RURAL AREA BACKGROUND REPORT

Introduction

This background report will provide you with information in preparation for the upcoming Rural Summit as part of the City of Burlington’s Official Plan Review. You will find the following sections within this document:

- An invitation to the Rural Summit (p.1);
- Statistical highlights about the Rural Area of Burlington (p.3);
- A summary of the City’s Official Plan policies regarding the Rural Area (p.3);
- A summary of key government policies in Ontario and how they relate to the Rural Area (p.5);
- A discussion of the objectives of the Rural Summit (p.7);
- Information about previous community discussions (p.8);
- Next steps in the process and how the input will be used (p.9); and
- Contact information and additional links (p.10).

You are Invited to the Rural Summit!

The City has initiated the five year review of its Official Plan. As part of this review, we are interested in hearing from those who live, work and play in the Rural Area about their vision for the area over the next 20 years.

We invite you to join a community conversation at the Rural Summit on January 19, 2013. Through small discussions and large group sharing of ideas, a community based vision will be developed and themes will be identified and discussed. This will help the City’s planning staff better understand what is important to you.

The details for the Rural Summit are:

Date: Saturday, Jan. 19, 2013

Time: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

Where: Kilbride Public School Gymnasium
6611 Panton Street
Kilbride, Ontario L7P 0L8

RSVP: Call 905-335-7642 or e-mail opreview@burlington.ca.
**Burlington’s Rural Area**

The boundaries of the Rural Area are identified on a map (see Schedule A of the City’s Official Plan, below):

![Map of Burlington’s Rural Area](image-url)
**Statistical Highlights:**

- As of 2011, the population of the City of Burlington was 175,779.
- Currently, there are approximately 2000 households in the Rural Area of Burlington.
- The Rural Area accounts for about half of Burlington’s land mass.
- Urban development in Burlington has occurred south of Dundas Street and south of Highway 407.
- The current Official Plan supports the continued preservation of significant natural features and protection of agricultural land within the Rural Area.
- Data from the Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture and analysis presented in the *Phase 3 Sustainable Halton Report 3.03: An Agricultural Evaluation* note the following:
  - The total number of farms reported in the City of Burlington:
    - 1976: 191 farms
    - 1996: 113 farms
    - 2001: 95 farms
    - 2011: 70 farms
  - The average size of farms:
    - The average acreage of farms in Burlington has trended to increase in size over time. In 1976, the average farm size was 111 acres while in 2006 the average farm size was 135 acres.
    - In 2011 62% of farms were categorized as being 69 acres or less in size, while in 2006 the figure was 54%.
  - Gross farm receipts:
    - In 2006 Burlington had per acre farm receipts of $2,877 compared to Halton Region ($1,485), Oakville ($549), Milton ($1,302) and Halton Hills ($1,396).


**What is the City’s Official Plan?**

An Official Plan is a policy document that sets out the City’s land use objectives and directions for growth and development for the next 20 years. It includes policy directions related to many aspects of the City including transportation, infrastructure, natural environment, housing, heritage, open space and the downtown. The City of Burlington’s Official Plan can be accessed online at: [http://cms.burlington.ca/Page846.aspx](http://cms.burlington.ca/Page846.aspx).

The Official Plan categorizes land into Urban, Rural and North Aldershot Planning Areas. Within the Rural Planning Area, there are two sections: **Rural Lands** and **Rural Settlement Areas**.
Rural Lands

The Rural Lands comprise the majority of the Rural Planning Area of the City. The key Principles for the Rural Lands as laid out in the Official Plan are:

Principles

- Rural Lands have a distinct character consisting of productive farmlands, other resource industries, natural areas and limited residential settlement areas.
- Agricultural lands shall be protected and given priority.
- Significant natural and cultural heritage features and landscapes shall be preserved and protected.
- New residential development shall be directed to the Urban Planning Area, except in Rural Settlement Areas where limited residential growth can be accommodated.
- The designation of new mineral resource extraction areas or a new license shall be provided for where they can be accommodated.

Rural Settlement Areas

Rural Settlement Areas comprise the areas of Kilbride, Lowville and Mount Nemo, as geographically defined in the Official Plan. These areas represent locations in the Rural Planning Area where residential, commercial and institutional development shall be located.

The key Principles for Rural Settlement Areas as laid out in the Official Plan are:

Principles

- Growth and development within Rural Settlement Areas shall be compatible with and provide protection for the natural environment and shall have regard for existing settlement patterns.
- Rural Settlement Areas shall provide limited opportunities for rural, non-farm residences, commercial and institutional uses within the Rural Planning Area.
- Expansion of the Rural Settlement Areas shall not be permitted.
- Rural, non-farm uses, including small-scale commercial and industrial development servicing agriculture and the rural community, as well as small-scale public uses such as postal outlets, maintenance buildings, and small meeting halls, shall be directed to Settlement Areas.
- Impacts on groundwater supplies of Rural Settlement Area development shall be evaluated and considered.
How Does the Official Plan Work with Other Plans?

