



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Rouge National Urban Park – Official Plan Amendment – Final Report

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Date:</b>             | October 23, 2012   |
| <b>To:</b>               | Planning and Growth Management Committee                         |
| <b>From:</b>             | Chief Planner & Executive Director, City Planning Division       |
| <b>Wards:</b>            | Ward 42 – Scarborough-Rouge River and Ward 44 – Scarborough East |
| <b>Reference Number:</b> | p:\2012\Cluster B\PLN\pg12081                                    |

#### SUMMARY

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The Official Plan prohibits the sale or disposal of City owned lands in the *Green Space System* and City owned land designated *Parks and Open Space Areas* unless the lands are exchanged for other nearby land of equivalent or larger area and comparable or superior utility. This City-initiated amendment recommends a site and area specific policy to allow the City to enter into a land transfer agreement with the Federal Government to transfer City owned lands, in the absence of receipt of nearby lands of equivalent, larger, comparable or superior utility. The lands to be transferred are to be used for the purpose of establishing the Rouge National Urban Park in the Rouge Valley area of the City of Toronto.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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**The City Planning Division recommends that:**

1. City Council amend the Official Plan, for the lands in the Rouge Park area substantially in accordance with the proposed Official Plan Amendment attached as Attachment No. 6 to report dated October 23, 2012.
2. City Council authorize the City Solicitor to make such stylistic and technical changes to the proposed Official Plan Amendment as may be required.

## **Financial Impact**

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting of May 8, 2012, City Council endorsed the Statement of Intent and committed to collaborate with the Government of Canada and other public landholders on the establishment of a national urban park in the Rouge Valley. City Council also authorized the Deputy City Manager, and appropriate City staff, to represent the City in the national urban park establishment process and report back on the results of the establishment process, including how City interests have been addressed. The following is a link to that decision:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.EX19.2>

At its meeting of October 2, 3 and 4, 2012, City Council adopted the preliminary report which proposed a site and area specific policy to enable the City to transfer City owned lands, in the absence of receipt of nearby lands of equivalent, larger, comparable or superior utility, for the purpose of establishing the Rouge National Urban Park in the Rouge Valley area of the City of Toronto. The following is a link to that decision:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.PG17.15>

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

In 2011 the Government of Canada, in the speech from the throne, indicated a commitment to create Canada's first national urban park in the Rouge Valley. In May 2012, the federal government announced \$143.7 million in funding over the next 10 years for the establishment of the park and a subsequent \$7.5 million annually for ongoing park operation. The study area under consideration by Parks Canada spans 5,600 hectares including 2,040 ha in the City of Toronto (Attachment 1). In order to establish the park, publicly owned lands within the study area will need to be transferred to Parks Canada. Parks Canada has requested that the lands be transferred at nominal value. Public land holders have been meeting since November 2011 to discuss and come to agreement on the lands to be included in the park.

Most of the lands within the study area are identified as *Green Space System* on Map 2 (Urban Structure) of the Official Plan or designated *Parks and Open Space Areas* (Attachments 2 and 3). Policies 2.3.2(4) and 4.3(8) of the Official Plan discourage the sale or disposal of publicly owned lands in the *Green Space System* or in *Parks and Open Space Areas* and prohibit the sale or disposal of City owned lands unless lands are exchanged for other nearby land of equivalent or larger area and comparable or superior green space utility.

## **Proposal**

An Official Plan amendment is required in order to allow the City to enter into a land transfer agreement with the Federal Government to transfer any City owned lands that are identified as *Green Space System* or designated *Parks and Open Space Areas* in the

absence of receipt of nearby lands of equivalent, larger, comparable or superior utility. No change in land use is proposed.

