



The Living City[®] Policies

for Planning and Development in the
Watersheds of the Toronto and Region
Conservation Authority

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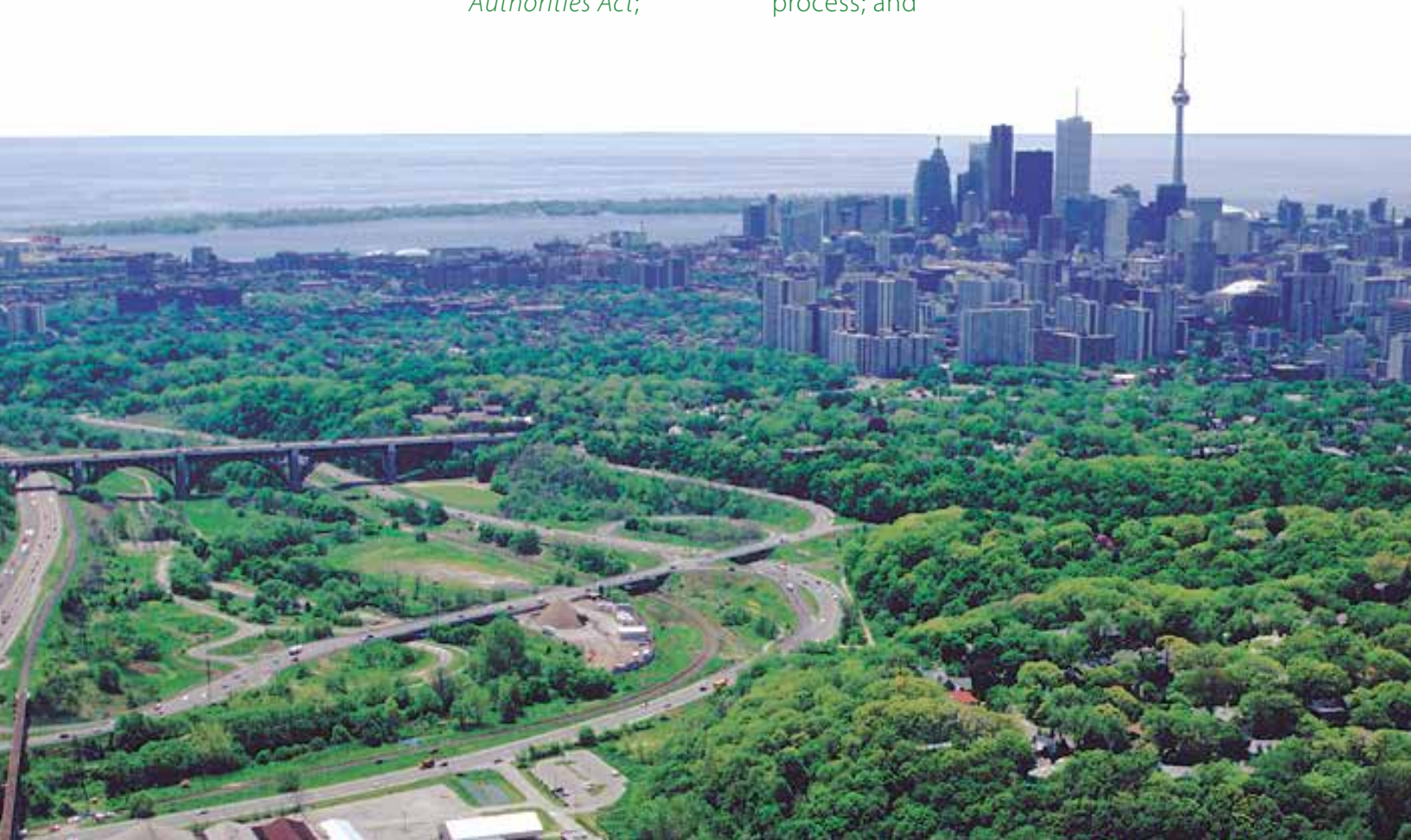
1 What is this document?

