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PLACES TO GROW: FINAL URBAN GROWTH CENTRE BOUNDARIES

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends that Council adopt the recommendation contained in the following report dated December 3, 2008, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The Regional Clerk circulate this staff report to the Town of Newmarket, Town of Markham, Town of Richmond Hill, City of Vaughan and the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this staff report is to inform Committee and Council of the final location and boundary of York Region's four Urban Growth Centres, released by the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure (MEI) (formerly the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, MPIR) on November 3, 2008. This is part of the Region's conformity exercise with the Provincial Places to Grow Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

The Provincial Growth Plan establishes a target of 200 people and jobs combined per gross hectare within each urban growth centre

In June 2006, the Province released the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006*. The Growth Plan identified four urban growth centers in York Region (Markham Centre, Newmarket Centre, Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway, and Vaughan Corporate Centre) and contained policies specific to the development of these urban growth centres:

- “The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, in consultation with municipalities that have urban growth centres, will determine the approximate size and location of the urban growth centres.”
- “Municipalities will delineate the boundaries of urban growth centres in their official plans.”

- “Urban growth centres will be planned:
 - a) As focal areas for investment in institutional and region-wide public services, as well as commercial, recreational, cultural and entertainment uses.
 - b) To accommodate and support major transit infrastructure.
 - c) To serve as high density major employment centres that will attract provincially, nationally or internationally significant employment uses.
 - d) To accommodate a significant share of population and employment growth.”
- “Urban Growth Centres will be planned to achieve, by 2031 or earlier, a minimum gross density target of 200 residents and job combined per hectare.”

The Region and local municipalities have worked with the Province to draft boundaries for the urban growth centres

In mid-2007, the Province commenced pre-consultation with the Region and local municipalities to derive the general size and location of the four urban growth centres located within York Region.

On April 2, 2008, the Province released the “*Proposed Size and Location of Urban Growth Centers in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: Technical Paper Spring 2008*”, which included the proposed size and location for each urban growth centre. *Attachment 1* contains the proposed boundaries released by the Province in spring 2008.

York Region, along with the local municipalities, submitted comments on the proposed urban growth centre boundaries to the Province in May 2008. A copy of the letter submitted to the Province is appended to this report as *Attachment 2*.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The final urban growth centre boundaries reflect many of the changes requested by York Region and local municipalities to MPIR

On November 3, 2008, MEI released the report “*Size and Location of Urban Growth Centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Fall 2008*”, which included the final boundaries for the urban growth centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. *Attachment 3* contains the final boundaries for York Region’s four urban growth centres.

Many of the revisions to the urban growth centre boundaries requested by York Region and the local municipalities in spring 2008 were updated in the final boundaries. Table 1 includes a summary of the requested boundary changes and whether they were amended in the final boundaries.

Table 1
Requested Revisions to the Proposed Urban Growth Centre Boundaries

Urban Growth Centre	Comments	Reflected in Final Boundary
Markham Centre	- Extend the eastern boundary to include lands around the existing GO station. - Remove the Rouge River Valley lands	Yes No
Newmarket Centre	Remove part of the lands north of Davis Drive	Yes
Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway	- Include land on the west side of Yonge Street - Move the northern boundary to just north of Bantry Avenue - Remove the Highway 7 and 407 corridor and hydroelectric transmission corridor lands	Yes No No
Vaughan Corporate Centre	No changes to the boundary requested	N/A

Rouge River Valley, Highway 7 and 407, and hydroelectric transmission corridor lands will be used in urban growth centre density calculations

In spring 2008, York Region requested that lands unavailable for development not be included within the urban growth centre boundaries. This includes the Rouge River Valley lands in the Markham Centre and the Highway 7 and 407 and hydroelectric transmission corridor lands in the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway. The final boundaries released by MEI do not exclude these lands. This means that to reach an overall density of 200 people and jobs per hectare in the urban growth centre, the densities achieved in the developable areas must be enough to offset the areas that will not be available to accommodate development. A preliminary analysis of Markham Centre and Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway indicate that with the inclusion of undevelopable land in the gross area calculation, each centre will need to achieve densities approximately 15 – 20% higher than originally anticipated.

Local municipalities will provide a more detailed definition of urban growth centre boundaries in their Official Plans

In spring 2008, York Region requested that the Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway boundary be revised to include the lands just above Bantry Avenue. However, the final boundaries released by MEI show the northern boundary lying along Bantry Avenue. The Province has stated that each local municipality is responsible for defining urban growth centre boundaries within their Official Plan. This definition must follow the boundaries released by MEI, although the Province has also indicated that the Official

Plan will allow for a more detailed definition of the boundaries. In the case of Richmond Hill, the Town will be able to use the northern property line for lots on the north side of Bantrey Avenue as the detailed boundary definition.

Relationship to Vision 2026

The release of the final urban growth centre boundaries is an integral part of implementing the Province's Growth Plan. The Growth Plan itself supports the Vision 2026 goal areas of "Managed and Balanced Growth" and the "Healthy Communities" theme area of the *York Region Sustainability Strategy: Towards a Sustainable Region*.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report has no direct financial implications.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The Province's Growth Plan mandates that local municipalities plan to achieve minimum densities of 200 people and jobs per hectare in urban growth centres. With the boundaries of these centres defined, local municipalities can now incorporate these boundaries into their Official Plan and continue planning to achieve these targets.

7. CONCLUSION

In the Fall of 2008, MEI released the final boundaries for urban growth centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. York Region has four urban growth centres: Markham Centre, Newmarket Centre, Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway, and Vaughan Corporate Centre. The final boundaries are a result of discussions between the Province, York Region and its relevant local municipalities.

Boundary revisions were submitted to the Province by the Region and local municipalities and have been integrated into the final boundaries for Newmarket Centre and Vaughan Corporate Centre. Within the Markham Centre and Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway, the Rouge River Valley, Highway 7 and 407, and hydroelectric transmission corridor lands are still included within the urban growth centre boundaries. These lands must also be included in the total land area and in the planning to achieve the 200 people and jobs per hectare target.

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Bottomley, Manager of Growth Management, Economy & Information Research at 905-830-4444 Ext. 1530 or John Waller, Director of Long Range and Strategic Planning at 905-830-4444 Ext. 1525.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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