
For Information

REPORT TITLE: Health and the Built Environment – Opportunities in Land Use Planning

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OBJECTIVE

To provide an update to Regional Council, as the Board of Health, on current and future health and built environment initiatives that integrate public health considerations into land use planning.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- This report informs Regional Council, as the Board of Health, on Public Health’s built environment initiatives that integrate health evidence into land use planning.
 - Building complete communities that make healthy behaviours convenient and safe can help prevent chronic diseases related to physical inactivity.
 - Public Health works with Regional Planning, City of Brampton, Town of Caledon, and City of Mississauga to implement the Healthy Development Framework and fulfill Section 7.5 of the Region of Peel Official Plan, Healthy Communities and the Built Environment, which requires a health assessment as part of a complete development application.
 - Between 2017 and 2022, the annual number of residential development proposals undergoing a health assessment has more than doubled from 40 to 95, and the percentage of applications that met or exceeded a pass (i.e., “healthy”) score has increased from 65 per cent to 95 per cent.
 - Preliminary calculation of the Peel Walkability Composite Index suggests that from 2016 to 2022, walkability has increased in all three local municipalities.
 - Since 2017, the Healthy Development Framework has been applied to residential and mixed-use development applications. In 2023, Peel Public Health advanced the implementation of the Healthy Development Framework by validating its use to assess the health-promoting potential of institutional, commercial, and industrial developments.
 - The dissolution of Peel Region through Bill 112, *Hazel McCallion Act (Peel Dissolution) 2023*, and the changes introduced to the *Planning Act* through Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act 2022*, creates uncertainty in how Peel Public Health will continue to advance critical partnerships to support and encourage built environment programs and complete communities. Several immediate tactics are underway to address this risk, such as continued integration of health into tools and processes developed by local municipal partners.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

Community design has a well-established effect on health. Walkable and transit-supportive built environments are associated with higher levels of physical activity, which can positively impact mental health and reduce the burden of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

Public Health is mandated to act on the links between built environments and health through the Chronic Disease and Well-Being Ontario Public Health Standard outlined in the *Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability* (OPHS). Peel Public Health's healthy built environment initiatives contribute to meeting this standard and support the achievement of Peel Public Health's 2020-2029 Strategic Priorities of "Enabling Active Living and Healthy Eating and Reducing Health-Related Impacts of Climate Change". This report informs Regional Council, as the Board of Health, of Public Health's progress with integrating health evidence into land use planning.

In partnership with Regional Planning, Public Works and Peel's local municipalities, Public Health continues to develop and embed health evidence in land use policies and processes. A key achievement from Peel Public Health's long-standing partnership with Public Works is the implementation of Region of Peel Official Plan Section 7.5 Healthy Communities and the Built Environment policies. These policy directives authorize Peel Region and local municipalities to systematically require a health assessment as part of a complete development application.

Since 2016, Public Health has worked with municipalities to develop health assessments as part of the local development review process and has provided evidence-informed recommendations on designs that improve active transportation opportunities submitted in applicable development applications.

2. Incorporating Health Considerations into Land Use Planning

Progress has been made on several projects and strategies to promote healthy built environments in Peel through the implementation of Official Plan policies focused on Healthy Communities and the Built Environment. These policies require residential and mixed-use developments to undergo an assessment that scores the development on how it contributes to a walkable environment. These assessments examine land-use mix, density, streetscape characteristics, street connectivity, service proximity and efficient parking, the six core elements of Public Health's Healthy Development Framework (HDF). To monitor the implementation of these policies, The Healthy Development Monitoring Map (HDMM) examines changes in these six core elements across Peel over time.

a) Implementation of Healthy Communities and the Built Environment Policies

Region of Peel Official Plan Section 7.5 Healthy Communities and the Built Environment policies implement the HDF and direct local municipalities to require a health assessment as part of a complete development application. The HDF guides a collection of local, context-specific health assessment tools, including the Region's Healthy Development Assessment (HDA). Local municipalities apply a health assessment tool, and each tool utilizes health evidence from the Region's HDA.

- The Town of Caledon uses the Region's HDA and currently applies the HDA to mixed-use and residential development proposals.

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- The City of Brampton applies the Sustainability Assessment Tool.
- The City of Mississauga uses the Healthy by Design Questionnaire, introduced through a pilot project between 2018 and 2020. Following the pilot of this tool, Public Health provides general health comments on development applications.

Table 1 shows an overall increase in the number of applicable residential development applications that underwent a formal health assessment from 2017 to 2022.

Table 1: Number of Development Applications that Underwent a Formal Health Assessment, 2017 - 2022

	Brampton	Caledon	Mississauga ¹	Total
2017	30	9	1	40
2018	47	10	6	63
2019	59	6	25	90
2020	64	6	9	79
2021	74	13	0	87
2022	75	20	0	95

¹Scores in 2017 for the City of Mississauga are from the Region of Peel's Healthy Development Assessment tool for large-scale plans. Scores in 2018-2020 for the City of Mississauga are from the Healthy by Design Questionnaire Pilot Project, which ended in 2020.

