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GREENING STRATEGY - LAND SECUREMENT SALMON PROPERTY TOWNSHIP OF KING

The Transportation Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated April 4, 2010, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services and Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council authorize the contribution of 45% of the acquisition costs, not to exceed \$755,000, from the Greening Land Securement Reserve, towards the purchase of the 27 hectare (68 acre) Salmon Property, legally described as part of Lot 22 Concession 7, being all of Part 2 and the westerly 12 hectares (30 acres) of Part 3 on Deposited Plan 65R-20140, Township of King, subject to successful fundraising by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust for the remainder of the costs.
2. The lands be jointly held by the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and York Region, with the Region being the majority landowner (>50%) and managing the lands as part of the York Regional Forest.
3. The Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and the Clerk of the Township of King.

2. PURPOSE

This report seeks Regional Council's authorization to contribute 45% of the total acquisitions costs (not to exceed \$755,000), towards the purchase of 27 hectares (68 acres) of land currently owned by Carmen and William Salmon within the Township of King (*Attachment 1*). This commitment is subject to the remainder of the acquisition costs (\$958,000) being successfully raised by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and/or the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, and majority Regional ownership of the lands.

3. BACKGROUND

In 2001, Regional Council adopted the Greening and Land Securement Strategies. In support of these strategies, \$1.35M is allocated annually to allow for the delivery of a

number of Greening Strategy programs (tree planting, environmental education, stewardship, etc.) and to secure strategic environmental lands.

Properties can be secured using a number of means ranging from stewardship agreements and tree planting, donation, conservation easements, to fee simple acquisition by the Region or a partner. The Region continues to demonstrate environmental leadership through the implementation of the Greening – Land Securement Strategy and our investment in green infrastructure.

Since 2001, a total of 35 properties (872 hectares) have been secured through conservation ownership or easements, with a total Regional investment of \$10M. The value of the properties secured exceeds \$50M (at time of securement).

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Salmon property is part of the Happy Valley Forest, designated as Natural Core Area in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

The Salmons own a total of 40 hectares (99 acres) within the Township of King. The property is divided into two parcels, the north parcel containing 24.5 hectares (61 acres), including a residential dwelling to be retained by the Salmons, and the south vacant parcel containing 15 hectares (38 acres). As identified on *Attachment 1*, the property subject to this potential acquisition includes the westerly 12 hectares (30 acres) of the north parcel, and the entire south parcel, for a combined total of 27 hectares (68 acres). The Happy Valley Forest is a priority for conservation land acquisition. Over 400 acres of land has been secured by the Nature Conservancy of Canada as shown on *Attachment 2*.

These lands are within the Natural Core Area land designation of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) and form part of the Happy Valley Forest, a key natural heritage feature. The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail crosses the property. The property is also considered a federal priority natural area and is therefore eligible for funding consideration under the Government of Canada's Natural Areas Conservation Program.

These lands provide the opportunity to protect and enhance significant environmental lands and allow public access through acquisition and reforestation

The subject lands comprise 27 hectares (68 acres) within the Happy Valley Forest in the Township of King. The majority of the property is forested and forms part of the Happy Valley Forest Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) and Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI), as designated by the Lake Simcoe and Region Conservation Authority and Ministry of Natural Resources respectively. Approximately 7 hectares of

the property is available for reforestation. Reforestation of these lands will enhance the existing significant features of the area and provide an opportunity to increase forest cover. Forest cover within York Region is currently 22.5% with a Regional Official Plan policy to increase forest cover to 25% by 2031.

In addition, while the property is protected from development through the Oak Ridges Moraine land use designations, neither the designations nor acquisition of the property by the Nature Conservancy of Canada alone will permit public access to the lands. Regional participation in the acquisition and ownership will ensure the lands are publicly accessible as part of the Regional Forest system and available for use in the “Nature’s Classroom” environmental education program run by the Region.

The Federal Natural Areas Conservation Program is being requested to contribute 45% of the total project costs

Through the Federal Natural Areas Conservation Program, \$752,390 (45% of total costs) is being requested towards the acquisition of these lands. The Salmon application will be considered for this funding in July 2010. This program includes the following requirements for eligibility which are being met with the proposed partnership acquisition.

1. The applicant be a non-governmental, charitable land trust as defined in the program.
2. The applicant must receive and retain title, at least in part, to the lands.
3. The establishment of a Stewardship Endowment fund in the amount of 15% of the value of the land.

Each partner has a unique role in the acquisition and future management of the lands

The objective for all partners is to see these Happy Valley lands, on the Oak Ridges Moraine, protected for their natural features and functions and made available to the public through existing Region programs. Specifically, the lands will be managed as part of the York Regional Forest and therefore provide passive recreation and education programming to our residents.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust has taken the lead role with the vendors in securing this property. The Land Trust is also satisfying the first two requirements of the Federal funding as the non-governmental, land trust applicant and future landowner in partnership with the Region.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada will raise and maintain a Stewardship Endowment Fund for the property. The partnership role of the Nature Conservancy satisfies the third Federal funding application requirement and is perfectly aligned with the Nature Conservancy of Canada’s own requirement for a stewardship endowment fund to protect and promote the Happy Valley Forest.