Most of the lands within the City of Toronto that will become part of the proposed park are owned by TRCA however a few small parcels or slivers of land are owned by the City. City owned parcels in the proposed Official Plan Amendment area which are being reviewed for transfer are shown in Attachment 4 and described in Attachment 5. Surplus road segments which may also be transferred have not yet been identified. Existing roads and required rights of way and other infrastructure, such as storm water management facilities, that the City will continue to operate will not be transferred. Two City owned parcels south of Old Finch Avenue, one on the west side of Meadowvale Road which is part of the Zoo and the former Beare Road landfill site east of the CNR rail line, are located outside of the national urban park study area and are not proposed to be transferred.

The proposed amendment is provided in Attachment 6.

## **Site and Surrounding Area**

The lands subject to the Official Plan Amendment are located within and adjacent to the existing Rouge Park in the Rouge Valley area of the City of Toronto. The area contains two well defined valleys of the main Rouge and Little Rouge Rivers, some of the largest forest blocks in the City and provincially and locally significant natural areas including the Rouge River Valley Provincial Area of Natural and Scientific Interest and the Rouge River Marshes Provincially Significant Wetland. Adjacent lands are almost entirely residential. The nearby Morningside Tributary, which is not included in the proposed park, has been engineered for storm water management and contains a number of storm water management facilities that service these adjacent residential communities. The City of Markham and the City of Pickering are located to the north and east.

## **Provincial Policy Statement and Provincial Plans**

The proposed amendment area is located within the provincial Greenbelt and is part of the Green Space System identified on Map 2 of the Official Plan.

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The PPS sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land. The key objectives include: building strong communities; wise use and management of resources; protecting natural heritage systems and protecting public health and safety. City Council's planning decisions are required to be consistent with the PPS.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe provides a framework for managing growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe including: directions for where and how to grow; the provision of infrastructure to support growth; and protecting natural systems and cultivating a culture of conservation.

The Greenbelt Plan identifies the Greenbelt of the Greater Golden Horseshoe as an area where urbanization should not occur in order to provide permanent protection to the agricultural land base and the ecological functions and features occurring in this landscape. In particular, it restricts development and land use in the Rouge River Watershed and the Rouge Park area in Toronto.

City Council's planning decisions are required by the Planning Act, to conform, or not conflict, with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Greenbelt Plan.

## **Official Plan**

Most of the lands within the study area are identified as *Green Space System* on Map 2 (Urban Structure) of the Official Plan or designated *Parks and Open Space Areas*. Policies 2.3.2(4) and 4.3(8) of the Official Plan discourage the sale or disposal of publicly owned lands in the *Green Space System* or in *Parks and Open Space Areas* and prohibit the sale or disposal of City owned lands unless lands are exchanged for other nearby land of equivalent or larger area and comparable or superior green space utility.

## **Community Consultation**

Notice of the public consultation meeting was published in the Scarborough Mirror on October 4, 2012 and distributed to interested parties mailing lists. The meeting was held on October 15, 2012 at the Scarborough Civic Centre. The purpose of the meeting was to provide area residents and the surrounding community with information about the proposed amendment and provide an opportunity to ask questions and submit comments. The meeting was attended by City Planning staff, representatives from Parks Canada and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and twenty-two interested people. The Councillor and MP for Scarborough-Rouge River were present.

Most participants were generally supportive of the proposed Official Plan Amendment. One participant suggested that the amendment may be premature as they did not support the proposed park in its current form. Participants were interested in the area of the City-owned lands that may be transferred and how the transfer might affect City park land calculations and provincial Greenbelt policies. One written submission was received in support of not including lands in the Morningside Heights area in the proposed park or within the proposed Official Plan Amendment area.

Most participants were interested in discussing the proposed national urban park rather than the proposed Official Plan Amendment. Several participants suggested that the study area of the proposed park be expanded to include additional trail connections and natural heritage features, particularly the Morningside Creek tributary. Comments were

made about the importance of protecting significant natural features and species of concern. Questions were asked about the park name and how the proposed park would be buffered from adjacent urban areas. These comments and questions are outside the scope of the proposed Official Plan Amendment and were addressed by the Parks Canada representative.

