



**SUBJECT: Regional Official Plan Amendment 48: City of Burlington Comments**

**TO: Community Planning, Regulation & Mobility Cttee.**

**FROM: Community Planning Department**

Report Number: PL-20-21

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 150-14-02

Date to Committee: May 4, 2021

Date to Council: May 18, 2021

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**Recommendation:**

Direct the Director of Community Planning to submit community planning department report PL-20-21 and its appendices as the City of Burlington submission on the Region of Halton's Regional Official Plan Amendment Number 48; and

Direct the Director of Community Planning to provide any further comments to the Region, if any, upon Council's decision on May 18, 2021.

**PURPOSE:**

To provide comments on the first Regional Official Plan amendment (ROPA 48) which has been prepared to define a Regional Urban Structure.

**Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Increase economic prosperity and community responsive city growth
  - Improve integrated city mobility
  - Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment
  - Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture
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## **Executive Summary:**

City of Burlington Staff have reviewed the Region of Halton's scoped Regional Official Plan Amendment titled Regional Official Plan Amendment 48 and have prepared a submission to inform the Statutory Public meeting and to inform the finalization of the amendment. Staff are supportive of the amendment and of moving the implementation of the Regional Official Plan Review forward in a phased manner. Staff encourage the Region to move expeditiously to prepare a recommendation report related to the amendment and to provide sufficient time to consider any comments received prior to, and through the statutory process. Staff have also proposed a series of modifications for consideration to support implementation of the policies. Overall, modifications proposed by City Staff are intended to support local plans and priorities by providing the flexibility to plan within the local context of each municipality.

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## **Background and Discussion:**

### **1.0 Regional Official Plan Review**

In April 2014, through Report No. [LPS28-14](#), Regional Council authorized the commencement of a statutory five-year review of the Halton Region Official Plan, referred to as the Regional Official Plan Review (ROPR). Regional staff developed a Work Plan, Communications and Engagement Strategy, and Directions Report to guide the ROPR through Report No. [LPS110-16](#) which was delivered to Regional Council in October 2016. The Directions Report was the culmination of Phase 1 of the ROPR and identified a high-level work plan for subsequent phases.

The Regional Official Plan Review is being advanced in partnership with Halton's local municipalities and in consideration of local plans and priorities. The Region continues to be responsive to the local vision for growth established by the local municipalities throughout the process.

The Regional Official Plan Review (ROPR) in Phase 2 focused on research, analysis and a set of Discussion Papers on five key theme areas. The Discussion Papers were prepared and released for public consultation in July 2020. For more details and to review the comments provided in September 2020, please refer to staff report [PL-28-20](#) titled *Submission on Region of Halton's Official Plan Discussion Papers*. These City prepared comments highlighted key issues related to the various discussion papers as well as discussing recent changes (August 2020, Amendment 1) to the Growth Plan

(2019), and the Burlington City Council Direction to request the Region consider an adjusted Urban Growth Centre boundary.

During the consultation period related to the Discussion Papers, Regional Staff prepared staff report [LPS84-20](#) titled *Advancing Key Planning Priorities of the Halton Municipalities through the Regional Official Plan Review*. The report directed staff to prepare an initial Scoped ROPA, under Section 26 of the Planning Act which would advance select local municipal planning priorities related to urban structure as presented in the Regional Urban Structure and Supplemental Discussion Paper.

Report No. [LPS84-20](#) outlined a number of local municipal planning priorities that were to be considered as part of the initial Scoped Regional Official Plan Amendment including boundary and policy changes to Urban Growth Centres, delineation and assignment of density targets for MTSA's, identification of additional growth nodes and strategic growth corridors with a corresponding policy framework and limited employment conversions.

By way of a letter dated November 12, 2019 the Province confirmed that municipalities may advance a phased approach to municipal comprehensive reviews through multiple official plan amendments.

In response to City of Burlington Staff report [PL-33-20](#), a supplemental discussion paper was prepared jointly by Regional and City staff titled "[Downtown Burlington Urban Growth Centre and MTSA Supplemental Discussion Paper](#)" which was released in October 2020. City of Burlington comments were provided in staff report [PL-59-20](#) titled *Update on the Downtown Burlington Urban Growth Centre (UGC) and Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) Supplemental Discussion Paper*. Further discussion of the adjusted Downtown Burlington Urban Growth Centre is provided below.

