



TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL

OFFICIAL PLAN TASK FORCE

January 22, 2009

SRPD.09.007

Planning and Development
Planning

SUBJECT: Urban Structure Study:
Existing Urban Structure Background Paper for the Town's New Official
Plan - (SRPD.09.007)
File No. D10-ST-UR

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this staff report is to present a summary of the Existing Urban Structure Background Paper, one of a series of background papers to be completed as part of the development of the Town's new Official Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Official Plan Task Force receive Staff Report SRPD.09.007 and the Existing Urban Structure Background Paper (attached as Appendix 'A') for the Town's New Official Plan for information.

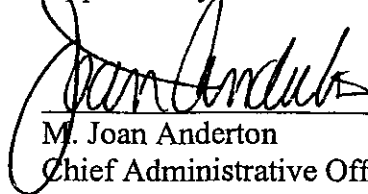
Contact: Michelle Dobbie, Planner II (Policy), extension 2467
Paul Freeman, Manager of Policy, extension 2472
Joanne Leung, Manager of Urban Design, extension 5498

Submitted by:



Ana Bassios
Commissioner of Planning and Development

Approved by:


M. Joan Anderton
Chief Administrative Officer

BACKGROUND

In October 2007, the Town of Richmond Hill initiated the *People Plan Richmond Hill* process to develop a new Strategic Plan and a new Official Plan (OP), which are being developed concurrently. The Urban Structure Study is one of the background studies being undertaken as part of the development of the Town's new OP.

The Urban Structure Study is being undertaken in-house and forms the backbone of the Town's Integrated OP Review process. The Urban Structure Study will serve as the integration point for all of the background studies being undertaken on:

- Environmental Policy;
- Growth Forecast;
- Economic Policy;
- Housing and Residential Intensification;
- Transportation;
- Infrastructure;
- Parks and Recreation;
- Urban Design;
- Built Heritage;
- Downtown; and
- Regional Centre.

These background studies combined with ongoing public consultation through the *People Plan Richmond Hill* approach will help shape the Town's new OP. The resulting OP will be a reflection of policy direction from the top-down and local input from the ground-up, identifying the challenges, opportunities and standards for what the community in Richmond Hill truly wants to achieve.

The Urban Structure Study is being completed using a seven-stage holistic, collaborative planning process as follows:

- Stage 1 – Background Research and Analysis
- Stage 2 – Land Use Principles
- Stage 3 – Options Development and Testing
- Stage 4 – Preferred Option through Consultation
- Stage 5 – Land Use Vision
- Stage 6 – OP Policy Formulation
- Stage 7 – Draft OP and Implementation

This Background Paper is part of Stage 1 - Background Research and Analysis. As part of this stage, research and analysis was completed by undertaking literature reviews, mapping and aerial analyses, site visits, and a series of public and stakeholder workshops on what is valued within the existing urban structure in November and December 2007, and July, September, October and December 2008.

EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE BACKGROUND PAPER

The Existing Urban Structure Background Paper is the second in a series of background papers for the Town's new OP. The first background paper outlined the Policy Context within which the Town's new OP will be developed and was received by the Official Plan Task Force on May 22, 2008 for information (SRPD.08.040). The purpose of the Existing Urban Structure Background Paper is to set out the existing spatial framework within which the Town's new OP will be developed. The paper is divided into five major sections:

- What is an urban structure?
- The evolution of Richmond Hill's urban structure;
- Elements of Richmond Hill's existing urban structure;
- Provincial and Regional Policy Direction for the urban structure; and
- What Does this Mean for Richmond Hill's future urban structure?

The first section explains the concept of an urban structure as the pattern of points (centres and features), lines (movement corridors, linkage areas), and surfaces (areas between the points and lines) within an urban area. The second section describes the evolution of the Town's urban structure, summarizing the main timeframes in the development of the Town to date and describing the pattern of points, lines, and surfaces that have evolved over thousands of years. The third section describes the elements of Richmond Hill's existing urban structure. This section establishes the physical framework of points, lines, and surfaces that exist today and describes the qualitative aspects of the existing urban structure valued by residents and stakeholders. Both the physical and qualitative elements that exist today can be enhanced and strengthened through the development of the Town's new OP. The fourth section outlines the Provincial and Regional land use planning policy direction for the Town's urban structure, explaining where the upper-tier levels of government require the Town to direct growth. By directing growth to strategic locations, the Town's future urban structure can help to build the regional land use vision for the Greater Toronto Area and York Region. The fifth section attempts to synthesize what this means for Richmond Hill's future urban structure, establishing key directions that integrate the policy direction from the Province and York Region, the Town's existing physical framework, and the qualitative values established through *People Plan Richmond Hill*. The key directions will aid staff and the Town's consultants in developing draft land use principles for the new OP.

KEY DIRECTIONS - WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR RICHMOND HILL'S FUTURE URBAN STRUCTURE?

The background report states that Provincial and Regional land use planning policy direction is clear – municipalities must direct growth away from greenlands (natural heritage systems, water resources, prime agricultural areas, mineral resources, petroleum resources, mineral aggregate resources, natural hazards) and cultural resources (significant built heritage resources, significant cultural heritage landscapes) towards settlement areas using a structure of centres and corridors. The Town must manage growth by developing a future urban structure with a hierarchy of centres and corridors that promotes a compact, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly built form while protecting environmental and employment areas over the long-term.

But the Provincial and Regional policies are not clear as to how these new centres and corridors will take shape or how Richmond Hill can take advantage of its strategic location at the centre of the GTA, or its existing economic sectors, built form, cultural resources, and environmental resources. The onus is on the Town to determine how best to shape and market itself - no small task when most of the places that residents value are also the places that the Provincial and Regional policies are directing the Town to intensify.

How then will the Town develop a future urban structure that directs growth to a hierarchy of centres and corridors while ensuring that what is particular, distinct and unique about the Town is not lost?

Rather than pushing aside or turning our backs on distinct features, systems, economies, places, and experiences, we must plan in a way that actively engages and enhances these distinctions. We will plan in a way that creates places of memory versus fabric. We will make new connections to the thriving urban region that surrounds the Town and enhance the connections within our own landmass. **We will plan in a way that will transform Richmond Hill over time by engaging its assets.**

TRANSFORMING RICHMOND HILL OVER TIME

Richmond Hill is on the cusp of a paradigm shift in terms of how to direct the future urban structure. The Town must direct growth to a hierarchy of centres and corridors as outlined in Provincial and Regional land use policies, but the onus is on the Town to determine how these centres and corridors will be shaped and marketed as part of the future urban structure. Based on what has been heard through the *People Plan Richmond Hill* process, this will be no small task since most of the places that residents value are also the places that the Provincial and Regional policies are directing the Town to intensify.

So the Town must embark on a new path – a path towards a proactive planning approach where growth is actively directed over time by engaging the Town's existing and planned assets. *People Plan Richmond Hill* participants are encouraging the Town to collaborate with stakeholders on the journey down this new path. They want to build a Town that recognizes and engages the distinct and unique aspects of our location, economy, environment, built form, and people together. They want to work together to build an exceptional future urban structure over time.

The Existing Urban Structure Background Paper sets out the Town's existing spatial framework, establishing the backbone documentation about how the Town evolved to this point in time, what exists today, what is valued today, and the types of natural and built form characters and experiences that can be enhanced and engaged. This information forms the backbone on which the Town's new OP will be developed. The key directions included in the report will be used by Staff together with the findings to date from the other background studies to prepare the draft land use principles for the new OP. As land use options are developed for the new OP, this information will remain the backbone for the development of the future urban structure. **By looking at where we came from, what exists today, and what is valued today, the Town will**

develop a future urban structure to transform Richmond Hill over time by engaging its assets.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/OTHER IMPLICATIONS

This background paper was produced in-house. There are no financial/staffing/other implications.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Urban Structure Study is one of the background studies being undertaken as part of the development of the Town's new OP, which is being developed concurrently with the preparation of the new Strategic Plan. The Existing Urban Structure Background Paper addresses four of the Key Strategic Directions for the new Strategic Plan endorsed by Committee of the Whole on November 10, 2008 (SRCAO.08.042):

Celebrate our identity and place

The background paper outlines the elements of Richmond Hill's existing urban structure that are distinct and unique, providing base information for the celebration of these elements through the development of the Town's new OP.

Live, work, play in our community and Cultivate strong neighbourhoods

The background paper outlines Provincial and Regional policy direction for the urban structure, which states that the Town must develop a hierarchy of centres and corridors that promotes a compact, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly built form while protecting environmental and employment areas over the long-term. In doing so, strong neighbourhoods where people of all ages can live, work and play will be established through the development of the Town's new OP.

Connect to our community and beyond

The background paper documents how the Town evolved to this point in time, what exists today, what is valued today, and the types of natural and built form characters and experiences that can be enhanced and engaged through the development of the new OP. It establishes base information that could help to improve connections within the Town's landmass, and enhance connections to areas beyond the Town's municipal boundary through the development of the new OP.

NEXT STEPS

It is recommended that this staff report summarizing the Existing Urban Structure Background Paper be received for information by the Official Plan Task Force. Copies of the Background Paper will be made available to the public on the Town's website for information. The background paper will be used by staff and the Town's consultants to assist with the development of the Town's new OP.

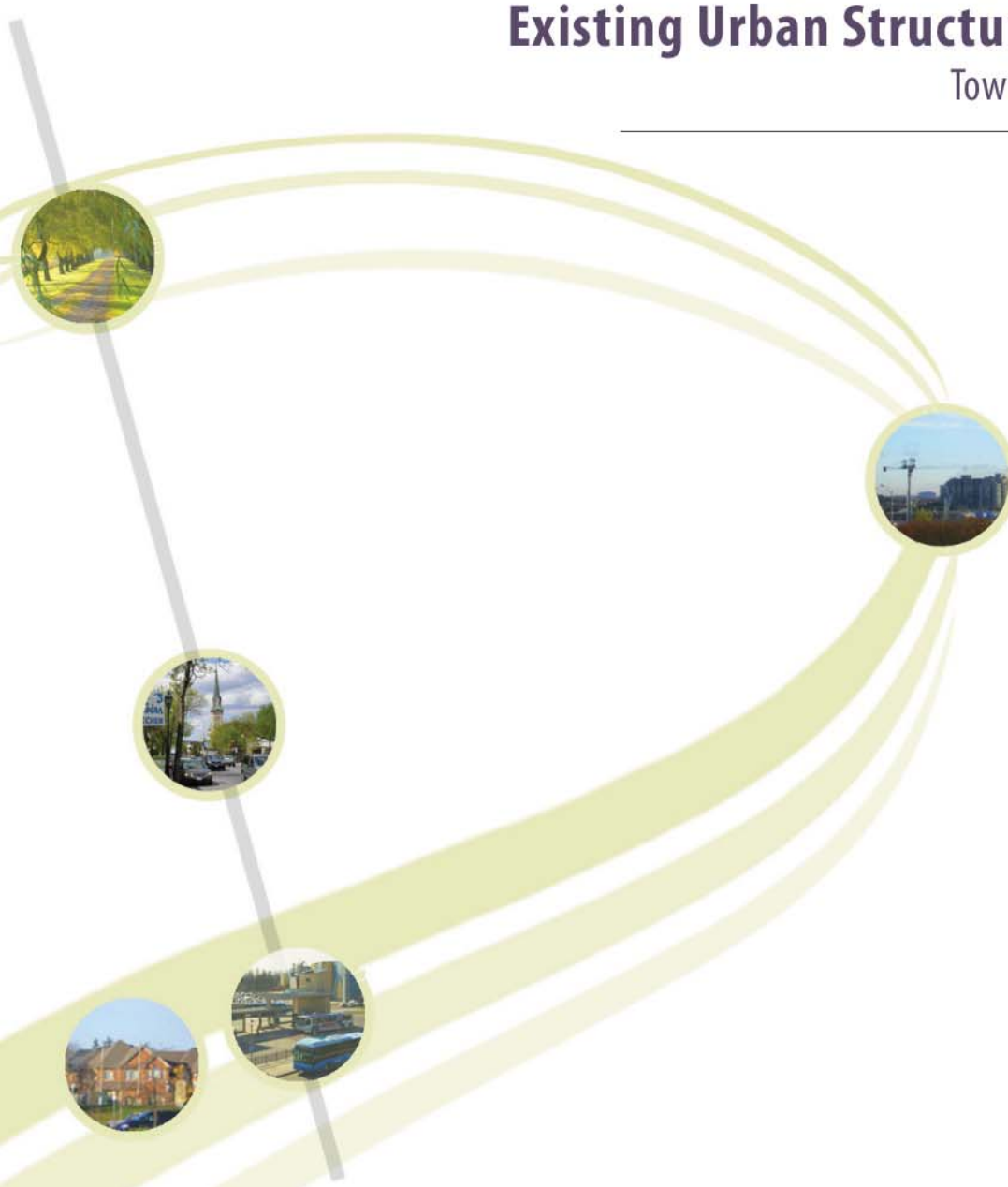
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“A” Urban Structure Study – Existing Urban Structure Background Paper, January 2009.

