

OVERVIEW: POLICY DIRECTIONS BRIEFS

The Town of Halton Hills is undertaking the review of its Official Plan to incorporate key updates such as conforming with current provincial policy and considering key regional policies.

Phase 1 of the project focused on setting the stage and completing a background review. **Phase 2** took a deeper dive into technical analysis and brainstorming around a vision and key policy themes.

In **Phase 3**, the project team prepared a **Policy Directions Report** informed by what we heard (and learned) in Phases 1 and 2. The report sets out key ideas and recommendations that will guide the development of the new Official Plan. These policy directions are organized around the six main themes discussed in Phase 2, including:



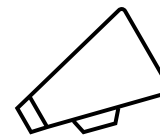
Altogether, there are **18 proposed policy directions** across these themes. The project team has created **six short briefs** to highlight the proposed policy directions.

The proposed policy directions are based on several sources, including:

- Provincial planning legislation and policy
- Regional and local strategies and plans
- Technical studies (prepared in Phase 2 of the OPR project)
- A best practices / precedents scan of other municipal official plans

Town staff will be at pop-up engagement events in May and June to gather feedback on the policy directions. To learn more about upcoming pop-ups or to read the full Policy Directions Report, visit [Let's Talk Halton Hills](#)

Key Terms



The Briefs contain a number of bolded and colourful terms.

If you want to learn more, a glossary / list of key planning terms is provided in Appendix A of the **Policy Directions Report**.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

How will the Town prepare for future population and job growth?

The Province projects the Town to grow to **132,050 residents by 2051**, which means planning for about 65,000 more people than today.

Through the Official Plan Review (OPR), the Town will prepare policies to ensure projected growth can be accommodated while making sure people have enough housing, employment, and amenities to support daily living.

Direction #1: Plan for anticipated population and employment growth to 2051 via **intensification** and **greenfield sites** / development.

- Review the Town's **urban boundary** to understand its capacity for growth
- Update the Town's policies related to requests for expanding the urban boundary
- Support the planning of the Acton GO **Major Transit Station Area** (MTSA) and the Georgetown GO MTSA.
- Intensification in the Town's urban areas (Georgetown and Acton) outside of its mature neighbourhoods
- Encourage a mix of homes, shops and services in new areas/communities
- Support efficient use of land and infrastructure by planning for a mix of low-, mid- and high-rise development in suitable locations

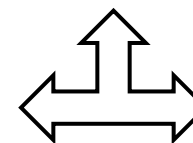
Key documents that informed these directions:

- Housing Needs Assessment (NBLC)
- Housing Strategy (NBLC)
- Commercial Needs Assessment (Tate Research)
- Growth Capacity Analysis (NBLC).
- Halton Region Official Plan Amendments 48 and 49
- Town of Halton Hills (Intensification Opportunities Strategy, 2020)



What's an urban boundary?

The main built-up area (**settlement area**) where most growth happens and where homes, shops and services are located together.



Recap: What is the Town's current growth strategy?

The Town's has a three-pronged growth strategy:

1. Balancing growth through intensification
2. Moderate greenfield growth
3. Employment growth



Direction #2: Encourage a greater supply and diversity of housing.

- Support more kinds of homes to meet different needs and preferences (affordability, tenure (such as rental or ownership), size, building type)
- Enable more areas to allow and support new housing, including commercial areas and existing neighbourhoods (subject to criteria)
- Expand the role of publicly owned lands or new public facilities, in providing **affordable housing**
- Explore new planning tools to support the delivery of affordable housing

Direction #3: Protect **employment areas** for traditional employment uses while directing compatible employment uses to mixed use areas.

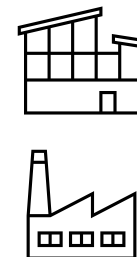
- Support locating jobs closer to where people live (and ensure strong connections to/from home to work)
- Protect land for traditional employment uses like manufacturing and warehousing
- Encourage smaller industrial units to support small businesses

Direction #4: Ensure sufficient commercial floor area to support local and regional needs.

