

**Region of Waterloo**  
**Planning, Development and Legislative Services**  
**Community Planning**

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**To:** Chair Galloway and Members of the Planning and Works Committee

**Meeting Date:** June 29, 2022

**Report Title:** Draft Regional Official Plan Amendment (Growth-Related Component of ROP Review)

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**1. Recommendation:**

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo take the following actions with respect to the proposed draft amendment to the Regional Official Plan (ROP) described in Report PDL-CPL-22-21, dated June 29, 2022:

- a) Direct staff to update the draft ROP amendment to reflect Council's decision regarding the findings and recommended approach to growth set out in the Land Needs Assessment described in Report PDL-CPL-22-20, dated June 29, 2022; and
- b) Direct staff to engage the community and stakeholders to obtain feedback on the updated draft ROP amendment, and schedule a statutory Open House and Public Meeting on July 19 and 27, 2022 respectively.

**2. Purpose / Issue:**

This report presents a draft of an amendment to the Regional Official Plan (ROP) for public review and engagement. The proposed amendment would establish the planning framework for accommodating the Region's forecasted population and employment growth to 2051, in accordance with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The draft amendment shown in Attachment 'A' is a working draft intended to be updated following Council's consideration and direction on Report PDL-CPL-22-20, dated June 29, 2022, regarding the draft Land Needs Assessment (LNA). A summary of the key policy changes proposed through the draft ROP amendment and the next steps for community engagement is provided below.

### 3. **Strategic Plan:**

The proposed ROP amendment directly supports several focus areas of the Region's Corporate Strategic Plan, including: Thriving Economy; Sustainable Transportation; Environment and Climate Action; Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities; and Responsive and Engaging Public Service.

### 4. **Key Considerations:**

- a) **The ROP establishes the framework for guiding Waterloo Region's long-term growth and development in keeping with the vision for an equitable, thriving and sustainable community.**

The ROP is the principal planning document for shaping where and how Waterloo Region will grow and develop in the future. Since 1976, it has guided Council's strategic decisions on a range of planning priorities, including the development of the ION light rail transit system; the protection of our valuable agricultural lands, groundwater resources, and natural environment; and the maintenance of our high quality of life for all residents. The ROP will also play an increasingly stronger role in tackling climate change through land use policies that support energy conservation, a more compact built form, and other climate initiatives.

- b) **The Region must update the ROP to plan for and accommodate significant population and employment growth to 2051.**

Under the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan), the Region must update the ROP to accommodate a forecasted population of 923,000 people and 470,000 jobs by 2051. This represents growth of approximately 306,000 people (50%) and 168,000 jobs (56%) between 2021 and 2051. The proposed ROP amendment would update the Region's planning framework for guiding and accommodating this growth in a manner that supports the vision for creating an equitable, thriving, and sustainable regional community.

- c) **The draft ROP amendment reflects a significant amount of input to date from the community, including Indigenous peoples, local residents, area municipalities, and other key stakeholders.**

The public engagement strategy sought to engage as many residents and stakeholders as possible using a variety of tools and approaches. The overall goal was to connect with people early and continuously throughout the project, and provide the necessary information to ensure the informed involvement of the community.

Over the past two years, we received several hundred emails, phone calls and written submissions reflecting a broad range of comments. The project's Engage WR Website also received over 27,000 page visits, and about 800 responses to 12

online surveys. Staff also obtained valuable input through social media, virtual and in-person public information meetings and webinars, and individual meetings. This extensive level of engagement was accomplished while overcoming the challenges posed by COVID-19.

**d) The draft ROP amendment represents a working draft intended to be updated following Council's consideration of the draft Land Needs Assessment (LNA).**

The draft ROP amendment still contains some gaps or placeholders (e.g., intensification targets, density targets for greenfield communities, and area municipal allocations of population and job growth) that will be filled in following Council's consideration of and direction on a recommended approach to growth in the draft LNA (see report PDL-CPL-22-20). Completing the LNA is an integral step in the project to establish minimum intensification and density targets in the ROP, and to determine the need for any urban boundary expansions to accommodate urban growth to 2051.

Subject to Council's consideration of the LNA, staff will prepare an updated draft of the amendment to reflect Council's direction on a recommended approach to growth, and then initiate a further round of public engagement in accordance with statutory requirements (see Next Steps section below). This engagement process will culminate in a final proposed ROP amendment presented for Council's consideration and adoption targeted for August 18, 2022.

**e) The draft ROP amendment proposes policy changes in several important areas.**

Highlights of the key policy innovations proposed through the draft ROP amendment include:

**Indigenous Relationships and Reconciliation**

- Adding a new Territorial Land Acknowledgment in Chapter 1 to recognize the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories.
- Introducing objectives for integrating and respecting Indigenous values, history and cultures in planning for growth and change through respect, trust, and meaningful dialogue.
- Recognizing the significance of the Grand River, groundwater, local landscapes, natural features and biodiversity, and the importance of ecosystem health and opportunities for people to connect with nature.