The Living City Policies is the new policy document of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) approved by TRCA's Board on November 28, 2014. It is a conservation authority policy document to guide the implementation of TRCA's legislated and delegated roles and responsibilities in the planning and development approvals process for the next ten years.

Comparable to a combined municipal official plan and zoning by-law, The Living City Policies represents a compilation of existing plan and permit review policies and practices that have evolved over time. It also contains new policies related to TRCA programs, scientific research, and external planning and development initiatives.

Its purpose is four-fold:

- 1 To guide TRCA review of planning applications and environmental assessments;
- 2 To provide the basis for approving permit applications under Section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*;
- 3 To inform TRCA's advocacy role for The Living City in the planning and development process; and
- 4 To assist and enable our partners' and stakeholders' contributions to building The Living City.



2 What is The Living City?

Simply put, The Living City is TRCA's vision for a healthy, attractive, sustainable urban region prospering into the next century. Its foundation is the traditional conservation authority mandate, adapted for the distinct needs of an urbanizing city-region. TRCA agrees with the assertion by the United Nations that the future of the planet will be determined in rapidly expanding city-regions, such as our own Greater Toronto Area (GTA). We believe that the future of our region depends on decisive action now to change unsustainable practices, both individual and corporate, and to find creative new ways of city building and of living in our rapidly growing urban region. Accordingly, TRCA has put forth its vision for a new kind of community:

The Living City, where human settlement can flourish forever as part of nature's beauty and diversity.

TRCA works from the perspective that natural processes contribute to the physical form of cities and neighbourhoods; and that the development of urban areas influences and affects the health and ecological integrity of natural systems – that cities are part of, not separate from, nature. TRCA's quest for sustainable development, through building The Living City, seeks to reconnect human and natural environment objectives by working in partnership with the community. Accordingly, the mission of TRCA is:

To work with our partners to ensure that The Living City is built on a natural foundation of healthy rivers and shorelines, greenspace and biodiversity, and sustainable communities.



3 Why does TRCA need a new policy document?

Under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, a conservation authority implements a program to further its “objects” of conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources. TRCA’s main program that previously guided the Authority in its planning and regulatory roles was the Valley and Stream Corridor Management Program (VSCMP) endorsed by the Authority in October 1994.

In a 2009 Mining and Lands Commissioner decision, the tribunal affirmed the importance of such programs in order for CAs to accomplish their objects.

It is clear to the tribunal that the Authority has the right, and in fact the responsibility to develop programs to ‘accomplish its objects.’ Ontario Regulation 166/06 outlines the objects accepted by the TRCA. The Valley and Stream Corridor Management Program has been developed to guide the Authority in the implementation of its objects. In effect, the Policy’s purpose is to further the aims and objectives of the Authority and provides a ‘purposive approach’ to both the Act and the regulation.

(MLC Decision, Russell versus the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (CA 003-05) May 27, 2009)

The Living City Policies (The LCP) supercedes the VSCMP while continuing and expanding on the program’s valuable foundation of principles and policy intent. Since the VSCMP was first introduced, many changes have occurred in the quality and extent of scientific understanding of TRCA watersheds, as well as changes to the planning, development and growth management realm of the GTA. The development of The LCP was informed by these changes and serves to: fulfill TRCA’s legislative responsibilities; support our municipal partners in building environmentally, socially and economically sustainable communities; and minimize the need for costly remedial measures through the conservation of land and resources.



Some of the changes that highlighted the need for adapting and updating TRCA policies included:

- The requirement to conform with new provincial legislation and policies such as the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, the Places to Grow Growth Plan, and the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement, among others;
- Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of conservation authorities through provincial initiatives such as Generic Regulation conformity, the Conservation Authority Liaison Committee (CALC), and the delegated authority for representing the provincial interest for natural hazards;
- New or updated memorandums of understanding with our municipal partners for plan review, environmental assessment review and technical clearance services;
- A growing body of scientific research and evidence documenting the declining quality of the environment in TRCA's increasingly urban watersheds; and
- Systems-based approaches and best management practices to address the decline and promote healthy, sustainable communities.

