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VAUGHAN HIGHWAY 400 NORTH EMPLOYMENT AREA - UPDATE AND STATUS OF ROPA 52 AND OPA 637

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The communication from Rosemarie L. Humphries, President, Humphries Planning Group Inc., June 11, 2007, representing the Vaughan 400 North Landowners Group, be received; and**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report dated May 10, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) No. 52 be brought forward for a decision by Regional Council in the Fall of 2007.
2. Adopted Vaughan Official Plan Amendment (OPA) No. 637 be subject to review by Regional staff, in consultation with the City and area landowners, to finalize the infrastructure requirements, fiscal impacts and development phasing to accommodate employment uses within the ROPA 52 planning area.
3. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Provincial Ministries of Municipal Affairs & Housing and Public Infrastructure Renewal, the Township of King, and to the City of Vaughan for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide a status on the review and analysis of ROPA 52 and OPA 637, prior to a future Regional Council decision on these planning documents. These official plan amendments facilitate an expansion of the Region's urban boundary, and establish a detailed planning framework for a new 500 net hectare (1,235 acres) business park.

2.1 A two-step decision process

In addition to providing an update on the comprehensive review process undertaken to date, this report recommends a two-step decision process for ROPA 52 and OPA 637. The first step is a Regional Council decision in the Fall of 2007 on Regionally-initiated ROPA 52, following the completion of its comprehensive review over the Summer

months. This process is well underway by Regional staff, in consultation with the City and area landowners, as outlined in section 4 of this report.

The second step is the approval of City-adopted OPA 637 by Regional Council, which is the approval authority for this amendment. Regional staff will continue to work with local staff, in consultation with the area landowners, to determine the infrastructure requirements and development phasing related to OPA 637. This will be accomplished through the Regional Master Plan process for transportation, and water and wastewater, and through the privately-initiated Master Servicing and Transportation Strategy Study. Substantial completion of that work will trigger a Regional Council decision on OPA 637.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Subject Lands

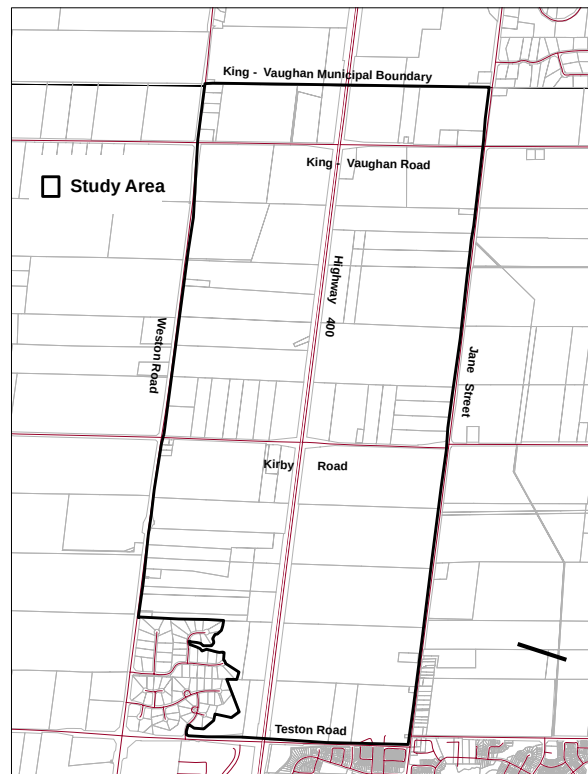
The lands subject to ROPA 52 and OPA 637 comprise approximately 800 hectares (2,000 acres) of undeveloped lands, bounded by Teston Road to the south, the King-Vaughan boundary to the north, Weston Road in the west and Jane Street to the east (see *Figure 1 – Area Map*). Combined, the proposed Amendments would establish a prestige, Regional-scale business park that will contribute to meeting the long-term employment needs of the Region and the City of Vaughan to 2031.

The lands are currently located outside of the urban boundary of the City and Region, and are partially located within the Provincial *Greenbelt Belt Plan*, and are shown as “White Belt” or “Places to Grow” under the Provincial *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (Growth Plan). There are approximately 500 hectares of developable land within the planning area, once the *Greenbelt* and other environmentally-constrained lands are removed.