The Official Plan is dependent on a number of layers of policy. These layers of policy are illustrated in Figure 1 below and in Appendix A on page 11. You can read further about these policies below.

**FIGURE 1: PLANNING FRAMEWORK IN ONTARIO**

Provincial Legislation

Halton Regional Official Plan

City of Burlington Official Plan

**Provincial Policy**

The *Planning Act* in Ontario enables the Provincial Policy Statement, which gives policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The list of matters of provincial interest includes such things as the protection of agricultural resources of the Province and appropriate location of growth and development. The *Planning Act* requires that decisions affecting planning matters, including regional and local official plans, “shall be consistent with” the Provincial Policy Statement.

There are several provincial plans, including the Greenbelt Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Parkway Belt West Plan (see Appendix A on page 11 for more information). Under Section 3(5) of the *Planning Act*, any decision of a municipal council, ministry, or the Ontario Municipal Board, “shall conform with”, or “shall not conflict with”, these provincial plans. This means that the Region of Halton and the City of Burlington are required to recognize and consider carefully the provincial plans affecting Halton. Provincial plans shall take precedence over policies in the Provincial Policy Statement to the extent of any conflict.
Halton Region is comprised of more than 500,000 residents in the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton, and the Town of Oakville. The Region provides services and broad policy direction on strategic matters such as managing land and natural resources, growth strategies, housing, economic development, water and wastewater services, solid waste management, transportation, and health and social services.

Halton’s Regional Official Plan (2006) is Halton’s guide for land use planning. The goals, objectives, policies and land designations of the Provincial Policy Statement and provincial plans have been incorporated into the Regional Official Plan and, in some cases, made more restrictive, as permitted by the provincial plans.

Burlington’s Official Plan must conform to the Regional Official Plan. The Region of Halton will comment on the conformity to the Regional Official Plan of all development applications in the Rural Area. When reviewing development applications, Regional staff may provide technical advice and comments to the City and/or the Niagara Escarpment Commission with respect to matters of Regional significance or interest.

The Regional Official Plan is reviewed every five years to ensure that its policies are still relevant, that it meets current provincial policies, and that it achieves the goals of Regional Council and the Region’s communities. The last review resulted in Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) 38, which Council approved on December 16th, 2009.

ROPA 38, the new Regional Official Plan, has been appealed, but the Region will have regard for its policies until it is approved at the Ontario Municipal Board. Some of the ROPA 38 topics that could be incorporated into the City’s Official Plan are:

- Policies incorporating the Regional Natural Heritage System, which differs from the existing Greenlands system under the 2006 Regional Official Plan;
- Policies incorporating conformity with the Greenbelt Plan (2005); and
- Policies related to mineral aggregate resources.

Conservation Halton

Conservation Halton is one of 36 Conservation Authorities in Ontario, enabled by the Conservation Authorities Act. The fundamental provincial role for all Conservation Authorities focuses on watershed based natural hazard prevention and management. It includes flood and erosion control and the conservation of land.

Conservation Authorities may undertake the following roles and activities:

- Regulate development in or adjacent to watercourses (including valley lands), wetlands, shorelines of inland lakes and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River System and other hazardous lands.
- Represent the provincial interest regarding natural hazards on behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resources. This involves acting as a commenting agency on municipal policy documents like Official Plans, and development planning applications.
- Develop programs that reflect local resource management needs.
- Enter into agreements with ministries and municipalities to undertake regulatory responsibilities or provide technical advice.

Niagara Escarpment Plan

In 1973, the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act established a planning process to ensure that the Niagara Escarpment would be protected. From this emerged the Niagara Escarpment Plan (1985, revised in 2005), which was Canada’s first large-scale environmental land use plan and which set the stage for subsequent environmental land use plans, including the Greenbelt Plan (2005) and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (2002). Principles of sustainable land use planning and the preservation of core natural areas are underscored by the Niagara Escarpment’s World Biosphere Reserve designation, granted by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1990.

The Niagara Escarpment Plan prevails over the Provincial Policy Statement. The policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan are the policies of the Greenbelt Plan within the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area. Municipal Official Plans, Secondary Plans and zoning (where it applies) can set standards that are more stringent than the requirements of the NEP, unless doing so would conflict with the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

Why the Rural Summit?

