

	
Towards a Sustainable Region	
Town of Markham Town Hall Meeting Feedback September 17, 2008	

	
• The following comments, questions and suggestions are a summary of the public input received at the consultation session held in the Town of Markham. Regional staff attempted to respond to questions and provide additional input. Please contact the Region if this summary does not adequately reflect your input or ideas, or if you have any additional thoughts. • Comments from the public are recorded in black. • <i>Regional staff comments are recorded in blue italics.</i> 	

Feedback



- In 2013 there will be developer demand for allocation. Will the Region release allocation to satisfy market demand, if built where already planned for?
- *Over the next 5 years, will allocate demand potential in certain amounts, keeping close to forecast rate; Want to monitor this, along with job creation, population and intensification rate.*
- Can we go higher than the 40% intensification rate or 50 people & jobs per hectare densities in new communities?
- *These standards are set by the Province as minimums for the Region – we can go higher. The rates in each municipality will vary – some will be higher, others lower. For example, Markham's intensification rate will be 50%.*
- How did the Province come up with these targets – based in forecasts or market demand?
- *Combination – The market will shift to a more mixed & compact form based on the needs of future demographics (i.e. substantial increase in seniors), but a fine balance must be maintained between progressive housing variety and realistic housing for the market.*



Feedback



- Is there a downside to being more aggressive with intensification and creating more multiple-unit dwellings?
- *York Region needs a variety of housing types – too many of any one type, and those looking for a different type will look elsewhere. People will drive longer commutes to get the housing types they prefer – negatively impacting the environment, traffic congestion.*
- Has the development industry/builders been consulted? I am concerned that the preference in York Region is still single family homes.
- *York Region continues to meet with the development industry to obtain their perspective. We must now carefully determine where intensification will go and where it will not go – must maintain a variety of housing choices and neighbourhoods.*
- Is "intensification" the redevelopment of existing properties, or the development of vacant land within the built area?
- *Both.*



Feedback



- "Cultural planning" has largely been left out of this conversation, which is a mistake. Without it, we will have problems with our quality of life. World cities that have richer culture do better economically – our communities must have stronger heritage and culture. What is York Region doing about this?
- *York Region is working on better supporting and integrating culture – this is an important part of the equation. We will look into this.*
- Markham has a diverse mix of ethnic groups – this diversity will continue to increase. What kind of social structures can create better neighbourhoods and communication between these groups?
- *35% of York Region's population are new Canadians, creating unique housing and human service needs. To accommodate these groups, we will need to look at lifestyle preferences and family living arrangements, as well as ways to adapt education and health services.*
- Is the Region examining the impact of roads, the Metrolinx transportation plan, and the Pickering Airport will have on the Whitebelt lands?
- *Various agencies, along with York Region, are looking at the entire GTA comprehensively.*



Feedback



- 69% of York Region's land is protected – how much of this is agricultural land? We must make these lands sustainable and support locally growth food.
- *40% of York Region's land base is agriculture and half is actively farmed.*
- The importance of careful phasing and sequencing must be emphasized.
- Hospitals and health facilities are important infrastructure – they have not kept pace with growth and are suffering. Have there been lobbying efforts to engage higher levels of government about this issue?
- *York Region has worked with United Way to create the "Fair is Fair" document illustrating the shortcomings of Human Services in the Region. Region also sent the Province a list of the Human Services currently lacking and needed for the future.*
- Who from Federal Government is listening to York Region?
- How aggressive is York Region willing to be in demanding for more funding?
- *Council is concerned about inadequate funding for this growth. Council has said to the Province that we will not grow unless we can obtain adequate infrastructure.*



