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2007-2010

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated March 4, 2010, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report highlights the major accomplishments, events and successes of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, over the four year term of the current Regional Council.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region grew a total of 108,000 people during this term of Regional Council and approximately 35,000 jobs

During the most recent term of Regional Council, York Region has continued to have strong population growth. The Region has grown from 932,000 residents in 2006 to 1,040,000 in 2010, attracting approximately 27,000 new residents annually. This represents an average annual growth rate of just under 3%. This means 108,000 people chose York Region as their home during this term of Regional Council, which is equivalent to a city the size of the City of Waterloo. Over the same period, approximately 35,000 jobs were created within York Region communities.

The committee provides leadership in developing strategies to advance the goals of *Vision 2026* and reinforce decision-making processes as outlined through the *York Region Sustainability Strategy*. Initiatives are results driven with the aim to achieve comprehensive action plans in the area of growth management and economic development. The committee oversees five service areas within the Planning and Development Services Department: Community Planning, Geomatics, Infrastructure Planning, Long Range and Strategic Planning and Economic Development.

The current Regional Council term has continued to plan for population growth associated with *Places to Grow* legislation, which will reach approximately 1.5 million

residents, 780,000 jobs and 510,000 households by 2031. In order to accommodate additional growth, York Region conducted an extensive public information and engagement process that resulted in Council's adoption of the update Regional Official Plan in December 2009. The policies of the Plan will guide economic, environmental and community building decisions to manage growth, and play a key role in shaping the programs and initiatives for the Region.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

2007-2010 Planning and Economic Development Committee Accomplishments

The following sections summarize the activities and success of the Planning and Economic Development Committee over the past four years as it relates to activities associated with planning and economic development.

Awards

It is noteworthy that York Region has received a number of significant awards:

- The Region was presented with the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators 2009 Environmental Award for the Implementation of *York Region Greening Strategy*.
- In 2009, York Region received the ESRI Canada Map Calendar Award for *Operation Green Day*.
- York Region was the recipient of the prestigious "Whole City Award" at the 2008 International Awards for Liveable Communities presented in Dongguan, China for *York Region Sustainability Strategy "Towards a Sustainable Region."*
- In 2008, York Region received the Ontario Professional Planners Institute award for Excellence in Planning, in the category of Communications and Public Education, for the *Smart Commute Initiative*.
- Also in 2008, York Region received the Ontario Professional Planners award in the Healthy Communities category for the *Smart Commute Initiative*.
- The *York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan* won the Canadian Institute of Planners 2008 award for Planning Excellence in the category of Transportation and Infrastructure.
- Recipient of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities - CH2M Hill 2008 Sustainable Community Award in the Transportation Category for York Region's *Smart Commute Initiative*. It is noted that this award recognized the success in achieving project objectives, particularly on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from urban transportation through carpooling, transit incentives, bus shuttles and vanpooling programs.

- In 2008 received a Silver Award from Urban Regional Information Systems Association for *York Region Immigration Profile 2006 Census Map*.
- York Region was selected by the Transportation Association of Canada for their 2007 Sustainable Urban Transportation award for *Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan*.
- In 2007 received the ESRI Canada Map Calendar award for the *State of the Environment Map*.

PLANNING INITIATIVES

Natural Heritage System

A Natural Heritage System discussion paper and workshop served as the basis to identify a complete and linked Natural Heritage System for the Region. The key points that emerged from the workshop included: updating the Regional Greenlands System and identifying better and innovative infrastructure planning, design and construction techniques that protect and enhance the Regional Greenlands System. In addition, the Discussion Paper called for the integration of new natural heritage feature information into the Regional Official Plan update, including the Region's *Significant Woodlands Study* (2005).

Newmarket Official Plan Approval

The Town of Newmarket's new Official Plan establishes a 20 year planning horizon to 2026 for the Town. Council approved the plan in April 2008.

Planning for Tomorrow: Growth Management Program

Between 2007 and 2010, the Region conducted the Growth Management initiative *Planning for Tomorrow* which included a comprehensive public consultation exercise. This initiative provided input into the updated Regional Official Plan, which was adopted by Council on December 16, 2009 and is currently being reviewed by the Province for approval.

