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GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY OPTIONS – PRELIMINARY REPORT

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

1. The presentation by Paul Bottomley, Manager, Growth Management/ Economy and Information Research, Long Range and Strategic Planning Branch, be received;

2. The recommendations contained in the following report dated March 7, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services, be adopted:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional staff bring forward the specified staff reports as outlined in Section 4.

2. A copy of this staff report be circulated to the area municipalities for information purposes.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this staff report is to provide a high level overview of the components of the Region's Growth Management Strategy that will be presented to Regional Council over the next few months.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 York Region Context

According to the Provincial forecasts contained in the Places to Grow Plan, the Region is expected to have 1.5 million residents by 2031, and 780,000 jobs. To accompany these forecasts, the *Places to Grow Plan* and the *Greenbelt Plan* have established parameters on where and how this growth will be distributed. Staff have presented the details and impacts on these two pieces of legislation in previous staff reports.

As a result, staff has embarked upon an update to the Growth Management Strategy that will incorporate the theme of sustainability and the values of sustainable natural environment, economic vitality and healthy communities.

3.2 Integration with Infrastructure Master Plans

In keeping with the theme of sustainability, the growth management strategy update and Regional Official Plan review will be integrated with the updates to the Infrastructure Master Plans. This approach ensures that any updated policies in the Regional Official Plan will be coordinated with the updates to the master plans for transportation and transit, water and wastewater and pedestrian and bicycling. A 25 year fiscal impact analysis will also be completed to further assess the fiscal challenges associated with growth options. In this way, the Region can devise a decision-making model that gives equal consideration to land-use and infrastructure planning, human services and fiscal impacts.

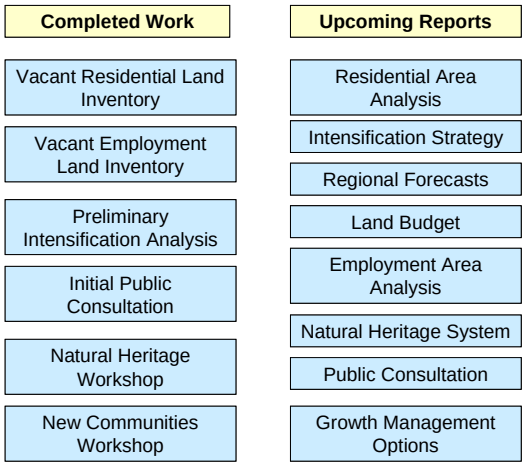
The Region's Natural Heritage System will also be updated as part of the growth management initiative. This ensures that the Region's natural heritage is protected and enhanced while creating new healthy and liveable communities.

3.3 Growth Management Work Completed

During the period between 2005 and 2006, the following growth management studies were completed and received by Regional Council:

- Vacant Residential Land Inventory
- Vacant Employment Land Inventory
- Preliminary Intensification Analysis
- Public Information and Engagement Program – Initial Consultation
- Natural Heritage Workshop
- New Communities Workshop
- Extensive series of public and stakeholder consultations.

Figure 1: Growth Management Strategy



4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The following is a high level overview of the upcoming studies that comprise the Region's Growth Management Strategy. These studies are an extension of the completed work listed above. Together, these components make up the Region's Growth Management Strategy as illustrated in Figure 1. The following is intended to provide a brief overview of major forthcoming technical reports.

4.1 Regional Forecasts

Scheduled date to Regional Council: April 2007

Purpose

- To test and distribute the Provincial Places to Grow population and employment forecasts to the local area municipal level of York Region. Multiple scenarios have been tested with the York Region Forecast Model, including the 40% intensification scenario as mandated by the Province. Area municipal unit allocations have been generated for each of the scenarios: 30%, 40% and "ultimate" (2051) generating specific implications to the future housing stock in York Region.

Key Considerations/ Issues

- The population and employment forecasts for most municipalities will increase, some significantly.
- The housing mix forecast across the Region and in each municipality will shift significantly towards town houses and apartment style units.
- The pace of growth will create significant demand for infrastructure, human services and result in significant financial demands.
- The Provincial requirement of 40% intensification generates approximately 85,000 new intensification units in the Region by 2031. Is this achievable? Will the residential housing market support the forecast increase in demand for apartments and row style housing?

Next Steps

- Consult with local municipalities to determine their specific allocation of housing units, population and employment.
- Use Regional forecasts as input into new infrastructure master plans, fiscal analysis and natural heritage evaluation.
- Present to Council and adopt the 2006-2031 population and employment forecasts as a Regional Official Plan Amendment.