Feedback



- How are we going to persuade people to accept/buy/build intensification units?
- *Ensuring that intensification is appropriately located, with the proper fit, scale and design for communities, is key. We believe people will consider this choice due to constantly evolving communities, the aging population, etc.*
- York Region needs to decide how it will create intensification units. Concerned that only condo units will be built and neighbourhoods will change, so that everyone is forced to live in these units/dense communities. Must be careful to not be overly aggressive and eliminate a certain market segment (i.e. single family homes/neighbourhoods).
- *Each municipality will need to create its own intensification strategy – where it will and will not go. This will direct development into key areas and ensure intensification does not occur in areas where it is not appropriate.*
- Will the Centres and Corridors be able to accommodate 40% intensification?
- *Yes. Intensification will also occur throughout the built boundary, based on the intensification hierarchy that includes infill, such as second suites.*



Feedback



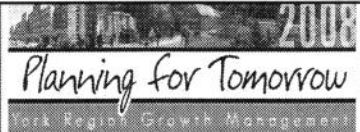
- The issues of intensification are also related to cultural planning, especially the quality of life created from intensification. These considerations are not clear in the current Growth Management Strategy. Cultural planning is present in local municipal plans, but should be stronger at the Regional level.
- *Local municipalities are primarily responsible for cultural services, however York Region can play a role in larger cultural facilities.*
- What impact will the Pickering Airport and Highway 404 extension have on the Whitebelt and lands in northern York Region?
- *Most new development in York Region will occur in the south and the pink "inverted T" on the maps. The Highway 404 extension will go to Ravenshoe Road in 2012/2013. Lands will not be taken away from the Greenbelt, therefore there will be no additional Whitebelt land created.*
- What does 50 persons and jobs per hectare look like?
- *Cornell is above 50. It is the only large community at this standard in York Region and maybe GTA. Angus Glen is slightly below.*



	
Towards a Sustainable Region	
City of Vaughan Town Hall Meeting Feedback September 18, 2008	

	
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Feedback



- I am worried about the environment. A number of woodlots are protected but not linked – this is especially important for wildlife. In particular, wetlands and wildlife are not being protected at Pine Valley Drive and Teston Road.
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority is building a demonstration sustainable home at the Kortright Centre. There is to be a greywater re-use system, ground source heating, etc. The goal is to use the highest level of sustainability. My suggestion is that the Region follow its own green goals by legislating that all new development (and not just single detached dwellings) meet Energy Star, LEED Platinum or the same level as the sustainable home being built at the Kortright Centre.
- *York Region is making steps in this area - Regional building are LEED Silver for new facilities, the new Vaughan City Hall is LEED Gold, Joint EMS/Fire Station in Vaughan is LEED Gold. East Gwillimbury and Vaughan Councils require all new residential homes to Energy Star standard.*



Feedback



- The Oak Ridges Moraine Plan was created, yet did not engage the landowners. A lot of rights were taken away by the Province and landowners need compensation for this.
- Wetlands have disappeared due to OMB decisions. 70% of Ontario's wetlands have already disappeared. Wetlands and agricultural lands within the Vaughan and Markham Whitebelt will be impacted – this needs to be remedied.
- *The Region has recently completed a significant woodlands study. Overtime the Whitebelt will be developed, however significant natural heritage areas in the Whitebelt will be protected.*
- A lot of land, despite being within the Oak Ridges Moraine, has been developed – especially in Richmond Hill.
- Stop widening roads (i.e. Dufferin Street, Jefferson Sideroad).
- The heritage area in Thornhill is being threatened – York Region needs to protect this area.
- The Don River is not adequately connected – this has caused problems with flooding.



Feedback



- Concerned over the quality of jobs within York Region. Employment opportunities need to go beyond big box retail, banquet halls, etc. We need to match residents with their income – stop exporting higher order jobs.
- *The proportion of residents that live and work in York Region is 53% - the lowest in the GTA. We require more highly skilled jobs, and a broader array of housing options for those in lower-end jobs.*
- Workers still need to drive if their employment is located along Highway 400 corridor (i.e. PowerStream building). We need to create better pedestrian and transit oriented environments and put better employment along arterials. We need to think about better placement to create more sustainable travel patterns.
- Development along Yonge Street and Highway 7 will be compact, yet employment continues to be approved for remote areas. We need to arrange jobs better. How can we control this? Municipalities and other agencies need to be able to say yes/no, so that the right types of employment occur in the right locations.