The LCP addresses not only the policy, administrative and environmental changes identified above, but also the new challenges facing the GTA in the coming years. Key among these challenges from TRCA's perspective and mandate are:

- Growth and urban intensification in the context of environmental protection and managing the risk from flooding and erosion hazards; and
- Adapting to and mitigating for the potential impacts of climate change.

The LCP capitalizes on the opportunities resulting from the many changes since the adoption of the VSCMP, such as:

- The promotion of a "Culture of Conservation," through the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, to protect natural systems, increase energy and water efficiency, as well as to value and protect prime agricultural areas and cultural heritage resources; and
- TRCA's adoption of a science-based, integrated watershed management (IWM) approach

to manage human activities (such as land use change) and natural resources on a "systems" basis, in order to address critical issues such as the cumulative impacts of rapid growth and transitioning to a sustainability model for all aspects of society.

Integrated Watershed Management is a holistic approach that recognizes and operates based on the interconnectedness of environment, economy and society – in short, a sustainability-based model. IWM is an evolving, continuous and adaptive process through which decisions are made for the sustainable use, development, restoration and protection of ecosystem features, functions and linkages. Integrated watershed management allows for addressing multiple issues and objectives, and enables us to plan within a very complex and uncertain environment. (Conservation Ontario)



4 What's new in The Living City Policies?

The foundation for The LCP is TRCA's mandate under the *Conservation Authorities Act* for the management of natural hazards and natural heritage in our watersheds and waterfront using a watershed-based ecosystem planning approach. The protection of valley and stream corridors through our regulatory role remains as the primary foundation of The LCP. The new policies reflect TRCA's current plan review practice and are based on many TRCA initiatives and programs consulted on previously with external stakeholders.

New policy areas in The LCP include

- Wetland and Lake Ontario Shoreline policies in accordance with TRCA's Ontario Regulation 166/06, as approved by the Province in May 2006;
- Natural System protection policies based on the science from TRCA's Terrestrial Natural Heritage System Strategy (2007), and as refined in watershed plans and municipal official plans;
- Natural System management policies for redevelopment of existing urban lands that emphasize restoration of degraded natural areas and the remediation of flooding and erosion hazards;
- Policies to address flood risk reduction and redevelopment through comprehensive planning to integrate science, engineering and ecological design in urban intensification areas;
- Stormwater management policies based on TRCA's SWM Criteria Document (2012) that include managing water balance for natural features and groundwater recharge through options such as low impact development measures in a "treatment train" approach;
- Environmental Assessment, Master Plan and Infrastructure policies that incorporate the consideration of cumulative impacts and adaptive management;
- Policies that emphasize an "ecosystem services" perspective in which human health and urban design benefits can be maximized by drawing on both the natural and built elements of "green infrastructure";
- Sustainable Communities policies that advocate for other Living City program interests in the planning and development process.



5 The Living City Policies – Chapter by Chapter Contents

1

Introduction

Purpose, Scope and “How to Read” the document.

2

The Toronto Region

Description of TRCA’s jurisdiction.

3

Legislative Foundation

Overview of TRCA’s mandate and roles in planning and development.

4

TRCA History and Evolution to The Living City

5

The Living City Vision, Mission, Strategic Objectives and Principles

6

Paths to Achieving The Living City

Advocacy Policies for Sustainable Communities

7

Policies for Environmental Planning

Policies to guide TRCA’s role as a commenting agency under the *Planning Act*, *Environmental Assessment Act* and as a technical review agency and service provider to our municipal partners.

8

Regulation Policies

Policies to Guide TRCA’s regulatory responsibilities under section 28 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*.



6 Process and Timelines

The process to bring The LCP to completion was ongoing for several years and included the completion of many TRCA projects such as watershed plans, natural heritage strategies, and the development of new technical guidelines or the update of existing ones. Each of these discrete projects included their own elements of public and/or stakeholder consultation. Additionally, TRCA created the Planning and Development Procedural Manual in 2007, which provides technical and

procedural details for many of the policies found in The LCP. The intent of the Procedural Manual is to enhance TRCA's cooperative working relationship with municipal partners, the development community, and permit applicants regarding the implementation of TRCA's planning and regulatory functions, including opportunities to increase procedural transparency and streamline the review process where appropriate.

