



York Region SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Towards a Sustainable Region

A background image for the bottom section showing people waiting at a transit stop, with a bus visible in the background. The image is tinted with a reddish-pink color.

2007



*Markham · Vaughan · Richmond Hill · Newmarket · Aurora
Georgina · Whitchurch-Stouffville · East Gwillimbury · King*

We Need Your Input

This Sustainability Strategy is based on input from the public and stakeholders during the Region's Sustainability Symposium, the Towards Sustainability in York Region (TSYR) Advisory Group and the Growth Management Public Engagement Initiative. We also received valuable feedback from several organizations and individuals during the consultation phase of the preliminary draft. The Sustainability Strategy contains many of the hundreds of ideas that we have heard from the public.

We need your suggestions and ideas to evolve and strive for sustainability in all aspects of our work.

To send us your input, please contact York Region at:

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Alternatively, you can send your comments to our mailing address:

**The Regional Municipality of York
Planning and Development Services Department
Long Range and Strategic Planning Branch
17250 Yonge Street, 4th Floor
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1**

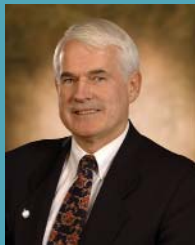
For more information on our sustainability and growth management work, visit our website at

www.york.ca

and search under "Planning for Tomorrow".



Mayor
Frank Scarpitti
Town of Markham



Regional Councillor
Jim Jones
Town of Markham



Regional Councillor
Jack Heath
Town of Markham



Regional Councillor
Tony Wong
Town of Markham



Regional Councillor
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Town of Richmond Hill



Mayor
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City of Vaughan



Chairman and CEO
Bill Fisch



Regional Councillor
Brenda Hogg
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City of Vaughan



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Town of East Gwillimbury



Mayor
Margaret Black
Township of King

A Message From York Regional Council

York Regional Council is pleased to present the final version of the first *York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region*. Given our dynamic pace of growth, The Regional Municipality of York will continue to address important issues such as creating and retaining a diversity of employment, protecting and restoring our natural heritage system and providing supportive infrastructure and adequate human services.

This *Sustainability Strategy* will enable York Region to take a new and fresh approach to our operations and decision-making processes - a sustainability perspective. It provides a model for municipal decision making that integrates the values of sustainable natural environment, healthy communities and economic vitality. This model also addresses the way we engage our public, monitor our progress and improve on our successes. *Towards a Sustainable Region* represents an important step on our continuing journey towards greater sustainability.

We would like to thank all who contributed to this document and look forward to your continued support. *Towards a Sustainable Region* will assist York Region in being adaptive and resilient to changing environmental, economic and social trends.

Towards a Sustainable Region

The purpose of the **York Region Sustainability Strategy** is to provide a long-term framework for making smarter decisions about growth management and all municipal responsibilities that better integrate the economy, environment and community.

As our population is expected to increase to 1.5 million residents by 2031, the Region will face a number of important issues. These decisions will address how we manage our growth, protect and enhance our natural heritage system and foster a strong economy. In addition to this growth, the Region will be affected by a myriad of trends related to changing demographics, diversity, energy concerns and social cohesion. We are re-thinking how we design, service and support our communities. There is a need to better understand the connections between stewardship of natural resources, job opportunities, human services provision, and public health issues. This connection also includes the ability of our citizens to fully engage and participate in the economic, social and cultural life of their communities.

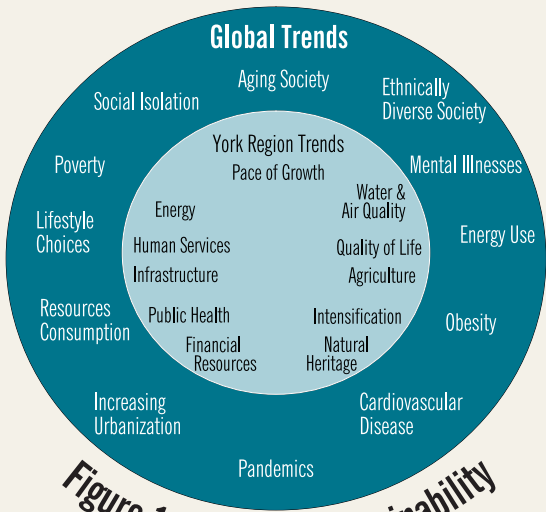


Figure 1: Drivers of Sustainability

York Region will approach these issues from a new and fresh perspective. The Sustainability Strategy is intended to provide an integrated, innovative and long-term view. In this way, we can fully evaluate our decisions and strengthen our environment, economy and communities. To achieve this, the seemingly inconsequential choices of everyday life, as well as our important long-term decisions require a different level of awareness.

Sustainability: Living Better, Not Living Without

“Sustainability means living within the Earth’s Limits. It means living in a world where feeding people does not necessitate polluting groundwater and coastal shorelines. Where transporting people and goods does not mean polluting our air and changing our climate. Where heating our homes and powering our industries does not require vast amounts of polluting fossil fuels. Sustainability means doing things better — not doing without.”

