage Strategy, as proposed, will align with the action items identified in the Halton Region Strategic Business Plan 2019-2022 and is not meant to add additional policies but rather provide direction on a plan of action for the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Regional Official Plan. The purpose of the strategy would be to identify a framework for initiatives such as monitoring, stewardship/restoration and community awareness that need to be undertaken to achieve

a sustainable, natural environment. The Strategy could explore opportunities for programs and services to address non-land use related matters to further support and recognize landowners including the agricultural farming community in their stewardship efforts to protect and enhance the Natural Heritage and Water Resource Systems as well as endeavors to implement climate change mitigation and resiliency strategies. The Strategy also could explore opportunities and identify an approach to where the Natural Heritage System can be utilized through mitigation and adaptation to respond to climate change and reducing Halton's carbon footprint.

Respondents supported the creation of a Natural Heritage Strategy that would allow the goals of the Regional Natural Heritage System to align with action items, provide for a collaborative approach to its development, and outline potential key focuses of the Strategy outlined in other Regional plans, such as the approved 2019-2022 Strategic Business Plan, Agriculture and Rural Strategy and corporate climate action plan being developed.



A Natural Heritage Strategy will provide short and long-term actionable opportunities for Halton to respond to climate change, including actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, restore, enhance and connect the Natural Heritage System throughout the urban and rural areas, and create monitoring programs.

Policy Direction – NH-11 – Update and enhance current policies in the Regional Official Plan to recognize agriculture in components of the Natural Heritage System.

Natural heritage and agriculture are not mutually exclusive in terms of where they are located in the rural area. In many instances farming is occurring within the Natural Heritage System and in some cases buildings already exist within key natural heritage features. The Regional Official Plan currently permits certain agricultural buildings and farm operation uses within the Regional Natural Heritage System but outside of the Niagara Escarpment Natural Area or the Key Features other than those areas where the only Key Feature is a significant earth science area of natural and scientific interest. Within the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System and Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan, new development including agricultural buildings are not permitted within key natural heritage features or key hydrologic features and associated vegetation protection zones. The Regional Official Plan also sets the criteria for the requirements of an Environmental Impact Assessment for proposed development and site alterations and identified opportunities for when an agricultural building would not trigger a study.

Through engagement, there was support for the Region to update and enhance current

policies to recognize agriculture in the certain key natural heritage features and components of the Regional Natural Heritage System. This policy direction recommends that the Region explore additional opportunities for clarification on existing permissions for agricultural buildings and uses within the Regional Natural Heritage System within the existing policy framework and that is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and conforms to Provincial Plans. Additional permissions would need to be considered based on a set criteria (i.e. size threshold) and would demonstrate no negative impact to the Regional Natural Heritage System. Outside of Key Features, there will continue to be permissions specifically for agriculture, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses.

Comments were made during the engagement process that indicated that further clarification and consideration is needed in policies and mapping around permissions for agricultural uses in the Natural Heritage System.

3.5 Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations

3.5.1 Overview

The current Regional Official Plan has policies primarily related to Cultural Heritage (archaeology) and consultation that reference First Nations. It is proposed that going forward as part of the Regional Official Plan Review, the policies be updated to address all Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations with land use related rights applicable in Halton Region and include a full range of interests related to land use, particularly engagement.

Indigenous People, Communities and First Nations are part of diverse community in Halton, however, there are no specific First Nation Communities geographically located within the boundaries of Halton, however, there are Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations around Halton which include: The Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River, Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council (Not elected), Métis Nation of Ontario, Credit River Métis Council and the Grand River Métis Council. The Mississaugas of The Credit First Nation are the original Treaty and title holders of the territory in which Halton Region resides.

The following were invited to participate in the Regional Official Plan Review:

- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- Six Nations of the Grand River
- Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council
- Métis Nation of Ontario – Credit River Métis Council

Several meetings have been held with Regional staff the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) and continued dialogue concerning MCFN's interests in the Halton Region Official Plan.

Regional staff are following-up on submissions as they are received. All of this will be fully documented and available to the public record along with all other engagement submissions.

Going forward the Huron-Wendat First Nation will be included in engagement based on discussions with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing staff.

3.5.2 Policy Directions

Policy Direction – IP-1 – Update the Regional Official Plan to recognize and acknowledge interests of Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations related to land use, in a new policy in 'Part II - Basic Position' in the Regional Official Plan which would provide general direction and elsewhere in the Plan.