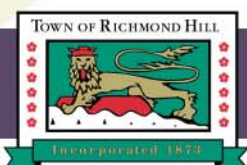
Urban Structure Study

Existing Urban Structure Background Paper

Town of Richmond Hill Official Plan



January 2009
Department of Planning & Development





Department of Planning & Development
Planning Division

January 2009

Please direct information inquiries and publication orders to:

Town of Richmond Hill Planning Division
P.O. Box 300
225 East Beaver Creek Road, 4th Floor
Richmond Hill, ON
Canada L4C 4Y5

Telephone: (905) 771-8910
Fax: (905) 771-2404



EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE BACKGROUND PAPER

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"When you look at a city, it's like reading the hopes, aspirations and pride of everyone who built it."
- Hugh Newell Jacobsen

"Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail. "
- Annie Sullivan

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INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Once considered a medium-sized town on the outskirts of Toronto, the Town of Richmond Hill is now at the centre of a thriving urban region. Current plans to develop Regional and Local Centres and Corridors, key development areas, and new transit projects will intensify and change the face of growth and development within the Town's settlement areas. In order to deal with these changing circumstances effectively, the Town of Richmond Hill needs a new Official Plan (OP). The purpose of an OP is to establish a municipality's policies on how land shall be used for the long-term to help meet the specific physical, social and economic needs of its inhabitants. The Town must prepare for changing growth patterns as Richmond Hill faces a more mature state of growth, shifting away from greenfield subdivision development to the evolution of more compact communities.

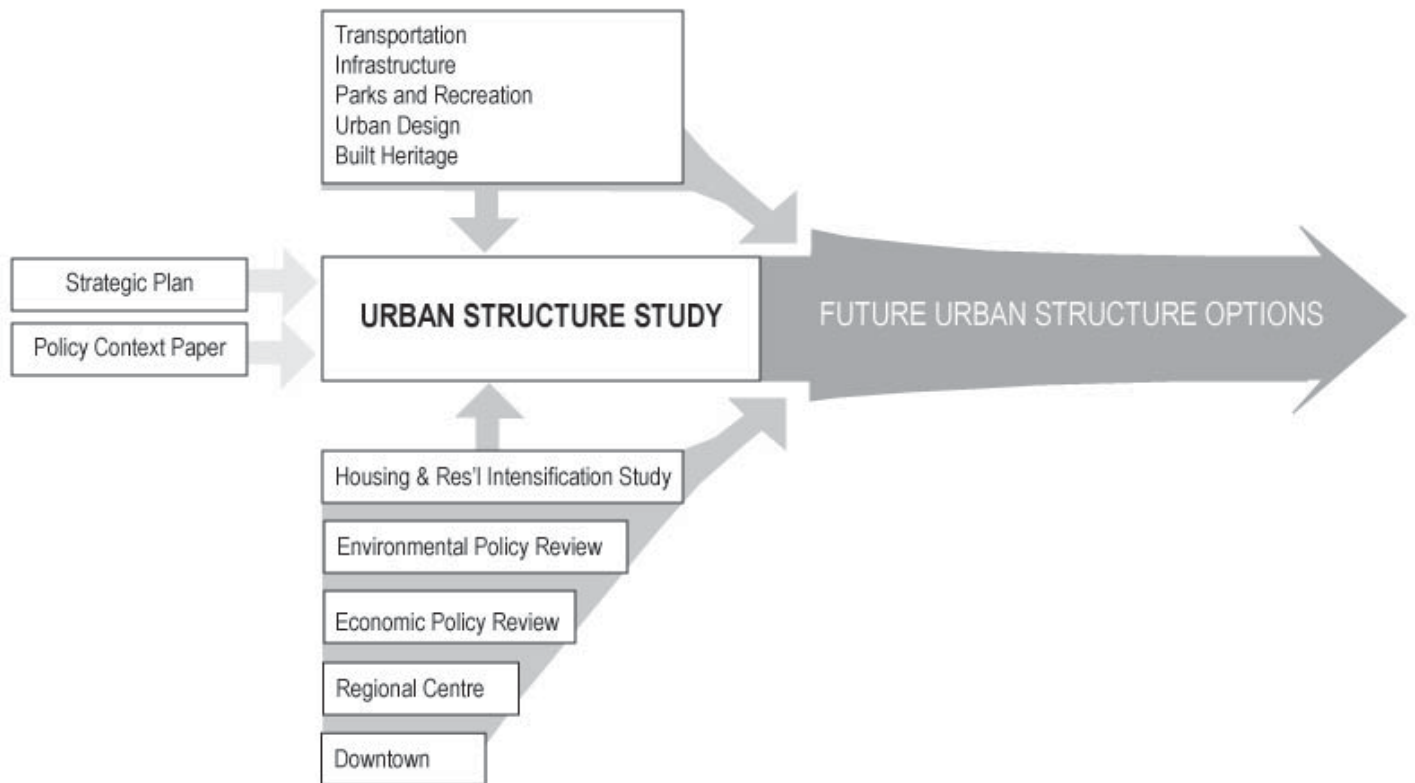
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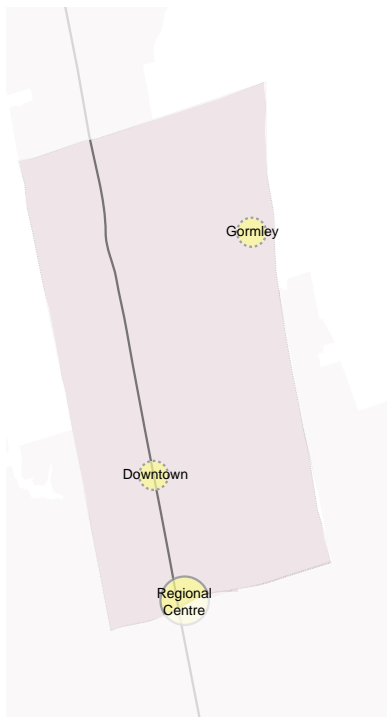
WHAT IS AN URBAN STRUCTURE?

2.0 WHAT IS AN URBAN STRUCTURE?

The term urban structure refers to the arrangement or pattern of points (centres and features), lines (movement corridors), and surfaces (areas between the points and lines) within an urban area. A place, whether it is a hamlet, a village, a town, or a city is created through the interrelationships that are able to occur as a result of the arrangement of the components (i.e. the points, lines, and surfaces) of the urban structure. In the Town, points include centres such as the Downtown and the Regional Centre. Lines include man-made movement corridors like the road network, the rail corridor, and the highways and natural movement corridors such as rivers, creeks, or hedgerows. Surfaces include areas in between the points and the lines such as residential neighbourhoods, employment areas, rural areas, or agricultural areas. An urban structure does not imply any particular type of urbanism – it is simply the organization of the physical components within a settlement area, and the inter-relationships that are able to occur (or not occur) among these components based on this organization.

The urban structure is an important part of any settlement area. It is the physical framework that binds the settlement area together, and provides the physical context for future developments. Where the components of an urban structure are working together they create a place that is larger than the sum of its parts, a place where people want to live, work, and play.

Where the urban structure is actively planned, managed, and maintained, it creates a place that sticks in a person's memory, a place that people talk about and want to experience – a place that is like no other.



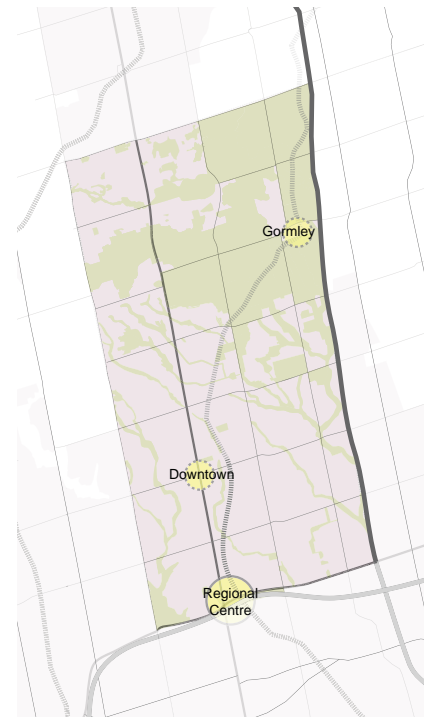
POINTS AREA STUDIES

Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy
Regional Centre Design and Land Use Strategy
Gormley Heritage Conservation District Study



LINES CORRIDOR STUDIES

Transportation Master Plan Update
Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan
Infrastructure/ Servicing



SURFACES LANDSCAPE STUDIES

Socio-Economic Study
Policy Context
Growth Forecast
Environmental Policy Review
Economic Policy Review
Housing and Residential Intensification Study

The points, lines, and surfaces of Richmond Hill's existing urban structure provide the framework for the background studies being undertaken to develop the Town's new OP



Lake Wilcox and Lake St. George area of Richmond Hill's urban structure as seen from the air



Examples of points in Richmond Hill - Downtown, the Regional Centre, and the David Dunlap Observatory



Examples of lines in Richmond Hill - Yonge Street, tributary of the Don River, and the CN rail corridors



Example of surfaces in Richmond Hill - Residential neighbourhoods, Newkirk Business Park, and the Oak Ridges Moraine

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THE EVOLUTION OF RICHMOND HILL'S URBAN STRUCTURE

3.0 THE EVOLUTION OF RICHMOND HILL'S URBAN STRUCTURE

Time is a critical component of the urban structure. A settlement is not built overnight; it is the product of many hands over time. Similarly, the development of the urban structure is a product of the evolution of settlement and subsistence patterns over many centuries. This section describes the evolution of Richmond Hill's urban structure based on the information provided in the Town's Archaeological Master Plan (1989), historical maps and aerial imagery, and other historical documents.

The evolution of Richmond Hill's urban structure is summarized in three main stages. The first stage is called the Nomadic Hunter-Gatherer Stage and covers the period starting after the Wisconsinian glacier (the most recent glacier to cover the land mass of southern Ontario) receded approximately 12,000 years before present. The second stage is called the Agricultural Stage and covers the period following the introduction of corn to southern Ontario around 800 A.D. The third stage is called the Urbanization Stage and covers the period following the extension of Provincial Highway 404 and the York Durham Sewer System in the 1980s. The key physical developments within each of these stages are outlined below in an attempt to understand how the pattern of points, lines, and surfaces of Richmond Hill and the surrounding Region have evolved to present day. By understanding how the pattern of the urban structure has evolved to this point, the Town will be better able to define and direct the future urban structure.

Nomadic Hunter-Gatherer Stage (12,000 years before present to 800 A.D.)

Thousands of years ago, southern Ontario was covered by an ice sheet. Around 12,000 years before present the glacier began to retreat leaving a wealth of sand, gravel, and till. The retreat of the glacier created various landforms across southern Ontario. The Great Lakes, the Niagara Escarpment, and numerous smaller landforms such as drumlins and eskers were created by a series of glacial events over many thousands of years. Glacial scour and the pooling and ponding of meltwater from the retreat of the Wisconsinian glacier created the kettle lakes that remain distinct features of the Oak Ridges area. The advance and retreat of the glacier also established the landform that we now know as the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) and the numerous high points in the topography that still provide variation across the Town's landmass.

The pattern of glacial retreat deposited layers of permeable rock and unconsolidated materials (gravel, sand, silt) underground. Meltwater from the retreating glacier was trapped in these layers creating aquifers at varying depths. These aquifers formed the foundation of the groundwater and surface water systems that have evolved to present day. The groundwater discharge and surface water strandlines eventually created the river and valley systems that provide identifiable corridors in the southern portion of the Town.

The topography and water systems set the framework for the development of over 20 soils within the Town. The arrangement of landforms, their proximity to water systems, and the types of soils that were able to develop as a result of these patterns allowed a range of vegetation communities to establish. The topography and landforms, water systems, soils, vegetation, and climate within the Town provided the foundation for the settlement patterns that occurred during this period.

