



TOWN OF
HALTON HILLS
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REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Melissa Ricci, Senior Policy Planner

DATE: August 12, 2025

REPORT NO.: PD-2025-049

SUBJECT: Official Plan Review Phase 1 Update

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PD-2025-049, titled Official Plan Review Phase 1 Update, dated August 12, 2025, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT the update on the status and project timeline of the Town's Official Plan Review and the draft Background Report prepared by Sajecki Planning as a key deliverable for Phase 1, be received.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Town of Halton Hills, in collaboration with a consultant team led by Sajecki Planning, is undertaking the Official Plan Review (OPR) project to assess and update the Town's Official Plan.
- The new Official Plan will be developed through a five-phase workplan over the span of approximately two years.
- Phase 1, which entails setting the stage by launching the project and preparing the Background Report is nearing completion.
- This report presents a summary of the deliverables completed as part of Phase 1, the initial feedback that has been received, and the next steps as the project proceeds into Phase 2.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

The Town’s Official Plan is a legislated and overarching municipal planning document that establishes policies for how land in Halton Hills should be used, based on a minimum twenty-year planning horizon. It is a forward-looking document that describes the community’s vision and goals for development, and establishes directions for municipal decision-making, including:

- a growth strategy;
- land use designations and policies for permitted uses;
- infrastructure and road requirements;
- built form and design requirements; and
- policies for the protection of the Town’s natural and cultural resources

Under Section 26 of the *Planning Act*, municipalities are required to update their Official Plans on a regular basis to reflect changing provincial legislation and policy. With the last review of the Official Plan occurring in 2010, the current Official Plan Review project represents an opportunity to revisit the vision and policies of the Official Plan as the Town enters its next phase of community building to the year 2051. The updated Town of Halton Hills Official Plan (THHOP) is required by the *Planning Act* to conform with all Provincial policy and legislation including the Provincial Planning Statement (2024), Greenbelt Plan (2017), Niagara Escarpment Plan (2017), and 2051 growth targets for people and jobs. Considering that the Region of Halton does not have planning responsibilities as of July 1st, 2024, the new OP must also incorporate, as required, policies of the provincially approved Regional Official Plan.

The new Official Plan will be developed through a five-phase workplan over the span of approximately two years.

Figure 1: Official Plan Review Project Timeline



1. Phase 1 Deliverables

In Phase 1, the project team set the stage for the OPR project through various engagement opportunities. During this phase, a Public Engagement Strategy (PES) was prepared to identify engagement tools and strategies through all project phases. The PES was endorsed by Council via Report [PD-2025-024](#). The following section of the report will summarize engagement activities, including a summary of the preliminary feedback received, and the key findings from the Background Report, which will form the basis for exploring policy directions in the next phases of the project.

a) Introductory Survey

An introductory survey was published on Let's Talk Halton Hills in late February. The survey inquired about community priorities, challenges, and preferred engagement methods for the Official Plan Review. Approximately 150 users completed the survey.

In the OPR Survey, residents were asked to rank topics by priority, with 1 indicating the topic of highest interest. Each theme's average rank was calculated to reflect its overall priority. Below is a summary of the responses collected between February 28 and June 27, 2025.

Q1: Participants ranked their top three themes for the Official Plan update as follows:

1. Economic Growth and Employment Growth: The availability of local jobs for those who reside in the Halton Hills community.
2. Complete Communities: Mixed-use neighbourhoods that offer opportunities for equitable access to daily necessities.
3. Environmental Stewardship: The responsible use and protection of the environment through conservation and sustainable practices.
4. Transportation: All modes of transportation to move people and goods safely, efficiently and sustainably.
5. Residential Growth & Housing: The number of new housing units required to accommodate future growth.
6. Cultural Heritage: Local heritage tying past to present.

Q2: Participants ranked their biggest challenges for the Town as follows:

1. Traffic Congestion
2. Preservation of Agricultural Lands
3. Limited Local Employment Options
4. Need for a Variety of Housing Options
5. Ensuring the protection and enhancement of the Town's natural assets is incorporated into future development
6. Building heights for new development
7. Conservation of Heritage Resources

8. Impacts of Climate Change
9. Access to Other Modes of Transportation

Q3: Participants ranked the language in the existing Official Plan Vision that they would like to see reflected in the new Vision Statement as follows:

1. Halton Hills is a safe place to live.
2. Halton Hills residents are passionate about preserving the small-town character.
3. The agricultural and rural areas of the Town are an important component of the community's character.
4. The Town has a number of significant environmental and topographical features that contribute to the Town's scenic atmosphere.
5. The Town and its residents view community services as fundamental to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for all ages.
6. Halton Hills has an active community life.