— David Suzuki, Foreword to Sustainability Within a Generation, 2004

Fifty-years ago, our world was a different place and it will be vastly different fifty-years in the future. During this time, technological advances, political shifts, climate change, immigration, demand for human services and affordable housing, and higher energy costs, will require society to adopt a different economic, social and environmental value system. In North America, we represent one of the smallest shares of the world’s population, yet we are the largest consumers. Sustainability is about bringing this gap into equilibrium. We must work together to find innovative and creative ways to live our lives within the Earth’s limits using our ingenuity.

Sustainability is about living better, not living without — this is the legacy of sustainability to which the Region is committed.

Consumer Spending and Population by World Region, 2000		
World Region	Share of World Private Consumption Expenditures	Share of the World Population
United States and Canada	31.5	5.2
Western Europe	28.7	6.4
East Asia and Pacific	21.4	32.9
Latin America and the Caribbean	6.7	8.5
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	3.3	7.9
South Asia	2	22.4
Australia and New Zealand	1.5	0.4
Middle East and North Africa	1.4	4.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.2	10.9

SOURCE: "State of the World 2004" The World Watch Institute, 2004, Washington D.C.

Background

The concept of sustainability is rooted in the pursuit of environmental protection and social justice. During the 1960s and 1970s, the typical approach to economic prosperity was to maximize profit and optimize performance without regard to environmental impacts or social costs.

By the 1980s, there was an international awareness that this approach to economic development was responsible for: loss of biodiversity, natural resource depletion, pollution and, in some cases, social inequity and a reduction in quality of life. As a result, a new paradigm of growth and development was created through the notion of sustainability.

In 1987, the United Nations Commission on the Environment and Development produced the Brundtland Commission Report that defined sustainable development as **“development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”**



SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT

SMART COMMUTE IN YORK REGION

Smart Commute York Region is a group of programs and policies to encourage usage of alternative modes of transportation instead of driving alone to work. Regional Council approved the following Smart Commute initiatives:

- The Carpool Zone: web-based carpool ride matching to help employees find matches for carpooling to and from work
- Preferential parking for those who carpool
- Emergency Ride Home Program for employees who use transit, walk, cycle or carpool to work
- Bike Rack and incentives for employees who cycle to work

DID YOU KNOW

The average Canadian will, in his/her lifetime:

- use 120,000,000 litres of water
- consume the equivalent of 600,000 cubic metres of natural gas, 1,100,000 kg coal or 575,000 litres of crude oil
- travel 700,000 km in motor vehicles which is equivalent to traveling around the world at the equator 17.5 times
- generate 40,000 kg of garbage

SOURCE: Sustainability within a Generation, 2004

What Does Sustainability Mean?

"Treat the earth well: I t was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children".

— Ancient Aboriginal Proverb

SUSTAINABILITY MEANS leaving our communities, our Region, our World in a healthy state for our children and grandchildren.

SUSTAINABILITY MEANS evaluating the community, environmental and economic effects of our actions.

SUSTAINABILITY MEANS thinking differently, being more innovative and collaborative.

SUSTAINABILITY MEANS making smarter decisions about our lifestyle, community design, infrastructure and financial decisions.

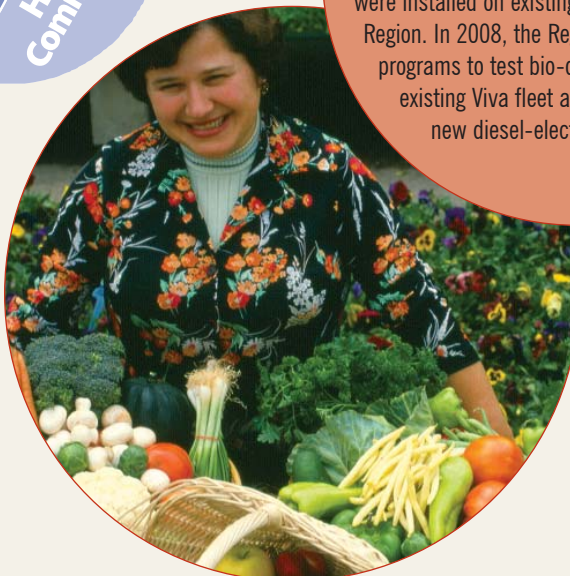
SUSTAINABILITY MEANS practicing prevention and adaptation so that our communities become more resilient to long term social, economic and climate change.



SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT

PROMOTING ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES IN PUBLIC TRANSIT

In 2006, the Region implemented a Solar Light Pilot Program for bus shelters. Ten solar light kits were installed on existing shelters throughout York Region. In 2008, the Region will begin two pilot programs to test bio-diesel fuels for the existing Viva fleet and the purchase of new diesel-electric buses.



Why a Sustainability Strategy?

"Then I say, the earth belongs to each generation during its course, fully and in its own right, [but] no generation can contract debts greater than can be paid during the course of its own existence."

