

Halton Official Plan Review: Embracing Smart Growth- Which Path?

January 2003

Prepared by:

Lynne Russell, Social Planner
Joey Edwardh, Executive Director

Halton Social Planning Council



A United Way
Member Agency

© 2002 Halton Social Planning Council

Copies of this report are available from:

Halton Social Planning Council
760 Brant St., Suite 406
Burlington, ON
L7R 4B7
Phone: (905) 632-1975
Fax: (905) 632-0778
Email: office@haltonspcvc.on.ca
<http://www.haltonspcvc.on.ca>



A United Way Member Agency

“Cheshire puss, would you tell me please, which way I ought to walk from here?” asked Alice.

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to”, said the cat.

“I don’t much care where”, said Alice.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you walk”, said the cat.

“...as long as I get somewhere”, Alice added.

“Oh, you’re sure to do that”, said the cat, “if you walk long enough”.

(Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND	1
HALTON SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL.....	2
PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT	2
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES	4
BACKGROUND	4
HALTON	5
A DIFFERENT APPROACH	7
RECOMMENDATIONS	7
SMART GROWTH.....	8
BACKGROUND	8
HALTON EMBRACES SMART GROWTH.....	9
A DIFFERENT APPROACH	11
RECOMMENDATIONS	12
HUMAN SERVICES	14
BACKGROUND	14
HALTON	15
A DIFFERENT APPROACH	17
RECOMMENDATIONS	18
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	19
BACKGROUND	19
HALTON	20
A DIFFERENT APPROACH	22
RECOMMENDATIONS	23
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	25
REFERENCES	29

INTRODUCTION

Background

The current *Official Plan* for the Regional Municipality of Halton, commonly referred to as the Regional Plan, was approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 1995. It describes its purpose as:

..to give clear direction as to how physical development should take place in Halton to meet the current and future needs of its people. It is also intended to reflect their collective aims and aspirations, as to the character of the landscape and the quality of life to be preserved and fostered within Halton. Finally, the Plan clarifies and assists in the delivery of Regional services and responsibilities as set out in *The Regional Municipality of Halton Act*.

This Plan outlines a long term vision for Halton's physical form and community character. To pursue that vision, it sets forth goals and objectives, describes an urban structure for accommodating growth, states the policies to be followed, and outlines the means for implementing the policies within its property tax base and other financial resources. (Halton Regional Municipality, 1995, A1,1)

The Regional Municipality of Halton is currently undergoing the statutory five-year review of its *Official Plan* as set out in *The Planning Act*. A key component of the review process is a *Consultation Plan*. The purpose of the *Consultation Plan* is to provide opportunity for public discussion and agency consultation on the *Official Plan*. Regional staff has prepared the *Directions Report* to provide an opportunity for community information and feedback on the framework and direction for the new *Official Plan*.

The *Directions Report* suggests a new framework for planning policies for the new *Official Plan* and recommends 15 directions for change. These 15 directions include affordable housing, the countryside, greenlands, environmental quality and mobility. The underlying framework of *The Directions Report* is that of Smart Growth and includes the recommendation of a Smart Growth Index to gauge new development.

Halton Social Planning Council

Since 1984 the Halton Social Planning Council has been committed to social development as a desired state of community well-being and social change as a continual process towards achieving and sustaining social development for everyone in the community. The Council values: community, volunteerism, diversity, equity and social justice. The principles underlying our work are: independence, community accountability, knowledge-based action, citizen participation, inclusiveness and empowerment.

The primary purpose of the Council is to build and strengthen the community of Halton. It focuses on the social impact of larger social, economic, political and cultural forces on individuals, families and the broad community. The Council is an intermediate organization that provides a research and development function that serves Halton's voluntary sector, municipal and regional government and local grass roots organizations concerned with the well being of people in the community. The Council helps to improve the effectiveness of the voluntary sector and facilitate its development through research, needs identification, education and training. It helps shape the civic foundation of care and support in our community.

The Council believes the *Official Plan* sets the stage for social and economic development and as such affects in some way the many activities of the voluntary sector. Therefore, the Council has participated in the review process in two ways. Firstly, we have convened two community consultations in the Region to provide community agencies the opportunity for input and discussion on *The Directions Report* (see Appendix for *Halton Official Plan Review Consultations –A Non-Profit Perspective*). Second, we have prepared this report, *Embracing Smart Growth –Which Path?*, which offers the Council's observations on the proposed changes to the *Official Plan*.

Purpose of this report

This report discusses the importance of having an *Official Plan* that has a strong underlying framework that strives to improve the quality of life for all its residents. It examines some of the areas discussed in the *Directions Report*, as well as emphasizing other topics the Council feels are essential in a Regional *Official Plan*. The Council has selected those areas

that are relevant to our work. Specifically, this report addresses: Healthy Communities, Smart Growth and the Smart Growth Index, a Human Services Plan, and Affordable Housing. Each section is presented in terms of

- (i) background and history in Ontario,
- (ii) the current Halton *Official Plan* and the *Directions Report*,
- (iii) different approaches, a comparative perspective for Halton, and
- (iv) recommendations.

The Council shares these observations with the belief that they will contribute to the development of a far reaching and innovative *Official Plan*.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Background

The Healthy Communities movement originated in Canada in 1985, but grew quickly with the establishment of a Canadian Healthy Community Network in 1988. In a few short years the network covered over 200 communities across the country - large and small, urban and rural. British Columbia and Quebec have the largest networks; Ontario's network began in 1993.