An "other" option was also available for respondents to provide alternative options. Some of the options received are:

- A community grows richer by sharing, better by making room for others - and bolder by moving forward together.
- A complete and evolving community that grows responsibly to meet the housing and economic needs of the future.
- The Town is an inclusive space for all cultures.
- Halton Hills is primed and ready for Economic Growth and Employment Growth.
- Halton Hills A Place to Call Home!
- High real estate value and no high-density housing.
- HH strives to be a caring community in which people of all ages can thrive, be socially and physically active, and feel welcome.

Q4: Preferred Engagement Methods

From the survey, most respondents chose emails as their preferred method to hear more about the project and Let's Talk Halton Hills as the second-most preferred option. Paper Mail was the least preferred option. Participants ranked their preferred option to stay informed and engaged as follows:

1. Email (113)
2. Let's Talk Halton Hills (76)
3. Social Media (61)
4. Town Website (53)
5. In-Person Events (46)
6. Local Events (38)

7. Paper Mail (24)

b) Public Open House #1

The First Public Open House took place on June 26th from 6-8 p.m. at the John Elliot Theatre in Georgetown. The event included a presentation in the theatre followed by a discussion panel which focused on answering questions submitted via Mentimeter (an online engagement tool) or on the comment cards submitted by attendees during the event. Following the presentation and discussion panel, participants moved on to the Helson Gallery to take part in a number of engagement activities and one-on-one discussions with Town staff. Over 70 attendees participated in the event.

All questions and answers received during the session have been posted on [Let's Talk Halton Hills](#).

The project team gathered feedback through Mentimeter polling, the moderated Q&A panel discussion and engagement activities. This feedback has been summarized below, with detailed feedback provided in Appendix B of this report.

Mentimeter Polling

- The majority of respondents identified as residents that live in the Town of Halton Hills and the rest of the respondents were made up of landowners, business owners, and consultants
- The top planning interests were infrastructure needs, housing options, and environmental stewardship, while other key interests included job opportunities, community services, and cultural heritage.
- Generally, respondents emphasized “good development” as being mixed-use, affordable, sustainable, inclusive, connected, and having sufficient infrastructure and green spaces.
- The top words respondents used to describe how they want their neighbourhood to feel in 25 years were safe, small, connected, peaceful, and livable.

Moderated Q&A Panel

- The majority of questions raised related to growth (housing and the economy), transportation and servicing, and community services.
- Other questions raised were regarding settlement areas, site specific applications, parking, affordability, agriculture, climate change and the environment, businesses, and general questions about the character of the Town.

Engagement Activity

A number of engagement stations were available for participants to provide feedback on specific topics, speak to Town staff and the consulting team and ask questions. The engagement stations included the following topics:

- Our community: granted an opportunity for participants to describe their community and identify what they love and any gaps that needed attention.
- Environment: Asked participants to identify on a map their favourite green places.
- How we grow: asked participants to identify the top three priorities facing the future.
- Ask a Planner/Engineer (Question Corner) / Youth Drop-in Station: participants could view the current land use designation of their property and ask staff from the Planning and Development Engineering teams questions. A selection of colouring sheets were available at this station for children attending the event.

Below is a summary of the feedback received at each of the stations:

- Our Communities
 - Participants generally represented communities or neighbourhoods of Georgetown South, Moore Park, Stewarttown, Stewart's Mill, Glen Williams, Arborglen, and Delrex.
 - Generally, participants described their communities or neighbourhoods as safe, friendly, small, connecting, peaceful, cozy, and undergoing change.
 - Participants described their favourite places to frequent in their neighbourhood as parks, ravines, woodlots, and trails.
 - Participants described the following gaps in their neighbourhood: walkability, local businesses, connectivity, transit, and indoor community facilities.
 - Participants want to see more of the following in the future: transit, recreational facilities, parks, affordable housing, safety at night, walkability/pedestrian friendly streets, climate resilience, water system preservation, and preserved character of the Town.
- Environment
 - Participants expressed their appreciation for convenient access to trails from their homes, the sounds of wildlife provided by greenspaces, and the tree canopy, flowers (e.g. Trilliums), and sense of peace offered by parks.
 - As for the participants' favourite greenspaces, there were 19 pins on trails, 11 pins on parks, 5 pins on private properties, and 7 pins on other greenspaces.
- How We Grow
 - Participants identified the top priorities facing the future as public spaces and amenities, multiple transportation options, and environmental protection.
 - Housing – Most participants did not currently live with or were interested in living with multiple generations of their family, and most participants were interested in eventually downsizing.
- Ask a Planner/Engineer (Question Corner) / Youth Drop-in Station
 - Questions regarding area servicing and additional residential units were common