— Thomas Jefferson

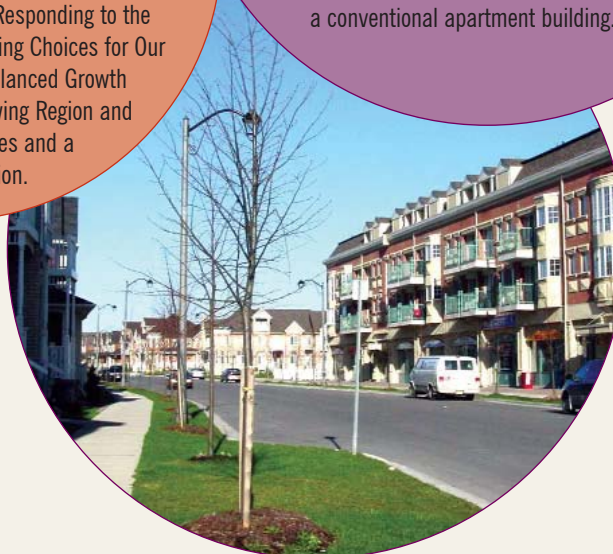
- Makes good business sense in terms of increasing our competitive advantage for the future, energizing our employees, increasing efficiency and productivity.
- Translates the concept of sustainability into practical action.
- Provides a useful model for smarter decision-making that integrates economic, environmental and community considerations.
- Aligns and coordinates current sustainability initiatives, and identifies gaps.
- Addresses the expectations and values of our public, stakeholders and employees.
- Reduces and minimizes the effects of greenhouse gas emissions through mitigation and adaptation.
- The Strategy demonstrates leadership.

SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT VISION 2026

Vision 2026 is an overall blueprint for York Region. It includes a vision statement, eight goals, and action areas within each goal that describe what people have said they want the Region to be. These goals areas include: 1) Quality Communities for a Diverse Population 2) Enhanced Environment, Heritage and Culture 3) A Vibrant Economy 4) Responding to the Needs of Our Residents 5) Housing Choices for Our Residents 6) Managed and Balanced Growth 7) Infrastructure for a Growing Region and 8) Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region.

SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT ENERGY EFFICIENT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Tom Taylor Place is the first affordable housing development in York Region that has been designed to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification by incorporating sustainable and energy efficient measures into the design. This \$10 million dollar project is a 50-unit building comprising of 51,500 square feet. The units are designed to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities, including seven households for clients of the Canadian Hearing Society. Tom Taylor Place is expected to use 58% less energy than a conventional apartment building.



York Region Successes

The Region has built a strong foundation for sustainability over the years and has established an extensive portfolio of sustainability initiatives that include:

- Vision 2026 with eight integrated goals
- Regional Official Plan based on the themes of natural environment, economic vitality and healthy communities
- Human Services Planning Coalition
- The Greening Strategy and Land Securement Initiatives
- The State of the Environment Report 2005
- Energy and Environmental Management System (EEMS)
- Water for Tomorrow Program
- Energy Efficient Affordable Housing Project: Tom Taylor Place
- Public Transit and Rapid Transit Initiatives (YRT/VIVA)
- Minimum LEED Silver Standard for Regional Facilities
- Corporate Clean Air Task Force
- York Region Housing Strategy
- Coordinated approach to the Regional Official Plan and Infrastructure Master Plans Update
- A variety of purchasing and operation decisions (i.e. LED traffic lights, new carpet procurement etc.).



Local Municipal Initiatives

- Town of Aurora: Water Conservation By-Law
- The Town of East Gwillimbury: Energy Star Program and LEED Silver Standard for all new Town facilities and all new industrial, commercial, institutional and high-rise residential buildings
- Town of Georgina: Municipal Waste Reduction Initiatives, Willow Beach Water and Sewer Project, Town operated vehicles converted to bio-diesel
- The Township of King: Outdoor Water Use Initiatives
- Town of Markham: Green Bin Collection Program, Pathways and Trails Master Plan
- The Town of Newmarket: Pesticide By-Law prohibiting the use of cosmetic pesticides on public and private property
- The Town of Richmond Hill: Wind Energy Project, Residential Intensification Study
- The City of Vaughan: Sustainable Community Project in Block 39
- The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville: Redevelopment of 19 Civic Avenue — Nineteen on the Park for arts, culture and entertainment.

...and many more!

York Region Sustainability Strategy

The purpose of the Sustainability Strategy is to provide a long-term framework for making smarter decisions about growth management and all municipal responsibilities that integrate the economy, environment and community. This strategy is the first step on the sustainability journey and builds on the sustainability policy and activities that the Region already has in place. The purpose of this strategy is to take the Region to the next level of sustainability. It is recognized that as we aim to

strengthen sustainability values throughout the Region, we will have to take additional steps while we continually evaluate our direction and progress.

A Different Way of Thinking

The Region of York has established a strong vision for the future with its two major strategic documents, **Vision 2026** and the **Regional Official Plan**. The Region also has a number of implementation plans and strategies including: The Greening Strategy, Housing Strategy, Infrastructure Master Plans, the Economic Strategy and a Human Services Strategy.

The York Region Sustainability Strategy calls for a different perspective on **how** we implement Regional initiatives. The Strategy calls for a new way of doing things — new integrated solutions. **Each decision we make should produce value and net gains within the environment, economy and community.** The strategy will focus on integrating this different approach into all our policies and practices. The Region will report on our

progress annually to provide an opportunity for public feedback. In this way, the Sustainability Strategy is intended to be an **evolving, living** document.

The Strategy provides a leadership framework for updating, implementation and monitoring progress for all Regional sustainability efforts.



Towards a Sustainable Region...

Creating a vision of sustainability will steer our decision-making processes. The Region's vision will be achieved when every citizen and employee can:

- Breathe clean air and eat healthy food
- Live in adequate housing and have quality human services
- Access different, efficient and affordable modes of transportation
- Experience economic prosperity
- Feel engaged and included in their community
- Lead an active and healthy lifestyle
- Realize their full potential and attain a state of overall well-being.

