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ROPA 43 - REGIONAL CENTRES AND REGIONAL CORRIDORS

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, November 17, 2004, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Commissioner of Planning be directed to issue a Notice of Adoption under *Section 17(22)* of the *Planning Act* to approve Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) No. 43, attached as *Attachment 2*.
2. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the area municipalities, the Regions of Durham and Peel, the City of Toronto and the Provincial Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Public Infrastructure Renewal.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide a summary of the planning and public consultation process followed for ROPA 43;
- Outline the feedback received by staff, and explain how this feedback shaped the content of ROPA 43;
- Present and explain the minor changes made to ROPA 43 since the Statutory Public Meetings on June 24 and September 8, 2004; and,
- Recommend that staff be authorized to issue a Notice of Adoption under *Section 17(22)* of the *Planning Act* to approve ROPA 43.

3. BACKGROUND

The planning rationale for ROPA 43 is sound and is reinforced by a consultation process that was open, comprehensive and led to better policy. ROPA 43 has gone through several iterations involving a broad cross-section of stakeholder groups since the planning process began in mid-2002. The amendment is now complete and ready for adoption.

3.1 Purpose and process

The purpose of ROPA 43 is to advance the city-building model of development based on a network of Regional Centres and Regional Corridors, served by rapid transit. The low-density, suburban-type development form dominant since the 1950s is no longer sustainable from economic, environmental or social perspectives. The long-term sustainability of York Region's urban structure requires a diverse, mixed-use

development form that is compact, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly and well-designed.

Focusing growth and infrastructure investment in centres and corridors has been a key goal of the Regional Official Plan since its adoption in 1994. This approach represents good planning and is central to the Region's Growth Management Strategy.

Regional initiatives including Vision 2026, Transportation Master Plan, York Region Rapid Transit Plan (YRTP), and the "York Region Centres + Corridors Strategy: "Making it Happen!" have reaffirmed the need for and benefits of more compact and concentrated development patterns as a means of supporting infrastructure investment and improving the overall quality of our communities.

A focus on centres and corridors also forms the basis for growth management across the entire GTA region, as endorsed by Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario – GTA Caucus in their December 2003 report, "Centres & Corridors – Growth Management in the GTA." This growth management model is further reinforced by the July 2004 release of the Provincial discussion paper, "Places to Grow – A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe," which calls for a compact, "inward" pattern of growth supported by transit as an alternative to continued auto-oriented "outward" growth. The Region has done a substantial amount of work to advance the growth management model of centres and corridors.

Much of this work is reflected in the Provincial *Places to Grow* discussion paper. This Provincial initiative, however, needs to be stronger to provide the required support for the growth management model of centres and corridors advanced by the Region. In the report adopted by Council on September 23, 2004 key recommendations were made to clearly provide this support, including:

- The Province enact legislation requiring the Greater Golden Horseshoe municipalities to adopt the principles of *Places to Grow* in the form of official plan amendments that enshrine these principles and is not subject to OMB appeal consistent with the process followed for the *Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act*;
- Support by the Province for higher order transit, including a streamlined implementation process;
- Sustainable funding and fiscal tools;
- Provincial recognition of human services in its ultimate growth plan; and,
- Provincial recognition of urban design as an essential infrastructure component.

The Province, Region, and area municipalities will need to work together to effectively implement this planning framework and create a consistent policy continuum across all government levels.

3.1.1 Policy principles

Regional Council adopted ten policy principles in February 2003 to shape the policies of ROPA 43, consistent with the city-building objective outlined in Section 3.1 of this

report. These policies also impact Local Centres and Local Corridors, and their role in that structure.

These principles are, that:

1. The Region should promote and encourage appropriate development in the Regional Centres and Corridors in support of large public investments in rapid transit.
2. A sustainable urban structure needs to be reinforced which includes a connected hierarchy of centres and corridors.
3. Investment in public buildings, community facilities and human services needs to be supportive of the urban structure hierarchy and strategic focal points.
4. Development should be transit supportive with the highest densities located in the Regional Centres. Overall densities in the Regional Centres and Corridors should achieve an average density of 2.5 FSI.
5. Development in the Regional Centres should provide for the broadest land use mix including a variety of housing types, range of employment opportunities, human services and entertainment uses.
6. Key development opportunities should be identified within the Regional Centres and Corridors.
7. Stable residential communities should be supported.
8. A high quality of urban design should be promoted, which achieves a pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented development form. The development of urban design guidelines for both the Regional Centres and Corridors can achieve this.
9. Development should be facilitated through a streamlined process using innovative policies, programs and financial tools to ensure implementation.
10. The timing and delivery of appropriate infrastructure should be considered through the development process.