Dr. Trevor Hancock, a founder of the Healthy Communities movement in Ontario, describes the key elements of a healthy community as follows:

A Healthy Community is one that is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and strengthening those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and achieving their maximum potential.

Figure 1 illustrates the key interrelationships between the environmental, economic, social and health sectors.

Figure 1: The Healthy Communities Model



The Healthy Communities approach blends the community, the environment, and the economy, with health as the primary focus around which they all revolve. It brings together groups from a variety of sectors, including: environment, economy, social and health. Healthy Communities does not seek to impose a doctrine or philosophy, but to provide a framework and

process within which all these groups can work together towards a common goal. (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 2002, 10 and 11)

The Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition describes the qualities of a Healthy community as including:

- Clean and safe physical environment
- Peace, equity and social justice
- Adequate access to food, water, shelter, income, safety, work and recreation for all
- Adequate access to health care services
- Opportunities for learning and skills development
- Strong, mutually supportive relationships and networks
- Workplaces that are supportive of individual and family well-being
- Wide participation of residents in decision-making
- Strong local cultural and spiritual heritage
- Diverse and vital economy
- Protection of the natural environment
- Responsible use of resources to ensure long term sustainability (www.healthycommunities.on.ca).

Halton

The 1995 *Official Plan* clearly identifies healthy communities as a priority, and identifies some of the key healthy communities principles. The Plan states:

A7 In its vision of planning for Halton's future, Halton believes in the development of **healthy communities**. A healthy community is one:

A7a that fosters among the residents a state of physical, mental, social and economic well-being;

A7b where residents take part in, and have a sense of control over, decisions that affect them;

A7c that is physically so designed to minimize the stress of daily living and meet the life-long needs of its residents; and

A7d where employment, social, health, educational and recreational opportunities are accessible for all segments of the community.

Also under the Human Services section of the *Official Plan* it states:

B1c2 Develop, jointly with the Area Municipalities, and adopt Development Guidelines for Healthy Communities, which include, among other things:

B1c2(a) description of general characteristics of a healthy community,

B1c2(b) desirable mix of land uses within the community,

B1c2(c) community design guidelines that will promote integration of the community and accessibility by residents to services within and outside the community,

B1c2(d) physical design features that will promote health and safety of the community's inhabitants,

B1c2(e) zoning, site plan and design guidelines for promoting the shared use of land or facility by compatible uses or activities, and

B1c2(f) suggested level of service and facility requirement for the provision of human services over the full human lifecycle and under special circumstances.

The 1995 *Official Plan* clearly recognizes the importance of the assumptions underlying a healthy communities framework. Section B1a2 states that the goals of the Region are: "To develop and maintain healthy communities by fostering physical, social and economic conditions that will enhance the state of well-being and the quality of life for the residents of Halton." The 1995 *Official Plan* embraces a holistic vision of health, one that recognizes that our need for clean air and water, safe communities, green space and housing flow as much from our physical and social environments as our health care system. This framework searches for balance.

The *Directions Report*, however, does not discuss or emphasize the need for a healthy communities framework. As discussed in the previous section, the recommended direction for the new *Official Plan* is Smart Growth, which does not embrace the healthy communities principles.

Regional Government is responsible for and influences the development of the community, not only its physical infrastructure but also its economy, its health and its social environment.

A Different Approach

One example of a regional Official Plan that is based on Smart Growth but includes the healthy communities concept is in British Columbia. Here they have developed a new *Regional Growth Strategy* for its Capital Region which was presented recently at the 2002 Canadian Institute of Planners Conference: *Making Waves*. BC's new strategy is also based on Smart Growth but includes social well-being as one of the six priority areas. They are as follows:

- managing and balancing growth;
- social well-being;
- transportation;
- economic development;
- environment and resources; and
- housing (Government of British Columbia, 2002).

The inclusion of social well-being distinguishes their plan from that of Halton. It has strong links to the principles of the healthy communities movement.

Recommendations

The Council recommends that the healthy communities philosophy be retained and further developed in Halton's new *Official Plan* based on the following principles:

- the quality of its environment (natural or man-made)
- the vitality of its social fabric
- the efficient use of material resources
- the vitality and strength of its economy
- access to public and private services
- the involvement of citizens in the decisions that affect them, and
- the health of its citizens

This framework complements Smart Growth by guaranteeing that the human face of life in Halton is central to Regional Government.

SMART GROWTH

Background

Smart Growth is a collaborative, incentive-based approach to growth management that emerged in the United States in the 1990s in response to a range of problems associated with conventional patterns of development.

Smart Growth means different things to different people and as such lacks precision and, in fact, can cause confusion. Smart Growth has become the touchstone for a catch-all of physical and fiscal development ideas for governments. In an analysis of Smart Growth, Patrick Moan of Dalhousie University, states:

...Various Canadian urbanists—Onyschuk, Crombie and others—have warned against the dangers of misusing the term “smart growth.” Organizations such as the American Planning Association, Bank of America, Urban Land Institute, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and over 30 state governments understand “smart growth” to be a land use planning initiative which recognizes the linkage between development patterns and the quality of life... In Canada, two variations of smart growth agendas have emerged. One adheres to the intent of smart growth as articulated by the Smart Growth Network and many regions with well-established agendas. Another recasts smart growth as an economic development program (Moan, Patrick, 2002).