On February 17 Regional Council considered three reports on its agenda related to the Regional Official Plan Review:

[LPS05-21 – Regional Official Plan Review – Phase 2 Initial Consultation Summary](#)

[LPS18-21 – Regional Official Plan Review – Integrated Growth Management Strategy – Growth Concepts Discussion Paper](#)

[LPS17-21 - Draft Regional Official Plan Amendment 48 - An Amendment to Define a Regional Urban Structure.](#)

The purpose of the subject report is to provide comments on ROPA 48 as presented in LPS17-21 in advance of the Statutory Public Meeting. City staff will also provide discussion and an associated submission related to both the Initial Consultation Summary and the Growth Concepts discussion paper in a forthcoming report.

Regional Council amended the recommendations related to LPS17-21. The effect of the modifications were to add a specific geographic area to be considered for employment conversion around the Milton Education Village and to add the following considerations for Regional staff:

THAT given the changing nature of employment and the need to understand the role of employment in the mixed use growth nodes, request that Regional staff consider a policy which would allow for changes in the ratio between population and jobs within each of the growth nodes outside of municipal comprehensive reviews. A policy should allow for changes to capture the evolving nature of employment uses which are flexible and responsive to the market and which capture the contribution the mix of employment and residential uses which contribute to the vibrancy and success of the growth nodes.

THAT Regional staff consider the local input in the defining the growth node policies.

THAT Regional staff comment on the ability of the growth nodes to contribution to higher density employment and how this is factored into the land needs for employment forecasts.

City staff look forward to working with Regional staff to review the above noted considerations.

## **2.0 Regional Official Plan Amendment 48**

The Region has prepared, in line with the recommendation, a draft Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA 48) which is being advanced under Section 26 of the Planning Act. This amendment, among other things, identifies non-discretionary components of a Regional Urban Structure that support local plans and priorities while ensuring that Regional Council retains its ability to comprehensively and objectively evaluate the full range of Growth Concepts associated with the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

City staff are supportive of the approach to present this first phase amendment to the Regional Official Plan which has been drafted with a focus on settlement areas, specifically within the Urban Area, to:

- define the Regional Urban Structure;
- reinforce Local Urban Structures; and,
- enable Local municipalities to move forward with critical work at the local level.

The amendment is well written and easy to understand. The specific details of the amendment are considered below. Detailed comments on the proposed amendment ([Attachment 1 to LPS17-21](#)) are included as Appendix A: ROPA 48 Comment Table. While the comments in this report and in Appendix A form the City's comments at this time, staff will monitor the progress of ROPA 48 and will provide further comments, if necessary, in advance of the Region's Statutory Public Meeting.

The comments below are divided into the following categories:

2.1 Population and Employment to 2051

2.2 Regional Structure

2.2.1 Urban Area and Regional Urban Structure

2.2.2 Strategic Growth Areas

a) Urban Growth Centres

b) Major Transit Station Areas

c) Regional Nodes

d) Targets & Proportions for UGCs, MTSAs and Regional Nodes

e) Employment Uses in Strategic Growth Areas

f) Other Regional Urban Structure Elements

2.2.3 Employment Conversions

**2.1 Population and Employment to 2051**

Draft ROPA 48 implements the Halton Region-wide target to 2051 in Table 1 and replaces 2031 with 2051 in other locations in the amendment. Table 1 includes an asterix with respect to population and employment forecasts for each of the Local Municipalities to 2051 which refers to the following footnote:

\*Distribution of the 2051 population and employment forecasts to the Local Municipalities, forecasts to be determined through the municipal comprehensive review.

City staff agree that the Region must apply the forecasts from Schedule 3. Staff also agree that Halton Region can only fully achieve the Growth Plan policy direction through the completion of the municipal comprehensive review. In consideration of the Growth Plan policy 5.2.4.3 which states:

The population and employment forecasts and plan horizon contained in the applicable upper- or single-tier official plan that is approved and in effect as of August 28, 2020 will apply to all planning matters in that municipality, including lower-tier planning matters where applicable, until the upper- or single-tier municipality has applied the forecasts in Schedule 3 in accordance with policy 5.2.4.2 and those forecasts are approved and in effect in the upper- or single-tier official plan.