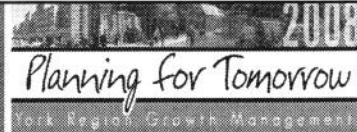
Feedback



- Who dictates what is “appropriate fit and scale” for intensification? For example, in a smaller village like Kleinburg, would that be a mix of bungalows and 2-3 storey buildings?
- *Local municipalities will be creating their own intensification plans to determine how and where intensification will occur. This will identify the appropriate size and locations among varying communities.*
- We need better accountability for these policies. Planners do not make decisions – politicians do. How we can ensure that policies created with this government still have teeth when the next government comes into power?
- *The hierarchy of plans are becoming increasingly specific – the Province has been establishing a tighter policy regimen.*
- Greenbelt Plan has caused the price of vacant land to increase substantially. Have these policies considered the economics of the price of land? Developers will only develop if it is feasible – higher prices could mean higher densities.
- *It is difficult to direct type of jobs to where we want them to go. Planners and Governments can make land available in the ideal location, but the market ultimately makes the decision.*



Feedback



- GTA west corridor is not a highway yet, there has been no decision. It is inappropriate for York Region to show it on their presentation.
- Is York Region going to provide urban expansions to accommodate people and jobs?
- *Yes. The Whitebelt will be used to accommodate future population and employment.*
- We need to build bike lanes that are safe. Install a barrier between the bike and traffic like in Europe.
- *Council has adopted the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan. We are also looking a trails plan for York Region which can provide the opportunity to have off-road bike lanes.*
- We should be designating land for particular types of development and not give politicians the chance to change it. A tire store was built next to million dollar homes. It went to the OMB and despite council opposing it, the OMB approved it. This decision did not have people in mind.
- We need to support intensification, so that agricultural and green land can be protected. Children should grow up with parkland and walkable communities.



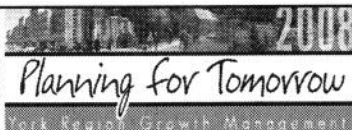
Feedback



- Planning is for people. We must attract industries to make people friendly plans. York Region must market itself more for economic development.
- To improve traffic flow, York Region should consider the use of roundabouts. They are used in Europe and the UK because they are less expensive and a land efficient alternative. The Region should undertake a pilot project for roundabouts, perhaps at King Road and Weston Road.
- Suburban street lighting is a problem. We need to stop the light pollution creeping north into King Township. The Region should legislate that new development use much less street light than is the current practice in new developments. Street lighting with motion sensors could minimize cost of power and pollution. It is becoming hard to see the stars in southern King Township.



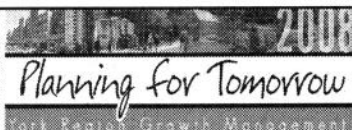
Feedback



- What is the timeframe for expanding development into the Whitebelt?
- *Likely between 5-11 years, but this will depend on the market to a certain extent. Regional level designations will be considered, then detailed planning must be conducted at the local level.*
- In regards to all of the areas slated for "high density development" (i.e. Yonge Street, Highway 7) – we have to be careful that we do not overpopulate them; perhaps limit the height of high rise buildings. We do not want to create a jungle.
- Idea of "complete communities" is not clear in the Growth Management Strategy. The term can mean different things to different people. When looking at built form and design, it is okay to have 4-5 storey condos on arterial roads near single family homes, as they tend to have more open space and landscaping so can be more attractive. But many people will not accept living in 15 storey high-rises.
- To me, complete communities are self-contained, with shops, sports, culture, etc. Too often we've built either single family homes or employment, but we need to mix them together along with human services. We need to move away from car dependency.