Thus, the use of the term Smart Growth introduces a significant degree of ambiguity. Consider the following view on Smart Growth from www.Smartgrowthcanada.com, a comprehensive website for research on urban issues:

The new paradigm of new paradigms in economic development is smart growth. It tends to encompass everything from free market planning concepts to no-growth advocacy. Industry Canada has emphasized the technological aspects; Natural Resources Canada, the ecological; Environment Canada, the environmental. It is a chameleon that adapts to its surroundings.

Ontario Smart Growth is the Government of Ontario’s vision for promoting and managing growth in Ontario. It is a Smart Growth vision based on three principles: a strong economy, strong communities and a clean, healthy environment. The Government of Ontario’s Smart Growth website www.smartgrowth.gov.on.ca, describes it’s vision in the following way:

...to improve our economic competitiveness, protect and enhance our environment, build liveable communities and create transportation choice by using a smart growth framework.

The goals of the Ontario's governments Smart Growth framework is based on promoting and managing growth in ways that create strong economies. Their goals are as follows:

- **Grow Toward a Better Future**

Smart Growth will take a co-ordinated approach to managing and promoting sustainable growth, involving all levels of government and stakeholders from diverse sectors.

- **Improve Competitiveness and Increase Opportunity**

Smart Growth will help Ontario communities reach their economic potential by building on their local strengths, facilitating decisions on issues that cross community boundaries and promoting investments consistent with the Smart Growth vision.

- **Make Better Decisions About Infrastructure**

Smart Growth promotes using our resources more wisely by optimizing the use of existing infrastructure such as roads, sewer and water systems, and guiding future decisions on infrastructure investment.

- **Create Transportation Choices**

Smart Growth will encourage better choices in travel between and within communities and promote a more integrated transportation network for people and goods.

- **Protect and Enhance the Environment**

Smart Growth will work to protect the quality of our air, our land and our water by steering growth pressures away from significant agricultural lands and natural areas.

- **Build Liveable Communities**

Smart Growth will contribute to building strong, safe, attractive and vibrant communities (www.smartgrowth.gov.on.ca).

As of yet, the Government of Ontario has not detailed the policies and programs to implement these goals. For example, there is no discussion on how 'Build Liveable Communities' are to be achieved.

Halton Embraces Smart Growth

Clearly, all organizations do not see Smart Growth the same way so we must be aware of the context on which the Smart Growth paradigm in Halton is based. The *Directions Report* draws its Smart Growth principles from a 2001 policy paper produced by the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario, the *Directions Report* states:

...in a policy paper produced by the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario called *Beyond Smart Growth: A Call to Action*... there are 20 specific action items that will achieve Smart Growth or good planning. Much of this *Directions Report* is built upon these action items. (Halton Regional Municipality, 2002, 17)

Beyond Smart Growth: A Call to Action organizes its 20 action items into five themes:

- Maintain firm urban boundaries and densities;
- Development key nodes;
- Invest in public transit infrastructure;
- Protect greenland and the countryside; and
- Re-align fiscal policies (Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario, 2001,1).

The Council is concerned in adopting a Halton *Official Plan* based on a Smart Growth framework when little priority or importance is given to social development and human well-being. Furthermore, the *Directions Report* proposes to take Smart Growth a step further by developing a Smart Growth Index on which to gauge any new development in Halton. The *Directions Report* states:

We propose to introduce a system to measure development plans or planning applications, such as secondary plans, plans of subdivision and re-zoning applications, against the principles or objectives of Smart Growth using what we call a *Smart Growth Index (SGI)*...In brief, each planning application will be assessed against the following ten Smart Growth Indicators, producing ten scores:

- density of development,
- mix in land use,
- facilities within walking distance and ease of walking through the neighbourhood,
- availability of affordable housing,
- amount of green space,
- access to major facilities or services—health, social, recreation, shopping, etc.,
- access to public transit,
- proximity of existing urban service (water and wastewater) infrastructure,
- design of the development in meeting objectives of environmental protection, heritage feature preservation, and barrier-free design, and

- . degree of public involvement in the development process (Regional Municipality of Halton, 2002,17).

Again, these indicators do not incorporate many of the principles that the 1995 *Official Plan* embraced using a Healthy Communities framework that links the importance of social well-being to the physical and economic environments.

A recent report, *Building Inclusive Communities: Cross-Canada Perspectives and Strategies* by Peter Clutterbuck and Marvyn Novick discusses the importance of socially inclusive communities. The report states:

Social inclusion reflects a growing international recognition that investments in human and civic assets are core foundations to economic prosperity and social well-being. Successful countries in the global era will develop the social capacities of people and communities to live in states of mutual trust and to contribute to innovations. Smaller countries such as Canada have a greater challenge to ensure that no human resource capacity is lost or underdeveloped, and that no civic community is neglected or undervalued. It is within municipalities that basic states of social inclusion are created and experienced in everyday life. Social inclusion is promoted by policies:

- that reduce economic, social and cultural inequities within the population (e.g. economic disparities, racism, age or gender discrimination, etc);
- that recognize, value and support the contributions of all community members to the economic, social and cultural life a a society; and
- that are grounded in shared values/principals and common commitments while respecting and accommodating appropriately the diversities within a society (Clutterbuck and Novick, 2002, 6).