Updates may include general policies that acknowledge Indigenous Peoples and their rights and recognize MCFN as the Treaty holder. Updates should ensure at all relevant section of the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, are addressed.

It is recommended that the Regional Official Plan be updated to ensure that the interests of Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations are recognized through land use planning matters while still maintaining alignment with Regional programs and initiatives, including work undertaken by the Region's Strategic Government and Policy Relations department, including the Indigenous Relationship Building Initiative.

Policy Direction – IP-2 – Update the Regional Official Plan to recognize and acknowledge interests of Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations related to consultation on land use planning matters.

In implementing the Regional Official Plan, Halton Region must recognize the importance of consulting with Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations on planning matters that may affect their rights and interests. The Regional Official Plan must be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the recognition and affirmation of existing Aboriginal and treaty rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Updates are proposed to ensure meaningful consultation with Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations.

Policy Direction – IP-3 – Update the Regional Official Plan to ensure adequate recognition and protection of Indigenous Cultural Heritage, particularly related to archaeological resources.

The Regional Official Plan currently contains policies on Cultural Heritage and consultation. These policies should be updated refer the language in the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) (Planning authorities shall engage with Indigenous People and Communities and consider their interests when identifying, protecting and managing cultural heritage and archaeological resources) and refer to the Region’s Public Engagement policy and Indigenous Engagement Guidelines which are currently under development. In addition, the Region’s existing Archaeological Management Plan (titled ‘Master Plan of Archaeological Resources of the Regional Municipality of Halton 2008 Update’ prepared by Archaeological Services Inc., 2009) should be reviewed.

3.6 North Aldershot Planning Area

3.6.1 Overview

In the current Regional Official Plan, the North Aldershot Policy Area is a mutually exclusive land use designation that is separate from the Urban Area, Agricultural Area, Regional Natural Heritage System and other designations. The permitted uses for this designation include agricultural and agriculture-related uses, residential uses, home occupations and cottage industries, watershed and wildlife management uses and recreational uses.

The North Aldershot Policy Area policies of the current Regional Official Plan remain unchanged from the policies introduced through Regional Official Plan Amendment 2 introduced in 1998. Since that time, the Provincial policy framework has evolved significantly with the latest update being the Growth Plan 2019 and Provincial Policy Statement, 2020. The North Aldershot Policy Area designation and many of the existing permissions for this designation do not conform to the current Provincial policy framework.

The [North Aldershot Discussion Paper](#) presented a number of considerations for the review of the North Aldershot policy framework in the Regional Official Plan in order to bring it into conformity with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and Provincial plans. Of particular relevance is the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 that divides the Province into two general land use categories with one being urban 'settlement areas' and the second being 'rural area', with rural areas including rural settlement areas, rural lands, prime agricultural areas, natural heritage features and areas and resource areas.

Rural lands and prime agricultural areas are considered to be mutually exclusive, with rural lands not encompassing prime agricultural areas. Further details and background information for the proposed policy directions can be found in the Paper.

North Aldershot was also considered as part of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy in exploring whether this area is appropriate for accommodating future population and employment growth. As summarized in [Staff Report No. LPS18-21](#), the review undertaken as part of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy concluded that urban boundary expansion within the North Aldershot Policy Area as a whole is not supportable given the overriding policy considerations of the Growth Plan, 2019. This conclusion was based on considerations such as the prevalence of significant and sensitive natural heritage features and functions; the challenge of optimizing major infrastructure investment to service very limited and dispersed pockets of developable land; and, the challenge of achieving a complete community through more compact urban form and a complete range and mix of housing.

In addition, there was further analysis undertaken through the development of the Draft Preferred Growth Concept. Through that analysis it has been concluded that, in comparison to the areas identified in the Draft Preferred Concept, any other areas contiguous to the existing settlement area boundary that may have limited potential for redevelopment are not appropriate for urban boundary expansion. This conclusion is based on considerations such as servicing feasibility, protection of the natural heritage system and water resources, and financial viability. It should be noted that existing, historical development approvals will be taken into consideration in the North Aldershot Policy Area.

A map is provided in Appendix C showing the proposed Rural designation and Natural Heritage System in North Aldershot.

3.6.2 Policy Directions

This section outlines the proposed policy directions for the planning of the North Aldershot Planning Area.