**Staff Position**

City staff request that the Region consider modifying the note on Table 1 to clarify that until the completion of the municipal comprehensive review that the Population and Employment Distributions to 2031 also found in Table 1, and in effect as of August 28, 2020, will apply to all planning matters in Halton Region and within lower-tier planning matters, where applicable. For the specific comment and proposed modification please see Appendix A.

**2.2 Regional Structure**

Limited modifications have been made to the policies relating broadly to Halton's Regional Structure in the phased Regional Official Plan Amendment. Modifications are focused on enhancing the details of the Urban Area and its Regional Urban Structure which is supported by Map 1H, which is included as Appendix B: Regional Urban Structure Map 1H.

**2.2.1 Urban Area and the Regional Urban Structure**

ROPA 48 includes a new goal related to the Urban Area and the Regional Urban Structure which states:

The goal of the Urban Area and the Regional Urban Structure is to manage growth in a manner that fosters *complete communities*, enhances mobility across *Halton*, addresses climate change, and improved housing affordability, sustainability, and economic prosperity.

In support of this goal, Objective 72.1(6) is also modified to clarify that the proposed policies identify a Regional Urban Structure that directs growth to Strategic Growth Areas and protects Regional *Employment Areas*.

New policies 51.3 and 78 are also added to clarify that the lands within the Urban Area are further defined by having a Regional Urban Structure consisting of the following:

- Strategic Growth Areas
- Regional Employment Areas
- Built-Up Areas and
- Designated Greenfield Areas

The comments in this section are focused on the Strategic Growth Areas and the Regional Employment Areas as no changes have been proposed through ROPA 48 to the Built- Up Areas or the Designated Greenfield Areas. Changes to those features of the Regional Urban Structure will be considered after the completion of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

### **2.2.2 Strategic Growth Areas**

One of the key elements of ROPA 48 is the presentation of a Region-wide approach to responding to the direction from the Growth Plan which requires Upper-tier and Single-tier municipalities to “establish a hierarchy of settlement areas, and of areas within settlement areas” in line with the policies of the Growth Plan.

Strategic Growth Areas are a new term, first coined in the Growth Plan in 2017. Strategic Growth Areas are defined in the Growth Plan 2019:

Within *settlement areas*, nodes, corridors, and other areas that have been identified by municipalities or the Province to be the focus for accommodating *intensification* and higher-density mixed uses in a more *compact built form*. *Strategic growth areas* include *urban growth centres*, *major transit station areas*, and other major opportunities that may include infill, *redevelopment*, *brownfield sites*, the expansion or conversion of existing buildings, or *greyfields*. Lands along major roads, arterials, or other areas with existing or planned *frequent transit* service or *higher order transit* corridors may also be identified as *strategic growth areas*.

In general, the approach that ROPA 48 takes is to propose the former defined term “Intensification Areas” in the Regional Official Plan be replaced throughout with the

newly defined term “Strategic Growth Areas”. Staff are supportive of this approach as the defined term from the Growth Plan is implemented and further supported by the establishment of a Strategic Growth Area hierarchy in ROPA 48.

ROPA 48 proposes an important clarification related to the agricultural, natural heritage systems and to the Strategic Growth Areas which are all defined as durable elements of the Region’s Official Plan which recognizes that the horizon for these elements is far beyond the planning horizon of 2051. ROPA 48 proposes the following Strategic Growth Areas:

- Urban Growth Centres;
- Major Transit Station Areas;
- Proposed Major Transit Station Areas;
- Primary Regional Nodes;
- Secondary Regional Nodes; and
- Regional Corridors

Policy 79.2 identifies a proposed hierarchy of Strategic Growth Areas (SGAs) delineated or identified by symbol on Map 1H. The SGAs that correspond to each and, where applicable, to Table 2b as proposed, are included in bold italics within () below):

- (1) Urban Growth Centres / Major Transit Station Areas on a Priority Transit Corridor; (***Downtown Burlington UGC / Burlington GO and Midtown Oakville UGC/Oakville GO***)
- (2) Urban Growth Centres / Major Transit Station Areas on a Commuter Rail Corridor; (***Downtown Milton UGC / Milton GO***)
- (3) Major Transit Station Areas on a Priority Transit Corridor; (***Bronte GO and Appleby GO***)
- (4) Major Transit Station Areas on a Commuter Rail Corridor; (***Aldershot GO, Georgetown GO and Acton GO***)
- (5) Proposed Major Transit Station Areas; (***Proposed Trafalgar GO***)
- (6) Primary Regional Nodes; (***Uptown Core, Oakville; Hospital District Oakville; Milton Education Village; Palermo Village; Uptown Urban Centre, Burlington***)
- (7) Secondary Regional Nodes; (***Neyagawa Urban Core, Oakville; Kerr Village, Oakville; Bronte Village, Oakville; Downtown Oakville;***)

