

The City of Ontario Sphere of Influence General Plan is founded on the vision for what the area should become in the future:

- its functional role;
- uses to be accommodated;
- physical form and character of development;
- livability of its places;
- quality of life for residents;
- its relationship to the greater Ontario community; and
- its economic performance.

These constitute the “imperatives” that drive the Plan’s goals, objectives, policies, and programs.

The Sphere of Influence’s Vision has emerged from an extended public discussion regarding the area’s existing conditions, constraints, and opportunities, possible alternative futures, their impacts, and a preferred course of action. While some may argue regarding specific policies or standards, there is no disagreement and there has been consensus regarding the fundamental notions about the kind of place the Sphere of Influence should become.

OVERVIEW/STRUCTURE

The Sphere of Influence will become a place of diversity--encompassing a mix of residential neighborhoods, high intensity regional serving centers, employment centers, and an activity core that serves as the common focal point for all Sphere of Influence neighborhoods and districts. All uses that are typically found in sustainable communities are here--housing, retail, offices, entertainment, educational, medical, visitor-oriented, industrial, schools, cultural, recreational and parks, government, open spaces, and so on. Each neighborhood and center will become a place that is uniquely identifiable for its residents, employees, and visitors. These will be united through an area wide network of greenways/trails, open spaces, amenities, and infrastructure.

Cumulatively, the Sphere of Influence’s uses will extend Ontario’s fabric of development, rather than isolating itself as an island. However, it will be distinguished from other competing developments in the region in several important aspects. Livability and quality of life are important drivers of its uses and urban form. The Sphere of Influence balances personal privacy in residential neighborhoods with numerous opportunities for community socialization, interactions, and walkability. The creation of mixed use, commercial, and public places that emphasize pedestrian activity is a fundamental premise of the Plan. Development will be organized around a number of amenities including a regional-scaled public park (“Village Green”), lake and waterways, golf course(s), and extensively landscaped parkways and trails. The amenities will compensate for the lack of natural environmental elements upon which development can capitalize. Cumulatively, these characteristics will offer a cachet that the Sphere of Influence is a special place to live, work, recreate, and visit.

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

A cornerstone of the Sphere of Influence will be its composition of eleven distinct residential neighborhoods (see Figure 3-7). Residents will identify with their neighborhood, rather than the Sphere of Influence. These will be self-contained places that encompass a full diversity of uses that support daily needs of a resident housing, local serving retail, entertainment, personal services, educational, religious, recreation, public meeting, and so on. The need to travel to outside areas for basic services will be minimized.

A diversity of housing types will be accommodated in each neighborhood offering opportunities for differing family sizes and compositions, age groups, incomes, and lifestyles. This may encompass small lot detached or attached units, townhomes, co-housing, apartments, and other new forms of housing that may emerge from market conditions in addition to traditional single family detached configurations. A portion of the Sphere of Influence will be developed with higher priced executive housing that is not now available in the Ontario market.

The various types of housing will be integrated and mixed within neighborhoods, offering diversity within a small area. Large scale areas consistently developed with high density apartments creating “ghetto-type” environments will be avoided. Rather, these units will be distributed in smaller pockets and integrated with lower density forms of housing.

Residential areas will be designed to promote intimacy and socialization, as well as privacy. Street frontages will be developed as “outdoor living rooms” for the housing, with street-oriented units, livable front yards, extensive street landscaping, walkable sidewalks, and minimized street widths.

Each neighborhood will be oriented around a primary activity center that serves as a common focal point for local services, governance, and socialization. These will integrate local commercial uses and services (retail, small scale entertainment, and similar) with public meeting facilities, day-care, schools, libraries, parks, and religious facilities.

Buildings will be sited around a public square/plaza that serves as the assembly ground for community celebrations and events. Pedestrian activity will be enhanced through the siting and orientation of the buildings to public sidewalks, with parking located to their rear, articulation and transparency of elevations, inclusion of high patronage and outdoor oriented uses (dining, news racks, vendor carts, etc.), and development of streetscape amenities.

Public uses will be developed to serve multiple purposes, to the extent feasible. School campuses may be located adjacent to one another and common facilities, such as athletic fields and auditoriums, may be shared. Libraries could be sited and developed to serve both schools and the general public. Athletic fields could be integrated with public parks. Auditoriums may be used to accommodate public meetings. The integration and sharing of these functions reinforces the establishment of a singular place that serves to identify and unify the neighborhood.