3.1.2 Consultation process

Consultation with area municipal councils, staff, residents and other stakeholders has added value to the planning process and resulted in better policy. Beginning in mid-2002, the consultation process has comprised:

- Workshops with Regional and local staff in May 2002, and February, April and December 2003;
- ROPA 43 information displays at public consultation centres held as part of the YRTP Environmental Assessment study process in the Spring and Fall of 2003;

- An urban design charrette in February 2004 attended by 40 people, including municipal staff, the development industry and professional consultants;
- Presentations to six area municipal councils between January and April 2004;
- Six public consultation sessions held in five municipalities attended by 170 people in March and April 2004;
- Presentations to Grade 9 and 12 students in May and June 2004; and,
- Statutory Public Meetings on June 24, 2004 in Richmond Hill and September 8, 2004 in Newmarket.

A comprehensive listing of the comments received from residents and other stakeholders throughout the ROPA 43 consultation process is attached to this report as *Attachment 3*. How this consultation shaped the ROPA 43 policies is outlined in Section 4.2 of this report.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The policies of ROPA 43 are in the public interest and represent good planning. They were developed through a sound planning process and were reaffirmed through a broad consultation process involving municipal councils, staff, residents and other stakeholders.

4.1 Achieving the policy objective

The ROPA 43 policies are consistent with the ten adopted policy principles as outlined in Section 3.1.1 of this report. The proposed policies also hold true to the city-building model of development and advance the Region's planned urban structure of Regional Centres and Corridors, served by rapid transit.

Changes to the Regional Official Plan in Chapter 5 – Regional Structure and Growth Management, Chapter 6 – Regional Infrastructure, and Maps 5 and 10 were made in accordance with the policy objectives of ROPA 43. These changes ranged from adding new introductory text in some Sections to adding new policies to adding new Sections altogether.

Key elements of ROPA 43 include new and enhanced policies to:

- Establish more detailed criteria, with an emphasis on compact development and urban design, for the establishment and review of secondary plans for Regional Centres and Regional Corridors (Policies 5.3.9 and 5.5.11);
- Create urban design guidelines for Regional Centres and Regional Corridors (Policies 5.3.9.b and 5.3.8);
- Co-ordinate development with infrastructure investment, including rapid transit (Policies 5.3.9.c and 5.5.14);
- Encourage the use of a wide range of implementation tools and strategies (Policies 5.3.12 and 5.5.15);
- Focus higher density and mixed-use development in locally-identified Key Development Areas (Policy 5.5.5); and,

- Establish a long-term density target of 2.5 FSI for Regional Centres and Key Development Areas in the Regional Corridors (Policies 5.3.4. and 5.5.6).

A more detailed summary of these changes and the corresponding policy principles is attached to this report as *Attachment 1*.

It is important to note that the changes proposed under ROPA 43 are in keeping with the intent and strategic direction of the Regional Official Plan and related programs. Existing policies were clarified, strengthened and expanded to advance the city-building objective, with an emphasis on an urban form that is compact, pedestrian-friendly, transit-supportive and well-designed.

Minor changes have been made to ROPA 43 since the last Statutory Public Meeting on September 8, 2004. The intent of the policies remains unchanged. These minor changes include:

- Edits to the introductory text of Chapter 5, and new introductory text to Section 5.3 – Regional Centres to add clarity to the intent of the policies;
- New introductory text to Chapter 6 to reference the completion of the Transportation Master Plan, formation of York Region Transit, and the launch of YRTP;
- A description of the four Regional Rapid Transit Corridors (Policies 6.2.2 and 6.2.3); and,
- Definitions of “Floor Space Index (FSI),” “Fine Grain Network of Streets,” Rapid Transit,” and “Reverse Lotting.”

4.2 Achieving a sound planning process

The ROPA 43 planning process was intended to be consultative, inclusive, fair and in the public interest. The objective of the planning process, outlined in Section 3.1 of this report, was clear and consistent throughout.

The over two-year consultation process outlined in Section 3.1.2 of this report provided excellent input into the ROPA 43 planning process and resulted in better policy. The process also reaffirmed that the objective and principles of ROPA 43 were sound. The wide cross-section of people and backgrounds represented in this process ensures that the final product is responsive to the public interest.

4.2.1 Making better policy

Some of the most significant and innovative policies of ROPA 43 were the direct product of the consultation process, including:

- Directing the more intensive development to locally-defined Key Development Areas, providing a measure of clarity and predictability to where and how change will occur (Policy 5.5.4);
- Establishing an overall long-term density target of 2.5 FSI for Regional Centres and Regional Corridors, recognizing that areas will become more compact incrementally over time (Policies 5.3.4 and 5.5.6);

- Developing broad, high-level urban design guidelines to support the creation and implementation of more detailed guidelines at the local level (Policies 5.2.7.q and 5.3.9.b);
- Providing a better explanation of the role and function of Local Centres and Corridors in the Region's urban structure (new introductory text to Chapter 5); and,
- Linking infrastructure investment more closely with development in the Regional Centres and Regional Corridors (Policy 5.3.9.c).

There were several other policies in ROPA 43 improved through consultation with area municipal staff. A detailed summary of these is attached to this report as *Attachment 4*.

4.3 Next steps

The planning and implementation of York Region's urban structure does not end with ROPA 43. Rather, the policies of ROPA 43 will enable the full achievement of the planned vision for Regional Centres and Regional Corridors aided by a clearer, stronger, action-oriented policy framework. This should include the launch of new programs to compliment the ongoing initiatives (e.g. Fiscal Impact Analysis) related to the Region's Centres + Corridors Strategy.

