

5

GREENING STRATEGY - REGIONAL SECUREMENT CRITERIA

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The presentation by Diane Pomeroy, Senior Planner, be received; and**
- 2. The recommendation contained in the following report, December 10, 2003, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services and the Commissioner of Transportation and Works, be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council endorse the York Regional Securement Criteria (*Attachment 1*) as the basis for evaluating Regional securement opportunities.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Committee and Council with the recommended York Region Securement Criteria for review and endorsement as a basis for evaluating Regional securement opportunities. The revised criteria have been developed based on the Council directed consultation and circulation initiated in April 2003.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region Council committed itself to ensuring that our natural heritage systems would be available for future generations through the adoption of the Greening Strategy in 2001. The Strategy provides a context for policy decisions that affect natural heritage systems and focuses on co-ordinating Regional, agency and private sector efforts to improve our environment.

As part of the comprehensive Greening Strategy, Regional Council adopted the Greenlands Property Securement Strategy - A Legacy for Our Future in May 2001. This Strategy establishes the principle of protection of significant properties through stewardship, management donations of land or conservation easements to augment the Regional Greenlands system. York Region, by its adoption of the Securement Strategy and an annual funding commitment took on a leadership role in securement issues

In April of 2003, Regional Council received the draft Regional Securement Criteria and directed staff to circulate the criteria. The report was sent to all area municipal CAOs, councils, Conservation Authorities and other government and non-government agencies operating in York Region. This circulation review and dialogue has been completed over

the past few months. The Securement Working Group and the Internal Evaluation Team were also involved in an operational review of the draft criteria.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The objective of the Regional Securement Criteria is to clearly establish Regional priorities and criteria for strategic securement activities including land acquisition throughout York Region. Stakeholders and other agencies may have complementary securement priorities and interests. It is essential to stress the Regional perspective when setting our securement priorities.

4.1 Circulation Comments

Overall, the response to the circulation of the draft Regional securement criteria was supportive and positive. The Region was commended for developing a cohesive strategy for land securement and for taking a leadership role in co-ordinating a Regional Land Securement Working Group. The Region's continued efforts in providing information, advice and technical support on land securement issues were noted. Stakeholders were supportive of the ongoing partnerships between the Region and local municipalities, public and private agencies.

It was noted several times that the greatest benefit of developing the land securement criteria has been the involvement of the various groups and agencies (representing a range of objectives and priorities for land securement) in the Working Group discussions. It was also suggested that application of a weighting system for Regional criteria might be the best means of evaluating opportunities and identifying the value of specific securement initiatives to the Region.

A number of additional comments, suggestions and issues were also raised including:

- need for the criteria to focus more consideration of the importance of water quality and protecting watershed basins
- ensuring that the criteria does not diminish opportunities to secure land in urban municipalities
- the importance of establishing permanent annual funding
- consideration of increased funding for securement
- consideration of the financial implications inherent in the loss of tax generation where land is transferred from private ownership to public ownership
- continued and greater emphasis on the more vulnerable linkage areas between core areas
- encourage the consideration of north south linkages as well as the east west linkages on and off the Oak Ridges Moraine
- reiteration of the importance of the Regional Greenlands System as a means of identifying areas that should be Regional priorities
- more co-ordination between various governments and government agencies to maximize use of public funds
- improve definitions and diagrams for key Regional Securement criteria

- revisions to the evaluation form to better reflect a Regional focus, eliminate duplication and do a more complete review of the full range of opportunities some properties offer
- clarifying Region's role in context of other agencies' interest.

The Criteria reflect revisions as a result of these comments and consultations. The criteria were also revised to demonstrate a clearer understanding of the Regional securement interests and the science or long term natural heritage benefit upon which that interest is based.

The Regional Securement Criteria and Evaluation form (*Attachment 1*) has benefited by the greater review of stakeholders. Several valid issues were raised and the revisions reflect this input. The result is better-articulated Regional Securement Criteria and Property Evaluation form.

4.2 Next Steps

The next steps with the Regional Securement Criteria include

- Council adoption of the Regional Securement Criteria.
- Securement Working Group: Continuation in co-ordinating securement activities with area municipalities and agencies.
- Internal Evaluation Team: Continuation to refine and review regional securement opportunities.
- Staff should continue to pursue innovative partnerships and other funding and stewardship opportunities.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

The York Region Securement Criteria supports several Vision 2026 statements:

"In 2026, York residents continue to value and embrace the Region's unique natural heritage (land, air, water) and cultural heritage (sites and buildings important to our history, faiths and cultures)."

"In 2026, York Region will have grown at a pace that supports healthy communities, economic vitality, sustainable natural environment and effective human services."

The securement criteria further strengthen the Region's commitment to the natural environment and therefore Vision 2026.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The York Region 2003 budget contained the allocation to the Greening land securement reserve. Remaining 2003 reserves for this purpose will be carried forward into the 2004 fiscal year. Innovative implementation of securement will be necessary to leverage these funds and maximize the legacy impact for Region residents.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities are important partners in the York Region Greening Strategy and its Greenlands Property Securement Strategy. Local municipalities were consulted and revisions made to the criteria as a result of the discussions. Staff from local municipalities are also members of the Securement Working Group.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In order to create a long term vision and natural heritage legacy for York Region, it is important to establish a process and criteria to guide the Region's actions. Green infrastructure must be approached strategically in order to identify and focus on a Regional system. The approach proposed in the Regional Securement Criteria and Evaluation Form builds on the direction from the Greening Strategy and the foundation of Regional and Provincial work including the Regional Official Plan, Greening Strategy, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Securement Strategy, the Regional Forest Management Plan and the Rouge North Management Plan.

It is recommended that Regional Council adopt this report and the attached revised York Region Securement Criteria (*Attachment 1*) as the basis for evaluating Regional securement opportunities.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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