The neighborhood centers will be easily accessible to surrounding housing through a network of trails, bicycle paths, greenways, and the local street network. Communications and accessibility will be further enhanced through a common fiber optic telecommunications network that links all housing with neighborhood services and centers.

One or more residential neighborhoods may be developed around public or private golf courses, a lake and waterways, or other amenity that enhances its character and identity. Normally, these are attractors of higher income housing.

TOWN CENTER

A Town Center will constitute the principal center of activity and identity for all Sphere of Influence neighborhoods and districts. The highest densities/intensities of uses and public events will be concentrated here. A broad diversity of uses that serve as a destination for Sphere of Influence residents will be accommodated including retail, office, entertainment, dining, hotels, cultural, performing arts, government, and similar uses. High density housing will be integrated in mixed use structures or as free-standing development to make the Town Center a 24-hour working and living environment. This may include live/work facilities for artists, professionals, and others with home occupations.

Community activity will be induced by the development of public places and pedestrian oriented design of buildings. A series of public squares and parks will be developed that will accommodate community celebrations and events such as farmers markets, picnics, 5k/10k races, art fairs, and similar functions. Pedestrian activity will be enhanced through the siting and orientation of the buildings to public sidewalks, with parking located to their rear, articulation and transparency of elevations, inclusion of high patronage and outdoor oriented uses (dining, news racks, vendor carts, etc.), and development of streetscape amenities.

A lake may serve as the centerpiece of the Town Center. Buildings would be sited and designed to take advantage of lake views, public plazas and promenades would be developed along its perimeter, and recreational opportunities such as sailing and canoeing would be provided. Waterways may extend from the lake into surrounding parklands and residential neighborhoods as the focus of housing developments.

An educational campus and a supporting research/business park would be located within or immediately abutting the Town Center to reinforce its unique character and identity. The consolidation of these uses affords the opportunity to create a “town and gown” environment that is associated with older American communities such as Cambridge and Claremont.

The Town Center will be linked to surrounding residential neighborhoods and activity centers by a network of trails, bike paths, and greenways, as well as local streets. Its uses will transition with surrounding neighborhoods to avoid its isolation and an “island-like” environment.

REGIONAL CENTERS

Several high intensity centers will be differentiated from the residential neighborhoods and Town Center. These will accommodate uses that serve and attract a regional population, provide employment opportunities, and contribute substantial revenues for the maintenance of City and local services. A diversity of “destination” uses may be accommodated including regional and specialty retail, professional offices, medical and research facilities, hotels and conference facilities, large scale entertainment complexes, commercial recreational and sports uses, and similar functions. Higher density housing, including live/work facilities, may be incorporated within or immediately abutting the centers to intensify their activity and support population.

As with the neighborhood and Town Centers, development will be designed to promote community activity. Major public places (square, plazas, promenades, and so on) will be incorporated to accommodate events and enhance pedestrian activity. Buildings will be sited along common sidewalks and public places, with parking located to their rear.

The regional centers will be linked to surrounding residential neighborhoods and activity centers by a network of trails, bike paths, and greenways, as well as arterials, collectors, and local streets.

BUSINESS PARKS

Business parks will provide employment opportunities for local and regional residents and support other uses, such as medical and educational facilities, within the Sphere of Influence. These will accommodate “clean,” non-polluting industries, with an emphasis on high technology, research, and educational businesses. The parks will accommodate a wider diversity of supporting uses than normal to reflect the changing functions, products, and needs of the industrial sector of the economy. This may encompass financial, retail sales, professional office, design, and similar uses that need to be located in proximity of the primary uses to maximize efficiency.

The business parks will be linked to surrounding residential neighborhoods and activity centers by a network of trails, bike paths, and greenways, as well as arterials, collectors, and local streets.

VILLAGE GREEN

A large scale park (the “Village Green”) will be developed as a major amenity of the Sphere of Influence and as a key organizational element of land use development. Conceptually similar to a Golden Gate Park (San Francisco), it may accommodate passive and recreational uses, museums, outdoor performance venues, botanical gardens, ponds and waterways, and similar elements. Adjacent residential and commercial uses will be sited to take advantages of views and access to the park. It will be linked to surrounding residential neighborhoods and activity centers by a network of trails, bike paths, and greenways.

Cumulatively with the, previously discussed, lakes, golf courses, and parkways, the Village Green can contribute a significant identity and enhance the Sphere of Influence’s livability for residents distinguishing it from other developments in the region.