



Towards a Sustainable Region

York Region Growth Management
Environmental Stakeholders Consultation
Feedback
September 27, 2007

Discussion



- Question the public's "acceptance" of growth and the Growth Plan
- Is there a mechanism to determine whether we can accommodate the growth forecasted? Yes, through the review of our human services, fiscal, environmental impact analyses.
- This analysis will form part of the consideration to Council
- Federal immigration policy – growth is coming
- Costs of growth needs to be shared more equitably
- 2051 scenario; build out of whitebelt and continuation of intensification
- Is there a point where growth in York Region stops? Capacity limit to land base; population will fluctuate



Discussion



- When the Province assigned targets to York Region, are we assured that the limits on developable area in York Region (Greenbelt, ORM) was taken into consideration?
- What has been the growth rate in YR for the last 10 years?
- 35,000 ppl./year, which is close to our projections
- We are already experiencing negative impacts from the current rate of growth (smog), will get worse with climate change, water restrictions,
- Do we look at climate change when examining growth?



Discussion



- Lack of acceptance of growth to York Region
- Environmental Assessments can be piecemeal; we don't have a way of looking at growth in a comprehensive way (e.g.. Hwy. 427 EA is not currently into ORM but potential future impacts of extension are not being examined)
- We need to take a more aggressive stance on growth and acceptance of growth
- We are not identifying the cumulative impact of growth; we need to have a more comprehensive view of growth



Discussion



2007
Planning for Tomorrow
York Region Growth Management

- York Region live-work ratio; how robust is the plan to address this?
- Key issue to live-work is affordable housing
- Growth Management approach examines fiscal impact, coordination with infrastructure master plan updates
- Continuing same pattern of growth; concern about maintaining our infrastructure
- Popsicle test (can our children easily walk to buy a popsicle?); how do we make our communities more walkable?
- We are looking at a different way of planning communities, both whitebelt and intensification.



Discussion



2007
Planning for Tomorrow
York Region Growth Management

- Don't develop into the whitebelt until all the capacity within the existing urban areas is achieved (100% intensification)
- Reduction in greenhouse gas; what can we do to force a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions?
- What tools does the Region have to force reductions in Greenhouse gas emissions?



Discussion



- What can we do to achieve a series of communities that are more sustainable?
- There needs to be an immediate effort to make a connection to the Sustainability Strategy and the Growth scenarios.
- We need to know that if growth will occur, that it will occur in a way that will improve our current sustainability situation.
- Council's endorsement of sustainability means that we must make these connections between sustainability and growth.



Discussion



- If we are going to expand into the whitebelt areas, then we need to ensure that we are developing communities and examining our infrastructure master plans in a different, more sustainable manner (both in intensifying urban areas and new communities)
- Infrastructure master plans are being developed with sustainability principles



Discussion



2007
Planning for Tomorrow
York Region Growth Management

- Linked system in new communities; did growth take into consideration the linked system in the whitebelt?
- Concern about connection between the 404 extension and York Region's sustainability goals.
- What are we doing by getting people out of their cars?
- We need to intensify our existing urban areas, and not expand into our greenfield areas.
- We need to ensure that our urban areas have sufficient greenspace, gardens, etc. to ensure liveability
- Dunlop Observatory lands; want York Region and Richmond Hill to acquire these lands.
- We need to rethink our attitude toward land use planning, land is a fixed resource; radically rethink how we plan – public transit before we plan cities, smaller cars – if we hold onto the single family dream, we cannot be sustainable.



Discussion



2007
Planning for Tomorrow
York Region Growth Management

- Epidemic diseases; cardio-vascular, obesity, caused by our lifestyle, (add childhood obesity and children with fatty livers)
- We don't concentrate enough on rail transit, improved rail infrastructure and service to allow flexibility
- YR has been advocating for significant Provincial and Federal transit investment; recent Provincial announcement allocates multiple hundred million investment into transit (rail and other)
- How much money is budgeted for transit in 2007 compared to how much money is budgeted for roads in 2007? Will show Regional priority.
- For every dollar invested in roads, three dollars invested in transit (over 10 years) – reflects Provincial funding in addition to Regional budget
- Pre-greenbelt and pre-growth plan, natural heritage planning was done differently
- It seems now, that the Region is looking at natural heritage planning differently. How are we supporting local municipalities in their natural heritage strategies. What level of detail is the Region looking at for the natural heritage system.



Discussion



- Until the natural heritage work is done, how can we analyse the growth scenarios?
- Co-housing could appeal to various segments of our population
- Green by-laws? Can we mandate roofs to be made with reflective materials.
- Natural heritage – should include grasslands; maintain grasslands
- Dialogue with the public more often (long time between consultation sessions) – environmental advisory committees



Discussion



- Assumption that the greenbelt and the ORM is the answer to the agriculture problem in York Region. Whitebelt has the best farmland in York Region.
- Affordable farmland in York Region to save; not enough income from farming in York Region.
- Who will pay for buffers on farmlands?
- Environmental benefit of farmlands have not been considered. Are cornfields of less ecological valuable than forests (for carbon)?
- Farmlands can be linkages for wildlife
- Concern about tree planting (connections in Natural Heritage Discussion Paper) through farmland



Discussion



2007
Planning for Tomorrow
York Region Growth Management

- LSRCA has program to provide financial incentives for farmers
- Significant environmental improvement through environmental farm strategies
- Expand the strategy to examine crop land as connection
- Oakville's Urban Canopy study (UFORE study) YR should do similar
- Agriculture in the urban setting is important
- Important to distinguish between the biodiversity of a core forest area and agriculture
- Updating the natural heritage system is timely
- Pg. 9 (of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper) list of features; can be expanded to other ownerships other than TRCA and LSRCA
- Pg. 12 (of the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper) private land stewardship should not be confined to Greenbelt and ORM; but the entire York Region... this will be the secret to the success of the Region's natural heritage system

