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CENTRES AND CORRIDORS DRAFT ROPA AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The following communications be received:**
 - a) Janet Babcock, Commissioner of Planning, Town of Richmond Hill, January 6, 2004 and attached Resolution CW#01-04 of January 5, 2004;**
 - b) Carrie Hoffelner, Richmond Hill, resident, January 7, 2004;**
 - c) Gloria Marsh, Richmond Hill, resident, January 5, 2004;**
- 2. The following requests for deputations be received:**
 - a) Janet Babcock, Commissioner of Planning, Town of Richmond Hill;**
 - b) David Cohen, Councillor, Town of Richmond Hill;**
 - c) David Fleiner, Richmond Hill, resident;**
 - d) Lynn Foster, Councillor, Town of Richmond Hill;**
 - e) Geoff Green, President, Yonge-Harding Church Ratepayers' Association, Richmond Hill;**
 - f) Neil Maynard, Richmond Hill, resident;**
 - g) Vito Spatafora, Councillor, Town of Richmond Hill;**
 - h) Susan Walmer, Chairperson, Ratepayers of Aurora Yonge South;**
 - i) Arnie Warner, Councillor, Town of Richmond Hill;**
- 3. Regional staff be directed to hold a meeting with the above-noted deputants and other interested parties to obtain their comments on the Centres and Corridors Draft ROPA;**
- 4. The recommendations contained in the following report, December 4, 2003, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services, be adopted.**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 1. Council receive this report and attachments for information.**
- 2. Staff continue to consult with the public and local municipalities in order to further refine a draft Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) to achieve the desired urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors, served by rapid transit.**
- 3. Staff be authorized to present an overview of the policy as invited by local Councils.**
- 4. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the nine area municipalities for information.**

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the status of the ROPA addressing Regional Centres and Corridors, and the related consultation process by outlining:

1. The key policy components of a draft ROPA to advance the Region's desired urban structure of Regional Centres and Corridors, served by rapid transit.
2. Feedback received from the local municipalities and public.
3. Upcoming consultation opportunities.

3. BACKGROUND

The York Region Centres and Corridors Strategy is the primary action plan to guide the development of an urban structure based on a network of higher density, mixed use regional and local centres connected by rapid transit corridors. The Strategy contains four major action areas: 1) policy; 2) programs; 3) infrastructure, and; 4) financial tools. The proposed ROPA is the primary policy tool. Reports on centres and corridors at the GTA and York Region level are also before the Committee on this agenda.

A set of ten policy principles was established and endorsed by Regional Council on February 20, 2003 to shape the ROPA (see *Attachment 1*). A staff report dated June 18, 2003 started to set out a policy framework for the ROPA and the associated consultation process. Since that time, consultation has taken place and the draft ROPA has begun to take shape with more detailed draft policies. A draft of the policies for Section 5 (Regional Structure and Growth Management) was circulated to the area municipal staff. A workshop was held on December 1, 2003 with area municipal staff and a great deal of positive feedback was received with ideas on how to better clarify and implement the ROPA as outlined in section 4.2 of this report.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The idea of concentrating development in a network of Regional Centres and Regional Corridors is not a new concept. This was a guiding principle in the development of the Regional Official Plan ten years ago and has been reinforced by the public several times since then through consultations for Vision 2026, the Transportation Master Plan, and the statutory five-year review of the Regional Official Plan in 2002. The Regional Official Plan Amendment is intended to enhance the Region's urban structure. Changes to Chapter 5 will be made to further emphasize and detail the role that Centres and Corridors have in advancing the Region's urban structure. The highlights are outlined below and set out in detail in *Attachment 2* to this report.

The "inverted-T" shape of the Region's urban area is focused on the Yonge Street and Highway 7 corridors, and provides the foundation for building a higher-order transit system and provides locations for more intense development. More intensive development supports transit ridership and attracts a mix of higher-density uses needed to

create a more vibrant, city-type environment. Development will not occur all at once, but incrementally over the timeframe of the Regional Official Plan and beyond as the long term vision. It should be recognized that not all lands next to the rapid transit corridors will be redeveloped at higher densities in the timeframe of the Regional Official Plan.