Table 2 shows the percent of total health assessments that met or exceeded a pass score from 2017 to 2022 across the Region. Additional details are in Appendix I.

Table 2: Percentage of Health Assessments that Met or Exceeded Pass Score, 2017-2022

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
65%	79%	77%	91%	91%	95%

The increase in both the number of development applications undergoing health assessments and the total percentage increase in assessments that met or exceeded a pass score demonstrates that more development applications are including health-promoting designs to support active transportation. This reflects the overall success of this program and shows Public Health's effective partnership with both public and private stakeholders engaged in the development of healthy, complete communities.

Recognizing the importance of developments that support employment in Peel, Public Health developed an addition to the HDA that includes metrics to assess Institutional, Commercial, and Industrial (ICI) developments using the HDF. This will increase the number of development applications that undergo a health assessment. Applicable ICI development applications will require this assessment starting January 1, 2024.

In 2023, Peel Public Health is building on the partnership with the Town of Caledon to integrate HDA metrics into the Town's forthcoming Green Development Standards. This will support increased coordination to deliver on shared Official Plan policies requiring health assessments and maintain efficiency in the existing development review process.

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b) Healthy Development: Monitoring Map (HDMM) Update

The HDMM supports the requirement to monitor the impact of Peel’s healthy built environment Official Plan policies. The 2016 HDMM provides a baseline assessment of existing health-supportive infrastructure throughout Peel. The HDMM measures align with the categories of health-supportive infrastructure that are evaluated by the HDF’s health assessment tools.

A key metric from the HDMM is the Peel Walkability Composite Index (PWCI). The PWCI is an overall measure of how well the built environment supports walking for active transportation. Table 3 compares the preliminary PWCI scores for 2021 with baseline 2016 scores by municipality. These scores suggest an increase in walkable built environments across Peel’s municipalities since 2016. This is consistent with the demonstrated increase in both the number of development applications assessed undergoing a formal health assessment and the number that met or exceeded a pass score over this period.

Table 3: Preliminary PWCI Scores, Brampton, Caledon, Mississauga, Peel, 2016 and 2021

		Brampton	Caledon	Mississauga	Peel
Peel Walkability Composite Index Scores	2016	51	19	58	53
	2021	53	20	62	56

¹The Peel Walkability Composite Index Score is calculated on a scale using values from 0 to 100. Values closer to 100 represent increased access to built environment features that promote walking for residents in Peel, as identified in statistical analysis conducted as part of the HDMM project. 2016 values have been recalculated at the Census Tract (CT) level to improve measurement stability over time. Figures are preliminary and subject to data validation. Data refinement may occur and marginal adjustment to PWCI figures may be required as data validation continues.

In addition to monitoring the implementation of the Peel’s healthy built environment Official Plan policies, the HDMM provides valuable information that can be used by internal departments (e.g., updating Peel’s Neighbourhood Information Tool), local municipalities and partner organizations (e.g., Toronto Region Conservation Authority nature-based climate solutions siting tool).

BILL 112 RISKS AND IMPLICATIONS

The passing of the *Hazel McCallion Act (Peel Dissolution)*, 2023 on June 8, 2023, will dissolve the Region of Peel effective January 1, 2025. Details on the transition of Regional responsibilities are currently unknown. Further, due to statutory changes brought about by Bill 23 *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* (Bill 23), the Region’s responsibilities related to land use planning are to be removed on a date to be proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor. When changes from Bill 23 are proclaimed, the Region of Peel Official Plan will be deemed to be an official plan of each local municipality in conjunction with their own official plans. Therefore, future implementation of the HDF will be supported only by local municipal Official Plans. In partnership with the local municipalities, Public Health staff will continue to support health and built environment initiatives that integrate health into land use planning but will have limited influence on the existing municipal policies that determine how the HDF is applied. To ensure public health expertise continues to be considered in land use development across Peel, new partnership agreements with the local municipalities should be considered as a mechanism to create role clarity throughout the transition and to maintain Public Health’s contribution.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications as a result of this report. Associated financial implications will be managed within the existing budgets of Public Health and Public Works.

CONCLUSION

As a result of effective partnerships, shared priorities and commitment, significant achievements and progress have been made to build healthy complete communities in Peel. Public Health will continue to produce credible health evidence and create reliable data products that assist with developing healthy complete communities and monitoring progress. Maintaining partnerships between Public Health, local municipal staff and partner organizations will be crucial to ensure minimal impact while Peel Region and the local municipalities transition to a future state. Developing additional partnership agreements would strengthen continued collaboration to mitigate the significant health, social and economic risks associated with built environments that limit daily physical activity and increase preventable chronic diseases, health care costs and strain on the health care system.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - Healthy Development Framework Application Data, 2017 to 2022.



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