This vision will be realized by applying sustainability principles to our decisions and implementing the actions listed in this strategy. By having on-going conversations with our many different stakeholders, the Region will be able to gauge its progress and determine whether we have achieved our vision.

By having one vision throughout the Corporation, we can make more effective investments that will take the Region, its communities and citizens, one step closer towards sustainability.

Guiding Principles for Implementation

The following principles are designed to achieve the Region's vision and promote a different way of thinking towards implementation so that we can make smarter, more integrated choices, and lead by example.

Principle 1: Provide a long-term perspective on sustainability.

Principle 2: Evaluate using the triple bottom-line elements of environment, economy and community.

Principle 3: Create a culture of continuous improvement, minimizing impact, maximizing innovation and increasing resiliency.

Principle 4: Identify specific short-term achievable actions that contribute towards a sustainability legacy.

Principle 5: Set targets, monitor and report progress.

Principle 6: Foster partnerships and public engagement.

Principle 7: Create a spirit of stewardship, shared responsibility and collaboration.

Principle 8: Raise the level of sustainability awareness through education, dialogue and reassessment.

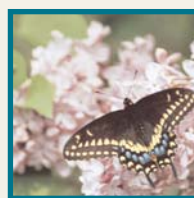
Principle 9: Promote sustainable lifestyles and re-evaluation of our consumption and expectations.

Think Globally, Act Locally

Action Areas

The policies and initiatives of the Sustainability Strategy have been categorized under the following action areas:

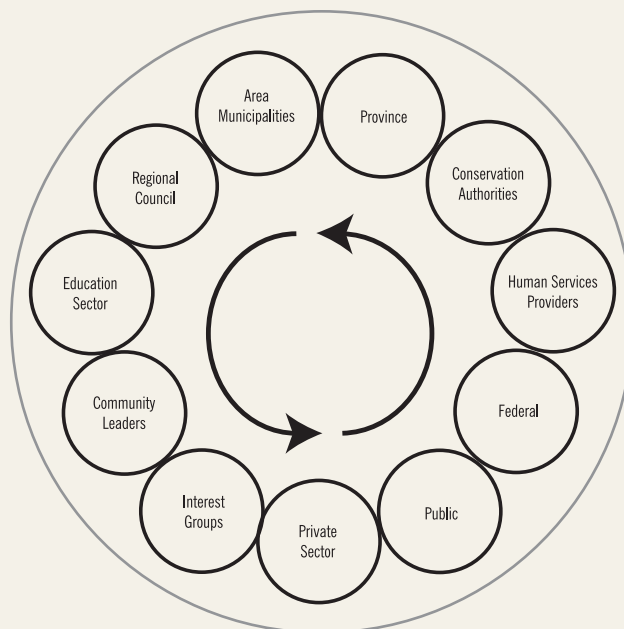
- I. Corporate Culture of Sustainability
- II. Healthy Communities
- III. Economic Vitality
- IV. Sustainable Natural Environment
- V. Education, Engagement and Partnerships
- VI. Sustainability Implementation and Monitoring



Strengthening Partnerships to Achieve our Legacy

The issues and actions in this Sustainability Strategy are wide-ranging and have a broad effect across all levels of government in Canada and Internationally.

The framework for the Sustainability Strategy will be carried out in partnership with Regional departments, stakeholders and our public. In this way, the Region has an opportunity to be a leader with its partners in order to capture the Region's unique diversity of values, needs and perspectives.



DID YOU KNOW

An inclusive society creates both the feeling and the reality of belonging and helps each of us reach our full potential. The feeling of belonging comes through caring, cooperation, and trust. The reality of belonging comes through equity, fairness, social and economic justices. We make belonging real by ensuring that it is accepted and practiced by society.

SOURCE: Count me in! Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse, 2006.

Corporate Culture of Sustainability

Theme Area

The Region understands that sustainability is very much a way of thinking that begins with raising awareness and integrating sustainability principles into Regional decision-making processes. This approach will assist the Region in optimizing productivity, resiliency, performance and overall employee well-being.

Actions

- Become a leader in sustainability policy and action in Canada.
- Foster corporate champions of sustainability to provide leadership within the Corporation.
- Initiate a sustainability training program to further engage Senior Management, Regional Council and all levels of staff.
- Include a triple bottom line sustainability assessment in Council Reports on decisions.
- Initiate a speaker series for Regional employees on how to be eco-friendly in their everyday activities.
- Increase the financial sustainability of the Corporation's budget, business plans and processes.
- Continue to incorporate methods of sustainable budgeting such as lifecycle costing, full-cost accounting, cost-benefit analysis, assessment of long-term cost savings, among others.
- Require Regional business units to incorporate sustainability objectives into their business plans.
- Prepare a green procurement strategy that ensures that environmentally friendly and biodegradable products are given first priority.
- Prepare a purchase of service protocol which introduces sustainability criteria.
- Hold seminars for Regional employees on green purchasing and contracting.
- Use electronic distribution of materials wherever possible to reduce paper usage.
- Consider a Third Party Audit of Regional policy, operations and procedures to identify the gaps where sustainability considerations may be lacking.



"It is not enough to change strategies, structures, and systems, unless the thinking that produced those strategies, structures and systems also changes."

