



WE MAKE MILTON

Introduction to Stage 3:
Big Questions



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Welcome to Stage 3

Welcome to Stage 3 of the We Make Milton project.

The purpose of this part of the work program is to explore Big Questions that have been identified so far about land use planning and development in Milton, leading to policy directions for our new Official Plan. This stage of the project picks up from work completed in Stage 1 (Listening and Learning) and Stage 2 (Visioning), and carries forward the new Official Plan vision statement and guiding principles that were endorsed by Council in February 2021.

This Stage 3 introductory report is intended to:

1. Provide a status update on the We Make Milton project
2. Introduce the next set of Background and Information and Big Question reports and explain how they were prepared and are organized
3. Describe how the Big Questions will be used to obtain additional input from you and the rest of the community to inform the creation of new Official Plan policies.

A set of Background and Information reports are being prepared to provide an overview of the planning context of Milton as well as an analysis of community and stakeholder input received so far. These reports lead to a series of Big Questions.

A set of reports have also been prepared to explore the Big Questions in more detail (policy framework, local plans and studies, and current planning practices). These reports lead to the identification of policy considerations for Milton's new Official Plan.

The set of Stage 3 reports are intended to be read by all audiences, including Town of Milton staff, Technical Advisory Committee members, local community groups and organizations, Stakeholder Committee members, residents, businesses and other members of the public. They provide detailed information about Milton's planning policy context, statistical information about our community, what we've heard through consultation efforts to-date, and current planning practices from other comparable municipalities. However, for those looking for less detail, brief summaries of each report and the Big Questions will also be available on [Let's Talk Milton](#).



What are Big Questions?

For the purpose of We Make Milton, Big Questions are critical policy questions about how to manage change and achieve our land use Vision - Choice Shapes Us - to the year 2051.

Big Questions are open-ended and have no simple right answer. They emerged from extensive community consultation and reflect what is important to the community.

Big Questions are meant to be explored from different points of view and will guide our Stage 3 engagement - leading to recommended policy directions for the new Official Plan that are Milton-specific.

About We Make Milton

Project purpose and goals

In the fall of 2019, the Town launched the We Make Milton project, which involves the creation of a new land use planning policy document called the local Official Plan. Milton's existing Official Plan has met our needs for many years, and we now require a new, strategic, and forward-looking planning policy document to be prepared. In particular, our new Official Plan should be updated to:

- Reflect the community's aspirations and ideas for the future of Milton
- Set the stage for growth and development to the year 2051
- Conform and be consistent with planning legislation and provincial plans
- Align Milton's local policy directions with the on-going Regional Official Plan Review

As set-out through the [Council-endorsed work plan](#), the overall project goals for We Make Milton are:

- 1. Engagement, engagement, engagement:**
To generate specific land use focused questions as part of a broader discussion about the future of Milton. Consultation and engagement will be unique, innovative and extensive.
- 2. Creative approaches to achieve local priorities:**
To ensure that new policies are realistic for Milton and that a balance is achieved between the implementation of upper-tier policies and creative policy approaches, which will ensure that local goals and desires are met.
- 3. New policies that are strategic - not reactive:**
To implement tools that enable local municipalities to be more strategic about growth objectives and land use policies (for example, financial and non-financial incentives).
- 4. New policies that are flexible - not prescriptive:**
To create performance or results-based policies, where appropriate, so that development applications can be evaluated in a flexible, but consistent manner, in order to enable good development.
- 5. Contemporary, user-friendly, easy to interpret:**
To streamline Milton's Official Plan and improve the overall formatting and organization so that it is accessible, easy to read and interpret, and will allow for frequent and new users alike to navigate and find information easily.



What is an Official Plan?

It's a legislated and overarching planning document that establishes how land is to be used in a municipality. It's a visionary document that sets out how Milton will change over a thirty-year planning horizon. An Official plan is prepared under the Planning Act, and will be adopted by Milton Council. It must conform to applicable provincial policy and the Region of Halton Official Plan. Once adopted, an Official Plan becomes legally binding. This means that Town staff must implement it, all public works must conform to it and it cannot be changed without a formal public process.

The overall project goals for We Make Milton will be used in Stage 3 to help evaluate policy considerations and identify recommended directions for the new Official Plan.

