

Reviewing the town's Official Plan

Public input wanted on four studies

Friday is the deadline for public comment on four discussion papers prepared for the town's Official Plan (OP), which is currently under revision.

The papers, Growth Management, Economic Development, Environment and Housing, are available on the town's Web site, www.town.halton-hills.on.ca (look under the planning department's tab). Additional studies, including rural issues and urban design guidelines, have also been prepared for the OP review.

"With the Official Plan we're trying to set the course (for the town) out to the year 2021 and implement a general land use plan that will provide residents, the development industry and (governmental) agencies with a good picture of what's intended to occur in that planning horizon," said John Linhardt, manager of planning policy and the man in charge of the OP revision.

The current OP was adopted in 1982, and there's been a series of modifications to it since then. In addition to its age, the OP needs to be reviewed since there have been changes to the provincial planning act, Niagara Escarpment Plan (about 25 per cent of Halton Hills is located within the plan area), Halton Region Official Plan which is undergoing yet another revision (and which the



JOHN LINHARDT

town's OP must conform to), and completion of a strategic plan with set clear town goals in 1999.

As well, growth pressures and the community's concerns regarding the protection and enhancement of the town's environmental and rural areas have prompted a need for a review. "We're trying to bring forward a plan that addresses today's situations, but also provides guidance over the next 20 years," Linhardt said.

He is targeting the release of the draft Official Plan by the end of this year, after which there will be "a considerable length of time" in which people can review the new policies.

"We've done a considerable amount of work to date," Linhardt said, and that includes the four discussion papers, which target key areas of concerns. They provide options for possible incorporation into the OP.

The Environment paper outlines the current state of protection for environmentally-sensitive areas as well as the town's drinking water. It also advises of revisions,



More protection for the town's environmentally sensitive areas may be included in the town's Official Plan, currently under revision.

including additional greenland protection areas, being planned by Halton Region, Niagara Escarpment Commission and provincial ministries and conservation authorities. The paper recommends the town's OP incorporate changes already approved by those agencies and any revisions that do occur after their policy reviews.

The Economic paper says there is enough industrial land in Halton Hills to accommodate growth until 2021. However servicing and financing issues need to be resolved in order for the 401 Corridor to emerge as Halton Hills' primary industrial area. Acton's industrial area is not expected to play a major role in the future, while a future study is being recommended on the lack of employment lands within the Georgetown urban area. The paper also presents policy options for the commercial areas of the town.

The Growth Management paper suggests that by 2021 the population in town will be distributed as: 46,325 in Georgetown, 10,855 in Acton and 12,670 in the rural area (including hamlets). While it lists a number of landowners who want their lands included within the urban boundaries, it's expected the boundaries will remain as is—for the time being. While there continues to be high demand for housing development, both Acton and Georgetown areas still face servicing constraints. Lots have also been identified for potential sites for multiple-family housing.

Similarly, the housing discussion paper presents a number of housing issues facing the town, and options for consideration. These include financial incentives to the private sector, conversion of rental housing to condos, re-designating infill development to multiple-family housing options and including townhouses as low-density zoning.

Anyone wishing to comment on the discussion papers should e-mail Linhardt at johnl@town.halton-hills.on.ca or Steve Burke, policy planner at stevebu@town.halton-hills.on.ca

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

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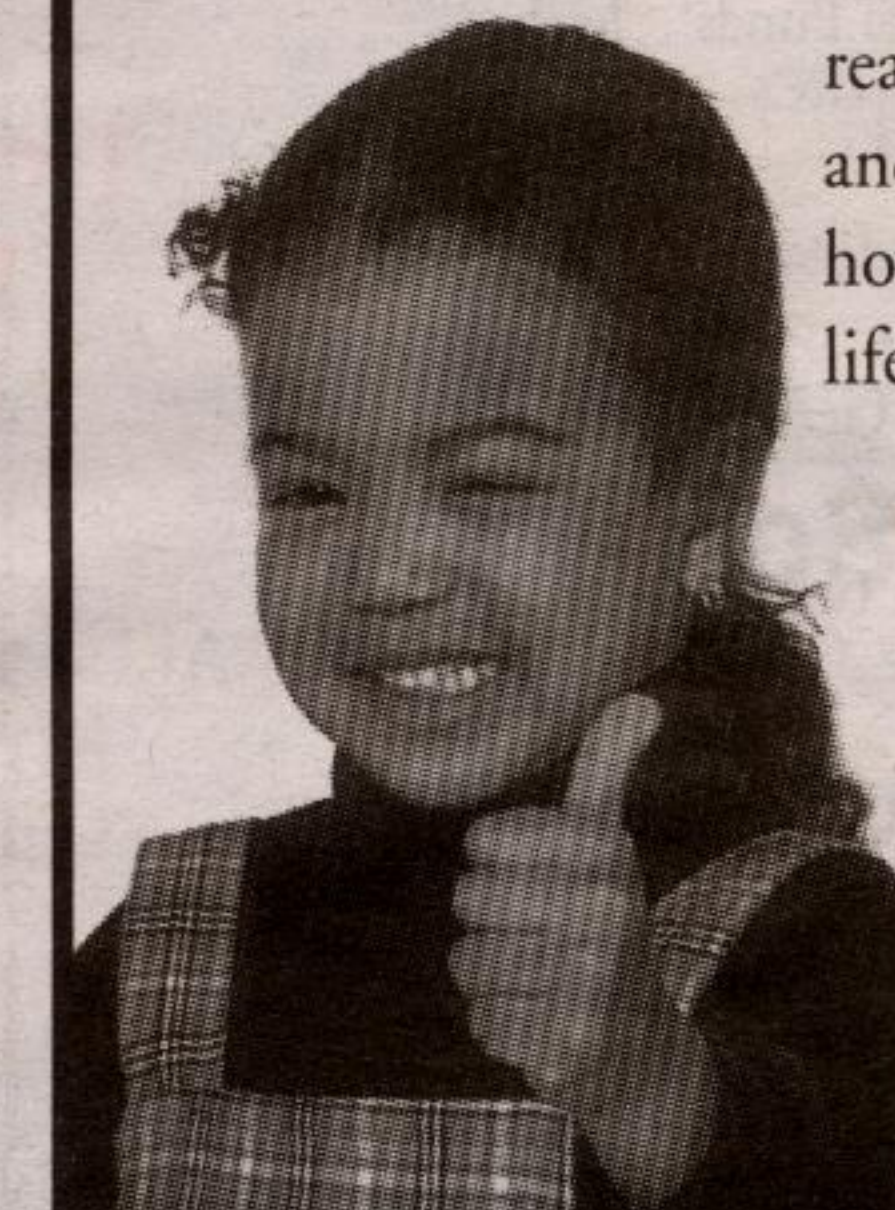
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