A Different Approach

Other organizations also share a concern for how Smart Growth is interpreted and support a different approach to Smart Growth. The organization www.Smartgrowthcanada.com describes itself as the most comprehensive website for smart community development on the Internet. It provides global resources and links to foundations, local economic development initiatives and the assumptions underlying Smart Growth. In one of their white papers, *Smart Growth is Social Intelligence*, they state:

We believe that the missing element in most of the previous efforts at creating more livable communities is the definition and utilization of the social form of capital, citizen engagement across jurisdictions and boundaries.

Social capital or social intelligence is the interactions between people, not between inanimate objects such as infrastructure. The OECD calls social capital the “glue” that holds communities and nations together. Without shared norms and goals, a community cannot build or sustain any economic connectivity.

In the area of the creation of sustainable employment, opportunities and wealth, social capital is vital. Yet it is not mentioned in most of the ‘smart growth’ programs we’ve found in Canada (www.Smartgrowthcanada.com, 2002).

Another organization that supports the importance of social inclusion in Smart Growth is the American Fannie Mae Foundation. This Foundation has conducted extensive research on Smart Growth in the United States. In one of their discussion papers they state:

We use the term “fair growth.” Fair growth takes smart growth one step further. It advocates that smart growth policies should include a greater emphasis on social equity. Fair Growth is a set of land use practices that attempt to curb urban sprawl without endangering housing affordability and access to jobs for minorities and low-income residents...Connections between smart growth, gentrification, sprawl, and social equity must be made to ensure a metropolitan future that is both smart *and* fair (Fannie Mae Foundation, 2000,1).

Recommendations

The Council recommends that the framework of Smart Growth be redefined to include not only economic and physical criteria but to reflect the importance of social and human capital. This holistic approach reflects a healthy communities philosophy and promotes Halton as an inclusive community. The characteristics of an inclusive community, which promotes democracy and values citizenship, are as follows:

- Integrated and cooperative – inclusive communities bring people together and are places where people and organizations work together.

- Interactive – inclusive communities have accessible community spaces and open public places and groups and organizations that support social interaction and community activity, including celebrating community life.
- Invested – inclusive communities are places where both the public and private sectors commit resources for the social and economic health and well-being of the whole community.
- Diverse – inclusive communities welcome and incorporate diverse people and cultures into the structures, processes and functions of daily community life.
- Equitable – inclusive communities make sure that everyone has the means to live in decent conditions (i.e. income supports, employment, good housing) and the opportunity to develop one's capacities and to participate actively in community life.
- Accessible and Sensitive – inclusive communities have an array of readily available and accessible supports and services for the social, health, and developmental needs of their populations and provide such supports in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways (essential services identified include good schools, recreation, childcare, libraries, public transit, affordable housing and supportive housing, home care, crisis and emergency supports, well coordinated and comprehensive settlement supports)
- Participatory – inclusive communities encourage and support the involvement of all their members in the planning and decision-making that affect community conditions and development, including having an effective voice with senior levels of government.
- Safe – inclusive communities ensure both individual and broad community safety and security so that no one feels at risk in their homes or moving around the neighbourhood and city (Clutterbuck and Novick, 2002, 8).

HUMAN SERVICES

Background

In the past urban planning and Official Plans were primarily concerned with land use control and the physical infrastructure. Today's Official Plans deal with a wide range of environmental, economic and human service policies. York Region's Human Services Planning Coalition describes human services the following way:

Human Services are those programs and services that support a safe, healthy community and maintain and promote its quality of life. Among others, they include:

- police
- schools
- hospitals
- housing providers
- social services
- public health
- recreation
- religious organizations
- neighbourhood centres
- non-profit voluntary organizations (www.region.york.on.ca).

All members of our Halton community rely on these services from recreation programs to health care, from housing to income support programs. Together these programs and services form the basis of a caring society that enhances the quality of life of all citizens.

Human Service policy and planning is also about the allocation and distribution of resources for the benefit of all people. It plays a critical bridging role between the economic and social environments. Building a strong human service infrastructure builds an inclusive community and positively influences economic development.

Different communities have defined their own human services strategies as they proceed through their own unique process. Generally the processes and plans include the following:

Human Services are those dedicated to the development and protection of human capital. Human Services encompass the following: income support, personal social services, preventative social services, education and social planning (York Region, 2000, 2).

Governments such as that of Newfoundland and Labrador have linked the importance of human and social services to physical and economic development. In their 1998 *Strategic Social Plan*, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador commits to an integrated, holistic approach to policy development to address community needs and the social and economic policies affecting them.

Halton

The 1995 *Official Plan* for Halton includes a Human Services Policy section, which includes the development of Human Services Plan. Section *B1c1* states that it is the policy of the Region to:

Prepare and update every five years, in collaboration and partnership with the School Boards and other human services planning organizations, a Human Services Plan that will include:

B1c1(a) an assessment of the current state of health and social well-being in Halton, based on information from the State of the Environment Report,

B1c1(b) an audit of the cost and effectiveness, based on previously established targets, of current programs and systems delivering human services,

B1c1(c) projection of demographic trends and their impact on future needs and demands for human services,

B1c1(d) a review of new and potential Provincial and Federal policies and legislation that have or will have an impact on the delivery and cost of human services,

B1c1(e) establishment of a set of health and social indicators and targets for program delivery to be achieved in short and medium terms,

B1c1(f) identification of policies to guide the development of prevention/maintenance and treatment/support services to meet these targets and their relative priority based on the goals and objectives of this Plan, Region's mandate and available financing,

B1c1(g) an analysis of the financial implication and funding arrangement for achieving these targets,

B1c1(h) a five-year implementation program consistent with the Region's operating and capital budget forecasts, and

B1c1(i) directions for the Infrastructure Staging Plan.