— Peter Senge, *Dance of Change*

- Recommend that all York Region capital projects consider life-cycle costs which include maintenance.
- Promote employee wellness including fitness, stress management and healthy workplace.
- Complete a sustainable fleet strategy for regional vehicles that considers alternative fuels, vehicle types, and operational guidelines.
- Build Regional Buildings at a minimum LEED Silver Standard as directed by Regional Council.
- Continue to increase the energy efficiency and sustainability of York Region Buildings through retrofits, procurement and conservation measures.
- Reduce emissions of smog precursors (ozone, particulate matter, sulphur dioxide) and harmful pollutants that impact human health.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in existing and future Regional Facilities and provide reduction targets over time as per our Partners for Climate Protection commitments.
- Consider establishing a Regional Office of Sustainability.

SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT

FLOORING REPLACEMENT PROJECT:

York Region recently replaced the flooring in its administrative building with a combination of carpet and rubber flooring. The carpet contains 50 percent recycled content, including 23 percent recycled carpet. In fact, the rubber flooring is made entirely from recycled tires! This product passes strict tests for indoor air quality, meets the LEED rating systems, is 100 percent recyclable, and is more durable and longer-lasting than conventional carpet. The existing carpet was removed and reclaimed guaranteeing that no material would be incinerated or placed in a landfill site.

DID YOU KNOW

York Region invested \$1.4 million dollars in energy retrofits to its Administrative Centre which will translate into an 8.4 year payback — an annual cost-savings of \$200,000!



Healthy Communities

Theme Area

Sustainability is about achieving a state of well-being. The Region strives to improve the quality of life and health of our residents and employees and support overall independence and personal development by planning and developing healthy and strong communities.

Our goal is to create self-sustaining and healthy communities that emphasize the human condition. This objective involves an integrated decision-making process that simultaneously considers land-use and infrastructure planning, human services and fiscal impacts.

DID YOU KNOW

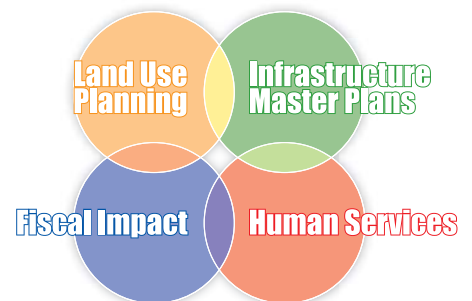
The Region recognizes that the health of a community is based on the following social factors defined as the determinants of health:

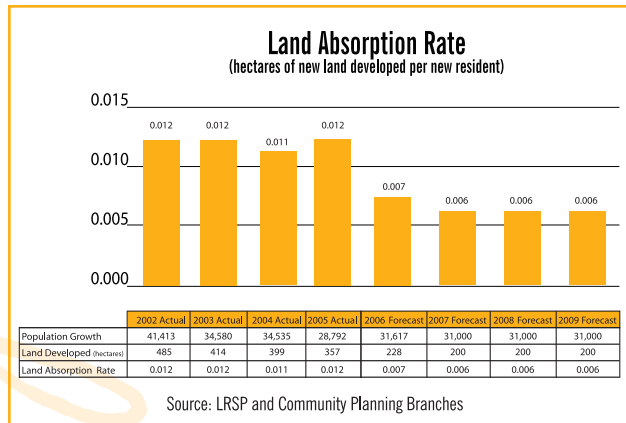
- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| - Income and social status | - Social environments | - Biology and genetic endowment |
| - Social support networks | - Physical environments | - Health services |
| - Education and literacy | - Personal health practices and coping skills | - Gender equity |
| - Employment/working conditions | - Healthy child development | - Culture |

SOURCE: Count me in! Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse, 2006

Actions

- Recognize the connection between human services, economic vitality and quality of life.
- Integrate land-using planning with urban design and infrastructure planning.
- Implement high quality urban design, architecture and place making across the Region.
- Update the Region's Infrastructure Master Plans and integrate with the Growth Management Strategy and Natural Heritage System.
- Require that all new residential development be compact in nature and incorporate a mix and range of housing options.





- Promote the Region's Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines to provide opportunities to shape urban form that is transit-supportive, mixed-use and efficient, and provides a sense of place to residents and employees.
- Ensure that all residents and employees, including new immigrants, the elderly, young people and the disabled have barrier-free, accessible and affordable transportation.
- Create new communities that prioritize mobility and access so that everyone is entitled to reasonable access to all places, goods and services in the Region. This includes people with physical disabilities, low incomes and the elderly.
- Design new communities in the Region's Whitebelt which consider the social determinants of health to help the community and individual realize their full potential with respect to health, social equity, culture, environment, economic vitality and sense of place.
- Recognize that culture and heritage are key elements of community, quality of life and health.
- Continue to investigate innovative and creative strategies to promote intensification and compact development in the Regional Centres and Corridors, including financial and planning tools.
- Prepare a Region-wide Housing Requirements Study based on the 2006 Census and update the Region's Housing Supply Strategy.
- Update the York Region Affordable Housing Strategy.
- Work with the private sector and public agencies to provide a broad array of housing choices for all income groups.
- Work with the Province and Area Municipalities to promote secondary suites across York Region to contribute to housing choice and affordability.
- Work with the police, area municipalities and other key stakeholders in employing the techniques of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED).

