

## Executive Summary

Brampton’s historic downtown core is a defining element of the City Structure, the overall planning framework for the City in the Official Plan. It forms a part of the Central Area for the City of Brampton, the focus of major institutional, residential, commercial, cultural and recreational activity in the City-the “heart” of the City of Brampton. The ongoing rehabilitation and revitalization of the historic downtown core plays an essential role in realizing this vision.



Commercial Core-View North  
(Photo: August 2009)

A portion of the Central Area is located in the floodplain of the Etobicoke Creek. To allow for the continued viability of the historic downtown core and address the significant social and economic hardships that would result from strict adherence to provincial one zone flood plain management policies, the Province approved a Special Policy Area in 1986.

As the City grew and matured, Brampton experienced significant growth and development pressures and received a number of applications for development in the SPA. In 2005, Council adopted a Central Area Vision to accommodate significant growth in a vibrant and healthy downtown with a strong urban character.

Around the same time, there was emerging interest from landowners and developers in downtown Brampton to intensify the residential land uses more in character with the downtown cores of urban centres. In response to the applications, the Province requested that a comprehensive analysis and Amendment to the SPA policies be undertaken to address all of the growth across the SPA.

The City of Brampton Comprehensive Flood Risk and Management Analysis (2011) (the Submission) and proposed Amendment are intended to provide the comprehensive analysis and broad framework for future development within Brampton's SPA. The Submission addresses all of the planning and technical requirements of the January 2009 Ministry of Natural Resources' *"Procedures for Approval of New Special Policy Areas (SPAs) and Modifications to Existing SPAs Under the Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 (PPS, 2005), Policy 3.1.3-Natural Hazards-Special Policy Areas"*, Appendix 5 to the River and Stream Systems: Flooding Hazard Limit.

The Submission is not seeking approval of a new SPA. A level of growth beyond the existing level of development was permitted when the SPA was approved by the Province in 1986. The intent of this SPA update is twofold. The primary intent is not to change the boundaries of the Special Policy Area or to increase intensification, but to introduce policies that more strategically refine the distribution of growth to reduce risk and fulfill the City's vision for residential and job growth contributing to a vibrant downtown and to reduce overall flood risk.

The second component of this SPA review is to update the boundaries of the SPA based upon current floodplain mapping. This is generally a reconciliation exercise to reflect the current floodplain boundary and to eliminate lands that are no longer flood vulnerable based on new technical information. This boundary reconciliation process inherently involves the addition and deletion of areas from the SPA. The updated SPA boundary maintains the original intent of the approved SPA boundary-that is, to maintain the continued viability of the historical downtown core that would otherwise be limited by the one zone flood plain management approach.

This submission shows that all of the MNR requirements for policy changes within SPAs as well as minor boundary changes are satisfied while achieving the Provincial objectives for intensification in Urban Growth Centres and Mobility Hubs and the City’s objectives for a healthy and vibrant downtown.

## **Goals of the Comprehensive Flood Risk and Management Analysis**

The goals of this Submission and proposed Official Plan policy amendments are to:

- Update the technical data related to flood risk based on the updated floodlines and hydrological model;
- Provide clarity within the policy framework and enable appropriate revitalization and redevelopment of the historic downtown to ensure its long term health and vitality.
- Clearly establish the location, nature and extent of development that is permitted and any related requirements with respect to mitigating risk.
- Create a policy framework that provides a common understanding among all stakeholders of development opportunities and requirements in the area.
- Provide greater certainty on planning outcomes as they pertain to the ability to satisfy requirements related to development within the floodplain; remove the need for Provincial approval of rezoning applications.
- Recognize the long term objective of eliminating flood risks in Downtown Brampton to the regulatory storm event.