Economic and social development are not discrete functions but are interwoven processes that leads to prosperous, just and inclusive communities. The *Directions Report* does not discuss or stress the importance of developing a human services policy or plan in the new *Official Plan*. The Council believes, however, that human service planning needs to be an integral part of an Official Plan.

A recent research paper by the University of Toronto stresses this important link, it states:

Transit, housing, physical plant, cultural institutions –all contribute to the quality of urban life. One essential component of urban infrastructure, however, remains neglected... there is little discussion of the social and community infrastructure of cities, such as public health, recreation, children's services, libraries and the network of non-profit agencies that provide community services. These forms of social and community infrastructure in the city are not as obvious as physical infrastructure, but they play an important role in maintaining the quality of life...Social and community infrastructure should be a central part of the debate surrounding the future of our cities (Clutterbuck and Howarth, 2002, 6).

The need for a strong human services focus was also identified in the comments made at the community consultations the Council hosted from the non-profit sector in Halton. Comments from Council's report, *Halton Official Plan Review Consultation: A Non-Profit Perspective*, include the following:

We need to develop a human services plan as part of an official plan.

Planning for human services should be given equal importance to economic development by government (Halton Social Planning Council, 2003a, 6).

Growth must include human service planning. Not just the physical infrastructures of roads and sewers. Government must shift from its physical and economic driven planning to a more integrated approach. This cannot be achieved by government alone, but by strong collaborations within government departments, and partnerships with not-for-profit agencies and community groups of civil society.

A Different Approach

Official Plans with a strong focus on the provision and planning for human services is part of a growing trend and is reflected in the Official Plans of other communities such as Ottawa, Peel and York.

Ottawa 20/20 is the City of Ottawa's growth management strategy. It sets out the City's vision for planning, articulates what the city wants over the next 20 years, and how Ottawa will get there. Ottawa 20/20 consists of five growth management plans: Official Plan, Human Services Plan, Arts and Heritage Plan, Economic Strategy and a Corporate Strategic Plan. The Human Services Plan states:

The Human Services Plan aims to anticipate and meet the challenges that change will bring. The Human Services Plan will build a case for providing the service and community infrastructure to our City's most important asset-its people. This Plan is a strategic map for the 20-year journey we are about to take, and includes identification of the shorter priority pathways for our travels over the next five years.

From libraries to affordable housing, respecting our cultural diversity, emergency services, self-sufficiency through employment, celebrating the arts and consideration of our seniors, the Human Services Plan will describe what People Services and Emergency and Protective Services can do and how we will meet the needs of citizens in the future.

It takes vision and concrete actions to ensure that we are not swept away by the changes that could easily overwhelm us and change our determined direction. Our 20-year vision will promote the highest possible quality of life for all citizens of Ottawa.

The actions in the Human Services Plan are designed with the following priorities:

- Increasing employment and earnings potential
- Creating healthy communities
- Providing housing and housing supports
- Adopting a "prevention first approach"
- Targeted intervention to high needs neighbourhoods
- Measuring the outcomes of the services we provide (www.ottawa2020.com).

Currently Peel region, like Halton, is conducting a review of its *Official Plan* and has identified Human Services as one of its four focus areas. Peel Region is examining

opportunities to revisit and strengthen the existing human services policies contained in its 1996 *Regional Official Plan*. To achieve this, Peel is developing a coordinated strategy to address its human services needs in a more integrated approach. This *Human Services Strategy* will provide long-range planning policies to guide human services delivery in a sustainable manner through collaboration with human service partners. Components of this focus area will include an assessment of existing human services policies, research on human service planning strategy models, issues identification through relevant data collections, and consultations with stakeholders and the public.

In October 2000, in recognition of the need for long-term sustainable, integrated planning and funding of human services, York Region approved a *Human Services Strategy*. The goal of the human services strategy is to develop a long range planning framework for future human services in York Region. The strategy is coordinated by the Human Services Planning Coalition consisting of representatives of human service organizations and Regional Council for York Region.

Recommendations

The Council recommends that the new *Official Plan* include a strong Human Services focus that includes a Human Services Plan for Halton Region to assist Government and human services agencies in the planning and delivery of their services or programs.

The Council recommends that this Human Services Plan be developed, jointly with the Area Municipalities, service agencies, and other human services planning organizations.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Background

Affordable housing is a serious problem across Ontario and Halton is no exception. Research has shown us that those living on a fixed income such as seniors, social assistance recipients, the working poor and single parent families are among those most affected. Many community groups across Ontario and in Halton are trying to raise more awareness about the need for a continuum of housing including emergency and affordable housing.

The Halton Housing Advisory Committee reported in 2000 the following:

Although low mortgage rates have made ownership housing more affordable, virtually no purpose-built rental housing has been constructed in Halton in the last five years. A vacancy rate below 1% in Halton means fewer housing options for our residents and places upward pressure on rents for the aging stock that does exist. Also, anecdotal evidence suggests that employers are beginning to consider adequate housing for their employees as one of the key components in the decision to locate in the Region. Without a range of affordable and accessible housing, the Region may well lose economically as employers chose to locate elsewhere... The need in Halton for affordable and accessible housing is real, significant and increasing. (Halton Housing Advisory Committee, 2002,1)

In 2001 a Community Plan, entitled *A Journey Home*, was developed to address homelessness in Halton. The Plan presents a 'Continuum of Supports' model to address homelessness in Halton whilst also recognising the lack of affordable housing as a root cause of homelessness. The Plan states the following:

The notion of a "continuum of supports" is predicated on the notion of a parallel "continuum of need". As peoples' needs shift so, too, do the resources and supports they might require... Thus, supports and resources which can shift people from the fairly marginal status of being "at risk" in relation to housing to being secure in their housing are critical, in the long run, to reducing homelessness overall.

