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STATUTORY PUBLIC MEETING AND INFORMATION REPORT FOR PUBLIC MEETING ON AMENDMENT NO. 62 TO THE YORK REGION OFFICIAL PLAN

Pursuant to Section 17(15) of the Planning Act, as amended, the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee held a Public Meeting on February 4, 2009 to inform the Public and receive comments regarding Amendment No. 62 to amend the Regional Official Plan and identify Regional interests and issues.

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. Receipt of the presentation by Paul Belton, Manager of Development Review;**
- 2. Receipt of the following deputations:**
 - (a) M. Yarranton, KLM Planning Partners Inc., on behalf of Yonge Green Lane South Development Ltd.;**
 - (b) D. Grosvenor, iPLANcorp, on behalf of Dalton Faris, landowner;**

and
- 3. Adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated December 4, 2008 from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- 1. Staff receive and review comments from the public meeting and responses to the circulation regarding the proposed Amendment, and prepare a further report with recommendations for consideration at a future Planning and Economic Development Committee meeting.**

2. PURPOSE

This report provides a description of a privately initiated application to amend the Regional Official Plan and identifies Regional interests and issues. The application is for a site specific expansion to the Region's urban boundary.

3. BACKGROUND

Privately Initiated Application Proposes to Expand the Region's Urban Area Boundary

In February 2008 Regional Planning staff received a request for a site specific amendment to the Regional Official Plan. The request proposes to redesignate approximately 18 ha (44.6 acres) of land located at the northeast corner of Yonge Street and Green Lane from "Agricultural Policy Area" to "Urban Area" (see *Attachment No. 1*).

The proposed Regional amendment will facilitate the approval of a local Official Plan amendment which will permit a full range of retail commercial uses, restaurants, entertainment and financial institutions. The applicant is proposing approximately 322,000 sq. ft. of retail commercial development.

Location Map



Previous Approvals Granted for Lowes Home Improvement Store on Portion of the Site

A portion of the site previously received approval of a minor variance application that permitted the development of a Lowes home improvement store. Approval from a Regional Planning perspective was not required as the existing local zoning by-law permitted the construction of the current Lowes building.

Growth Plan requires urban boundary expansion to occur as part of a Municipal Comprehensive Review

The site is located within the "whitebelt" and is subject to the policies of the Provincial Growth Plan. Policy 2.2.8 of the Growth Plan deals with settlement area boundary expansions and requires urban boundary expansions to occur as part of a municipal comprehensive review that meets specific criteria.

The site is not located within the Oak Ridges Moraine, or the Provincial Greenbelt Plan.

The Regional Official Plan requires urban boundary expansions to be consistent with specific criteria including population and employment forecasts

Section 5.2.3 of the Regional Official Plan deals with urban boundary expansions and indicates that any expansion must be consistent with the following:

- a) regional population and employment forecasts;
- b) the need for expansion relative to other lands available for development in the area municipality;
- c) the role of the new development lands identified in area municipal growth management strategies;
- d) the capability of the area municipality to provide growth within the urban area;
- e) an analysis of options for growth direction and sequencing with respect to environment, agriculture and the implications on the availability of servicing including water, sewer, road and transit networks and human services;
- f) the protection of and integration with the Regional Greenlands System;
- g) the amendment is large enough (i.e. a concession block) with clear and identifiable boundaries, such as concession roads, major natural features, rail or major utility corridors, to assess the creation of new communities at the regional level;
- h) the role of the development lands is supportive of an urban structure of centres and corridors with transit-supportive densities.

The Region's Planning for Tomorrow Exercise is complete and an Amendment to the Regional Official Plan is anticipated in the summer of 2009

In April and May of 2007 Regional Council endorsed a series of reports known as the "Planning for Tomorrow" exercise that established preliminary population and employment forecasts at a local municipal level and a regional scale land budget based on the forecasts set out in the Growth Plan. Since the Spring of 2007 Regional Planning staff have continued to dialogue with area municipal staff and refined the forecasts and land budget. Subsequent reports were adopted by Regional Council in September 2008 and January 22, 2009. Regional staff are in the process of preparing a major review of the Regional Official Plan which consists of, among other things, an amendment to the Regional Official Plan that expands the urban boundary and revises Table 1 of the Plan. This amendment is anticipated to occur in the summer of 2009.