Policy Direction - NAPA-1 – Integrate the North Aldershot planning framework with the Rural and Agricultural System policies in the Regional Official Plan through the application of a ‘Rural Land’ designation to the lands currently identified as ‘North Aldershot Policy Area’.

In accordance with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 land use categories, it is recommended that the Region remove the distinct North Aldershot Policy Area

designation from the Regional Official Plan and re-designate the lands to a Rural Lands designation in accordance with the Rural and Agricultural System Policy Direction in this regard (RAS-1).

A significant portion of the North Aldershot Policy Area is now within the draft updated Natural Heritage System as a result of the incorporation of the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan (NH-1). As indicated in the Natural Heritage Policy Direction NH-6 of this Report, Key Features of the Regional Heritage System are recommended to be a mutually exclusive designation with the components (i.e. buffers/linkages) of the natural heritage system as an overlay in the Regional Official Plan. As a result, only those portions of the North Aldershot Policy Area that are outside of the Key Features would be re-designated to the new 'Rural Land' designation as set out in the Rural and Agricultural section of this Report (RAS-1) with the natural heritage system as an overlay, where applicable.

There was general support heard during the engagement process to limit new development in North Aldershot as some participants indicated awareness of a number of ecological features in the area and how Provincial Plans would limit development potential. But also some that supported further development subject to the condition that new development be dense, compact, and focused on housing affordability.



The recommendation supports a number of climate change objectives including directing growth towards compact mixed-use communities with transit supportive densities and protecting the Natural Heritage System from fragmentation due to development encroachment. A strong and continuous Natural Heritage System and Rural and Agricultural System provides valuable ecosystem services like clean air and water and carbon sequestration. These systems also support the Region's resilience and capacity to respond to extreme weather events.

Policy Direction - NAPA-2 – Align policies for urban servicing with updated Provincial policy direction that requires municipal services to be directed to urban areas by removing the 'Area Eligible for Urban Servicing' overlay on Map 1. Servicing policies for North Aldershot will be integrated with the policies applicable to the Rural and Agricultural System.

It is recommended that the Region remove the 'Area Eligible for Urban Servicing' overlay from the Regional Official Plan. This would not affect affecting existing approvals for servicing supported by the Region.



Directing municipal water and wastewater servicing to the urban area supports climate change mitigation objectives including the promotion of

3.7 Implementation

3.71. Overview

IN addition to the key theme areas that have been explored in Phase 2, the initial Directions Report identified the need to explore implementation tools and housekeeping improvements through the Regional Official Plan Review. A policy audit of the effectiveness of the range of planning tools included in the Regional Official Plan is recommended to determine the need for adjustments as well as consider opportunities to improve the user-friendliness of the Official Plan including through housekeeping and layout revisions.

In support of this direction, the following background reviews were initiated:

- **Provincial Policy Audit:** review all changes to Provincial plans and policies identifying new or enhanced terms and concepts that may need to be addressed in the Regional Official Plan as well as changes in language and to definitions that may result in updates to the Regional Official Plan.
- **Housekeeping Policy Audit:** review the Regional Official Plan to identify any stale-dated, non-land use, and/or repetitive policies as well as any other housekeeping modifications that should be considered to enhance the readability of the Regional Official Plan. This review also included a mapping audit to identify any necessary mapping updates.
- **Best Practices Review:** reviewed other jurisdictions for best practices for official plan format and style options including page layout and numbering as well as best practices for mapping format and style.

3.7.2 Policy Directions

This section outlines the proposed policy directions for implementation tools and housekeeping improvements to the Regional Official Plan. It should be noted that certain implementation aspects of the Regional Official Plan Review are being undertaken in the context of the theme area updates and are not repeated here.

Policy Direction – IMP-1 – Improve the legibility and wayfinding of the Regional Official Plan by reviewing the organization of the Plan, the numbering of policies, the heading and sub-heading structure of the document, mapping, and the page layout including title pages and section covers.

A review of the Regional Official Plan layout to improve readability and user-friendliness has been undertaken. Looking at best practices for official plans from municipalities across the Province, the following preliminary recommendations were identified:

- Consider a layout that utilizes a sidebar that provides explanations and context to the Regional Official Plan policies.
- Consider the use of plain language throughout
- Incorporate clear distinction between policies and objectives through the use of sub-headings.
- Incorporate diagrams and images with plain language to explain and clarify concepts.
- Ensure maps are up to date and readily interpreted.