Land Use planning in Ontario

Land use planning in Ontario is the process for managing land and resources. Land use planning guides decisions about where to build homes and industry, establish parks and schools, and expand infrastructure such as roads and sewers. Land use planning helps communities like Milton set development goals while keeping social, economic and environmental priorities in mind. Good land use planning leads to orderly growth and the efficient provision of services. The responsibility for long-term planning in Ontario is shared between the province and municipalities.

Ontario's planning role, the *Planning Act*, and Provincial Plans

The province sets the ground rules and directions for land use planning through the [*Planning Act*](#), [*Provincial Policy Statement \(PPS\)*](#) and provincial plans.

1. The ***Planning Act*** provides the legal authority for the province's policy-led land use planning. The *Planning Act* defines:

- How the land use planning system works
- Who makes decisions
- How to resolve disputes and seek public input

The purpose of the *Planning Act* is to provide planning processes that are fair by making them open, accessible, timely and efficient. It integrates matters of provincial interest into provincial and municipal planning decisions; recognizes the decision-making authority and accountability of municipal councils in planning; and establishes tools that can be used to achieve local growth and development goals.

2. The **Provincial Policy Statement** is a consolidated statement of the government's policies on land use planning, issued under Section 3 of the *Planning Act*. It gives provincial direction on key land use planning issues that affect Milton, such as:

- Efficient use and management of land and infrastructure
- The provision of sufficient housing to meet changing needs, including affordable housing
- The protection of the environment and resources including farmland, natural resources (for example, wetlands and woodlands) and water
- Opportunities for economic development and job creation
- The appropriate transportation, water, sewer and other infrastructure needed to accommodate current and future needs

Under Section 2 of the *Planning Act*, 'matters of Provincial interest' are:

- the protection of ecological systems;
- the protection of the agricultural resources;
- the conservation and management of natural resources;
- the conservation of features of significant architectural, cultural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest;
- the supply, efficient use and conservation of energy and water;
- the adequate provision and efficient use of communication, transportation, sewage and water services and waste management systems;
- the minimization of waste;
- the orderly development of safe and healthy communities;
- the accessibility for persons with disabilities;
- the adequate provision of educational, health, social, cultural and recreational facilities;
- the adequate provision of housing, including affordable housing;
- the adequate provision of employment opportunities;
- the protection of the financial and economic well-being;
- the co-ordination of planning activities;
- the resolution of planning conflicts;
- the protection of public health and safety;
- the appropriate location of growth and development;
- the promotion of development that is designed to be sustainable, to support public transit and to be oriented to pedestrians;
- the promotion of built form that is well-designed, encourages a sense of place, and provides for public spaces that are of high quality, safe, accessible, attractive and vibrant;
- the mitigation of GHG emissions and adaptation to a changing climate;
- the protection of people, property and community resources by directing development away from natural/human-made hazards.

3. Provincial Plans have been prepared for certain parts of the province, which provide more detailed and geographically-specific policies to meet certain objectives, such as managing growth, or protecting agricultural lands and the natural environment.

The [Greenbelt Plan](#), [Niagara Escarpment Plan](#), [Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan](#) [A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#) and [Growth Plan for Northern Ontario](#) are examples of geography-specific regional plans. These plans work together with the PPS, and generally take precedence over the PPS in the areas where they apply.

While decisions are required to be consistent with the PPS, the standard for complying with provincial plans is more stringent, and municipal decisions are required to conform or not conflict with the policies in these plans.

Halton Region's planning role and the Regional Official Plan Review

Upper-tier municipalities, like the Region of Halton, implement provincial policies through their [Regional Official Plan \(ROP\)](#) and through decision-making on planning-related decisions. Upper-tier municipalities deal with broad land use planning issues that concern more than one local municipality and have the power to approve local official plans, in place of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH). As such, Milton's Official Plan must conform to Halton's ROP.

Halton is currently undertaking its own Regional Official Plan Review (ROPR). The last comprehensive review of the ROP was the Sustainable Halton process completed in 2009, which resulted in Regional Official Plan Amendments (ROPA) 37, 38 and 39 and implemented the policies of the provincial Growth Plan and the Greenbelt Plan amongst other key policy initiatives.

