

**New Communities Workshop
November 22nd, 2006
Glenway Country Club
Break-out Session Feedback**

The following is a summary of the issues and ideas discussed in the break-out sessions carried out at the New Communities Workshop at the Glenway Country Club on November 22nd, 2006.

The purpose of the workshop was to focus on the challenges and opportunities of creating new communities in greenfields (or the whitebelt, as it is often referred to).

York Region will continue to experience rapid growth. The Province's Growth Plan calls for a population increase of 600,000 people and 330,000 jobs by 2031. Some development can be accommodated in already approved greenfield areas and 40% of this growth will be directed to existing built areas. Additional development, however, will be required in new greenfield areas.

The Region is committed to a number of principles in these areas: creating compact, well designed communities; protecting a linked natural heritage system; and providing required infrastructure systems. Integrating these principles in a way that accommodates significant growth presents a number of practical challenges. The approach will require careful planning, a new way of thinking, a more sustainable approach to community design, and environmental stewardship.

The workshop sought advice from key environment, development industry, and government stakeholders.

New Communities Key Ideas

Attached in Appendix 1 are the detailed thoughts/questions/ideas as expressed in the break-out groups on the creation of new communities within the whitebelt.

The following is a staff summary of the key conclusions/directions identified regarding the creation of new communities within the whitebelt.

- A new approach to community, natural heritage, and infrastructure planning in "Whitebelt" area is required.
- All stakeholders: development industry, interest groups, municipalities, public should be involved.
- New approach could avoid expensive and time consuming conflicts.
- Intensification of existing areas is required.
- Careful integration of natural heritage areas, communities, and infrastructure is key.
- Natural heritage corridors should be thought of as essential, permanent "green infrastructure."
- New approach to infrastructure is required including: low impact green crossing, emphasis on transit, and sustainable storm water management.
- Community design must address: energy, green buildings, walk/transit emphasis, and quality of life.
- Innovative funding will be key to address capital costs, upkeep, management.

- Communication/education with all parties is essential.
- Additional workshops/studies will be necessary to drill down on specific sub-issues and produce recommendations.

Next Steps

York Region has committed to reporting back on the findings of the workshop. These results will be brought to Council in early 2007. The input received in this workshop will contribute to the Region's Growth Management initiatives and provide a basis for further discussions regarding the development of a new generation of communities within the Region.

Stakeholders and workshop participants will be kept informed. If you have any comments or additional suggestions, please forward them to Regional staff at futureyork@york.ca.

Appendix 1 – New Communities Break-out: Detailed Notes

The break-out session addressed the creation of new communities within the whitebelt. The discussion focused on the following questions:

1. What are the key elements and attributes of:
 - a. Compact communities.
 - b. Linked natural heritage systems.
 - c. Integrated infrastructure.
2. What are the key issues, conflicts, and opportunities for compact communities, linked natural heritage systems, and integrated infrastructure?
3. What is the right balance of natural heritage and community areas?
4. What are your ideas for how we can move forward; are there opportunities for partnerships? What processes are needed?

Four break-out groups, with the assistance of a facilitator, discussed the issues and generated ideas for the creation of new communities within the whitebelt. The following thoughts/questions/ideas are repeated as expressed in the break-out groups. Each break-out group identified a number of “Key Points” or conclusions.

1.1 Group 1 – Facilitator: Laura Atkins-Paul

Question 1: Key Elements

Compact Communities	Linked Natural Heritage System	Integrated Infrastructure
• Safe community (involve police early) • Walkability • Work/live balance • Close gap between residential and employment • Reduced right of way for vehicular traffic (higher transit use) • Flexible zoning • Lifecycle built into community • Bike to community amenities • Amenities for seniors • Compact communities don't have to be 20 stories – can achieve targets with different urban form	• Define natural heritage layers & provide certainty • Keep natural heritage areas natural, i.e. not every space needs trails • Create more links between bigger features • Carefully plan trails to avoid individual trail blazing • Trails provide full lifecycle opportunities • Sustaining wildlife; e.g. IBM's Markham campus has deer • Science based protection of “pristine” areas and use of other areas • Clear implementation system	• Think differently about getting people around – i.e. smaller shuttles • Holistic transportation system • Dedicated right of way for transit & cycling lanes • Walkability & accessibility in village design → include more pedestrian shortcuts • Finer grid – more connectivity

