

**Region of Halton
2009 Official Plan Review**

Directions Report

**Towards
Sustainability**

APRIL 14, 2009



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Towards Sustainability

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1 Regional Official Plans and the Plan Review Process

The Planning Act requires that each upper-tier municipality prepare an Official Plan and undertake a review of the Plan no less than every five years. The purpose of an Official Plan is to provide guidance for land use planning, including the protection of the natural environment and natural resources, the development of healthy communities and the promotion of health, social and economic well being. *The Planning Act* also requires that official plans and planning decisions by Municipal Councils must be consistent with Provincial policies as stated in the Provincial Policy Statement.

The Region's last Official Plan review culminated in Regional Council's approval of Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 25 (ROPA 25) in June of 2004. Under the banner of "*The Greening of Halton—Smart Growth, Smart Choices*", the Official Plan update focused on delivering new policy directions including:

- Delivering smart growth within our urban boundary;
- Achieving affordable housing;
- Supporting and promoting our agriculture;
- Enhancing our Greenlands;
- Improving our environmental quality; and
- Improving our mobility.

The protection of woodlots, support for intensification within nodes and along corridors, and the inclusion of new definitions for assisted and affordable housing were some of the new policy directions incorporated into the Regional Official Plan through ROPA 25. Following appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board, ROPA 25 came into effect in June of 2006, subject to certain deferrals and referrals.

2 Planning Context

In June of 2006, the Province released "Places to Grow. Better Choices. Brighter Future, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe" (Growth Plan). Prepared under *The Places to Grow Act, 2005*, the Growth Plan sets out a framework for implementing the Government of Ontario's vision for building stronger, more prosperous communities by better managing growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe to 2031. Future decisions on land development, management of resources, and public investment are to be guided by the Growth Plan's six "Guiding Principles":

- Build compact, vibrant and complete communities;
- Plan and manage growth to support a strong and competitive economy;
- Protect, conserve, enhance and wisely use the valuable natural resources of land, air and water for current and future generations;
- Optimize the use of existing and new infrastructure to support growth in a compact, efficient form;
- Provide for different approaches to managing growth that recognize the diversity of communities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe; and

- Promote collaboration among all sectors – government, private and non-profit and residents to achieve the vision.

The Growth Plan assigns specific population and employment targets to upper and single-tier municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe that they must achieve by 2031. Under the targets, Halton would grow to 780,000 people and 390,000 jobs by 2031. To achieve these, the Growth Plan has set out a number of specific intensification and greenfield targets. By 2015, and each year thereafter, a minimum of 40 per cent of all residential development occurring annually within each upper-tier and single-tier municipality must be within the built-up area as identified by the Province. The three urban growth centres in Halton Region – Downtown Burlington, Downtown Milton and Midtown Oakville - must be planned to achieve a minimum gross density of 200 residents and jobs per hectare by 2031. And the designated greenfield area in Halton must achieve a minimum density target of not less than 50 residents and jobs combined per hectare measured over the entire area of the Region.

The Places to Grow Act, 2005, requires upper and lower-tier municipalities to bring their Official Plans into conformity with the Growth Plan by June 16, 2009. In June of 2006, immediately following the release of the Growth Plan, Halton Region initiated the Durable Halton exercise to bring its Official Plan into conformity with the Growth Plan by identifying where and how Halton will grow in the future. Durable Halton was subsequently re-named Sustainable Halton to reflect the Region's focus on creating sustainable, healthy communities in meeting the Growth Plan's population and employment targets. The Region's current Official Plan distributes population and employment for the planning horizon of 2021. Sustainable Halton is focused on accommodating the 2031 population and employment forecasts assigned to the Region by the Growth Plan through intensification and greenfield development.

Through Regional Report PPW15-06, Halton staff identified a four-phase approach to bring the Regional Official Plan into conformity with the Growth Plan. In the first phase entitled "Year of Building Blocks", twenty two technical background reports were prepared that identified a set of principles and priorities to direct future growth in Halton while at the same time balancing the competing issues of housing, economic development, agriculture, natural heritage, and infrastructure (see Appendix). The twenty two technical background reports were vetted through an extensive public consultation process, resulting in a number of revisions to several of the background reports prior to them being referred to the next phases of Sustainable Halton.

In the second phase of Sustainable Halton, the "Strategic Planning" phase, Regional staff, with the assistance of the Sustainable Halton consulting team, identified nine high level land use concepts to frame and promote discussion around the many issues to be considered in establishing new urban growth areas. The nine concepts were narrowed to five physical land use concepts following the Inter-Municipal Liaison Committee workshop in April 2008, where a number of key conclusions were reached around the most appropriate locations for new urban growth areas. Regional Council received the five refined physical concepts in June 2008 and directed staff to consult with the Local Municipalities, Conservation Authorities, the Schools Boards, the Halton Developers' Liaison Committee, and the public on the five concepts. In the Fall of 2008, Regional staff hosted a series of Public Information centres on the refined concepts in each of the Local Municipalities.

Also in the Fall of 2008, Sustainable Halton entered its third phase, the “Decision Making” phase, in which Halton Regional Council will select a preferred growth option to accommodate Halton’s future growth for the period 2021 to 2031. To date, further work has been done to refine the five concepts as well as provide technical information on key issues, such as agriculture, aggregates, financial impacts and infrastructure costs, so that Halton Regional Council can make an informed choice in selecting the preferred growth option (see Appendix). It is anticipated that Halton Regional Council will select a preferred growth option by June 2009.