- Interest in what is occurring at Regional Road 25 & 5 Sideroad in the future
- Questions regarding the planning policy framework and site / property specific issues
- Questions regarding subdivision growth in Southeast Georgetown

c) Community Working Group

Invitations have been extended to the following organizations to participate in the Community Working Group: Glen Williams Community Association, Stewarttown Community Association, John Street Residents' Association, Norval Community Association, Silver Creek Residents Association, Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Georgetown BIA, Downtown Acton BIA, Halton Hills Youth Centres, Hillview Seniors Centres, Halton Hills Agricultural Round Table and BILD.

During the first meeting, which at the time of writing this report is anticipated to take place on August 18th, the OPR team will share an overview of the Official Plan Review process, present key findings from the Background Report and open the floor to hear participants' thoughts on the priorities that matter most to them and their organization.

d) Other Engagement

Town staff have attended the Acton and Georgetown Farmer's Markets this summer and the Ward 4 Community Socials. During these pop-up events, staff have spoken to over 180 people about the Official Plan Review project. A flyer with a QR code to access the OPR Let's Talk Halton Hills Page has been created to allow residents to easily access the project engagement webpage from their phones.

In the Fall, the OPR team will also be participating in the Georgetown Fall Fair, Acton Fall Fair and Ward 1 and 2 Community Socials.

A number of key informant interviews with local organizations have been scheduled for late summer. These interviews aim to foster connections early on in the process with key organizations that are not part of the Community Working Group. The interviews will provide an opportunity to identify preliminary / perceived opportunities and constraints and proactively plan for them as the project advances.

Background Report

The Background Report, attached as Appendix A to this report, is the first major deliverable of the OPR project. It sets the stage for the OPR process by:

- creating an inventory of provincial legislation and policy that the new Official Plan will need to conform to/be consistent with;
- reflecting on regional and municipal policies, strategies, and plans whose recommendations could be integrated into the Official Plan and translated into policy; and
- identifying any policy gaps or opportunities for innovative policies based on best practice to address existing and emerging planning challenges in the Town of Halton Hills.

The key policy issues and opportunities related to growth management, infrastructure and servicing, natural environment, complete communities, agriculture and general policies outlined in section 3 of the Background Report will form the foundation for developing policy directions in future phases of the project. A summary of the key policy areas identified in the Background Report, that will need to be addressed through the OPR, are listed below.

Growth Management:

- Establish population, housing, and employment forecasts to determine intensification and greenfield development targets and incorporate boundary expansions that have been approved by the Province to 2051 (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Identify strategic growth areas, including the potential for new major transit station areas and frequent transit corridors, to focus growth (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Consider minimum density targets for designated growth areas (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Consider policies to further encourage and support residential development, including redevelopment of underutilized commercial plazas and post-secondary institutions (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Consider revised language and/or policies to reflect a greater emphasis on providing a full range of housing options (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Integrate OPA No. 58 permitting additional residential units (*Planning Act*).
- Review land use designations and policies in light of more recent definitions of 'Area of Employment' and 'Employment Area' as set out in the *Planning Act* and Provincial Planning Statement respectively (*Planning Act*, Provincial Planning Statement).
- Revise employment conversion policies (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Revise land use compatibility policies to permit greater adjacencies where impacts can be minimized/mitigated (Provincial Planning Statement).

Agriculture:

- Ensure an 'agricultural system' approach (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Protect lands for agricultural use outside of identified urban areas (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Allow for on-farm diversified uses that provide opportunities for additional income generation with preserving farmland and maintaining compatibility with farm operations (Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas).
- Address how lots can be created in the agricultural area, including surplus farm dwelling severances arising from consolidation of farm operations (Provincial Planning Statement).

Climate Change and the Environment:

- Ensure policies reflect the changing scope and responsibilities of conservation authorities (*Conservation Authorities Act*).
- Consider Regional Natural Heritage System policies and draft Natural Heritage System mapping (Regional Official Plan, Draft ROPA 50).
- Consider recommendations of ongoing studies and plans, including the Green Infrastructure Master Plan, the Natural Environment Action Plan, and Biodiversity Studies, as required.