Question 2: Issues, Conflicts, Opportunities

- Natural Heritage System → who pays for it, who maintains it, what are the processes to implement? Under who's authority? What are the mechanisms to implement?
- Park Acquisition → Could the 5% dedication be included within the Natural Heritage System – increases opportunities/land
- Expectation that infrastructure engineers will protect natural heritage areas – but people supporting the natural heritage side need to take a bigger picture view on how infrastructure happens in order to protect the natural heritage system so that infrastructure isn't fragmenting Natural Heritage Systems.
- Rethink how we provide infrastructure
 - E.g. Lower impact design instead of "no road"
- Barriers:
- Separation of home and work
 - Challenge to use transit – need more work trips
 - Current live/work locations are too great a challenge to transit use
- Test cases of home based work on Newmarket – unsuccessful
- Stonehaven: not everything was there to make it work
- Industry needs to work with government on work from home innovations
- Increased cost of protecting natural features in design and build of infrastructure
- Less density = more automobile use
- Don't realize that if we don't pay now, will pay later – e.g. remediation of storm water works
- A barrier is the way we don't work together – we've lost the art of "town planning"
- Need more inter-disciplinary co-operation
- Look at process
- How can financing take place in a way that works for everyone
- We need to think about "saleable" factors to industry, community; current & cost benefit analysis – for council, community, and industry
- What are cost benefits of natural environment - benefits to community well-being, to community – broader scale i.e. Province.
- Lack of understanding and sophistication of design makers – some politicians, developers
 - Need to reach beyond the converted; reach and re-educate home buyers and existing homeowners

Question 3: Natural Heritage/Community Balance

- In upper watersheds we're in a finer topography – i.e. natural features – small streams that feed the whole system
- If we look at this in terms of "developable area" we put a negative lens on it
- Can look at small streams as the multi-purpose community amenities – bike trails – infiltration areas
- Extremes are not desirable – if extreme, not integrated
 - Eg. Development vs. environment – need to be integrated part of community
- Implementation of landform conservation design should look to other jurisdictions that have done this
 - We're not the first

- Look at implementation mechanisms
- Think about what really needs protection & have discussion with Province on lines drawn
- Improve science so built environment does not have an impact on natural systems
- New science and innovation with engineering → look beyond how we're doing things now and the rules in place
- Look at more innovative ways to do things e.g. smaller storm water ponds

Question 4: Ideas for Moving Forward

- Partner with Region, municipalities, developers & province on symposiums that look at specific issues
 - Eg. Toronto's tall and medium rise buildings
- Bring in experts; inspire people – get decisions makers there
- Increasing getting people together is a challenge
- Look at ways to more effectively engage all stakeholders; need to do a better job around that – talk to them where they are
- Look at innovative new ways to build better infrastructure e.g. multi-use roadways
- The current innovations need more “hype”
- Where you have an existing historic town, need a higher level of innovation
- Greenfields “blank canvasses” are more challenging
- Natural heritage needs to be a bigger part of urban areas
- Need to look at technologies and communications around innovation e.g. what's being done with Markham Centre
- How do we tap into existing technologies to reach more stakeholders and tackle issues of community growth
- Delegate tasks to different groups to go out and work on solutions; circle the wagons around key points we're all working out
- Avoiding OMB → set stricter standards
- Need to breakdown silos – work together
- Get adjoining ratepayers on board and get them enthusiastic
- Improve how do we design consultation process to engage stakeholders
- Ideas:
- Go to where the stake holders are, E.g.:
 - Hockey rink
 - Mall
 - Getting into schools – influence public opinions e.g. blue box & recycling
 - Mom's groups
 - Get to ratepayers executive to engage groups
 - These ideas shown to work
- Communication and education are key elements
- Get NIMBY neighbourhoods on board early
- Look at different levels of density and costs – environmental, financial, social – let community help direct what happens
- What is right density split?
 - If this is a number crunching exercise we're in trouble
- Get stakeholders on board to help to craft vision