Approximately 9,000 years before present, small nomadic camps settled at certain times of the year within the Town. These camps generally located in areas where they could exploit local plant resources (e.g. berries), large game (e.g. mastodon, moose, elk, caribou, and later deer and fish), and water resources for subsistence. Two settlement patterns occurred during this time period:

Inconsistent/ever-changing nomadic camps

Between 9,000 years before present and 7,000 B.C. nomadic camps drifted inconsistently across Richmond Hill. These nomadic camps drifted from location to location in a sporadic pattern over the course of thousands of years. Many of these camps were located adjacent to the strandlines of large post-glacial lakes in order to intercept migrating caribou herds.

Seasonally Migrating nomadic camps

Around 7,000 B.C. until 800 A.D., the settlement pattern shifted to nomadic camps that migrated between two points based on the time of year. In the spring/summer the camp was located adjacent to fish and/or caribou migration routes and in the fall/winter, the camp moved inland to take advantage of the climate and the wealth of fruit and game available in the inland forests.

During the Nomadic Hunter-Gatherer Stage, settlement patterns were tied to an area's ability to provide food and water resources that settlers could exploit. The urban structure in the Town was directed by forces outside of the settler's control, namely the food and water resources that existed within the landscape. This stage established a number of the enduring points, lines, and surfaces that still exist within the Town today. Points include the numerous kettle lakes in the northern portion of the Town, which provide a source of enduring identity for the neighbourhoods that surround them. Lines established include the groundwater and surface water systems of the ORM and the river and valley systems that form the basis of the green fingers characteristic of the southern portion of the Town. Surfaces established include the hilly topography for which Richmond Hill is known, along with the landform which we now know as the ORM and the range of soils that developed across the Town's landmass.

Agricultural Stage (circa. 800 A.D. to 1980 A.D.)

Between the end of the 8th century and the beginning of 9th century, corn was introduced to Ontario. The introduction of corn and the establishment of corn horticulture revolutionized Ontario's settlement pattern. Settlements no longer needed to move at various times of the year to secure food. Instead, settlers could cultivate corn during the spring/summer and store it for use over the fall/winter months. With the addition of corn horticulture, food became less of a limiting factor on survival and settlers gained more time to focus their energies on other efforts. Three settlement patterns occurred during this time period:

Small Villages with Strategic Camps positioned outside the Village

Between the 9th century and the 13th century, settlement generally took the form of small palisaded villages. Many of these villages established strategic camps or hamlets outside of the village walls to exploit natural food resources. Corn played a supplementary role in the diet, marking a transition from a subsistence program focused exclusively on hunting and gathering.

Small Villages surrounded by productive agricultural lands

Between the 13th century and the end of the 18th century, settlement patterns evolved to small villages surrounded by productive agricultural lands. Subsistence patterns also evolved to incorporate a fully developed corn-bean-squash agriculture. Generally, the agricultural lands surrounding villages stretched for a radius of approximately two kilometres in all directions.

Crossroads Communities

Towards the end of the 18th century in 1787 the Toronto Purchase, which was un-



Bond Lake, located within the Oak Ridges Moraine, is an example of one of Richmond Hill's enduring points



German Mills Creek, an example of one of Richmond Hill's enduring lines



The Oak Ridges Moraine is an enduring surface within Richmond Hill

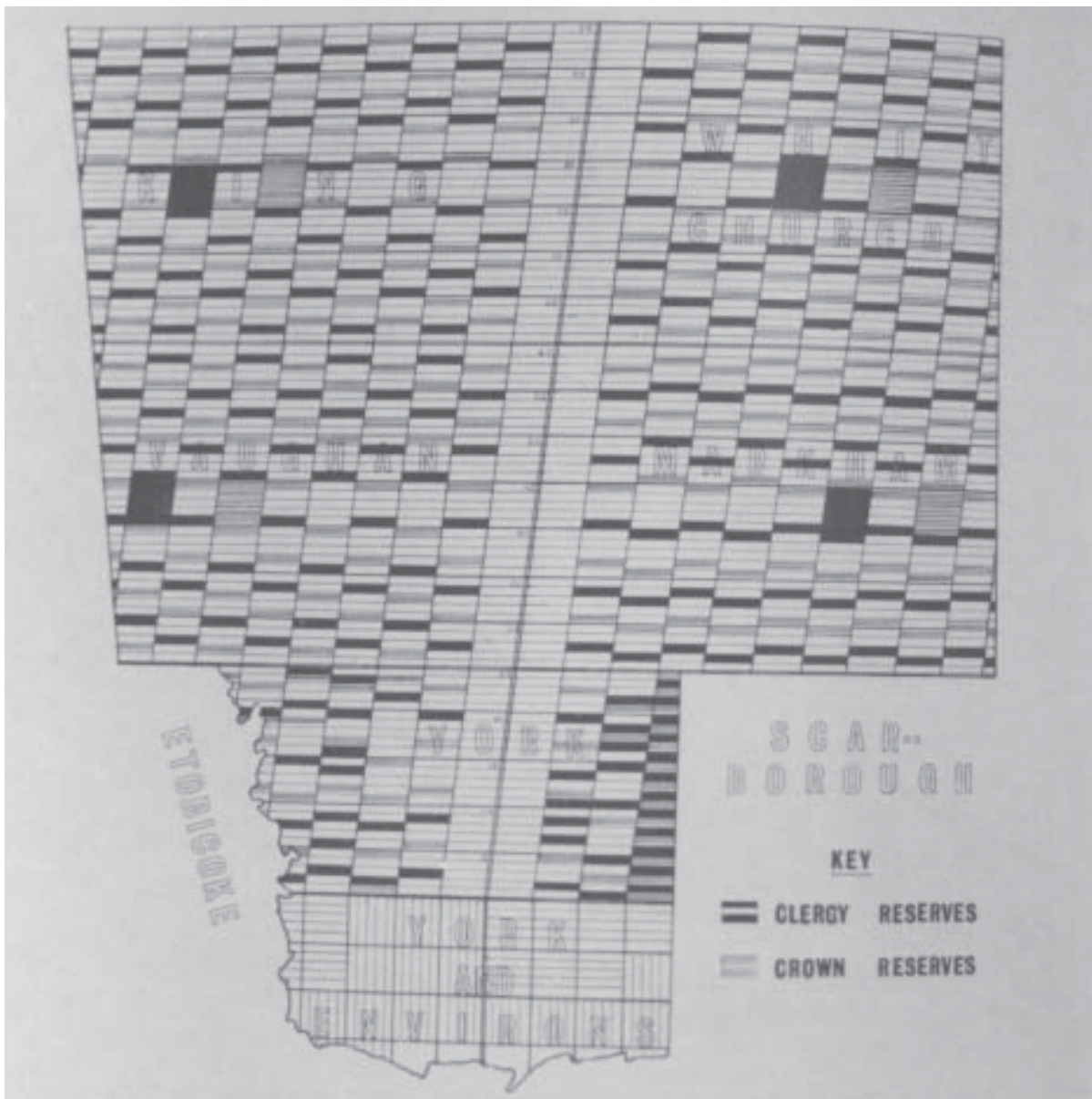


Part of a palisaded Huron-Iroquois village (Source: C.W. Jefferys, The Picture Gallery of Canadian History, Ryerson Press via the Town of Richmond Hill Library)

3.0 THE EVOLUTION OF RICHMOND HILL'S URBAN STRUCTURE

derstood at the time to include present-day Richmond Hill, took place between British European settlers and Mississauga Natives. In 1794, the first survey of what is now Richmond Hill was completed as a precursor to Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe's plan to construct Yonge Street as a military road to the north. The first survey established the concession roads, a series of lines that are essential to the Town's existing urban structure and that transformed the settlement pattern to a series of crossroads communities.

By 1796 Richmond Hill had been surveyed into 1,000 acre concession blocks, establishing the east-west and north-south concession roads that remain essential lines within the Town's existing urban structure. Concession roads are straight, linear movement corridors established on a square-grid at 2.01 kilometre intervals. One concession road – Yonge Street - was planned as the primary military road to Georgian Bay and the Upper Great Lakes, providing distinction to this corridor in relation to the others. Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe's Yonge Street Plan was the first government-lead vision for the development of Yonge Street as an essential spine within the Town. Every lot along Yonge Street was open to permanent settlement, as shown on Surveyor-General D.W. Smith's Checkered Plan. This set the framework for Yonge Street to develop into the commercial spine it remains today.



Surveyor-General D.W. Smith's Checkered Plan (Source: The York Pioneer via the Town of Richmond Hill Library)

By the early 1800's, enterprises began locating along the newly established Yonge Street. Abner Miles' Tavern and Store was the first enterprise built on Yonge Street establishing Richmond Hill as a community providing for the needs of the traveling public. For almost a century Richmond Hill matured as a farming community with a series of crossroads villages and hamlets focused around agriculturally-based mills and industries (e.g. grist mills, saw mills, asheries, cider mills) along the various river corridors. In 1828, a daily stagecoach line was introduced on Yonge Street between Toronto and Holland Landing. The stagecoach from Toronto took around three hours to reach Richmond Hill, making the Town an ideal location for the establishment of taverns and inns to serve travelers.

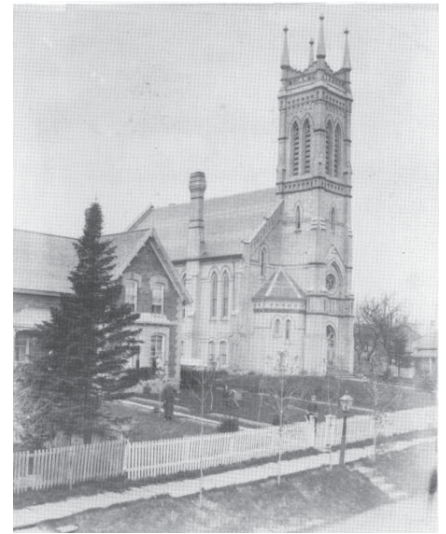
By the 1880's churches began to replace the taverns as key physical points in the Town. The Liberal published an article in 1881 which noted that "Few villages of equal size or importance within the Province have manifested so much activity and energy in church enterprise as our own". By 1881 three of the four church spires - St. Mary's Anglican Church, Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church, and Richmond Hill United Church - that still distinguish the point which is now known as the Downtown had been built. By 1894, the fourth church - St. Mary's Immaculate - had been constructed and church spires dominated and defined the Town's skyline, creating the views to the spires that continue to be valued by stakeholders today.

In the later part of the 19th century the Radial Rail arrived in Richmond Hill reducing the travel time to Toronto to forty-five minutes. The stagecoach line was soon out of business, but other general trade industries prospered. By 1899 the Radial Rail extended to Newmarket, establishing Yonge Street as the transit corridor it remains today. Soon after the extension to Newmarket, the railway company bought land close to Bond Lake establishing the first electrically powered lighting systems in a park in Ontario. Bond Lake became a centre for recreational pursuits, which may be re-engaged in the present day through the proposed Oak Ridges Corridor Park.

The James Bay Railway opened a station on its line running from Toronto to Sudbury at Centre Street East in 1906. Soon after the station was opened, the line became a main route for shipping freight. Six years later, a prospering greenhouse industry developed in the Town and Richmond Hill became known internationally for its prize roses. The development of the greenhouse industry and the increasing popularity of the automobile spurred the Town's first population influx. In 1918 William Lawrence began to develop Roseview Gardens, the Town's first residential subdivision at Roseview and Major Mackenzie Drive.

In the 1920's, a pumping station and water tower were built on Mill Pond, and Highway 7 was extended to stretch between Sarnia and Peterborough. Highway 7 was the only east-west inter-regional route north of Highway 2 serving Ontario, quickly becoming the critical east-west movement corridor that it remains in the Town today.

During the Great Depression the greenhouse industry remained successful and the Town partnered with North York, Markham and Vaughan to purchase the radial rail-



Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church circa 1880 (Source: Town of Richmond Hill Public Library)



Car 71 of the Metropolitan Railway, which ran along Yonge Street, circa 1900 (Source: Town of Richmond Hill Public Library)



Radial railway station at Yonge Street and Lorne Avenue circa 1911 (Source: Town of Richmond Hill Public Library)

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way, renaming it the North Yonge Railways. In 1935 the David Dunlap Observatory, a point which remains valued by many residents today, opened under the direction of the University of Toronto housing the world's second largest telescope.

In 1947 the first segment of Highway 401 was constructed between Scarborough and Oshawa. Highway 401 was extended west from Scarborough in the 1950s across the top of Toronto. Buttonville Airport began as a grass strip airport in 1953 and later became an official airport in 1962. These points and lines of infrastructure set the framework for the Town to become part of an inter-regional movement system.

Richmond Hill grew quickly during the 1950s, developing a number of new neighbourhoods including Richmond Acres, Pleasantville, Tyndall, and Glenbrae. In 1957, Richmond Hill was incorporated as a Town leading to service upgrades such as the construction of various schools, the opening of the York Central Hospital in 1963, the opening of public parks and recreational facilities including Centennial Pool in 1965, and the reconstruction of St. Mary's Immaculate Church in 1967. The first winter carnival, which remains an event valued by residents to present day, was held at the Mill Pond in 1969.

