

# 4.0 | Economic Vitality



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A strong and stable economy is essential to a healthy and prosperous Region. Strengthening the links between the natural environment, healthy communities and the economy is required to improve the overall well-being of York Region's residents and businesses in a sustainable manner. The Region's natural heritage and diverse communities attract a skilled labour force and progressive employers that help to maintain a high-quality of life.

The Region's economy continues to head in a new direction; one that encourages entrepreneurship and investment, protects the natural environment and local markets, and attracts a high-quality, and diverse workforce. The Region's economy will depend more in the future on well-educated and trained people, new technologies, and the exchange of ideas and information.

This Plan is intended to promote innovation, economic diversity and resilience. Its policies are intended to encourage investment and prosperity in a way that creates a competitive business environment. In an increasingly competitive world, the Region must offer employers and employees the highest level of liveability, as well as high quality public services and infrastructure systems. The Region will continue to leverage its diversity, strategic location and investment in infrastructure to respond to an ever-changing business environment.

▶ **Economic Vitality Goal: To create a competitive and flexible economic environment that encourages investment and a diversity of employment opportunities.**

### York Region Economic Strategy Strategic Directions

- Create an environment to share information and ideas
- Sustain a high-quality and diverse workforce
- Strengthen entrepreneurship and industry clusters
- Enhance the quality of place
- Encourage the efficient movement of goods and people
- Protect strategic employment areas 



## ► 4.1 Supporting the York Region Economic Strategy

York Region is located in one of the most attractive and vibrant economic areas on the continent. As of 2009, over 490,000 people were employed in approximately 30,000 businesses across the Region. Employment in the Region is distributed across a diverse economy within a broad range of industry sectors. Prominent high growth sectors are anticipated to play a more important role in the Region's economy, including information and communication technologies, health and life sciences, the building and land development industry, transportation and logistics, and advanced manufacturing. There are also a number of emerging sectors in York Region including green industries, such as sustainable agriculture and alternative energy, as well as an increase in knowledge based creative industries.

The York Region Economic Strategy provides an action plan to maintain and support a vibrant economy. Industry needs will increasingly be tied to continuous improvement and education, cultural, environmental, recreational and tourism opportunities and the development of a greener economy. In an increasingly competitive world, vibrant, liveable and healthy communities that offer high-quality services and infrastructure will attract employees and employers to York Region.

► **Objectives: To encourage and accommodate economic activities that diversify and strengthen the Region's economic base, employment opportunities for residents and competitive advantage for its businesses.**

**To encourage and support cultural, recreational, institutional and tourism opportunities that enhance the Region as a place to work, live and visit.**



### It is the policy of Council:

**4.1.1.** To invest in infrastructure to support job creation, strengthen the Regional economy and ensure an equal integration between economic vitality, the natural environment and healthy communities.

**4.1.2** To create high-quality employment opportunities for residents with the goal of 1 job for every 2 residents.

**4.1.3** To create vibrant and healthy communities that attract and retain youth, a highly skilled labour force, and quality employers.

**4.1.4** To annually monitor the location, type and characteristics of business and the supply of serviced employment lands with local municipalities.

**4.1.5** To work with local municipalities to create a business friendly environment that includes:

- a. a diverse range, size and mix of available employment lands;
- b. state-of-the-art communications facilities and networks, including broadband technology;

- c. advanced infrastructure;
- d. a range of quality human services facilities and programs;
- e. a protected and enhanced natural environment; and,
- f. employment areas that are well designed and include business support services.

**4.1.6** To work with local municipalities to promote the Region as a location for knowledge-based activities by leveraging existing employment clusters and the Region's highly skilled diverse workforce, and establishing and maintaining strong links to educational and research institutions and companies.

**4.1.7** To continue working with local municipalities and the agricultural community through policies and initiatives that support:

- a. the Greater Toronto Agricultural Action Plan; and,
- b. local agricultural production and diversification.

**4.1.8** To encourage and support the development of a green industry cluster through training programs, business attraction, export development, and other support programs.

**4.1.9** To research and analyze the Region's economy, including conducting an annual comprehensive survey of York Region businesses in partnership with local municipalities.