***Downtown Urban Centre, Burlington; Downtown Georgetown, Halton Hills; Guelph Street Corridor, Halton Hill)*** and,  
(8) Regional Corridors. (***Not currently identified in ROPA 48***)

The Regional Urban Structure is supported by the Local Urban Structures identified in Local Official Plans which reflect this hierarchy of Strategic Growth Areas and may include additional Local Nodes, which are not expressly identified as specific Strategic Growth Areas.

The City supports the reference to the role of Local Official Plans, Local Urban Structures and associated policies. In addition, City staff confirm that the hierarchy proposed is generally appropriate and reinforces the City's Urban Structure and Growth Framework policies found in the new Official Plan. Burlington-specific comments are provided below related to each of the Strategic Growth Areas.

**a) Urban Growth Centres**

Urban Growth Centres are shown on Map 1H and are included on Map 6, which is made up of a series of maps including the specific details of the proposed boundaries for both UGCs and MTSAs.

The amendment includes the adjustment to the Downtown Burlington Urban Growth Centre boundary as proposed through the "[Downtown Burlington Urban Growth Centre and MTSA Supplemental Discussion Paper](#)". In addition, boundary adjustments have been made to the Downtown Milton UGC and Midtown Oakville to remove the regulated flood plain in those areas.

City staff agree with the proposed boundary adjustment to the Downtown Burlington UGC. The adjustment of the Downtown Burlington UGC brings Regional policies in alignment to Growth Plan Schedule 5: Moving People – Transit. All of the Region's 3 UGCs are located along Existing Higher Order Transit Corridors. Further, the adjusted Downtown Burlington UGC and Midtown Oakville UGC are both located on Priority Transit Corridors. City staff also agree with the boundary adjustments to the Downtown Milton UGC and Midtown Oakville UGC to remove the regulated flood plain in those areas.

City staff recommend that modifications be made to Map 1H to better distinguish Urban Growth Centres that are also Major Transit Station Areas on a Priority Transit corridor from other MTSAs. Clarification in the mapping would

support a better visual understanding of proposed Strategic Growth Area hierarchy set out in Policy 79.2.

### New Official Plan

The new Official Plan was prepared in conformity with the Region's current Official Plan (ROPA 38) with a horizon to 2031. The scoped re-examination of the downtown set out policies and vision to guide future growth in the downtown to 2031 while recognizing the wide variety of unique areas that make up the downtown with a focus on strong policies for a retail main streets, urban design, and cultural heritage.

A specific "given" was established in the Public Engagement Plan for the scoped re-examination as the following:

Planning policy is guided by various legislative requirements and policy documents, such as the Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statement, provincial plans, the Halton Region Official Plan, Bill 108, and the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan.

These legislative requirements include policies for the Urban Growth Centre (UGC), Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs), and Mobility Hubs. City Council has directed staff to report back on any changes to the Urban Growth Centre and Major Transit Area designations after the completion of the Official Plan and Interim Control By-law studies. This analysis will not form part of the current project.

The policy framework, recently considered through the scoped re-examination project, which informed modifications to the adopted Official Plan, provides a framework for accommodating new growth in a manner that reflects the existing context and identifies potential for growth in accordance with those policies. The new Official Plan Downtown Urban Centre policy framework recognizes the existing boundary of the Downtown Burlington Urban Growth Centre which conforms to the Regional Official Plan. Should ROPA 48 be approved, it is expected that the policies of the Downtown Urban Centre would require only minor changes to the policy framework to bring the policies into conformity with the Regional Official Plan with the exception of establishing affordable housing targets which will be considered through the Housing Strategy currently underway and concluding in mid-2022.

Given that the Regional Official Plan Review is considering the future beyond 2031 to 2051, in conformity with the Growth Plan, this is the appropriate time for comments from the City of Burlington to reinforce that the adjustments to the

Downtown Burlington UGC boundary being proposed through this first ROPA supports the vision established in the Local Official Plan and in the Downtown Urban Centre policies.

