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TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL: RESIDENTIAL INTENSIFICATION STUDY - PRELIMINARY INFORMATION REPORT

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report January 5, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information and circulated to the Town of Richmond Hill and area municipalities.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide preliminary information to the Committee and Council about the Town of Richmond Hill's Residential Intensification Study and draft Official Plan amendment. Secondly, this report outlines the next steps, at the Regional level, for the review of the study and draft amendment.

3. BACKGROUND

The study process was initiated in February 2004 when Richmond Hill Council approved the Terms of Reference for a comprehensive review of the existing Official Plan policies and Zoning By-law standards for high density apartment development. On March 29, 2004, Richmond Hill Council approved the retention of Metropolitan Knowledge International, Meridian Planning Consultants Ltd., Brook McIlroy Inc., and McCormick Rankin Corporation to complete the study.

The study was to be completed by September 2004, but a number of factors resulted in its delay. These factors included:

- The release of Bill 136 – Places to Grow Act in October 2004, which signalled that the Province intended to set new policy directions for municipalities directed at reducing urban sprawl and promoting intensification within existing urban boundaries.
- The approval of Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 43 – Centres and Corridors in January 2005 establishes new policy directions for area municipal plans in respect to directing growth to centres and corridors.

The Residential Intensification Study was released for public review and comment in November. Further, Richmond Hill Council directed staff to meet with resident groups, landowners, development industry representatives and other government agencies

including the Region of York. Richmond Hill Staff are to report back to Council in mid-2006 with the input received as a result of the consultation process.

4. ANALYSIS

The Residential Intensification Study and proposed official plan amendment applies to all lands within the Corporation of the Town of Richmond Hill. It is consistent with the policies contained in the Provincial Policy Statement, the Province's proposed Places to Grow Plan and the Region's Official Plan, specifically the policy changes established by Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 43 – Regional Centres and Corridors Amendment (ROPA 43).

The study identifies three objectives:

1. To begin to address evolving policy initiatives of senior levels of government directed at encouraging intensification within existing urban areas in order to promote transit supportive development and reduce urban sprawl.
2. To establish a hierarchy of residential land use designations with appropriate policies relating to height, built form, access and location.
3. To implement policies relating to transition and urban design to ensure that new development within existing built neighbourhoods respects the character and scale of the neighbourhood.

The study is an excellent start and lays the groundwork for formulating the policies for Richmond Hill's centres, corridors and other areas identified for intensification. By redefining the urban structure within its boundaries, Richmond Hill's efforts demonstrate leadership in this area. The study and draft OPA:

- Are currently undergoing a public review process and will be going through a more thorough process when a proposed OPA has its statutory public meeting. The policy initiatives and the consultation process represents good planning.
- Are supportive and reflective of the Region's Intensification Strategy.
- Are progressive policy setting documents that update the Town's urban structure to reflect senior government initiatives for growth management.

It should also be noted that the Towns of Markham and Newmarket and the City of Vaughan are also conducting their respective residential intensification studies. The Region will continue to work with the local municipalities to ensure a consistent approach in developing residential intensification strategies.

4.1 The Draft Official Plan Amendment

A draft Official Plan amendment is appended to the study. This draft OPA is intended to:

- Show how the issues of transition, built form, height, density and location of intensification would interact in a policy context.
- Provide the Town with an updated hierarchy of residential designations with appropriate policies and development standards.
- Detail the specific studies and requirements necessary for applications for high density residential uses.

The draft OPA introduces new designated areas for potential intensification: Regional Centre; Key Development Areas; Regional Corridors; Village Core; Local Corridors; Infill and/or Redevelopment; and Oak Ridges Community Core. These designations are illustrated on Figure 1 (*Attachment 1*).

4.1.1 Regional Centre

The Regional Centre is generally located east of Yonge Street and north of Highway 7. This node is intended to develop with the greatest intensity and with the widest range of mix of uses. The anticipated size of the Centre is a minimum of 10 hectares (24.7 ac) to a maximum of 30 hectares (74.1 ac). The various uses within the Centre should be within 500m of Yonge Street or Highway 7 and/or within walking distance to G.O. Transit. The anticipated heights could be greater than 22 storeys and the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) between 1.0 and 3.5. Development can occur at FAR's greater than 3.5 with funding commitments for the extension of subway service on Yonge Street or two way G.O. train service.