The 1960s saw the remaining phases of Highway 401 constructed and the completion of the Don Valley Parkway (DVP). By the late 1960s, Highway 401 stretched from Windsor in south-west Ontario to Brockville in north-east Ontario. Reconstruction of the DVP as a municipal freeway leading out of downtown Toronto to Sheppard Avenue just north of Highway 401 was completed in 1967. Following the completion of the DVP the Province of Ontario decided to construct the rest of the expressway to Highway 7.

Richmond Hill's municipal boundary was expanded in 1971 when the Regional Municipality of York was established. The expansion of the Town's municipal boundary was one of the precursors to the rapid population growth that occurred over the next few decades. The 1970s also saw numerous large-scale infrastructure and service expansions. Hillcrest Mall was established in the 1970s, a commercial centre that still exists today, and construction began on Highway 404, which remains a critical inter-regional corridor along the eastern edge of the Town. In 1978, the GO train line was extended to Richmond Hill establishing a higher-order transit linkage to downtown Toronto that still exists today.

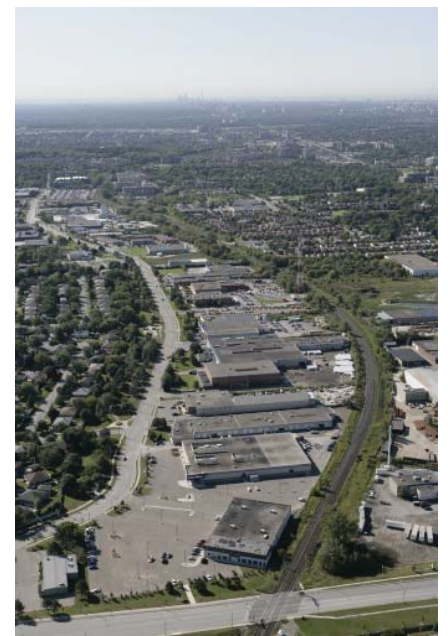
Settlement patterns were revolutionized during the Agricultural Stage due to the introduction of corn horticulture and subsequent technological and infrastructure developments that improved the movement of people and goods. The urban structure was directed by both introduced movement systems (i.e. roads) and natural movement systems (i.e. rivers). This marked a shift in the evolution of the urban structure, as settlers began to direct the settlement pattern through the placement of introduced built form and movement systems. This stage established a number of the man-made points, lines, and surfaces within the Town that exist today. Points include the numerous churches that remain valued by residents for the skyline and views they create in



Yonge Street is an example of a man-made line in Richmond Hill



With the extension of the GO train line in 1978, a higher order transit line was established between Richmond Hill and Downtown Toronto



The Newkirk employment area is an example of a man-made surface within the Town

the Downtown area, along with the Mill Pond, the David Dunlap Observatory, the York Central Hospital, Hillcrest Mall, and the Downtown centred at Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive. Lines established include the concession roads that remain the primary east-west and north-south movement corridors within the Town, the evolution of Yonge Street as a commercial and transit spine, the extension of the GO train higher-order transit linkage to downtown Toronto, and the construction of key inter-regional movement corridors such as Highway 7, Highway 401, the DVP, and Highway 404. Surfaces established include the residential neighbourhoods that were built during this period, along with the Newkirk employment area that began to develop adjacent to the rail corridor.

Urbanization Stage (1980 to present)

In the early 1980's, the Province of Ontario finished the construction of the York-Durham Sewage System (YDSS), which included a series of sewer pipes, pumping stations, and sewage treatment works. Until this point in time, there was a technical limit to growth in York Region due to a 1965 Provincial decision to allow no additional sewage treatment plants on the Don, Humber, and Rouge Rivers. The original concept and construction of the YDSS by the Province of Ontario was the result of the Government of Canada's execution of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement with the United States in 1978 and the subsequent Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem, which committed Canada and the United States to control pollution in the Great Lakes and clean up waste water from industry and communities. The YDSS was a Provincial strategy to improve the natural water environments while continuing to meet the needs of the growing communities in York Region. The settlement pattern that resulted during this time period and which continues to present day can generally be summarized as follows:



Richmond Hill within the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Source: Richmond Hill Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy)

Town within an Urban Region

The construction of the YDSS, the Provincial expansions to the 400 series highways, and the Provincial extension of GO train service set the framework for the settlement pattern within the Town to evolve from a series of crossroads communities to a Town within a thriving urban region. In 1982, the Ontario Municipal Board approved the Town's first OP. The OP directed employment growth to the south-east corner of the Town, anticipated limited development in north Richmond Hill, and directed commercial centres to the Yonge Street corridor. The last greenhouse industry to operate in Richmond Hill closed in 1982, marking the beginning of a transition in the Town's economic base from a goods-producing to a service-producing economy.

3.0 THE EVOLUTION OF RICHMOND HILL'S URBAN STRUCTURE

Two years later Town Council changed the motto for Richmond Hill from “Like the rose, I flourish” to “A little north, a little nicer” in reference to the smaller, quieter lifestyle of the Town in comparison to Toronto. A year later the Town's largest sports park, Richmond Green, was built attracting sports enthusiasts and park visitors from beyond the Town's borders. Richmond Green remains valued by residents, providing a variety of unique facilities not found elsewhere in the Town.

The East Beaver Creek Business Park began to flourish following the extension of Highway 404 in the mid-1980s and the relocation of a portion of Highway 7 to construct Highway 407 along the Town's southern edge. Today the employment areas on both sides of Highway 404 in Richmond Hill and Markham are recognized as a strategic employment area with a focus on information technology and high-tech industries. Richmond Hill's 404 employment corridor now includes three business parks – East Beaver Creek in the south, Headford in the middle, and the Barker Business Park in the north. The Headford Business Park is home to the Canadian head offices of Staples Business Depot, Mazda Canada, Tetrapak, Xenos, and Rubicon. The Barker Business Park has a focus on sustainable development and includes such businesses as Toygalaxy, Cosmo Music, and La Rocca Creative Cakes. The opening of Highway 407 in 1997 as a new east-west inter-regional movement corridor on the southern edge of Richmond Hill has continued to foster economic growth in the Town's employment areas. In addition to the north-south linkage provided by Highway 404, Highway 407 provides a key linkage to Pearson International Airport in the west and Pickering in the east.

During the 1990s the Town grew rapidly, adding numerous low-density residential areas. The market demand for single-detached dwellings directed the types of built form constructed in these neighbourhoods along with the pervasive attitude that new low density development was desirable. Most of the subdivisions developed during the 1990s protected environmental lands, but did not actively engage the environment as part of the subdivision design. For example, river corridors were protected and enclosed by backlogged low-density housing (e.g. Bayview Hill, portions of Elgin-Leslie and Bayview North-West) or treated as separate entities from the rest of a site (e.g. Riotrin site at Leslie Street and Elgin Mills Road East), and stormwater management ponds were incorporated with fences around the perimeter (e.g. pond at Yonge Street and Highway 7). Several subdivisions were inhabited by a wave of immigrants, many of whom arrived from Hong Kong, who moved to the Town in the 1990s. The evolution of the Town's demographics spurred the development of new forms of shops and restaurants. Times Square, an Asian-style shopping mall, is one example of the commercial form that was built to cater to a specific demographic.

The recession of the 1990s and a growing retail trend to locate in malls lead to a decline of the Downtown area. A consumer shift occurred as people began to buy goods in larger-format retail establishments and malls versus on mainstreets. The Regional Centre was established during this decade providing large-format single-use retail, commercial, and restaurant establishments.



Richmond Green, the Town's largest park, is an example of a point developed during the Urbanization Stage



Viva, unveiled in 2005 by York Region Transit, provides a higher order transit line along Yonge Street and Highway 7



Surfaces created during the Urbanization Stage include the residential neighbourhoods within the Oak Ridges area

The new millennium ushered in a value-shift in terms of public awareness of environmental issues leading the Provincial and Regional governments to recognize and protect the ORM, the Greenbelt Plan area, and a Regional Greenlands System comprised of both natural and human-made linkages. A large portion of the Town will be protected over the long-term as a significant natural resource. Growth was recognized as an issue of Provincial interest under the Places to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, requiring municipalities to direct growth to a series of centres and corridors. Values towards transit also began to shift during this decade as the price of oil increased. In 2005 York Region Transit unveiled a new rapid transit initiative entitled VIVA which provides higher-order rapid transit along Yonge Street and Highway 7. A station was established in the Regional Centre to provide a hub for these services and in 2008 a pedestrian bridge linking the VIVA station to the GO train station on the other side of the rail track was completed.

The Urbanization Stage marks the beginning of a new phase in city-building. No longer is the settlement pattern driven by where local settlers can exploit resources for subsistence purposes (as it was in the Nomadic Hunter-Gatherer Stage), or by the placement of introduced built form and movement systems (as it was in the Agricultural Stage). Rather, the settlement pattern is directed by a series of Global, National, Provincial, Regional, and Local forces. This period marks a shift in the evolution of the urban structure as government legislation and individual values begin to direct the settlement pattern within the context of the larger urban region. A number of new points, lines, and surfaces have evolved as part of this new stage to date. Points include Richmond Green, which remains the Town's largest park and is valued for the unique events it hosts, along with the Regional Centre. Lines include the inter-regional VIVA rapid transit system, which establish Yonge Street and Highway 7 as rapid transit corridors, along with Highway 407, which connects the Town west to Pearson International Airport and east to Pickering. Surfaces established include the residential neighbourhoods that were built during this period, along with the East Beaver Creek, Headford, and Barker business parks adjacent to the Highway 404 corridor.

4

ELEMENTS OF THE TOWN'S EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE

4.0 ELEMENTS OF THE TOWN'S EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE

This section describes the elements of Richmond Hill's existing urban structure. As outlined previously, the term urban structure refers to the arrangement or pattern of points, lines, and surfaces within an urban area. The existing urban structure provides the physical context for future developments, establishing the spatial framework within which the future urban structure will be developed and defined.

The elements of Richmond Hill's existing urban structure are examined using three analyses. First, the key layers of the existing urban structure are mapped and identified. Second, a site analysis was undertaken to categorize the existing physical patterns within the Town. Third, facilitated consultation sessions were held with residents, Town Staff (Planning Division, OP Steering Committee), and the OP Task Force (Council, Senior Management Team) to understand qualities shared among valued features and areas of the existing urban structure. The findings of each of these analyses are outlined below.

Layers of the Existing Urban Structure

To understand the existing urban structure at the scale of the Town, the layers of the existing urban structure were mapped and identified. Based on the analysis, there are five key layers in the existing urban structure including: existing policy context, land use, movement systems (e.g. roads, trails, transit), environment, and topography/views. Each of these layers is briefly described below.

Existing Policy Context

The existing policy context of the Town is structured around three areas: the ORM Area, the North Urban Development Area, and the South Urban Development Area. Each of these areas is briefly described below:

The ORM Area, which covers the northern portion of the Town following an irregular line generally located north of Elgin Mills Road, comprises a number of Settlement Areas, Natural Core Areas, Natural Linkage Areas, and Countryside Areas. The ORM covers just over half of the Town's land area. The proposed Oak Ridges Corridor Park is located within the ORM Area, along with the Hamlet of Gormley.

The North Urban Development Area (NUDA) is one of the settlement areas within the ORM Area and is generally located north of Bond Lake to Bloomington Road, between Bathurst Street and Bayview Avenue. The NUDA comprises the northern part of Richmond Hill and includes the Oak Ridges community and the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area.

The South Urban Development Area (SUDA) is generally located south of Bond Lake to Highway 7, between Bathurst Street and Provincial Highway 404. The northern portion of the SUDA is located within the ORM Area. The remainder of the SUDA is not located within the ORM Area and includes such neighbourhoods as Downtown, Richvale, Observatory Lane, Bayview Glen, Doncrest, Bayview Hill, Bayview North-West and Elgin-Leslie. It also includes the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area and the Beaver Creek, Headford, Barker, and Newkirk Business Parks.

Land Use

Land Use within the Town is categorized into six main designations: Residential, Commercial, Employment, Institutional, Environmental, and Mixed-Use. Generally, these land use designations have been established to separate and/or mitigate incompatible land uses.

Generally, Residential lands are located in the interior of concession blocks. Existing policies encourage the development of low-density residential uses (single, semi-detached and duplex dwellings), with medium and high density residential uses anticipated based on certain locational criteria.