**Staff Position**

City staff support the boundary adjustments to the existing Urban Growth Centres in Halton Region. Staff recommend enhancements to Map 1H to reinforce the Strategic Growth Area hierarchy set out in Policy 79.2.

**b) Major Transit Station Areas**

ROPA 48 identifies and delineates Major Transit Station Areas across the Region. Similar to the comment provided with respect to the Urban Growth Centre, staff support the Major Transit Station Areas identified as part of the Regional Urban Structure on Map 1H.

Staff are supportive of the removal of the MTSA designation in Downtown Burlington as discussed in the "[Downtown Burlington Urban Growth Centre and MTSA Supplemental Discussion Paper](#)". Similar to the comments related to the adjustment of the UGC, the removal of the MTSA does not impact the high-level direction and policies approved by the Region in the City's new Official Plan. There are likely to be several modifications required to language and mapping in the new Official Plan as it relates to the identification of the lands around the John Street Bus Terminal as a Major Transit Station Area.

The New Official Plan maintains and reinforces the transit connection between the Burlington GO Station, downtown and the rest of the City. The City's new Official Plan also identifies long term frequent transit corridors, which reinforce transit connections among key destinations.

Staff are supportive of the identification of Major Transit Station Areas as Protected Major Transit Station Areas in accordance with Section 16 (16) of the Planning Act. One of a number of considerations related to Protected Major Transit Station Areas is the potential to develop Inclusionary Zoning By-laws to support the introduction of affordable housing. Staff request further discussions related to the preparation of the required municipal assessment reports as there may be some potential for identifying a shared opportunity among the Region and Local municipalities. The City of Burlington has initiated a Housing Strategy and would like to move ahead with detailed discussions about the development of Inclusionary Zoning.

***i) Delineation of Major Transit Station Areas – Map 6***

The Growth Plan requires that Upper or Single-tier municipalities are responsible for the delineation of Major Transit Station Area boundaries. Establishing these boundaries within the Regional Official Plan is a critical step in moving forward with the Major Transit Station Area area-specific planning process in Burlington, for which Council approved funding in March. Progress on that work relies upon both the delineation of Major Transit Station Areas and the Regional Employment Area conversions within Major Transit Station Areas.

Study area boundaries around the existing GO Stations in Burlington have had a series of different treatments over time. First, the adopted Official Plan (2018) established Mobility Hub study boundaries. The intent of the Mobility Hub study areas was to signal and identify where additional study would be undertaken including a variety of studies like a transportation analysis, noise and vibration studies, archeological assessments to support the development of area-specific plans. When the boundaries were created in 2017 staff included a larger area, capturing existing public service facilities, including parks and open spaces, as well as neighbourhoods within the boundary for the purpose of studying the area holistically. These broader boundaries were established in anticipation of the need to identify connections and any potential impacts from a transportation network perspective such as increased traffic flows to and from the GO Station, opportunities for pedestrian and active transportation connections, as well as matters such as noise and air quality studies.

Next, through the Region's consideration of modifications to the New Official Plan "MTSA Special Planning Areas" were established which clarified that the formal delineation of MTSA boundaries would occur through the Region's municipal comprehensive review. To implement Official Plan Amendment No.119 while ensuring clarity and consistency throughout the Official Plan, the City proposed modifications to update the overall nomenclature and policy framework for transit-supportive development, which included the removal of the redundant term "mobility hub" and the introduction of the "MTSA Special Planning Area" concept to replace the former "Mobility Hub Study Area" terminology and align with provincial and regional policy. With one exception in the Aldershot Area, the "Mobility Hub Study Area" and the "Major Transit Station Area Special Planning Areas" are identical.

Lastly, the proposed Major Transit Station Areas Boundaries delineated in ROPA 48 are the result of the application of the Region's delineation

methodology first described in the Urban Structure Discussion Paper in 2020. City staff are supportive of the Region of Halton's MTSA delineation methodology. Staff note that a primary goal of delineating an MTSA through the Region's process is to identify a minimum boundary density target to be achieved in alignment with the Growth Plan (2019). The earlier Mobility Hubs Study Areas were created to study matters like connectivity, transportation, air quality, noise impacts etc. at a larger scale, and therefore included parks, open spaces and some neighbourhood areas. Based on the Region's methodology, areas such as parks, open spaces and neighbourhood areas are excluded from the MTSA delineation.