In order to address this reality, the concept of identifying key development areas is being introduced in the ROP. Regional Centres are already identified through the ROP as key locations for intensification. Each of the Regional Centres is currently covered by a Secondary Plan in the area municipal Official Plans except for Newmarket. Newmarket Council adopted a report on September 8, 2003 recommending that town staff continue to work with Regional staff on implementing the Regional Official Plan Amendment through the upcoming Town Official Plan and Zoning By-law review.

4.1 Regional Official Plan Amendment Highlights

There are two main components to the urban structure: 1) Regional Centres, and 2) Regional Corridors. The Regional Centres have Secondary Plans in place and implementation work is ongoing. Newmarket will be addressing their centre in 2004. Making the Regional Corridors work demonstrates the close linkage of transportation and land use planning. The York Region Rapid Transit Plan and the Transportation Master Plan address the transportation needs, while the ROPA ensures supportive land uses in the Regional Corridors.

The Regional Official Plan is successful and has stood the test of time. This ROPA introduces several new concepts to address the changing land use requirements of the Regional Centres and Regional Corridors. A primary concept is the identification of key development areas along the Regional Corridors. The ROPA also introduces the concept of density targets partnered with urban design criteria to ensure the right development is promoted in these key development areas.

4.1.1 Key Development Areas

A fundamental component of the draft ROPA is the idea of choosing the spots along the Regional Corridors where more intensive development is appropriate, recognizing that Regional Centres are the primary locations for intensification. There is a great diversity in the areas along the corridors in terms of existing development, development opportunities, natural environment, and historical context. It is therefore important that the Region assist the area municipalities in identifying the different conditions of each Regional Corridor on a segment-by-segment basis. This should occur in a comprehensive manner that identifies “Key Development Areas” within these segments, representing one or more of the following:

- Areas with the greatest opportunity for mixed-use and higher-density development.
- Vacant lands or existing areas in transition.
- Areas assigned early priority for rapid transit facilities and services.
- Areas abutting or adjacent to rapid transit stations.
- Areas of the corridor that intersect with other major transportation routes or facilities.

The identification of “Key Development Areas” where higher-density, mixed-use development is encouraged will provide clarity as to where infill and intensification will occur. This in turn will provide some degree of stability to the areas that have not been identified for intensification.

4.1.2 Secondary Plans

Secondary Plans are primary vehicles for implementing the pedestrian friendly, transit supportive development in the area municipalities and are excellent tools to facilitate growth in key development areas. Secondary plans can contain policies which recognize the unique characteristics of each area and set a detailed policy context for new development.

A number of secondary plans currently exist for some portions of the Regional Corridors, may not currently contemplate rapid transit services or supportive development patterns and densities. It is important to review secondary plans to ensure that they can respond to the changing context of the Region through a greater emphasis on pedestrian-friendly, transit-supportive development and intensification. The initial focus needs to be on the secondary plans containing key development areas defined by the area municipalities. This may only be a few of the existing secondary plans, but is an important first step in providing the policy context. The draft ROPA policies provide a number of criteria to guide the secondary plan reviews, including:

- Ensuring compact built form and uses that promotes transit ridership easily accessible by pedestrians.
- Provisions for connections by a fine grain of streets and pedestrian links in Centres.
- Minimum density requirements and resident-to-employee targets.
- Development integrated with surrounding land uses and built-form.
- Promotion of Centres as focal points for community activity and civic pride.
- High quality pedestrian environment.

4.1.3 Urban Design Principles

A large part of achieving transit supportive development rests with the design of the buildings, spaces around the buildings, and the connections to the streets. Buildings can be designed to make it convenient, comfortable, and desirable for pedestrian to get from the building to the sidewalks and transit stops. The design of the building is also the primary factor in how well the building fits within an area. Because of the importance of urban design in achieving good transit supportive development, the draft ROPA has introduced the new concept of including urban design principles and objectives. A number of more specific urban design objectives have been proposed in the ROPA as follows:

- Achievement of pedestrian-friendly development in terms of scale, safety, connectivity, vibrancy, and sun, shade and wind.
- Provision pedestrian connections directly to the street.
- Promotion of street and public space definition through building location and design.
- Achievement of streetscapes that provide a high standard of design in the public realm.