### **Agency Circulation**

Notice of the proposed amendment was provided to adjacent municipalities, appropriate agencies and City divisions. No written comments were received.

### **COMMENTS**

Lands within the Rouge National Urban Park study area that are identified as *Green Space System* or designated *Parks and Open Space Areas* have long been set aside for park purposes. Transfer of City owned lands to the Federal Government for inclusion in the Rouge National Urban Park is consistent with Council's objectives for this area as the lands will continue to fulfill the role of *Green Space System* and continue to function as parks and open space. The role of these lands as *Green Space System* and *Parks and Open Space Areas* will also be enhanced through future capital and operating investments that will be made by Parks Canada. In essence, there will be no net loss of parks and open space.

Most of the lands within the City of Toronto that will become part of the proposed park are owned by TRCA. The total combined area of City owned parcels being reviewed for transfer is 1.31 hectares. Surplus road segments may also be identified. The transfer will have no impact on the amount of available City parkland. The proposed amendment is not premature because it does not result in the transfer of land. Any City owned parcels to be transferred will first be circulated through the City's process to declare lands surplus and will follow the City's transfer process. No land will be transferred until all public landholders, including the City of Toronto, have reached agreement on the lands to be included in the proposed Rouge National Urban Park and the process by which the lands will be transferred. However, in the absence of this proposed amendment the City would not be able to enter into that agreement.

Ongoing protection of natural heritage features has been identified as an essential principle for the proposed park and will be a central component of the new legislation that will establish the park. This legislation will take precedence over both local policies and provincial legislation. The proposed amendment does not conflict with the intent of the PPS, the Growth Plan and the Greenbelt Plan. No change in land use is proposed and the lands will continue to function as parks and open space. Natural heritage features will continue to be protected under the ownership and mandate of Parks Canada.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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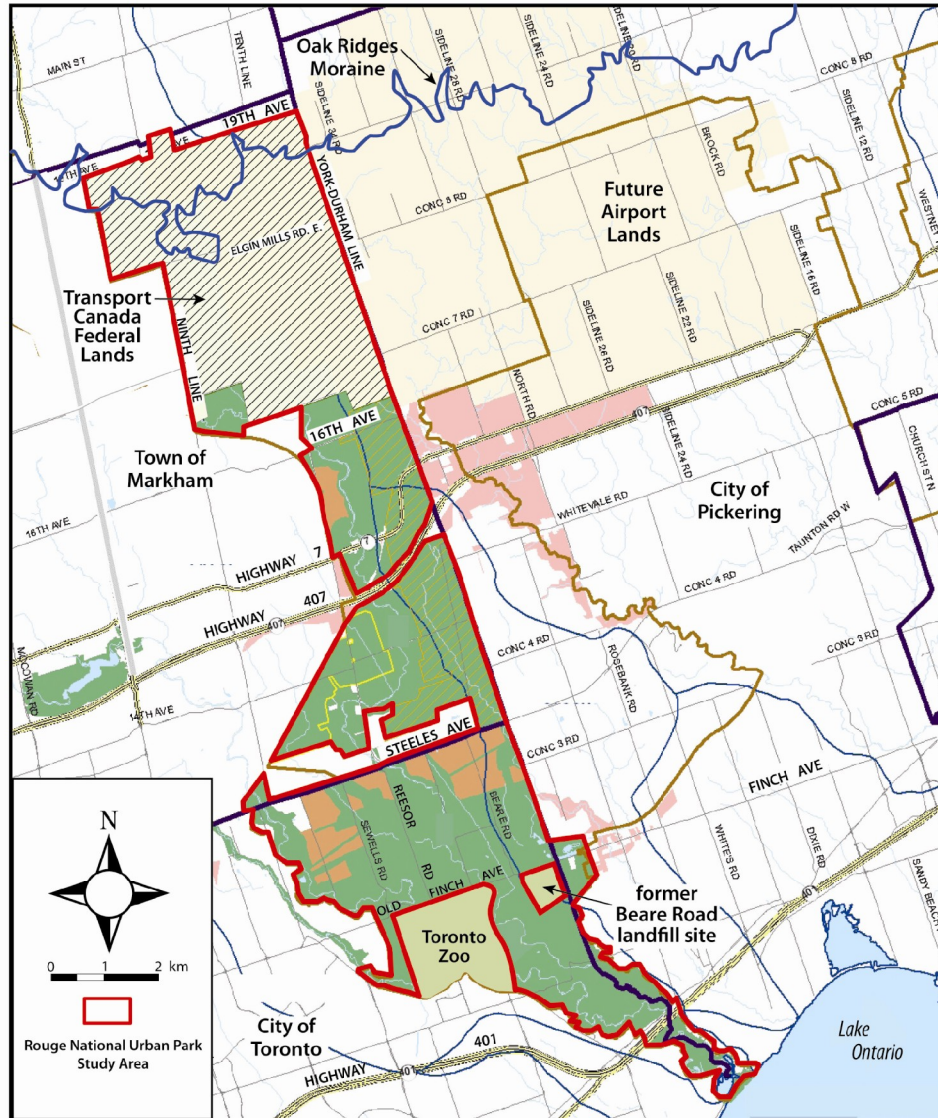
Jennifer Keesmaat, MES, MCIP, RPP  
Chief Planner & Executive Director  
City Planning Division

