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INFORMATION REPORT FOR A PUBLIC MEETING REGARDING AMENDMENT NO. 46 TO THE YORK REGION OFFICIAL PLAN URBAN EXPANSION OF 404 NORTH EMPLOYMENT LANDS TOWN OF MARKHAM

Pursuant to Section 17(15) of the Planning Act, as amended, the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee held a Public Meeting to inform the Public and receive comments in regard to the following:

**Amendment No. 46 to the York Region Official Plan Urban Expansion
of 404 North Employment Lands, Town of Markham**

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The presentation by Karen Whitney, Senior Planner, Community Planning, be received;**
- 2. The deputation by Sharolyn Vettese, on behalf of Vetmar Limited, property owner, be received;**
- 3. The communication from Colleen Romanovich, on behalf of Romanovich Family Trust, property owner, May 4, 2005, be received; and**
- 4. The recommendation contained in the following report, April 20, 2005, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services, be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- 1. Staff receive and review comments from the public meeting and responses to the circulation regarding the proposed amendment and prepare a further report with recommendations for consideration at a future Planning Committee meeting.**

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide details of the request by the Town of Markham to amend the Regional Official Plan (ROP) to incorporate the subject lands into the Urban Area.**
- Provide background information for the required public meeting to be held in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act.**
- Identify Regional interests associated with the proposal.**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Description of Application

The Town of Markham requested on June 24, 2003 that York Region amend the Regional Official Plan to incorporate the subject lands within the Region's Urban Area and approve the Town's Official Plan Amendment 113. The purpose of both the Regional OPA and Markham's OPA 113 is to expand the existing urban boundary northward to provide primarily new employment lands. Markham's OPA also provides for some residential lands adjacent to the existing hamlet of Victoria Square.

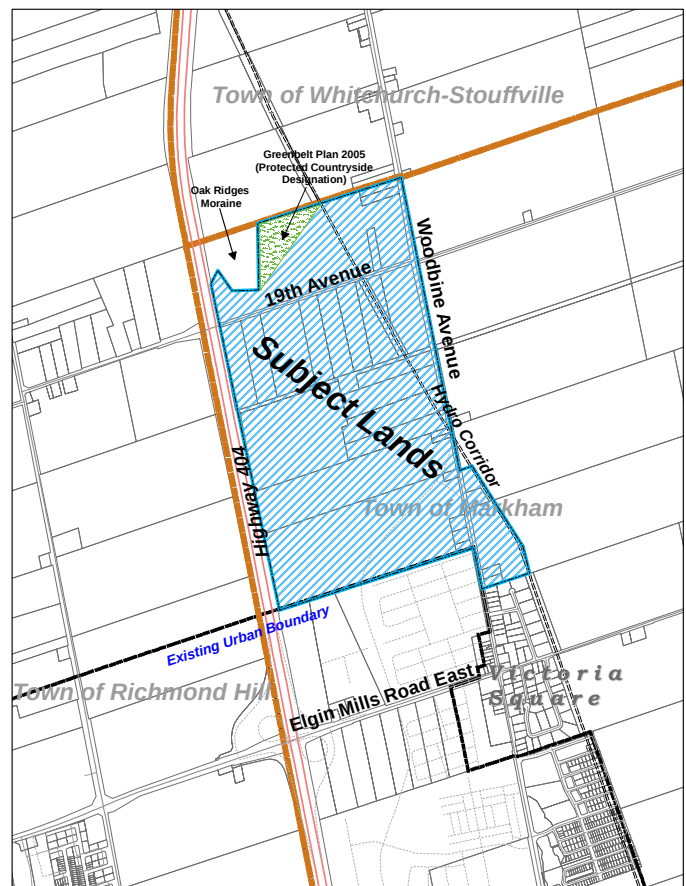
Markham began a study and consultation regarding these specific lands in June 2002. A number of information meetings were held in addition to the statutory public meeting which was held on June 17, 2003 and the OPA was subsequently adopted by Markham Council on June 24, 2003.

Markham requested a modification to OPA 113 on October 21, 2003 in order to address the issues of the landowner at the location of the new intersection of the northern leg of the Woodbine By-pass and Woodbine Avenue. The modification resulted in settling the appeal of Regional Official Plan Amendment 31 (Woodbine By-pass) by the landowner.