Halton's current ROPR process started in 2014 and has three phases, with Phase 2: Discussion Papers currently underway.

Milton's planning role and our new Official Plan

Milton also has a major role in implementing provincial policies and providing direction for land use planning decision-making. Our local Official Plan sets out Milton's long-term planning goals and policies to guide future land use, and provides direction for more detailed planning regulations to control development through zoning by-laws.

Having a contemporary, current and strategic official plan that reflects provincial interests provides a foundation for economic readiness and timely decision-making for future growth.

We Make Milton milestones to-date

Work program and status

We Make Milton is a multi-year initiative that was launched in July 2019 and includes five project stages. This report marks the beginning of Stage 3: Big Questions. Table 1 below provides an overview of the overall work program, with an indication of the current status and timing of each stage.

On July 7, 2021, Regional Council adopted ROPA 48, "An Amendment to Define a Regional Urban Structure" through By-law No. 31-21. It is the first amendment to be considered by Regional Council as part of the ROPR. Milton is required to implement ROPA 48 through We Make Milton, and this will be explored/discussed in the Growing in Milton reports.

Milton also uses the development application approval processes, and the creation of detailed secondary plans, to help decide how to grow and develop, while addressing important social, economic and environmental objectives.

Charles Montgomery, award-winning urbanist and author, speaking to the Milton community at Visioning Night - an evening designed to open conversation and inspire visionary thinking about Milton's future.



Table 1: Project Stages and Status

Stage	Purpose
1. Listening and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to ideas about planning issues, opportunities and challenges in Milton. Spread the word about the project and generate awareness.
2. Visioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a new land use planning vision and guiding principles for future planning and development. Document background information and issues relative to key planning themes.
3. Big Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and answer big questions about how to manage change to the year 2041. Develop recommended policy directions based on community input.
4. Drafting and Discussing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare first draft of the new Milton Official Plan. Undertake preliminary consultation on the first draft.
5. New Official Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine first draft based on input and collect input on second draft. Council adoption and Regional approval of new Milton Official Plan.

Figure 1: We Make Milton Project Stages



New vision statement and guiding principles

A planning vision statement describes a community's long-term aspirations for future growth and reflects the core values, qualities and characteristics that define a community. Based on the community engagement undertaken in Stages 1 and 2 of We Make Milton, the new planning vision statement for Milton's Official Plan is:

On Feb. 8, 2021, a new land use planning Vision Statement and Guiding Principles were endorsed by Council through We Make Milton.

Figure 2: Choice Shapes Us

Milton 2051 Choice Shapes Us

In 2051, Milton offers a diversity of options for how and where we live, work, move and grow. As we evolve, choice is what shapes us.



Milton’s new planning vision statement is supported by a set of guiding principles which identify more specific directions for protecting and/or enhancing the community’s core values, qualities and characteristics.

Figure 3: Guiding principles for the new Official Plan

1. Be creative and provide choice	7. Make connections
2. Mix uses	8. Protect our environment
3. Move efficiently and safely	9. Support the rural area
4. Diversify and prosper	10. Encourage good, green design
5. Prioritize the public realm	11. Collaborate
6. Supports arts, culture and recreation	12. Think local

The new vision statement and guiding principles will be used in this stage of We Make Milton to help evaluate policy considerations and identify recommended directions for the new Official Plan.

Overview of Stage 3: Big Questions

Purpose of Stage 3 and the Big Questions

Following Council endorsement of the new planning vision statement and guiding principles in February 2021, Stage 3 of We Make Milton was initiated. The purpose of Stage 3 is to investigate and understand the current planning context of Milton in more detail and to explore specific land use planning matters raised by the community so far, including how they can be addressed by our new Official Plan. To organize information and explore community ideas about key land use planning issues, a series of We Make Milton reports is being prepared. The reports are focused on four themes (Living, Working, Moving, Growing), as shown below. However, it is noted that there is crossover between themes, and these crossovers will be identified and discussed in our Stage 3 reports.

