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CENTRES AND CORRIDORS - GROWTH MANAGEMENT IN THE GTA

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, December 16, 2003, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council receive this report for information.
2. Staff continue to work with the GTA Regions and Cities on key proposed action areas and in monitoring progress.
3. This report be forwarded to the local municipalities and other interested stakeholders for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of *Centres and Corridors-Growth Management in the GTA* is to identify the actions that need to be taken to focus on the development of 17 major Centres and Corridors across the GTA, including a Provincial and Federal government lead role in policy, programs and investment. York Region staff have taken a lead role in developing this paper and based its approach on the work done for the Region's Centres and Corridors Strategy and the *Making It Happen Report*.

3. BACKGROUND

In 1992, a report entitled *GTA 2021: The Challenge of our Future, a Working Document* was prepared by the former Office for the Greater Toronto Area (OGTA) and endorsed by Provincial Cabinet. The report adopted the concentrated nodal form of development as the "Vision for the GTA".

The report had a number of purposes:

- To raise public awareness of issues facing the GTA
- To present a **vision** of what the GTA should look like in 2021; and
- To provide a broad outline of the process needed to achieve the vision.

The GTA Vision emphasized quality of life through the development of sustainable, healthy communities supported by concentrated centres and corridor growth and a transportation system that balances transit and automobile use.

To a large degree, the GTA Vision has been integrated into the Official Plans of the four regions, the City of Toronto, area municipalities as well as the City of Hamilton.

Important growth management successes across the GTA include the establishment of firm urban boundaries, innovative and comprehensive community building systems, long-range infrastructure strategies, and systems that protect greenlands, agricultural and rural areas and the identification of 17 major Centres and Corridors for development across the GTA.

Four of the 17 major Centres are located in York Region: Markham Centre, Vaughan Corporate Centre, the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway and Newmarket Centre all proposed to be linked by the rapid transit Corridors of Yonge Street and Highway 7.

Well-established examples of success include the Mississauga City Centre, the North York Centre, the City of Toronto's "The Avenues" and the Markham Centre.

However, efforts to create Centres and Corridors linked by transit have not been as successful as hoped.

The Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario (RPCO- GTA Caucus) have hosted a number of workshops and prepared several discussion papers focussing on growth management, examining what is working and what challenges remain to moving ahead.

The consensus continues to be that the GTA Vision model is still the best plan to address the growth pressures facing the area.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

In order to maintain and enhance the GTA's strong economic competitiveness into the 21st century, it is critical for government to set the stage through policy, investment and private sector partnerships to encourage effective urban growth management in the form of vibrant, liveable Centres and Corridors that support transit, affordable housing, and employment.

Centres and Corridors-Growth Management in the GTA summarises the successes, challenges and efforts to date, and identifies the key action areas, the roles of all levels of government, and critical next steps to moving forward with an initial focus on creating a strong system of 17 major Centres and Corridors across the GTA.

4.1 Key Action Areas

A number of action areas have emerged from recent discussions on Centres and Corridors. There is also agreement that transit is a key ingredient for success.

There is no one action that will create centres. A broad series of actions, by all levels of government and the private sector over a long period of time is needed.

A suite of key action areas are recommended in *Centres and Corridors-Growth Management in the GTA* which include:

- Policy Initiatives
- Infrastructure Investment
- Financial Tools
- Supportive Programs

Centres and Corridors-Growth Management in the GTA compliments and verifies York Region's efforts underway on the *Centres and Corridors Strategy Making It Happen!* and the *Centres and Corridors Regional Official Plan Draft Amendment 43*.

4.2 A Co-ordinated Effort is Required

There is agreement that a package of co-ordinated policy, infrastructure, financial tools and related programs is required to build Centres and Corridors across the GTA both at the municipal, Provincial, Federal levels along with private sector involvement.

4.2.1 Municipal Role

Municipalities need to create a new generation of strong local policies and guidelines to ensure focussed growth management, civic investment and public awareness of Centres and Corridors. Municipalities must continue to strengthen the local “toolbox” of supportive by-laws, financial partnerships and performance measurement and continue to work with the Provincial, Federal and private sectors to focus investment and policy and legislative reforms on a system of Centres and Corridors that will support smart growth.