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Rouge National Urban Park Study Area  
Attachment 2: Official Plan Green Space System  
Attachment 3: Official Plan Designations  
Attachment 4: City Owned Parcels within Proposed Amendment Area  
Attachment 5: City Owned Parcels Being Reviewed for Transfer to Parks Canada  
Attachment 6: Proposed Official Plan Amendment

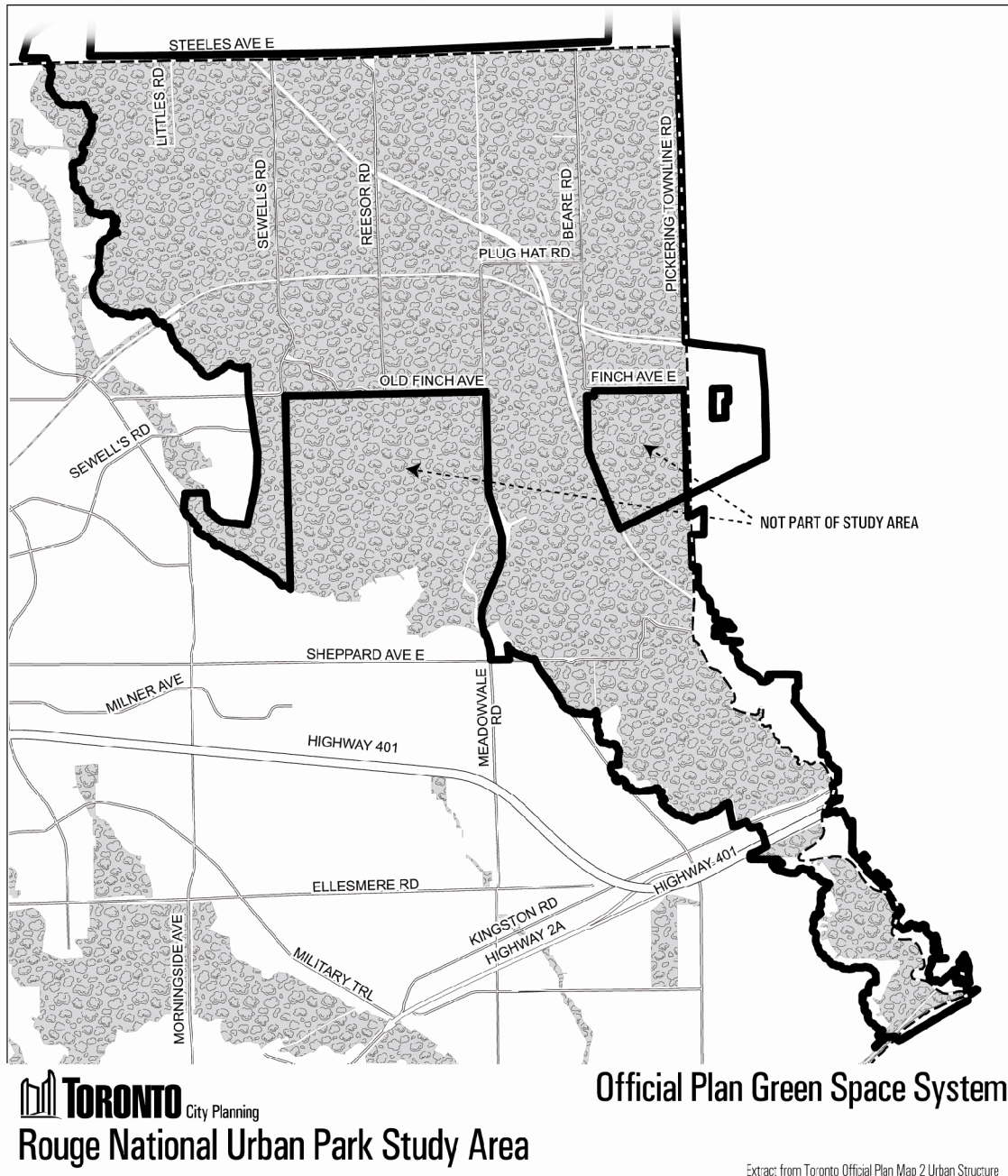
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## Attachment 1: Rouge National Urban Park Study Area