*Major environmental features and policy areas that support economic vitality:*

- Lake Simcoe
- The Holland Marsh Specialty Crop Area
- The Oak Ridges Moraine
- The Greenbelt
- The Regional Greenlands System

**It is the policy of Council:**

**4.1.1.** To invest in infrastructure to support job creation, strengthen the Regional economy and ensure an equal integration between economic vitality, the natural environment and healthy communities.

**4.1.10** To work with local municipalities to encourage telecommuting where appropriate.

**4.1.11** To work with local municipalities to promote work-at-home through the adoption of enabling zoning provisions that allow for live-work units where appropriate.

**4.1.12** To work with local municipalities, the Province and Federal government to ensure that the Region is a high-priority location for major sporting, trade and convention facilities, natural heritage interpretive centres, and venues for showcasing arts and entertainment activities.

**4.1.13** To work with local municipalities to establish and promote destinations for recreation and tourism and implement York Region's Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy.

**4.1.14** To work with local municipalities to leverage Community Energy Plans as a tool to promote economic development.

**4.1.15** To demonstrate leadership in corporate sustainability to York Region’s businesses through the implementation and annual monitoring of the York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region and associated programs.

**4.1.16** To review and implement the York Region Economic Strategy at least every 5 years, concurrent with the 5-year review of this Plan.

**Top Employers in York Region**

- Magna International
- IBM Canada
- American Express
- Canada’s Wonderland
- AMD Technologies

**4.2 City Building**

Regional Centres and Corridors are a focal point of commerce, business and cultural activities in the Region. The Region and local municipalities will continue to support the development of Regional Centres and Corridors by encouraging attractive, compact community design and the clustering of economic activities. This will promote creativity, the exchange of ideas, ease of business transactions and an increased opportunity for economic spin-offs. Regional Centres and Corridors are planned to become the economic hubs of the Region and have the highest concentration of *major office*, mixed-use commercial and high-density residential development.

**Objective:** To support Regional Centres and Corridors as a focus of economic activity and culture in York Region.

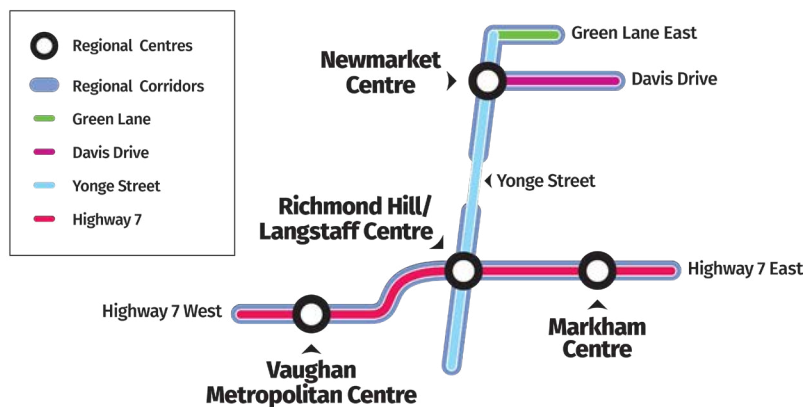
**It is the policy of Council:**

**4.2.1** To recognize Regional Centres and Corridors as hubs of commerce, business and entertainment activities.

**4.2.2** To recognize Regional Centres and Corridors as the preferred location for *major office* uses and to develop incentives to attract *major office* uses to these locations.

**4.2.3** To encourage the Province and Federal government to provide incentives to attract *major office*, institutional, educational, cultural and entertainment facilities to Regional Centres and Corridors.

**York Region Centres and Corridors**





**4.2.4** To require a mixed-use pedestrian environment in Regional Centres and Corridors that promotes transit use and enhances these areas as destinations for business, entertainment and recreation.

**4.2.5** That government, educational, institutional, *major office*, cultural, entertainment and other commercial uses be located and designed to support the Regional Centres and Corridors structure of this Plan.