Existing Policy Context

1

LEGEND

- Designated Greenfield Area
- Built-Up Area
- Open Space/Natural Areas
(includes ORM, EPA, Hazard Land, Major Open Space, and PBW designations in OR OPA 218, OPA 225, and North Leslie Land Use Map - version 5)
- Hamlet Area
- Railway
- ORMCP Area
- Greenbelt Plan Area
- Road

North Urban Development Area (NUDA)

Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM)

South Urban Development Area (SUDA)

Sources:
 Town of Richmond Hill Official Plan Schedule 1 - Land Use (Consolidation to 1998).
 Town of Richmond Hill OPA 218, 2003.
 Town of Richmond Hill OPA 225, 2005.
 Town of Richmond Hill, North Leslie Secondary Plan Map (version 5), 2008.
 MMAH, ORM Conservation Plan, 2001.
 MMAH, Greenbelt Plan, 2005.
 MPPIR, Places to Grow Built Boundary for the Growth Plan for the GH, 2008.

4.0 ELEMENTS OF THE TOWN'S EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE

Most Commercial lands are located along major arterial roads. Yonge Street functions as the Town's main commercial spine. The Downtown area serves as the historic mainstreet and Hillcrest Mall serves as a Regional Commercial Shopping Centre south of the Downtown area.

Employment lands are located within four business parks. Three of the business parks are located on the Town's eastern boundary adjacent to Highway 404. The fourth business park, which is the Town's oldest business park, is centrally located north-east of the Downtown adjacent to the CN Rail corridor.

Institutional lands are limited within the Town. The majority of existing Institutional lands are located along major arterial or collector roads.

The Environmental areas within the Town are primarily located around natural features and systems such as kettle lakes, headwaters and tributaries of the Don, Rouge, Humber, and East Holland River systems, wetland complexes, forest communities, and a portion of the ORM.

Mixed-use areas (i.e. areas that anticipate a mix of residential and commercial uses) are limited within the Town. The majority of existing Mixed-use areas are located along Yonge Street.

Movement Systems

Movement systems serving the Town generally fall into one of six categories: road corridors, transit centres and corridors, rail corridors, trail corridors, watercourses, and airports. The Town is serviced by two Provincial Highways – Highway 404 and Highway 407, one municipal airport - Buttonville, which is located in Markham. A number of rail, bus, and rapid transit systems also service the Town including:

- o Richmond Hill GO train line
- o Two GO bus routes (Route 40 – Square One, Pearson Airport, Richmond Hill Centre; Route 62 – Newmarket “B”)
- o Numerous York Region Transit (YRT) bus routes
- o Three VIVA Rapid Transit bus routes (VIVA Blue, VIVA Pink, VIVA Purple)
- o One TTC bus route (Route 25 – Don Mills)

In addition, a number of transit terminals and stations are located within the Town including:

- o Richmond Hill Centre Terminal (YRT, VIVA and GO surface terminal)
- o Yonge-Bernard Street Terminal (YRT, VIVA, and GO surface terminal)
- o Richmond Hill GO train station (at Major Mackenzie)
- o Langstaff GO train station (at Highway 7)

The Town has constructed an ever-growing trail network. Trails range from accessible asphalt terrain, to more challenging trails with loose surfacing and steeper slopes. Many of the trails are located adjacent to the Town's numerous watercourses.

Environment

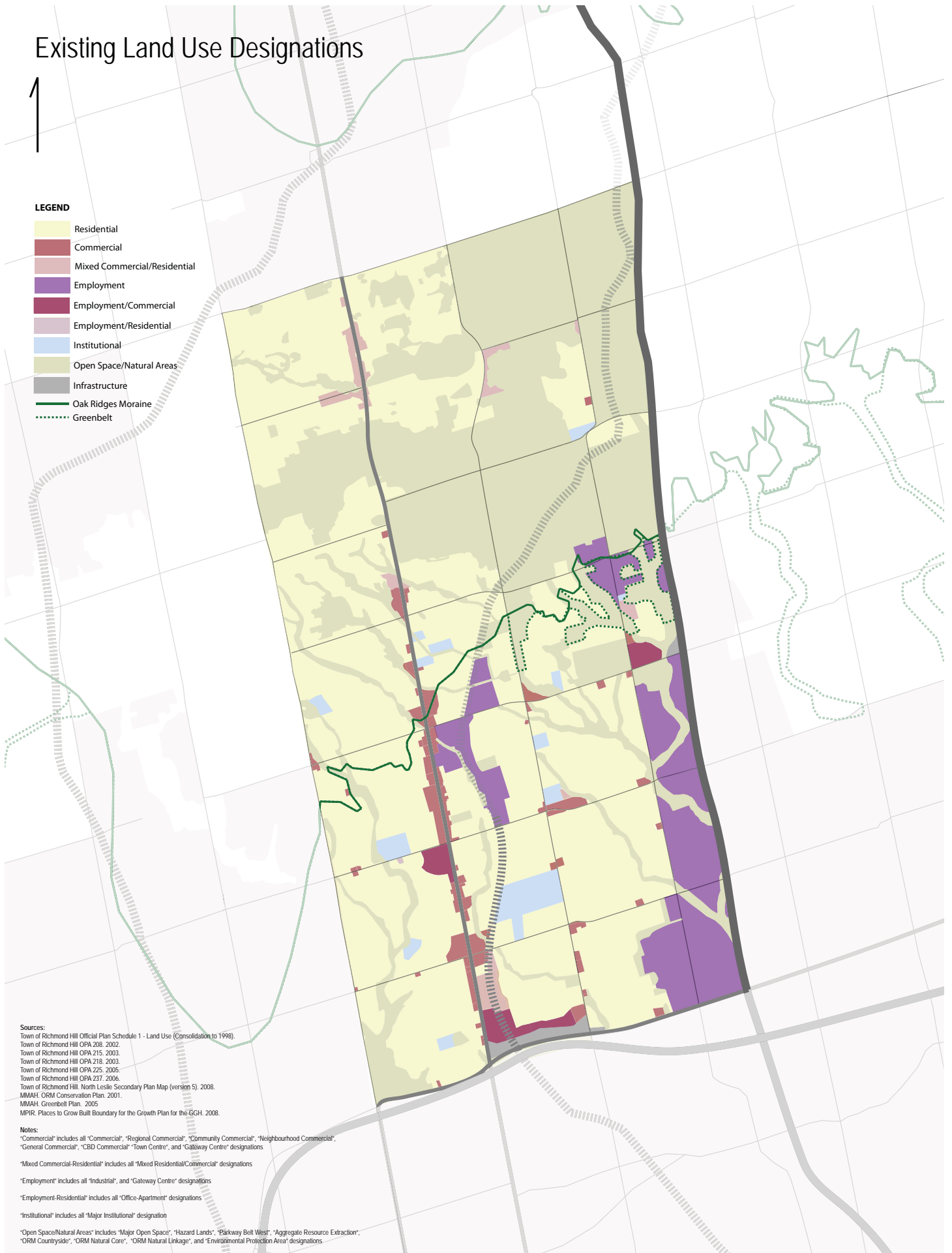
The Town's existing environmental areas are primarily located around natural features and systems including kettle

Existing Land Use Designations

1

LEGEND

- Residential
- Commercial
- Mixed Commercial/Residential
- Employment
- Employment/Commercial
- Employment/Residential
- Institutional
- Open Space/Natural Areas
- Infrastructure
- Oak Ridges Moraine
- Greenbelt

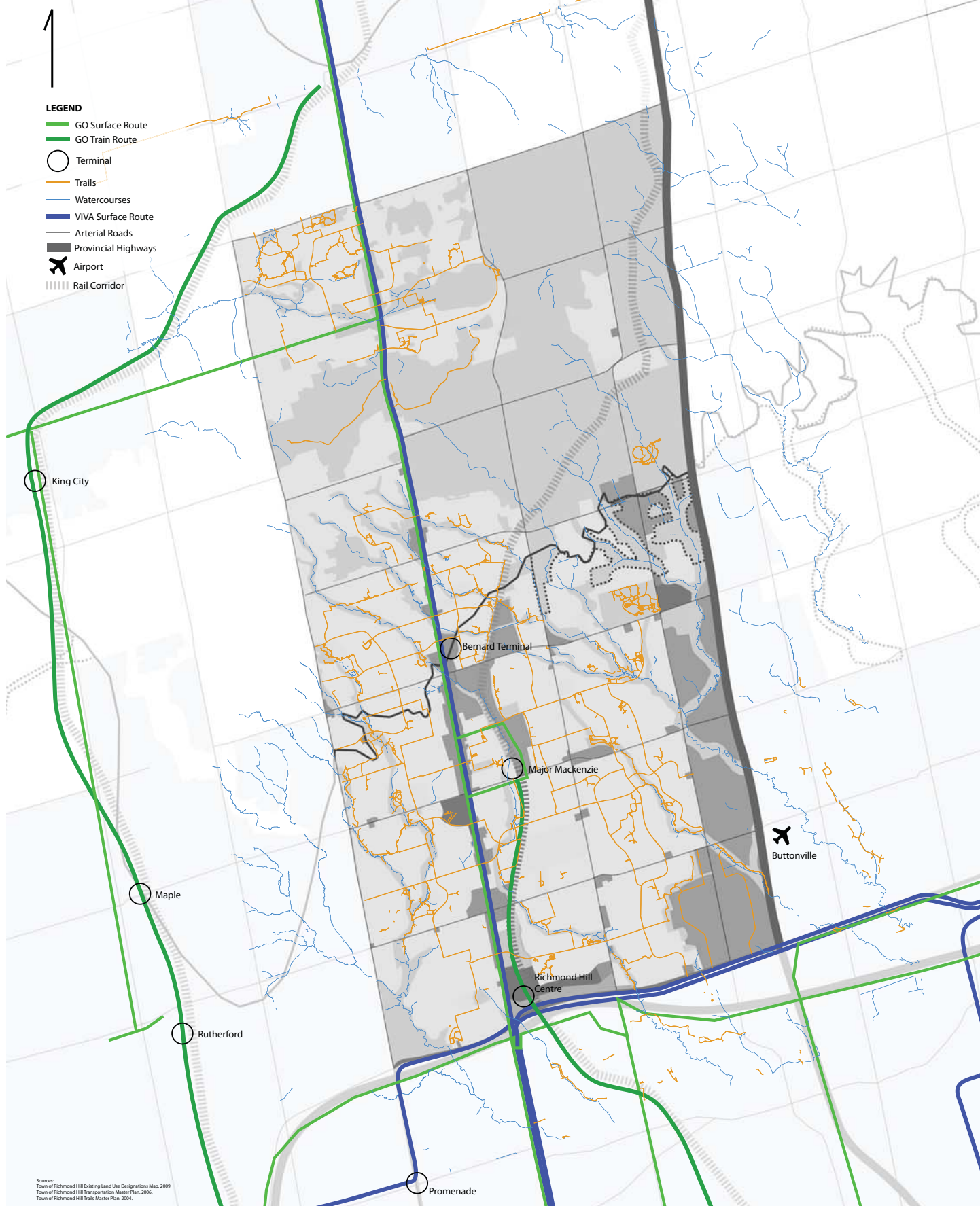


Sources:
 Town of Richmond Hill Official Plan Schedule 1 - Land Use (Consolidation to 1998).
 Town of Richmond Hill OPA 208, 2002.
 Town of Richmond Hill OPA 215, 2003.
 Town of Richmond Hill OPA 218, 2003.
 Town of Richmond Hill OPA 225, 2005.
 Town of Richmond Hill OPA 237, 2006.
 Town of Richmond Hill, North Leslie Secondary Plan Map (version 5), 2008.
 MMAH, ORM Conservation Plan, 2001.
 MMAH, Greenbelt Plan, 2005.
 MPR, Places to Grow Built Boundary for the Growth Plan for the GGH, 2008.

Notes:
 *Commercial includes all "Commercial", "Regional Commercial", "Community Commercial", "Neighbourhood Commercial", "General Commercial", "CBD Commercial", "Town Centre", and "Gateway Centre" designations.
 *Mixed Commercial-Residential includes all "Mixed Residential/Commercial" designations.
 *Employment includes all "Industrial", and "Gateway Centre" designations.
 *Employment-Residential includes all "Office-Apartment" designations.
 *Institutional includes all "Major Institutional" designation.
 *Open Space/Natural Areas includes "Major Open Space", "Hazard Lands", "Parkway Belt West", "Aggregate Resource Extraction", "ORM Countryside", "ORM Natural Core", "ORM Natural Linkage", and "Environmental Protection Area" designations.