Based on the Planning for Tomorrow exercise, a total of 2,837 developable hectares (ha) of land in the Whitebelt is required for residential and employment uses in order to achieve the Provincial Growth Plan 2031 forecast. This includes 1,771 ha for community land development (including 296 ha for major retail uses) and 1,066 ha for employment land development. East Gwillimbury's portion of major retail uses is approximately 56 ha.

Notice of Public Meeting advertised January 13, 2009

Notice of the statutory Public Meeting was advertised in the Toronto Star and the Era-Banner on January 13, 2009 (*see Attachment No. 2*). The amendment was circulated to adjacent municipalities and public agencies on March 18, 2008 and Notice of the Public Meeting was also circulated to these agencies on January 13, 2009.

Staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing have indicated that the privately initiated site specific amendment should be considered as part of the Region's municipal comprehensive review, the Town's Official Plan review and await the Region's Growth Plan conformity exercise.

4. ANALYSIS

Although private companies and individuals may make application to expand the urban boundary, approval of the expansion requires municipal endorsement because a decision to refuse the expansion is not appealable by the proponent unless the appeal is made at the time of a comprehensive review. In order for the site specific Regional amendment application to be approved it requires the Town of East Gwillimbury's component of the comprehensive review to be complete. The Region's comprehensive exercise is complete and indicates that there is demand for 56 ha of population related major retail land in East Gwillimbury. Prior to any decision on the subject application, the Town should provide its position on the application. The Town is likely to evaluate the application in the context of its ongoing Official Plan review and adoption of its new plan should precede any decision on the site specific urban boundary expansion.

The subject site is partially developed with fully serviced urban uses and is bounded to the south and southwest by fully serviced retail commercial uses that are within the Region's urban envelope. The site has frontage on Yonge Street, which is identified in the Regional Plan as a Regional Corridor, and Green Lane East, which is a 36 m Regional arterial road. The site is well positioned for retail commercial uses; however, the proposal should be considered in conjunction with the Town's new Official Plan when adopted.

Town of East Gwillimbury anticipates adopting its new Official Plan in Spring of 2009

In 2007, the Town of East Gwillimbury undertook an Official Plan Review with the intent of adopting a new Official Plan. Town staff have held a number of open houses, two public meetings, and engaged consultants to prepare various background reports including a Future Employment Lands Economic Review in support of the new Official Plan. Town staff have presented the framework of the new Official Plan to its Council in a November workshop. Preliminary land use schedules show the site within the Town's

settlement area expansion and identified as a Major Retail/Mixed Use Node. Adoption of the plan is anticipated to occur in the spring of 2009 and dialogue with Regional staff concerning the population and employment targets, which include accommodating major retail uses, and the extent of the urban boundary expansion, are ongoing.

Proposed Amendment Application is consistent with Town of East Gwillimbury's Employment Corridor Review

The Future Employment Lands Economic Review prepared by Watson & Associates for the Town provides a review of employment lands, including commercial lands, for the Town and identifies 5 strategic employment corridors. The subject site is located within the Yonge Street North Corridor which is anticipated to be developed with retail, service commercial, accommodation and food services uses. The proposed application is consistent with the anticipated uses set out in the Town's Employment Corridor Review.

