

HOUSING: Stouffville, King head region's 2013 stats

Greenbelt will halt Stouffville's growth

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If you live in Whitchurch-Stouffville or King, you may have noticed quite a few new neighbours.

At 4.9 per cent, Whitchurch-Stouffville recorded the most rapid growth for the first half of this year, while King came second at a rate of 3.1 per cent. The region's other seven municipalities grew at a pace of 1 per cent or less.

"Stouffville, over the last two or three years, has seen faster growth than it has historically," York's manager of growth management Paul Bottomley explained. "Likewise for King."

In total, the region saw 10,500 new residents move into the area during the first six months of 2013, equating to a 0.9-per cent increase and is on track to welcome another 10,000 to 14,000 people by the end of the year. The total population of York Region as a whole now sits just below 1.12 million residents.

So where did those people go?

According to the region, the majority of those new residents, 3,200 or 30 per cent,

wound up in Markham, while 2,300 of them, or 22 per cent, settled in Vaughan.

About 1,500 people, or 14 per cent, moved to Richmond Hill, 1,300, or 12 per cent, put down stakes in Whitchurch-Stouffville and 1,100, or 11 per cent, ended up in King Township.

During the same period, 500, or 5 per cent, moved to Newmarket, while Aurora, East Gwillimbury and Georgina all saw population increases of just 200 residents or 2 per cent.

And while the figures seem to indicate that King and Whitchurch-Stouffville are on the grow, it's important to put the numbers in context, Mr. Bottomley said.

For example, much of the activity can be chalked up to the fact urban areas in both municipalities were recently hooked up to the York-Durham Sewage System, which has opened the floodgate to some new developments, he said, adding that there is still plenty of growth potential in the region's south end particularly when it comes to Markham and Vaughan.

Furthermore, King and Whitchurch-Stouffville will only be able to grow to a

certain size as much of the land in both municipalities is protected by provincial legislation such as the Greenbelt Plan, Mr. Bottomley said. Protected land can also be found in East Gwillimbury, although it may see the most growth in the future as its population is pegged to hit 150,000 people 40 years from now, he explained.

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Beyond population numbers, the region's mid-year review also reported that the global economic recovery remains slow and that the local property market remains strong with 8,665 residential resales recorded for a value of more than \$5.3 billion. The average residential resale price in the region is now

close to \$613,000, with your average single detached home going for nearly \$721,000 — 2.4 per cent more than 2012.

"It's a steady, upward curve," Mr. Bottomley said of the residential resale prices. "It just keeps going up and up."

That is, except for condominiums where the residential resale price fell 1.9 per cent to land just below \$328,000.

As of June 30, the region had issued 2,869 new residential building permits, ranking it only behind Toronto in terms of GTA building activity, while also seeing a nearly even split between single and multi-residential construction.

With a value of \$375.5 million, industrial, commercial and institutional construction accounted for 30 per cent of York's total construction. Even so, industrial and commercial building is down, while institutional activity is up.

For his part, Mr. Bottomley said the apparent dip in industrial and commercial construction is no cause for concern.

"It's only six months, so you can't read a lot into it," he said. "One large project can make a big difference."

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