Through Regional Report LPS27-09, the Region launched Phase IV of Sustainable Halton, the “Official Plan Review”. The Report also introduced a “two-stage” approach to bring the Region’s Official Plan into conformity with the Provincial Growth Plan. In the first stage, staff brought forward proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 37 (ROPA 37) to incorporate the basic requirements of the Growth Plan into the Regional Official Plan. Through ROPA 37, the following Growth Plan policies will be incorporated into the Regional Official Plan:

- Population, employment, and intensification targets for the City of Burlington and the Town of Oakville to the year 2031, while those for the Towns of Halton Hills and Milton to 2031 will be added through a future amendment (ROPA 38) to the Regional Official Plan;
- The minimal density and intensification targets including:
 - The 40% intensification target for the built-up area by 2015 and each year thereafter,
 - The requirement that Halton’s three urban growth centres (Downtown Burlington, Midtown Oakville, and Downtown Milton) be planned to achieve a density of 200 jobs and persons per hectare, and
 - The greenfield density target of 50 persons and jobs per hectare;
- The appropriate locations for future growth including urban growth centres, intensification corridors, designated greenfields, built-up areas, and major transit station areas and the corresponding policies to guide this growth;
- The protection of employment lands by providing more stringent criteria for the conversion of employment lands to other uses;
- The requirement that the Local Municipalities develop and implement strategies to phase in and achieve the intensification targets identified in the Growth Plan; and
- Growth Plan definitions.

In the second stage of the conformity exercise, an amendment (ROPA 38) to the Halton Regional Official Plan will be brought forward that identifies an expansion to the urban settlement boundary to accommodate Halton’s future growth for the period of 2021 to 2031, and provides a growth management strategy to guide and manage this growth. In addition, the Regional Official Plan will be brought into conformity with other Provincial plans and policies and a number of “housekeeping items” will be addressed.

To a large extent, the Region’s Official Plan already implements most of the policy directions identified in the Provincial Growth Plan, which include:

- Directing growth to built-up areas to accommodate expected population and employment growth, and providing strict criteria for settlement area boundary expansions;
- Promoting transit-supportive density and a healthy mix of residential and employment lands;
- Preserving employment areas for future economic opportunities;
- Identifying and supporting a transportation network that links urban growth centres;
- Planning for community infrastructure to support growth;
- Ensuring sustainable water and wastewater services for future growth;
- Identifying natural systems and prime agricultural areas; and
- Supporting the protection and conservation of water, energy, air, and cultural heritage as well as integrated approaches to waste management.

3 Purpose

The purpose of this Official Plan Directions Report is to identify additional policy directions for inclusion in the Regional Official Plan that implement the policies of the Provincial Growth Plan and contribute to a growth management strategy that will guide the Region's growth to 2031. This Directions Report draws upon the research undertaken and results presented in the twenty two technical background reports to the Sustainable Halton process, subsequent reports that have been prepared on the natural heritage system, agricultural and aggregate sectors and health issues, and the thirteen reports prepared in Phase 3 of Sustainable Halton (see Appendix). Discussions with Halton's residents at the Sustainable Halton Public Information Centres, and the written feedback received, provided staff with the opportunity to hear and see first hand their issues and concerns regarding Halton's future growth. Discussions with the Local Municipalities, Niagara Escarpment Commission, Conservation Authorities, and School Boards have enlightened Regional staff to the planning issues and challenges that they are facing and the directions that should be considered through this Official Plan Review.

This Official Plan review will also address a number of settlements that were reached as part of the Region's previous Official Plan review, Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 25 (ROPA 25). This includes the requirement that the Region prepare an aggregate strategy.

In addition to the Growth Plan, the Province has also taken a more active role in planning through amendments to the Planning Act and the Provincial Policy Statement, and the adoption of the Greenbelt Plan. The Region's Official Plan will be brought into conformity with these initiatives.

Finally, several "housekeeping" items that have been identified through our discussions with Regional and Local staff, and other government agencies, will be addressed in this review. These are discussed later in this report.

4 Theme

The theme of this Directions Report and the Official Plan review is “*Towards Sustainability*”. In a recent report (LPS32-09/CA), staff identified ten “Draft” Sustainability Principles that we are proposing to consult on with Halton’s residents and other public agencies as part of the Official Plan review. Through this consultation, staff are hoping to develop a “Sustainability Lens” or “Sustainability Test” that the Region can use in its land use decision making processes. The Region’s proposed approach to sustainability is based on four system conditions adapted from “The Natural Step”:

- Natural resources are not being over-used;
- Waste generated does not accumulate over time;
- The natural environment is not being degraded; and
- This and future generation’s capacity to meet their needs is not being undermined.

The Natural Step is a sustainability framework is used by many governments, organisations, and companies around the world. Based on systems thinking and need for common language, the Framework recognises that what happens in one part of a system affects every other part. The Natural Step complements other sustainability tools and methods by providing both context and strategic vision. The Framework is used in problem-solving, strategic planning, and guiding actions.

The Region’s commitment to sustainability is already reflected in its actions and plans, including the Official Plan, Strategic Plan 2007-2010 and future Halton Corporate Sustainability Plan. But the Region also recognizes that it alone cannot achieve sustainability and that achieving sustainability in Halton depends on the actions of those beyond its borders, requiring a global effort.

Through the Sustainable Halton exercise, the Region is looking to achieve “Draft” Principle 6 i.e. identifying a land use plan that embraces the sustainability principles that have been identified through the application of the Evaluation Framework. That framework is in turn based on four themes:

- Protect what is valuable;
- Build healthy, complete and sustainable communities;
- Support growth with sustainable infrastructure; and
- Promote health for all.

Through the Official Plan review program the Region will focus on implementing a land use plan where all decisions are screened through a “Sustainability Lens”.

5 Policy Directions

Through the background work prepared for Sustainable Halton, and discussions with Halton’s residents, other Regional departments and public agencies we have identified

thirteen major Directions that we are considering in helping the Region move toward creating more complete, healthy and sustainable communities in Halton.