4.0 ELEMENTS OF THE TOWN'S EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE

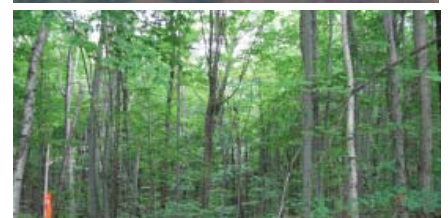
Existing Movement Systems



lakes, headwaters and tributaries of the Don, Rouge, Humber, and East Holland River systems, wetland complexes, forest communities, and a portion of the ORM. The ORM covers the northern half of Richmond Hill, and is a ridge of land stretching over 160 kilometers of southern Ontario between the Niagara Escarpment in the west almost to the Trent River in the east. The environmental areas in the Town are unique and diverse, defined by a variety of vegetation communities, species, soil types, and water systems.

Topography and Views

The predominant feature of the Town's topography is its elevation in relation to the rest of the GTA. The elevation of the Town provides sweeping views to the Toronto skyline from a number of vantage points along Yonge Street, on the ORM, and on Highway 7. After the glacier receded 12,000 years before present a number of earthen mounds formed, creating the unique "hill" in the Downtown area, along with the high point upon which the DDO was sited and constructed in 1935. A view from Highway 7 to the DDO can be observed from around Red Maple Road. The ORM, which covers the northern portion of Richmond Hill, is arguably the Town's most distinguishing topographical feature.



4.0 ELEMENTS OF THE TOWN'S EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE

Physical Patterns within the Existing Urban Structure

To understand the existing urban structure at the scale of the neighbourhoods, a site analysis of the Town was undertaken to categorize existing physical patterns. Based on the analysis, key points (centres and features), lines (corridors and linear elements), and surfaces (neighbourhoods, employment areas or environmental areas in between the points and lines) were identified to describe the existing physical patterns.

It should be noted that the key physical patterns identified should not be thought of as discrete elements within the existing urban structure. Each of these patterns intersects within one another in various locations throughout the Town creating what could be thought of as an interconnected weave.

Points

Points are centres or features containing identifiable buildings, services and/or functions. The analysis identified three centres within the Town and a number of features.

Centres

Three centres exist within Richmond Hill. Centres are areas that contain the highest concentration and greatest mix of uses. The centres include: the Regional Centre at the intersection of Yonge Street and Highway 7; the Downtown at the intersection of Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive; and Oak Ridges at the intersection of Yonge Street and King Road. Each of these centres evolved in a unique manner from the others and contains different functions.

The Regional Centre is focused on getting people where they want to go, functioning as a mobility hub within the Region that links residents of York Region to the rest of the GTA. A regional transit terminal exists within this centre, along with an inter-regional GO train station, and access to Highway 407.

The Downtown is focused on bringing people together, functioning as the historic mainstreet of the Town and the heart of Richmond Hill's civic and cultural life. The Downtown is distinct in its built form in comparison to the other centres as it was built at a pedestrian-scale, and continues to be a place where people want to meet and gather with one another. The Town's main public library, the new Centre for the Performing Arts, the Elgin Barrow Arena, the Lois Hansey Aquatic Centre, and a number of historic churches are located within the Downtown.

Oak Ridges is focused on serving residents of northern Richmond Hill. Oak Ridges is distinct from the other centres in its geography as it is the only centre located on the ORM, representing the most urbanized portion of the Moraine. Oak Ridges evolved as a tourist destination and still maintains a cottage-character. In the past few decades, Oak Ridges has grown into a



The Regional Centre



The Downtown



Oak Ridges

community with a year-round residential population and will soon be home to the new LEED Certified Oak Ridges Community Centre.

Features

The analysis identified four features within Richmond Hill. Features are areas that have a distinct character, significant buildings, and/or significant cultural associations. The four features identified include: the DDO, the Hamlet of Gormley, the numerous kettle lakes on the ORM, and the Mill Pond. Each of these features evolved in a unique manner from the others and offer distinct physical and experiential characteristics.

The DDO opened in 1935 as a gift to the University of Toronto from Jessie Donald Dunlap in memory of her husband David Alexander Dunlap. Since its inception, the Observatory has been a research centre for the Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics, in addition to providing public education and teaching programs. The Black Hole was discovered by an astronomer working at the Observatory in 1972. In September 2007, the University of Toronto announced its intention to sell the Observatory lands. Town Council has designated five significant heritage buildings, various heritage features, and a culturally significant landscape (currently subject to a Conservation Review Board appeal) on the Observatory lands.

The Hamlet of Gormley is a small rural community with a wealth of built and natural heritage. Gormley has a variety of heritage building styles dating from the mid-19th century onward and many substantial brick houses. The topographical character of Gormley reflects its location on the south slope of the ORM. The topography has remained undisturbed except for the cut-and-fill undertaken to create the railway and highways. The elevation provides sweeping views to the Toronto skyline to the south. The Town is currently in the process of undertaking a Heritage Conservation District Study for the Hamlet of Gormley.

The seven kettle lakes on the ORM support diverse and sensitive biological communities, a variety of recreational activities, and create identifiable natural features within the Town. Kettle lakes are the result of glacier water getting caught in water-tight depressions in the land. These lakes are sustained by rainfall and groundwater flows in the immediate area. Lake Wilcox is the largest of the kettle lakes and is located in the Oak Ridges community at the headwaters of the East Humber River.

Mill Pond was named in recognition of the sawmill operation that originally used the pond for power. The sawmill operation was part of what made the Downtown area an attractive place to settle in the late 1800s. Today, Mill Pond Park provides a venue for summer concerts, along with the annual Winter Carnival.



The David Dunlap Observatory



The Toronto skyline as seen from the Hamlet of Gormley



Bond Lake, one of seven kettle lakes



Mill Pond

4.0 ELEMENTS OF THE TOWN'S EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE

Lines

Lines are corridors or linkages containing movement, services and/or functions. Lines form key connections between centres within the Town and centres in other municipalities. The analysis identified two corridors and two types of linkages within the Town.

Corridors

Corridors provide for the movement of people and goods. Corridors contain a mix of uses and development forms, and are served by rapid bus transit. Two Regional Corridors exist within Richmond Hill: the Yonge Street Corridor, and the Highway 7 Corridor.

The Yonge Street Corridor functions as the historic north/south spine not only of the Town, but of the larger Region. Yonge Street links Richmond Hill north-south to York Region and Toronto. It includes a range of land use conditions such as areas that are unlikely to change, like the ORM plateaux area around Bond Lake (soon to be the Oak Ridges Corridor Park); areas that are ideal for intensification; and areas that are vacant. Yonge Street is currently served by VIVA transit and will be a key VIVA rapid transit corridor in York Region.

The Highway 7 Corridor has a different history than Yonge Street, originally being constructed by the Province to move automobile and truck traffic across Ontario. Highway 7 links the Town east to Kanata (now part of the amalgamated City of Ottawa), and west to Elginfield in Middlesex County. A range of land use conditions exist on Highway 7, most of which are automobile-oriented. Highway 7 is currently served by VIVA transit and will be a key VIVA rapid transit corridor in York Region.

Linkages

Linkages provide for the movement of plants, animals, and/or water. Linkages are part of the Town's environmental systems. Two types of linkages exist within the Town: Natural linkages and Human-made linkages.

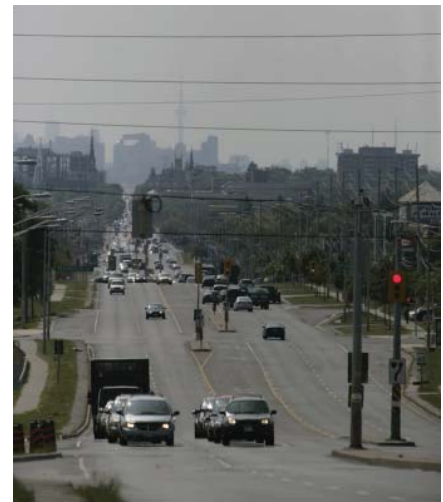
Both Natural linkages and Human-made linkages support the movement of plants and animals between core environmental features and/or areas and other linkage corridors. Natural linkages within the Town include river and creek corridors associated with the Don, Humber, Rouge, and East Holland river systems. Human-made linkages include the east-west Trans-Canada pipeline easement south of Gamble Road/19th Avenue, the east-west Hydro Corridor located north and south of Highway 7, and the north-south CN Rail right-of-way located between Highway 7 and Bloomington Road.

Surfaces

Surfaces are non-linear areas or patches located between points and lines. Surfaces function as the fabric of the existing urban structure, holding the points and lines together and providing the framework for interrelationships to occur. The analysis iden-



Higher order transit on Yonge Street



Yonge Street facing south towards Toronto



Twickenham Park, an example of a natural linkage in Richmond Hill

tified four surfaces including: Agricultural/Rural areas, Residential neighbourhoods, Employment and Environmental areas.

Agricultural and Rural Areas are the fabric of the north-east portion of the Town. These surfaces link Richmond Hill to similar agricultural and rural areas in neighbouring municipalities to the north (Aurora) and to the east (Whitchurch-Stouffville, Markham). These areas feature a diversity of conditions ranging from corn and cabbage fields, tree farms and greenhouses, barns and rural residential farmhouses, to equestrian areas, golf courses and resource processing and stockpiling.

Residential Neighbourhoods are the fabric of the south and north urban areas of the Town. The majority of Residential neighbourhoods include low-density dwellings such as single, semi-detached, and duplex dwellings. A few high-density neighbourhoods existing along Yonge Street and other major arterial and major collector roads. A variety of residential characters have developed within these neighbourhoods including the cottage residential character in parts of Oak Ridges, the estate residential character on the ORM, subdivision residential areas in Bayview Glen, Bayview Hill, Doncrest, Bayview North-West and Elgin-Leslie, and the village residential character in the Downtown. A number of the older residential neighbourhoods are in a state of transition, as older dwellings are retrofitted to more modern dwelling styles and sizes.

Employment Areas are the fabric of the eastern edge of the Town, and north-east of the Downtown. The Employment areas along the eastern edge of the Town have a business park character containing mainly office, commercial, and warehouse buildings. The Employment area adjacent the Downtown has more of an industrial character, and contains primarily industrial and warehouse buildings.

Environmental Areas are the underlying surfaces of the entire Town. Surfaces that we rarely see such as the soils and groundwater systems are included, along with the topography that results from what is happening under the ground. The ORM is a significant environmental surface in the northern portion of the Town where a variety of vegetation surfaces can be observed ranging from forests to meadows and fields.

Areas Valued within the Existing Urban Structure

Targeted consultation sessions were facilitated by Staff to understand areas of the existing urban structure valued by stakeholders. Stakeholders were asked to identify and describe special and distinct areas within the Town, areas that they value and that are important or have meaning to them. The following ten areas are identified as places with a unique physical built-form, natural character, or experiential character:

Downtown

Downtown is valued for its unique physical qualities. The views to the church spires and the views from the top of the hill to the Toronto skyline are unequalled along Yonge Street. People feel comfortable Downtown because the buildings are pedestri-



Richmond Hill south of Major Mackenzie Drive



Headford Business Park, one of Richmond Hill's eastern employment areas



A variety of built forms are seen in the Downtown area

4.0 ELEMENTS OF THE TOWN'S EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE

an-scale. People have a special attachment to the merchants and the stores – they provide niche goods and the merchants are attentive, informed, and interested in having a conversation. People love to gather Downtown. Friends meet at the library, the McConaghy Centre, and the many festivals; families socialize at the arena, the wave pool, and the churches; and loved ones come together at the hospital and cemetery in times of need. The Downtown is a place where people want to spend time.

David Dunlap Observatory (DDO)

The DDO is valued as an island of green in an otherwise urban area. The Observatory is valued as a unique site, located on a high point in the Town's topography and framing views from Highway 7 and beyond. Even though the site is in private ownership, people remember the discoveries and experiments that occurred on the site and value the site's landscape, heritage buildings, and wildlife. The DDO is a place that people want to experience.

Regional Centre

The Regional Centre is valued as a place that allows people to get where they need to go. People can choose to travel north, east, west, or south using different modes of transit. The GO train, GO bus transit, VIVA rapid transit, and YRT bus lines all intersect at this point. There is also access to the inter-regional Highway 407 system, which links to Pearson International Airport and the other 400-series highways across Ontario. The Regional Centre is a place where people go to get somewhere.

Hillcrest Mall

Hillcrest Mall is valued as a centre for commercial goods and services. Elderly people value the mall as an all-season walking area, with a food court and seating area to talk with friends. Younger people value the mall as an area to socialize with friends. Overall, people value the mall as a place where they can obtain many of the goods they need in one location. Hillcrest Mall is a place where people go to socialize and shop.

