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PLANNING FOR TOMORROW PHASE 2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION 2007 SUMMARY

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The presentation by Karen Antonio-Hadcock, Senior Planner, Long Range and Strategic Planning, be received; and**
- 2. The recommendation contained in the following report dated July 19, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (PIR), the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and local municipalities for information purposes.

2. PURPOSE

This report details Phase 2 of the Planning for Tomorrow Public Engagement process and feedback and advises of the next steps in the Region's growth management initiatives.

3. BACKGROUND

Regional Council at its meeting of April 19, 2007 adopted Clause No. 10 of Report No. 4 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, which outlined the steps and timing involved in the Phase 2, Public Engagement and Consultation program for the Region's, *Planning for Tomorrow* - Growth Management Initiative. This Phase of consultation involved the review and consideration of growth scenarios with stakeholders in York Region.

Phase 2 of the Public Engagement and Consultation for the Planning for Tomorrow Growth Management initiative builds on earlier work including:

- Towards Sustainability in York Region Advisory Group (September 2005 to June 2006);
- Sustainability Symposium (March 2006);
- Phase 1 Planning for Tomorrow Public Engagement and Consultation (Spring 2006);
- Natural Heritage Workshop (November 2006); and
- New Communities Workshop (November 2006).

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The focus of the Phase 2 Planning for Tomorrow consultation was on the growth scenarios and the preliminary assignment of forecasts to the local municipalities. The discussion is a fairly complicated one, making the public engagement work challenging.

The objectives of the public engagement and consultation process, established in the 2005 work plan are:

- To foster a public/stakeholder discussion on issues and choices facing the Region.
- To begin to create a broad public consensus on the public policy decisions that need to be made.
- To discuss issues and identify solutions.
- To ensure that decisions are evaluated against the triple bottom line sustainability; principles of economic development, social equity and environmental value.

4.1 Getting the Message Out to a Wider Audience

In April 2007, Regional Council approved a strategy to reach a wider audience through public engagement in order to inform and facilitate discussion on growth management issues.

This strategy included the following components:

Technical Advisory Committee: Regional staff continues to meet with local municipal staff to discuss the population and employment projections, intensification targets, land budget and growth scenarios to ensure coordination.

Area Municipal Councils: Invitations were sent to the Mayor's of each local municipality to schedule appearances at local Council meetings. As a result of these invitations, Regional staff made presentations to the Councils of Vaughan, Georgina, Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville, King, East Gwillimbury and Markham. Local municipal staff were also informed of the Town Hall meetings and invited to attend and participate.

Public Notice of the Open Houses, Discussions and supporting materials: Notice for the public meetings was given in the local newspapers throughout the Region during the first two weeks in April, and subsequently at the beginning of May. Regional Staff also worked closely with the local municipalities to obtain ad space in the town notice page in the local papers, as well as posting advertisements on both the Region's website and the local municipal websites.

Supporting materials were made available to all Town Hall attendees which included an information brochure; displays of mapping, key concepts, and statistics; and supporting materials from other Regional departments.

Stakeholder Contact Lists: The stakeholder contact list, which was started in 2006 for the Phase 1 Town Hall meetings, was subsequently updated with contacts from the Water and Waste Water and Transportation Master Plan meetings was used to circulate invitations for the Town Hall meetings via mail and e-mail. There are currently 1500 contacts on our list.

Newsletter: Advertisement for the Town Hall meetings was included in the April Transportation and Works “York Works!” newsletter which was distributed to all residents in York Region.

Website Consultation: The Planning for Tomorrow website was updated for the 2007 public engagement. The website provides all of the background information on the growth management strategy; staff reports, publications, including the information brochure for the public engagement; town hall meeting information including meeting times, locations, maps, and a copy of the presentation. The website also provides a forum for providing feedback to Regional staff through the “futureyork” e-mail.

The website was continually updated after each meeting to post the discussions summaries (appended as *Attachment 1* to this report).

Brochure: A public consultation brochure was created which was circulated to all persons on the stakeholder mailing list, and to all participants at each Town Hall and public engagement session. The brochure was used to frame the discussions and provide a high level background of the key issues the Region faces about how to manage growth over the next 25 years.