4.2 Land Budget/ GM Options
Scheduled date to Regional Council: April 2007

Purpose
- To outline the key components of the land budget and to provide some initial calculations.

Key Considerations/Issues
- Updated forecasts in the *Places to Grow Plan* call for a greater number of households and jobs then previously planned for.
- The Vacant Employment Land Inventory found that there was an 18.5 year supply of designated employment lands as of year-end 2004.
- The Vacant Residential Unit Supply Inventory found that there was a 12.8 year supply of designated residential lands as of mid-year 2005.
- A significant amount of growth will be accommodated through intensification of existing built areas.
- In order to accommodate the Provincial forecast, a significant amount of additional greenfield development will also be required.
- From conception to approval, it can take upwards of ten years to expand the urban boundary.
- There areas where urban expansion is possible are limited by the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Greenbelt.
- Key issues to be considered include: phasing, controlling the pace of growth and urban area expansion.

Next Steps
- Consultation with area municipalities on pace, phasing and timing of detailed local planning work.
- A full 25 year fiscal impact analysis
- Coordination of transportation, water and wastewater, and pedestrian and cycling master plans with land budget planning.

4.3 Residential Area Analysis
Scheduled date to Regional Council: April 2007

Purpose
- To track how the built environment has evolved in the Region over the years with respect to residential density, housing mix and other built form factors.

Key Considerations/ Issues
- Describe visually and empirically how Regional communities can achieve 50 residents and jobs/ha specified in the Places to Grow Plan.

- The Places to Grow density standard for new communities will be difficult to reach especially given that many new developments over the next 5 – 10 years will not reach the standard.
- Track the historical development of residential growth and development in the Region by municipality between 1971 and 2006.
- Compare and contrast the progress of development and the "look and feel" in older and emerging communities throughout the Region.
- The historical and emerging development trends throughout the Region will help establish a framework for how to effectively shape the development new communities in the remaining whitebelt areas.

Next Steps

- Review current policy and determine future direction and tool necessary to meet the targets outlined in the *Places to Grow Plan*.
- Continue to track examples of good development across the Region with respect to built form, transit-supportive densities and design.
- Prepare criteria for the development of new communities which will include a set of best practices and principles for potential development in the Region's whitebelt.

4.4 Employment Area Analysis

Scheduled date to Regional Council: April 2007

Purpose

- To examine the business and employment characteristics in our approved employment parks and compare these trends to the Provincial Places to Grow targets.

Key Considerations/ Issues

- An additional 330,000 new jobs are expected in the Region by 2031. A large proportion of these jobs are expected to be within new or established employment parks. Developing an understanding of the existing and required built form characteristics is a key consideration.
- Creating 330,000 new jobs in the Region will be a considerable challenge.
- The report will examine the existing vacant employment land supply in relation to our employment forecasts.
- A number of the Region's existing employment parks do not have the density required by the Places to Grow plan for new development (i.e. 50 residents and jobs/ha).
- The report will examine a series of case studies in order to develop an understanding of the urban design characteristics associated with various employment densities.

Next Steps

- Review current policy and determine future direction and tools necessary to meet the targets outlined in the *Places to Grow Plan*.

- Continue to track examples of good development across the Region with respect to built form, transit-supportive densities and design.
- Prepare criteria for the development of new communities.

4.5 Residential Intensification Strategy
Scheduled date to Regional Council: April 2007

Purpose
- To demonstrate what the Provincial Places to Grow target of 40% intensification means to York Region and the area municipalities in terms of absolute numbers and urban design.

Key Considerations/ Issues
- The majority of these intensification units will occur in Regional Centres and Corridors with the reminder in local centres, corridors, GO/VIVA/subway stations, infill etc.
- The Region is required to ramp up from the current 18.4% intensification rate to 40% per year by 2015.
- Each municipality will have to accommodate some intensification with the majority in Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan.
- The Intensification Strategy provides a framework for a Municipal Intensification Implementation Plan that outlines how each area municipality will achieve their preliminary intensification assignment.
- The Region already has good examples of intensification with respect to urban design, public transit accessibility and parking standards, among others.

Next Steps
- Consult with the Province on the delineation of the built boundary.
- Complete the intensification hierarchy and consult with area municipalities.
- Review existing policies to identify future direction and tools necessary to meet the Region's 40% intensification target.