The Directions are grouped into Sections 6 to 10. Under the heading of “Building Complete, Healthy and Sustainable Communities”, Section 6 contains Directions 1 to 7 that assist the Region in meeting the policy requirements of the Provincial Growth Plan by helping to create complete, sustainable, and healthy communities in Halton. Directions 8 to 10 in Section 7 “Protecting and Enhancing the What is Valuable to Us” identifies actions the Region can take in protecting and enhancing those features that are important to Halton’s residents including the natural heritage system, agricultural sector, and archaeological features.

Directions 11, 12 and 13 in Sections 8, 9, and 10, respectively, are standalone Directions. Direction 11, “Developing an Aggregate Strategy” identifies key elements of a “Made-in-Halton” aggregate strategy. Direction 12 “Strategic Employment Areas” proposes to identify future employment lands beyond the Growth Plan’s horizon of 2031. Direction 13, “Moving to Greener Energies and Technologies” recognizes the Region is likely to receive more applications for newer and greener energy generation and that the land use implications need to be addressed.

Finally, Section 11 addresses a number of “Housekeeping” items that have been identified through discussions with the Local Municipalities, other Regional Departments and public agencies.

6 Building Complete Healthy and Sustainable Communities

6.1 Developing a Sustainability Lens/Test

The overall theme of this Directions Report and the Official Plan review is “*Towards Sustainability*”. The first direction we are proposing is the development of a “Sustainability Lens” or “Sustainability Test” as a way to screen the Region’s Official Plan policies to ensure that they move the Region toward sustainability. We are also proposing that all development applications be passed through the “Sustainability Lens/Tests” to ensure that they are contributing to complete, healthy communities in Halton.

Work has already begun at the Region to lay the groundwork for the discussions on sustainability. Report LPS-32-09/CA-06-09, *An overview of Sustainability in Halton Region* introduced ten “Draft Sustainability Principles” as part of this Official Plan review. A companion paper to this Directions Report entitled,

	Direction #1
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Sustainability Lens or Test for land use decision making within context of the Regional Official Plan.
Financial Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cost of implementing the Sustainability Lens or Test will be part of the development review process.
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance from the other Regional Departments, Local Municipal staff and the public in developing the Sustainability Lens/Test.

“Connecting Sustainability in Halton...From Policy to Practice” discusses what sustainability means; reviews Halton’s experiences with sustainability; recognizes that achieving sustainability in Halton will require the efforts of others beyond the Region’s borders; examines how sustainability is addressed through the Regional Official Plan; and identifies practices and measures Halton can implement to move towards sustainability. This paper will serve as the framework for the discussions on developing the “Sustainability Lens or Test”.

6.2 *Measuring and Monitoring Intensification*

Creating complete communities is one of the six Guiding Principles of the Provincial Growth Plan. The Plan describes complete communities as:

“communities that meet people’s needs for daily living throughout an entire life time by providing convenient access to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, a full range of housing and community infrastructure including affordable housing, schools, recreation and open space for their residents. Convenient access to public transportation and options for safe, non- motorized travel is also provided.”

Halton’s Official Plan expands on this principle by recognizing the link between complete and healthy communities as articulated through its healthy communities policies. With its focus on health, the Official Plan is looking to create complete, “healthy” and sustainable communities for Halton’s residents. Through an earlier technical background report to Sustainable Halton (*Healthy Communities Principles*), a healthy communities model was presented along with an overview of how the Provincial approach to complete communities meets the principles of this model. Specific recommendations were presented on how Halton can create complete, healthy and sustainable communities when planning the Region’s new communities or re-planning its existing communities by including:

- Connected street networks that are accessible for all modes of transportation;
- Densities to support public transit and amenities within a 5 to 10 minute walking distance of all households;
- Physical access to grocery stores either by foot or transit for all residents;
- Residential neighbourhoods that include a mix of housing and access to a full range of amenities and services within a 5 to 10 minute walking distance;
- Adequate affordable housing for all persons regardless of income, age or family size;
- Community designs that allow for community gardens and rooftop gardens;
- Urban planning that provides for inter-connected green space within the urban boundary by ensuring parks and by promoting tree planting, green roofs and community gardens; and
- Community design policies and incentives that foster all of the above.

Other Sustainable Halton technical background reports (*Air Quality, Human Health and the Built Environment*, and *Physical Activity and the Built Environment*) provided the technical data showing the impacts to health from current development forms and

practices. More recent reports from the Region's Health Department (*Protecting Health: Air Quality and Land use Compatibility* and *Creating Walkable and Transit Supportive Communities in Halton*) set out specific parameters, policies and practices that will assist Halton in managing its growth and creating complete, sustainable communities while safeguarding our health.

The intensification targets and policies in the Provincial Growth Plan provide the Region with the opportunity to build more complete, healthy and sustainable communities, while meeting all of our day to day living needs. More compact communities means Halton can: provide higher density more affordable housing to meet the housing needs of all of its residents; support an efficient public transportation system; and ensure the protection of our natural features and agricultural areas for our generation and future generations. All of these measures contribute to a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle and environment for Halton's residents.

The Region's responsibility is to ensure, with the assistance of the Local Municipalities, that Halton achieves the density targets set out in the Growth Plan through ROPA 37 (see Section 2). For the three urban growth centres, Local Municipal staff in Burlington, Oakville and Milton will be able to track the densities through the development application review process to ensure that the urban growth centres achieve the minimum target of 200 residents and jobs combined per hectare by 2031 or earlier. Likewise, Local Municipal staff will be able to calculate greenfield densities based upon the plans of subdivision submitted to them. Halton's role in addressing greenfield density will be to ensure that the target of at least 50 residents and jobs combined per hectare is achieved across the Region as a whole. The Region will work closely with the Local Municipalities in monitoring densities to ensure that the Growth Plan targets are achieved. As a direction, we are recommending that Regional staff, with the assistance of Local Municipal staff, monitor the greenfield and urban growth centre densities to determine whether they were achieved in the previous calendar year and identify appropriate actions to address any shortfalls.