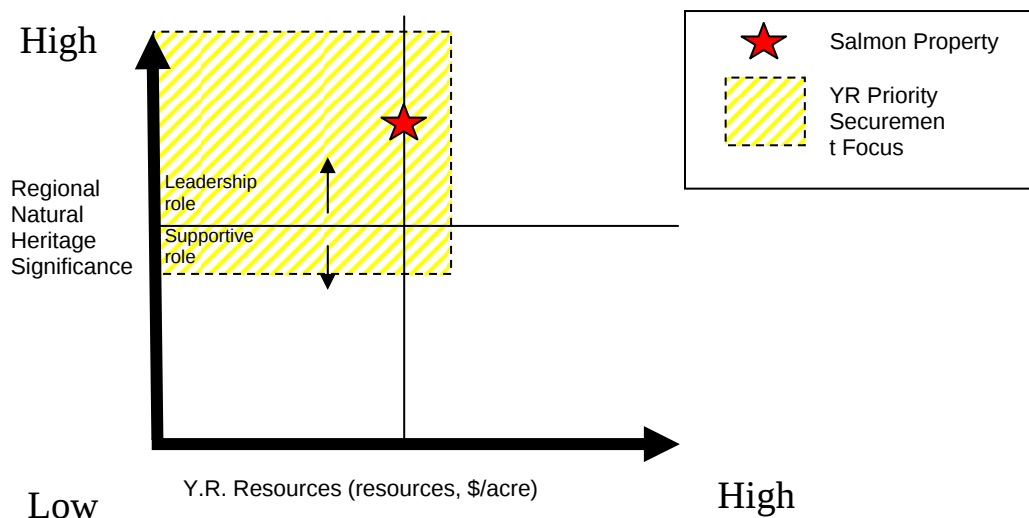
Table 1
Proposed Partnership Roles

Partner	Interest in Property	Contribution	Long Term Role
York Region	Expand Regional Forest	Funding (45%)	Ownership (>50%) and Management
Federal Government	National Priority area for Natural Areas Conservation Program	Funding (45%)	None
Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust	Long term protection of Oak Ridges Moraine	Federal funding applicant	Ownership (<50%)
Nature Conservancy of Canada	Long term protection of the Happy Valley Forest	Stewardship Endowment Fund Contribution	Promotion and Stewardship of the Happy Valley area

The Internal Evaluation Team for securement initiatives recommends this partnership acquisition

The Region's Internal Evaluation Team (IET) for securement initiatives has considered this opportunity and recommends it for acquisition as proposed. With the proposed Federal contribution of \$752,390, the requested Regional contribution is \$11,000/acre. The property scores 76/100 when assessed against the criteria checklist. On the Securement Priority Matrix (Figure 1), the property acquisition opportunity falls within the area of those which are a priority for Regional involvement.

Figure 1
The Salmon property plotted on the Securement Priority Matrix



The acquisition builds upon existing partnership agreements

The Region has existing partnerships with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust. Through these agreements the Region provides funds to advance their lands securement objectives within York Region. This acquisition provides an opportunity for these partners to assist the Region in meeting our land securement objectives, specifically by accessing over \$750,000 in federal funding to acquire a parcel of land key to delivering York Regional Forest programs in the western part of York Region.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Total project costs, broken down into land costs, associated acquisition costs (e.g. appraisal, land transfer tax, fencing), and stewardship endowment fund costs are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2
Land Securement Costs

Securement Item	Funds Required
Land	\$1,385,000
Associated Costs	\$119,780
Stewardship Endowment	\$207,750
TOTAL	\$1,712,530

The proposed budget for the partnership acquisition of the Salmon property is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3
Proposed Project Budget

Funding Partner	Partner Total
York Region	\$752,390
Federal Partnership Program	\$752,390
Nature Conservancy of Canada	\$207,750
PROJECT TOTALS	\$1,712,530

It is proposed that the Nature Conservancy of Canada contribute the entire stewardship endowment fund (\$207,750) with the Federal program and York Region splitting the cost of the land and associated land securement costs (\$752,390 each).

Property appraisals have been completed for the subject lands. The total average land cost for the property is \$20,367/acre (the south parcel has been valued slightly higher

than the north parcel as it is an existing vacant lot of record and therefore has development potential as a residential lot). Realty services staff of the Region, the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Land Trust find the land costs satisfactory. The proposed total Regional contribution is \$752,390, or \$11,000/acre.

The Greening Land Securement reserve will fund the Region's portion of the proposed acquisition which is scheduled to close late 2010 and/or early 2011. The two parcels may close on separate dates to accommodate fund-raising by the other partners. The current balance of the Greening Land Securement reserve, including the 2010 allocation is approximately \$2.2M. The Greening Land Securement Strategy is funded through a tax levy contribution to the Land Securement Reserve. There are sufficient funds in the reserve for this partnership acquisition.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

As Greenlands are protected and enhanced through securement initiatives, local municipalities benefit from the enhancements for both their communities and the natural environment. Local municipalities within York Region are also actively involved with the Region's Greening Land Securement program as members of the Land Securement Working Group.

The Township of King has been provided with the details on this securement opportunity with a request to comment on the proposed acquisition. While no formal response was provided, staff has advised that the Township has supported comparable land securement opportunities within Happy Valley in the past.

7. CONCLUSION

The acquisition of the Salmon property provides opportunities to:

- Protect environmentally sensitive Happy Valley Forest lands
- Increase forest cover in a strategic location
- Offer York Regional Forest passive recreation and Nature's Classroom environmental education programming in King Township
- Leverage York Region Greening funds with Federal land securement funding
- Expand our partnership role with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust

This property has been recommended by the Region's Internal Evaluation Team (IET) for securement initiatives as a high priority for Regional involvement in acquisition, subject to the lands being owned, at least in part, by the Region and managed as part of the York Regional Forest.

For more information on this report, please contact Ian D. Buchanan, Manager of Natural Heritage and Forestry Services at Ext. 5204.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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