Note: This map is of a Study Area only. The lands shown are currently under review for possible inclusions/exclusions to the national urban park. This map does not represent proposed park boundaries.

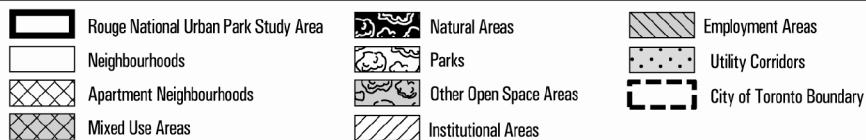
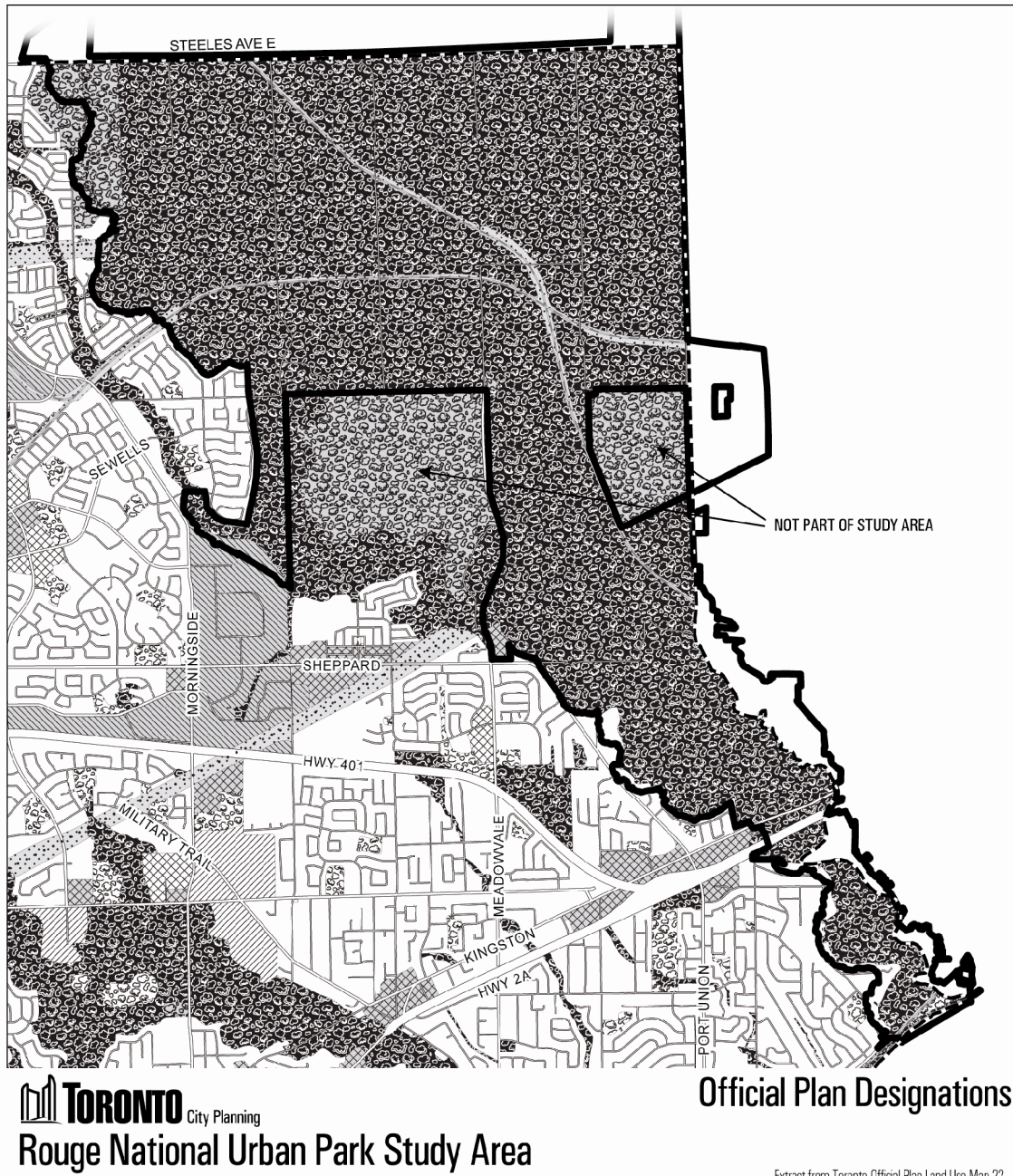
## Attachment 2: Official Plan Green Space System



- Rouge National Urban Park Study Area
- Green Space System
- City of Toronto Boundary

