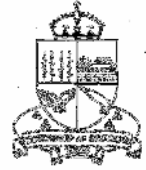


**Meeting:** GENERAL PURPOSE AND ADMINISTRATION  
COMMITTEE



**Date:** January 7, 2008

**Dept:** Planning and Public Works

**Report No:** PLAN-2008-02-GP&A

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**Title:** TOWNSHIP OF SCUGOG OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW –  
*DEFINING RURAL CHARACTER*

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**THAT** this Committee recommend to Council that Staff Report No. PLAN-2008-02-GP&A be referred to the Township of Scugog Official Plan Review for consideration and to the Heritage Scugog Committee for comment;

**AND THAT** until the Official Plan is updated accordingly, consideration be given to the guidelines described in this report when considering development applications to ensure the proposal has regard for the preservation of the Township's rural character.

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## **BACKGROUND:**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

An overarching objective and theme of the current Township Official Plan is the preservation of the municipality's "rural character". Throughout the preparation of the current Plan, Council and the public expressed a strong desire to maintain the qualities that make the Township rural in nature. This resulted in numerous policy statements citing the need to guide growth in a manner that will preserve the rural character of the community.

Over the past few years, Council has questioned the definition of rural character and how it is considered and reflected through development applications. As the Township proceeds through its on-going Official Plan

review, it has become apparent that a more concise description is needed. This description is particularly important at this time with the Township considering the SmartCentres Site Plan, its largest commercial development proposal ever. Council will want to ensure the development integrates appropriately into the overall fabric of the community.

The purposes of this report are to explore the concept of rural character and provide guidance on how it should be preserved through development applications.

## **2. DEFINING RURAL CHARACTER**

It must be recognized that the perception of rural character will differ from person to person. The perception may vary from a completely natural and relatively unmodified landscape to low density development with large areas of open space.

In addition, the elements of rural character will vary from one place to another. The characteristics for Scugog may not necessarily be the same features that define rural character in other communities. In Scugog, the elements of rural character generally include:

- Farmlands;
- Woodlands;
- Tree-lines within fields;
- Tree-lined streets;
- Undeveloped open space;
- Natural waterways, streams and shorelines;
- Un-modified landscapes;
- Natural stream channels;
- Clusters of agricultural buildings well separated from each other; and
- Small assemblies of residential development in hamlets or rural clusters.

Rural character may also be defined by other non-physical elements such as:

- The ability to see for a long distance, unobstructed by man-made features;
- Fresh air; and

- Quiet and peaceful, without human generated intrusions, like noise or light.

Finally, rural character can be defined by the activities that occur in rural areas such as:

- Farming;
- Low density residential development;
- Recreation;
- Forestry; and
- Aggregate extraction.

The form of architecture to a certain extent also adds to the rural character of an area. Rarely, other than in the case of silos or feed mills, are buildings in the rural area taller than three storeys. As well, most buildings have peaked, rather than flat, roofs and traditional simple architectural styling.

### **3. SCUGOG'S DISTINCTIVE AREAS**

When defining rural character, the Township can be separated into the following three main areas:

- Port Perry;
- Hamlets and the Beach communities around Lake Scugog;
- Countryside, being the agricultural and natural areas surrounding Port Perry and the Hamlets and Beach Communities.

Each of these areas demonstrates a distinctive character that can be described as rural in quality. However, slightly different strategies are required for the preservation of this character in each area.

### **4. PRESERVING RURAL CHARACTER**

The Township Official Plan states that Scugog will remain a distinctly rural municipality characterized by large open spaces, agricultural uses and buildings and low density development in rural, shoreline and hamlet areas. More intense development on full urban services will be concentrated within Port Perry Urban Area. All new development must recognize and reflect the existing character of the Township.

Today, the rural character is preserved through the provisions of the Zoning By-law that restricts lot coverage, height, yard and setback requirements as well as use. The implementation of the regulations imposed through the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Greenbelt Plan will further serve to preserve the rural character for much of the Township well into the future. The policies of these Provincial Plans limit development to uses that have traditionally been permitted in rural and agricultural areas.

Other actions that should be taken over the long term to protect and enhance the Township's rural character, by area, include:

#### **4.1 Port Perry**

- Promoting an aggressive street tree planting, maintenance and replacement program;
- Requiring new buildings to be reflective of the distinctive historical architecture;
- Requiring new development to build on the existing grid pattern of streets;
- Protecting and enhancing Palmer Park and smaller neighbourhood parks;
- Avoiding sprawling development patterns at the edge of the community;
- Limiting the dominance of suburban form by controlling the amount and design of big box retail on the fringes of the Town.

#### **4.2 Hamlets and Shorelines**

- Promoting the retention of local distinctive features such as corner stores, sports fields, places of worship, and public schools;
- Restricting the conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development on the edges of hamlets;
- Celebrating the hamlets by supporting unique local events, and identifying the communities with distinctive signing.

#### **4.3 Countryside**

- Supporting local agriculture;
- Preserving open space through the use of conservation design practises;
- Requiring larger building setbacks;

- Maintaining public access points to Lake Scugog;
- Protecting local recreation areas for hiking and biking;
- Supporting protective measures for surface and ground water;
- Reducing the amount of phosphorous leachate through best practices for shoreline development, restrictive policies and community awareness programs.

## **5. REFLECTING RURAL CHARACTER IN NEW DEVELOPMENT**

Ensuring that new development preserves the rural character of the municipality will require that the elements described above be implemented through planning applications. Key actions would include:

- Lining streets with trees and fences;
- Separating buildings to afford a view beyond the property limits;
- Preserving open space and vegetated areas that visually buffer human built elements;
- Preserving natural waterways and providing for habitat;
- Limiting building height and requiring architectural styles to reflect the traditional building design and materials already in place;
- Incorporating more natural areas and natural landscapes into built form in the Countryside areas.

It will also be necessary to establish and protect a clearly defined edge to the existing communities by restricting sprawling land uses. Obscuring the identifiable edges of these unique communities will impact their perceived rural character.

The protection of existing vegetation on a development site is also important and currently accomplished through the Township's Woodlot, Tree Preservation, Protection, Replacement and Enhancement Policy By-Law. Other design treatments should also be applied to ensure the development reflects the natural rural character of the municipality. Such treatments include using landscaping to break-up large expanses of asphalt and setting larger buildings further back from the roadway.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

The Township Official Plan requires consideration and preservation of the municipality's rural character through the development process. However,

the current Plan is not explicit enough in defining rural character and how it should be reflected.

Through the on-going update of the Official Plan, the policies that require new development to preserve the rural character of the municipality should be expanded to include the concepts identified in this report. Input from the Heritage Scugog Committee should be sought in refining these policies, given its mandate for heritage preservation within the Township.

Until the Official Plan is updated, consideration still needs to be given to the preservation of the Township's rural character. This can be accomplished by requiring landowners to include the elements described above in development applications submitted to the municipality.

**FUNDING OPTIONS: N/A**

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Respectfully submitted:



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Concurred by:

Gene Chartier, P.Eng.  
Commissioner of Planning & Public  
Works

Approved for presentation to Committee:

Bev Hendry  
CAO