With the introduction of the Greenbelt Protection Act and Zoning Order on December 16, 2003, municipalities were prohibited from enacting by-laws, adopting or approving Official Plan Amendments that permitted "urban uses" outside of an existing "urban settlement area". Because of this development freeze, both the Regional Official Plan Amendment 46 and Markham Official Plan Amendment 113 were held in abeyance until the zoning order expired on March 9, 2005 and the development freeze was lifted.

3.2 Location

The lands are located in the northwest corner of the Town of Markham and are bounded by Highway 404 to the west, the northern Town boundary to the north, Woodbine Avenue and a portion of the Hydro corridor to the east. The southern boundary is the northern limits



of the Cathedral Secondary Plan area and Victoria Square. The lands subject to the Regional Official Plan Amendment comprise 180 hectares.

3.3 Site Description

The land is currently comprised of mainly agricultural uses and other space extensive uses including agricultural produce sales, rugby playing fields, a golf driving range and industrial open storage. There are also several rural residential lots, a service station and a Trans Canada Pipeline station located in the amendment area. The northern portion of the study area that is within the Oak Ridges Moraine as shown on the above map has been excluded from proposed Official Plan Amendment. A small portion of the proposed Official Plan Amendment area north of 19th Avenue is included in the Greenbelt Plan Area as shown on the above map.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Employment lands play a central role in the economic health of a municipality. In this regard it is important to comprehensively take stock of the municipal supply of employment lands and the future demand. Markham undertook such a comprehensive approach through undertaking a Employment Lands Strategy Study in 2000. The comprehensive municipal-wide approach and the public consultation undertaken for this amendment area represent a good planning approach in determining the appropriateness of this land for employment use.

4.1 Employment Land Need

In 2000, the Town of Markham retained Hemson Consulting to undertake an employment land study of the entire town in order to examine the supply of employment lands, and to identify additional employment land needs. The lands subject to this amendment were identified as one of the locations for establishing a new employment area outside the existing urban boundary. The study found there is a need for 1,500 to 2,800 acres (600 to 1100 ha) of new employment land outside the urban boundary to accommodate the expected employment growth from the year 2000 to 2020. The study also found that there was a lack of diversity in employment land supply especially large parcels in excess of 20 acres; whereas it was found there is an adequate supply of land for prestige employment and office uses in Markham.

Given the outcome of the Hemson study, Markham proceeded with a more detailed study of the Highway 404 North Lands in 2002 to establish the most appropriate location and extent of employment lands. A new consultant team was retained to further examine the land requirements, natural environment/stormwater management, water and sanitary servicing, and transportation requirements for the proposed employment area.

The Provincial Places to Grow Plan anticipates even higher employment growth than currently reflected in the Regional Official Plan. This further reinforces the need for additional employment lands in both Markham and the Region.

This comprehensive examination of employment lands in Markham is a key component of determining if the expansion of the urban area is appropriate.

4.2 Regional Official Plan

Subsection 5.2.3 of the Regional Official Plan is the primary policy for assessing the appropriateness of an expansion to the existing urban boundary. According to Section 5.2.3, urban expansion is to be:

- a) consistent with the regional population and employment forecasts
- b) needed for expansion relative to other lands available for development in the municipality
- c) consistent with the role of the new development lands identified in the area municipal growth management strategies
- d) consistent with the capability of the area municipality to provide growth within the urban area
- e) consistent with an analysis of options for growth direction and sequencing with respect to environment, agriculture and availability of servicing (including human services)
- f) protective of and integrated into the Regional Greenlands System
- g) an area large enough to assess the creation of new communities at the regional level with clear identifiable boundaries
- h) consistent with the role of the development lands as supportive of an urban structure of centres and corridors with transit supportive densities, and
- i) consistent with all other policies of the Regional Official Plan.

The employment lands study of 2000 and the more specific studies done in 2002 for these areas are intended to address each of these requirements. How the amendment achieves the objectives of the Regional Official Plan will be more specifically addressed in a further report once comments have been received and assessed from the public meeting.

A high quality of life depends on economic activity. Subsection 3.3 “Locations for Economic Development” provides further direction for planning employment areas in the Region with the objective of creating a range of potential locations for economic uses across the Region that support economic development. This amendment is intended to provide for much needed diversity in the local and regional economies.