A more significant challenge for the Region will be in measuring and monitoring intensification on an annual basis to ensure that the minimum 40% intensification target within Halton's built-up area is achieved starting in 2015.

To do this, Regional staff is proposing a three step process for monitoring both density and intensification targets: (a) set targets; (b) measure performance; and (c) take corrective action if significantly off target. In the first step, staff will set annual density and intensification targets, in collaboration with the Local Municipalities, for the first five year period of the Growth Plan, 2015 to 2019. Working with the Local Municipalities, the Region will identify the total number of new residential units that will be built annually, inside and outside the built boundary, in each of the Local Municipalities based on the Best Planning Estimates. Building permits and other supplementary data will be used to compile actual units built each year.

In the next step, these actually built units will be compared with the numbers in the density and intensification targets to determine whether or not those targets set have been achieved. Finally, in the last step, if the numbers fall significantly short of the intensification targets the Region and Local Municipalities will review the reasons for the shortfalls and recommend actions to regain those targets.

	Direction #2
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a process, in collaboration with the Local Municipalities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Set annual targets for the next five years of new housing units, by density type, to be developed within the Built-Up Area and within the Designated Greenfield Area for each Local Municipality; b) Monitor annually whether the following minimum targets were attained in the previous calendar year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) 40 per cent of new housing units occurring in the Built-up Areas, measured across the Region as a whole; ii) 50 residents and jobs combined per gross hectare in the Designated Greenfields Areas, measured across the Region as a whole; and iii) 200 residents and jobs combined per gross hectare within each Urban Growth Centre; and c) Recommend to Council appropriate actions to address any significant shortfalls under b) above.
Financial Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will form part of Regional and Local staffs' yearly work plan.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance from the Local Municipalities in providing building permit data and other supplementary data to identify the number of units constructed inside and outside the built boundaries on a yearly basis.

6.3 Adopting a Housing Mix Target

The Provincial Growth Plan requires the Region to develop a housing strategy in consultation with the Local Municipalities to meet the housing needs of all of Halton's residents, including those in need of affordable housing. The Growth Plan also requires the Region to establish and implement affordable housing targets in accordance with the Provincial Policy Statement (2005) (Policy 1.4.3).

The current Official Plan policies focus on addressing the housing needs of all of Halton's residents by providing an adequate mix and variety of housing to satisfy differing physical, social and economic needs. Through the previous Official Plan update, ROPA 25, "made-in-Halton" definitions were developed for Assisted and Affordable Housing to help identify the true housing needs of Halton's residents.

The definitions were then used to develop Halton's Housing model that subsequently identified the Assisted and Affordable Housing Gaps along the Region's housing continuum for the Region's 2006 Comprehensive Housing Strategy.

	Direction #3
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt a minimum target of 50 per cent of medium and high density units combined within the Designated Greenfield Area of each Local Municipality.
Financial Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None. This will be undertaken as part of the yearly monitoring of housing.
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance from the Local Municipalities in monitoring the targets.

Since then, the Housing Model has been updated on annual basis to identify the yearly demand for assisted and affordable housing within Halton. Work in establishing policies to meet the housing demands of Halton's residents continued through the "*Housing Directions*" background report to Sustainable Halton where preliminary assisted, affordable and market housing targets were identified. A series of housing policy options were also identified that could take Halton from its current form of development to one that creates more complete, healthy, and sustainable communities. Work is continuing through the preparation of a Joint Municipal Housing Statement, in collaboration with the Local Municipalities, that will provide a better understanding of the housing needs of Halton's residents and identify additional policies to address these needs.

Based on the additional work that has been prepared through the Sustainable Halton process, we have determined that the goal for affordable housing can be met with a housing mix that contains at least 50 per cent of medium and high density housing. As a result, we are proposing to include a minimum housing target for medium and high density units, combined, within the designated greenfiled area of each Municipality. The minimum target of 50 percent medium and high density units, combined, will assist the Region in moving towards more complete, healthy and sustainable communities that provide Halton's residents with a greater choice of housing units, including affordable housing. We are proposing to monitor the housing mix target on an annual basis and to report on our findings to Council through the Annual Housing Report. The target of 50 per cent medium and high density housing combined exceeds the Region's previous housing targets where medium and high density housing combined accounted for 45 per cent of the housing target (medium 25 per cent and high density 20 per cent) and low density housing accounted for the remaining 55 per cent (*Housing Directions*).

6.4 *Seamless, Accessible and Affordable Transit*

The Provincial Growth Plan identifies public transit as a first priority for transportation planning and major transportation investments, and sets out criteria on which to base all transit planning and investment decisions that include placing priority on improving

linkages from nearby neighbourhoods to urban growth centres, major transit areas and other intensification areas. The Growth Plan's focus on public transit reflects the Regional Official Plan's focus of encouraging the use of, and planning for public transit in Halton.

The provision of public transit is key to achieving the Region's vision of creating complete, healthy and sustainable communities. Public transit should provide a seamless, accessible and affordable alternative to using the auto for Halton's residents to meet a large percentage of their daily trips. The transit systems within the Region should also provide quick convenient access to inter-regional transit stations (e.g. GO buses and trains) so that residents can travel on public transit quickly throughout the Greater Toronto Area.

From the Sustainable Halton background report, *Effect of Demographic Change on Halton Region*, we know that the demand for public transit and special transit services, such as kneeling buses and buses for the disabled, will increase as Halton's population continues to age. The Region's Elder Service Advisory Committee (ESAC) has called for the different levels of government to ensure the availability of affordable public transportation alternatives for seniors as they make the transition from driving to using public transportation.

In the Fall of 2007, the Elder Services Advisory Committee forwarded Report SS-60-07 to the Sustainable Halton Inter-Municipal Liaison Committee recommending the establishment "of a locus of authority and leadership for undertaking region-wide planning for public transit that is fully aligned with the Region's strategic planning initiatives for developing complete communities within the context of its provincial growth targets through 2031".