Amendments that are proposed to implement the matters outlined above will be prepared with a recognition that the intended outcome is to simply make the Official Plan easier to navigate and understand, not to reopen established policy decisions embedded in the Official Plan.

Policy Direction – IMP-2 – Update Regional Official Plan policies, as needed, to improve clarity of implementation and intent and undertake general housekeeping edits.

Since Regional Official Plan Amendment 38 has been mostly implemented, some policies have been identified as requiring updates based on clarity of implementation and intent, or in some instances may require updates based on language. Some policies may no longer be necessary based on the changes proposed in the other policy directions. This policy direction is to allow for these changes to occur where existing policies would benefit from some modifications or in some instances removal or additional policy be added. Also to be addressed are the removal policies that provide direction to various Regional departments on non-land use matters so that the focus of the Official Plan is on land use planning - not the delivery of other programs and services. An example of the type of policies to be reviewed policies related to non-land use corporate functions such as selection of recycled materials in packaging for products purchased by Region – ROP 149(5).

An example of general housekeeping edits would be updating the history of the ROP in the Plan.

Policy Direction – IMP-3 – Harmonize and consolidate policies and principles that are repetitive in the Regional Official Plan.

The Regional Official Plan Review provides an opportunity to make housekeeping updates to the Regional Official Plan to remove, combine, or condense any repetitive policies to improve the readability of the Plan. These policies have been identified through the housekeeping policy audit. There are two types of repetitive policies: those that are similar or almost identical to another policy or objective and those where their sole function is supporting other policies of the Regional Official Plan.

Policy Direction – IMP-4 – Coordinate and align the Regional Official Plan with strategic documents, policies, guidelines, and programs at the Region, and also reduce duplication to refocus the Regional Official Plan on strategic objectives appropriate to the implementation of land use planning matters.

The Regional Official Plan update should ensure that land use planning related information incorporated in strategic documents, such as policies and programs from Regional Departments that is included in the Plan, is up-to-date and aligns with work undertaken by departments such as Legislative and Planning Service, Public Works, and Finance.

In addition, there are a number of policies in the Regional Official Plan that provide direction on matters unrelated to land use planning that may be better suited for a Strategic Plan or other document as opposed to the Official Plan. These may include policies that guide corporate functions and activities and/or that direct the Region to undertake or support non-land use programs and strategies. It is recommended that the Regional Official Plan be updated, to ensure that the Regional Official Plan is focused on providing direction that is implementable through land use planning while still maintaining appropriate connections to related Regional programs and activities. To illustrate this, the Regional Official Plan contains policies and objectives related to corporate procurement practices and programs that are more specifically addressed in more frequently updated corporate documents such as the Strategic Business Plan and purchasing policies and by-laws.

Policy Direction – IMP-5 – Update the Regional Official Plan to reflect current practices and changes to Provincial policies and legislation not reflected in theme areas.

There are a number of policies within the Regional Official Plan that do not reflect current Provincial policies and legislation in addition to the matters being addressed in the Regional Official Plan theme area. It is recommended that these policies be updated through the Regional Official Plan Review. For example:

- Revised “Planning for stormwater management” policy in Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 – 1.6.6.7 which appears to be more detailed than Regional

Official Plan policies;

- New provision in Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 policy 3.2.3 and Growth Plan, 2019 related to excess soil;
- New provision in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 policy 4.6 requiring planning authorities to keep their official plans up-to-date with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 1.6.6;
- Definitions from the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and Growth Plan; and
- Changing terminology to reflect Provincial documents such as “elderly” (Regional Official Plan) to “older persons” (Provincial Policy Statement, 2020).

4.0 Conclusions and Next Steps

The Regional Official Plan Review Policy Directions Report (Draft) has outlined the policy directions that require further review and refinement and are recommended to be addressed through a future Regional Official Plan Amendment related to Climate Change, the Integrated Growth Management Strategy, the Rural and Agricultural System, and the Natural Heritage System, Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations, and general Implementation and Housekeeping based on the research and analysis that went into the Discussion Papers and public engagement. The Amendments will ensure that the Regional Official Plan reflects current Provincial requirements, and continues to meet the needs of the community today and in the years ahead.

