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IMPLEMENTING ROPA 43 – TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) GUIDELINES AND NEXT STEPS

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, February 10, 2005, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. As a first-step in ROPA 43 implementation, Planning staff initiate the creation of Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines as outlined in Section 4.2 of this report, in consultation with the nine local municipalities, York Region Transit and York Region Rapid Transit representatives.
2. Planning staff report on the status of the Regional TOD Guidelines to the Planning and Economic Development Committee in June 2005.
3. As a second-step in ROPA 43 implementation, Planning staff prepare a detailed, comprehensive and long-term workplan for ROPA 43 implementation based on the actions outlined in Section 3.1 of this report, in consultation with the nine local municipalities, York Region Transit and York Region Rapid Transit representatives.
4. Planning staff present a draft ROPA 43 implementation workplan to the Planning and Economic Development Committee in May 2005.
5. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the local municipalities for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to receive the direction from Planning and Economic Development Committee and Council for staff to begin implementing ROPA 43. This is proposed through a two-step process, in consultation with the nine local municipalities, York Region Transit and York Region Rapid Transit representatives:

- 1) Initiate the creation of Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines, as outlined in Section 4.2 of this report.
- 2) Prepare a detailed, comprehensive and long-term workplan for ROPA 43 implementation based on the actions outlined in Section 3.1 of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

ROPA 43 – Regional Centres and Regional Corridors – came into effect on January 7, 2005 following its adoption by Regional Council on December 16, 2004. No appeals were received.

The amendment serves as the Regional land use “policy” arm of the Centres + Corridors Strategy, complimenting “supportive programs,” “financial tools” and “infrastructure investment” strategies to achieve the Region’s planned urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors, served by rapid transit.

Amending Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 of the Regional Official Plan, the purpose of ROPA 43 (appended to the September 30, 2004 Office Consolidation) is to more fully articulate and implement the Region’s planned urban structure, including the promotion of development that is compact, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly and well designed.

3.1 Shifting focus to Implementation

The staff report adopted by Regional Council on December 16, 2005 not only recommended adoption of ROPA 43, but also outlined actions that could be taken to begin implementation of the new policies in 2005 and 2006. These actions included:

- The creation of Regional TOD Guidelines, in consultation with the nine local municipalities, York Region Transit and York Region Rapid Transit representatives.
- Assist local municipalities in the identification of Key Development Areas for segments of the Regional Corridors, through the review/preparation of secondary plans.
- Create a highly-visual, user-friendly brochure outlining the planned vision for the Regional Centres and Regional Corridors. This will have the dual purpose of serving as a customer service tool for developers/land owners, and as a public education tool for residents and other stakeholders.
- Create a specialized monitoring program using the Department’s new, computerized Growth Management System to track the scope and quality of development in Regional Centres and Regional Corridors.

These actions compliment and are in addition to the 2005 Growth Management Workplan, which was adopted by Regional Council on November 18, 2006.

3.2 Infrastructure Capacity – Setting Priorities

Regional and Provincial planning policies call for intensification targets of 30 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively, to support the city-building model of development in urban areas across the GTA and beyond. Within the current constrained infrastructure capacity context, assigning priority to Regional Centres and Corridors is essential for supporting the transit-supportive development that achieves the city-building objectives of the Regional Official Plan. The Town of Markham, for example, passed a Council Resolution on December 10, 2002 that assigned infrastructure allocation priority to Markham Centre and for infill/redevelopment along key transit corridors. The Regional

Official Plan (as amended by ROPA 43) supports this approach through Policy 5.3.9 c), which states that transit, road, and water/wastewater infrastructure should be coordinated to support the build-out of the Regional Centres.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The implementation of ROPA 43 policies is integral to realizing the vision of the Centres + Corridors Strategy and the objectives of the Growth Management Strategy. This will enhance and ensure the long-term sustainability of the Region's urban structure from social, economic and environmental perspectives.

A Planning staff report adopted by Regional Council on December 16, 2004 set out next steps for the implementation of ROPA 43, as outlined in Section 3 of this report. These represent a logical starting point, recognizing that, like the Official Plan itself, implementation will be long-term and far-reaching.

4.1 Implementation Approach

Successful implementation will require the continuation of the consultative, widely-scoped and "long-view" approach taken throughout the planning process for ROPA 43 and Centres + Corridors Strategy. This includes collaboration with the local municipalities and related agencies, and continued public input.

Local municipal staff involvement will be critical for the success of this initiative, as strong linkages with the development review process will be needed to ensure that the product is both practical in its approach and is consistent with the long-term vision for Regional Centres and Corridors. A continued, strong role for local municipalities will also strengthen ongoing local planning to advance city-building. These initiatives include Newmarket's Official Plan Review, Richmond Hill's High Density Study and Vaughan's Thornhill Centre Street Land Use Study.

Coordination between and among Regional Departments is also important to implementation success. For example, the Finance and Transportation & Works Departments are key players in the development of "supportive programs," "infrastructure investment" and "financial tools" under the Centres + Corridors Strategy.

Collaboration and coordination among Regional Departments, and with local municipalities and the public, will ensure the successful implementation of ROPA 43 and related Strategies. Action supported by monitoring and evaluation will strengthen and advance the effectiveness of good planning policy.