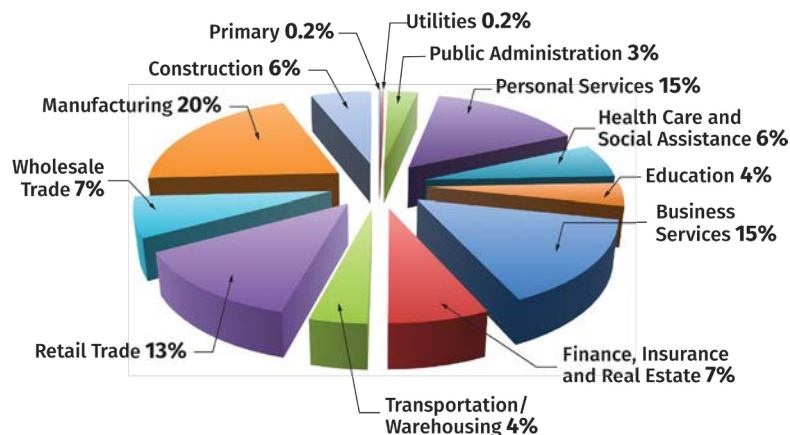
**4.2.6** To work with local municipalities to ensure that Regional Centres and Corridors include a significant amount of mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, and street-related uses including retail.

**4.2.7** To ensure the efficient movement of goods and services in Regional Centres and Corridors through effective planning, urban design and infrastructure planning.

## ► 4.3 Planning for Employment Lands

York Region is committed to maintaining and enhancing the long term viability of employment lands. Employment lands are major drivers of economic activity, and contain over 50 per cent of the Region’s employment. These lands are forecasted to continue to play a significant role in the Region’s economy, primarily accommodating industrial and business uses. The ongoing viability of these lands is contingent upon long term protection, effective planning and design, and a shift towards increasingly sustainable and innovative industrial processes.

**York Region Employment by Industry, 2008**



► **Objective:** To ensure the long term supply and effective planning and design of employment lands.

**It is the policy of Council:**

**4.3.1** That the employment forecasts in Table 1 of this Plan be used as the basis for planning for employment lands.

**4.3.2** That a sufficient supply of employment lands based on the applicable *municipal comprehensive* review will be maintained to accommodate the employment growth forecasts in Table 1 of this Plan.

**4.3.3** To recognize that employment lands are strategic and vital to the Regional economy and are major drivers of economic activity in the Region.

**4.3.4** To require local municipalities to designate and protect employment lands in local municipal official plans.

**4.3.5** To protect, maintain and enhance the long term viability of all employment lands designated in local municipal official plans for employment land uses.

**4.3.6** To protect strategic employment lands, including lands identified in Figure 2. These lands are identified based on their proximity to existing or planned 400-series highways and shall be designated for employment land uses in local municipal official plans.

**4.3.7** To require local municipalities to give priority to the strategic employment lands identified in Figure 2 when considering additional employment land designations.

**4.3.8** That the conversion of employment lands to non-employment land uses is not permitted. For the purposes of this policy:

- a. employment lands are lands that are designated for employment uses including land designated as industrial and business park in local official plans; and,
- b. uses not permitted on employment lands include residential, *major retail* and other retail and commercial *non ancillary uses*.

**4.3.9** That notwithstanding policies 4.3.6, 4.3.8, 4.3.13 and 4.4.6 of this Plan, the conversion of employment lands to non-employment land uses may only be considered, at the time of a *municipal comprehensive review* in accordance with the applicable policies and population/employment forecasts of the Region.

**4.3.10** To require local municipalities to include employment land conversion policies within local official plans and secondary plans that are consistent with the employment land conversion policies of the Province and the Region.

**4.3.11** To allow a limited amount of *ancillary uses* on employment lands, provided that the proposed uses are intended to primarily service businesses in the employment lands and that *ancillary uses* collectively do not exceed 15 per cent of an employment area as defined in the local official plan.

**4.3.12** To require local municipalities, through local official plan policies, to determine the location, amount and size of *ancillary uses* on employment lands that is commensurate with the planned function, size and scale of the overall employment land area.

**4.3.13** That local municipalities include official plan and secondary plan policies and zoning provisions to allow only employment and *ancillary uses* on Local Corridors and other major streets within employment lands.

**4.3.14** That local municipalities, in consultation with York Region, prepare comprehensive secondary plans for new employment lands that are consistent with the applicable policies in Sections 5.2 and 5.6 of this Plan.