4.1.2 Key Development Areas

Key Development Areas (KDA) are generally located at the intersection of two arterial roads and must have direct frontage on either Yonge Street or Highway 7. The anticipated uses include multi-uses in a single building or two buildings with different uses. The minimum size of a KDA is 2.5 hectares (6.2 ac) and must have an internal road network. The boundary of a KDA will be defined on the basis of a tertiary plan exercise. The anticipated building heights are 15 storeys and greater with FAR's of 1.0 to 3.0.

4.1.3 Regional Corridor

Regional Corridor lands are those fronting onto Yonge Street or Highway 7. They may contain residential and employment uses in separate buildings or as a mixed use complex. The anticipated size of development parcels is a minimum of 0.5 hectares (1.2 ac) to a maximum of 2 hectares (4.9 ac). The maximum building height is 10 storeys with a minimum FAR of 1.0 to a maximum of 2.5.

4.1.4 Village Core

The Village Core properties are those fronting Yonge Street, north of Major Mackenzie Drive to Lavendale Road. The anticipated uses include residential with ground floor retail/employment uses. Redevelopment parcels for intensification must have frontage on Yonge Street and have at least one additional point of access which may include a laneway. Subject to the transition policies of the Official Plan, the maximum building height is 7 storeys and have a maximum FAR of 2.5.

4.1.5 Local Corridor

The Local Corridor in Richmond Hill is 250m on both sides of Major Mackenzie Drive between Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue. The intended use is for residential intensification with a minimum site size of 0.5 hectares (1.2 ac). A Tertiary Plan is required for sites greater than 1.0 hectare (2.5 ac). Subject to the transition policies of the Official Plan, the maximum building height is 10 storeys and have a maximum FAR of 2.0.

4.1.6 Other Infill and/or Redevelopment Sites

Other infill and/or redevelopment sites for residential intensification are intended to be located at intersections of two arterials or one arterial and a major or minor collector road. These sites should have a minimum area of 0.5 hectares (1.2 ac) and have at least two access points, one of which is on an arterial road.). Subject to the transition policies of the Official Plan, the maximum building height is 10 storeys and have a maximum FAR of 2.0 on arterial roads and 1.5 on collector roads.

4.1.7 Oak Ridges Community Core

The Oak Ridges Community Core lands are located on both sides of Yonge Street in Oak Ridges. The intended uses in this area is for residential and employment or a mix of these uses. The minimum site area for redevelopment is 0.5 hectares (1.2 ac) and have access to Yonge Street with no access through existing low density residential neighbourhoods. Subject to the transition policies of the Official Plan, the maximum building height is 4 storeys and have a maximum FAR of 2.0.

4.2 Compliance with the Provincial Policy Statement

The March 1, 2005, Provincial Policy Statement introduced new policies regarding compact urban growth. It promotes efficient development by encouraging densities and mixed use development to better use existing infrastructure and public service facilities. It also encourages development that would compliment and support public transit and other alternative modes of transportation.

The Richmond Hill Residential Intensification Study and draft Official Plan amendment is consistent with the above policy directions. The proposed policies direct residential intensification to appropriate areas of the Town while protecting adjacent neighbourhoods from the potential impact of high density buildings.

4.3 Compliance with the Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

On June 13, 2005, the Places to Grow Act received Royal Assent. This paved the way for the Province's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area (Growth Plan). The Act requires planning decisions and official plans to conform with the Growth Plan. The first draft of the Growth Plan was circulated for comments on February 16, 2005 and on November 24, 2005, the proposed Growth Plan was released. The main intent of the Growth Plan is to prescribe policies directing where and how growth is to occur. It

directs growth to existing built-up areas through intensification and greenfield developments that are compact and transit supportive. The Growth Plan identifies urban growth centres, recognizes major transit station areas as key focus areas for development to accommodate intensification, and prescribes that by the year 2015, a minimum of 40% of all residential development will be within the built-up area of the municipality.