- Need to look at the most sustainable way of intensifying existing urban before we even think about white areas

Key Points

- Want communities that are safe and walkable, have flexible zoning and the lifecycle built into them.
- Need to define all layers of Natural Heritage and provide science based protection for them – and ensure there is a clear implementation system for this.
- Communities should be designed on a finer grid for better connectivity and include a holistic transportation system.
- The way infrastructure is provided needs to be reworked – need to use low impact designs.
- Need to address the separation of home and work.
- A large barrier is the way we don't work together – need to recapture the art of “town planning”; break down the silos.
- Cost benefit analysis needs to be given to council, community and industry...need to think about the “saleable” factors of what we intend to build.
- Development and the environment need to be properly integrated for good community design.
- The Region should look to other parts of the world for guidance on how to define/implement best practices. We need to use new science and engineering in our projects – look beyond how we're doing things now and the rules in place. New innovations need more “hype”.
- The Region needs to partner with other levels of government, developers, environmentalists, etc. to hold symposiums that drill down to address specific issues.
- Communication is key – need to effectively engage all stakeholders; go to where they are & get them on board with future planning/projects.
- There is a need to set stricter standards to avoid escalating conflicts/sending projects to the OMB.
- The issue of how to intensify existing communities needs to be addressed before we even think about how to address the whitebelt/new communities.

1.2 Group 2 – Facilitators: Anthony Ierullo & Trish Elliott

Question 1: Key Elements

Compact Communities	Linked Natural Heritage System	Integrated Infrastructure
• Live/work(/play/learn) • Mixed use • (Rapid) transit • Marketable • Healthy ▪ Walkability ▪ Fewer cars = less smog • Linked to transit, trails, communities, commercial, etc...	• River valley • Forests • Open field • Bridges between green roofs • Trails/bikes • Mix of active/passive uses ▪ In natural heritage, should only be passive	• Technology changes (more working at home) • Already-built form has poor storm water management ▪ Accommodate new with better tech. • “Green infrastructure” • Innovation (tools/technologies) • Highway vs. transit

• Greenspace • Mixed housing ▪ Variety/choice • Aesthetics (good urban design) ex. Markham Centre • Intensification • Higher density • Sustainable • Community gardens • Working from home • No school busses needed (walk to school) • Built around people not cars • Local markets (agricultural land links/ locally grown food) • Safe ▪ Well lit ▪ OBA standards • Less energy use • Green buildings (facilitating storm water?) • Self sufficient (Zero footprint) • Needs to address changes in population age and cultures (the different needs and values) • Use urban lens on built areas; more compact = more efficient • Reduce leapfrog effect	• Wetlands • Connections to other open spaces • Agriculture (in certain cases...i.e. more native species) • Conflict between agriculture & natural heritage • Quality of location (size & shape) ▪ How to handle the isolated bits • Quantity & quality balance (one does not necessarily mean the other, but they are linked) • Storm water opportunities • Aquifer discharge and recharge; head waters • Provincially significant landscapes (ex. ORM, ESAs, PSAs, ANSIs, etc...) ▪ Policy beyond the Region • Needs to meet some green cover goal (over time)	ways • Water & sewer • Dove tail infrastructure with itself e.g. carry out a wastewater project with a roads project • Who will pay for it? • How to deal with small pockets of land? • Transit ▪ Mixed opportunities (walk, rail, bus, bike, etc...) ▪ Each community would have different opportunities and constraints to this • Early planning to look at servicing (multiple objectives) ▪ E.g. trails along a hydro corridor • Energy: supply mix; district energy; heating/cooling within the actual communities • Waste management/recycling & biomass • Key is to integrate as much infrastructure as possible without widening the project space
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Question 2: Issues, Conflicts, Opportunities