	Direction #4
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit to the provision of, and seek sustained funding for, a seamless, convenient and affordable (to users) public transportation system that has a level of service in terms of travel time comparable to that of driving one's car.
Financial Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consultant may be required to assist staff identify appropriate standards and how they may be achieved.
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance from the Local Municipalities in identifying appropriate transit standards and securing sustainable funding for transit from other level of government.

We are proposing to promote standards for transit that would make it a viable alternative to using an auto, convenient to access, and affordable to users. We are also proposing that the Region and Local Municipalities seek secure, sustainable, and predictable funding for transit from the Provincial and Federal Governments.

6.5 Community Design

Community design is essential to creating complete healthy communities in Halton. The Health Department's recent paper, *"Creating Walkable and Transit-Supportive Communities in Halton"*, undertakes a review of health and planning literature and best

practices to identify how communities in Halton can be more walkable and transit-supportive in the future.

The paper identifies numerous benefits associated with a “walkable” community including improved air quality, reductions in greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change, increases in physical activity among residents, and improvements in human health. Density and mixed uses are identified as key

	Direction # 5
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, in collaboration with the Local Municipalities, a set of community design criteria that would promote walking/cycling and support transit services in all new residential neighbourhoods and employment areas.
Financial Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input from the Local Municipalities in developing the design guidelines.

elements of the built environment that make walking and cycling viable options by ensuring there are places to walk and cycle to. The focus of the paper is on how to “design” aspects of the built environment that actually encourage walking and cycling. Key features of design are discussed including street layout, pedestrian connectivity, bicycling connectivity, and the pedestrian and cycling environment. It identifies ten parameters for consideration through the Official Plan process to support the development of walkable and transit friendly communities. Some of these parameters are currently captured in the Region’s Official Plan such as the requirement that all new urban development consider in its design the provision of pedestrian walkways, cycling paths and access to public transit services within a walking distance of 400 metres. We are proposing, in collaboration with the Local Municipalities, to consider preparing community design criteria based on the parameters identified in the Health Department’s paper.

6.6 Community Infrastructure

The Growth Plan calls for an appropriate amount of community infrastructure to be planned to meet the needs of residents and to foster complete communities. It defines community infrastructure as, *“lands, buildings and structures that support the quality of life for people and communities by providing public services for health, education, recreation, socio-cultural activities, security and safety, and affordable housing.”*

The Region’s Official Plan recognizes that the provision of human services requires the involvement of other levels of government, public agencies and the private and voluntary sectors. It’s an objective of the Official Plan to

	Direction #6
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require Secondary Plans to include a Community Infrastructure Plan with a strategy for its implementation.
Financial Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input from residents, the Local Municipalities and public service providers.

identify and support, in co-ordination with the Province and voluntary agencies, a range of services that will enhance the social functioning of Halton’s residents.

Policies in the Social Support Services section of the Regional Official Plan call for the Region to, among other things, prepare and adopt regularly, in co-operation with other social service planning organizations, strategic plans to coordinate and implement service delivery programs for a range of services. To meet the needs of Halton’s residents, we are proposing to require secondary plans to include a community infrastructure plan, along with a corresponding implementation plan. Details of such a plan will be the subject of consultation with the public, agencies and stakeholders.

6.7 Health-Based Guidelines

The Health Department’s recent paper, *Protecting Health: Air Quality and Land Use Compatibility* was undertaken to inform the Sustainable Halton and the Official Plan review processes. The paper draws the link between air quality and human health, citing the Ontario Medical Association that estimates that in 2005 air pollution contributed to approximately 190 premature deaths, 540 hospital admissions, 2010 emergency room visits and one million minor illness days in Halton Region.

It also reviews policy approaches to incompatible land uses, including the policies within the Regional and Local Official Plans. The Region’s current Official Plan policies are primarily focused on protecting agricultural

	Direction #7
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the introduction of guidelines to address land use compatibility and localized air pollution concerns.
Financial Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input from the Health Department, Local Municipalities, and Province in developing the guidelines.

and aggregate land uses from incompatible uses and addressing land uses that are sensitive to noise and vibration. As noted in the Health Department’s report, in 1995 the Ministry of Environment released a series of guidelines related to land use compatibility, including D-1 *Land Use Compatibility* and D-6, *Compatibility Between Industrial Facilities and Sensitive Land Uses*. The Health report raises a number of concerns over these guidelines – e.g. traffic corridors are not addressed in the D-1 and D-6 guidelines; there is no guidance on what should be included in a study to justify use of minimum distance separation; and the controls are only implemented after land use planning decisions are made. It recommends seven parameters that the Sustainable Halton process and Official Plan review should consider in protecting human health, including the development of “made-in-Halton” Incompatible Land Use Guidelines. As part of the Official Plan review, we are proposing to consider the introduction of health-based guidelines for distance separation between non-compatible land uses.

7 Protecting and Enhancing What is Valuable to Us

7.1 Natural Heritage System

The current Official Plan uses a “features based” approach to identify and protect the Region’s natural areas although Section 115 provides for a “system” approach. While the Regional Official Plan policies have been designed to protect natural areas, experience has shown that the Region’s “features based” approach has resulted in the loss of isolated natural features because they were not able to withstand the impacts of development over time. To reduce the risk of species loss and ensure that Halton’s natural areas are protected for our generation and future generations, we are proposing to implement a “science-based” approach to identifying the Natural Heritage System. Key features of the proposed natural heritage system, as recommended by Sustainable Halton studies, include Greenlands “A” and “B”, as identified in the Regional Official Plan, candidate significant woodlands and the natural heritage system defined as part of the Province’s Greenbelt Plan. Through this approach we are proposing to increase the size of existing core areas and create Regional centres for biodiversity. The centres for biodiversity would be 200 hectares or larger and are intended to provide the conditions necessary for the long term sustainability of regional biodiversity. Linkages will be identified that facilitate the movement of species among isolated features. Regional linkages may be up to 300 metres in width, with the width of the “face” of the features used to determine the width of local linkages. The buffer width provided around a natural feature will depend upon the feature that is being protected.