DID YOU KNOW

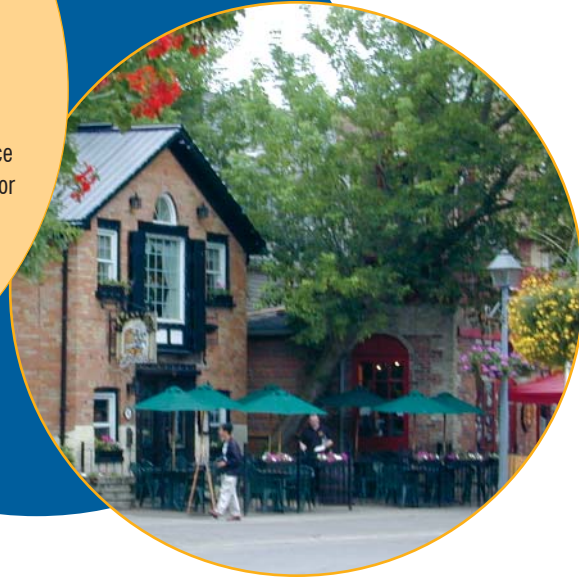
Each hour per day spent in a car increases the likelihood of becoming obese by 6%. In 2001, obesity cost the Canadian Health Care System \$1.6 Billion in hospital care, drugs and doctors and \$2.7 billion in lost earnings due to illness and/or premature death - a total of \$4.3 billion!

SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT

YORK REGION POLICE: PROMOTING LIVEABLE AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

York Regional Police are involved in a number of community initiatives which include:

- Guns and Gangs Strategy
- Methamphetamine Strategy, developed with Health Services to address the use and production of methamphetamine
- Police/School Protocol: to solidify the partnership between police and both school boards to maintain a safe school environment for our children
 - Be Net Aware: program launched to teach children and parents about internet dangers and safe use.

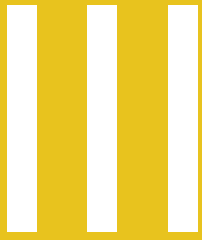


- Prepare and adopt a York Region Pedestrian and Bicycling Master Plan to promote an active transportation system and lifestyle.
- Continue to support human services planning by advocating for adequate funding for human services infrastructure for a growing population and to foster civic engagement in building healthy communities.
- Continue to finalize and implement the Region's Human Service Strategy to ensure that services match our rapid population growth and that the needs of children, young people, seniors, new Canadians and low income individuals are met.
- Continue to invest in our children through early childhood development and early intervention services.
- Update the Region's human services requirements and include a 25-year Human Services Fiscal Impact Study to align with the growth targets in the Provincial Growth Plan.
- Work with partners through the Inclusivity Action Plan to ensure that the potential of all new Canadians is realized.
- Promote 'one stop' community service delivery that is located in the Regional Centres and Corridors to provide transportation access options for users.
- Consider how community design and lifestyle is connected to such health issues as obesity, as well as respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

- Promote health awareness and programs such as: walk to school, no smoking awareness, healthy foods and physical activity.
- Hold a Sustainable Greenfield Workshop with an array of Regional stakeholders to explore ideas around transit, energy planning, environmental protection and development options in the Region's remaining greenfield areas.
- Continue to support "20/20" The Way to Clean Air Program for Schools.
- Continue to construct energy efficient Affordable Housing Projects such as Tom Taylor Place.
- Implement a policy to provide incentives for high density Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) development in the Regional Centres and Corridors.

Community





Economic Vitality

Theme Area

Sustainability will help make York Region more competitive. This approach can result in efficiencies and savings, create attractive, balanced communities, and help attract a talented labour force and leading edge companies. The Region can provide a climate for the growth of innovative and competitive companies that can contribute towards a resilient, diverse and prosperous economy. In short, sustainability makes good business sense.

Actions

- Work with the Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade to promote economic vitality, industry diversity and full participation among the resident labour force.
- Promote senior level partnerships and investment that support economic development initiatives.
- Improve the understanding of the Regional economy to address industry requirements and skills availability.
- Complete a Fiscal and Economic Implications Study of various growth scenarios as part of the Region's Growth Management and Regional Official Plan Update.
- Work with different levels of government to implement immigration policies that provide more Canadian work opportunities for the new immigrant labour force.
- Recognize that economic benefits, strength and resiliency are accrued in a community that has access to adequate and quality human services.
- Continue to provide rapid transit and public transit with connecting pedestrian- friendly access routes.
- Update the Region's Water, Wastewater and Transportation Master Plans utilizing sustainability principles.
- Ensure that the movement of goods are safe, efficient and flexible and will minimize the use of non-renewable resources.
- Promote the economic and environmental benefits of intensification within urban areas.
- Work with the area municipalities to expedite key industrial/commercial developments through the Regional approval process.

DID YOU KNOW

In 2004, the GDP output for York Region was \$37.5 million – that is greater than each of the provinces of Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia!