Richmond Green

Richmond Green is valued as a centre for Canada Day celebrations, cultural festivals, arts and crafts shows, animal shows, antique shows, and sporting events. People value Richmond Green as an all-season park, with passive and active events all year long. The winter skating trail is a favourite of many people, along with the skate and waterplay parks in the summer. Richmond Green is a place where people go for recreation.

Yonge Street Corridor

Yonge Street is valued as the historic mainstreet of the Town. People value the range of heritage and modern buildings and the diversity of urban and natural conditions that exist along the corridor. The varied topography of Yonge Street is appreciated, especially the plateau of the ORM, which provides a natural break between Oak Ridges and the southern portion of Richmond Hill. Yonge Street is a corridor where people experience all that is urban.

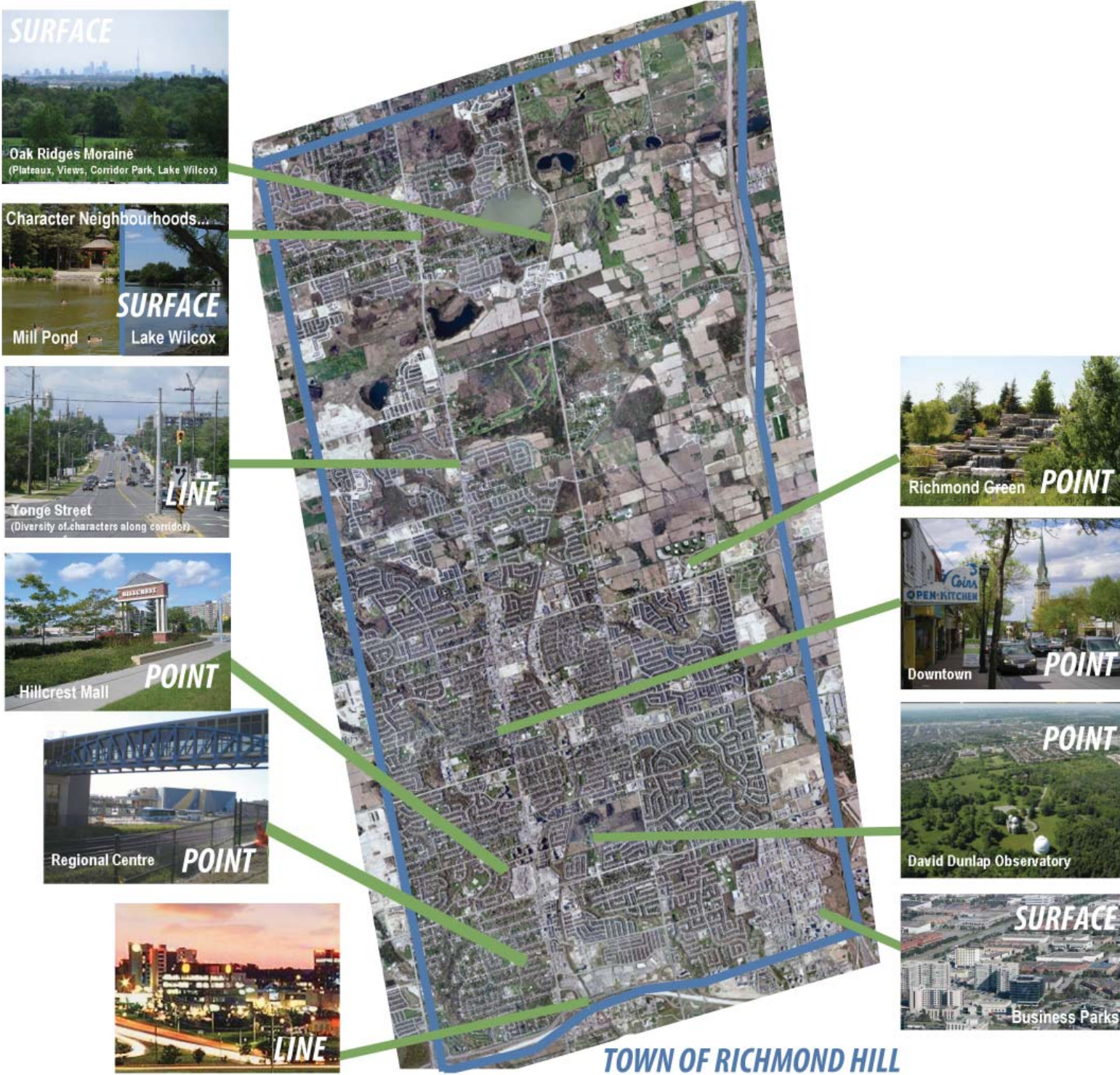
Highway 7 Corridor

The Highway 7 Corridor is valued in Richmond Hill for the unique asian-inspired shops and restaurants that exist in the southeast corner of the Town. People value the range of commercial establishments and the diversity of restaurants that function as gathering places along the corridor. The opportunities for new development along the corridor are also appreciated, along with the variety of signage in different languages. Highway 7 is a corridor where asian-inspired establishments are legible.

Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM)

The ORM is valued as a natural system that links the Town to the surrounding area. The natural features on the ORM are distinct and provide a sense of identity – where else in the GTA can you find kettle lakes in the middle of an urban area? The

Areas Valued within the Existing Urban Structure



4.0 ELEMENTS OF THE TOWN'S EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE

varied topography of the ORM provides sweeping views to the Toronto skyline, particularly along Stouffville Sideroad. The ecosystems are varied and include significant habitat for the elusive Jefferson Salamander and the endangered Butternut tree. The agricultural and rural areas remind people of another time, offering a range of field crops, tree farms and greenhouses, and equestrian pastures along Leslie Street. The ORM is a place where people find repose.

Character neighbourhoods

The Town's neighbourhoods are valued for their range of characters and social diversity. People appreciate the picturesque qualities of certain neighbourhoods, such as the areas around the Mill Pond and Lake Wilcox, in contrast to the dynamic character of other neighbourhoods, such as Richvale and parts of Oak Ridges. The established estate residential character on the ORM and the new subdivision residential characters of Bayview Glen and Bayview Hill were also noted. People value the range of housing styles and the way that certain neighbourhoods are connected with natural features and mature trees. The character neighbourhoods are places where communities interact.

Business Parks

The business parks are valued as places of economic activity within the Town. People value the range of enterprises in the business parks, along with the emerging high-tech and information technology centre in East Beaver Creek. People recognize the business parks in south-east Richmond Hill as unique due to their proximity to Highway 404 and Highway 407. The business parks are places where economic vitality thrives.

5

PROVINCIAL & REGIONAL POLICY DIRECTION FOR THE URBAN STRUCTURE

5.0 PROVINCIAL & REGIONAL POLICY DIRECTION

The Town of Richmond Hill's new OP must be consistent with both Provincial and Regional land use planning policies. The Province provides direction for where the Town must direct growth in the Provincial Policy Statement, the Parkway Belt West Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, and the Places to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Town's new OP will be consistent with Provincial Plans, allowing Richmond Hill to contribute to building a strong and prosperous Province. The Region of York provides direction for where the Town must direct growth in the York Region OP (ROP). The Town's new OP will be consistent with the ROP, ensuring that the Town protects greenlands, enhances linkages, creates livable neighbourhoods where people can live, work, and play, and promotes economic vitality within York Region.

Provincial Policy direction for the Urban Structure

Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)

The PPS promotes the building of strong communities through efficient land use and development patterns that support strong, livable, and healthy communities, protect the environment and public health and safety, and facilitate economic growth.

The PPS directs growth to designated settlement areas and away from natural heritage systems, water resources, prime agricultural areas, mineral resources, petroleum resources, mineral aggregate resources, significant built heritage resources, significant cultural heritage landscapes, and natural hazards. The PPS promotes compact form and a structure of nodes and corridors. Transportation and infrastructure corridors and employment areas are to be planned for and protected for both current and future use. Major employment, commercial, and other travel-intensive uses are directed to sites well-served by public transit.

The PPS promotes the use of public transit and other alternative transportation modes to link residential, employment, and other areas within a settlement. The PPS also promotes healthy, active communities that provide a range of housing types and densities, and a range of publicly accessible built and natural settings for recreation. A land use pattern, density, and mix of uses that minimizes vehicle trips and supports public transit, and design and orientation of built form that maximizes the use of alternative or renewable energy are also promoted.

Parkway Belt West Plan (PBWP)

The PBWP was implemented in 1978 to create a multi-purpose utility corridor, urban separator, and linked open space system. The PBWP establishes two land use designations: Public Use Areas and Complementary Use Areas. Within Richmond Hill, the lands on the north-east corner of the intersection of Bathurst Street and Highway 7 are subject to the PBWP.

Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP)

The ORM is a unique concentration of environmental, geological and hydrological features and is one of Ontario's most significant landforms. Approximately 52% of Richmond Hill is located on the ORM including the most urbanized part of the Moraine as well as a significant east-west natural linkage corridor. In 2001, the Province established the ORMCP as an ecologically-based plan to provide land use and resource management direction for the ORM. The ORMCP establishes four land use designations across the entire ORM: Natural Core Area, Natural Linkage Area, Countryside Area, and Settlement Area. The ORMCP provides direction for the long-term protection and management of the ORM as a significant natural resource.

Greenbelt Plan

In 2005, the Province developed the Greenbelt Plan to permanently protect agricultural, environmentally-sensitive, and rural-settlement lands within the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) of Southern Ontario. The Greenbelt Plan establishes four land use designations: ORM Area, NEP Area, PBWP Area, and Protected Countryside Area. Within Richmond Hill, the ORM Area makes up the majority of the designated Greenbelt Plan area. A number of stream corridors in the Rouge River watershed

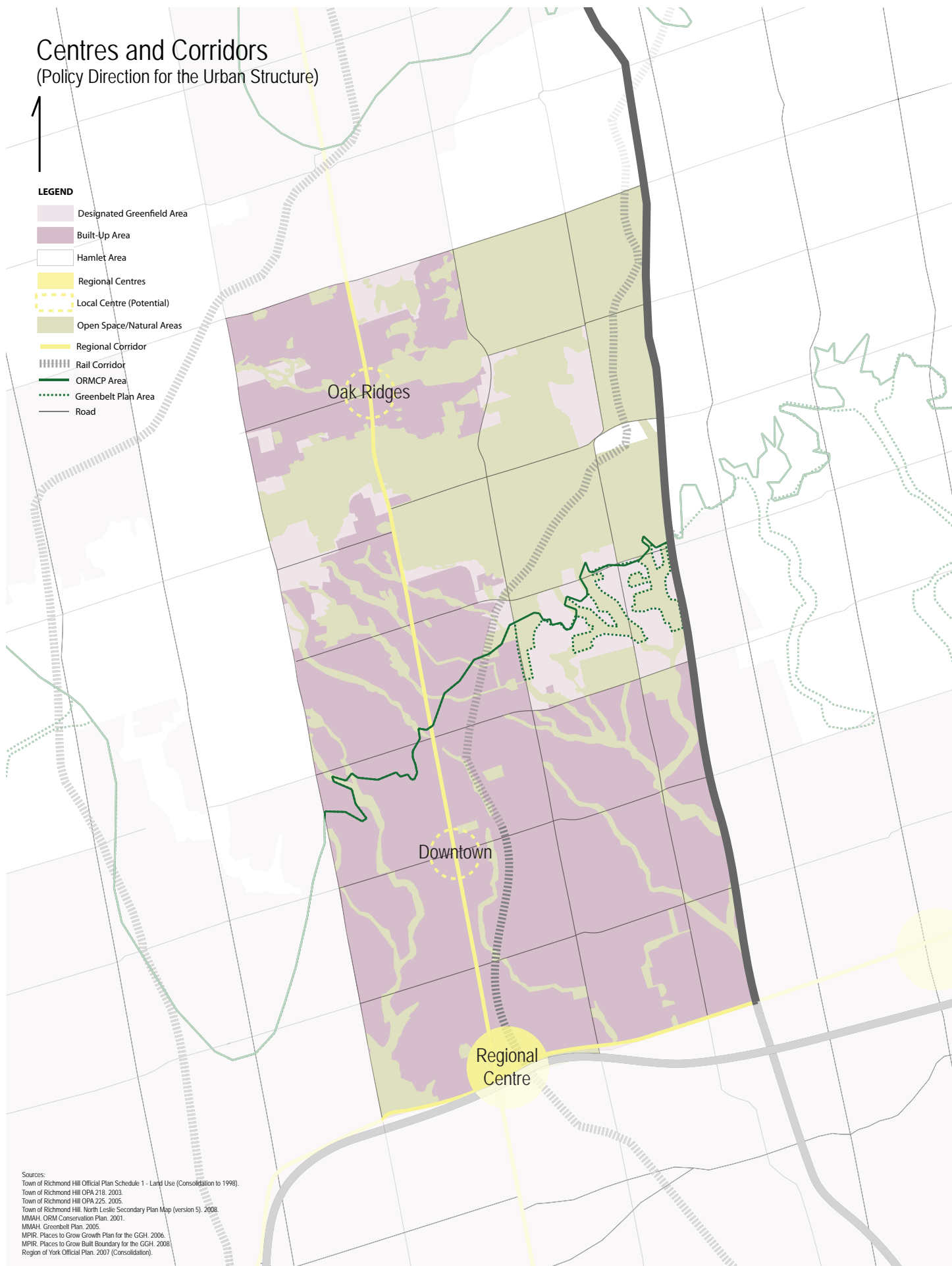
Centres and Corridors

(Policy Direction for the Urban Structure)



LEGEND

- Designated Greenfield Area
- Built-Up Area
- Hamlet Area
- Regional Centres
- Local Centre (Potential)
- Open Space/Natural Areas
- Regional Corridor
- Rail Corridor
- ORMCP Area
- Greenbelt Plan Area
- Road



Sources:
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 Town of Richmond Hill OPA 218, 2003.
 Town of Richmond Hill OPA 225, 2005.
 Town of Richmond Hill North Leslie Secondary Plan Map (version 5), 2008.
 MMAH, ORM Conservation Plan, 2001.
 MMAH, Greenbelt Plan, 2005.
 MPR, Places to Grow Growth Plan for the GG, 2006.
 MPR, Places to Grow Built Boundary for the GG, 2008.
 Region of York Official Plan, 2007 (Consolidation).