3.2 ROPA 52

This Amendment was initiated by the Region at the request of the Council for the City of Vaughan, following the City’s adoption of OPA 637 on June 26, 2006. ROPA 52 would add the OPA 637 planning area to the Region’s urban boundary by re-designating the

Figure 1 – Area Map



subject lands from “Agricultural Policy Area” and “Regional Greenlands System” to “Urban Area” and “Regional Greenlands System.”

A statutory public meeting was held under *Section 17(15) of Planning Act* to consider the proposed ROPA as part of the October 4, 2006 meeting of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee.

3.3 Vaughan OPA 637

The objective of this City-initiated amendment is to establish a new, Regional-scale “Prestige Employment” area, and to set out a broad policy framework to create detailed urban design, infrastructure, and development phasing requirements through the City’s Block Plan process. To support the planning process for the amendment, the City initiated the *Highway 400 North Employment Lands Secondary Plan Study* in February 2005.

Regional approval of OPA 637 and the required ROPA would establish new planning policies to permit 519 net hectares of employment-related uses, and approximately 12 hectares of residential development to “round-off” an existing estate residential subdivision which abuts the planning area to the southwest. The balance of the 800-hectare amendment area would remain in a natural state, consistent with the provisions of the Provincial *Greenbelt Plan*.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Comprehensive Review

The Regional and local amendments are being reviewed in a comprehensive manner, consistent with Provincial requirements prescribed under the *Growth Plan* and *Provincial Policy Statement*, and the urban expansion criteria outlined in the Regional Official Plan. The key components of this comprehensive review and how they are being addressed by Regional staff are outlined in this report, beginning in section 4.2.

4.1.1 Provincial requirements

The *Growth Plan* in *Section 2.2.8* requires that urban boundary expansions be subject to a “municipal comprehensive review.” Such a review is defined in the *Growth Plan* as a municipally-initiated official plan amendment or official plan review that comprehensively applies the policies and schedules of the *Growth Plan*. The *Growth Plan* in *Section 2.2.6* also emphasizes the importance of providing an adequate supply of employment land, and that those lands be protected for in strategic locations.

The *Provincial Policy Statement* (2005) defines a “comprehensive review” in the same manner as the *Growth Plan*, and prescribes five components of such a review by a municipality:

1. Population and employment projections determined by an upper-tier municipality;
2. Identification of opportunities to accommodate growth through intensification and redevelopment;
3. Confirmation that the lands do not comprise specialty crop areas;
4. Integration with planning for infrastructure and public service facilities; and,
5. Consideration of cross-jurisdictional issues.

4.1.2 Regional Official Plan requirements

The proposed ROPA will be evaluated through a comprehensive analysis of all Regional Official Plan policies, including the urban expansion criteria set out in Policy 5.2.3, which are as follows:

- a) Regional population and employment forecasts;
- b) The need for expansion relative to other lands available for development in the area municipality;
- c) The role of the new development lands identified in area municipal growth management strategies;
- d) The capability of the area municipality to provide growth within the urban area;
- e) An analysis of options for growth direction and sequencing with respect to environment, agriculture and the implications on the availability of servicing including water, sewer, road and transit networks, and human services;
- f) The protection of and integration with the Regional Greenlands System;
- g) The amendment is large enough (i.e. a concession block) with clear and identifiable boundaries, such as concession roads, major natural features, rail or major utility corridors, to assess the creation of new communities at the Regional level;
- h) The role of the development lands is supportive of an urban structure of centres and corridors with transit-supportive densities; and,
- i) Other policies of the Regional Official Plan.

These criteria are consistent with the Provincial requirements of the *Provincial Policy Statement* (2005) and the *Growth Plan*, and will form the basis of a Regional Council decision on ROPA 52.

4.2 Regional Growth and Land Requirement Forecasts to 2031

The Planning Department's Long-Range and Strategic Planning Branch is engaged in a comprehensive planning exercise – "Planning for Tomorrow" – to evaluate the Region's land use needs and related requirements to 2031. This exercise is based on the following components, as presented in a series of reports considered by the Planning and Economic Development Committee in April 2007:

- Population and employment forecasts
- Land requirements
- Residential land intensification

- Residential area analysis
- Public engagement and consultation.