For implementation it is proposed that the Regional Official Plan will be updated in three stages:

- Stage 1: (ROPA 48 - Completed)
 - Regional Official Plan Amendment 48: Regional Urban Structure (adopted by Council and approved, with modifications, by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing)
- Stage 2 (In-process)
 - Growth Strategy Regional Official Plan Amendment
- Stage 3:
 - Climate Change, Natural Heritage System, Rural and Agricultural System, Climate Change, Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations, and Implementation Regional Official Plan Amendment.

Appendix

[Appendix A](#)

Regional Official Plan Amendment Framework for Policy Directions

[Appendix B](#)

Mapping Option 2: Prime Agricultural Area and Key Features are designated with a Natural Heritage System overlay

[Appendix C](#)

North Aldershot Map

Appendix A
Regional Official Plan Amendment Framework for Policy Directions

Policy Direction	1 st Regional Official Plan Amendment ROPA 48	2 nd Official Plan Amendment ROPA 49	3 rd Regional Official Plan Amendment
Climate Change			
CC-1 – Strengthen and enhance the Regional Official Plan’s vision, goals, objectives, policies, and definitions so that the impacts of a changing climate are a key factor to consider in making decisions on growth and development and the protection of the Region's natural heritage, water resource, and agricultural systems.			✓
CC-2 – Enhance the policies in the Regional Official Plan that support a culture of conservation.			✓
CC-3 – Introduce new policies and enhance existing policies in the Regional Official Plan to undertake stormwater management planning in a manner that assesses the impacts of extreme weather events and incorporate appropriate Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development solutions as part of an Area-Specific Planning Process.			✓
CC-4 – Introduce new policies in the Regional Official Plan that require the Region and the Local Municipalities to assess infrastructure risk and vulnerabilities, and identify actions and investments to address these challenges where appropriate.			✓
CC-5 – Introduce new policies in the Regional Official Plan that encourage the Local Municipalities to introduce and/or enhance Green Development Standards for new development.			✓
CC-6 – To support the transition to low carbon communities, the Regional Official Plan provide policies to promote renewable and alternative energy systems and require the preparation of a Community Energy Plan as part of an Area-Specific Planning Process.			✓

CC-7 – Introduce new policies and enhance existing policies in the Regional Official Plan to promote urban agriculture and locally-sourced food production.			✓
CC-8 – Update existing subwatershed policies to include the consideration for the impacts of a changing climate as part of an Area-Specific Planning Process.			✓
Integrated Growth Management Strategy			
IGMS-1 - Create a Regional Urban Structure and supporting policy framework to accommodate a significant amount of population and employment growth in Strategic Growth Areas	✓ (Regional growth to 2051)	✓ (Distribution of Regional growth to Local Municipalities)	
IGMS-2 – Confirm the boundaries of the existing Regional Employment Areas and advance Strategic Employment Land Conversions.	✓ (Initial set of strategic employment land conversions)	✓ (New Employment Areas + Additional Employment Land Conversions)	
IGMS-3 – Update the Regional Employment Areas policy framework to provide clarity on permitted uses and to identify opportunities for intensification of employment uses.		✓	
IGMS-4 — Set an Ambitious and Achievable Intensification Target for the Region and Local Municipalities.		✓	
IGMS-5 – Update Housing Mix Targets in the Regional Official Plan to establish a broad range and mix of housing in the Region.		✓	
IGMS-6 – Establish a Regional Urban Boundary to support population and employment growth.		✓	
IGMS-7 – Set Community Designated Greenfield Area Targets for the Region and Local Municipalities.		✓	
IGMS-8 – Establish Employment Area Density Targets for Regional Employment Areas.		✓	

IGMS-9 – Identify and provide sufficient employment land supply based on the Land Needs Assessment to provide a complete range of employment opportunities.		✓	
IGMS-10 – Strengthen and clarify existing Development Phasing Policies for the Region and Local Municipalities.		✓	
IGMS-11 – Direct the growth to Settlement Areas in order to maximize efficient use of existing or planned urban services.	✓	✓	
IGMS-12 – Clarify study and policy requirements for Area-Specific Plans in the Regional Official Plan to differentiate between Designated Greenfield Area and redevelopment/intensification contexts.		✓	
IGMS-13 – Update land use compatibility policies in the Regional Official Plan in accordance with Provincial plans and policies.	✓	✓	
IGMS-14 – Strengthen inclusionary zoning policies introduced through Area-Specific Plan requirements under Regional Official Plan Amendment 48 by establishing complementary housing objectives and policies.	✓	✓	
IGMS-15 – Broaden policies permitting the creation of additional residential units within and ancillary to detached houses, semi-detached houses, and townhouses.		✓	
IGMS-16 – Strengthen policies to prevent the loss of rental housing and to mitigate the impacts of rental conversion or replacement on tenants and the rental market.		✓	
IGMS-17 – Provide additional direction to Local Municipalities to support the achievement of Halton Region’s 30% affordable unit mix target through Area-Specific Plans.		✓	
Rural and Agricultural System			