The lack of affordable housing in Halton is a key determinant in shaping the experiences of homelessness in Halton. People in crisis have nowhere to go to when they leave emergency facilities, and for many, it is their inability to meet rent and utility obligations that forces them into crisis in the first place (The Chrysalis Group, 2001, 8 and 40).

This research and community leadership in Halton clearly shows us the need for not only more affordable housing in Halton, but also, the need for a continuum of housing supports that meets the changing needs of its citizens.

Unfortunately, a strong affordable housing strategy to support needs identified at the local level has not emerged from Ontario's Provincial government. In 1989, the Government of Ontario issued a Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) requiring new housing developments to provide a mix of housing. The PPS required a fixed percentage of new housing development (at least 25 per cent) to be affordable. However, a later PPS issued in 1997 has superseded this policy and the minimum 25 per cent quota is no longer a requirement.

Furthermore, in 2000 the Provincial Government passed the Ontario's Social Housing Reform Act (Bill 128). This Act transferred the funding and administration of provincial social housing programs, including provincial housing co-ops program, to municipal service managers. This meant the Regional Municipality of Halton, like the other municipalities and Regions in Ontario, is responsible for providing and administering their own social housing.

Halton

The 1995 Halton *Official Plan* incorporated the 1989 PPS 25 per cent affordable housing requirement into its regulations. The *Official Plan* states:

Adopt, in conjunction with the Area Municipalities and in consultation with the development industry and other housing providers, five-year housing targets based on economic forecasts and housing needs identified in the Regional Housing Statement. Such targets will include the provision of affordable housing for each Area Municipality and the Region as a whole, of at least 25 per cent of the new residential units or in accordance with the need identified in the Regional Housing Statement, whichever is greater. (Halton Regional Municipality, 1995, B5c5, 22)

With the 25 per cent quota of affordable housing no longer a Provincial Policy requirement, the *Directions Report* proposes a new affordable housing policy. This

policy is predicated on the Smart Growth paradigm and the use of the Smart Growth Index. Direction #3 of the *Directions Report* includes the following:

- Introduce new definitions for assisted and affordable housing.
- Identify assisted and affordable housing needs on an annual basis, set targets to meet these needs and deliver appropriate programs.
- Recognise Region's new role as provider and manager of assisted housing.
- Promote the delivery of affordable housing through the use of the Smart Growth Index (Regional Municipality of Halton, 2002, 25).

The Council is pleased to see the recognition of the need for more affordable housing identified in the *Directions Report*; however, we are concerned about the implementation of such a policy direction. The new direction only discusses the delivery of more affordable housing through the use of the Smart Growth Index. The supposition is that by using the Index, it will encourage developers to build affordable housing. However, as we have previously discussed, affordable housing is only one of the criterion in the Smart Growth Index. New housing developments could, in fact, repeatedly score zero in the affordable housing criterion (with no provision of affordable housing units) on the Smart Growth Index and still be approved.

It is unlikely that the Smart Growth Index and private sector cooperation will provide a strong basis to promote affordable housing in a new *Official Plan* policy. The Smart Growth Index gives all its criteria equal weight and it does not prioritize. For example, access to major facilities or services and the degree of public involvement are given the same weight in the index as affordable housing. This is not to say that the most important criterion is affordable housing. They are all important criteria, but if this is the only way affordable housing is to be supported in the *Official Plan*, it falls short.

Furthermore, there is a need for a strong Regional Government role in developing a framework that supports a continuum of housing. This role has been identified in a consultation process recently completed by the Government of Ontario in its Provincial Policy Statement five-year review. The consultation document states:

Due to varying growth and development pressures across the province, stakeholders suggested a regional focus to implementing housing policies (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2002, 9).

If the policy support for affordable housing does not come through provincial and federal government policy initiatives, it has to be supported through stronger regional leadership and policy. The Halton Housing Advisory Committee recommends that the *Official Plan* be strengthened in respect to the provision of affordable housing. It states:

Amend Official Plan Provisions related to housing to give them more force when Ontario Municipal Board appeals are lodged, especially those provisions that provide for density and housing mix target. (Halton Housing Advisory Committee, 2002, 25)

The research suggests that Halton needs a strong regional policy to ensure greater direction for developing affordable housing throughout our community.

A Different Approach

Other examples of strong Regional Government roles in developing and promoting affordable housing can be seen in Peel and York Regions.

As part of Peel Region's *Official Plan* update, they are developing a Peel Housing Strategy in collaboration with its local municipalities (Mississauga, Brampton, Caledon). This strategy includes creating a municipal housing by-law for the Region of Peel, which will permit municipalities like the Region of Peel to enter into partnership agreements to build affordable housing. These housing strategies will be reflected in Peel's *Official Plan* currently under review.