- How to integrate as much infrastructure into small spaces at the same time
- Density and NIMBYism
 - Estimated growth = higher densities
- "New communities" should not only be houses
- Need a realistic density for the market
- Shift social values
 - Communication initiative with the public
 - E.g. show the health benefits of density
- Public sector leadership on public education
- Policies that do not promote leapfrogging to other Regions

- Learn from the policies/practices of other areas that are currently doing a better job than us
- Intensification target is a challenge
 - Who has the political fortitude to get this approved?
- The “bubble” of aging population
 - Changing needs and housing requirements (e.g. more condos)
- Cost: Who covers it? How?
 - Partnerships
 - Efficiencies in administration: need to get groups together to decide who/what/where/etc.
- Lobby for incentives
- Let it evolve naturally
- Take out invasive species to leave areas for future planning
- In whitebelt – will we actually be able to develop these communities? (the true, connective communities)
 - What about the isolated bits? (We don't want to put in executive estates)
- Make demand for connecting them
 - People won't walk along spaces that aren't really connected...need to facilitate this; alternative solutions
- Is our current system even able to do this?
 - Is this more than we can swallow? Too many people, alternatives, etc...How realistic are our ideas?
 - Maybe look at what we can do; don't setup for failure
 - Perhaps we need to identify what we can do now, what is realistically possible, and what is not realistic – and focus on these three types at separate stages
 - We all know what we have to do, but we need to look at how do deal with it
- We know the progress won't be perfect, but needs to stay goal oriented and make all the small steps to make things better and the goal achievable
 - Invest money now so we won't have huge burden later (that may make any goals even less possible)
- Need to focus on new communities as zero footprint
- Put features in there now that will allow for connectivity (etc.) later
 - If we focus on making communities greener, then perhaps we can allow for less of a buffer between communities and green areas because it has less impact – this will provide for more space and more connectivity
- How put transit/roads across greenbelt areas to connect?
- Integrated use is really important, so we actually need less connectivity to other areas, since everything you need will be in your immediate area
- Cost of these natural heritage crossings seems too high
 - We need new ways to pay
 - The Province should step up
 - Shared costs (from top to bottom)
- Need to do things better up front

Question 3: Natural Heritage/Community Balance

- Which comes first, natural heritage or communities?

- Do we plan communities in the context of the existing natural heritage?
Or plan communities then look at putting natural heritage into it?
- It may not be a 'balance' between the two, but more about how we look at planning, or the order that planning gets done
- The best way seems to be planning communities in the context of the existing natural heritage system
- Need key people at the table to discuss this
- There are better practices today than what existed in the past, and they will only get better
 - The balance needs to be seen in the context of future technological advances – we don't want to plan without flexibility for technological advances or we may put ourselves in situations where the decisions we made in the past limit us from implementing a new & better practice in the future
 - The cost of fixing it may be too high
- Need shared values, innovation, integrated partnerships
- Natural heritage green areas can serve other functions
- Credits balanced with parkland and natural heritage uses
 - Public seems to want more parkland
 - Maybe these expectations should be lower and then we would get more natural heritage instead?
 - Can requirements for parkland be traded with natural heritage areas?
- Schools and social housing and long term care facilities
- Integrate power in areas, can't have a "normal community"
 - Wind generation, biomass
- Keep services/energy/etc. within communities, so doesn't need to import a lot of things; self sufficient
- Integration, innovation, and leadership will work better than "balance" → balance implies that somebody wins/loses
 - Education to get everyone on the same page; we know it will be a long process, but we need to keep making small steps
- Where could we put wind technologies?
 - Need to educate people to allow for them to be built in the most efficient spaces; even if this means putting it on the Oak Ridges Moraine or in plain sight
 - Ex) The Huron Wind Project in Kincardine
- Energy conscience, friendly, efficient – maybe this won't be wind technology, but need to figure it out.