**4.3.15** That employment land development be designed to be both walkable and transit accessible where possible.

**4.3.16** That development on fully serviced employment lands be compact and achieve a region-wide average minimum density of 40 jobs per hectare in the *developable area*. This target is expected to be higher for lands adjacent to centres and corridors.



**4.3.17** To work with local municipalities to provide a diverse mix of lot sizes on employment lands.

**4.3.18** To require flexible and adaptable employment lands that include street patterns and building design and siting that allow for redevelopment and *intensification*.

**4.3.19** To work with local municipalities to review and monitor opportunities for employment land *intensification*.

**4.3.20** To require local municipalities to conduct 5-year reviews of employment lands to accommodate employment *intensification*.

**4.3.21** To encourage employment intensification and higher density employment uses in Regional Centres and Corridors, in support of the policies in Section 5.4 of this Plan.

**4.3.22** That industries on private services be limited to existing approved sites.

**4.3.23** That the employment land designation policies and transportation corridor policies in ROPA 52 continue to apply to these lands.

**4.3.24** Lands located in the vicinity of Highway 48, Donald Cousens Parkway and the GO commuter rail line may have the potential to support future employment uses.

## ▶ 4.4 Planning for Retail

Retail trade is an essential component of a healthy economy. York Region is home to significant retail uses that are continually evolving. The Region, in partnership with local municipalities, is committed to providing an appropriate amount of retail activities in suitable locations. Local retail areas are key components of mixed-use communities and should incorporate effective urban design to ensure the integration of retail uses within the community. Well-designed and strategically located retail allows residents, workers and visitors to purchase goods and services locally by walking, cycling or taking public transit. Shopping locally reduces travel times and congestion, and supports the Region's economy.

Retail facilities should be designed and located to serve the needs of the community and support the Region's urban structure.

### York Region's historical main streets include:

- Aurora Main Street
- King City Main Street
- Jackson's Point Main Street
- Kleinburg Main Street
- Langstaff Main Street
- Markham Main Street
- Markham Unionville Main Street
- Mount Albert Main Street
- Newmarket Main Street
- Old Richmond Hill Main Street
- Pefferlaw Main Street
- Sharon Main Street
- Stouffville Main Street
- Sutton Main Street
- Thornhill Main Street
- Woodbridge Main Street 

► **Objective:** To ensure retail is well-designed and appropriately integrated into communities in a manner that encourages walking, cycling, and transit.

**It is the policy of Council:**

- 4.4.1** To require that retail be designed to be walkable, transit-supportive, and integrated into communities and pedestrian and cycling networks, with high-quality urban design.
- 4.4.2** To work with local municipalities to improve urban design in new retail developments and to identify opportunities for the intensification and revitalization of existing retail.
- 4.4.3** To work with local municipalities to identify and protect the historical main streets in the Region.
- 4.4.4** To direct a significant amount of mixed-uses, including street-related retail, to Regional Centres and Corridors.
- 4.4.5** To require local municipalities to define major retail uses within the context of the local commercial hierarchy.
- 4.4.6** That *major retail* is not permitted on designated or strategic employment lands.
- 4.4.7** That *major retail* sites should be designed to support redevelopment or retrofitting.
- 4.4.8** To work with local municipalities to plan comprehensively for all retail uses, including *major retail* uses, that are integrated and provided for within the community. Planning should include the identification and designation of lands to accommodate these uses. In this regard, a mixed use designation, or designations, that provides for *major retail* will serve to meet the intent of the policy.

*Policy 4.4.8 of this Plan directs local municipalities to plan comprehensively for retail uses including **major retail**. It is recognized that each of the local municipalities will choose to adopt various approaches in their retail planning. The Region encourages all retail uses be provided in a manner that is integrated within the community. A mixed use designation, or designations, that provides for **major retail** is one possible approach that will serve to meet the intent of the policy.* ■■■

**It is the policy of Council:**

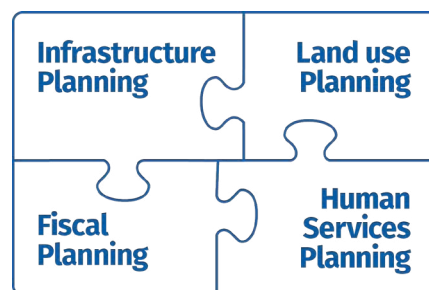
- 4.4.9** That new retail facilities in excess of 30,000 gross leasable square metres shall require a Regional impact analysis that addresses the following:
  - a. transportation requirements;
  - b. the impact on existing and approved future retail facilities;
  - c. pedestrian, cycling and transit access to the facilities; and,
  - d. the manner in which the proposal is supportive of the centres and corridors policies of this Plan.
- 4.4.10** To undertake a study of the Region’s retail sector.