Yonge Street North Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment is nearing completion

On December 5, 2008 the Region published a Notice of Study Completion and released the Environmental Study Report for the North Yonge Street Corridor Public Transit and Associated Road Improvements for a 30-day public review. The study recommended:

- A median rapidway along Yonge Street, from 19th Avenue in Richmond Hill to Green Lane in East Gwillimbury, with the exception of a constrained segment within Aurora, from Henderson Drive to Orchard Heights, where transit service will run in mixed traffic as it is today.
- A median rapidway along two routes east of Yonge Street, one along Green Lane to the East Gwillimbury GO Terminal and the other along Davis Drive to the Southlake Regional Health Centre and then in mixed traffic east of the hospital to Hwy 404.
- An interim stage along Yonge Street, from Davis Drive to Green Lane, where HOV lanes are proposed as a pre-cursor to ultimate median rapidway.
- Associated road improvements including intersection turning lanes to address local traffic operational needs.

The proposed development site will require suitable urban design measures that facilitate public transit ridership including enhanced pedestrian and bicycling access to the proposed rapidway on Yonge Street and Green Lane.

Development of the site should include Transit Oriented Design measures consistent with Regional Official Plan Policy

Section 5.5 of the Regional Official Plan provides policies to guide development along the Regional corridors. It is acknowledged that different segments of the corridors are at different stages of development and the Region is working with local municipalities in developing specific local policies and programs. Development along the corridors should:

- Promote public ridership through high quality design, human scale, land use mix, and compact development.
- Promote buildings that are oriented to the street to create a consistent setback and building form adjacent to the street right-of-way.
- Set a high standard of urban design.
- Have buildings and sites that are designed to provide convenient access for public transit users, pedestrians, cyclists and persons with disabilities.
- Recognize that infill and intensification may occur incrementally over time as land uses evolve and mature.
- Provide for public gathering places, streetscaping and greening to create a pedestrian-friendly environment, integrated with the local and Regional Greenland Systems including parks, bicycle and pedestrian systems and natural features.
- Appropriately integrate with and transition to surrounding land uses and built form through scale, land use and design.

Integration with surrounding lands is essential

The site is located in the northeast quadrant of Yonge Street, a Regional corridor, and Green Lane, a Regional arterial road that functions as an east west by-pass for Newmarket and a connection between Highway 400 and Highway 404. Intersection turning movements will significantly increase over time as development in this area takes place, making it essential that the future local road pattern can assist in relieving traffic congestion on the Regional road network.

Concept plans for the site show connection to a local east west road at the northern end of the property. A north south public or private road, which connects to the east-west road, is required on the subject land. It is critical in providing free flowing traffic movement and an alternative for vehicles that would otherwise use the Yonge Street and Green Lane intersection. There is currently an existing signalized intersection on Green Lane, east of Yonge Street that provides access to the site and this access road could provide a portion of the required north-south connection. The final road pattern for this area will be determined by the new Official Plan, Region and Town's Transportation Master Plans and subsequent block plans and specific development proposals. As noted in Clause number 5 of Report No. 1 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, which was adopted by Regional Council on January 24, 2008, a staged approach to growth and

cooperation between the Region, Town of East Gwillimbury and Town of Newmarket is required in this area.

Growth Plan and Urban Boundary Expansions

The site specific proposal is consistent with the Town's preliminary new urban structure and Official Plan land use designations; however, adoption of the new OP is required to confirm the designations, road, and land use patterns, for this area. Prior to any decision on this site specific amendment, the Town's Official Plan Review requires a full public process and endorsement by the Town.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report has no financial implications to the Region. If approved, the amendment will facilitate future development that will provide additional assessment for York Region and the Town of East Gwillimbury.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

In July 2008 the Town adopted a preliminary report on the proposed local Official Plan amendment and are holding a Public Meeting on January 26, 2009. The Town of East Gwillimbury's Employment Corridor Review prepared for its new Official Plan envisions this site being developed for retail commercial uses.

7. CONCLUSION

Staff should receive and review comments from the public meeting and responses to the circulation regarding the proposed Amendment, and prepare a further report with recommendations for consideration at a future Planning & Economic Development Committee meeting.

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Belton, Manager of Development Review at (905) 830-4444, Ext. 1507 or Heather Konefat, Director of Community Planning at Ext. 1502.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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