City Staff note that while the MTSA will have a delineated boundary, through area-specific planning staff will continue to consider areas adjacent to MTSAs to identify and strengthen connections, and consider any potential impacts from a transportation network perspective such as potential increased traffic flows from the GO Station, or potential opportunities to support pedestrian connections to the GO Station, as well as technical matters such as noise and air quality.

As noted in PL-28-20 "Submission on Region of Halton's Official Plan Discussion Papers", the proposed MTSA boundaries proposed at that time for Burlington GO and Appleby GO vary slightly from their respective former Mobility Hubs study area boundaries. These variations relate primarily to the exclusion of parkland as well as minor refinements in Appleby GO, west of Appleby Line and north of the rail, which were made to align with ownership parcel fabric data. City staff are supportive of the proposed Downtown Burlington UGC / MTSA boundary and the Appleby GO MTSA boundary.

Several differences are noted between the Aldershot MTSA Special Planning Area boundary within the new City of Burlington Official Plan and the proposed Aldershot GO MTSA boundary.

#### **1135 Gallagher Road**

The Region's proposed Aldershot GO MTSA boundary excludes Grove Park, Aldershot Park and the properties located at 1135 Gallagher Road. Staff are supportive of the Region's proposed Aldershot Major Transit Station Area boundary, consistent with the Region's delineation methodology.

#### **1150 and 1200 King Road**

The Region's proposed Aldershot GO MTSA boundary excludes 1150 and 1200 King Road. As part of the submission related to the Discussion Papers in the Fall of 2020 the following comment was provided:

Staff note that the lands at 1200 King Road are addressed in Minutes of Settlement between the City and the owner of those lands, Paletta International Corporation. The City agreed, through the Minutes of Settlement, to conduct a review to determine whether the portion of the 1200 King Road lands located west of Falcon Creek should be developed with MTSA land uses. That review, which includes a natural heritage component, has not yet been completed. City staff await a response from the Province respecting the natural heritage review that has been completed for these lands. Once received, the City will consider the Province's comments and conclude its review. Through previous correspondence, the Region has noted that the proposed Aldershot GO MTSA boundary as presented in the IGMS Discussion Paper is consistent with the Region's delineation methodology to following the Natural Heritage System (NHS) boundary.

A portion of 1200 King Road was supported for employment conversion through the new Official Plan process given its inclusion in the Mobility Hub Study Area boundary as noted on [Appendix D](#) to PB-04-18. The Aldershot Mobility Hub Draft Precinct Plan identified that the same area was subject to further environmental review and it would be premature to prepare any draft precinct information for that portion of the study area.

The City has recently been informed by the Province that a new Provincially Significant Wetland named Grindstone-Falcon Creeks Headwater Wetland Complex has been identified on a significant portion of the western half of 1200 King Road lands nearest the Aldershot GO station. Given this information staff believe that the natural heritage component of the work has been sufficiently completed. The findings confirm that significant natural heritage constraints exist on these lands. These constraints severely limit the potential of those lands of being able to accommodate development contemplated within an MTSA. Accordingly, staff are supportive of the Region's proposed Aldershot Major Transit Station Area boundary, consistent with the Region's delineation methodology.

In general, should ROPA 48 be approved as proposed a number of mapping and policy issues would need to be addressed at the time of consideration of Local Official Plan conformity.

**Staff Position**

City staff:

- Support the removal of the MTSA designation from lands around the John Street Bus Terminal;
- Support the identification of all MTSA's shown on Map 1 H and Map 6 as Protected Major Transit Station Areas in accordance with Section 16(16) of the Planning Act;
- Support the delineation methodology used to propose the Major Transit Station Area boundaries set out in Map 6; and
- Support the boundaries of the Major Transit Station Areas set out in Map 6.

**c) Regional Nodes (additional growth nodes)**

ROPA 48 establishes a set of additional growth nodes which form part of the Local Urban Structure. In the City of Burlington two Regional Nodes are identified: the Uptown Urban Centre which is identified as a Primary Regional Node and the Downtown Urban Centre which is identified as a Secondary Regional Node on Map 1H (Appendix B).

City staff are supportive of the identification of Regional Nodes. By identifying the Regional Nodes ROPA 48 includes all of the existing Urban Centres and emerging Major Transit Station Areas as Strategic Growth Areas in the City of Burlington. In doing so ROPA 48 includes all areas identified as Primary Growth Areas within the City's new Official Plan.