- Establish a Sustainable Business Directory of companies that sell sustainable products, purchase environmentally-friendly products, and exercise corporate social responsibility.
- Engage the business community on techniques to reduce water usage and energy consumption.
- Initiate a “greening technology centre of excellence” that acts as a discussion forum for industries, research organizations, education institutions and service sector companies.
- Develop and implement a local source food strategy that increases awareness about production, processing and distribution.
- Continue to support the York Region Farm Fresh Initiative to promote local food production and consumption.
- Support the GTA Agricultural Action Committee in implementing the GTA Agricultural Action Plan.
- Coordinate with the agricultural community to promote local agriculture to local markets, retailers, restaurants and other related businesses.
- Investigate how community gardens can be incorporated into new developments and into the existing urban fabric as a contributor to community health, social interactions and security of the local food supply.
- Continue to promote our tourism strengths, including forests, historic villages, parks and artistic and cultural activities as identified through such initiatives as the Premier-Ranked Tourism Destination project.
- Ensure that all new initiatives listed in the Region’s business plans include a sustainability assessment.



DID YOU KNOW

Solar, photovoltaics, wind turbines, and fuel cells are expected to expand from a current sector value of \$9.5 billion now to \$89 billion by 2012.

(State of the World, 2004)

IV

Sustainable Natural Environment

Theme Area

York Region's natural environment is one of our greatest assets. The Greenbelt includes 69% of the Region's land area. It contributes to the quality of life of our residents and helps attract new business to the Region. Our goal is to not only protect, but to enhance and strengthen our natural heritage.

Actions

- Identify and adopt an updated linked natural heritage system for York Region in collaboration with the stakeholders, area municipalities and conservation authorities.
- Host a Climate Change Symposium in York Region to promote awareness of implications as well as explore mitigation, adaptation and response strategies.
- Update the Greening Strategy and Land Securement Initiative for York Region based on sustainability values.
- Review the Regional forest cover target of 25% in the context of the updates to the Greening Strategy, Natural Heritage System and Regional Official Plan.
- Adopt and implement the Corporate Clean Air Strategy.
- Investigate and adopt principles for sustainable green communities in order to create more liveable, energy efficient communities with smaller ecological footprints.
- Ensure triple bottom line assessments of all infrastructure initiatives and context sensitive designs.
- Continue to find new and innovative infrastructure construction techniques that result in positive economic, environmental and social impacts.
- Apply Transportation Demand Management to increase transit usage, carpooling and alternative transportation modes to improve access and mobility.
- Investigate community energy planning techniques and the use of alternative and renewable sources of energy such as building/subdivision orientation, district energy and community-based ground source heat pump systems, among others.



- Work with the Conservation Authorities to improve the quality and quantity of storm water through innovative approaches such as permeable surfaces, green roofs and creating artificial wetlands.
- Work to improve the quantity and quality of the Region's subsurface and surface water systems including Lake Simcoe.
- Continue street tree and reforestation programs to increase green cover in the Region.
- Continue to pursue the Energy-from-Waste Incineration Project with Durham Region to manage our waste locally.
- Adopt energy efficient systems and utilize state of the art infrastructure construction techniques to minimize impact on the environment.
- Continue to ensure clean and safe drinking water for residents in York Region.
- Increase the Region's waste diversion rate to 65% by 2010 and 75% by 2016.
- Investigate the possibility of establishing an emissions trading/carbon credits system for the Region.
- Expand on energy efficiency initiatives and pursue other forms of renewable energy (i.e. solar, wind).
- Incorporate more initiatives that target the rural and agricultural sectors, such as programs that inform farmers about more sustainable farming techniques.
- Explore and produce a comprehensive green building strategy in consultation with municipalities that would incorporate ENERGY STAR® and/or LEED™ Standards.

SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT

THE GREENING STRATEGY:

York Region's award winning Greening Strategy was adopted in 2000. Since that time, Council has annually funded the Natural Environment Securement Fund. Approximately 500 hectares have been protected and 500,000 trees and shrubs have been planted between 2000 and 2005.





Education, Engagement and Partnerships

Theme Area

Many of the elements of sustainability lie outside traditional municipal responsibilities. The strength and resiliency of a community is very much linked to the inclusion and engagement of individuals, community and organizations in community life.

Actions

- Publish and distribute the Sustainability Strategy inviting input from the public stakeholders and partners.
- Produce a citizen's brochure that describes how York Region residents can contribute to the Region's sustainability goals and actions.
- Promote the social goals of equity, accessibility and engagement so that each of our citizens can lead healthy, fulfilling and connected lives.
- Showcase and promote the York Region Sustainability Strategy and accomplishments at various local, national and international forums.
- Establish a sustainability website which includes regional programs and promotes awareness.
- Reconstitute the Towards Sustainability in York Region (TSYR) Advisory Group to provide partner/stakeholder feedback at various implementation stages.
- Continue to support the York Region Human Services Planning Coalition in its efforts to advocate for adequate and timely investment in human services so that quality of life in York Region is maintained and enhanced.
- Advocate a Provincial Human Services Plan that encourages partnerships with the community and other levels of government and makes a greater investment in prevention and early intervention services.
- Work with York Region Schools and School Boards to raise awareness about sustainability among young people.

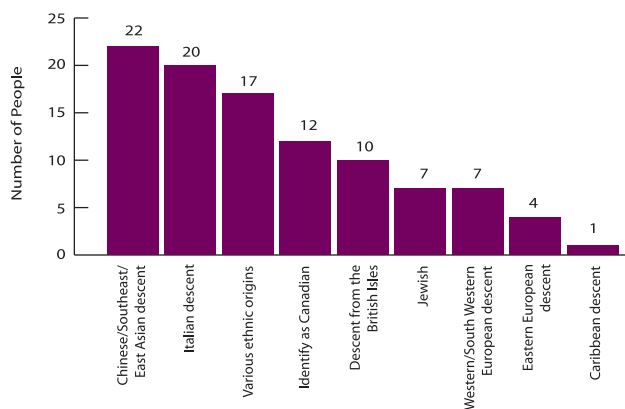
"We will never reach a perfect world but we can work towards it and we can improve our situation and that is why coming together to talk is necessary"

— Count me in! Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse, 2006.