The Growth Plan designates the area around the Langstaff Gateway as an Urban Growth Centre. This is where the highest concentration of intensification is anticipated. The Growth Plan sets a minimum gross density target of 200 residents and jobs combined per hectare for Urban Growth Centres. The draft Official Plan amendment is consistent with this policy as it designates the Langstaff Gateway area as a Regional Centre. By identifying the new hierarchy of designations to direct intensification, the draft amendment is assisting the municipality and the Region of York in achieving the Growth Plan's intensification target of 40% and the 200 residents and jobs per gross hectare target. Further analysis will be required to determine how development will meet the minimum gross density targets.

4.4 Compliance with the York Region Official Plan Amendment No. 43 – Regional Centres and Corridors Amendment

The intent of ROPA 43 is to encourage more compact urban form in the Regional Centres and along the Regional Corridors. The policies of intensification are intended to encourage development that would better utilize existing infrastructure and public amenities as well as support rapid transit initiatives. The Regional Official Plan now sets a target where 30% of new residential development should occur through intensification efforts. It also sets a density target where the average density of development along the Regional Corridors is 2.5 Floor Space Index (FSI).

The Richmond Hill Residential Intensification Study and draft OPA generally complies with the policies contained in ROPA 43, however, the density targets contained in ROPA 43 may have to be reviewed if the proposed Growth Plan is approved in its current form. A new hierarchy of designations are intended to direct intensification to appropriate locations within the Town. These new designations also contain height and density expectations.

4.5 York Region's Transit Oriented Development Guidelines

The Region is currently developing the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines. These guidelines are intended to implement the policies of ROPA 43. Since Richmond Hill's draft OPA contains policies affecting transition, built form, height, density and locational attributes, it will compliment and assist in developing the TOD Guidelines. Richmond Hill and other area municipalities will be consulted in the formulation of the TOD Guidelines.

4.6 Regional Intensification Strategy

In addition to the TOD Guidelines, the Region will be developing the Regional Intensification Strategy to further implement the policies of ROPA 43 and the Growth

Plan. The Province's proposed Growth Plan requires upper tier municipalities, in consultation with lower tier municipalities, to outline a strategy to phase-in and to achieve the intensification target.

Richmond Hill's Intensification Study is an excellent starting point for future discussions.

4.7 Next Steps

Regional staff will conduct a detailed review of the proposed Official Plan amendment for compliance with the policies of ROPA 43 and the proposed Growth Plan. The review will specifically examine the policies of the new hierarchy of designations and the associated "High Density Development Matrix".

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The notion of intensification is to better utilize existing infrastructure while diminishing the land consuming exercise of urban sprawl. Residential intensification reduces the need to expand hard services and in that respect will be a financial benefit to both the Region and area municipality.

In order to achieve the intensification targets and densities, as proposed by the Province, the Region has consistently identified the need for significant infrastructure investment as well as long term sustained funding for public transit, affordable housing and human service facilities in our centres and corridors.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The residential intensification policies from the Province, the Region and Richmond Hill's draft Official Plan amendment directly impacts on the future development pattern of the local municipality. As discussed in Section 3, of this report, the Town is progressively developing policies to guide future residential intensification.

7. CONCLUSION

The Town of Richmond Hill has completed their Residential Intensification Study. The study was initiated because the Town received several Official Plan amendment applications for apartment buildings exceeding densities and heights currently contemplated by their Official Plan. The study reviewed the Town's Official Plan policies relative to recent senior government policy initiatives encouraging residential intensification.

The study was completed by Richmond Hill Planning staff with initial assistance from a team of consultants. The study and associated draft Official Plan amendment are

currently in its consultation stage. Richmond Hill expects to report back to their Council by mid- 2006 with the outcome of the consultation process.

The Region will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the study and the draft Official Plan amendment to ensure their compliance with Provincial and Regional policies. It is anticipated that this analysis will be presented to the Planning and Economic Development Committee in the Fall of 2006.

The Region will also be preparing the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines and the Intensification Strategy in consultation with the local area municipalities.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)