Refinements to the Region's Final Plan of Subdivision Clearance Process

The new set of procedures for the Region's final plan of subdivision clearance process provide for a timely subdivision clearance response from the Region back to the area municipalities, and a trigger mechanism that ensures Regional development charges are collected near the end of the approval process. Minor changes to the process may be made if they will enhance the process or resolve issues.

Regional Official Plan Amendments

Regional planners continued to examine the Region's growth management approach through major Regional Official Plan Amendments and updates to the York Region Urban Structure Plan to support provincial initiatives such as *Places to Grow* and *Greenbelt Protection Act*.

Water and Wastewater Servicing Protocol

A partnership between the Region and local municipalities is needed to ensure that the planning process moves forward and servicing capacity is used and monitored efficiently. The separation of the draft approval process from the servicing allocation provides the opportunity to move the planning process forward while ensuring that the development is tightly linked to the provision of servicing. The criteria for the provision of draft plan conditions sets out a clear, consistent process which achieves the goals of the Official Plan, the local municipalities and the development industry.

York Region 2031 Land Budget

The 2031 land budget report is part of the Region's Growth Plan conformity exercise and provides the basis for the proposed urban area expansions in the Regional Official Plan. The 2031 land budget report details York Region's residential and employment land requirements to 2031, provides the basis for proposed urban area expansions in the Regional Official Plan, and demonstrates the Region's ability to achieve the Growth Plan's designated greenfield area density target of 50 people and jobs per hectare.

York Region 2031 Population, Household and Employment Forecasts

The Regional forecasts of 1.5 million people, 510,000 households and 780,000 jobs were developed to conform to the Provincial Growth Plan and were prepared in consultation with Regional departments and the local municipalities. The forecasts are the product of a number of assumptions that are based on current social, demographic and economic trends, and on Regional and local policy. Forecasts of population, households and employment play a vital role in the planning of future Regional services. They are a fundamental building block to virtually every major Regional study including the designation of settlement and land use boundaries, and the planning for infrastructure projects, housing needs, and various health and social programs.

Forecasts are particularly critical in determining the requirements of transportation, sewer and water facilities, new schools, hospitals and medical services, and social and community services such as the police department and day care facilities. They also form the basis of Regional development charges bylaws and are used by industry and business for investment decisions.

SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Climate Change in York Region: Workshop and Discussion Paper

The York Region *Sustainability Strategy* called for a Climate Change Workshop to better understand the impacts of Climate Change on York Region. The *Climate Change Discussion Paper* report was prepared to foster discussion at the York Region Climate Change Workshop which was held in April of 2008. The Discussion paper was circulated to Planning and Economic Development Committee, Council and workshop participants prior to the Workshop, which explored potential impacts of Climate Change on the Region's infrastructure, energy, health care systems and emergency response capabilities. Feedback on the Workshop was presented to Planning and Economic Development Committee and Council in June of 2008.

Sustainable Development through LEED®

The Sustainable Development Through LEED program was adopted by Regional Council on June 19, 2008. This initiative is an innovative Program that represents the first of its kind in Ontario. The purpose of the program was to encourage, through incentive, the development of more sustainable forms of housing for the residents of York Region. Careful effort was taken to ensure that the Program is easily implementable, practical and flexible and works across all 9 distinct municipalities within the existing planning approval framework. The benefits of the program include water and energy efficient highrise residential developments that provide a healthier indoor living environment.

Sustainable Home Incentive Program (SHIP)

On September 24, 2009, Regional Council adopted the Sustainable Home Incentive Program. The program provides the opportunity to promote sustainable construction practices in grade-related residential development. The success of this program will depend on partnerships between the Region, local municipalities and the development industry. The benefits of this program will extend beyond water conservation resulting, for the residents of York Region, in homes that have reduced carbon footprints, emits less greenhouse gases, reduces energy and water consumption and provides a healthy indoor living environment more resilient to climate change.