The planning process being followed through “Planning for Tomorrow” is consistent with Provincial and Regional criteria for urban boundary expansions, and will support the Region’s more specific review of ROPA 52 and OPA 637.

4.2.1 Employment land requirements

The “Planning for Tomorrow” exercise will update the Region’s 2005 *York Region Vacant Employment Land Inventory*, and will provide a detailed employment-generation analysis of the ROPA 52 lands.

The 2005 inventory concluded that 682 net hectares (1,685 net acres) of Vaughan’s 1,367 net hectares (3,377 net acres) of vacant employment land – almost half – is constrained pending the final determination of the Highway 427 alignment north of Highway 7. This supports Vaughan’s proposed employment land expansion, and will contribute to the justification of the Regional urban boundary expansion under ROPA 52, consistent with Provincial and Regional criteria.

Preliminary data arising from “Planning for Tomorrow” signals that the supporting studies undertaken by the City to support OPA 637 are consistent with the Region’s projected employment land needs to 2031. Specifically, Regional staff estimate that the Vaughan expansion area will generate approximately 21,000 to 23,000 jobs. This estimate is consistent with the 22,000 jobs estimated for the area through the City’s background study, which was undertaken by Hemson Consulting.

4.3 Infrastructure Requirements

The subject lands will require substantial investments in Provincial, Regional and local infrastructure to accommodate the employment development proposed under OPA 637. The Region’s current 10-Year Capital Plan will therefore need to be reviewed to assess these requirements in a manner that coincides with proposed development phasing.

Completion of Regional Master Plans for transportation, and water and wastewater, will determine the long-term infrastructure needs of the Region, including the Vaughan expansion lands. These Master Plans will be substantially complete by the beginning of 2008.

Supplementary to the Region’s Master Plan process, the landowners within the OPA 637 planning area have engaged a consulting team to assess the infrastructure requirements of the planning area. This work is being led by Cole Engineering in the form of a Master Servicing and Transportation Strategy Study. Staff from the City and Region have been consulted in this process, and have proposed that the scope of the work be undertaken in a manner that is consistent with the Regional Master Plan approach.

4.3.1 400-series highway improvements

The Provincial Ministry of Transportation has recently initiated two important highway projects that will have an impact on the subject lands. The first is the widening of Highway 400 between Major Mackenzie Drive and King Road to accommodate up to 10 travel lanes, including High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes. Highlights of this project include:

- Bridge improvements at King-Vaughan Road and King Road.
- An improved, re-constructed interchange at King Road.
- Enhanced landscaping in the highway right-of-way.

Staff from the Region and City have been engaged in the preliminary design process and have highlighted the need to explore additional interchanges along the segment of Highway 400 within the OPA 637 planning area. One option is an interchange at Kirby Road. The preferred design for the segment of Highway 400 between Teston Road and King Road will be complete and ready for tender by the end of 2008.

The second project is the *GTA West Transportation Corridor*, which is a new east-west Provincial arterial that is shown conceptually in the *Growth Plan* – running between Guelph and Vaughan. An update on this project was provided at the May 2, 2007 meeting of the Planning and Economic Development Committee through the report entitled, “GTA West Corridor Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment.”

The corridor may impact the OPA 637 lands if the new Provincial arterial extends as far east as Highway 400. To that end, the Planning Department’s Infrastructure Planning Branch is working with the Province to address any necessary protection for a potential alignment within the OPA 637 planning area. Regional Council on May 17 adopted a resolution arising from Planning Committee, calling on the Province to finalize the alignment, in consultation with Regional and City staff, within two years.

4.3.2 Water and wastewater servicing

Water and wastewater servicing does not currently extend into the OPA 637 planning area. The development of the lands will be on full municipal services. A servicing scheme – including phasing and costs – for the area will be determined following the completion of the Region’s Master Plan process in early 2008, as supplemented by the servicing study initiated by the area landowners.