4.3 Town of Markham's Official Plan

The Town adopted OPA 113 on June 24, 2003 to provide an overall framework for the further formulation of a secondary plan to guide development of the subject lands primarily for industrial employment purposes. The Amendment proposes to designate approximately 135 ha for employment uses and 22 ha for residential purposes. The residential land is adjacent to the existing hamlet of Victoria Square and is intended to provide a buffer and transition area between the existing residential area and new employment lands.

The delineation between the employment and residential lands is the proposed new Woodbine By-pass. The route of the by-pass has now been determined as the Class Environmental Assessment has been completed. The Ministry of the Environment has made the determination that an individual Environmental Assessment is not required and indicated that the Region may proceed with the by-pass project.

Lands associated with the valley of the Berczy Creek tributary have been proposed to be designated as Open Space and Hazard Lands. This is reflective of their inclusion in Markham's OPA 116 for the Rouge North Management Plan Area. A portion of these lands have been included in Greenbelt Plan Area. Further refinement is intended to be done at the Secondary Plan stage in consultation with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

A full assessment of both ROPA 46 and OPA 113 will be provided in a future report to assess any comments received at the public meeting and support decisions on both amendments.

4.4 The Greenbelt Plan

On December 16, 2003, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing issued a Zoning Order prohibiting development or land use changes for urban uses on any lands in areas outside of "Urban Settlement Areas" as they existed on December 16, 2003. The Order was issued to permit the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) time to undertake a study to and prepare a Greenbelt Plan around the urban areas of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The designated study area, as defined by the Order, encompasses all of the lands outside of Urban Settlement Areas in the GTA and included the 404 North Employment Study Area lands.

The final Greenbelt Plan was released by the Province on February 28, 2005 and is now in effect. Only a small portion of the proposed amendment area north of 19th Avenue is within the Greenbelt Plan Area and designated as Protected Countryside. It appears that since a decision was made by Markham Council to adopt Official Plan Amendment 113 for these lands, they are not subject to the provisions of the Greenbelt Plan. The portion of the study area that is within the Oak Ridges Moraine and subsequently also within the Greenbelt Plan Area has been excluded from the proposed amendment area.

The portion of the amendment area that is within in the Greenbelt Plan Protected Countryside designation forms the valley and associated lands of the Berczy Creek.

4.5 Transportation Network

A broad conceptual network has been shown in the local official plan amendment OPA 113 which includes a crossing of Highway 404 with a collector road. The precise determination of the location of this road will be required at the secondary plan stage. Transportation staff have noted that a jog elimination at 19th and Woodbine Avenue should also be included.

The northern leg of the Woodbine By-pass is within the amendment area and will serve to define the edge of the employment lands. The Woodbine By-pass is currently scheduled for construction in 2012 in the 10 Year Capital Plan. Up front financing may facilitate the earlier construction of the Woodbine By-pass. It is anticipated that the southern portion in the Cathedral Community would be built first.

4.6 Servicing Capacity

The Region's York Durham Sewage System Master Plan and Master Plan for Water Supply have included the Highway 404 North lands in the plans for servicing. Water supply to this site will be made available from Pressure District 7 and the watermain on Elgin Mills Road. The watermain was sized to provide water supply to both the Cathedral lands and the Highway 404 lands. With regard to sanitary servicing, the existing Lower Leslie Street Trunk and the 16th Avenue Trunk Sewer currently under construction will service this area.

5. FINANCIAL IMPACT

A full fiscal impact assessment is required at the secondary plan stage. The Town is currently drafting the secondary plan and once that plan has been submitted the fiscal impact assessment will be commenced.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The proposed ROPA application should be considered in conjunction with the Town's Official Plan Amendment 113. Regional Planning staff will discuss this further in a future Planning Report to the Committee. Regional and local staff will continue to work together through the Secondary Planning process for this area.

7. CONCLUSION

This report is intended to provide information on the proposed ROPA for the public meeting being held in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act. This report has summarized Regional and local interests associated with the proposal and the issues that are to be addressed.

It is recommended that any comments from the public meeting and circulation of the proposed ROPA be received and that staff be directed to prepare a further Planning staff report on the application with recommendations for presentation at a future Planning Committee meeting.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)