The natural heritage system in the Greenbelt Plan comprises a large part of the Region’s proposed natural heritage system. The implementation framework for the proposed natural heritage system is consistent with the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System. The proposed “science-based” natural heritage

	Direction #8
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace the current Greenlands System with a Natural Heritage System that is science-based and sustainable to the impact of surrounding urban development.
Financial Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input from the Ecological and Environmental Advisory Committee, Conservation Authorities, Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Local Municipalities.

system also recognizes that agricultural landscapes impose fewer impacts on the natural environment than urban development. Farming activities may continue in the buffer and linkage areas. The boundaries of the natural heritage system will be refined as part of further studies such as subwatershed studies, secondary plans or master servicing plans having regard to the overall function of the natural heritage system at the landscape level.

7.2 Ensuring a Viable Agricultural Industry

Through the Sustainable Halton process, the Region's consultant, Planscape Ltd., prepared three reports that reviewed the state of agriculture in Halton. The first report, *Agricultural Countryside Vision*, confirmed that most of the agricultural area in the Primary Study Area for Sustainable Halton has Class 1 capability for agriculture. It also identified a strong agricultural sector in both the Greenbelt and the Primary Study Area as being integral to Halton's established goals of maintaining landform permanence and sustainability. The Sustainable Halton background report on *Food Security* also called for a continued agricultural presence in the Region so that Halton's residents have access to a local food system.

The second report, 3.03 *An Agricultural Evaluation*, identified the characteristics of agriculture in Halton, examined the nature of Halton's agricultural resources, concluded that the entire Primary Study Area is prime agricultural lands and addressed the implications of the proposed aggregate and natural heritage system policies on agriculture. One of the key conclusions reached in this study is that Halton continues to have a strong and productive agricultural sector, but that the uncertainty over the future of agriculture in Halton is having an impact on commodity profiles and agriculture's long term viability.

The third and final report, 3.04 *Agricultural Countryside Strategy*, addressed the issue of maintaining a viable agricultural sector in Halton by identifying tools to support agricultural sustainability and viability. While the Region has a longstanding commitment to maintaining an agricultural presence and industry, the policies in the Regional Official Plan, for the most part, focus on restricting uses in the rural system as an approach to preserving agriculture in the Region. Through discussions with the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and residents, we know that simply preserving lands for agriculture is not sufficient to ensure a viable and sustained agricultural presence in Halton. The Region must now look to implementing the recommendations identified in *Agricultural Countryside Strategy* that will assist Halton's farming community in maintaining a viable agricultural industry over the long term.

A key recommendation of the third report is the implementation of an agricultural strategy that contains a series of initiatives and programs to support agriculture in Halton. The list is extensive and includes, among other things, an economic development policy that is specific to agriculture; the use of tax policies to support agriculture; and an agricultural facilitator to assist the agricultural sector in conducting

	Direction #9
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to supporting the agricultural industry in Halton by investing in programs and infrastructure that would improve the viability, sustainability and profitability of farming in rural areas of Halton.
Financial Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of the agricultural strategy will require financial commitment from the Local and Regional levels.
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with and input from the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee and Local Farmers on the implementation of the strategy tools.

business and providing support for new farmers. We are proposing to implement the agricultural strategy identified through the Sustainable Halton process to ensure a viable, profitable and sustainable farming industry in Halton.

7.3 Protecting Archaeological Resources

Halton is among the leaders in the preservation of archaeological sites and artifacts. In 1998, the Region prepared an Archaeological Master Plan that provided an inventory of registered and unregistered archaeological sites, developed an “archaeological site potential model” to help identify possible sites of archaeological interest, and recommended a strategy for protecting known and unknown potential archaeological sites. The Region’s current Official Plan policies on cultural heritage were also developed through the Archaeological Master Plan.

Since the preparation of the Archaeological Master Plan, there have been several legislative and policy changes that affect the way archaeological resources are managed. For example, the Provincial Policy Statement (2005) only permits development or site alteration on lands containing

	Direction #10
Suggested Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require a comprehensive review of Halton’s Archaeological Master Plan every five years and establish a protocol for consulting with First Nations.
Financial Implications	Part of the cost of doing the five year Official Plan review.
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake these Directions in consultation with the Local Municipalities, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, Conservation Authorities and First Nations.

archaeological resources (or areas of archaeological potential) if the resources have been removed and documented, or preserved on site. *The Planning Act* now requires an archaeological assessment to be completed and submitted with an application for

the approval of a plan of subdivision. Also, under *The Planning Act*, municipalities may now pass a zoning by-law “for prohibiting any use of land and the erecting, locating or using of any class or classes of buildings or structures on land that is the site of a significant archaeological resource.” In addition to these and other policy changes, there have been a number of court cases and issues involving First Nations (e.g. Ipperwash) that brought the need to consult with First Nations on archaeological matters to the forefront.

Through the Sustainable Halton process, the Region undertook an update of the Archaeological Master Plan which made a number of specific recommendations to strengthen the Region’s role in protecting Archaeological resources, and identified the need for the Region to consult with First Nations on Aboriginal archaeological matters. These recommendations form the basis for our proposed changes to the archaeological policies of the Region’s Official Plan.

It should be noted that the map showing the location of archaeological sites and potential sites throughout Halton is not included in the Archaeological Master Plan to preserve the integrity of these sites and the artifacts they may contain. Any member of the public may view these maps by making arrangements with staff from the Region of Halton Legislative and Planning Services Department.