4.1.1. Two steps

Implementation needs to occur in a manner that is achievable, effective, widely-scoped and timely. Staff recommend a two-step approach for starting ROPA 43 implementation.

This approach aims to produce high-impact results within existing staff and financial resources, while recognizing opportunities to strengthen existing policies and programs. The two steps are to:

- 1) Initiate the creation of Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines, as outlined in Section 4.2 of this report.
- 2) Prepare a detailed, comprehensive and long-term workplan for ROPA 43 implementation based on the actions outlined in Section 3.1 of this report.

4.2 Regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines

The creation of Regional TOD Guidelines is a key action outlined in Section 3.1 of this report, and represents an achievable, high-impact initiative that will have considerable effect on planning implementation.

Design is as equally important as density in achieving development that is pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive. The most effective and common ways to influence building and site design are through local zoning by-laws and site plan control under Sections 34 and 41 of the *Planning Act*, respectively. Although these are and will remain local municipal responsibilities, the ROPA 43 polices present an ideal opportunity for the Region to strengthen and support local efforts to implement transit-supportive development.

The creation and adoption of Regional TOD Guidelines can assist and strengthen local planning for Regional Centres and Corridors, consistent with Regional Official Plan policies, as described in Section 4.1 of this report. The benefits of Regional guidelines include consistency, clarity and direct linkages to local and Regional policies and programs that promote compact communities served by transit. The guidelines will also support the continued, significant investment by the Region in conventional and rapid transit services.

4.2.1 Process and Product

An inclusive, widely-scoped process is required for this undertaking, consistent with the approach outlined in Section 4.1 of this report. Community Planning Branch staff will lead the project, in collaboration with the Long Range and Strategic Planning Branch, and consult with Regional Departments including York Region Transit, local municipalities and YRTP representatives.

The Regional guidelines should be based on existing best-practices from across the Region and GTA, and transit providers including York Region Transit. The Provincial *Transit-Supportive Land Use Planning Guidelines* developed by the Ministry of Transportation in 1992 is a model for this exercise. The objective is not to “re-invent the wheel,” but to draw on the expertise of local staff and other professionals with experience in this field.

The guidelines should set out development principles that address:

- The massing, height and density of buildings.

- Quantity and design of surface and above/below-grade parking.
- Pedestrian safety and comfort.
- The layout of streets, sidewalks and other pedestrian connections.
- Distances and connections between transit stops and buildings.

The final product should be a “Made in York” document that is highly-visual, clear, easy to understand, and geared to a wide cross-section of readers including developers, residents and elected officials.

4.3 Next Steps

Consistent with the two-step approach outlined in Section 4.1.1 of this report, staff propose to proceed first with Regional TOD Guidelines. A progress report will be presented to the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee in June 2005. A final product will be presented to Regional Council for endorsement by the end of 2005.

A draft, long-term workplan for ROPA 43 implementation will be prepared concurrently with the development of Regional TOD Guidelines, in consultation with the with the nine local municipalities, York Region Transit and York Region Rapid Transit representatives. A draft document will be presented to the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee in May 2005.

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

Advancing the implementation of the Region’s planned urban structure, consistent with ROPA 43 and the Centres + Corridors Strategy, is consistent with all eight goal areas of Vision 2026, specifically “Infrastructure for a Growing Region,” “Quality Communities for a Diverse Population” and “Managed and Balanced Growth.”

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The implementation actions described in this report do not require additional staff or financial resources. Advancing the implementation of the Region’s planned urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors, served by rapid transit, will optimize investments in existing and planned infrastructure. For example, the creation and adoption of Regional TOD Guidelines will support planning for compact and pedestrian-friendly communities which, in-turn, will support the Region’s investment of upwards of \$4.2-billion in rapid transit over the next 30 years.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities have made significant strides in city-building through their planning for compact, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly and well-designed communities.

Much of the planning implementation required for ROPA 43 and the Centres + Corridors Strategy will be accomplished through local instruments including secondary plans, zoning by-laws and site plan control. A key objective the Regional Official Plan, as amended by ROPA 43, is to support and strengthen local planning for Regional Centres and Regional Corridors wherever possible and appropriate. Local municipalities have contributed to better policy in the planning process for ROPA 43 and will continue to shape Regional policy throughout the implementation stage.

7. CONCLUSION

The approval of ROPA 43 on January 7, 2005 marks the beginning of the implementation stage of policies aimed to achieve the Region's planned urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Centres, served by rapid transit. The implementation process requires a widely-scoped and inclusive approach that involves Regional Departments, the local municipalities and related agencies, and the public.

Like the Regional Official Plan itself, the implementation process will be far-reaching and long-term. Staff recommend a two-step approach to starting ROPA 43 implementation, recognizing that high-impact results can be achieved in the short-term using existing staff and financial resources. The first step involves the creation of Regional TOD Guidelines, while the second step calls for the drafting of a long-term, detailed workplan.

This report marks the first in a series to update Planning and Economic Development Committee and Council on the process and progress of ROPA 43 implementation. Reports to Committee will follow in May and June 2005 on the draft workplan and Regional TOD Guidelines, respectively.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.