RAS-1 – Create three new mutually exclusive land use designations: Prime Agricultural Areas, Rural Lands or Key Features to provide clarity about land uses in Halton’s Rural Area.			✓
RAS-3 – Update the Rural Agricultural Strategy to address non-land use related matters to further support and strengthen the Rural and Agricultural System.			✓
RAS-3 – Update the policies of the Regional Official Plan to broaden permissions and allow for more opportunities for agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses as outlined in Provincial policies, plans and guidelines.			✓
RAS-4 – Introduce new policies in the Regional Official Plan that may permit cemeteries, subject to criteria, in the new Rural Lands designation.			✓
RAS-5 – Update the policies in the Regional Official Plan to clarify when an Agricultural Impact Assessment is required.			✓
RAS-6– Update the Regional Official Plan to permit Special Needs Housing in the Rural Area and Additional Residential Units within the Agricultural and Rural Area.			✓
RAS-7 – Introduce new policies in the Regional Official Plan that support an enhanced planning and development review process at both the Regional and local levels that supports new and expanded agricultural uses and which provides clarity on the Region's role as a commenting agency on Niagara Escarpment Commission applications.			✓
RAS-8– Introduce new policies in the Regional Official Plan that implement near urban planning best practices to minimize the impacts of urban development on nearby agriculture.			✓

Natural Heritage System			
NH-1 – Incorporate mapping and policies in the Regional Official Plan that implement the new Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan.			✓
NH-2 – Incorporate and update policies that implement updated policies on natural heritage from the Greenbelt Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan.			✓
NH-3 – Harmonize the mapping and policies for the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System and the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan to create a Provincial Natural Heritage System.			✓
NH-4 – Incorporate new policies and mapping in the Regional Official Plan that implements a Water Resource System.			✓
NH-5 – Update and enhance existing policies in the Regional Official Plan on Natural Hazards to be consistent with and conform to Provincial Policies and Plans.			✓
NH-6 - Update Regional Official Plan mapping to include a Natural Heritage System overlay with Key Features designated in rural areas and maintain the Natural Heritage System designation in Settlement Areas.			✓
NH-7 – Update the policies and mapping that build on the existing comprehensive Regional Natural Heritage System policy framework.			✓
NH-8 – Update the Regional Plan to recognize the impacts of invasive species on the determination of the significance of woodlands.			✓
NH-9 – Update the Regional Official Plan to include policies that conform to the three source protection plans that apply in the Region.			✓
NH-10 – Introduce a new policy in the Regional Official Plan that requires the Region to develop a Halton Region Natural Heritage Strategy.			✓
NH-11 – Update and enhance current policies in the Regional Official Plan to			✓

recognize agriculture in components of the Natural Heritage System.			
Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations			
IP-1 – Update the Regional Official Plan to recognize and acknowledge interests of Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations related to land use, including consultation on land use planning matters.			✓
IP-2 – Update the Regional Official Plan to recognize and acknowledge interests of Indigenous Peoples, Communities and First Nations related to consultation on land use planning matters.			✓
IP-3 – Update the Regional Official Plan to ensure adequate recognition and protection of Indigenous Cultural Heritage, particularly related to archaeological resources.			✓
North Aldershot Planning Area			
NAPA-1 – Integrate the North Aldershot planning framework with the Rural and Agricultural System policies in the Regional Official Plan through the application of a ‘Rural Land’ designation to the lands currently identified as ‘North Aldershot Policy Area.’			✓
NAPA-2 – Align policies for urban servicing with updated Provincial policy direction that requires municipal services to be directed to urban areas by removing the ‘Area Eligible for Urban Servicing’ overlay on Map 1. Servicing policies for North Aldershot will be integrated with the policies applicable to the Rural and Agricultural System.			✓
Implementation			