- Preserve existing commercial space
- In growth areas, promote shops and services on the ground floor (i.e., below apartments on upper floors)
- Encourage food stores or supermarkets in larger, planned communities
- Support a range of commercial spaces and sizes (including different levels of affordability) to support local and small businesses



Diverse housing types (Source: Town of Halton Hills)



Did you know...

The Province introduced a new definition of employment area which excludes office, institutional and commercial (retail) uses, unless its associate with a primary employment use (like manufacturing).



Existing retail buildings, Acton (Source: Town of Halton Hills)



INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICING

Infrastructure includes the critical physical structures that support growth and development. In built-up areas, it is important to use land, resources and infrastructure efficiently. Good planning helps ensure infrastructure can meet the needs of Town residents now and in the future.

The delivery of hard infrastructure (including water, wastewater, and regional transportation) is the responsibility of Halton Region. The new Official Plan will need to align with regional plans while also considering key local infrastructure plans and strategies.

Key documents that informed these directions:

- Halton Region Official Plan
- Transportation Master Plan and Active Transportation Master Plan (to be replaced by an ongoing Mobility Master Plan) (Town of Halton Hills)
- Trucking Strategy (Town of Halton Hills)

Changes to Planning Responsibilities



As a result of Bill 185, *the Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024*, Halton Region lost its planning approval authority on July 1, 2024,

The Halton Regional Official Plan is now a Local Plan for the Town of Halton Hills. Halton Region remains responsible for the coordination of these services across the Region. Halton Hills' new Official Plan will need to integrate relevant regional Official Plan policies to support and facilitate the Region's new role.

Direction #5: Ensure new development is supported by existing or planned infrastructure.

- Development that is supported by adequate infrastructure
- Enough capacity to meet current and projected needs
- Infrastructure that is integrated with land use planning and growth management
- Require phasing of new development that is tied to infrastructure



Infrastructure upgrades (Source: Town of Halton Hills)



Direction #6: Support a multi-modal transportation system.

- Support different modes of transportation (walking, rolling, biking, driving, ActiVan, GO transit, future transit)
- Design of complete streets where possible
- Identification of a possible future local transit network
- Consider the new Highway 413 and integration with the existing transportation network and community



Multi-modal street (Source: Town of Halton Hills)

Direction #7: Support goods movement in a way that protects municipal infrastructure and public safety.

- Support goods movement related to mineral aggregates, farming operations and other industries
- Limit and mitigate issues associated with air quality, public safety, and maintenance related to trucking
- Balance economic and employment activities with community health and safety



Loading bays (Source: Town of Halton Hills)



CLIMATE & THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Town has many natural assets that contribute to its unique ‘sense of place’. Protection of the **natural heritage system** is a key, underlying priority of the Official Plan. The Town’s ‘environment first’ approach to land use planning supports maintaining, restoring and, where possible, enhancing or improving these natural features and ecological functions.

Halton Region previously prepared draft Regional Official Plan Amendment 50 (ROPA 50) to update its natural heritage system and related policies. Although ROPA 50 was never adopted, it provides a foundation to help guide natural heritage system planning, along with existing provincial protections under the Niagara Escarpment Plan and Greenbelt Plan. In addition, new opportunities have been identified to protect the Town’s natural features and support **climate change mitigation**.

Direction #8: Protect and enhance the Town’s natural heritage system.

- Updated natural heritage mapping based on current data
- New provincially-identified enhancement areas and linkages
- Clearer direction about what types of development or activities are permitted next to natural features
- Update the Town’s woodland classification criteria

Key documents that informed these directions:

- Halton Region Draft Official Plan Amendment 50
- Natural Heritage System Analysis Report (NRSI)
- Low Carbon Transition Strategy (Town of Halton Hills)
- Climate Change Adaptation Plan (Town of Halton Hills)



Limehouse Conservation Area (Source: Town of Halton Hills)



Direction #9: Identify and protect the Town’s water resource system.