Infrastructure & Servicing:

- Consider a watershed planning approach to inform planning for sewage and water services and stormwater management (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Align with any comprehensive municipal plans for stormwater management that consider cumulative impacts of development on stormwater at a watershed scale (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Improve or restore the quality and quantity of water by minimizing potential negative impacts, including cross-jurisdictional and cross-watershed impacts (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Ensure proposed distribution of population/employment is supported by existing and/or planned infrastructure capacity (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Consider opportunities for the allocation (and reallocation) of unused system capacity of municipal water services and municipal sewage services (*Planning Act*, Provincial Planning Statement).

Complete Communities:

- Consider revised language and/or policies to reflect a new definition of 'complete community' (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Consider revised language and/or policies to reflect a greater emphasis on social equity (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Develop processes for early engagement with Indigenous communities and ensure their interests are considered when identifying, protecting, and managing cultural heritage resources (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Revise heritage-related definitions in the Official Plan to be consistent with provincial policy definitions (Cultural Heritage Strategy).

General Policy:

- Revise language to reflect new and revised definitions (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Remove references to municipal comprehensive review (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Ensure policies reflect the changing scope of Regional planning responsibilities, recognizing the Region will retain a commenting role as an agency involved in the planning of regional infrastructure (*Planning Act*).

- Coordinate with service managers, school boards, and post-secondary institutions to allow for a more integrated approach to dealing with planning for housing and public infrastructure (Provincial Planning Statement).
- Integrate approved Secondary Plans into the primary Plan.

2. Phase 2 Deliverables

Phase 2 will focus on refreshing the community vision and confirming Town priorities through public consultation. In this phase, the consultant team will prepare technical reports that will help guide discussions around a new vision for the Town and policy directions. This vision and policy directions will inform priorities that will then be translated into specific Official Plan policies.

Technical Reports

The consulting team is in the process of preparing the following technical reports:

- Commercial Needs Assessment
- Growth Capacity Analysis
- Housing Strategy
- Natural Heritage System Analysis
- Agricultural Discussion Paper
- Cultural Heritage Review
- Servicing and Transportation Report

These reports are intended to identify key findings and policy recommendations that will guide the development of the Town of Halton Hills' new Official Plan. The goal is to ensure the OP is responsive to both current conditions and emerging trends, supporting the Town's long-term planning objectives.

To complement these reports, a series of thematic briefs will be prepared. These briefs are concise, accessible summaries designed to inform and engage the public. The briefs will help build public understanding and readiness ahead of community visioning sessions and feedback opportunities.

Open House # 2 - Public Visioning Session

The Public Visioning Session is anticipated to take place on October 21, 2025. The Session will begin with a brief presentation providing information regarding the Official Plan Review project and recent engagement outcomes. Following the presentation, attendees will be invited to participate in a series of interactive activity stations designed to facilitate dialogue and gather feedback. One of these stations will feature an artist-led engagement experience, coordinated by the Town, intended to further explore community perspectives and help refine the vision and key policy objectives of the OPR.

While the event will be held in person, the Town will also develop and promote an online feedback form to provide an alternative method for public input.

Council Workshop

The initial Council Workshop is expected to take place in late fall and will offer an update on the progress of the Official Plan Review (OPR) project, with an emphasis on the public engagement activities completed to date. The workshop will include a summary of key themes and input received during Public Open House #2 – the Visioning Session.

As part of the workshop, the project team will present the foundational elements of the OPR, including its emerging vision, goals, and objectives. Additionally, the presentation will outline preliminary policy opportunities and constraints identified through the technical reports. Council members will be invited to provide feedback on these findings to help guide the next stages of the project.

Other Engagement

The team will continue to leverage pop-up events to inform the community about the project and gather input. In addition, Let's Talk Halton Hills will continue to be leveraged through Phase 2 of the project by ensuring that the page is regularly updated and that material such as technical reports are easily available to the public.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report identifies a safe and welcoming community as one of the Town's Strategic priorities.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

As part of the OPR, the team will identify opportunities to enhance policies that promote a sustainable community. In addition, Town strategies related to climate change such as the Climate Adaptation Plan will be considered as input to the OPR.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement for the Official Plan Review will be aligned with the project Terms of Reference and the Public Engagement Strategy that was endorsed by Council through Report PD-2025-024. Phase 1 included engagement via an online survey, a Public Open House and during pop-up events at the Acton and Georgetown Farmer's Markets and attendance at Community Socials.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Consultation with various departments/divisions will continue to take place through the lifespan of the project.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report will be funded through an existing approved budget source.

Reviewed and approved by,

Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning & Development

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer