



# Let's PLAN, Clarington!

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**An Introductory Discussion  
Paper for the Clarington  
Official Plan Review to 2051**

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## **Table of Contents**

### **1.0 Introduction**

### **2.0 The Clarington Context**

### **3.0 What is the Clarington Official Plan?**

### **4.0 Why are we reviewing the Official Plan?**

*4.1 Council's Strategic Plan*

*4.2 Managing Growth and Evolving Needs*

*4.3 Legislative Requirements*

### **5.0 What should we be thinking about as part of this review?**

*5.1 Revisiting the Vision for Clarington*

*5.2 Planning for Complete Communities and Balanced Growth*

*5.3 Protecting What Matters*

*5.4 Sustainability*

### **6.0 What Other Initiatives are Relevant?**

*6.1 Clarington Initiatives*

*6.2 Provincial Initiatives*

### **7.0 How is the planning landscape changing?**

*7.1 Recent Changes to the Planning Act*

*7.2 Proposed Provincial Planning Statement, 2023*

*7.3 Durham Regional Official Plan*

### **8.0 What is the Process for the Review?**

*8.1 Review Phases*

*8.2 Consultation and Engagement*

### **9.0 Conclusion**

## **Appendix A – Summary of Discussion Questions**

## Summary

The Municipality of Clarington is reviewing its Official Plan, the key planning document that guides the development of our community. This introductory discussion paper seeks to start a conversation around how Clarington residents, businesses and landowners would like to see our community evolve to 2051.

The Official Plan must be reviewed due to legislative requirements set out by the Province, and to conform to the newly adopted Durham Regional Official Plan. However, the Official Plan review also presents an excellent opportunity to ensure that as Clarington continues to be one of the fastest growing municipalities in the GTA, we're proactively planning a community that fits with our shared values and Council's Strategic Plan. Policies in the Official Plan can ensure that we're growing in a smart manner that protects what we value most and enhances our community. Revisiting our vision will be key to achieving this.

The topics that are covered in the discussion paper include:

- Revisiting our vision;
- Planning for growth management, housing, economic development, and community design;
- Protecting our rural and agricultural land, natural heritage and community identity; and
- Social, economic, environmental, and fiscal sustainability.

There are other initiatives undertaken by Clarington, Durham Region, or the Province that will affect the Official Plan review. Incorporating these initiatives will make sure that our various policy pieces work together effectively.

The planning landscape has changed significantly in recent years and more changes are expected. Reviewing the Official Plan is necessary to proactively respond to these changes and ensure the Municipality can continue to plan for complete communities.

The initial start-up tasks for the Official Plan review are expected to take place through the summer and early fall of 2023. Once planning for the Review is complete, the process will include five phases:

- Phase One: Visioning and Information Gathering
- Phase Two: Background Studies and Topic Discussion Paper(s)
- Phase Three: Directions and Recommendations
- Phase Four: Draft Official Plan Amendment
- Phase Five: Recommended Official Plan Amendment



## 1.0 Introduction

### It's time to revisit our long-term vision for the future of Clarington!

The Municipality of Clarington is reviewing its Official Plan, and we need your ideas about how Clarington should evolve to the year 2051. The Official Plan affects every resident, business, and landowner in Clarington. Its policies will shape our future and provide direction on:

- Housing and densities
- Economic development and jobs
- Environmental and agricultural land protection
- Local traffic management
- Parks, trails and recreation and culture
- Investment in community spaces and services

Right now, we're just getting started on the review process and we're asking the big questions about what we'd like to look at as part of the Official Plan review. This is the time to ask ourselves:

- 1) **What do we already love about Clarington?**
- 2) **What are we already doing well, and how can we build on it?**
- 3) **What needs a closer look to make sure we get it right?**
- 4) **What sets Clarington apart from other communities?**

This Introductory Discussion Paper will cover:

- What is the Clarington Official Plan and why is it important?
- Why are we reviewing the Clarington Official Plan?
- What should we be thinking about as part of this review?
- What other initiatives does this affect?
- What is the process for the Official Plan review?

This paper provides the information that will get us ready to talk about the Official Plan and determine what matters most. This is just the first of many opportunities for the public to get involved in planning for Clarington's future. So let's dig in!

## Let's PLAN, Clarington!

Contact us to share your ideas or learn more:  
[OPReview@Clarington.net](mailto:OPReview@Clarington.net)  
[www.clarington.net/OPReview](http://www.clarington.net/OPReview)



## 2.0 The Clarington Context

The Municipality of Clarington is a local municipality located along the shores of Lake Ontario within Region of Durham. Clarington is geographically large, with an area of 612km<sup>2</sup>, and is a blend of rural countryside and four bustling urban areas: Courtice, Bowmanville, Newcastle and Orono. Our rural area falls within the protected Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine and has thirteen hamlets which are surrounded by highly productive agricultural land and natural heritage features and systems (Figure 1).

**Clarington was recently ranked the fourth happiest Municipality in Canada based on four 'happiness-relevant dimensions': Economy & Real Estate, Location & Demographics, Health & Wellbeing, and Community & Environment**

(Source: [point2homes.com](https://www.point2homes.com))

With a population of approximately 107,000 residents, Clarington has been the fastest growing municipality in Durham Region between 1996 and 2021. We are anticipated to experience strong population growth over the next 30 years with a forecasted population of approximately 221,000 in 2051.

Growth will continue to be focused in our serviced urban communities of Bowmanville, Courtice, and Newcastle. The urban community of Orono and the rural hamlets may accommodate a limited amount of growth in the form of infill lots and additional dwelling units.



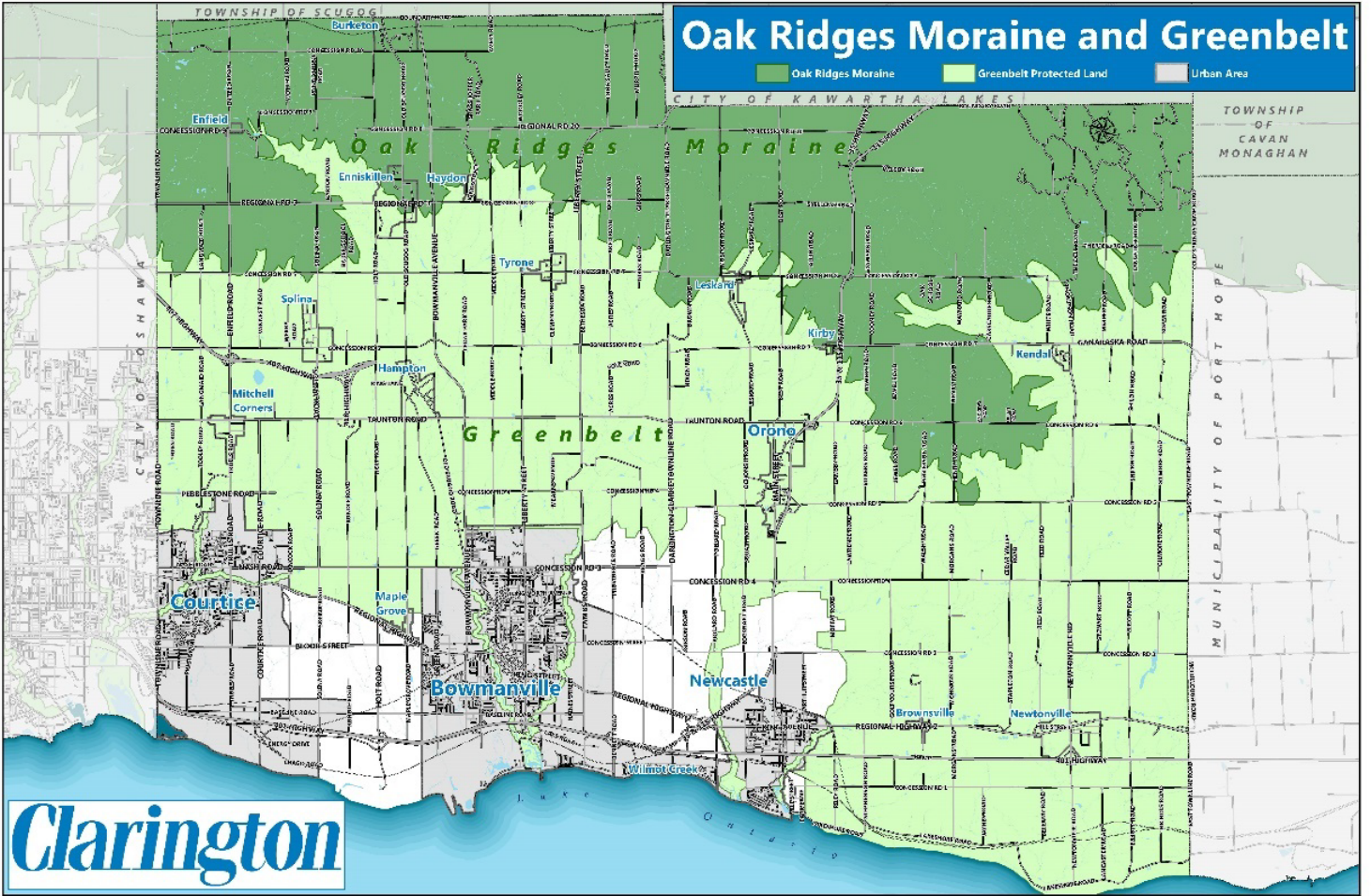


Figure 1: Clarington Context Map



### 3.0 What is the Clarington Official Plan?

The [Clarington Official Plan](#) is the Municipality's main policy document to guide and manage development. It provides a guiding vision, specific strategies, and a land use framework to realize the possibilities and aspirations of the Municipality. All parts of our community and its future are affected by the Official Plan: housing and transportation options, investment in community resources, environmental sustainability, and economic development.

The Official Plan provides Strategic Directions informed by Council and the Public, which include:

- Protecting the Natural Environment and Managing Natural Resources
- Managing Our Growth
- Creating Vibrant and Sustainable Urban Places
- Encouraging Housing Diversity
- Growing a Prosperous Community
- Celebrating our Cultural Heritage



Since the Official Plan was first developed, a number of changes have occurred in our community that affect how the Municipality should plan for the future. The last update to the Clarington Official Plan was completed in 2018. This update planned for growth to the year 2031 and incorporated changes that were made to policies at the provincial and regional level.

This current review will update the Official Plan to create a road map to the year 2051. Engagement with residents and stakeholders will be essential to updating our Official Plan in a way that successfully captures the needs and desires of the community.



## 4.0 Why are we reviewing the Official Plan?

Reviewing the Official Plan ensures that we are planning proactively for our future and adapting to the changing needs of our Municipality. The review is an opportunity to incorporate our values into development over the next 30 years while also meeting legislative requirements of the Province and the Region.

### 4.1 Council's Strategic Plan

Clarington Council is currently updating their [Strategic Plan](#) for the 2023-2026 Council term. As the Official Plan is one of the Municipality's key strategic planning documents, it's important that the Strategic Plan is integrated into the Official Plan to efficiently deliver on these priorities.

The draft Strategic Plan is currently undergoing consultation with the public before it's finalized in the Fall of 2023. The Strategic Plan will establish a vision, strategic priorities, and key actions that will implement these priorities. See the draft Strategic Plan's mission, vision and themes below:

**Mission:** To enhance the quality of life in our community

**Vision:** A dynamic, welcoming community focused on the future while honouring our past

**Themes:**

- Planning for the Future
- Service Excellence
- Vibrant and Inclusive Community

Each of the themes includes strategic priorities and actions that will see the mission and vision come to fruition. Aligning the Official Plan with the Council's Strategic Plan, where appropriate, will mean that these two pieces can work together and support one another.

### 4.2 Managing Growth and Evolving Needs

Clarington is growing. It is one of the fastest growing municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and was the fastest growing municipality in Durham between 1996 and 2021. This growth has seen Clarington's communities of Bowmanville, Courtice, and Newcastle increasingly become urbanized.

Clarington's population is expected to grow by 116,000 or 110% by 2051 and is expected to add 40,400 jobs over this horizon (Figure 2). This increase in growth will mean changes to the historical pattern of growth in Clarington. For example, future developments in strategic growth areas such as around future GO train stations or





along major roads will see denser and taller buildings as we seek to grow up instead of out into precious agricultural and natural areas. With new types of development, it's important that we plan in a way that mitigates potential impacts to existing neighbourhoods and creates new neighbourhoods with high quality of life.

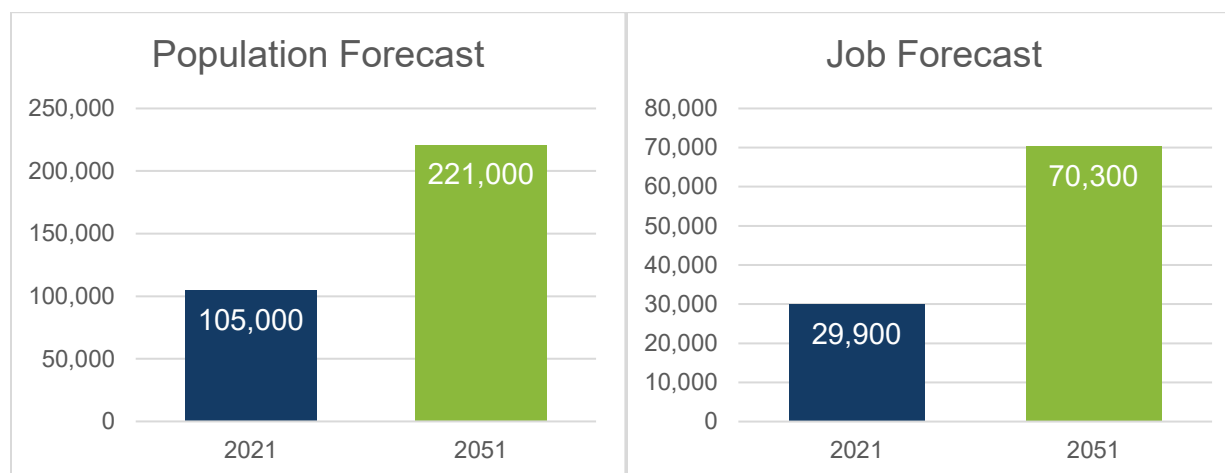


Figure 2: Population and Job Growth Forecast 2021-2051

As will be discussed in Sections 7 and 8, the Province is requiring Clarington to plan for this level of population and job growth through a number of different planning policy documents. As part of this growth, there is an opportunity to plan for initiatives like GO train service to Courtice and Bowmanville, economic development, affordable housing, new or renewed waterfront destinations, and active transportation connections to accommodate the growth of our communities in a way that makes sense locally for Clarington. The Official Plan review is key to creating a growing Clarington that is attractive to all.

### 4.3 Legislative Requirements

The Ontario Planning Act requires that the Official Plan is reviewed every five years to ensure that it conforms to, or does not conflict with, Provincial plans and policies. Since the previous Official Plan review, there have been significant changes to policies at the provincial and regional level. Updating the Official Plan is needed so that it adheres to higher-order policy, and so that we can proactively mitigate any negative consequences of the changing policy landscape.

Recent changes to provincial policy will result in continued growth and more housing in Clarington, but with fewer tools to manage and influence development through the development approvals process (e.g. new subdivisions). Strong and clear policies in the Official Plan are needed and important so that everyone understands what kinds of developments are appropriate in different locations and to ensure that new growth contributes positively to our community. More information about specific changes will be covered in Sections 7 and 8.



## 5.0 What should we be thinking about as part of this review?

This review is an opportunity to plan for a future Clarington that fits with our communities' values and provides a high quality of life. As part of the review, we need to think about what matters most to our community, what do we already love about Clarington, and how do we want to evolve. While exploring these values, we can think about the specific areas we should investigate. The following sections are some of what we'll be looking at as part of the review, but other thoughts and additions from the community are encouraged.

### 5.1 Revisiting the Vision for Clarington

As our community has grown, its vision for Clarington may have changed. Clarington is becoming increasingly diverse and is welcoming new forms of development that will bring new opportunities for economic growth and enhanced quality of life. Revisiting the vision that the community has for Clarington will ensure that we can capitalize on these coming changes, and that we're creating a guiding framework that ensures growth aligns with our collective values.

#### The current vision in the Official Plan sees Clarington as a:

- Place where each community can build on its individual character, share a common economic base and a distinct collective image;
- Place for people to live, work and play in a safe, vibrant, healthy and prosperous environment;
- Place where people, businesses and governments collectively balance growth with the protection, management and enhancement of rural landscapes, cultural heritage, natural resources and the natural environment; and
- Place where the built environment emphasizes high quality design and integrates nature in the design process.

As part of the Official Plan review process, the community will be asked for their ideal vision for Clarington. Together with insights from Council, Clarington's vision will be updated to reflect what we value and want to see in the future.

### 5.2 Planning for Complete Communities and Balanced Growth

Clarington has experienced relatively rapid growth over the last two decades. This is a trend that is expected to continue through to 2051, and one that we need to prepare for in order to ensure we grow Clarington together in a thoughtful and balanced way.



## 5.2.1 Growth Management

Clarington's is expected to grow to and diversify to approximately 221,000 residents and 70,300 jobs by 2051. Through this review, growth in Clarington will continue to be based on sound land use planning principles to provide for development patterns that:

- Use our land, transportation, and servicing infrastructure efficiently;
- Create complete communities where residents and businesses can access their daily needs without travelling; and
- Continue to direct growth to our serviced urban areas to sustain our natural heritage systems and agricultural lands for future generations.

One major change from how Clarington has developed in the past is a shift towards denser neighbourhoods. Denser development uses resources more efficiently and allows us to preserve more rural and agricultural land. However, denser development comes with new challenges. Official Plan policies will mitigate the impact of denser development by laying out plans for new servicing, infrastructure, and other investments. This includes proactively studying and planning for things like parks and road widening that are essential to creating neighbourhoods that support a high quality of life.

Higher density neighbourhoods with high-rise apartments and fewer ground-related built forms will require different needs. Planning for these evolving needs will mean strengthening the policies we've developed in the current Official Plan. This includes ensuring there's adequate green space, building transit-oriented communities, high quality design that supports local character, and appropriate transitions between neighbourhoods. This review is an opportunity to ensure that we can accommodate growth in a way that respects the values of our communities.

The Official Plan directs that the majority of this new growth will be in Secondary Plan areas within Clarington's urban areas of Bowmanville, Courtice, and Newcastle. Secondary Plans are more detailed land use plans for a specific area or neighbourhood that is expected to undergo major development changes.

Secondary Plans provide more detail on ideas such as urban design, sustainability, and community identity. We use Secondary Plans so that the goals and vision of the Official Plan will be implemented in new areas of growth in a way that is the most relevant to a particular area.

One of the main drivers of growth in Clarington will be the two future GO train stations that are planned. The stations are planned for southern Courtice and western Bowmanville. The areas around the new stations will be designated "Major Transit Station Areas," (MTSAs) which is a term from provincial policy that requires a minimum amount of density around higher order transit to generate reliable ridership to support the significant cost of this type of transportation.



The two MTSAs are expected to accommodate more than 21,000 new housing units by 2051. The new communities centred around our higher order transit stations in these areas are planned to be walkable and transit-oriented with access to amenities, schools, green space, and employment.

Increased growth creates an opportunity to enhance our communities. As our population grows, we are able to support new amenities, and plan for new projects. As a result of growth, the Official Plan can contemplate new initiatives such as a revitalized waterfront, complete streets, and more trails and active transportation networks across our community.

Our Official Plan policies are responsible for ensuring that new development integrates well into existing areas and uses resources responsibly.

The policies in the Official Plan need the community's input into what excites them about how Clarington will evolve to 2051.

### 5.2.2 Housing and Affordability



Key to managing growth in Clarington is determining appropriate ways to house our residents and new people coming to our community. Provincial policy on housing encourages a diverse mix of housing options that suits people with varying incomes and at different stages of life. Policies in the Official Plan can refine this principle by describing specific types of housing we want to encourage and how we can achieve this.



Historically, most of the housing in Clarington has been in the form of low-rise, single-detached homes. More recently, townhomes have become the most common new type of housing built. In the future, we are planning for more apartment buildings. One of the questions we need to determine as we plan for 2051 is where should this new growth go and what form should it take?

Across Ontario, the availability of affordable housing is of great concern. In 2019, Clarington released an affordable housing toolkit designed to support the development of new units that would be affordable to moderate- or low-income residents. The Official Plan review is an opportunity to look at how we can further incentivize the building of affordable housing, generate funding in support of it, or otherwise address this issue.

Clarington recently signed a housing pledge to the Ontario government that it commits to building 13,000 housing units by 2031 in response to Province's recent actions to increase housing supply and affordability in Ontario. This ambitious and short-term growth target means that we need to make sure housing is added in a smart and efficient way that creates vibrant, attractive new communities.

### 5.2.3 Economic Development and Jobs

As Clarington grows, we need to ensure that a growth in population is balanced with a growth in jobs and the local economy. Jobs in Clarington are forecast to grow by 135% by 2051. To support this job growth, the Municipality will focus on supporting current industries while attracting new ones. As Clarington becomes increasingly urbanized, our employment sectors are expected to grow and diversify.

The Official Plan will build on the work done as part of the Clarington Economic Development Strategy (see Section 7.1.2 for more details). Ensuring there is enough land serviced available for employment uses will be a key priority to incentivize job creation in Clarington. Official Plan policies must focus on investments in infrastructure such as roads and sewers that will enable economic growth. Support for and protection of the resources and locational criteria employment uses need in order to thrive will also be necessary (e.g. in proximity to goods movement corridors such as highways). Land use policy needs to support current economic drivers like agriculture or manufacturing but also be flexible enough to adapt to potential new businesses. As the broader Canadian economy changes, Clarington must ensure its Official Plan policies are ready to welcome innovative businesses.

The two future GO stations in Courtice and Bowmanville are expected to be major economic drivers. The new MTSA's will be mixed-use communities with office space, services, retail, and other commercial opportunities. Policies in the Official Plan will guide this growth and create the conditions for these areas to thrive as places to both live and work.

Land use policies contained in the Official Plan are responsible for determining how much we protect our current employment uses, and how flexible we can be in

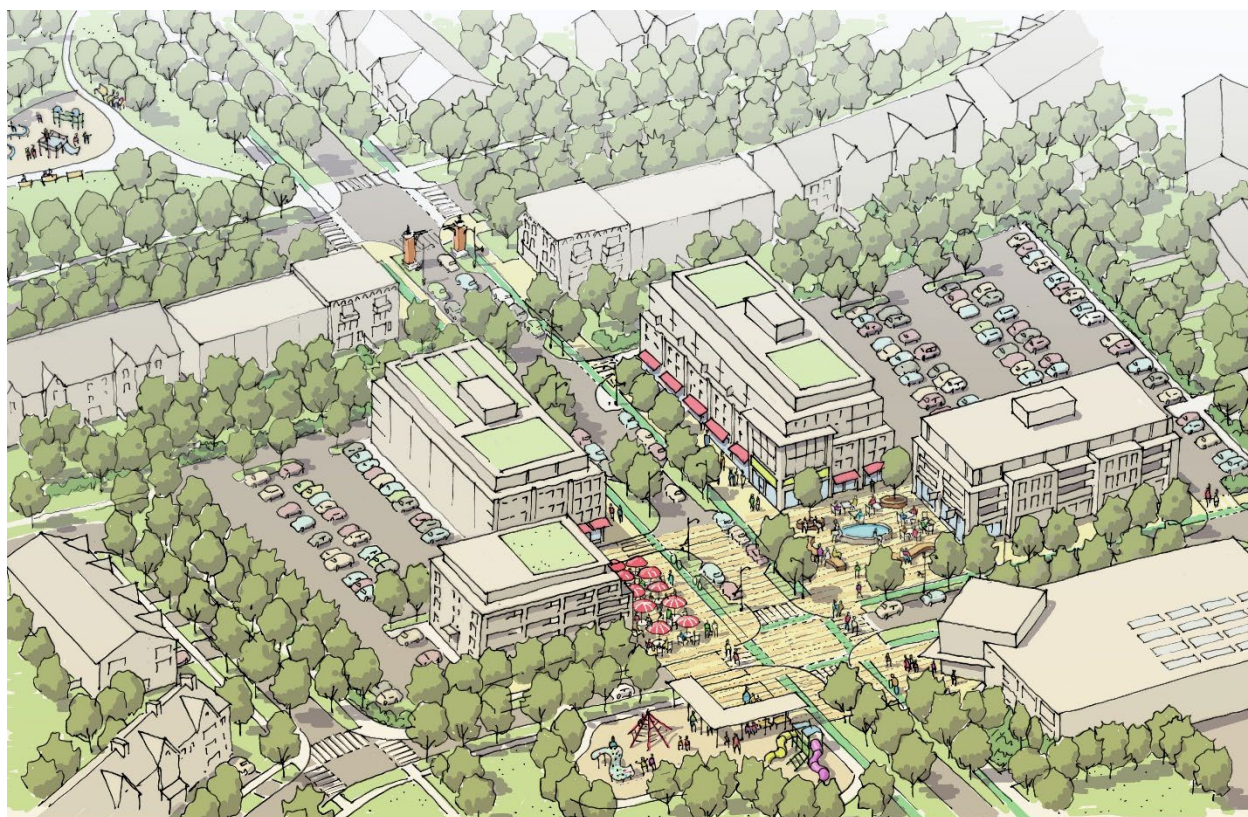


establishing new uses. The Official Plan review will also be an opportunity to implement some of the actions laid out in the 2022 Clarington Economic Development Strategy.

We want to be sure that we're proactively thinking about the future of Clarington's economy for future generations.

### 5.2.4 Community Design

Design is key to creating neighbourhoods that are climate resilient, encourage active lifestyles, provide employment opportunities close to where we live, and creating a sense of community with our neighbours. Each community should reflect the individual values of a neighbourhood as well as the priorities for Clarington as a whole.



The Official Plan is the policy document that sets these priorities and describes how new development is to provide for good quality design. The review will consider how we can implement our vision for Clarington into the design of new developments that will enhance our current neighbourhoods and create new neighbourhoods that are active and engaging. Recent changes to the Planning Act reduce our ability to influence design matters. This means the policies in the Official Plan are more important than ever for creating well designed communities.



## 5.3 Protecting What Matters

### 5.3.1 Agricultural and Rural Lands

Agriculture is a top industry in Clarington. Our Municipality contains Class 1 farmland, meaning it is home to some of Canada's highest quality farmland. Our agricultural and rural lands are essential to Clarington's economy, character, and local food supply. Policies in the Official Plan allow us to protect our agricultural areas for generations to come. Currently, there are changes proposed at the Provincial level that affect rural and agricultural land. The Official Plan review allows us to evaluate if our current policies will adequately protect these lands to ensure the success of our agricultural sector.



### 5.3.2 Natural Heritage and the Environment

Our natural heritage is a vital resource that needs to be prioritized as Clarington grows. The natural environment is essential for clean drinking water, healthy farmland, diverse ecosystems, and maintaining Clarington's natural beauty. As Clarington grows, there is pressure to develop further into these areas.

The Province has indicated that they will be re-evaluating their natural heritage provisions as part of their plan to increase housing supply. Once these changes are introduced, we will need to review our Official Plan policies to make sure that natural



heritage will continue to be treated as a system that is protected or further enhanced through new development and the creation of natural linkages.

### 5.3.3 Community Identity

Clarington is a “community of communities” and each has a unique identity. This identity is important for building pride in our communities and fostering a sense of place and home. We will be reviewing policies within the Official Plan that can help protect our unique characteristics. This includes agricultural characteristics like heritage barns, our historic downtowns, or new features like public art.



Reviewing these policies will be particularly important in light of changes at the provincial level that restrict our ability to control urban design in the development approvals process. Proactively identifying the key parts of our community identity can help us grow in a way that reinforces our civic pride.

## 5.4 Sustainability

Sustainability means more than just the environment. A sustainable community is one that is thriving in the present, and well prepared for the future. There are four types of sustainability we need to look at in order to plan for our future: social, economic, environmental, and fiscal.

**Social sustainability** is about maintaining and enriching the social fabric of our Municipality. Focusing on social sustainability means supporting our public spaces like parks and libraries, ensuring the health and safety of our community, and creating a unique sense of place and identity.





**Economic sustainability** is about building a strong local economy now and in the long term. This includes creating opportunities for job creation in the short term, but also protecting resources that will continue to provide jobs for decades. Protecting agricultural and employment land is one strategy that ensures long term economic viability in Clarington.

**Environmental sustainability** involves supporting the natural landscape and creating a climate resilient community. This includes protecting natural features, creating links between green spaces, providing for flood protection and rehabilitating waterways. Environmental sustainability will also mean exploring low-carbon approaches to development such as green building standards and transit-oriented communities.

**Fiscal sustainability** means ensuring that the Municipality of Clarington is able to fund the services that residents need and want. We need to make wise investments in our community that will be of long-term benefit, while also budgeting responsibly today. It's important that we understand what Clarington residents and businesses value most, so that tax dollars can be spent wisely.

**What matters most to you as we plan to 2051?  
Are your priorities covered here?  
Let us know if there are other topics related to the Official Plan that we should  
be thinking about.**



## 6.0 What Other Initiatives are Relevant?

### 6.1 Clarington Initiatives

To plan for our future, there are several other initiatives that are critical to enhancing quality of life in Clarington. The role of the Official Plan is to be the primary long-term planning framework, and it plays an important role in organizing these initiatives. The Official Plan will incorporate the directions provided by these documents to ensure they can be implemented effectively without conflicting with one another.

#### 6.1.1 Strategic Plan

As referenced in Section 5.1, the Strategic Plan for the 2023-2026 Council term is currently being developed. The Strategic Plan is a key building block to the Official Plan which helps set the vision and specific goals that the Official Plan aspires to realize. Information and public input gathered through the development of the Strategic Plan can be used as a starting point for reviewing the Official Plan.

#### 6.1.2 Clarington Economic Development Strategy

In 2022, the Municipality developed an Economic Development Strategy that seeks to clarify what Clarington is already succeeding at, and where more resources would be of the greatest benefit. This Strategy used goals and objectives from the previous Official Plan update as one of its starting points. An implementation plan is currently being developed.

Policies in the Official Plan will be updated so that the actions and tactics set out in the Strategy can be implemented. The objectives of the Strategy are highly dependent on Official Plan policies, particularly those related to cultivating an innovative land-use framework.

#### 6.1.3 Development Charges Background Study

Development Charges pay for new infrastructure and services that will be needed due to growth. They help ensure that “growth pays for growth.” A new development charges background study was completed in 2020 to ensure that the current fees are keeping pace with the rising cost of providing services and infrastructure.

The Official Plan provides forecasting, a plan for future development, and outlines the types of services that will be paid for by development charges. The updated Official Plan will be used for the next Development Charges Background Study. As well, this most recent study help inform how the Official Plan can incentivize efficient growth and development patterns.



### 6.1.4 Clarington Waterfront Strategy Update

The Clarington Waterfront Strategy was originally created in 1992, and an update to this strategy was initiated in 2022. This update is ongoing. Insights from the Clarington Waterfront Strategy will be integrated into the Official Plan. This will include opportunities such as new land uses that will be permitted by the water, new investments that should be made into our trail system, services and waterfront infrastructure, and strategies to foster economic development and tourism. There may also be an opportunity to collaborate on engagement activities between the two projects.



### 6.1.5 Active Transportation Master Plan

The Active Transportation Master Plan will commence shortly and develop a framework for fostering active transportation across Clarington. This Plan will connect and enhance existing active transportation options into a complete network that allows pedestrians and cyclists to safely travel throughout the Municipality.

The Official Plan encourages the development of complete communities, which rely on active transportation. The strategies and priority growth areas identified through the Official Plan review will be a key input for the Active Transportation Master Plan, so that we can ensure there are options for travelling to new neighbourhoods, parks, and tourist attractions in a way that encourages a healthy lifestyle and is climate friendly.



### 6.1.6 Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan

The Municipality will commence the development of a Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan shortly. This Master Plan will determine how these services should be offered now and in the long term. It will develop a plan for investment and programming.

This Master Plan and the Official Plan will work in tandem to inform each other. The amount and location of growth will be determined through the Official Plan, which will inform where and what types of programming will be needed. As well, the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan will develop a policy framework for parkland which will be incorporated into the Official Plan. Looking at both of these projects comprehensively will result in effective service delivery for both current and new residents.

Have your say and look out for upcoming engagement opportunities related to the following initiatives:

- [Strategic Plan](#) (Summer of 2023)
- [Clarington Waterfront Strategy](#) (2023-2024)
- [Active Transportation Master Plan](#) (2024)
- [Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan](#) (2024)

## 6.2 Provincial Initiatives

Planning at the local level is affected by policies and directions established at the provincial and regional levels of government. The Official Plan must conform to, or not conflict with, Provincial Plans and policies. Since the previous Official Plan Review, the Province has released many significant changes to legislation and provincial policy, particularly related to its efforts to increase the supply of housing.

Specifically, updates have been made to the Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement, the Growth Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, and the Region's Official Plan.

The Official Plan is the tool that ensures the provincial and regional planning directions that mandate how much growth Clarington should plan for and where it should go are addressed locally in a way that is carefully considered, responsibly phased over the Plan's horizon, and respects our Municipality's collective vision for the future.

### 6.2.1 Planning Act

The Planning Act is a piece of provincial legislation that sets out the parameters for land use planning in Ontario and defines the relationship between provincial policy and municipal land use planning. The legislative power of official plans is based on the provisions of the Planning Act. It sets requirements for municipalities for how to develop



official plans and zoning by-laws, when development approval is required, and how to process development applications.