Living in Milton



Working in Milton



Moving in Milton



Growing in Milton



For each theme, two separate reports are being prepared, including:

1. **Background and Information reports** will provide an overview of the planning context of Milton as well as an analysis of community and stakeholder input received so far. It leads to a series of Big Questions about how to manage change and provide more choice to the year 2051, in accordance with our new land use planning vision statement, endorsed by Council.
2. **Big Question reports** will provide an exploration of the Big Questions by looking at current provincial, regional, and local plans/policies, as well as current planning practices from municipalities in other jurisdictions. This leads to the identification of various policy considerations that could be used in our new Official Plan to address the Big Questions and provide more choice as Milton evolves.

Each report will be used for upcoming consultation with the community.

Summary of Stage 3 reports and how to read them

The following is a summary of the Stage 3 We Make Milton reports that are being prepared and will be shared with the community as Stage 3 progresses:

1. Introduction to Stage 3	i. This report
2. Living in Milton	i. Background and Information report ii. Big Questions report
3. Working in Milton	i. Background and Information report ii. Big Questions report
4. Moving in Milton	i. Background and Information report ii. Big Questions report
5. Growing in Milton	i. Background and Information report ii. Big Questions report
6. Summary of Stage 3	i. Big Questions and Policy Recommendations report

To read the Stage 3 reports, we recommend the following:

- a) To understand the full scope of planning issues, opportunities, and challenges unique to Milton and Miltonians, the Background and Information Reports for each theme (living, working, moving, growing) should be reviewed.
- b) If readers are more interested in certain Big Questions and how they could be addressed in Milton's new Official Plan, only certain sections of the Big Question Reports might be reviewed, as they provide a succinct overview of upper-tier policy requirements, relevant local plans and studies, and current practices.
- c) For those who just want to know the options for Milton's new Official Plan, the [Let's Talk Milton web page](#) will provide simplified summaries of all reports plus opportunities to provide feedback.

Things to keep in mind

Current planning trends and directions

As times change, planning trends and directions evolve. Sometimes they can imprint on our land use environment. For example, the post-Second World War era saw significant increases in urbanization as populations shifted from rural to urban areas. This coincided with planning that focused on automobile-oriented development and suburban single-detached dwellings, ultimately leading to urban sprawl and the associated social, environmental, and economic impacts.

Today, current trends are steering development in a different direction, as all levels of government understand that long-term prosperity, quality of life, and social wellbeing depend upon planning places and spaces that will accommodate people of all ages and abilities, contribute to a clean and healthy environment, and maintain a strong and competitive economy. Contemporary planning directions recognize that land and resources must be carefully managed to accommodate appropriate development and meet the full range of current and future needs, while achieving efficient development patterns and avoiding any potential risk to public health and safety.

The following is an overview of just some of the contemporary planning trends that respond to current land use opportunities and challenges and will shape our future.

Complete and healthy communities

The idea of creating complete communities, also known as a walkable neighbourhood or a 15-minute neighbourhood, is a current planning trend in North America. A complete community is a place where residents can easily access all of their basic day-to-day needs, such as food, education and parks or greenspace, within close proximity/walking distance from home. By growing in a more compact form with higher densities, complete communities reduce the environmental effects from urban sprawl.

According to the [Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing](#):
“complete communities support quality of life and human health whether they are urban, suburban or rural, complete communities:

- are compact
- foster vibrant public interaction and give residents and workers a sense of place
- encourage active transportation
- make efficient use of infrastructure
- support transit
- provide a mix of housing types and offer a range of affordability
- offer a range of employment opportunities
- offer access to healthy local food
- are designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change.”

Creating complete communities also supports the development of healthy, livable communities. There is a relationship between community design/built form and community health. For example, British Columbia's Provincial Health Services Authority summarizes these connections as follows:

- Walkable neighbourhoods are associated with changes towards more active travel behaviour;
- Walkable neighbourhoods are associated with lower body weights
- Increased density is associated with less pollution
- Pedestrian-friendly streetscapes encourage physical activity
- Pedestrian-friendly streetscapes are associated with fewer traffic accidents and less crime
- Public transit encourages physical activity
- The built environment influences nutrition
- Improving the food environment can improve nutrition

Transit-supportive development and active transportation

To help achieve complete communities, as well as minimize land consumption and servicing costs, current planning trends also focus on transit-supportive development and active transportation:

- Transit-supportive development makes the use of public transit viable and improves the quality of the experience of using transit. It often refers to compact, mixed-use development that has a high level of employment and residential densities in proximity to transit stations within the transportation system.
- Active transportation is human-powered travel, such as walking, cycling, skating, or travel with the use of mobility aids such as motorized wheelchairs.