York Region has an integrated approach to affordable housing in that it is part of a integrated human services plan. York Region's *Human Services Strategy* states:

There has been strong agreement throughout the development of the Human Services Strategy that ensuring an integrated range of affordable housing options in York Region is critical. This is an important step in building communities in York Region that are inclusive and in creating communities that nurture full development of human potential... The report recommends that a comprehensive and integrated housing supply strategy

is needed in York Region... the Strategy when completed, will update the Regional Official Plan Policies, facilitate the development of new affordable housing units, and monitor progress made in addressing housing needs (Regional Municipality of York, 2001,17).

Both these Regions provide examples of proactive and innovative approaches to support and provide affordable housing.

Recommendations

The Council recommends that Halton Region develop a new *Official Plan* with a strong framework to address affordable housing. This could include a stronger weighting of the affordable housing criterion in the Smart Growth Index or affordable housing land-use designations and partnerships.

The Council recommends that this housing policy be developed jointly in cooperation with other departments of Regional Government, such as Social and Community Services, Housing and with other community groups that have a key role in identifying how Halton affordable housing needs be met.

The Council supports the 2002 recommendations of the Halton Housing Advisory Committee's *Report to Regional Council* as outlined in report SS-33-02.

The Council supports the 2002 recommendations of the Halton Emergency Housing Advisory Group's *Final Report*. They are as follows:

1. That is report be forwarded to the Councils of the Region of Halton, Area Municipalities and the Head Office organization of the Salvation Army for their consideration.
2. That the Region of Halton, the Town of Oakville, and the Salvation Army endorse the report and incorporate its recommendations to the fullest extent possible within their respective legislation, program, and funding responsibilities.
3. That once the Region of Halton has endorsed site location criteria, Council pass a resolution indicating that the criteria cannot be changed without consulting the public.

4. That the definition and location criteria for emergency housing outlined in this report be forwarded to the regional and area municipalities for consideration within their Official Plan and Zoning Amendment Review, to establish a consistent definition and application across the Region of Halton.

In addition the Council supports the additional recommendation associated with emergency housing, that is #7 as outlined in report SS-04-03 to Regional Council. This moves our community to action in an effort to alleviate the human suffering experienced by some of our neighbours. The recommendations is as follows:

7. THAT the Region of Halton purchase and own the land for the proposed emergency shelter.

Also, in recognition of the need for a continuum of housing supports in Halton and in recognition of the difficult and fractious situations often unfolding around emergency and transitional housing, the Council recommends that Regional Government and Area Municipal Official Plans and zoning by-laws shall provide opportunities for transitional and emergency accommodation. Municipal shelters shall be a permitted use in all zones or districts in all the Area Municipal zoning by-laws. This “as of right” clause recognizes the responsibility of Regional Government in facilitating the development of such institutions that meet the needs of all its population.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Healthy Communities

1. The Council recommends that the healthy communities philosophy be retained and further developed in Halton's new *Official Plan* based on the following principles:

- the quality of its environment (natural or man-made)
- the vitality of its social fabric
- the efficient use of material resources
- the vitality and strength of its economy
- access to public and private services
- the involvement of citizens in the decisions that affect them, and
- the health of its citizens

This framework complements Smart Growth by guaranteeing that the human face of life in Halton is central to Regional Government.

Smart Growth

2. The Council recommends that the framework of Smart Growth be redefined to include not only economic and physical criteria but to reflect the importance of social and human capital. This holistic approach reflects a healthy communities philosophy and promotes Halton as an inclusive community. The characteristics of an inclusive community, which promotes democracy and values citizenship, are as follows:

- Integrated and cooperative – inclusive communities bring people together and are places where people and organizations work together.
- Interactive – inclusive communities have accessible community spaces and open public places and groups and organizations that support social interaction and community activity, including celebrating community life.
- Invested – inclusive communities are places where both the public and private sectors commit resources for the social and economic health and well-being of the whole community.
- Diverse – inclusive communities welcome and incorporate diverse people and cultures into the structures, processes and functions of daily community life.

- Equitable – inclusive communities make sure that everyone has the means to live in decent conditions (i.e. income supports, employment, good housing) and the opportunity to develop one’s capacities and to participate actively in community life.
- Accessible and Sensitive – inclusive communities have an array of readily available and accessible supports and services for the social, health, and developmental needs of their populations and provide such supports in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways (essential services identified include good schools, recreation, childcare, libraries, public transit, affordable housing and supportive housing, home care, crisis and emergency supports, well coordinated and comprehensive settlement supports)
- Participatory – inclusive communities encourage and support the involvement of all their members in the planning and decision-making that affect community conditions and development, including having an effective voice with senior levels of government.
- Safe – inclusive communities ensure both individual and broad community safety and security so that no one feels at risk in their homes or moving around the neighbourhood and city (Clutterbuck and Novick, 2002, 8).

Human Services

3. The Council recommends that the new *Official Plan* include a strong Human Services focus that includes a Human Services Plan for Halton Region to assist Government and human services agencies in the planning and delivery of their services or programs.

4. The Council recommends that this Human Services Plan be developed, jointly with the Area Municipalities, service agencies, and other human services planning organizations.

Affordable Housing

5. The Council recommends that Halton Region develop a new *Official Plan* with a strong framework to address affordable housing. This could include a stronger weighting of the affordable housing criterion in the Smart Growth Index or affordable housing land-use designations and partnerships.

6. The Council recommends that this housing policy be developed jointly in cooperation with other departments of Regional Government, such as Social and Community Services, Housing and with other community groups that have a key role in identifying how Halton affordable housing needs be met.

7. The Council supports the 2002 recommendations of the Halton Housing Advisory Committee's *Report to Regional Council* as outlined in report SS-33-02.