- Achievement of high quality design.
- Ensuring building and parking layout that will allow for future intensification in a phased manner.
- Parking design and standards that assist in achieving pedestrian friendly, transit oriented development.
- Provision of transition between existing residential communities and new development.

4.1.4 Density

The achievement of higher densities in the Regional Centres and Corridors is vital to ensure adequate transit ridership. Higher densities in these strategic locations will generate several benefits, including:

- More efficient use of land and infrastructure.
- Generate levels of activity required to make rapid transit viable.
- Provide a wider range of housing and employment opportunities.
- Create more diversity in the Region's economy.
- A more vibrant public realm.

The draft ROPA introduces a density target of 2.5 FSI (Floor Space Index, being the building area divided by the site area) for the Regional Centres and Regional Corridors to help achieve these objectives. Higher densities supportive of this target would be first achieved in the key development areas. Density also goes hand-in-hand with the urban design principles in achieving transit supportive development. In order to achieve the densities contemplated by the ROPA, for example, parking has to primarily be in a structure rather than at grade. Generally the building would also be pushed closer to the sidewalks since more of the site is covered by building than parking. It is important, however, that any density target be accompanied with detailed urban design objectives to achieve good development that enhances the surrounding community.

4.1.5 Infrastructure

The provision of infrastructure and land use intensification is linked together. The rapid transit infrastructure is needed to support the land use intensification and the land use intensification is needed to support the transit infrastructure. The provision of other hard infrastructure such roads, sewers and water are also important in supporting the Regional structure of Centres and Corridors. The ROP policies need to recognize this link and ensure that infrastructure investment and the Regional Capital Works Program are supportive of the objectives of achieving this structure. The draft ROPA needs to include a policy such as:

- “Provide support and direction for regional infrastructure investment including:
- i rapid transit and transit network
 - ii road network
 - iii sewer and water systems
 - iv streetscaping.”

In terms of rapid transit, it is important that the initial redevelopment is in tune with the Quick Start program and subsequent phases of the rapid transit implementation. Draft policies are included to reflect this relationship.

4.1.6 Implementation Tools

Current Provincial legislation, and a number of planning and transportation practices offer a variety of tools that can be used to help achieve the desired Centres and Corridors urban structure. Many of these tools need to be included in the local Official Plans. The concept of including a wide array of implementation tools in the Regional Plan is to support their use and enable the municipalities to pick and choose the ones most appropriate to their planning policies. The implementation strategies/tools may include:

- Encouraging public investment from all levels of government.
- Using a wide range of innovative financial tools to encourage development consistent with this Plan including Tax Increment Financing and site specific Development Charges.
- Providing opportunities for joint development between the transit agency and developers to encourage and facilitate transit supportive development and the transit infrastructure itself.
- Promoting transit ridership through controlled parking standards within the Regional Centre and Corridors including maximum parking standards, parking authorities and cash-in-lieu of parking under the *Planning Act*.
- Developing a suite of Transportation Demand Management measures, including the establishment of Transportation Management Associations.
- The establishment of the Regional Centres as Community Improvement Plan areas under *Section 28* of the *Planning Act* to assist in the implementation of this Plan.
- The establishment of a development permit framework or pre-zoning based on the principles of streamlining and promoting development in a cost-effective manner.
- Establishing phasing plans for the build-out of the regional centres.
- The use of *Section 37* of the *Planning Act* to achieve net community benefits which are supportive of a compact community form.
- Innovative policies and programs to provide schools, parks and open space to serve the Regional Centres, including bonusing and alternative parkland provisions.