There are many benefits of both transit-supportive development and active transportation including increasing physical activity, accessibility and social interaction, and reducing road congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Intensification and densification

Both of the above planning trends generally promote increased densities to achieve a more compact urban form. This requires that we focus the location of new development from the periphery of urban areas to within existing built-up places, and this approach is key to contemporary municipal growth management efforts.

Intensification is a term that gets used a lot these days, especially in the context of urban planning on Ontario. According to the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement, intensification means:

- “The development of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists through:***
- a) redevelopment, including the reuse of brownfield sites;***
 - b) the development of vacant and/or underutilized lots within previously developed areas;***
 - c) infill development; and***
 - d) the expansion or conversion of existing buildings.”***



We will explore many of these attributes of complete communities and how they can be achieved in Milton through the Living in Milton reports.



There are a number of Big Questions related to transit and active transportation that will be explored in the Moving in Milton reports.

Intensification also means something even more specific in the context of the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), which is subject to Place to Grow: Ontario's Growth Plan. The Growth Plan definition of intensification focuses on existing built-up areas and identifies an intensification target for those areas, including Halton Region, which Milton must help achieve. According to Section 2.2.2:

- a) A minimum of 50 per cent of all residential development occurring annually will be within the delineated built-up area.

As part of Halton Region's ongoing ROPR, a set of growth concepts have been identified and explored with input from the community - all of which either meet or exceed the Growth Plan intensification target. The Region's growth concept Discussion Paper uses the term 'densification', which also has a very specific meaning within the context of Halton. According to the Region, densification means the development of lands that are outside of the existing built-up area (as defined by the Growth Plan) but within the urban boundary (known as designated greenfield areas) through the development of apartments in mixed-use centres and corridors.

Whether its called intensification, densification, or any other term, higher-density development supports complete communities and transit-supportive development by making urban areas more compact and increasing the mix of land uses in certain areas.

Climate change, COVID-19 and community resiliency

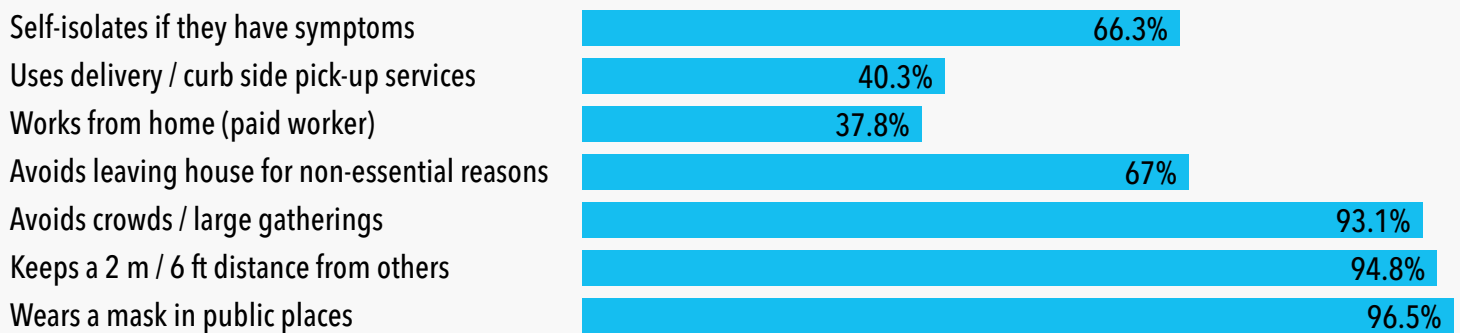
The summer months of 2021 exposed Canadians to extreme conditions brought on by a summer heat dome on the west coast and wildfires across the country. These extreme events will be more common as temperatures continue to rise due to climate change. It isn't just considered an environmental crisis. Climate change and public health are linked. In addition to the physical threat of injury, there are risks to mental health from the impact of major events such as floods and fires.

Climate change isn't the only public health crisis we are currently facing. After more than a year and a half since the COVID-19 pandemic was officially declared, life has changed. For example, most of the precautions we take to stay healthy have impacted day-to-day living, as shown on Figure 18 below and based on research in 2020 from Statistics Canada.