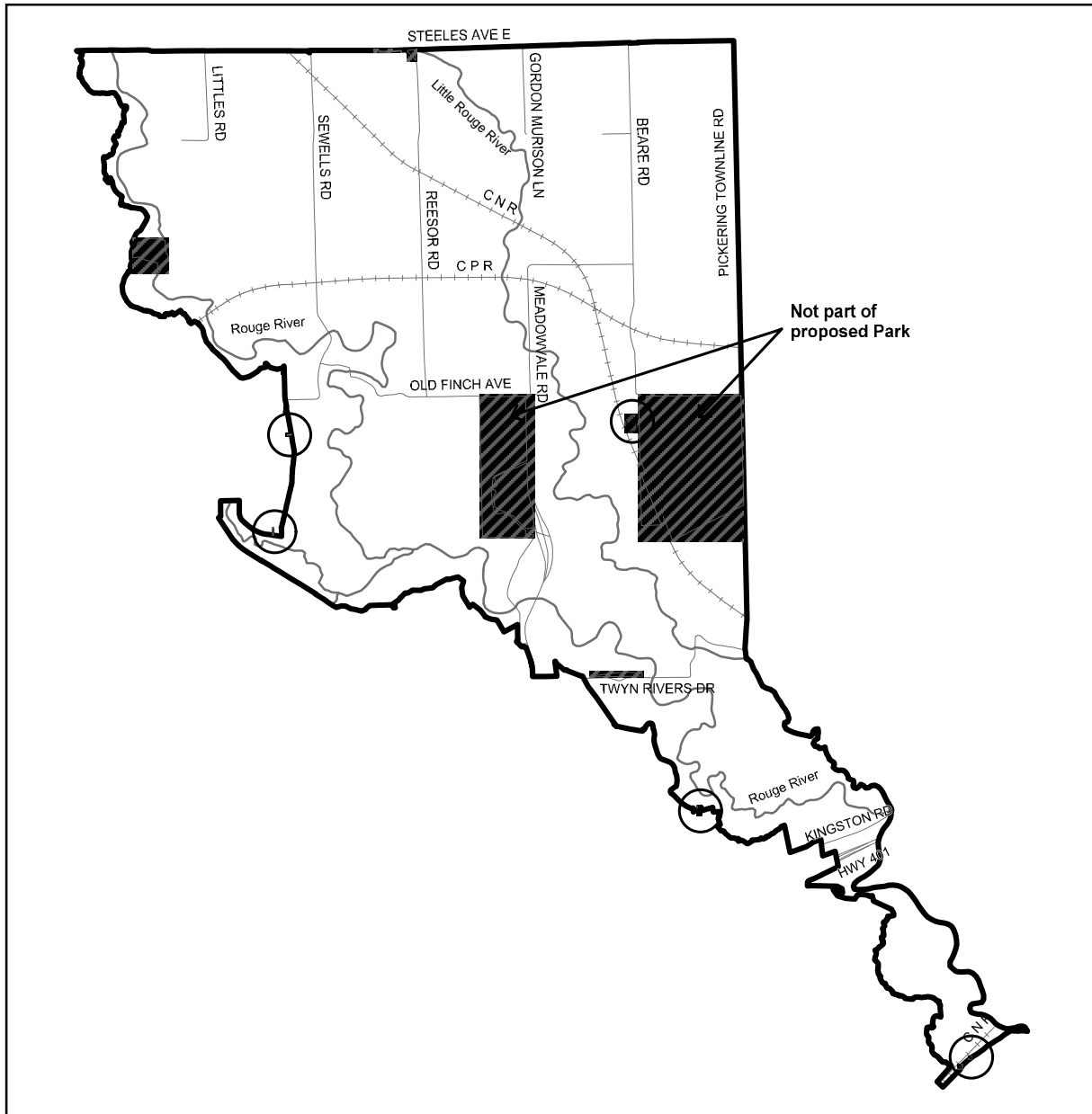
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 Not to Scale  
 09/16/2012

### Attachment 3: Official Plan Designations



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 Not to Scale  
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## Attachment 4: City Owned Parcels within Proposed Amendment Area



TORONTO City Planning

### City Owned Parcels within Proposed Amendment Area

- Proposed Official Plan Amendment Area
- City Owned Parcels
- Location of City owned parcels being reviewed for transfer to Parks Canada

Not to Scale

### Attachment 5: City Owned Parcels Being Reviewed for Transfer to Parks Canada

| Address   | Site area                                 | Current use                                 | Official Plan Designation  |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| Two parcels South of Ridgewood Rd and CNR, East of Rouge Hills Dr | 243 m <sup>2</sup> and 315 m <sup>2</sup> | Vacant land                                 | Parks and Open Space Areas |
| Portion of 2 John Graham Court, between 12 & 17 John Graham Court | 1,335 m <sup>2</sup>                      | Vacant land                                 | Parks and Open Space Areas |
| 0 Beare Rd adjacent to 1749 Meadowvale Rd.                        | 10,522 m <sup>2</sup>                     | Vacant land                                 | Parks and Open Space Areas |
| Parcel between 59 and 63 Gennela Square                           | 405 m <sup>2</sup>                        | Vacant land                                 | Neighbourhoods             |
| Parcel between 229 and 231 Morningview Trail                      | 235 m <sup>2</sup>                        | Walkway                                     | Neighbourhoods             |
| Surplus Road Segments   | To be determined                          | Closed, blocked or untraveled road segments | Parks and Open Space Areas |

