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TECHNICAL PAPER ON A PROPOSED METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING A BUILT BOUNDARY FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. Staff be directed to consult with the Local Municipal Staff within the next week to obtain their input to this report.**
- 2. The Regional Chair send a copy of this report and a letter incorporating the comments of the Local Municipalities, to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal by the January 19, 2007 deadline for comments.**
- 3. The recommendations contained in the following report, December 6, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. This report be submitted to the province as York Region's feedback on the built boundary methodology.
2. Staff report back to Committee and Council when the final built boundary has been released and analyzed.

2. PURPOSE

The main purpose of this report is to advise Committee and Council of the key provisions of the *Technical Paper on a Proposed Methodology for Developing a Built Boundary for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Built Boundary Technical Paper)*, released by PIR on November 27, 2006. Also, comments on preliminary mapping of the built-up area are provided.

3. BACKGROUND

On January 16, 2006, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (PIR) released the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Growth Plan includes policies which support the development of more compact, vibrant, transit-supportive communities.

One of the key policies of the Growth Plan is that “by the year 2015 and for each year thereafter, a minimum of 40 per cent of all residential development occurring annually within each upper- and single-tier municipality will be within the *built-up area*.”

The *built-up area* is defined as “all land within the built boundary”.

The *Built Boundary Technical Paper* establishes a methodology for developing a built boundary for the Greater Golden Horseshoe as well as preliminary mapping of built-up areas. The mapping does not depict the final built boundary, but rather a broad, grid-cell analysis of built-up areas. The standard methodology outlined in the technical paper provides a consistent approach to defining the built boundary for municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The final version of the built boundary will be a precise, fixed line used for the purposes of implementing and monitoring the intensification objectives of the Growth Plan.

This report summarizes the built boundary method established by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, as well as comments on the preliminary mapping of the built up area.

PIR has requested comments from municipalities on the overall approach and, in particular, on the steps involved in the refinement of the built boundary by January 19, 2007.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Built Boundary Methodology

The methodology for the development of the built boundary consists of four main steps. PIR has completed the first three steps. Step 4 includes a draft set of rules for refining and smoothing the edge of the built up areas, to delineate a final built boundary that reflects as closely as possible the extent of the built-up area on the ground. Steps 1 through 3 are described below:

Step 1: Creation of a Parcel Land-Use Database

The data used to derive the built boundary have been obtained from the Ontario Parcel Alliance (OPA) and the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC).

Tax Roll 2006 MPAC data is current to year end 2005, and OPA data is current to January 2006. These databases consistently report the location and number of residential units at the parcel level on an annual basis across the GGH. The OPA database provides the geospatial data required in order to map the parcel fabric in a Geographic Information System. The MPAC database provides the land-use and residential unit information required to determine the placement of the built boundary. The information from the two databases has been incorporated into the Parcel Land-use Database used as the basis for

the built boundary analysis. There are over 300 land-uses identified in MPAC. These land-uses have been summarized into six categories in the Parcel Land-use Database as outlined in *Attachment 1*.

Step 2: Selection of Settlement Areas for which a Built Boundary will be Developed

Settlement areas are those areas that are designated in a local official plan for development and urban uses (i.e. urban areas and towns and villages). All built-up areas that will be delineated by the built boundary will be within settlement areas. However, not all settlement areas will include built-up areas as some are quite small.

PIR determined that the built boundary would be developed for settlement areas over a size threshold of 400 residential units. Using the MPAC and OPA datasets, all settlement areas with 400 or more residential units were selected and mapped.

Step 3: Generation of Grid-cell Mapping for the Areas Identified in Step 2

In order to analyze the settlement areas, PIR developed a grid-cell matrix. The grid-cell matrix consists of 250 metre by 250 metre cells and was overlaid on the settlement area and parcel datasets in order to create a standardized and manageable dataset for further analysis.

For all grid cells within settlement areas, land-uses were classified as either built or unbuilt. Please see *Attachment 2* for the classification method.

Steps 1 to 3 describe the extent of the work completed by PIR on the built boundary to date. Overall steps 1 through 3 of the built boundary methodology outlined by PIR are sound.

Step 4: The Next Step in Built Boundary Methodology (Application of Refinement Rules)

The completion of Step 4 will result in the refinement of the built-up areas in order to create a built boundary that is precise, intuitive and identifiable on the ground. The following rules will be applied to the analysis in Step 4:

- Revert from grid-cells to parcels.
- Overlay detailed GIS datasets.
- Verify land-uses of parcels.
- Limit the built boundary to the settlement area boundary.
- Reassign certain unbuilt parcels adjacent to Provincial highways.
- Align the built boundary with recognizable features.
- Treatment of holes in the built-up area.
- Refine the built boundary further with local knowledge of other uses.
- Addition of new development prior to Growth Plan effective date.

Please see *Attachment 3* for a more detailed description of the refinement rules.

Clarity and simplicity should be key components in establishing the built boundary. The method should be simplified as much as possible in order to provide a clear and logical boundary.

4.2 Analysis of the Outcomes of the Methodology

Included in the appendices of the *Technical Paper* is mapping of the built up area, as determined by steps 1 through 3 of the methodology (see *Attachment 4*). Below are the comments by regional staff on the methodology.