One key policy related to Regional Nodes is the requirement to prepare area-specific plans in accordance with Policies 48 and 77(5). For reference City Staff, in preparing the area-specific policies for the Downtown Urban Centre were guided by the same policy framework and confirm that with the exception of specific targets for Affordable Housing, which is a city-wide issue and will be considered through the City's Housing Strategy, all elements of the area-specific planning policies with respect to a redevelopment of a community were considered as part of the preparation of the modifications to the Downtown Urban Centre policies.

Through the development of the new Official Plan a review of the policies in the Uptown Urban Centre was undertaken to recognize the maturity of the Uptown

Area which was first subject to Secondary Planning in the 1990's. Staff will work with the Region to review the Uptown Urban Centre policies in the new Official Plan to determine if further area-specific planning or study may be required in the future.

While supportive of the Regional Nodes policies, City staff also suggest that several refinements are required to:

- clarify the objectives of the Regional Nodes;
- distinguish Primary and Secondary Regional Nodes more clearly in policy;
- in an abundance of caution, support the policy that encourages and allows for discretion by the Local municipality with respect to the delineation of Regional Node areas and the establishment of density targets.

Detailed comments and modifications are proposed in Appendix A: ROPA 48 Comments Table.

**Staff Position**

City staff:

- Support the identification of Regional Nodes, reflective of Local Official Plans; and
- Suggest refinements to the Regional Nodes Policy and related concepts in Table 2b to support Local municipal discretion related to a number of aspects of the policy.

**d) Targets and Proportions for UGS's, MTSA's and Regional Nodes**

Table 2b in ROPA 48 establishes minimum density targets for the Urban Growth Centres and Major Transit Station Areas, as well as targets for the proportion of residents and jobs in the Urban Growth Centers, Major Transit Station Areas and Primary Regional Nodes.

Staff are supportive of the minimum density targets for the UGCs and MTSAs identified in ROPA 48, including the alternative density target of 120 people &

jobs per hectare for the Appleby GO MTSA, which is unique in nature given that a significant portion of the MTSA is within the Region's Employment Area.

While supportive, staff suggest the following refinements:

- Add a note to Table 2b to identify that the targets are to be considered in the development of local OPAs;
- Flexibility at the local level is needed to balance residents and jobs. Modifications to the target proportions of residents and jobs should be allowed through a local process implementing the relevant Regional OP policies;

As previously indicated, staff are supportive of the Region's policy which encourages local municipalities to delineate boundaries and establish minimum density targets for other Strategic Growth Areas which are not directly mandated through Provincial policy, such as Regional Nodes.

Detailed comments and modifications are proposed in Appendix A: ROPA 48 Comment Table.

#### **e) Employment Uses in Strategic Growth Areas**

ROPA 48 provides clear direction and solid expectations for the development of employment uses within Strategic Growth Areas, supported by detailed planning and monitoring.

In planning to achieve the target proportion of residents and jobs within Strategic Growth Areas, local municipalities are to establish policies identifying specific employment requirements including the identification of a minimum proportion or threshold of the total gross floor area to be developed for employment uses. Staff are of the opinion that the policy as written is too prescriptive. It may be more appropriate to identify a set of high level criteria to guide the Region when considering local approaches to achieving this balance. This approach would give local municipalities the opportunity to use a variety of tools and allow for flexible and creative approaches to support the broader Regional and Local objective of ensuring a balance of jobs and people in a way that best suits each unique local area.

Detailed comments and modifications are proposed in Appendix A: ROPA 48 Comment Table.

### **f) Other Regional Urban Structure Elements**

There are two remaining elements of the Regional Urban Structure that will be considered in subsequent amendments and those are Regional Corridors and Local Nodes. On the issue of Regional Corridors City staff look forward to discussing the identification and mapping of Regional Corridors at a later stage of the process.

City staff are supportive of the Regional Official Plan reinforcing Local Urban Structure and policies. As the Region moves forward with developing Local Nodes policy City staff recommend distinguishing Local Nodes in the Regional Official Plan. Local Nodes will each have unique local context and will be subject to the policies of Local Official Plans. In addition, staff recommend that Regional policy continue to support that Local Nodes may only be added through Local Official Plan Reviews and that the policy frameworks related to any identified Local Nodes should be exempt from Regional approval. Regional Policy 44 identifies that the “Local Urban Structure of each of the Local Municipalities, for instance are the responsibilities of the Local Municipalities as long as the overall planning vision for Halton and the policies of this Plan, including the Regional Urban Structure, are adhered to.” Staff support this position and look forward to future discussions.