IMP-1 – Improve the legibility and wayfinding of the Regional Official Plan by reviewing the organization of the Plan, the numbering of policies, the heading and sub-heading structure of the document, mapping, and the page layout including title pages and section covers.			✓
IMP-2 – Update Regional Official Plan policies, as needed, to improve clarity of implementation and intent and undertake general housekeeping edits.			✓

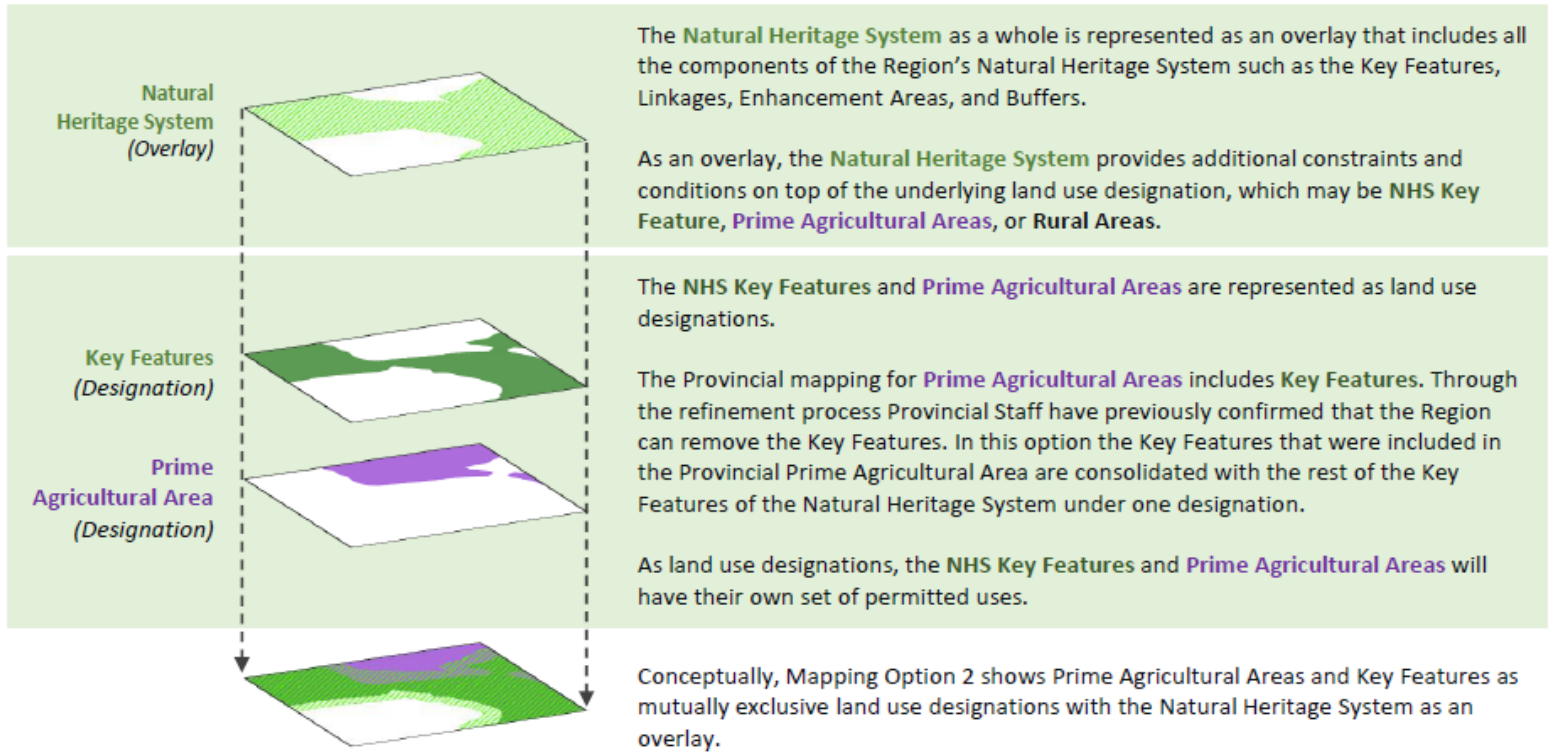
IMP-3 – Harmonize and consolidate policies and principles that are repetitive in the Regional Official Plan.			✓
IMP-4 – Coordinate and align the Regional Official Plan with strategic documents, policies, guidelines, and programs at the Region, and also reduce duplication to refocus the Regional Official Plan on strategic objectives appropriate to the implementation of land use planning matters.			✓
IMP-5 – Update the Regional Official Plan to reflect current practices and changes to Provincial policies and legislation not reflected in theme areas.			✓