Feedback

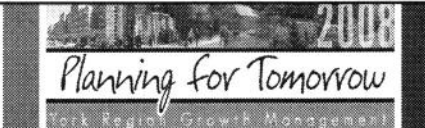


- We need to built safety into communities. We know places where high point towers have failed. At Yonge and Bloor street, an 85 storey tower is being built on 1 acre of land – this is not good.
- We need to incorporate walking/biking paths in green areas. Bring back "mom and pop" stores with the European model of meeting places and community. Green development is economically effective. We should be incorporating this into subdivision plans, along with family values to create liveable active communities.
- Concept of piazza can be used.
- We need to think about how older companies impact property values when located close to residential properties – the incompatibility of uses. i.e. Montessori schools beside auto stores.
- The auto companies along Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue create a noise problem for neighbouring communities. The OMB supports this development, but it is a horrible situation with the noise, smell and traffic. We have complained to the City of Vaughan, but nothing has been done.



Feedback	
• Where does your planning staff look for best practices? • <i>York Region created a Best Practices for New Communities document that looked at North American and Canadian examples.</i> • European examples should be used as well, i.e. squares and walkable communities in the UK. • How was this meeting advertised? Not many people are here. • <i>In newspapers twice, email to mailing list.</i> • Why is there no meeting in King Township? • <i>Meetings were scheduled in municipalities with Regional Centres or with large Whitebelt areas. We will be speaking at King Council.</i> 	

	 Towards a Sustainable Region
Town of East Gwillimbury Town Hall Meeting Feedback September 23, 2008	



- The following comments, questions and suggestions are a summary of the public input received at the consultation session held in the Town of East Gwillimbury. Regional staff attempted to respond to questions and provide additional input. Please contact the Region if this summary does not adequately reflect your input or ideas, or if you have any additional thoughts.
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Feedback



- When looking at human services, the Province has always focused on Toronto. In light of the growth they are expecting us to accommodate, have they expanded their view to the entire GTA?
- *York Region has created the "Fair is Fair" document to make this case to the Province. We're seeing some movement, but need to keep the pressure on the Province.*
- In light of the anticipated growth in the GTA, the Town of East Gwillimbury has done a lot of research on growth figures in preparation of its Official Plan. Why has York Region reduced the number of jobs that should be created in East Gwillimbury – one of York Region's policies is to create a sustainable community, but York Region's approach is only creating bedroom communities.
- *Job growth doesn't exactly match the population growth. East Gwillimbury is very advanced in their research and has taken a long term view. York Region does agree with the Town's numbers – we do not dispute having one job for every two people. If East Gwillimbury is successful in accommodating the job numbers, then York Region can review the numbers and adjust them as part of our 5 year review.*



Feedback



- Concerned that there is political pressure on the Region from the larger southern local municipalities in the distribution of employment numbers.
- *York Region has had to balance job distribution, but is not responding to political pressure.*
- With the extension of Highway 404 and the designation of employment lands, concerned that the numbers for job growth are not matching population growth.
- *York Region supports the Town of East Gwillimbury's Official Plan policies around job and employment growth and is quite willing to review these numbers over time.*
- Great to see a policy direction specifically for human services. Human services is more than hospitals and schools, it can include things like crisis services and services to newcomers. We are vastly underserved and underfunded in these areas.
- *We have over 1,000 human service agencies in York Region that are all struggling to get by on the funding they have now.*
- Need as-of-right zoning for these human services because currently, appropriate zoning is a barrier to offering these services. They also need to be linked into the transit plan.



Feedback



- Affordable housing was not included in tonight's presentation – it is a key discussion we should be having.
- I really appreciate Mayor Young's comments and Council's vision. The majority of people in this community voted for him and the McGuinty government, but we did not vote for the head of York Council or the York Region government. I feel that this is not a democratic process.
- Glad to see global warming included in this discussion. Planning paradigms need to consider this, however we also need to consider how the American economy will affect us. They are going through a trend similar to the depression, which will impact the entire world's economy.
- The American dollar will be dramatically devalued, which will impact our dollar. Ontario will suffer dramatically because of our dependence on north-south commerce. We need to re-think what commerce, manufacturing and employment lands will look like in the future, because they may be dramatically different.
- Suggest employment areas should be located along transit line.