- Provide greater recognition and protection of water resources, including rivers, lakes, and aquifers
- Revisit policies on the design, ownership and funding of new stormwater infrastructure, especially within greenfield areas to ensure appropriate cost-sharing and long-term maintenance

Direction #10: Mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

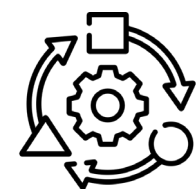
- Support more compact forms of development to reduce land needs, where appropriate
- Protection of high-quality ecosystems
- Promote pedestrian infrastructure
- Encourage electric vehicle charging infrastructure and car share spaces
- Encourage on-site renewable energy generation

Direction #11: Adapt to the impacts of climate change.

- Parks and public facilities designed to protect against extreme temperatures
- Plants and landscaping that can survive hotter summers and colder winters
- More trees and a wider variety of tree types to improve resilience and shade
- **Low-impact development** practices for stormwater management to help reduce flooding and run-off
- Support growing of local food within the community



Electric vehicle chargers at Town Hall (Source: Town of Halton Hills)



Mitigate vs. Adapt

Mitigate means to reduce or minimize negative impacts.

Adapt means to improve the ability to cope with, withstand or adjust to changes or impacts.



AGRICULTURE & RURAL AREAS

Agriculture plays a major role in the local and regional economy, making up about one-third of the Region’s agricultural economy. A systems approach is used to maintain and enhance farmland while also supporting farms, businesses, infrastructure and services that are part of the agri-food network.

Halton Region previously prepared draft Regional Official Plan Amendment 50 (ROPA 50) to update its agricultural system and related policies. Similar to the natural heritage system, although ROPA 50 was never adopted, it provides a foundation to help guide how the Town updates its own Official Plan along with Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) guidelines to support matters such as:

- Economic opportunities for farmers
- Limiting compatibility issues between livestock facilities and sensitive uses
- Assessing the impact of non-agricultural development on the agricultural system

These matters along with new opportunities identified during the OPR in collaboration with the project team and the Town’s Agricultural Roundtable will help to identify opportunities for the new Official Plan to further support the Town’s agricultural community.

Key documents that informed these directions:

- Halton Region Draft Official Plan Amendment 50
- OMAFA Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario’s Prime Agricultural Areas
- OMAFA Minimum Distance Separation Document
- OMAFA Agricultural Impact Assessment Guidance Document
- Agricultural Technical Plan (NPG Solutions)



(Source: Town of Halton Hills)



What’s the Agricultural Roundtable?

It is an advisory committee that provides a valuable forum to ensure the long-term economic viability and sustainability of the local agricultural sector. Members include representatives from a range of agricultural sectors, members of Town Council and Town staff.



Direction #12: Protect agricultural lands and foster a robust agricultural system.

- Development should stay within the Town’s urban boundary
- Regulation and restriction of non-agricultural uses in agricultural areas
- New residential areas should be planned to minimize conflicts or impacts from nearby livestock facilities
- Greater recognition of how rural lands are essential to supporting and sustaining agricultural operations

Direction #13: Support and foster economic opportunities for farmers.

- Update permissions for additional housing on farms in the form of **additional residential units (ARUs)**
- Update lot creation policies to align with Provincial direction
- Natural heritage policies that do not place unnecessary limits or restrictions on farm operations
- Promote more opportunities for **on-farm diversified uses**, agriculture-related and agri-tourism

Direction #14: Protect the character of Halton Hills’ rural areas and hamlets.

- Recognize that natural, cultural, and built heritage play an important role in shaping the character and identity of rural communities
- Ensure intensification and urban design related policies respect the character of existing rural areas and hamlets



Market in Downtown Georgetown (Source: Town of Halton Hills)



Rural character (Source: Town of Halton Hills)