### **Equity and Inclusion**

- Adding objectives to plan in a manner that improves social equity and overall quality of life, including human health, for people of all ages, abilities and incomes.
- Introducing policies to improve accessibility for persons of all ages and abilities, and at all times of year by addressing land use barriers that restrict their full participation in society.

### **Growth Management**

- Promoting an intensification first approach to development and community-building to make better use of existing land and infrastructure in our cities and townships.
- Delineating a new hierarchy of urban areas, and of supporting nodes and corridors within them, to provide clearer direction on where and how the region will grow in the future.
- Introducing a new Regional Intensification Corridor along the entire length of Ottawa Street in Kitchener to Fountain Street in Woolwich, to provide transit services to the East Side Employment Lands and direction transit connection Waterloo Regional International Airport.
- Setting new minimum targets in the ROP for residential intensification, and development densities within Urban Growth Centres, Major Transit Station Areas, and Employment Areas to support a more compact, transit-supportive built form.
- Fostering the development of a high-quality urban form to create an attractive and vibrant public realm.
- Phasing growth, infrastructure and other community services to support sustainable growth and financial responsibility.

### **Climate Action**

- Requiring the development of 15-minute neighbourhoods in the cities and townships where residents can meet their daily needs for living short by a short trip from home by walking, cycling, and rolling.
- Supporting mobility networks that prioritize walking, cycling and rolling over automobile travel to reduce auto-dependency, support active transportation, and reduce greenhouse emissions.
- Facilitating urban agriculture and a thriving food system to increase peoples'

access to healthy, local, and affordable food options in neighbourhoods.

- Providing direction to the area municipalities to create new Green Development Standards to support energy efficiency and net-zero operational buildings.
- Requiring green infrastructure and low impact development to better manage stormwater runoff and reduce flooding.
- Planning for more resilient communities and infrastructure that are adaptive to the impacts of a changing climate.
- Requiring large-scale development proposals to submit Neighbourhood Energy Plans to reduce energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Affordable and “Missing Middle” Housing**

- Setting an overall target of a minimum of 30 percent of new ownership and rental housing being affordable to low- and moderate-income households.
- Providing for a diverse range and mix of housing options to accommodate people at all stages of life, and meet the needs of all household sizes and incomes.
- Enabling the area municipalities to implement Inclusionary Zoning in Major Transit Station Areas to increase the supply of affordable housing close to transit services.
- Permitting “neighbourhood missing middle housing”, including additional units, on a residential lot within the Urban Area and Township Urban Areas.
- Permitting “mid-rise missing middle housing” in Regional Intensification Corridors, and in Local Centres and Corridors.
- Protecting the conversion of the existing stock of affordable rental housing to condominiums.

### **Economic Prosperity**

- Ensuring that each area municipality has an adequate supply of employment lands to support job growth and local economic development.
- Establishing a new Employment Areas designation to provide greater long-term protection of employment lands.
- Facilitating the intensification of lands for employment uses to support a more compact built form.

- Supporting existing office parks to improve connectivity with transit and mobility networks for walking, cycling, and rolling.

**f) The draft ROP amendment represents a major project milestone, and marks the beginning of the next round of public engagement on the ROP review.**

Subject to Council's direction, staff will update the draft ROP amendment and seek public input on it through a second round of engagement. This process will include two upcoming virtual, or in-person, public information sessions, and a statutory Open House and Public Meeting. Staff will assess what we heard at these sessions and compile the final recommended draft of the ROP amendment, anticipated for Council's consideration and adoption on August 18, 2022.

Beginning this September, staff will then focus on the second phase of the ROP review. That phase will update the balance of the ROP policies (e.g., agriculture, natural heritage, cultural heritage resources, infrastructure and other policy areas) to align with Provincial policy. Staff will provide a report on the status of and work plan for the second proposed ROP amendment in the fall of 2022.

## **5. Background:**

The ROP establishes the long-term framework for where and how Waterloo Region will grow and develop in the future. Since 1976, it has guided strategic decisions for profound transformation of this region, including the development of the ION light rail transit system, the protection of agricultural lands, groundwater resources and natural environment, and the maintenance of our high quality of life for all residents.

Under the Planning Act, the Region must review and update the ROP every five to ten years to align with any changes in Provincial planning policy. Since the approval of the current ROP in 2015, there have been significant updates to Provincial plans and policies, including the Provincial Policy Statement in 2020, the Growth Plan for the Golden Horseshoe in 2017, 2019 and 2020, and several other legislative changes.