8 Developing an Aggregate Strategy

The current aggregate policies within the Regional Official Plan were updated as part of Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 25 (ROPA 25) in accordance with the 1997 Provincial Policy Statement. Through the last Official Plan update, ROPA 25, the Region built upon its aggregate policy framework by, among other things, directing new or expanded extraction areas to locate in the Escarpment Rural designation in the Niagara Escarpment plan area and the Agricultural Rural Area designation, identifying the need to protect aggregate resources, and requiring the review of development applications within certain limits of aggregate operations within close proximity to known aggregate operation and areas where aggregate resources are known to exist. With the release of the Provincial Policy Statement (2005) and the Greenbelt Plan, the Region must now amend its Official Plan to conform with the updated aggregate policies within these documents. This is being accomplished through the preparation of a comprehensive aggregate resources strategy that is designed to provide the basis for an updated policy framework. The Strategy is being developed in consultation with Local and Regional staff, Provincial Ministry staff, members of the aggregate industry, local environment stewardship organizations and other key stakeholders.

The Region's current approval processes for licence applications are time consuming and often result in Ontario Municipal Board hearings. Through the aggregate strategy, the Region is proposing to update its processes for approving new or expanding existing resource use areas by taking a more proactive approach in identifying its expectations of where extraction should occur and

	Direction #11
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a schedule showing the Mineral Aggregate Resource Areas within Halton based on the latest mapping available from the Province, as modified by pre-emptive constraints and, policies that would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Protect the integrity of the Natural Heritage System from quarry operations; b) Require regular updates of the rehabilitation plans of existing and new quarries; c) Require regular on-going monitoring of impact of quarry operation on the natural and built environments.
Financial Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the Aggregate Strategy in consultation with key stakeholders.

under what conditions. The draft aggregate strategy identifies numerous directions for policy changes in the Regional Official Plan that address, among other things, mapping of resources, the environment, haul routes and materials required to be submitted with an application. We are recommending that the findings and conclusions in the paper, *3.05 Aggregate Resource Management in the Region of Halton, Part 2 – Establishing A Policy Framework* be the basis for establishing potential new Official Plan policies. However, it is also recognized that the policy framework developed in response to the work completed to date will require additional consultation and consideration and, as a result, the directions proposed to date may be enhanced or modified.

9 Strategic Employment Areas

The Growth Plan requires municipalities to ensure that there is an availability of sufficient employment land to accommodate forecasted growth to support the Greater Golden Horseshoe's economic competitiveness.

The submissions received on Sustainable Halton from the Local Municipalities, private sector and the public, identified the need to protect and provide a variety of strategically located employment lands beyond the 2031 timeframe of the Growth Plan. In the joint submission on the “*Planning for Employment in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Background Paper. May 2008*” (PPW07-08), the Region and Local Municipalities called on the Province to allow the Region to designate a reserve of future employment lands beyond the maximum 20-year planning horizon and to identify, conceptually, strategically located employment lands on a schedule within the Regional Official Plan. As a Direction, we are proposing to identify strategically located employment lands beyond 2031 by

	Direction #12
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a schedule showing strategic employment areas intended for development beyond the planning horizon of 2031, with the provision that such areas may be brought into the Urban Areas by Amendment through a justification study without the need for a Comprehensive Review.
Financial Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the policy framework to protect strategically located lands in collaboration with the Local Municipalities.

showing their location on a schedule to the Official Plan. We are also proposing that these lands may be brought into the urban areas through a “justification study” and not a comprehensive review, as required by the Growth Plan.

10 Moving to Greener Energies and Technologies

The Sustainable Halton technical background report, *Energy Demand and Supply*, discussed how a growing portion of the Region’s future electricity needs are expected to be provided by generation that occurs at the point of use (i.e. co-generation, photovoltaics). Benefits of point source generation include increased efficiency, the reduction or elimination for expanded transmission and distribution facilities, and a reduction on the reliance on burning fossil fuels and impacts to our health from the emissions. The *Energy Demand and Supply* report also discussed how, through land use planning and other processes, the Region can significantly influence energy use by moving to higher density housing where more than half of housing units are attached or apartments, would lower heating energy use in a community by about 29% relative to current densities. Implementing the density and intensification targets of the Growth Plan will assist the Region in creating higher density communities, and deriving the energy saving benefits.

Municipalities in Ontario have begun to address and encourage newer and greener energy generation. Through its recent Official Plan review, the City of Burlington has included policies that encourage proposals for new innovative methods of energy generation including wind power generating towers. Lambton Shores (along Lake Huron) has put in place policies to permit small scale wind conversion systems (less

than 500 Kv) and commercial wind conversions systems (in excess of 500 Kv) to take advantage of their strategic locations.

Halton will continue to receive inquiries concerning the possible locations for gas, and newer and greener energy generating technologies such as solar farms. While the Regional Official Plan recommends investigating alternative energy generation methods that would minimize impact on the environment, it lacks the policy framework to address key issues surrounding the growth of these newer technologies including the mitigation of impacts on nearby land uses.

The discussion of greener energies and technologies is timely given the Province’s proposed *Green Energy Act* that is looking to make it easier to bring renewable energy projects to life and foster a culture of conservation. There is concern with the Act given that it exempts renewable energy facilities and projects from a number of planning controls under the Planning Act including official plans, zoning by-laws and demolition control. We are proposing to consider new policies in the Official Plan that will address the land use implications of emerging green energy and related uses.

	Direction #13
Suggested Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider new policies to address the land use implications of emerging green energy and related uses.
Financial Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Community Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input from our residents, the Local Municipalities, newer and greener energy producers and public agencies.