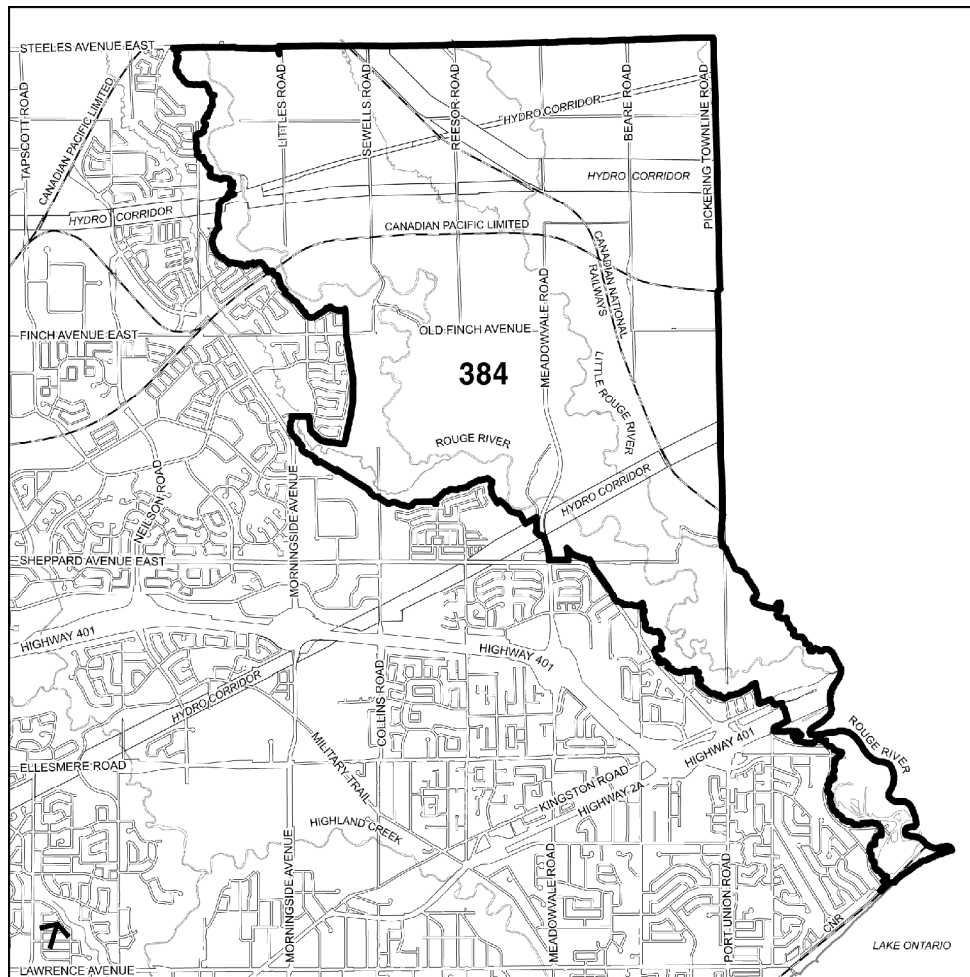
## Attachment 6: Proposed Official Plan Amendment

### AMENDMENT NO. 194 TO THE OFFICIAL PLAN CITY OWNED LANDS WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO THE ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK

The Official Plan of the City of Toronto is amended as follows:

Chapter 7, Site and Area Specific Policies is amended by adding the following policy no. 384.

1. City owned lands located within or adjacent to the area shown on the map below are exempt from Policies 2.3.2(4) and 4.3(8) of this Plan, which prohibit the disposal of City owned land in the *Green Space System* or *Parks and Open Space Areas*, provided the lands are transferred from time to time to the federal government for the purpose of the Rouge National Urban Park.



2. Map 33, Site and Area Specific Policies, is amended by labelling the lands shown on the map in 1 above, as being subject to Site and Area Specific policy 384.