5.0 PROVINCIAL & REGIONAL POLICY DIRECTION

(extending into the North Leslie Secondary Plan area) are subject to the Protected Countryside Area policies.

Places to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan)

The Growth Plan was established in 2006 to provide a framework to direct municipalities in the GGH on where and how to grow. The Growth Plan directs population and employment growth to existing settlement areas, establishing minimum requirements for intensification within the built-up area and in new greenfield and whitebelt developments. Municipalities are required to identify the Settlement Area, the Built-Up Area and Designated Greenfield Areas (the remaining portion of a settlement area outside of the built-up area) in their OPs. Municipalities are also required to designate identified Urban Growth Centres (UGC) and intensification corridors in their OPs.

The Growth Plan directs the Town to designate an Urban Growth Centre (UGC) at Yonge Street and Highway 7 (the Richmond Hill Regional Centre), establishes Yonge Street and Highway 7 as intensification corridors, and establishes the areas around the GO stations as major transit station areas. The Growth Plan directs the Town to protect its employment lands for employment purposes over the long-term. The Growth Plan directs the Town to identify and protect natural systems and encourages the Town to establish an urban open space system within the built-up area which may include rooftop gardens, communal courtyards, and public parks.

Regional Policy direction for the Urban Structure

York Region Official Plan (ROP)

The purpose of the ROP is to manage growth by providing direction for economic, environmental, and community building land use decisions in York Region. The ROP articulates the Region's planned urban structure of a Regional Greenlands System, Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors, municipally-defined Key Development Areas within the Regional Corridors, municipally-defined Local Centres and Local Corridors, and Employment Areas. The ROP directs new settlement areas or major land use changes away from the Regional Greenlands System, and towards the urban areas identified in the ROP.

The Regional Greenlands system is composed of Natural Core Areas and Natural Linkage Areas.

The Natural Core Areas incorporate significant environmental features and functions. The Natural Linkage Areas incorporate natural or restored corridors that facilitate the movement of animals, the dispersion of plants, and the movement of people. The ROP provides policy direction for the protection of the Regional Greenlands System over the long-term and encourages the restoration and management of the system.

The ROP identifies a number of Regional Centres, one of which is the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway Centre. The Regional Centres are planned to become hubs of business, cultural, government and social activity. They are envisioned to contain the highest concentration and greatest mix of uses in the Region including a range of employment and housing opportunities. Regional Centres will be compact, pedestrian-friendly, and transit supportive.

The ROP identifies two Regional Corridors (Yonge Street and Highway 7) extending to the limits of the Region and linking the Regional Centres together while connecting them to the GTA and the rest of the Province. Regional Corridors are envisioned as intensive, mixed-use corridors served by rapid transit with different characteristics along their length (i.e. they will not have a consistent density or built form along their entire lengths). The ROP provides direction for the identification of Key Development Areas (KDAs) within the Regional Corridors by local municipalities. KDAs are areas that provide the greatest opportunity for compact and mixed use development along a Regional Corridor. The ROP establishes a long term density target of 2.5 F.S.I. for Regional Corridors.

Local Centres and Local Corridors are similar to their Regional counterparts in terms of mixed use activity and focus on tran-

sit, but are intended to serve a smaller area. Concentrating residents and jobs at specific locations is important to providing opportunities to live and work in the same area. It also provides efficient and effective transit services, a variety of housing opportunities, specialized human services, and economic vitality.

The ROP directs the Town to accommodate a variety of business uses in a diversity of locations. Government, institutional, major office, cultural and entertainment uses should be located to support the Centres and Corridors. Employment Areas are to be planned to accommodate a variety of business uses. Retail facilities are encouraged to be planned as integral parts of communities.

6

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN
FOR THE TOWN'S FUTURE
URBAN STRUCTURE?

6.0 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE TOWN'S FUTURE URBAN STRUCTURE?

The direction from Provincial and Regional land use planning policies is clear – municipalities must direct growth away from greenlands (natural heritage systems, water resources, prime agricultural areas, mineral resources, petroleum resources, mineral aggregate resources, natural hazards) and cultural resources (significant built heritage resources, significant cultural heritage landscapes) towards settlement areas using a structure of centres and corridors. *The Town must manage growth by developing a future urban structure with a hierarchy of centres and corridors that promotes a compact, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly built form while protecting environmental and employment areas over the long-term.*

But the Provincial and Regional policies do not specifically direct how these new centres and corridors will take shape or how Richmond Hill can take advantage of its strategic location at the centre of the GTA or its existing economic sectors, built form, cultural resources, and environmental resources. *The onus is on the Town to determine how best to shape and market itself - no small task when most of the places that residents value are also the places that the Provincial and Regional policies are directing the Town to intensify.*

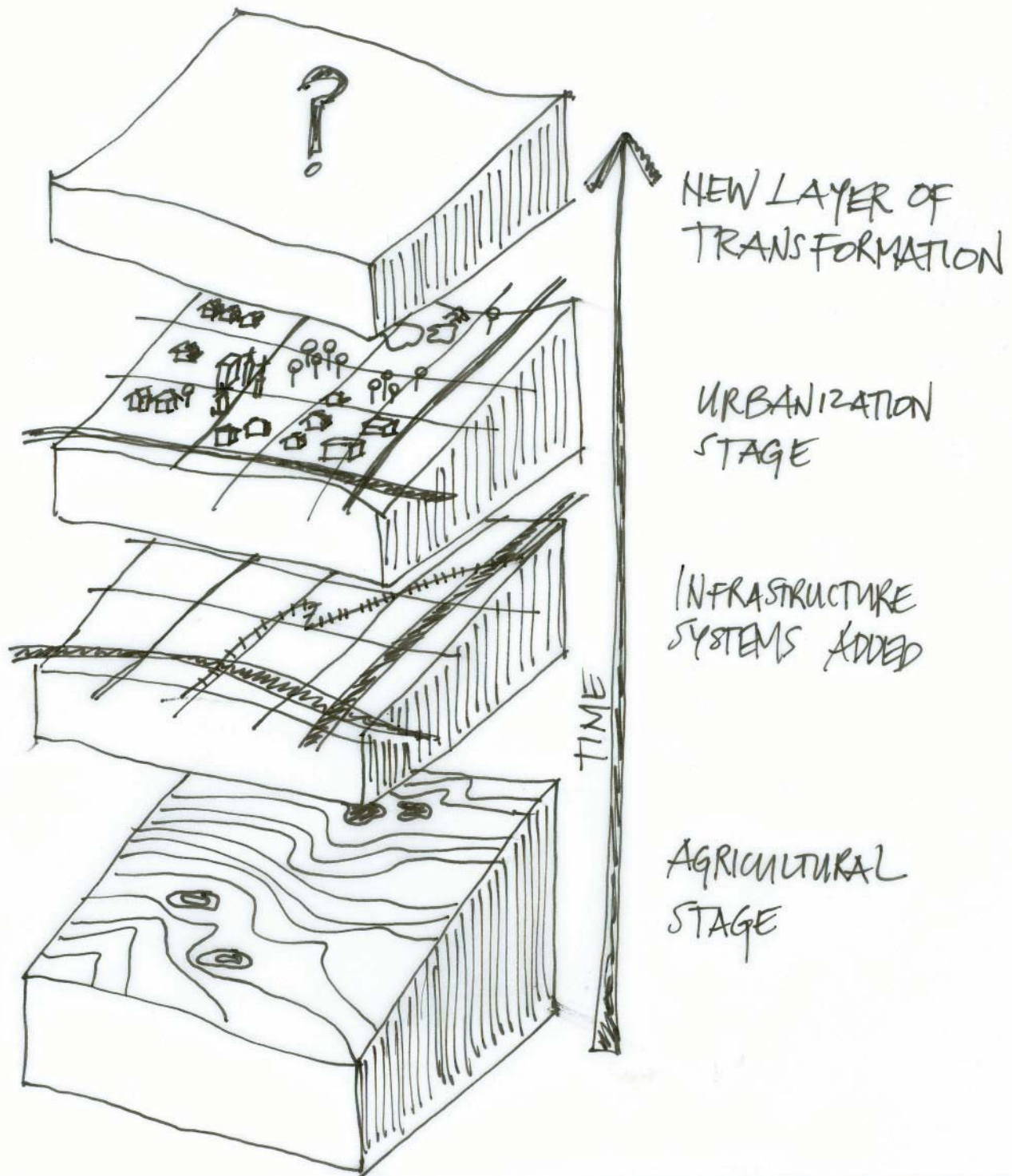
How then will the Town develop a future urban structure that directs growth to a hierarchy of centres and corridors while ensuring that what is particular, distinct and unique about the Town is not lost?

Rather than pushing aside or turning our backs on distinct features, systems, economies, places, and experiences, we must plan in a way that actively engages and enhances these distinctions. We will plan in a way that creates places of memory versus fabric. We will make new connections to the thriving urban region that surrounds the Town and enhance the connections within our own landmass.

We will plan in a way that will transform Richmond Hill over time by engaging its assets.

"Time is our ally when we are conscious of its power to transform"

- Paul Lukez, Suburban Transformations





CONCLUSIONS

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

Transforming Richmond Hill

Richmond Hill is on the cusp of a paradigm shift in terms of how to direct the future urban structure. The Town must direct growth to a hierarchy of centres and corridors as outlined in Provincial and Regional land use policies, but the onus is on the Town to determine how these centres and corridors will be shaped and marketed as part of the future urban structure. Based on what has been heard through the *People Plan Richmond Hill* process, this will be no small task since most of the places that residents value are also the places that the Provincial and Regional policies are directing the Town to intensify.

So the Town must embark on a new path – a path towards a proactive planning approach where growth is actively directed over time by engaging the Town's existing and planned assets. *People Plan Richmond Hill* participants are encouraging the Town to collaborate with stakeholders on the journey down this new path. They want to build a Town that recognizes and engages the distinct and unique aspects of our location, economy, environment, built form, and people together. They want to work together to build an exceptional future urban structure over time.

This background paper sets out the Town's existing spatial framework, establishing the backbone documentation about how the Town evolved to this point in time, what exists today, what is valued today, and the types of natural and built form characters and experiences that can be enhanced and engaged. This information creates the platform on which the Town's new OP will be developed. The key directions will be used with the findings from the other background studies to prepare the draft land use principles for the new OP. As land use options are developed for the new OP, this information will be a key component in the development of the future urban structure.

By looking at where we came from, what exists today, and what is valued today, the Town will develop a future urban structure to transform Richmond Hill over time by engaging its assets.



Existing condition on Yonge Street in the Downtown area (Source: Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy)



Example Transformation of Yonge Street in the Downtown area over the 25-year time horizon (Source: Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy)

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Department of Planning & Development
Planning Division

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Please direct information inquiries and publication orders to:

Town of Richmond Hill Planning Division
P.O. Box 300
225 East Beaver Creek Road, 4th Floor
Richmond Hill, ON
Canada L4C 4Y5

Telephone: (905) 771-8910
Fax: (905) 771-2404