Appendix B

Mapping Option 2: Prime Agricultural Area and Key Features are designated with a Natural Heritage System overlay

Mapping Option 2: Prime Agricultural Area and Key Features are designated with a Natural Heritage System overlay. Key features that overlap with the Prime Agricultural Area are cut out of the Prime Agricultural Area and incorporated into the Key Features designation.

Option 2 Mapping Concept

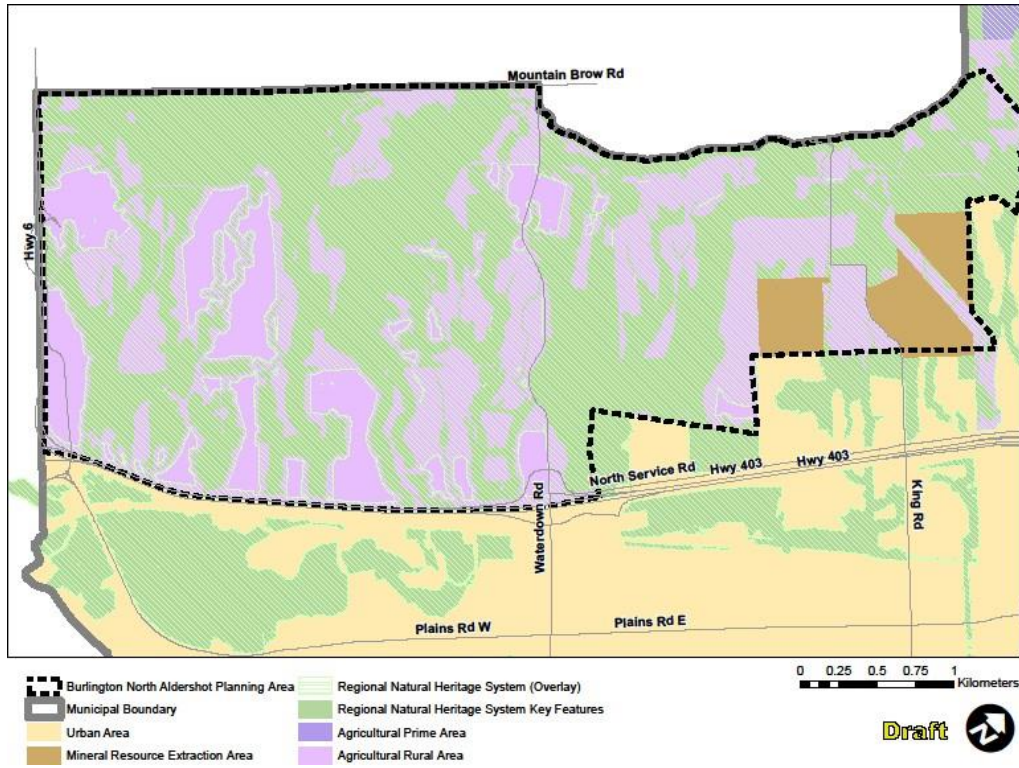


Option 2 Considerations



Pros	Map User Friendliness:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear visualization of how the Prime Agricultural Areas, NHS, and Key Features interconnect
	Policy Application:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balanced approach and clear representation of the NHS as a system with emphasis on the protection of Key Features and Prime Agricultural Areas Policies for Key Features are applied consistently through one designation (instead of 2 designations in Option 3)
	Provincial Direction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets Provincial direction for designating Prime Agricultural Areas and identifying Key Features Easiest method to identify Key Features in the RNHS, GBNHS, and NHSGP
Cons	Map User Friendliness:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not identify Linkages, Enhancements, and Buffers as a separate layer (they are included in the Natural Heritage System Overlay which includes the entire system)
	Policy Application:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detracts from the systems approach on which the RNHS is based on by creating two tiers; Key Features being treated differently from other components in the RNHS

Appendix C North Aldershot Map



Note: This map does not confer any final land use designations with respect to policy directions.

Regional Official Plan Review