11 “Housekeeping” Items

This Directions Report also identifies a number of “housekeeping” items that have been raised through planning applications received by the Region and in Regional staff’s discussions with the Local Municipalities and other public agencies. Included in the list of housekeeping items are:

a) Harmonization of the Greenbelt Plan and Parkway Belt West Plan

There are a number of areas within Halton where the Greenbelt Plan and the Parkway Belt Plans now overlap. The Official Plan review will look to harmonize the policies of the two Provincial Plans, especially given the fact that the Parkway Belt West Plan serves primarily as an infrastructure corridor (e.g. Hwy 407). This role of the Parkway Belt West Plan is already recognized through the Parkway Belt Area designation of the Regional Official Plan

b) Wellhead Protection Zones

Section 145 of the Regional Official Plan addresses the protection of wellhead zones. Figure A3, in Part VII (Appendix) of the Regional Plan shows the Municipal Wellhead Protection Zones within the Region. As Part VII, Appendix ix does not constitute part of

the Official Plan, staff will consider the inclusion of Figure A3, along with the Tables A3 (Land Use Groups by Risk to Groundwater Quality) and Table A4 (Land Use Prohibitions and Restrictions within Municipal Wellhead Protection Zones) within the operative part of the Official Plan and review the wellhead protection policies with a view to strengthening them.

c) Lot Line Adjustments

The interpretation and application of the Region's Official Plan policies regarding the re-configuration of lot lines has given rise to a number of situations not anticipated by the policy. For example, a residential parcel have been enlarged through the adjustment of a lot line with the additional land taken from an adjoining farm parcel. This was not the intent of the Region's policy (66(2)). Furthermore, the Provincial Policy Statement (2005) only allows for the lot adjustments in prime agricultural areas for legal or technical reasons, which is defined as "severances for purposes such as easements, corrections of deeds, quit claims, and minor boundary adjustments which do not result in the creation of a new lot." Staff will undertake a review of Policy 66(2) to ensure that it is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement (2005).

d) Landscape Contractors

The Region, in collaboration with the Local Municipalities, has initiated a study of the horticultural trades sector and similar land uses in the rural areas. While such industries provide many economic benefits, the growth of these uses in the rural areas has created a number of challenges and issues for both the Region and Local Municipalities. The current study is to identify Regional policy(ies) that will provide clear direction on how these uses are defined/classified, and where they should be located, and establish conditions or criteria for these businesses along with the tools that can be used to address any potential impacts.

e) Road Design and Transit Infrastructure in Intensification Areas

With the focus of the Growth Plan and Sustainable Halton on intensification in urban growth centres, intensification centres and major transit station areas, the Official Plan review will look to identify policies that encourage road designs and transit infrastructure within these areas that is supportive of transit use and complementary to the design of the community.

f) Extending Urban Services to Public Facilities Outside the Urban Area

The Region has received requests to extend urban services (water and wastewater services) to public facilities outside the urban area. Currently, the Official Plan only permits urban services within urban areas, unless permitted by special policies of the Plan (89(1)). As a result, public facilities seeking urban services are required to go through an Official Plan amendment. We are proposing to review such policy to better serve public interests.

12 Next Steps

The Directions and “Housekeeping” Items identified in this report will be discussed at the upcoming Public Information Centres on Sustainable Halton and the Official Plan review that are slated for April and May of 2009. The dates and locations of the Public Information Centres will be listed on the Regions web site at www.Halton.ca. Following discussions with the public, other public agencies and the private sector, Regional Planning staff will look to finalize the Official Plan Directions. It should be noted that additional Directions or “Housekeeping” Items may be identified through these discussions as well as during the summer through dialogue with agencies and stakeholders. The Final Directions report will identify the specific changes that Regional Planning staff are proposing to make to the Official Plan. It is anticipated that the Final Directions report will be presented to Regional Council at its meeting of June 24th, 2009.

Throughout the summer Regional staff will work to prepare ROPA 38 that will ultimately consolidate all proposed changes to the Official Plan for public consultation in the Fall of 2009 and Regional Council’s adoption by year’s end.

Appendix

Background Reports Prepared for Sustainable Halton Phases One to Three

Sustainable Halton Phase One Background Reports:

1. Aggregate Resources Strategy
2. Agricultural Countryside Vision
3. Climate Change
4. Energy Demand and Supply
5. Options for a Natural Heritage System in Halton
6. Water and Waste Water Infrastructure
7. Archaeological Resources
8. Air Quality, Human Health and the Built Environment
9. Community Food Security
10. Healthy Communities Principles
11. Human Services
12. Physical Activity and the Built Environment
13. Housing Directions
14. Land Supply Analysis
15. Regional Land Analysis
16. Urban Structure: Potential Long-Term Growth Areas
17. Towards and Intensification Strategy for Halton Region
18. Explaining Density
19. Effect of Demographic Change on Halton Region
20. Transportation Infrastructure
21. Waste Management Facilities
22. Communications and Consultations Plans

Sustainable Halton Phase Two Background Reports:

1. Evaluation Framework
2. Sustainable Halton Working Paper #1: Locating New Urban Land
3. Phase 2 Consultation Report: September 2007 to June 2008

Sustainable Halton Phase Three Background Reports:

1. 3.01 Response Document: Staff Analysis of Comments Received on Sustainable Halton Phase 2 Work, June 11, 2008 to March 20, 2009
2. 3.02 Natural Heritage System Definition and Implementation
3. 3.03 An Agricultural Evaluation
4. 3.04 Agricultural Countryside Strategy
5. 3.05 Aggregate Resource Management in the Region of Halton, Part 2 – Establishing a Policy Framework
6. 3.06 Master Plan of Archaeological Resources of the Regional Municipality of Halton, 2008 Update
7. 3.07 Accommodating Growth to 2031
8. 3.08 Working Paper #2: Concepts for Addressing Halton Region's Land Needs to 2031
9. 3.09 Summary of Evaluation of Growth Concepts
10. 3.10 Working Paper #3: Options Under the Preferred Concept
11. 3.11 Connecting Sustainability in Halton Region ...From Policy to Practice
12. 3.12 Transportation Servicing

13. 3.13 Water and Wastewater Servicing
14. Proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment 37: An Amendment to Incorporate the Basic Requirements of the Places to Grow Plan
15. Region of Halton 2009 Official Plan Review Directions Report: Towards Sustainability