



Corporation of the Township of Brock

Staff Report to the Mayor and Members of Council

From: Debbie Vandenakker

Position: Planner

Title / Subject: 03.2021-PL Response to Regional Policy Directions Report from Envision Durham

Date of Report: August 31, 2021

Date of Meeting: September 13, 2021

Report No: 2021-PCA-023

1.0 Issue / Origin

The Region of Durham is undergoing a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) to update their Official Plan. The project timeline is as follows, and the project is currently in the “Direct” stage:

- **2018–Background Work**
- **2019–Initiating Engagement**
 - Discover Stage – Public engagement launch and release of Public Opinion Survey
 - Discuss Stage – Release of theme-based Discussion Papers
- **2020/2021–Direct Stage**
 - Initiate release of Growth Management Study consultants' reports
 - Release Proposed Policy Directions
 - Phase 1 of Land Needs Assessment
- **2022–Draft Stage**
 - Phase 2 of Land Needs Assessment (where applicable)
 - Statutory Public Meetings and Open Houses
 - Presenting a draft Plan to Regional Council for adoption
- **2022–Finalizing the Plan**
 - Submitting a final Plan to the Ministry for approval
 - New Official Plan

2.0 Background

On May 2, 2018, Regional staff received authorization to proceed with Envision Durham, the Municipal Comprehensive Review of the Region of Durham Official Plan. Envision Durham is an opportunity to

undertake a core review of the current regional Official Plan and establish a progressive and forward-looking planning vision for the Region up to 2051.

On February 5, 2019, the Region initiated the first stage (“Discover”) of the public engagement program for Envision Durham by launching a project web page and public opinion survey. With the release of the first of a series of discussion papers on March 5, 2019, Regional staff launched the second stage (“Discuss”) of the engagement program, where participants were asked to provide input on various themes presented through the discussion papers. Stage three (Direct) is now underway. The “Proposed Policy Directions” report was released in March 2021 and can be found in full here: <https://www.durham.ca/en/regional-government/resources/Documents/Council/Reports/2021-Committee-Reports/Planning-and-Economic-Development/2021-P-7.pdf>

3.0 Analysis

The report is a 277 page summary of virtually all of the policy directions that will be included in the updated Official Plan. Some sections are still underway and refer to on-going study and analysis, while other areas have firm policy directions noted. The review of this report was undertaken from the perspective of ensuring the policy directions impacting Brock Township specifically adequately address Brock’s needs.

Table 1: Summary of Feedback below provides specific feedback by report section for the Region’s consideration.

Table 1: Summary of Feedback

Page / Report Section	Comment
Page 15 – Prosperous Economy	The addition of the word “sustainable” to the goal of a prosperous economy will add the element of viability, continuity and longevity to the goal.
Page 16 – Economic Development Policies	#7 reads: “Support the establishment and expansion of innovation hubs within the region.” The suggestion is to differentiate between urban and rural hubs to clearly denote the differences in establishing and supporting innovation hubs in a rural area vs. an urban area. This will help area municipalities create specific policies to support their innovation hubs.
Page 17 – Economic Development Policies	Add a goal of recognizing and supporting the rural economic system in terms of the value brought to the Region as a whole from the protection of natural heritage systems; ecological value in general; agricultural value for food, fuel and tourism; natural capital; climate change mitigation value; and the balance that north Durham brings to the Region as a whole with these resources.
Page 26 – Proposed Direction: Climate Resilient Development	The addition of 1.e) naturalizing the urban landscape with native planting and naturalized areas as an element of urban design for stormwater management purposes, temperature reduction and human connection to the natural environment.