4.2.2 The Provincial Role

In order for Centres and Corridors to be successful, the Province must take a lead role in transit investment, policy and legislative reforms, and enabling municipal tax capabilities to create a fiscal and land use climate that promotes Centres and Corridors. Provincial investment in housing and transit must be focussed on Centres and Corridors.

4.2.3 The Federal Role

The Federal government has a crucial role in supporting growth in Centres and Corridors, through long-term sustained investment in affordable housing (including rental), transit and infrastructure (including infrastructure renewal) and developing creative financial tools like location efficient mortgages, and transferring more tax resources to municipalities.

4.2.4 The Private Sector

Case studies in the United States and in our own urban areas demonstrate that significant public investment and policy attracts private sector involvement in creation of Centres and Corridors through reduced private sector costs, enhanced locational demand and reduced investment risk. Innovative collaboration on public sector/private sector development and marketing are required.

4.3 Moving Forward

All levels of government and the private sector agree- now is the time for action. Centres and Corridors are the heart of our urban systems. They help promote quality of life, economic vitality, and play a key role in effective growth management.

Municipalities have taken the first steps in identifying the major 17 centres across the GTA and in putting forward rapid transit proposals including York Region's Quick Start Program.

All three levels of government along with the private sector need to work together strategically to manage growth in a way that encourages livable urban areas that will remain economically strong and globally competitive.

Centres and Corridors - Growth Management in the GTA identifies the key actions that need to be taken and is intended to provide the starting point for discussion and coordination of next steps in achieving a successful system of Centres and Corridors in the GTA.

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

Implementation of *Centres and Corridors - Growth Management in the GTA* will help York Region achieve success under many areas of Vision 2026's eight goal areas. This includes: promoting livable, sustainable compact community cores, encouraging pedestrian friendly and transit oriented neighbourhoods, increasing housing choices available to residents, achieving better connections between where residents live, work, play and learn, partnering with federal and provincial government and the private sector to develop innovating funding methods, planning for high-level transit services to employment areas, and encouraging quality urban planning and design that emphasizes the needs of people, to name just a few.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Centres and Corridors - Growth Management in the GTA is an important step in ensuring that the GTA remains a strong and viable economic engine for the province and the country. Within this context, York Region will benefit from remaining a key player in a GTA wide coordinated effort to ensure the successful development of Centres and Corridors.

Consultation will continue with area municipalities on any changes to or implementation of financial tools such as development charges, property tax, etc.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Centres and Corridors - Growth Management in the GTA is supportive of many initiatives underway in York Region's Centres and Corridors including the Region's Centres and Corridors Strategy *Making It Happen!* and the Centres and Corridors Regional Official Plan Draft Amendment 43.

Continued co-ordination of efforts between the Region and local staff is critical to the successful implementation of *Centres and Corridors - Growth Management in the GTA*

Staff will continue to monitor and support local initiatives and to consult local staff on Regional activities to ensure that efforts are co-ordinated, not only across the Region, but also with the efforts occurring across the GTA.

7. CONCLUSION

There is consensus across the GTA that a system of Centres and Corridors is essential for effective growth management. The Centres and Corridors paper identifies key actions in four areas: land use policy, infrastructure investment, financial tools and supporting progress. The paper calls on the Federal and Provincial governments to provide infrastructure investment and additional municipal financial resources.

All three levels of government along with the private sector must work together strategically to manage growth to create economically strong and globally competitive, livable urban areas.

York Region has taken a lead role in developing *Centres and Corridors - Growth Management in the GTA*, which is based on the Region's Centres and Corridors Strategy *Making It Happen!*

Centres and Corridors - Growth Management in the GTA is being sent by the RPCO-GTA Caucus to the Provincial and Federal Governments, as well as other interested agencies, to initiate discussion on taking the next steps in achieving a successful system of Centres and Corridors in the GTA.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the attachment referred to in the foregoing has been forwarded to each Member of Council with the January 7, 2004 Planning and Economic Development Committee agenda and a copy thereof is on file in the Office of the Regional Clerk.)