4.3.3 Regional and local roads

Substantial improvements to the existing road network are required to accommodate the proposed business park. Regional roads within the area are Weston Road, Jane Street and Teston Road. Kirby Road may be upgraded and assumed by the Region if the Province determines that an interchange with Highway 400 is feasible. Teston Road is currently being improved to a 4-lane cross section and will interchange with the Highway 400, which is currently under construction.

4.3.4 Environmental considerations

Protecting and enhancing environmental features is an important consideration in determining detailed land use and infrastructure servicing schemes for the planning area. An Environmental Impact Assessment was conducted by the firm of Dougan & Associates as part of the City's background study; the findings of which will be implemented through the City's secondary plan and block plan process. The lands within the *Greenbelt* and Regional Greenlands System will be sufficiently designated and buffered through the policies and schedules of ROPA 52.

4.4 Next Steps

The comprehensive review of ROPA 52, consistent with Provincial and Regional criteria, is well underway and will be finalized over the Summer months. Regional Staff will continue to work with City, Province, and the landowners throughout this process, where appropriate.

4.4.1 A two-step decision process

Although the Regional and local amendments have been reviewed concurrently by Regional staff, it is recommended that ROPA 52 be brought forward for a decision by Regional Council in the Fall of 2007. Regional Staff are satisfied that the review process outlined in section 4 of this report is comprehensive, and that it will meet new Provincial policy requirements.

A decision by Regional Council on OPA 637 would be made following the determination of infrastructure requirements, fiscal impacts and development phasing requirements. This determination will be informed by the Region's "Planning for Tomorrow" exercise, the Regional Master Plans for transportation, and water and wastewater servicing, and through the privately-initiated Master Servicing and Transportation Strategy Study. Following the approval of OPA 637, implementation of the infrastructure requirements, fiscal impacts and development phasing will occur through the City's Block Plan process.

4.5 Relationship to Vision 2026

Providing an adequate supply of employment lands to meet the Region's long-term needs, and the associated two-step decision process, is consistent with all eight goal areas of Vision 2026, especially "A Vibrant Economy," "Managed and Balanced Growth," and "Infrastructure for a Growing Region."

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report. A detailed fiscal impact analysis of the lands subject to ROPA 52 and OPA 637 will be undertaken in two parts.

5.1 Fiscal Impact Analysis: wide-area and more detailed

A comprehensive fiscal impact analysis will be conducted by Regional staff in two parts. The first will be undertaken by the Planning Department's Long Range and Strategic Planning Branch to comprehensively assess the financial implications of future development within the Region's "White Belt" areas, as shown in the *Provincial Growth Plan*. The ROPA 52 lands will form part of that larger, high-level analysis.

The second analysis will be undertaken by the Regional Finance Department, specific to the lands subject to ROPA 52 and OPA 637. This detailed analysis will assess the costs and revenues associated with the servicing requirements and development potential, respectively, of OPA 637. This analysis will be incorporated into the review and approval of OPA 637, following a decision on ROPA 52.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Approval of ROPA 52 will facilitate a local process through which 500 net hectares of employment land will be added to the City's urban area to meet its long-term needs to 2031. This local process will involve Regional approval of OPA 637, which serves as the secondary plan to shape the character and determine the phasing of development within the planning area. Regional staff will continue to work with local staff, in consultation with the area landowners, to determine the infrastructure requirements and development phasing for the area. Substantial completion of this work, including a detailed fiscal analysis, will trigger Regional Council approval of OPA 637. More detailed development phasing and community design will follow through the City's Block Plan process.

7. CONCLUSION

The Region needs an additional supply of employment land to meet its long-term needs to 2031. The addition of 500 net hectares of employment land being proposed by Vaughan OPA 637 will contribute to meeting that need. The proposed expansion to the Region's urban area to accommodate this new employment area is being reviewed comprehensively by Regional staff and it is well underway.

It is recommended that ROPA 52 be brought back in a form suitable for a decision by Regional Council in the Fall of 2007, following the completion of its comprehensive review. A decision by Regional Council on OPA 637 will be made at a later date, following the determination of the infrastructure requirements, fiscal impacts and development phasing.

For further information about this report, please contact Sean Hertel, Senior Planner, Community Planning Branch at (905) 830-4444, Ext. 1556 or sean.hertel@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.