Sustainability Training Program for Management

As part of the Council adopted 2007 York Region Sustainability Strategy, the program raises awareness, increases knowledge and provides the decision-making tools to incorporate sustainability into business plans and work portfolios. Developed in partnerships with the Sustainable Enterprise Academy at the Schulich School of Business and The Natural Step, York Region managers and supervisors learn to analyze the process and outcome of a project or plan using a sustainability framework to increase performance and further build a corporate culture of sustainability across the Region. As

of 2009, over 150 directors, managers and supervisors participated in the sustainability training sessions, including all Commissioners and Directors.

In addition, members of the King Township Sustainability Steering Committee have attended the training session to assist in developing the Township's sustainability initiative. The Town of Markham Sustainability Office is scheduled to participate in 2010.

INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVES

Bradford Bypass

The current Provincial growth projections for York Region and Simcoe County have reinforced the need for the Bradford Bypass. However, the Provincial Growth Plan has excluded the Bradford Bypass from consideration without providing an alternative and without a comprehensive assessment of the transportation implications of this exclusion. Regional Committee and Council continue to advocate for the advancement of this key piece of infrastructure.

Highway 407 Interchange Improvements

The study recommended the following interchange improvements and timeframe for implementation subject to approval under the *Environmental Assessment Act*:

Immediate Implementation:

- 9th Line south to west and east ramps
- Donald Cousens Parkway south to west ramp
- Martin Grove Road ramps to/from east

Future Implementation

- Donald Cousens Parkway south to east ramp
- Centre Street partial interchange
- Kipling Avenue partial interchange (only if Martin Grove Road ramps are not constructed)

Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan

On April 2008, York Regional Council endorsed the final Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan. This master plan focuses on the provisions of sidewalks, bike lanes and multi-use trails to interconnect walking and cycling pathways through the Region. An extensive, inter-connected system of walking and biking facilities will enrich the quality of life and provide better mobility for our residents for years to come.

Pedestrian and Cycling Municipal Partnership Program

The Pedestrian and Cycling Municipal Partnership Program forms part of the Region's sustainable growth management initiatives by accelerating the construction of local municipal pedestrian and cycling infrastructure that serves a regional context. The program provides an additional tool to improve the co-ordination and implementation of local municipal pedestrian and cycling initiatives. This program allocates \$500K annually to local municipal projects.

Smart Commute

Programs and policies were implemented that encourage employees to use alternative modes of transportation and contribute to the reduction of traffic congestion and pollutants from vehicle emissions and vehicle operations such as air contaminants and green house gases. Smart Commute was created in 2004 through the joint effort of municipalities across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, led by York Region. Partial initial funding was provided by Transport Canada. York Region acted as the corporate home of the Smart Commute Initiative. Smart Commute is implemented primarily through local Transportation Management Associations (TMAs). TMAs partner with businesses within their boundaries to design, implement and promote Travel Demand Management (TDM) programs. In 2008, Metrolinx assumed the corporate responsibility for Smart Commute from York Region and provides matching funding to all TMAs.

Transportation Master Plan (TMP) Update

In 2006, York Region initiated an update of its TMP to address future transportation needs of \$18.3 billion to 2031, in a sustainable and integrated manner to address new Provincial initiatives and additional growth in the Region. The TMP update was also undertaken to refine the transportation opportunities and challenges first identified in the Region's 2002 Transportation Master Plan. The TMP was approved in 2009 by Council and is used to update DC Bylaw and the 10 year capital plan.

Transportation Tomorrow Survey

The participation in this initiative is to collect travel information including transit usage and obtain an update on the travel behaviours of residents since the previous 2001 survey. Conducted in 2006-2007, this information will be used to determine travel patterns across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and other participating municipalities, and establish a database which is used in planning future needs and improvements to transportation facilities and services.

Water & Wastewater Master Plan Update

The master plan update makes more than 50 policy and program recommendations supporting sustainable water and wastewater servicing. The total gross cost for water and

wastewater capital projects and supporting programs is approximately \$6.6 billion to the year 2051. These projects and programs are needed to meet the demands of *Places to Grow* and regulatory requirements for water and wastewater facilities.