## **Existing Secondary Plan and Zoning By-law Permit Significant Growth**

Policies governing development within the floodplain that impacts the historic downtown Brampton were put in place as part of the approval of the then new Brampton Central Secondary Plan (OP84-058), approved by the Region in 1986. The intent of the Secondary Plan was to introduce “a policy vehicle for rehabilitation and revitalization of the Downtown Commercial area and its surrounding residential neighbourhoods.” Lands designated Downtown Commercial permitted retail, service, entertainment and office commercial uses, and residential apartment uses. Residential apartments or offices were encouraged above retail and service shops and mixed use development was encouraged. It also put in place policies governing development within the floodplain, entitled “Damage Centre Policies”.

Secondary Plan 7, Downtown Brampton, approved in 1998 designated lands in the SPA as Office Node, and Central Area Mixed Use to permit a full mix of uses with a maximum Floor Space

Index for the area of 3.5, with potential increases subject to suitable planning justification reports. The existing Secondary Plan 7 and implementing Zoning allow significant growth beyond that which is currently built. The floodplain policies in Special Policy Area 3 of the Secondary Plan set out the technical requirements for development within the SPA.

Since 1986, no changes have been made to the SPA to address significant changes in the Provincial and municipal planning regime.



View East of Main Street and Queen Street Corridor  
(January 2010)

## **New Regulatory Floodlines Result in Smaller SPA and Significant Decrease in Flood Depths**

In 2006, Aquafor Beech limited undertook a Downtown Drainage Study Flood Risk Assessment on behalf of the City of Brampton. The study included an analysis of flood characteristics (based on draft 2007 hydrology) and flood proofing alternatives at a lot level. The study also provided flood damage cost estimates and evaluated potential flood relief alternatives.

TRCA completed official updates to the hydrology, hydraulics and regulatory floodline mapping in 2012. These products supersede the 2006 Aquafor Beech study. Significant technical improvements were made to the products, resulting in a more accurate and detailed characterization of flood risk in the SPA. The 2012 flood risk information (including the delineation of a new regulatory floodline) resulted in the following impacts to the SPA:

- Based on the new regulatory floodline, the new SPA would be approximately 5 hectares smaller than the existing SPA.
- Although the Brampton by-pass channel was originally sized to only convey the 100 year storm, current modelling shows that the channel can actually pass flows up to and including the 1:350 year storm. **This means that the downtown core is not affected by riverine flooding in all events up to and including the 1:350 year storm event.**
- The new modelling shows that the majority of the SPA area will experience 1-2m depth of flooding during a regional storm while shallow areas will exist at the outer boundaries. Previous hydraulic models (based on 2007 hydrology) showed much greater depths of flooding (up to the 4-5 m range) and that model updates have resulted in a **significant decrease in flood depths in the area.**

### **Negligible Change in Flood Levels with Full build-out**

A comparison of allowable lot coverage between the original OPA 58 and the proposed Secondary Plan Amendment showed either “no change” or very “minor” changes. Subsequently, TRCA concluded that increases to flows in subsequent hydrology updates would be negligible.

Based on a similar comparison of building footprints within the SPA (existing vs. potential future buildings), TRCA also found the potential for flood level increases to be minor due to the proposed Secondary Plan Amendment. While it is not possible to predict the exact nature and configuration of future developments, there will be consideration to the citing of buildings, as development applications proceed so that they maximize the conveyance efficiency within the SPA.

It is, therefore, **the opinion of TRCA that changes to flood elevations through the SPA would be minimal when the area reaches full build-out.**

## The Proposed Official Plan Policy Approach Reduces Risk

As part of the preparation of the Submission, the City identified an area near the edge of the floodplain that affords the opportunity for properties to gain access to/from lands outside of the regulatory flood plain to reduce the risk to life.

This area of focus is strategically located in close proximity to the GO Station and the historic core of the Downtown and is able to provide safe access onto adjacent streets above the regulatory storm elevation. This replicates the approach that successfully enabled the 11 George Street development (Alterra) to proceed.