4.2.1 Regional Centres

Portions of the southern three Regional Centres are not included in built up areas. They have not been included because they are not technically “built”. Staff have previously impressed upon the Province the need for the Urban Growth Centres to be included. The *Built Boundary Technical Paper* states that “all urban growth centres delineated pursuant to the Growth Plan would be included within the built boundary.”

4.2.2 Parkway Belt West Lands

The Parkway Belt West Lands have been largely excluded from the built up areas layer. This includes the Leitchcroft subdivision in Markham. Staff recommended that all Parkway Belt West lands should be included in the built boundary. The *Technical Paper* advises that “unbuilt parcels lying between the built parcel edge and the centre-line of a 400-series provincial highway will be reassigned as being built, if the distance between the nearest built parcel edge and the centre-line of the highway is less than 1km”. Regional staff will need to conduct a more thorough analysis of this rule in order to determine whether or not all Parkway Belt lands will be included in the built boundary.

4.2.3 Cornell Centre

The Cornell Centre Secondary Plan includes properties on both sides of Highway 7, between Reesor Road and Ninth Line, and is bound by Highway 407 to the south. Currently 8,750 units and 11,500 jobs are proposed for Cornell Centre. This entire area is not included in the built-up area. Regional and Markham staff recommend that Cornell Centre should be included in the Built Boundary.

4.2.4 Edge Issues

There are many areas in the Region where growth is occurring rapidly. In some instances, this has resulted in jagged, uneven built-area edges that could contribute to an awkward, discontinuous built boundary. Staff recommend that the final built area be largely contiguous and delineated by a clear boundary aligned with recognizable features. The *Technical Paper* allows that some significant development may have occurred prior to the adoption of the Growth Plan (June 16, 2006), and not been captured in the built up area analysis. Areas where edge issues are found include Stouffville; Berczy, Wismer, Greensborough, Cornell and the Markham Road/Steeles Avenue area in Markham; and Blocks 10, 11, 12, 18 and 39 in Vaughan. The refinement stage of the built boundary

methodology allows for the addition of areas that were built by June 16, 2006, as well as some smoothing of edges.

A technical analysis of the edge areas, in consultation with the area municipalities, will have to be completed to determine the exact boundary.

4.2.5 Donut Holes

Donut holes, or pockets of unbuilt grid-cells, surrounded by built-up areas are found throughout the Region. Staff recommend that most of these lands be included in the Built Boundary. The *Technical Paper* addresses donut holes by allowing for the inclusion of certain unbuilt land uses (such as public parks, natural heritage features where development is prohibited, and some servicing and transportation infrastructure) as well as groups of smaller unbuilt parcels (less than 62,500 sq.m.) regardless of land use in the final built up area.

4.2.6 Unbuilt Areas

In some cases, areas have been erroneously identified as built-up. Many of the Towns and Villages in the region may have inflated built up areas because all parcels with built structures, regardless of the size of the parcel, were captured as built-up. Some of these larger parcels may actually be of a more rural character. Regional staff, in consultation with the areas municipalities, will review these areas for accuracy.

4.3 Next Steps

The next steps for the review and final delineation of the built boundary include:

- In collaboration with area municipalities and PIR, refine the built-up areas and delineate the final built boundary. This work is expected to be completed during January and February of 2007.
- Integrate the final built boundary into the regional growth management forecasts.
- Continue to work with local municipalities on intensification strategies to achieve the 40% target.

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

The final built boundary will have direct impacts on the form, structure and density of new residential development in the long term. The impact on new development will in turn speak to many of the Vision 2026 goal areas, including Enhanced Environment, Heritage and Culture; Responding to the Needs of our Residents; Housing Choice for our Residents; Managed and Balanced Growth; and Infrastructure for a Growing Region.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications associated with the built boundary methodology proposed by PIR.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Defining the built boundary is one component of the Region's comprehensive growth management exercise that also includes developing revised local municipal forecasts, a land budget exercise, an intensification strategy and updates to the Region's infrastructure master plans and a fiscal impact analysis. To date, regional staff have consulted extensively with local municipal staff throughout this process.

Intensification units will account for 40% of all growth units at the Regional scale from 2015 on. The final delineation of the built boundary will determine the total built-up area for each local municipality. This information will be used as input in the assignment of local municipal intensification targets. Regional staff will work closely with local municipal staff in the refinement of the built up areas.

7. CONCLUSION

Overall the built boundary methodology outlined by PIR is sound. The methodology allows for a consistent evaluation of the built-up areas across the GGH.

The province has completed and mapped the first three stages of the four stage methodology. The maps created do not depict the final built boundary, but rather a grid-cell analysis of the built-up area. There are some areas to be further investigated and addressed in the final, stage-four refinement of the built boundary:

- Parkway Belt West Lands
- Cornell Centre
- Edges of the boundary
- Donut Holes
- Some unbuilt areas that may have been erroneously captured.

In consultation with the areas municipalities, staff will continue to review the methodology and mapping.

Staff are currently working on the residential and employment growth forecasts to 2031. The final delineation of the built boundary will be incorporated into the forecast work in order to help determine the location of the 40% intensification growth target by local municipality.

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Bottomley, Manager Growth Management, Economy and Information Research, Long Range and Strategic Planning Branch at 905 830-4444 ext. 1530 or Paul.Bottomley@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)