ECONOMIC INITIATIVES

Aging Workforce

The Aging Workforce Study Program will provide a better understanding of York Region's workforce demographic impact on the economy and initiate actions to improve efforts to maintain effective and adequate skilled labour supply to meet the needs of the future workforce. The program received \$517K in funding from Employment Ontario.

CEO Forum: Economics of Going Green

The CEO Forum in 2008, was an effective vehicle to communicate the environmental sustainability message to business leaders in York Region. The feedback received was used to develop supplementary initiatives to maintain the momentum on the "*Economics of Going Green*" as part of ongoing economic development marketing activities. The guide to Greening York Business was published in January 2009 and three sustainability workshops for businesses were held in 2009.

Economic Development Marketing and Communication Strategy

This strategy will support investment attraction to the Region. It is important for the Region to communicate its strengths, acknowledge its thriving economy and promote its quality of life through an established regional brand. The brand will convey key benefits offered by York Region to the business and investment community worldwide.

International Investment Attraction Program

This initiative is a highly targeted program that leverages existing initiatives and provides enhancements to increase the flow on international investment into the local municipalities that comprise York Region through sales prospecting, trade shows and delegations.

Long-Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy: 2009-2019

The Long Term Tourism Destination Development Strategy identifies actions to encourage and accommodate sustainable tourism economic activities that contribute to and enhance York Region as a place to work, live and visit.

Tourism Industry Partnership Development Program

This program will strengthen tourism industry partnerships; facilitate professional development; develop new service offerings and packages; research tourism needs and trends; and, track and manage consumer inquiries and information services.

York Region Tourism Customer Service Program

This program is fundamental to the overall appeal and image of York Region as a viable tourist destination. The Customer Service program provides the tools to enhance the customer experience resulting in customer loyalty, increases in visitation and generates economic benefits throughout York Region. . The program is funded \$420K from Employment Ontario.

GEOMATIC INITIATIVES

Interactive Maps

Several existing interactive maps were enhanced cartographically, and four additional interactive map views were published on YorkExplorer, they include: a road operations map, for staff to identify assets on, and characteristics of the regional road network; a bus stop inspection map, for YRT's contractor to locate and plan the delivery of the contracted services; a wellhead protection map that shows land holders what wellhead protection zone that lands are in; and, a trail map that shows where trails can be accessed and where they lead.

Urban Visualization Modelling

A 3D GIS program was launched along centres and corridors, in support of growth management and intensification activities in the Planning and Development Services Department, the Transportation Services Department and York Region Rapid Transit Corporation, and for public communication of future growth scenarios.

YorkInfo Partnership

The YorkInfo Partnership works together to create and operate a geospatial information infrastructure among tax-funded, not-for-profit organizations that operate within York Region. Membership includes all nine area municipalities; the Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority (LSRCA) and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA); and, the York Catholic District School Board and York Region District School Board.

PUBLICATIONS

Best Practices for New Communities: Discussion Paper

The Best Practices paper is intended to stimulate discussion on the development of the potential New Communities of York Region, and provide a basis for future new community criteria. The discussion paper was widely circulated for comment and discussion.

Cordon Count Bulletin: 2009

Identifies growth in traffic across a number of corridors through the Region. Results and analysis are used to monitor the effects of investments assist in identifying capital priorities.

Discovery Guide

The *Discovery Guide* is the only regional publication of its kind, produced annually and is the key consumer piece designed to promote travel to and within the Region. It provides comprehensive information regarding the Region's Municipalities, Attractions, Accommodations, Arts, Theatre, Dining, Shopping, Golfing, Marinas, Nature, Event listings and more. The Guide is an important component of the Region's tourism program and new milestones have been achieved each year such as increased industry participation, production, distribution and increased generation of advertising revenues.

Economic Development Review and Mid-Year Review

Produced twice a year, the Economic and Development Review provides a number of key economic indicators and development statistics, such as population growth, migration data, employment and labour market conditions, residential and commercial property market information and recent development trends. Major planning activities are also highlighted.