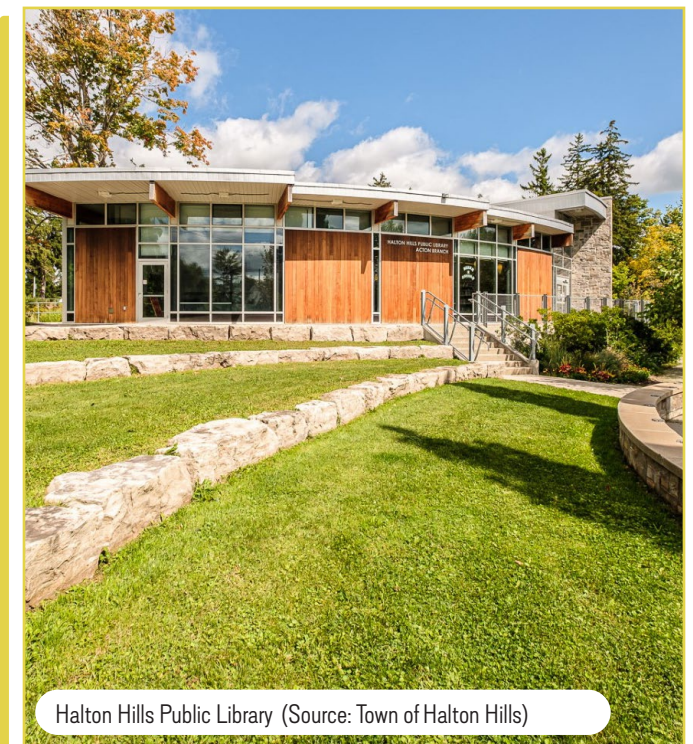
COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

Complete communities aim to meet the basic needs of residents within a community. They provide opportunities for people to live, work, shop and access services. Complete communities are meant to be easy for everyone to use, no matter their age or ability.

Complete communities are also intended to be inclusive and flexible. They can look different depending on the local context or surroundings. However, the goal is always the same: to ensure people have access to different resources and opportunities in a convenient and connected way.

Direction #15: Adopt complete communities as a framework for neighbourhood planning.

- A mix of different activities, jobs and services in a community
- Support different types of housing
- Promote well-connected streets that are safe and easy to get around
- Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure
- Access to parks and open spaces
- Public spaces and buildings that people can easily access and enjoy



Halton Hills Public Library (Source: Town of Halton Hills)



Direction #16: Ensure easy and equitable access to parks and recreational facilities.

- Encourage parks to be close to community centres and recreation facilities so its easier for people to use them
- Update requirements for new parks to reflect community needs
- Offer different types of parks and open space, especially in urban areas
- Provide a wider range of public spaces and gathering places

Direction #17: Encourage economic opportunities within the Town.

- Promote homes in areas where people can easily get around
- Ensure an adequate supply of employment lands
- Support a broad, flexible range of uses to support economic investment and opportunities
- Place a greater emphasis on green economy research and development as well as agri-tourism, sports tourism, cycling, and the arts



George Kennedy Public School (Source: Town of Halton Hills)



Hometown Hockey (Source: Town of Halton Hills)



CULTURE & CULTURAL HERITAGE

Halton Hills has a vibrant arts and culture scene. According to the Town’s Cultural Master Plan, culture is commonly understood as something that improves the quality of life in a community and is strongly connected to wellbeing, **sense of place** and the economy.

The Ontario Heritage Act provides municipalities with tools to protect and conserve significant cultural heritage resources. Recently, the Province introduced a number of legislative (and policy) changes to processes and requirements for the identification, management and protection of these resources. The Town has also prepared / is preparing several local strategies and plans focused on culture, safe and welcoming communities as well as truth and reconciliation initiatives.

Direction #18: Create, enhance, and maintain a distinct sense of place that is welcoming and inviting to all.

- Protect built heritage assets and heritage landscapes
- Speak to the future development of Indigenous engagement protocols as required by Provincial direction
- Promote public art and wayfinding (signage) to celebrate the Town’s character, history, and identity
- Create **placemaking** policies to improve social equity and overall quality of life for people of all ages, abilities, and incomes

Key documents that informed these directions:

- Cultural Heritage Strategy (Town of Halton Hills)
- Cultural Master Plan (currently underway) (Town of Halton Hills)
- Public Art Master Plan (Town of Halton Hills)

Components of Culture in Halton Hills



(Source: Town of Halton Hills Cultural Master Plan)