Since the last Official Plan Review, major changes have been made to the Planning Act to implement the recommendations of the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force. In 2019, Bill 108 was passed, followed in 2022 by Bill 109 and Bill 23 to amend the Planning Act to increase the supply of housing in Ontario and improve affordability.

Specifically, changes have been made to:

- Shorten development approval timelines and streamline the approvals process;
- Incentivize the building of a variety of housing types;
- Reduce how much parkland is provided in support of new development;
- Restrict the role of conservation authorities in reviewing development applications; and
- Limit the use of site plan control as part of the approvals process.

More information on changes to the Planning Act is provided in Section 8.1.

The review will provide an opportunity to explore ways to continue to plan comprehensively and introduce clear requirements for development application processes despite shortened development approval timelines, reduced parkland and development charge requirements, and fewer tools to influence community design.

### 6.2.2 Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides direction on matters of provincial interest including preservation of employment lands, agricultural land, and natural resources. It also directs growth to urban areas with municipal servicing, and promotes a range and mix of housing options, including intensification to existing settlement areas. Planning decisions must be consistent with the policies in the PPS.

The PPS was updated in 2020 to provide both increased flexibility for and certainty around land development. Among the changes was a clear statement that Official Plans are the most important vehicle for implementing the PPS. Key additions to the PPS, 2020 include:

- Increased emphasis on the need to plan for climate change and resilience;
- Strengthened protections of agricultural land for long-term success;
- Requiring municipalities to accommodate housing for 15 years with three years of serviced land;
- Minimum targets for affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households;
- Increased flexibility for employment land conversions and settlement area boundary expansions where it is demonstrated to be needed and impacts can be mitigated; and



- Increased clarity on the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives on land use planning.

Incorporating consistency with all PPS, 2020 directions into the Official Plan would ensure all development throughout the Municipality will support provincial interests.

At the time of writing, PPS, 2020 is being proposed to be replaced by Provincial Planning Statement, 2023. This is further addressed in Section 8.2.

### 6.2.3 A Place to Grow - Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

A Place to Grow – The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020 is the Province’s growth management policy. The Growth Plan includes detailed policies that support the achievement of complete communities, prioritize intensification of development within existing urban areas, and emphasize the importance of integrating land use planning and planning for infrastructure. It establishes growth (population and job) forecasts for each regional municipality so that they can plan for long-term housing and employment needs.

The Growth Plan was updated in 2020. The planning horizon changed from 2041 to 2051 and new growth forecasts have been created that plan for development to 2051. Municipalities are required to use these growth forecasts in their planning.

The updated 2051 growth forecasts will need to be incorporated into the Official Plan. Planning for 2051 will mean identifying future needs for land, transportation infrastructure, water and sewer servicing, and places for increased density.

### 6.2.4 Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

The Greenbelt Plan establishes an area in the Greater Golden Horseshoe that is permanently protected from development – where growth cannot occur. Generally, the Greenbelt Plan creates a ring around the Greater Toronto Area that cannot be urbanized. The majority of this land is agricultural, meaning that Ontario’s prime farmland is protected. The Plan also includes policies that ensure the protection and sustainability of ecological functions throughout the Greenbelt Plan area.

In Clarington, this also includes the lands within the Oak Ridges Moraine (subject to the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan). The Oak Ridges Moraine is an ecologically sensitive landform that stretches across south central Ontario from the Niagara Escarpment in the west to the Trent-Severn Waterway in the east. This piece of land contains watersheds that are vital for healthy ecosystems and the local water supply.

In 2017, the Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan were updated. In 2022, the Greenbelt Plan was amended to include urban river valleys as part of the Greenbelt. In contrast, the Province amended the Greenbelt Plan to conditionally remove several pieces of land to facilitate the development of housing.



In Clarington, Wilmot, Soper, and Bowmanville Creek urban river valleys have been added to the Greenbelt. One parcel of land in Clarington in the area of Nash and Trulls Roads has been conditionally removed from the Greenbelt for additional housing.

The Official Plan review will address these changes to ensure conformity with these provincial Plans.

For information about the changes to the Greenbelt Plan, see staff report [PDS-059-22](#).



**Planning at the local level is directed by planning at higher levels of government. Municipalities are legally required to adhere to plans and policies at the provincial and regional level.**

**However, local plans ensure these policies are implemented in a way that best fits Clarington.**



## 7.0 How is the planning landscape changing?

### 7.1 Recent Changes to the Planning Act

Recently, the Province has introduced a wide range of major changes to the land use planning framework in Ontario through amendments to the Planning Act. While these changes are intended to increase the supply of housing, they reduce the number of tools we have that help us create complete communities. They reduce certain municipal streams of funding, restrict site plan control, and limit the environmental oversight on development applications.

Some of this legislation has now been enacted, and some pieces are expected to be implemented over the coming months and into 2024.

As part of this review, the Official Plan will need to be adapted to address these changes in a way that helps us to continue to create high quality neighbourhoods and provide services that our residents have come to expect.

For more information about Bill 23 and the effects it will have on Clarington, see the staff report ([PDS-054-22](#)) and the staff report on a strategy to continue to incorporate environmental expertise into the planning process as a result of Bill 23 ([PDS-006-23](#)).

### 7.2 Proposed Provincial Planning Statement, 2023

In April 2023, the Ontario government released a proposed Provincial Planning Statement (2023 PPS) that is intended to replace the current Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and the Growth Plan and combine them into one document that would apply across Ontario. The proposed 2023 PPS enhances the Province's focus on creating housing and its goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031.

The new 2023 PPS would result in a simpler planning framework for Clarington. The changes would provide flexibility for municipalities by removing the rigid density and intensification targets contained in the Growth Plan, but may restrict our ability to ensure we're using land and resources wisely in a way that protects what is valuable, such as farmland and natural heritage.