Page / Report Section	Comment
	This is a conscious move away from flat, paved, impermeable design that is typically seen in urban development.
Page 28 – Proposed Direction: Air Quality	Amend 1.c) to read “increasing the tree canopy and naturalizing/rewilding priority areas to mitigate dust”.
Page 29 – Proposed Direction: Tree Canopy	Add 1.d) increasing natural capital. Add 8. Encourage the creation of a Regional tree canopy restoration strategy with all area municipalities to participate in strategically planting on publicly owned lands.
Page 31 -Proposed Direction: Complete Communities	Add 5. Embed policies requiring inclusivity and diversity of cultures, religions, abilities and beliefs in the planning, design, creation and retrofitting of complete communities.
Page 32 - Proposed Policy Direction: Urban Agriculture	Add 3. Encourage area municipalities to create policies within property standards and other by-laws to allow urban agricultural practices on private property, including on front yards, where appropriate.
Page 36 - Proposed Direction: Downtowns	Insert 7.a) Encourage municipalities to identify the core values of their downtown areas to support clear policy development. As is stated in the report, various areas provide different functions. The policy directions right now are very historical and culturally preservationist, while there are areas that do not fit this definition or need. Clearly establishing the value to the larger community of these downtowns is a strategic place to begin the policy review at the area municipal level.
Page 62 and 75 – Vibrant Urban Systems	“Waterfront Places” occur within the Region on Lake Simcoe and Lake Scugog as well as Lake Ontario. Please amend to include the northern municipal areas.
Page 75 - Proposed Direction: Waterfront Places	Recognize the significant differences between Lake Ontario Waterfront places and the smaller areas on Lake Simcoe by creating a “Rural Waterfront Area” designation. These policy areas should reflect much lower growth targets and the rural character of the surrounding areas. Thorah Island is currently designated a “Waterfront Place” but does not have the infrastructure support needed to make this designation appropriate. It needs to be recognized as a unique feature/area with specific policy direction for Island development and preservation that includes tourism, transportation, servicing options, commercial / recreational development possibilities etc. Additional and specific policy direction is asked for Thorah Island.
Page 85 - Policy Directions: Employment Areas	Recognize in flexible policy the role and expectation of rural employment areas in the Regional Context. The flexibility needs to acknowledge the

Page / Report Section	Comment
	<p>significant differences in opportunity for rural employment areas vs. those in the south along major transportation routes. Local area municipal discretion for allowing population related employment should be included.</p> <p>Creative financial arrangements to facilitate rural employment lands pre-servicing need to be encouraged and provided for in policy.</p>
Page 89 – Proposed Direction: Land Use Compatibility	Add 4. Encourage the use of natural plantings as part of the buffer to separate sensitive uses. These plantings should serve to assist in overland run-off, vegetative connectivity, noise absorption, dust collection and visual barriers to incompatible or undesirable uses.
Page 94 – Proposed Direction: Settlement Area Boundary Expansion	Suggest allowing area municipalities an opportunity for any expansion request/discussions following the release of the Land Needs Assessment final document. Without the projections and analysis, area municipalities do not have sufficient information to determine if “need” can be demonstrated.
Page 96 – Proposed Direction: Secondary Plan Considerations	Suggest adding a requirement for consideration of climate resiliency, accessibility, inclusiveness and diversity in design, active transportation and affordable housing options in secondary plans.
Page 101 – Proposed Direction: Rural System	<p>Suggest amending 8. to allow area municipalities to use discretion in determining, based on scale and potential impact, if a zoning by-law amendment or a site plan approval process is most appropriate for supporting on-farm diversified uses. A guidance document should be prepared to support applicants for each option.</p> <p>The requirement of a zoning by-law amendment can be onerous for small operations with minor diversified use plans.</p>
Page 85. Proposed Direction: Environmental Noise	Consider adding policy wording that exempts small infill development (less than 3 residential units) from noise studies along Regional Roads in established neighbourhoods. This requirement is unnecessarily onerous given the scale of development and the current existence of the surrounding neighbourhood and road.

Generally speaking, the input seeks to request that as much differentiation as possible be recognized between the rural and urban areas in Durham Region to enable Brock to best achieve the regionally set goals and to recognize the realities of living, working and doing business in Brock Township.

An additional policy request is for the Region to deal more specifically with Thorah Island. Currently, it is designated as a “Waterfront Place” for people and recreation. This designation is problematic in terms of formal policy direction as it suggests more development possibilities than are currently supported. It is asked that additional policy direction and discussions occur between the Region and the Township to address the needs and future of Thorah Island.

4.0 Related Policies / Procedures

N/A

5.0 Financial / Budget Assessment

N/A

6.0 Climate Change Impacts

The policy directions do a very good job of recognizing and providing policies to encourage climate action. These recommendations will be used as a foundation in Brock's update to our Official Plan.

7.0 Communications

N/A

8.0 Conclusion

The Region of Durham has done a very thorough job providing policy directions for updating the Regional Official Plan (OP) and it is hoped that the additional feedback provided in this report is helpful and valuable in the resulting updated OP.

9.0 Recommendation

That the Committee of the Whole approve this report to be provided to Jonah Kelly Jonah.Kelly@Durham.ca of the Region of Durham as Brock's formal input on the "Proposed Policy Directions" paper released as part of Envision Durham.