- Engage businesses, schools, environmental and community groups in an on-going dialogue to improve sustainability planning in York Region.
- Work with area municipalities, conservation authorities and interest groups on initiatives such as climate change, greening and intensification.
- Continue to work together with Provincial and Federal Governments on defining sustainability and putting together an action plan for moving ahead.
- Encourage the Province to make changes to the building code to implement innovative ideas that integrate sustainability principles into development.
- Explore methods to involve the diverse segments of the Region's population.
- Partner with the York Region School Boards to incorporate the concept of sustainability into the curriculum.

What if York Region were a Village of 100 People?



Source: York Region Community Services and Housing Department, 2006

SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT

LED TRAFFIC SIGNAL PROGRAM

York Region has completed its Light Emitting Diode (LED) traffic signal replacement program. LEDs consist of a number of small, low voltage lights connected in strings. Should one of the strings fail, the other strings continue to maintain the operation of the signal. These lights are superior to incandescent bulbs for longevity, visibility, maintenance and use 90 percent less power. It is anticipated that the LED program will pay for itself in three years.



VI

Sustainability Implementation and Monitoring

Theme Area

The key to a successful sustainability strategy is its implementation, continuous monitoring and improvement. A major component of this success is on-going communication and dialogue. It is important to identify and address the practical requirements for implementing the Regional Sustainability Strategy.

Actions

- Produce an implementation action plan that addresses priority-setting, targets, monitoring and evaluation.
- Identify timelines and success measures for each of the actions in this strategy.
- Identify qualitative and quantitative indicators of progress in sustainability.
- Benchmark Regional performance on an annual basis against a set of criteria, targets and indicators that define sustainability in York Region.
- Modify and incorporate Vision 2026: Annual Report on Indicators of Progress to act as the primary monitoring document for the Sustainability Strategy.
- Report annually to the public and stakeholders on sustainability initiatives, indicators and issues.
- Set up a Regional Internal Steering Committee to assist in the monitoring, resourcing and improvement of the Sustainability Strategy's implementation.
- Continue to use the Energy and Environmental Management System (EEMS) to track energy performance and costs across the Region on an annual basis.
- Prepare a business case and sustainability assessment for all proposed action items listed in the Sustainability Strategy.
- Require a sustainability assessment for staff reports seeking approval, adoption or endorsement of a position.



Example of Implementation Plan Template				
Action	Sustainability Assessment	Outcomes	Financial Sustainability	Corporate Responsibility and Accountability

Next Steps - York Region Priority I nitiatives

Throughout the consultation phase of the Sustainability Strategy, a number of priority actions were identified. As a sign of the Region's commitment to sustainability and to generate momentum for the strategy, the following initiatives are currently being implemented:

1. Complete Sustainable Infrastructure Master Plan Updates that are integrated with the Natural Heritage System and the Growth Management Strategy.
2. Provide incentives for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) development in the Regional Centres and Corridors.
3. Update Regional Natural Heritage System policies.
4. Initiate a corporate dialogue on sustainability leadership and building a corporate culture of sustainability.
5. Establish a Sustainability Training Program for regional employees.
6. Require a sustainability assessment for regional decisions, major staff reports and proposed sustainability strategy actions.
7. Establish a York Region Sustainability Internal Steering Committee to assist in the implementation, monitoring, resourcing and improvement of the Sustainability Strategy.
8. Develop an implementation plan for each action including specific steps, outcomes and responsibilities.
9. Integrate sustainability values into the business plans for each regional business unit.
10. Develop a mechanism to monitor greenhouse gas emissions corporate-wide.
11. Develop a sustainable purchase of service protocol and a green procurement strategy.
12. Prepare a business case for a proposed Sustainability Office with York Region.

We Need Your Input

This Sustainability Strategy is based on input from the public and stakeholders during the Region's Sustainability Symposium, the Towards Sustainability in York Region (TSYR) Advisory Group and the Growth Management Public Engagement Initiative. We also received valuable feedback from several organizations and individuals during the consultation phase of the preliminary draft. The Sustainability Strategy contains many of the hundreds of ideas that we have heard from the public.

This document represents the beginning of a process of continuous monitoring and improvement. York Region's Sustainability Strategy is a living and evolving strategy that takes a long-term perspective on sustainability. This journey is meant to be a learning experience and an inclusionary process. We welcome your input and perspectives.

We need your suggestions and ideas to evolve and strive for sustainability in all aspects of our work. To send us your input, please contact York Region at futureyork@york.ca or call 905-895-1231 extension 1570.

Alternatively, you can send your comments to our mailing address:

**The Regional Municipality of York
Planning and Development Services Department
Long Range and Strategic Planning Branch
17250 Yonge Street, 4th Floor
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We have taken significant steps, but there is much left to do. For more information on our sustainability and growth management work, visit our website at www.york.ca and search under "Planning for Tomorrow".





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