By focusing the most intensive development on The Edge Lands and assuming limited growth potential in the balance of the Policy Areas, **opportunity exists for a reduction of approximately 4,000 people and jobs across the SPA, from what is currently allowed under the existing policies.**

**The strategic redistribution of growth across the SPA allows an overall reduction of risk across the SPA.**

## Changing Provincial Directions Promote Growth

As part of the Provincial requirements to conform to **Places to Grow**, the City of Brampton downtown was identified as an Urban Growth Centre, for its capacity to accommodate more growth than other Greater Golden Horseshoe municipalities. Through OPA 43, the City has adopted policies to accommodate significant population and employment growth with a focus on the Urban Growth Centre where the greatest growth and most intense development should be directed. The Official Plan Amendment establishes minimum heights and densities to implement the policies.

A small but significant area of the Urban Growth Centre is affected by the Special Policy Area. Without growth in the SPA, the balance of the UGC is not likely to succeed in attracting the development needed to achieve the Provincial and municipal Growth Plan targets and objectives for intensification.

Further, The Metrolinx BIG MOVE identified downtown Brampton as an **Anchor Mobility Hub**, strategically located at the intersection of Express Rail (the GO Transit service) and two Rapid Transit lines (along Queen Street and Main Streets). As an Anchor Mobility Hub, the land within an 800 metre radius generally defining the mobility hub includes a significant portion of the SPA

from which a significant portion of the essential ridership originates. Together with GO Transit, the City's Züm bus rapid transit, the future LRT along Hurontario/Main Street and higher-order RT on Queen Street, will all contribute to supporting compact urban development.

It is essential that growth be aligned around this existing and planned high order infrastructure, to support the complimentary Provincial and municipal goals of intensification and reduced road congestion.

## Primary Policy Direction

The proposed amendment to the planning policy framework is designed to achieve the following:

- Establish distinct policy areas within the SPA, each with a particular set of permissions and development requirements in the proposed Official Plan Amendment based on a flood risk assessment.
- Provide for a redistribution of growth along the edge of the floodplain, subject to having safe ingress/egress to flood-free lands and establish maximum gross floor area and residential unit limits to provide certainty and manage risk.
- Implement Provincial Policy Statement direction with respect to restrictions on certain uses within an SPA, including certain sensitive institutional uses, essential emergency services and utility facilities and uses associated with storage, treatment, disposal and manufacturing of hazardous substances.
- Set out requirements to obtain ingress/egress to flood-free lands (above the regulatory storm elevation), requirements for building system designs, requirements for easements for access to flood-free lands, and other matters to minimize risk.
- Permit flexibility in the policy framework with a focus on civic uses to accommodate redevelopment in the southwest quadrant of Main Street and Queen Street in relation to the proposed expansion of City Hall.
- Provide for the protection of the historic relationship of buildings and streets including at-grade entrances in the "Four Corners" area, along Main Street and Queen Street to maintain the integrity of the historic built form.

- Establish the north side of Queen on each side of Main Street as the focus for non-residential, commercial/office/arts and cultural uses.
- Recognize and support the pursuit of technical solutions to eliminate all flooding risks in Downtown Brampton.

## **The SPA Update is Needed to Support the Viability of the Downtown**

There are a number of reasons why revitalization within a small portion of Brampton’s SPA is appropriate and essential and satisfies the requirements of the Provincial Policy Statement:

- The focus area of growth is in the “heart” of the City’s historic core where cultural, civic, commercial and residential uses historically established within the floodplain of the Etobicoke Creek before the Provincial Policies were introduced.
- Growth in the SPA portion of the UGC will serve as the catalyst for development in the balance parts of the UGC; it is not feasible to only direct growth outside of the floodplain, which will accommodate significant growth but cannot replace the more valuable role that growth plays in the Downtown, including parts of the SPA.
- Provincial policy in Places to Grow directs significant growth to the UGC where it is supported by high order transit; the City’s Growth Plan conformity amendment encourages a balance of residents and jobs in excess of 200 persons plus jobs/hectare.
- As an Anchor Mobility Hub, portions of the SPA within the 800 metre radius generally defining the mobility hub area are expected to generate significant ridership.
- Maximizing the return on financial investment within the core.
- Maximizing use of existing infrastructure.
- The overall effect of the Submission is to reduce risk.