4.6 Natural Heritage System
Since the original Greenlands system was identified in 1994 there have been a number of provincial initiatives, including the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Greenbelt Plan as well as area municipal Greenlands studies which have refined and focussed natural heritage systems planning in the Region.

In the fall of 2006, in part in response to the recommendations of the TSYR Advisory group, Regional staff held a Natural Heritage Workshop to discuss how to protect and enhance the Region's Natural Heritage System and to have infrastructure planning decisions that are more sustainable. The results of this workshop will be used to assist in the preparation a Greening Discussion Paper to establish the components and methods of achieving an enhanced Regional Greenlands System within the context of the Provincial

Growth Strategy and Regional growth needs. The Greening Discussion paper will address several issues, including:

- updating the Regional Natural Heritage System with the addition of Significant Woodlands;
- incorporating the Greenbelt Plan and other related legislation;
- establishing the principles for a linked natural heritage system of cores and corridors and identifying programs and partnerships
- establishing a conceptual trails network within the Greenlands system
- more fully integrating infrastructure planning and construction with natural environment principles
- updating the Region's Greening Strategy

Staff will also be examining how to create a linked natural heritage system in the "whitebelt" area. This work will be done in collaboration with affected area municipalities and will attempt to create a sustainable balance between natural heritage, community building and economic objectives.

4.7 Growth Management Consultation

In the spring of 2006 Regional staff conducted an extensive Phase 1 public consultation to obtain input on growth management issues in the Region. The results of this public input were posted on the Planning for Tomorrow portion of the Region's website and reported to Committee and Council in June and September 2006.

With the release of additional background reports relating to growth in York Region and the preparation of proposed growth scenarios, Regional staff will be undertaking Phase II of the public consultation and engagement to review future growth scenarios in the Region.

It is recommended that 5 public open house and town hall meetings (in the City of Vaughan and Towns of Markham, Richmond Hill, East Gwillimbury and Newmarket) be held in the first 3 weeks of May to obtain input and stimulate discussion on growth scenarios. Following the town hall meetings, stakeholder meetings will be held with special interest groups including, but not limited to UDI/GTHBA and environmental and ratepayer groups and presentations to local groups and area municipal councils at their request. In addition, prior to the public meetings there will also be information available both on the Region's *Planning for Tomorrow* website and in a newsletter format about the issues, choices and growth scenarios under discussion. Regional staff is exploring the possibility of holding a "Growth Summit" Symposium as well. The Region recommends coordinating this forum with the Province to engage our stakeholders and strengthen the growth management dialogue. A further report on this initiative is scheduled for April Planning and Economic Development Committee.

4.8 Relationship to Vision 2026

The nature of the growth management strategy speaks to all of the goal areas of Vision 2026, but especially to the goals of "Managed and Balanced Growth", "Infrastructure for a Growing Region" and "Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region".

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Growth Management Strategy will be undertaken within the existing staff complement and budget allocation for the Planning and Development Services Department. This approach is unique considering that a number of regions and municipalities throughout the Greater Toronto Area opt to contract external consultants for such an initiative.

A 25 year fiscal impact analysis will also be completed to further assess the fiscal challenges associated with growth options.

Any additional costs resulting from the Growth Management Strategy Update will be reported to Regional Council in subsequent reports.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

A Municipal Technical Advisory Committee has been established under the Growth Management Public Information and Engagement Program. This group of municipal representatives meet regularly to discuss growth issues affecting the Region and to provide feedback on the components of the Growth Management Strategy.

7. CONCLUSION

This report is intended to be an overview of growth management issues. Staff will report in detail in a series of technical reports over the next 2 months.

Given the 2031 growth estimates for the Region, staff has embarked upon an update to the Growth Management Strategy. This strategy will be based on the theme of sustainability and incorporate the values of sustainable natural environment, economic vitality and healthy communities.

Growth management work completed to date include the vacant residential land inventory, vacant employment land inventory, preliminary intensification analysis, initial public consultation, and the natural heritage and new communities workshop. Upcoming reports for 2007 include: Regional forecasts, land budget/GM options, residential and employment area analyses, residential intensification strategy, an update to the natural heritage system, and growth management consultations.

There are a number of significant issues that will be explored including: the pace of growth, housing mix, area municipal shares and expansion into new greenfield areas.

In keeping with the theme of sustainability, the growth management strategy update and Regional Official Plan review will be integrated with the updates to the Infrastructure Master Plans and a full 25 year fiscal analysis.

For further information about this report, please contact John Waller, Director of Long Range and Strategic Planning at 905-830-4444 ext 1525 or john.waller@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.