Employment and Industry

The Employment and Industry report is an annual report highlighting employment growth trends by industry sector and by area municipality. Detailed employment analysis is also provided for high growth areas within each area municipality, highlighting changing employment patterns and emerging industry sectors.

Regional Official Plan (ROP)

Since the Regional Official Plan (ROP) was adopted and approved in the mid 1990's there have been many new Provincial planning initiatives (Greenbelt, Source Water Protection and *Places to Grow*, Metrolinx and Draft Lake Simcoe Protection Plan) that

have fundamentally changed the way planning occurs in the south-central Ontario. As well a number of important Regional initiatives have advanced including the Sustainability Strategy, the Master Plans for Transportation and Transit and Water and Waste Water, the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan, Natural Heritage Strategic Directions and Best Practices for New Communities, as well as Regional Centres and Corridors. Other initiatives at the local municipal level, including the adoption of Energy Star minimum standards and the impact of LEED development and official plan updates currently in an advanced state by a number of municipalities can be better integrated into the overall Regional Official Plan context through a new Regional Official Plan adopted by Council in December of 2009.

Sustainability Strategy

The *Sustainability Strategy* adopted in 2007, will enable York Region to take a new and fresh approach to operations and decision-making processes. This model addresses the way we engage our public, monitor our progress and improve on our successes, while integrating the values of sustainable natural environment, healthy communities and economic vitality.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines

Regional Council adopted the Regional TOD Guidelines in September 2006 as a tool to help implement transit-supportive development across York Region. TOD is an approach to planning and design that strengthens the relationship between how we grow and our ability to provide efficient and effective transit services.

Transportation Fact Book 2009

The Transportation Fact Book 2009 highlights major elements of York Region's extensive transportation system, including the road network, public transit and other sustainable modes of transportation such as walking cycling and carpooling. The information is a comprehensive overview of the Region's transportation system and can be useful for planning on new and evolving communities.

Vision 2026 Annual Reports

The *Vision 2026* document was developed as a result of citizen consensus responses on how York Region should grow over the next several decades. Annual Reports on Indicators of Progress is published that details progress and success to date in the implementation of the Region's 25-year strategic plan.

Water and Wastewater Supply and Demand Annual Monitoring Report

The Region has adopted an approach to water and wastewater supply and demand management through the release of an annual monitoring report. This report assists staff

in tracking allocation and system capacity and increases the understanding of the Regional water and wastewater systems.

York Region Business Directory

The *York Region Business Directory* contains information on over 17,000 businesses, effectively promoting the York Region business community to the general public. The dataset has continued to grow, with the number of businesses increasing 4.8% annually between 1998 and 2005. As of 2005, there were an estimated 28,000 businesses employing 450,000 people in the Region. Recent employment growth in a number of industry sectors has contributed to the diversification of an already broad-based economy. This diversification helps to insulate our economy from sectoral shifts in the business cycle.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The costs of implementing the programs and initiatives cited in this report have been managed by Council in its administration of annual budgets between 2007 and 2010, and longer-term financial planning.

Priorities of Council are reflected in the annual budget and associated funding allocations. With responsible, prudent fiscal policies, sustainable financial strategies and proactive financial planning processes, York Region strives to ensure that programs and services are delivered to the community in an effective manner at reasonable cost. York Region's financial policies and practices ensure that ongoing operating requirements as well as growth and development needs are financed in a fiscally responsible manner to meet the current and future needs.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Regional staff has, and will continue to, work closely with local municipal staff to ensure the effective and efficient support of policies that are consistent with the strategic goals of local municipalities. Many of the accomplishments in the 2007-2010 term are facilitated by the spirit of collaboration between all municipalities in York Region.

7. CONCLUSION

The 2007-2010 Planning and Economic Development Committee and Council has continued to build on past successes and position the Region for a future that is committed to service excellence. Significant progress has been made in the overall

strategy of growth management to successfully implement plans for the future to balance the needs of a growing and aging population with environmental, economic prosperity and the delivery of infrastructure.

For more information on this report, please contact Kathryn Holland, Planner, at (905) 830-4444, Ext. 1511.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.