## ► 4.5 Financial Management

York Region is dedicated to implementing the policies of this Plan in a fiscally efficient and effective manner. This includes co-ordinating and streamlining service delivery, optimizing service levels, eliminating duplication and seeking innovative and efficient approaches to implementing this Plan. The Region will need the support of the Province and Federal government in funding major infrastructure including transit, 400-series highways and interchanges, housing and human services. This Plan promotes a comprehensive full cost accounting approach, the equitable distribution of costs, and ensuring that the funds required to provide the necessary services for growth are paid by the proponents of growth.



► **Objective:** To ensure that growth is fiscally responsible.

**It is the policy of Council:**

- 4.5.1** To implement a full cost accounting approach to financial management that considers the economic, environmental and social costs.
- 4.5.2** To ensure that development proponents provide the funds required to deliver the additional services and costs related to growth consistent with Regional plans and policies.
- 4.5.3** To ensure that the non-growth share of servicing costs is funded from the municipal tax base and municipal user rates.
- 4.5.4** To use financial mechanisms such as development charges, tax increment financing and user rates to offset the financial impact of development and to ensure that development proceeds in a fiscally responsible manner.
- 4.5.5** To consider innovative infrastructure financing initiatives including public/private partnerships and tax increment financing.
- 4.5.6** To update the York Region 25-Year Fiscal Impact Study at least every 5 years, concurrent with the 5-year review of this Plan.
- 4.5.7** To co-ordinate the York Region 10-Year Capital Plan with the phasing policies in Section 5.1 of this Plan.
- 4.5.8** To update the York Region 10-Year Capital Plan annually to adjust for variations in the timing and location of development.

**4.5.9** To regularly update the Development Charges By-law to reflect adjustments in Regional forecasts and costs related to growth.

**4.5.10** To advocate the Province and Federal government to examine a new funding formula for expanding Regional funding sources to accommodate growth.

**4.5.11** To advocate for revisions to the Development Charges Act for the recovery of costs that place greater emphasis on projected service levels, particularly for those service areas that are maturing or have had historically lower levels of capital investment, such as transit and emergency medical services.

**4.5.12** To encourage local municipalities and school boards to provide a 10-year forecast of capital expenditures.

**4.5.13** To review and co-ordinate the delivery of Regional services with local municipalities, school boards and agencies to ensure infrastructure and operational efficiencies.

**4.5.14** To require that an economic/fiscal impact analysis be completed for secondary plans, comprehensive plans and any other significant proposal, as determined by Council. This analysis shall be co-ordinated between the Region and local municipalities, boards and agencies and shall include but not be limited to:

- a. an assessment of Regional service costs including transportation, water, wastewater, police, community and health services;
- b. the impact on operating and capital budgets, and the financing implications related to the impact on tax levy, user rates and development charges; and,
- c. the ability to financially and technically provide for the required servicing infrastructure in order to allow the development to proceed on a timely basis.

**4.5.15** That all agreements required to provide servicing infrastructure, including financial and development agreements, be in place before any development proceeds.

**4.5.16** To monitor and report annually on the effectiveness of the policies in Section 4.5 of this Plan in achieving fiscally responsible financial management.

**4.5.17** To ensure the most efficient and effective use of infrastructure, and to design and implement the urban services to meet the capacity requirements of the Urban Area, and where it can be demonstrated that there are long term social, environmental or economic benefits, permit the oversizing of services where it is deemed prudent by Council and it is financially feasible.

**4.5.18** To promote long term financial viability of infrastructure, through preparation of infrastructure master plans which plan beyond the 20-year planning horizon and to recognize, based on infrastructure planning, that the lands outside the boundary of the Urban Area and outside the Greenbelt Plan area boundary as identified on Map 2, may be required to accommodate future growth, as determined through future Regional *municipal comprehensive reviews*.