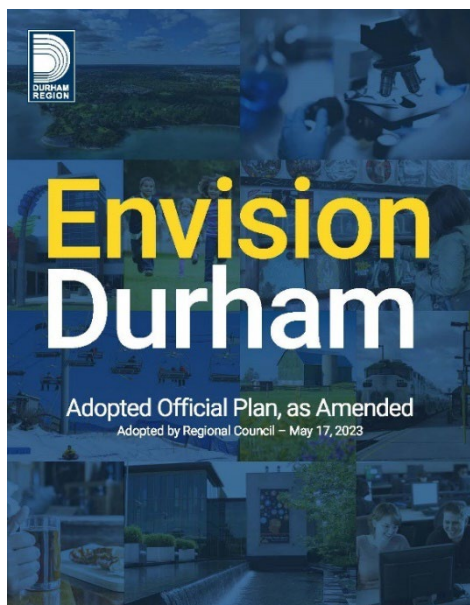
With less support from provincial policies to grow responsibly, it's critical that we establish our values and develop a framework for growth in our Official Plan that fits our Municipality's needs and protects what matters.

The proposed 2023 PPS remains on the Environmental Registry of Ontario for comment until August 4<sup>th</sup>.





## 7.3 Durham Regional Official Plan



The Durham Regional Official Plan was adopted by Regional Council on May 17, 2023, and will come into effect once the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing approves the new Plan. Once approved, the Clarington Official Plan must be updated to conform to the new Regional Official Plan.

Changes to the Durham Regional Official Plan include incorporating policy changes that have been made at the Provincial level, like growth targets, as well as Durham-specific changes related to guiding land use planning and growth, service and infrastructure planning and delivery. The Region's new Official Plan takes the regional population and employment targets from the Province's Growth Plan and distributes that growth amongst the area municipalities. It specifies population and

employment targets for Clarington to the year 2051 and identifies areas for urban expansion that can be used, as necessary, as we grow to 2051.

Durham Region is identified to become an "upper tier municipality without planning responsibilities" once Bill 23 is fully implemented. When this occurs, the Regional Official Plan will be assumed by local Durham municipalities. The impacts of this change will be examined during the Official Plan review.



## 8.0 What is the Process for the Review?

The Official Plan review process will recognize that Clarington has an Official Plan that has been effective and undergone updates in recent years.

The process will also reflect that:

- Clarington is expected to continue to be one of the fastest-growing municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and we need to ensure the vision for the Municipality continues to meet the community's evolving needs; and
- There have been substantial changes to the provincial and regional planning framework that must be incorporated into the Official Plan in a way that makes sense for Clarington.

### 8.1 Review Phases

The review will be a multi-year project that is expected to begin this fall with the retention of a consultant to assist staff with the review. The review is proposed to follow five phases, generally outlined below:

Phase	Description of Deliverables
<b>Pre-Phase: Start Up</b>	Terms of Reference Request for Proposals Retain Consultant Detailed Work Program Community Engagement and Communication Plan
<b>Phase One: Visioning and Information Gathering</b>	Council and Committee Engagement Community Visioning Sessions Phase One Summary Report
<b>Phase Two: Background Studies and Topic Discussion Paper(s)</b>	Issue refinement Release of Topic-specific Discussion Papers Public Engagement
<b>Phase Three: Directions and Recommendations</b>	Draft Directions and Recommendations Report
<b>Phase Four: Draft Official Plan Amendment</b>	Draft Official Plan Amendment and Mapping Public Open House and Statutory Public Meeting
<b>Phase Five: Final Official Plan Amendment</b>	Council Adoption



The feedback and input received in response to this Discussion Paper and at the Special Meeting of Council on June 27<sup>th</sup> will help to inform the development of the Terms of Reference and Community Engagement and Communication Plan.

## 8.2 Consultation and Engagement

Community and stakeholder engagement through out the Official Plan Review is essential to updating the Clarington Official Plan in a way that successfully captures the needs and desires of the community.

This is the beginning of the conversation about the review and is the first of many opportunities for the public to get involved in planning for Clarington's future.

A Community Engagement and Communication Plan will be developed as part of the Start-Up Phase of the project, including a robust strategy to engage residents, stakeholders and Indigenous communities that will ensure there are various types of opportunities available to all who wish to participate throughout the review process.



**Tell us how would you like to participate in the Official Plan review (e.g. in-person, virtually, surveys, daytime, evening)?**



## 9.0 Conclusion

This paper seeks to start a conversation about what we need to look at as part of the Official Plan review. There are many factors that need to be considered as part of this process, but there is also an opportunity to ensure we're embedding our values into our plans for 2051. This paper covered why the Official Plan review is important, major challenges facing us, and what we'll need to re-examine so that we can build a community we are proud to call home.

### Now it's time to start talking!

Think about the questions asked throughout this paper and share your thoughts at the Special Council meeting or by contacting us at the links below. See Appendix A for all of the questions we've covered.

Contact us to share your ideas or learn more:  
[OPReview@Clarington.net](mailto:OPReview@Clarington.net)  
[www.clarington.net/OPReview](http://www.clarington.net/OPReview)



## Appendix A – Summary of Discussion Questions

1	What do we already love about Clarington?
2	What are we already doing well, and how can we build on it?
3	What needs a closer look to make sure we get it right?
4	What sets Clarington apart from other communities?
5	What matters most to you as we plan to 2051?
6	Are your priorities covered in the Discussion Paper?
7	How would you like to participate in the Official Plan review (e.g. in-person, virtually, surveys, daytime, evening)?
8	Let us know if there are other topics related to the Official Plan that we should be thinking about.