The Growing in Milton reports looks, in detail, at provincial and regional growth management policy requirements and explores Big Questions regarding how they can be implemented by our new Official Plan.

Figure 18: Proportion of Canadians taking precautions as a result of COVID-19



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, September 2020 provisional data.
Source: Statistics Canada

Yet, there hasn't been enough time to understand what the long term effects are. In the context of We Make Milton, several observations can be made about where and how people live as a result of COVID-19. The pandemic has posed the following land use considerations:

- Many Ontarians are looking to suburban or rural areas for bigger homes and more outdoor space. Given that Milton's growth maturity is at an adolescent stage, especially compared to some of our neighbouring municipalities, how can we best respond to market demands?
- The importance of complete, healthy communities is clear. We value certain neighbourhood qualities more than ever, such as design, layout, and mix of uses. How can Milton continue to grow neighbourhoods that provide the quality of life that is desired?
- People are commuting less and working from home more. While the term 'live-work housing' was once considered unique, it is now far more common to combine these uses. How can housing units be designed and redesigned to offer more live-work options?
- Given the need for social distancing, organized sports, events and other recreational activities are more frequently held outdoors or virtually. What impact will this have on the need for sports fields, arenas and community centres? How can Milton respond to the desire for more outdoor gathering spaces?

It may not be possible to answer questions like these right now; however, the pandemic challenges us to be nimble and flexible in our future planning, so we can withstand, recover, and respond to changing times and circumstances.

Conformity versus local goals

Local municipal official plans are the most important vehicle for implementation of provincial and regional policies and for achieving comprehensive, integrated and long-term planning. Local municipal official plans are required to protect provincial interests and direct development to suitable areas. As such, all land use planning policies in Milton's new Official Plan must be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement. They must also conform to any applicable provincial plan. Finally, they must also conform to the Regional Official Plan.

However, not all planning policy areas are strictly regulated by upper-tier policies, and there are important opportunities for Milton to create locally responsive - and even innovative - local planning policies to achieve local goals and priorities. Many of the Big Questions identified in Stage 3 explore these opportunities.

Planning policy language

When writing or interpreting any kind of policy, it is important to consider the specific language used. Policies are intended to provide direction on implementation.

For example:

- Some policies set out positive directives, and use words like shall or must. For example, "settlement areas shall be the focus of growth and development."
- Other policies set out limitations and prohibitions, and use words like shall not and are prohibited. For example, "development and site alteration are prohibited."
- There are also policies that use enabling or supportive language, such as should, promote and encourage. For example, "the Town will encourage landowners to retrofit their sites with LID practices."

Frequently used acronyms

Throughout the Stage 3 We Make Milton reports, we will use a number of acronyms which represent planning terms and documents. The following is a list of frequently used acronyms that will show up often. Each report will also include a glossary of terms and acronyms specific to the theme/topics being explored.

- (GGH) - Greater Golden Horseshoe
- (LOP) - Local Official Plan
- (MMAH) - Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- (MCR) - Municipal Comprehensive Review
- (NEP) - Niagara Escarpment Plan
- (OP) - Official Plan
- (OPA) - Official Plan Amendment
- (PPS) - Provincial Policy Statement
- (ROP) - Regional Official Plan
- (ROPR) - Regional Official Plan Review
- (GBP) - Greenbelt Plan
- (GP) - Growth Plan

Staying involved and providing your input

Community involvement, participation, and support is critical to the success of Milton's new Official Plan, and we need you to stay involved. Here's how:

1. All community members should visit the [Let's Talk Milton web page](#) to learn about the project and find updates/opportunities to provide input.
2. All of the Stage 3 reports will be posted on Let's Talk Milton, with specific questions for you to consider and information about upcoming consultation events.
3. You can [register for email notifications](#) and we will let you know when We Make Milton documents are available.
4. We are always interested in talking to stakeholders and community groups to learn more about what you deem important and valuable. If you would like to be part of our stakeholder committee, please contact the email below.
5. If you have any other questions or comments, don't hesitate to contact our We Make Milton planning team at nancy.reid@milton.ca.



MILTON

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