4.1.7 Structural Changes to ROP

The section in the ROP pertaining to the Regional Structure currently contains a section on centres and a section on corridors that each have policies on the different types of centres and corridors. In order to emphasize the importance of the Regional Centres and Corridors, they have been broken out into separate sections that detail their relationship to rapid transit infrastructure and services in these areas. These components of the urban structure are the fundamental elements of achieving the transition to city-building in the Region. The structural changes to the ROP are illustrated in the following Figure 1.

Chapter 5 Policy Structure

- 5.1 Forecasting Growth
- 5.2 Community Building (*Refined*)**
- [5.3 Regional Centres](#)
- [5.4 Local Centres](#)
- [5.5 Regional Corridors](#)
- [5.6 Local Corridors](#)
- 5.7 Hamlets
- 5.8 Agricultural Policy Area
- 5.9 Rural Policy Area
- 5.10 Mineral Aggregate Resource Areas
- 5.11 Estate Residential Development
- 5.12 Consents
- 5.13 Resort/Recreational Development

Figure 1 – Structural Changes to the Regional Official Plan

4.2 Consultation

A thorough consultation process is important in achieving appropriate Official Plan policies that can drive the Centres and Corridors urban structure. The ROPA needs to reflect existing ongoing initiatives (Markham Centre Review & Vaughan Highway 7 Land Use Review) as well as provide guidance to future initiatives. There has been a great deal of consultation to date and there will be more.

The broad consultation accompanying Vision 2026 through the year 2001 engaged the public with the ideas of managed growth efficiently in urban areas, quality communities and infrastructure including higher-order transit. From this broader Vision 2026 and previous 2021 documents came the strategic initiatives of both the Transportation Master Plan that includes the provision of rapid transit on Yonge Street, Highway 7, the Vaughan north/south corridor and Markham north/south corridor and the Centres and Corridors Strategy.

The formulation of the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) also included an extensive consultation program involving key stakeholders and members of the public. The TMP provides a comprehensive transportation vision for the Region based on a transit-focused strategic direction largely centred on reducing automobile dependence and moving the Region towards more liveable communities. The TMP followed the “Master Planning Process” that integrated the planning of municipal infrastructure requirements with existing and future land use.

The draft Centres and Corridors Strategy has also been broadly circulated for consultation and information purposes. The draft Strategy was presented to council in May 2003 and was circulated widely to private and public agencies throughout the province. A number of presentations have also been made to groups such as the Urban Development Institute.

All of this work and consultation forms the basis for proceeding with further consultation specific to the Regional Official Plan policies to implement the Centres and Corridors urban structure. Regional Council has adopted the guiding set of 10 policies principles on February 20, 2003 and adopted a further report dated June 18, 2003 setting out a policy framework for the ROPA reflective of the consultation done to that point.

Regional staff hosted workshops with local municipal staff on February 24 and April 28, 2003 to discuss in detail the ten policy principles for the ROPA, part of an ongoing consultation process. The session generated excellent feedback for the ROPA process, and led to a general consensus on the approach and timing for developing new and enhanced policies. There was also a consensus that the Regional Centres and Corridors should be the focus of intensive development to support rapid transit. A further staff workshop was held on December 1, 2003 on more detailed policies. The attached draft Section 5 was sent out to area municipal staff for review and the comments received are outlined as follows:

- Percentage of development that occurs within the existing urban area needs to be looked at further.
- Need monitoring to determine effectiveness of targets.
- Clarification is needed for the hierarchy of centres and corridors within the overall urban structure.
- Clarify the role of the key development areas and how they are identified.
- Need to be selective of key development areas to be focused on first.
- Need to maintain long term vision.
- Key development areas need to be defined first and then adjust rapid transit stops.
- Density of 2.5 needs to occur through a phased implementation over time - need to pick initial locations for first phase.
- Provision of infrastructure must be linked to development.
- Specific lands need to be targeted for density in order to achieve the density.
- Priority needed to be given to Regional capital works that support Regional Centres and Corridors.
- Higher order transit definition needs clarification.
- Employment targets in the centres need to be given careful consideration – there may be other ways to represent them other than ratios.
- Urban design is important for inclusion, but don't want policies to be too prescriptive.