## Floodproofing is Required to Minimize Flood Damage

All new buildings must meet TRCA technical requirements with respect to flood proofing and structural ability to withstand flood depths and velocities up the regulatory flood.

The Official Plan Amendment requires the following measures:

- All new buildings shall be flood proofed to the regulatory flood elevation; if not feasible, then to the highest level practical but in no case less than the 1:350 storm elevation (historic four corners must meet 1:350). Dry-passive floodproofing is preferred.
- New buildings are required to demonstrate to the satisfaction of TRCA that they will not be susceptible to major structural damage due to the velocity and / or depth of a flood less than the regulatory storm.

## No Substantial Change in Flood Damage Cost Estimates

An assessment of flood damage costs was undertaken using the MNR, “Flood Damage Estimation Guide (2007)” as a basis. This assessment showed no substantial increase over the original estimates, primarily due to reduced flood depths.

Development scenario reflects the impact of Official Plan policies whether under the current Secondary Plan, proposed SPA revisions or the framework set out in OPA 58. In any of these cases, new additional ground floor area, primarily consisting of commercial uses is permitted. **The accepted level of risk (in terms of flood damage costs) remains unchanged from the original approval in OPA 58.**

## Brampton Emergency Management Prepared to Activate the Brampton Flood Emergency Response Plan

In June, 2010, the City of Brampton adopted the City of Brampton Emergency Plan in accordance with the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act R.S.O. 1990, Chapter E.9* (the Act). The Downtown Brampton Flood Emergency Response Plan for SPA 3, approved in 2013, provides protocols for agency notification/communication, resident notification, evacuation, shelters, street closures, access routes, and emergency responses and recovery. It

sets out the major roles and responsibilities for the various agencies involved in an emergency response.

Further, as part of the proposed policy update, a Building Safety Plan for flood events must be developed and approved for each new development application addressing the details of evacuation and other emergency procedures.

## **Flood Mitigation Study Underway to Address Long Term**

The Downtown Brampton Flood Protection Feasibility Study is a study led by the TRCA undertaken in concert with the City of Brampton. The TRCA retained AMEC Consulting to undertake the feasibility study to identify options to reduce and/or eliminate flooding during the regulatory storm.

In parallel, the City retained The Planning Partnership to develop a land use and City-building vision for the area and to integrate this vision with the flood protection options. Final recommendations arising from both studies, with recommendations for next steps will be presented in 2014.

The City and the TRCA have undertaken extensive work toward identifying a longer term view that eliminates the flood risk as required by the Provincial planning policy and create an exciting new opportunity to integrate the Etobicoke Creek into the urban fabric of the downtown.

## **Contents of Submission**

In accordance with the Ministry of Natural Resources' *"Procedures for Approval of New Special Policy Areas (SPAs) and Modifications to Existing SPAs under the Provincial Policy Statement"*, this Submission includes the following:

- Technical Information, including: new floodplain mapping, flow rates, flood depth, flow velocity (all in GIS), mapping showing old and new SPA, explanation of the changes, an analysis of flood risk, feasibility of floodproofing, appropriateness of other flood plain management measures, status of remedial measures, emergency response plan.
- Land Use Planning Information, including the current SPA and Official Plan approvals, background related to the issues with the existing SPA, details on the forecasted and proposed changes to distribution of population and employment, an explanation of the

proposed policy changes, demonstration of consistency with the PPS and other Provincial Plans, overview of historic planning studies, proposed Amendment to the Brampton Official Plan, Downtown Brampton Secondary Plan, and a Zoning By-law amendment.

## Conclusion

This Submission and proposed Amendment to the Special Policy Area in the City of Brampton satisfies the Provincial requirements for modification to a Special Policy Area by incorporating prevention, protection and emergency response measures. It is consistent with the Natural Hazard: Floodplain Management Guidelines, River and Stream Systems: Flooding Hazard Limit Technical Guide, Provincial Policy Statement, Places to Grow The BIG MOVE and all other application Provincial interests. It achieves the City's vision for the revitalization and redevelopment of the historic downtown to ensure its long-term health and vitality while appropriately mitigating flood risks.