8. The Council supports the 2002 recommendations of the Halton Emergency Housing Advisory Group's *Final Report* and recommends their implementation. They are as follows:

1. That is report be forwarded to the Councils of the Region of Halton, Area Municipalities and the Head Office organization of the Salvation Army for their consideration.
2. That the Region of Halton, the Town of Oakville, and the Salvation Army endorse the report and incorporate its recommendations to the fullest extent possible within their respective legislation, program, and funding responsibilities.
3. That once the Region of Halton has endorsed site location criteria, Council pass a resolution indicating that the criteria cannot be changed without consulting the public.
4. That the definition and location criteria for emergency housing outlined in this report be forwarded to the regional and area municipalities for consideration within their Official Plan and Zoning Amendment Review, to establish a consistent definition and application across the Region of Halton.

9. In addition the Council supports the recommendation associated with emergency housing, that is #7 as outlined in report SS-04-03 to Regional Council. This moves our community to action in an effort to alleviate the human suffering experienced by some of our neighbours. The recommendations is as follows:

7. THAT the Region of Halton purchase and own the land for the proposed emergency shelter.

10. Also, in recognition of the need for a continuum of housing supports in Halton and in recognition of the difficult and fractious situations often unfolding around emergency and transitional housing, the Council recommends that Regional Government and Area Municipal Official Plans and zoning by-laws shall provide opportunities for transitional and

emergency accommodation. Municipal shelters shall be a permitted use in all zones or districts in all the Area Municipal zoning by-laws. This “as of right” clause recognizes the responsibility of Regional Government in facilitating the development of such institutions that meet the needs of all its population.

REFERENCES

Bach, Michael. (2002) *Social Inclusion as Solidarity: Re-thinking the Childs Rights Agenda*. Laidlaw Foundation

Chrysalis Group. (2001) *A Journey Home-A Community Plan for Halton*.

City of Ottawa. (2002) *Ottawa 20/20*.

Clutterbuck, Peter and Howarth, Rob. (2002) *Toronto's Quiet Crisis –The Case for Social and Community Infrastructure Investment*. Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto.

Clutterbuck, Peter and Novick, Marvyn. (2002) *Building Inclusive Communities: Cross-Canada Perspectives and Strategies*. Federation for the Canadian Municipalities and Laidlaw Foundation. Draft Discussion Paper.

Fannie Mae Foundation. (2000) *Fair Growth: Connecting sprawl, Smart Growth, and Social Equity*.

Government of British Columbia. (2002) *Building a Regional Partnership for Smart Growth in BC's Capital Region*. Presentation, Canadian Institute of Planners Conference: Making Waves.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (1998) *People, Partners and Prosperity –A Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*.

Halton Housing Advisory Committee. (April 11, 2002) *Report to Regional Council*.

Halton Social Planning Council. (1998) *Oakville: An Audit of a Community in Transition*

Halton Social Planning Council. (1999) *Halton Food Bank Study: Alternatives to Dependency*.

Halton Social Planning Council. (2000) *The Cost of Living in Halton*.

Halton Social Planning Council. (2001) *The Hidden Faces of Poverty: The Reality and Testimonies of People Living in Poverty in Halton*.

Halton Social Planning Council. (2003a) *Halton Official Plan Review Consultation: A Non-Profit Perspective*.

Halton Social Planning Council. (January, 2003b) *Social Policy in Times of Discontinuity: A Report on Affordable Housing*. Draft Document.

Marmur, Dow. (2002) *Ethical Reflections on Social Inclusion*. Laidlaw Foundation

McMahon, Brian. (2002) *Memorandum: An agenda for revitalizing New York's upstate economy*. New York State Economic Development Council.

Megannety, Steven. (2001) *Smart Growth is Social Intelligence*. Smart Growth Canada. White Paper.

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. (2002) *Five-Year Review of the Provincial Policy Statement: Summary of Consultations*. Government of Ontario.

Moan, Patrick. (2002) *Pursuing a Smart Growth Agenda In Canada: Potential Inconsistencies*. Dalhousie University, Faculty of Architecture and Planning.

Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition. (2002) *Communities and Local Government: Working Together*.

Pim, Linda and Ornoy, Joel. (2002) *A Smart Future for Ontario – Protect Nature and Curb Urban Sprawl*. Federation of Ontario Naturalists.

Regional Municipality of Halton. (1995) *The Regional Official Plan*.

Regional Municipality of Halton. (2002a) *Smart Growth Index*. Draft Technical Background Paper #2.

Regional Municipality of Halton. (2002b) *Directions Report*.

Regional Municipality of Halton. (2002c) *A New Approach to Defining Assisted and Affordable Housing*. Draft Technical Background Paper #3.

Regional Municipality of Halton. (2002d) *Final Report of the Emergency Housing Advisory Group*.

Regional Municipality of Peel. (1996) *Regional Official Plan*.

Regional Municipality of York. (2001) *Human Services Strategy*.

Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario. (2001) *Beyond Smart Growth: A Call to Action*. Policy Paper.

Saloojee, Anver. (2003) *Social Inclusion, Anti-Racism and Democratic Citizenship*. Laidlaw Foundation

Social Planning Network of Ontario and Halton Social Planning Council. (2002) *Social Capital Formation: Research on Organizational Development and Community Practise*.

www.Smartgrowthcanada.com (2002) *Smart Growth is Social Intelligence*. White Paper.