In response to these changes, in 2019 the Region initiated a process to review the ROP in two phases. The first phase, which is now nearing completion, involved a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) to plan for the Region's forecasted growth to 2051 in accordance with the Provincial Growth Plan. Key components of the MCR process included: a detailed review of the Region's population and employment forecasts; a thorough Land Needs Assessment that considered three potential growth options; and an extensive public engagement process to obtain input from the community and key stakeholders. The draft ROP amendment outlined in this report represents a major project milestone, and marks the beginning of the next round of public engagement on the Region's recommended growth management framework to 2051.

Beginning this fall, the second phase of ROP review will update the balance of the

policies in the ROP (e.g., agriculture, natural heritage, cultural heritage resources, infrastructure and other policy areas) to ensure they align with the Growth Plan and Provincial Policy Statement. The results of this review will culminate in a second proposed ROP amendment targeted for 2023.

### **Background Research and Technical Studies**

The proposed ROP amendment contained in this report involved a significant amount of background research and technical studies, including:

- Regional Recharge Area Delineation Study (October 2019);
- Upper Cedar Creek Scoped Subwatershed Study (October 2019);
- Hydrogeological Assessment Strasburg Well Field (November 2019);
- Technical Approach to the Delineation of the Regional Recharge Area in the Regional Official Plan (November 2019);
- Long-Term Population and Housing Growth Analysis, 2051 (December 2020);
- Policy Direction Paper on Climate Change (January 2021);
- Employment Strategy Technical Brief (July 2021);
- Intensification Strategy Technical Brief (August 2021);
- Draft Land Needs Assessment Report (April 2022) and Addendum (June 2022)
- Greenhouse Gas Impact of Land-Use Scenarios on GHG Emissions (June 2022);
- Growth Option Infrastructure Review and Class D Cost Estimates (June 2022);
- Growth Evaluation Technical Brief (June 2022); and,
- Financial Analysis of the growth options and recommended approach to growth (June 2022).

### **Delineation of Boundaries for Major Transit Station Areas and Employment Areas**

At its meeting of April 21, 2021, Council endorsed the recommendations contained in Report PDL-CPL-21-17 to delineate the boundaries of the Region's 27 Major Transit Stations Areas, and to approve alternative density targets for the Laurier-Waterloo, Block Line, and Delta MTSAs. Council also endorsed the recommendations contained in Report PDL-CPL-21-16 to designate several important Employment Areas located throughout the cities and township in the ROP. The intent is to protect the conversion of lands within these Employment Areas to non-employment uses.

The draft ROP amendment incorporates the recommendations from these two reports. It also incorporates further minor boundary adjustments to certain MTSAs and Employment Areas requested by the area municipalities.

### **Alignment with Provincial Plans and Policies**

The draft amendment conforms with, or does not conflict with the Provincial Growth Plan, or the Greenbelt Plan, has regard for matters of Provincial interest under the

Planning Act, and is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

#### **6. Area Municipality Communication and Public/Stakeholder Engagement:**

Consultation and engagement with the various project committees, including the Steering Committee, Stakeholder Committee, Technical Team and Area Municipal Working Group, and with Indigenous peoples and the broader community, will continue throughout the ROP review. Staff will also continue to work collaboratively with each area municipality to work towards meeting Council's policy objectives, while also aligning with area municipal interests and objectives.

#### **7. Financial Implications:**

The Region's approved 2022 - 2031 Community Planning Capital Program includes a budget of \$756,000 in 2022 and \$3,250,000 in 2023-2031 for the Regional Official Plan Review (project 22007). The costs are to be funded from Development Charges (90%, \$3,605,000) and the Community Planning Capital Reserve (10%, \$401,000).

#### **8. Next Steps:**

Subject to Council's consideration of the recommendations in this report, staff will update the draft ROP amendment and seek public input on it through a second round of engagement. This process will include two virtual, or in person, public information meetings, and a statutory Open House and Public Meeting. Following these sessions, staff will assess the feedback received from the community and compile the final recommended draft of the ROP amendment, targeted for Council's consideration and adoption on August 18, 2022. The key dates in the process are shown below.

<b>July 6, 2022:</b>	Virtual Public Information Meeting
<b>July 13, 2022:</b>	In-Person Public Information Meeting
<b>July 14, 2022:</b>	Virtual Public Information Meeting
<b>July 19, 2022:</b>	In-Person Statutory Public Open House
<b>July 27, 2022:</b>	Virtual Statutory Public Meeting
<b>August 11, 2022:</b>	Recommendation report to Council on adoption of the final proposed ROP amendment
<b>August 18, 2022:</b>	Council consideration of final proposed ROP amendment



**9. Attachments / Links:**

**Attachment A:** [Draft ROP Amendment - Technical Document](#)

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