Question 4: Ideas for Moving Forward

- Natural Heritage Master Plan – goes back to setting the natural heritage first, and then planning communities within that context (set the footprint right off the bat)
- Scales of the plans
 - Configure/refine Regional plans down to community levels
- Education is key
 - Decisions are politically driven, down to the neighbourhood level
- Target density levels will shock the system so need politicians at the table
- We don't have the staff or energy to educate all public, so need local councillors to help within communities

- Partnerships can be used to help out
- Master Plans need to hold shared values
- Education and innovation and partnerships
- Need decision mechanisms that work to be able to move forward – like the governance mechanism for decisions
- Communities don't have the same rights
- Put people into plans earlier in the process
 - But how do we get them to come out for this?
- How do we get cooperation, incentives, and funding together for communities like Eco-tech
 - This was not an individual initiative
- What “carrots” are available to us? What can we work on?
 - Like lowering everyone's expectations/standards on lot size, etc.
 - This would take away the controversy in the decisions politicians need to make
- Need to remember that public safety trumps everything

Key Points

- Public Education
 - Create public interest to drive politicians
 - Overcome “NIMBYism”
- Not just about density
 - It's about having a wide range of uses
 - It's about kids being able to walk to school; corner stores
- The balance
 - What can you do with isolated areas?
 - How to connect these communities?
 - We want “communities” not “enclaves”
 - Ensure environmental protection does not undermine growth objectives for new communities (and vice versa)
- Coordinate infrastructure projects for the least disruptive layout and construction.
- Develop new/better tools for future growth i.e. prescriptive zoning in urban areas.

1.3 Group 3 – Facilitators: Heather Konefat & Paul May

Question 1: Key Elements

Compact Communities	Linked Natural Heritage System	Integrated Infrastructure
• Offer all services ▪ Retail ▪ Social services • Appropriate mix of residential & work opportunities • Walkability • Transit services • Definition of size of community? ▪ E.g. Cornell – 9	• Can also be used for walking • Needs to be integrated with community • Need to emphasize health aspects • Key is implementation ▪ Developers/ municipalities need the right tools ▪ Policy	• Concentrated/ consolidated in corridors • Pick key corridors • Need subway system • Think of smaller scale infrastructure ▪ Energy: e.g. wind; distributed energy ▪ Grey water usage ▪ Sewage treatment

neighbourhoods, 1 community • Attributes need to be scalable ▪ Some local ▪ Some larger • Complete community will have complete networks • Energy self sustaining • Reduced parking ▪ No surface parking ▪ No strip malls ▪ However, tenants are demanding parking • Commercial has to be competitive with other areas • Large parking lots should have sidewalks • Supply of land is not infinite ▪ Need to build upwards • Need to build transportation infrastructure ▪ Not enough happening • May have to start charging for parking to raise funds for transit • Highway 7 needs a subway ▪ Most significant corridor in GTA	▪ Legislative ▪ Transit funding	▪ Layering infrastructure • Communities are too far flung • Have to build infrastructure over long distances – not sustainable • Need greater intensification • Long infrastructure will be too costly to operate/maintain
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Question 2: Issues, Conflicts, Opportunities

- Protecting half of land for Natural Heritage System may force us into developing more areas
- How do you service isolated areas?
- Need to manage natural areas
- Can we achieve more than 40% intensification?
- Need right land use in right place
- Sometimes land uses don't mix well
 - E.g. high density next to highways
- Daily needs should be in walkable distance

Question 3: Natural Heritage/Community Balance

- Is 40/60 the right balance?
- Providing the right product to remain competitive in North America
- Need tools to implement higher density – local opposition
- Need to integrate various land uses
 - Residential/commercial/employment
- Implement good quality of life and good planning will follow
- Need to have the right employment opportunities
- Need appropriate housing for aging population
- Look at integrating government services
- Maybe supply of single family units is already provided by existing units
 - Need careful analysis of what is right balance of housing types
- Even young families don't necessarily want 50 ft lots