The public consultation process underway for the environmental assessment studies required for the rapid transit (YRTP) presented an ideal opportunity to engage the public in the ROPA process as these projects are closely linked. The implementation of rapid transit along Highway 7, Yonge Street, the Vaughan North/South Corridor and Markham North/South corridor is a key driver for the future success of achieving the Centres and Corridors urban structure partnered with the Official Plan policies promoting land uses and density that support the rapid transit. Planning staff attended a number of public information centres for the YRTP studies in June 2003 and September 2003.

The adopted principles and ideas of enhanced Official Plan policies were presented at these public information centres and the public response was positive. The idea of pedestrian-friendly environments was especially well received at these sessions. Many indicated that they recognized and supported the principles of intensification along the transitways, but had concerns about the fit of new development with the existing neighbourhoods.

Further consultation is planned to help shape the ROPA in January through March as follows:

- A series of public open-houses in Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Aurora and Newmarket. These open-houses will include visual displays to fully engage the public and foster a better understanding of pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive development.
- A series of presentations to local Councils if requested; there may be opportunities to partner with local staff presentations through local initiatives such as the Highway 7 work being done by both Vaughan and Markham.
- an Urban Design Charette to illustrate what different densities could look like and illustrate what different urban design principles mean.
- Youth outreach through presentations at schools and other youth forums since the youth are a large transit users and future transit users.
- a Statutory Public Meeting in May or June 2004.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

Making changes to the Regional Official Plan to achieve the desired urban structure of centres and corridors will advance the goals of Vision 2026, including “Quality Communities for a Diverse Population,” “Managed and Balanced Growth,” and “Infrastructure for a Growing Region.”

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Making changes to the Regional Official Plan to achieve a more compact urban structure of centres and corridors served by rapid transit will optimize Regional investments in existing and planned public infrastructure including transit, water supply and wastewater treatment capacity, and human services.

Innovative financial approaches must also be explored to ensure that transit-supportive land use is advanced in tandem with transportation investments. The Region’s public-private partnership to implement the YRTP, in particular, represents upwards of \$4 billion in rapid transit investments over the next 30 years. This and other capital-intensive investments in public infrastructure and related services must be supported by an efficient and effective urban structure.

The ROPA process is just one of the tools being used to advance our desired urban structure and support our related investments, including rapid transit. Forming a larger framework for the ROPA and other initiatives is the Region’s Draft Centres and Corridors Strategy endorsed by Council. This Strategy is currently under development

and will put into action a suite of programs, infrastructure and financial tools to leverage investments in our urban structure.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipal planning staff are taking an active role in determining the scope and direction of the future ROPA and will continue to be key stakeholders throughout this ongoing process.

The local municipalities have made significant strides in city-building to support the desired urban structure of Regional Centres and Corridors linked by rapid transit. The Regional Official Plan can assist local municipalities continue this progress. The ROPA will provide clear and supportive policy to bolster city-building at the local level, which occurs through local official plans, zoning by-laws, site plan controls and programs. The Regional Official Plan, therefore, should not only shape but also strengthen local planning policy.

7. CONCLUSION

The Regional Official Plan has proven to be an effective tool in managing growth and directing infrastructure investment, since its adoption in 1994. Our urban structure of Regional Centres and Corridors has played a key role in this success. This structure needs to be refined further to support the upwards of \$4 billion investment and long term planning required to implement the YRTP over the next 30 years. Local planning policies to advance city-building also warrant strong support through Regional policies, programs, infrastructure and financial tools.

This report outlines more refined policy principles, local municipal feedback and a public consultation plan that will form the basis of a ROPA to refine our urban structure. A further refined ROPA will be presented to Planning and Economic Development Committee in the first half of 2004 and a statutory public meeting will also be scheduled for the first half of 2004.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing are included with this report and are also on file in the Office of the Regional Clerk.)