The Official Plan provides the following vision statement for the Rural Area:

“This Plan supports previous planning approaches in terms of designating distinct urban and rural areas. Development in the Rural Area will remain restricted to existing Rural Settlement Areas. Preservation of significant natural features, particularly the Niagara Escarpment, and promotion and protection of agricultural operations and aggregate resources and operations are supported by this Plan.” (City of Burlington Official Plan, Part I Policy Framework, Section 4.0 Land Use Vision, page 8)

The discussions at the Rural Summit will help us to revisit this vision statement and all of the Official Plan policies related to the Rural Area with a better sense of the community’s views and priorities.

The objectives of the Rural Summit are:

- To provide and build on information about the existing policy framework in the Rural Area.
- To collect ideas and commentary regarding:
  - A vision for the Rural Area.
The themes and goals that will support the vision for specific elements of the area e.g. transportation, rural business, agriculture, role of the Rural Area within the City structure.

- To use what we hear from the community to inform policy direction for the Official Plan Review.

**Building on Community Conversations**

In designing the Rural Summit, we acknowledge and will build on previous discussions within the community. These include:

- In early 2011, Nemo 7G under the PERL (Protecting Escarpment Rural Land) umbrella led two visioning workshops. During the first workshop, participants shared information about the history of the Mount Nemo plateau, their values, and the trends that are shaping the plateau today. During the second workshop, participants discussed the vision for the Mount Nemo plateau.

- In preparation for the Rural Summit, we interviewed the Mayor, Councillors and members of the community to assist us in designing the Summit to create a meaningful day. The input provided has been incorporated into every aspect of the Rural Summit design.
What Are the Next Steps and How Will the Input Be Used?

Rural Summit Process Map

Community Discussions

Background Report

Rural Summit
- Visioning workshop to inform policy direction - January 19, 2013

Directions Report
- Report to Council in Summer 2013
- Public comments welcomed
- Will propose next steps for Rural Area policy
- Conformity with Regional Official Plan Amendment 38 (2009) to be determined

Draft Official Plan Policy for the Rural Area
- Date of release for public consultation to be determined

Results provided to
- Niagara Escarpment Commission for potential use in next review of Niagara Escarpment Plan in 2015
- Other City departments for potential use in their work

Results provided to
- Region for potential use in review of Regional policies

Current Official Plan Review

Outside of Current Official Plan Review
In Closing

Please visit the Official Plan Review website at www.burlington.ca/OPreview to watch the Official Plan Review video, learn about the latest and upcoming project milestones, and sign up to receive notifications about the project.

We look forward to seeing you at the Rural Summit! If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact:

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Links for Additional Information

City of Burlington www.burlington.ca
Region of Halton www.halton.ca
Niagara Escarpment Commission www.escarpment.org
Conservation Halton www.conservationhalton.on.ca
Provincial legislation www.mah.gov.on.ca/page212.aspx
Nemo 7G www.nemo7g.org
### APPENDIX A: EXPLANATION OF POLICY FRAMEWORK IN ONTARIO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>General Purpose</th>
<th>Relationship to City’s Official Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Policy Statement</td>
<td>To provide policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development.</td>
<td>Official Plan policies are consistent with policy directions to promote strong communities, a clean and healthy environment and strong economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP)</td>
<td>To maintain the Niagara Escarpment and lands in vicinity as continuous natural environment, and to ensure compatible development.</td>
<td>All development within NEP is subject to NEP policies. The Official Plan must conform to the NEP but can be more restrictive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenbelt Plan</td>
<td>To create a band of permanently protected land which protects agricultural land, natural heritage, water resources systems and provide for a wide range of appropriate economic and social activities.</td>
<td>All development within the Greenbelt Plan is subject to Greenbelt policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkway Belt West Plan</td>
<td>To create a multi-purpose utility corridor, urban separator and linked open space system.</td>
<td>All development within Parkway Belt West Planning Area is subject to Parkway Belt West Plan policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe</td>
<td>To create complete communities, curb sprawl, protect farmland and green space and increase access to transportation options.</td>
<td>The Official Plan includes policies to ensure that growth will be limited to the Urban Planning Area, Rural Settlement Areas and certain areas of the North Aldershot Area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metrolinx Big Move</td>
<td>To outline a common vision for transportation. Outlines priority actions that will have the largest impact on the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area’s transportation system.</td>
<td>The Official Plan includes policies related to transportation, infrastructure and design for supporting walking, cycling, transit, in addition to vehicles. These policies will need to be updated to align with The Big Move.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Region of Halton Official Plan | To outline a long-term vision for the Region of Halton’s physical form and community character. Regional Rural Area objectives and policies relate to:  
• Creation of new lots is directed to Hamlets or Rural Clusters.  
• Appropriate private, individual well water and waste water systems are required for development in Rural System.  
• Development with 5 or more lots in Hamlets and Rural Clusters requires hydrogeological studies.  
• The protection or enhancement of natural features within the Greenlands System/Natural Heritage System. | Official Plan policies must conform with the Region’s Official Plan. |