Key Points

- Need for upfront investment in right kind of infrastructure
 - Need alternate financing and senior government finance
- Compact communities to protect Natural Heritage System
- Communities should be self sustaining – waste; energy; etc.
- Infrastructure not just roads/sewers but also energy, health, social, etc. infrastructure
- Natural Heritage System shouldn't be thought of as existing "somewhere else" – it should be an integral part of communities
- Balance
 - Needs to be customized
 - One size doesn't fit all
- Car shouldn't drive the design of new communities; first focus on walkability
- Developers have to serve the marketplace...but they can also create it too
- Need to work in partnerships
- Recognize that some infrastructure will have to cross green corridors
 - Integrate them to minimize impacts
 - Will be some trade-offs
 - All stakeholders need to sit together to plan communities
- Do we have to accept provincial growth forecast?

1.4 Group 4 – Facilitator: Sean Hertel**Question 1: Key Elements**

Compact Communities	Linked Natural Heritage System	Integrated Infrastructure
• Mix of housing = Mix of people, ages • Transit-supportive ▪ Needs to be dense enough • Mix of uses – jobs, retail, etc. • Linkages with natural	• Energy (on-site) generation • Car-free → People-first (integration of activities) • Employment – How much? Degree? • Energy – district systems at early stage	• Transit – staging with development • Roads → Rethink (i.e. we always design to peak capacity) • Flexible flows to maximise capacity • Efficient infrastructure =

heritage system – interactions • Garden plots • Noise mitigation • Privacy • Sensitive design • Human services	• Naturalize/capture benefits of storm water management ponds, boulevards, etc. ▪ Rethink design • Integrate “green” through design • Two-tiered approach ▪ Region-wide ▪ Community-focus	more capacity, better function
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Question 2: Issues, Conflicts, Opportunities

- If we want mixed, live-work communities, why do we subsidize longer, one-way transit/car trips?
 - Could we price according to distance?
- What will take priority?
 - Bedroom community vs. integrated?
 - Cultural activity
 - What is culture?
 - Green/nature can define us/character/culture
- Should we price the community-based greenspace accordingly?
- Address the social benefits of greenspace
- Harness the function/value of existing natural heritage
 - i.e. storm water containment/treatment
- Valley systems can serve to isolate communities
 - How can this be overcome?
 - Natural linkages
 - Human activity links
 - We don't always have to link systems for humans
- Environmentally-sensitive infrastructure
 - E.g. locally-based sewage treatment, power generation, etc.
- Greywater recycling

Question 4: Ideas for Moving Forward

- Legislative changes are required (e.g. allow for greywater recycling)
- Building an economy of scale for energy-savings
 - Projects have to be big enough to be cost effective
- Why should people have to pay for something that should be there in the first place?
- Allow for things to happen
 - More flexible zoning
 - Allow a rich mix of uses/activities
- What about flexible communities?
 - Allow for more identity?
- Co-op communities
 - Better stewardship
 - Infrastructure
 - Environment

Key Points

- Education is key
 - Region has role in setting value system; to influence behaviour
 - Influence through costs – pricing structures
 - Education
 - There's a knowledge gap that is internal to the Region and local municipalities
- A new regulatory framework
 - Moving minds
 - Remove barriers to do innovative things
 - Create incentives ... (i.e. tax)
- Community Buy-in
 - What is true sustainability?
 - Cost-benefit analysis
 - Can we guarantee lower taxes through efficiency?
- What is the Region's legacy?
 - Building the communities of the future
 - Communities that are flexible and able to adapt & mature
 - A truly sustainable region
 - Becoming a national and international model on how to combat climate change through building communities differently
- What are the barriers to Ecotech Village?
 - How do we take those precedents and make them successful