The process to consult on and finalize The LCP took place as follows:

Winter 2013

TRCA's Board endorses the release of the first draft LCP for external consultation.

Spring & Summer 2013

Municipal, provincial and agency consultation; Stakeholder consultation with BILD, ENGOs, and other interest groups.

Fall 2013 & Winter 2014

Revisions to the LCP as necessary based on consultations.

Spring to Fall 2014

Revised draft released for final stakeholder and public consultation; Final revisions leading to approval by the Authority on November 28, 2014.





7 Evolution to The Living City

The Living City Policies is the next step in TRCA's continuous evolution in responding to changes in public policy, environmental conditions and citizen and stakeholder demands. The following historical overview demonstrates how TRCA has continually adapted itself over the years to changing times, new science, competing interests, and fiscal realities.

1946

The *Conservation Authorities Act* is passed in the Ontario legislature to enable municipalities to establish a conservation authority to manage their natural resources on a watershed basis.

1957

Three years after the devastation of Hurricane Hazel that killed 81 people and left thousands homeless due to flooding, four small conservation authorities are amalgamated to form the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (MTRCA).

1960s

The prevailing ideology was an engineering-based structural approach to flood control. Plans were formulated for the construction of numerous multi-purpose dams, engineered river channel improvements, the acquisition of flood plain lands and the creation of a flood warning system (which still exists today). But as the costs of land acquisition and major engineering works escalated throughout the 1960s and 1970s, it became clear that these aspects of the approach were not financially viable.

1970s

MTRCA was designated by the Province as the lead implementing agency for the Etobicoke to Ajax-Pickering shoreline (except for the central downtown waterfront) leading to the formulation of waterfront plans based on an integrated shoreline management approach. The plans addressed the need to limit high rates of erosion while enabling safe public access and the creation of regional scale parkland and waterfront recreation opportunities.



1980s

This decade marked a shift in provincial policy direction away from the structural engineering approach to an ecological approach in watershed management. Biological inventories to identify Environmentally Significant Areas were undertaken by MTRCA; water quality and healthy aquatic life took on new importance; and the sensitivity and significance of the headwaters on the Oak Ridges Moraine, as well as the vital role played by natural lands in flood and erosion control was recognized.

1990s

Public involvement in watershed management can be characterized as the theme of this decade. The Don Watershed Task Force was established with a mandate to develop an ecosystem regeneration plan for the entire Don River watershed, through its landmark strategy "Forty Steps to a New Don." This community-based, ecologically-focused model was adopted for MTRCA's other watersheds, resulting in numerous river and shoreline clean-ups, tree plantings, wetland creation and the development of trails and management plans for MTRCA's vast holdings of public lands.

2000s

The information technology revolution was a key theme in conservation in the first decade of the new millennium. Real-time in-stream monitoring, digital modeling of storm and flooding simulations and of natural cover, biodiversity losses and restoration needs, all came together through Geographic Information Systems. Additionally, provincial direction through the Greenbelt Plan, the *Green Energy Act*, the *Clean Water Act*, the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan and others, is seeking to move society towards a "Culture of Conservation" and apply a sustainability lens to all aspects of growth management.

Looking Forward to 2050

Since the days of Hurricane Hazel, TRCA has a long history of researching, regulating, advising and collaborating with our partners to manage the health of our urbanizing watersheds and waterfront. The Living City Policies builds on this tradition, adapts locally for the new global concerns and societal trends, and seeks to achieve a broad, ambitious, and positive vision for the Toronto Region in the coming decades. TRCA is working to create a new kind of community, The Living City, where human settlement can flourish forever as part of nature's beauty and diversity.



For further information, go to
www.trca.on.ca/planning-services-permits