This can be accomplished, in-part, by the Planning Department's growth management-related workplan for 2005 approved by Regional Council on November 18, 2004, which includes the following:

- Revised York Region population and employment forecasts;
- York Region Land Budget;
- Vacant employment land update; and,
- Growth Management Communications Strategy.

Additional programs should also be initiated in 2005/2006 to advance the Region's urban structure, including:

- Assist area municipalities, as requested, in identifying Key Development Areas along the Regional Corridors;
- Develop a consistent, Region-wide set of Transit-Supportive Guidelines in consultation with York Region Transit, YRTP, and the area municipalities. The Provincial Ministry of Transportation's 1992 "Transit-Supportive Land Use Planning Guidelines" can be used as a model for this effort;
- Create a highly-visual, user-friendly information brochure that outlines the planned vision for Regional Centres and Regional Corridors, and the applicable planning criteria for development in those areas. This can have the dual purpose of communicating the Region's planned urban structure while serving as a customer service tool for land owners and developers; and,
- Develop a monitoring program to track the scope and quality of development in Regional Centres and Regional Corridors, and the impact of Regional and local planning policies and related programs. This will ensure better policy implementation and provide an opportunity for further information-sharing between the Region and the area municipalities. The Planning Department's new computerized Growth

Management System, scheduled to come on-stream in early 2005, will serve as a valuable tool in this effort.

The work described above is directly in-line with the four action areas of the Centres + Corridors Strategy; being “policy”, “financial tools”, “infrastructure investment” and “supportive programs”. These actions form a multi-faceted and inter-related approach to planning implementation to advance the Region’s city-building objectives, of which ROPA 43 forms a large part of the “policy” component.

The actions outlined in this Section are all part of advancing a new planning framework for the long-term health and vitality of our urban environment, as described in Section 3.1 of this report. Building on a base of sound planning principles, implementation and continuous improvement is an essential part of building great communities.

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

Achieving the Region’s planned urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors served by rapid transit, is consistent with all eight goals of Vision 2026. The planning process for ROPA 43, in particular, advances “Managed and Balanced Growth,” while the consultation portion is consistent with “Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region.”

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Achieving a more compact, mixed-use urban structure based on a system of Regional Centres and Regional Corridors will optimize Regional investments in existing and planned infrastructure. This includes rapid and conventional transit, water supply and wastewater treatment capacity, and human services. Concentrating development in areas served by rapid transit also creates further potential to attract prestige employers to the Region. This will generate net benefits including increased assessment and job creation.

The Region’s Centres + Corridors Strategy identified several potential initiatives that could be undertaken to promote development in Regional Centres and Regional Corridors. These initiatives include a review of the current development charge structure, the financial impact of different development types and an assessment of servicing implications. Consistent with the “financial tools” action area of the Centres + Corridors Strategy, an assessment of financial implications and their outcomes will form a large part of the Finance and Planning Departments’ 2005 workplan, as outlined in Section 4.3 of this report.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local planning staff have taken an active role in the planning and consultation process for ROPA 43, and are satisfied with the final product. We would like to thank them for their

efforts and expertise, and look forward to a continued high level of collaboration throughout the implementation stage.

The policies developed through this process have been refined and improved by input received from local staff, as outlined in Section 4.2.1 of this report. The purpose of ROPA 43 is to implement the Region's planned urban structure in a way that supports and strengthens the city-building efforts of the local municipalities (e.g. Markham Centre Plan), which occurs through local official plans, zoning by-laws, site plan control and programs.

Local municipalities will continue to play a key role in implementing ROPA 43 through the review of secondary plans for their Regional Centres and segments of the Regional Corridors. The Region will play a supporting role in these efforts, which includes the identification of Key Development Areas.

7. CONCLUSION

The objective of ROPA 43 is to advance the city-building model of development in York Region's urban structure, based on a system of Regional Centres and Regional Corridors served by rapid transit. The low-density, suburban-type development form dominant since the 1950s is no longer sustainable from economic, environmental or social perspectives.

The policies of ROPA 43 are in the public interest and represent good planning. They were developed through a sound planning process that began in mid-2002, and were reaffirmed through consultation with municipal councils, staff, residents and other stakeholders. Local municipalities played a key role in the planning and consultation process for ROPA 43, and contributed to the development of better policy.

The policies of ROPA 43 are consistent with Regional, Provincial and local municipal policies to achieve an urban form that is compact, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly and well designed. This contributes to achieving the Region's planned urban structure, and a new planning framework to ensure the long-term health and vitality of our communities.

Implementing the policies of ROPA 43 will be in concert with Region's Centres + Corridors Strategy and new, proposed initiatives including the development of Transit-Supportive Guidelines and the creation of public information brochures. This is in addition to the implementation efforts of the local municipalities, which includes the review of secondary plans for Regional Centres and Regional Corridors, and the identification of Key Development Areas.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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