### **2.2.3 Employment Conversions**

As was noted earlier, the City as part of the adoption of the new Official Plan presented [Appendix D](#) to PB-04-18 that included the range of employment conversions recommended by the City to be considered through the Region’s municipal comprehensive review. With the exception of 1150 and 1200 King Road (see row E and O of Appendix D) discussed above, all City recommended employment conversions have been supported in the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper. Staff also note that of those supported only one area (see row I of [Appendix D](#)) has not been included in ROPA 48.

Staff request that the area be brought forward into ROPA 48. Given the nature of the conversion it is appropriate as it has been highlighted in the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper that these decisions to convert do not have an impact on the consideration of the rest of the IGMS.

Further details on other employment conversions and comments related to Employment Area additions will be provided as part of the City’s comments on the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper.

### **Strategy/process**

ROPA 48 is being advanced under Section 26 of the Planning Act to advance local municipal planning priorities related to defining the Regional Urban Structure and to achieve conformity with the Growth Plan, 2019.

Official Plan Amendments made under Section 26 of the Planning Act require approval from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, with the Minister's decision not subject to appeal.

The Planning Act also requires the Region to circulate draft ROPA 48 for the Minister's review at least 90 days in advance of providing notification of an Open House and Statutory Public Meeting. To that end, on February 17, 2021, through report LPS17-21, Regional Council directed Staff to circulate draft ROPA 48 to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Currently, the Region has indicated that the Virtual Public Information Centres, Open House and Statutory Public Meetings are targeted for June, 2021 with no date formally scheduled at the time of the preparation of this report. Staff note that engagement opportunities will also be available through the Virtual Public Information Sessions for the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper and Phase 2 – Initial Consultation Summary Reports as part of the Region's Integrated Growth Management Strategy work. These Virtual Public Information Sessions are currently targeted for May 2021.

At the time of ROPA 48's approval, the City of Burlington will be required to bring its Official Plan into conformity with the Region's Official Plan as amended by ROPA 48. Burlington's Official Plan will be brought into conformity with the Regional Official Plan through a phased approach. In the near-term, Staff will focus on bringing the site specific employment conversions into conformity while the broader conformity issues will be addressed through a series of Official Plan Amendments. It is expected that this will be accomplished in part through the forthcoming MTSA Area Specific Plan study work and in part through a broader amendment to the new Official Plan. Staff will consider approaches in delivering this conformity and will provide update on this process at the appropriate time.

### **Options Considered**

Not applicable.

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### **Financial Matters:**

Not applicable.

**Total Financial Impact**

Not applicable.

**Source of Funding**

Not applicable.

**Other Resource Impacts**

Not applicable.

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**Climate Implications**

The Region’s Urban Structure focuses on growth within the existing Urban Areas of the Region of Halton. The Regional Urban Structure and the identification a hierarchy of Strategic Growth Areas across the Region reinforces the Region’s ability to accommodate intensification and encourage and prioritize transit supportive growth.

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**Engagement Matters:**

Staff consulted with a number of City Departments as well as Burlington Economic Development to gather feedback on ROPA 48 in the preparation of this report and its appendices. This consultation included an internal virtual meeting with various City departments.

Please see the “Strategy/process” section above for information on the Region’s engagement process.

Regional staff have noted that there will be sufficient time to incorporate the findings from the Statutory Public Meeting into ROPA 48. As noted in the Regional Staff report LPS17-21 it is expected that:

Any comments received through the statutory process will be documented on the public record and responded to by Regional staff prior to bringing forward a recommendation report to Council.

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**Conclusion:**

ROPA 48 advances a number of local plans and priorities. Staff are supportive of ROPA 48 and the expeditious approval of the amendment will position the City to move

forward on Major Transit Station Area area-specific plans at Aldershot GO, Downtown Burlington UGC / MTSA, and at Appleby GO.

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Respectfully submitted,

Alison Enns, MCIP, RPP  
Manager of Policy and Community  
905-335-7600 ext. 7787

**Appendices:**

- A. ROPA 48 Comments Table
- B. Regional Urban Structure Map 1H

**Notifications:**

Curt Benson, Region of Halton

**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.