Communications Strategy: The Communications Strategy, which was approved by Regional Council in April 2007, was used as a blueprint for communicating the key messages on Planning for Tomorrow. This strategy was used to provide members of Regional Council with speaking notes, and briefing notes for the Town Hall meetings. Three media releases were also issued advising the media of the upcoming town hall meetings.

Additional Stakeholders and First Nation’s Consultation: Several meetings were held with Regional Stakeholders including UDI/GTHBA, the School Boards, Human Services Planning Coalition, York Region staff, Agricultural Liaison Committee, York Region Planning Commissioners, York Region Chief Administrative Officers, the United Way and others as detailed in *Attachment 2*.

Consultation with First Nation’s was initiated through a letter sent to initiate contact with representatives from various First Nation communities. Regional staff are currently examining a protocol to formalize consultation with First Nation communities in a coordinated manner.

A consultation session with environmental groups in York Region will be held in September, and the comments arising out of that session will be brought forward to a future Planning and Economic Development Committee.

4.2 29 Growth Management Presentations Made

Regional Staff hosted 6 Town Hall meetings and an additional 23 consultation sessions with Regional stakeholders and partners, and interested groups throughout May, June and early July.

The Town Hall meetings were formatted as follows:

6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. - Open house
7:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. - Presentation
7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. - Facilitated Discussion

The registered attendance at the Town Hall meetings was as follows:

Open House Location	Registered Attendees
Vaughan	32
Markham	48
Richmond Hill	50
Aurora	85
East Gwillimbury	33
Newmarket	46
Total	294

While Regional staff endeavoured to have as many attendees as possible register, there were some individuals who did not wish to register, or households or agencies with multiple representatives where only one representative signed on behalf of all attendees. Regional staff estimates that the total attendance was approximately 20% higher than the registered count.

At each public engagement session, a presentation was made by Regional Staff which addressed the following:

- New Approach to Provincial Planning (ORM, Greenbelt, Places to Grow);
- 2031 Forecast Summary for York Region;
- Draft Sustainability Strategy;
- Growth: Places to Grow requirements, population and employment growth forecasts;
- Intensification: local municipal distribution; intensification matrix (where);
- Land Budget: residential and employment land supply, “whitebelt” land requirements;
- Growth Scenarios: Regional Official Plan, 30%, 40%, and 2051 scenarios;
- Growth Management Principles and Questions:
 - Growth: how much, intensification, new communities;

- Environment: balance protection and growth, Air Quality, Climate Change.
- Economy: jobs to match residents, additional employment lands;
- Intensification: where, good design, protecting existing neighbourhoods;
- Infrastructure: to support existing and future population, transit funding, moving goods and people;
- Human Services: Quality of Life: adequate human services, aging population;
- Fiscal Responsibility: shared costs of growth with other levels of government, improve fiscal capacity, fiscal impact analysis
- Quality of Place: New Communities: well designed, pedestrian focused, sustainable communities.

The presentation was made available to all participants at the Town Hall and Stakeholder engagement meetings. The full presentation is available for viewing on the “Planning For Tomorrow” website at www.york.ca.

Attachment 2 summarizes all of the town hall and consultation sessions held.

4.3 What Was Heard

Key Observations

Throughout all of the Town Hall and stakeholder engagement, there was a general recognition and acceptance that growth will be occurring, and that the Region will be intensifying. Across the Region, there is a strong support for the protection of natural heritage and sustainability, and recognition that there needs to be a full assessment of the costs of growth. *Attachment 1* summarizes the discussions at each of the 6 Town Hall meetings.

The main issues heard in the Phase 2 Town Hall meetings included:

Pace and Impact of Growth

Residents continue to be concerned about the pace of growth being too fast and the impacts associated with growth being too high, including quality of life, financial implications, and the ability of transit, transportation and sewer and water services to satisfy increasing demands. Of some interest was the interface with new communities and intensification and existing communities, and a number of residents questioned whether the Region had to conform with the provincial forecasts.

Quality Employment for York Region Residents

There needs to be a balance between employment and residential in order to ensure connectivity and reduced travel times. York Region needs to ensure a mix of high quality jobs so that the people who live in York Region can work in York Region. There needs to be affordable housing options for people who currently work in York Region but who cannot afford to live here, and live-work housing options.

Sustainability Needs to be Addressed

Many people expressed general concern with respect to future growth being sustainable and that any new growth should include consideration of energy, non-renewable resources, air and water quality and the design of new communities to address these issues.

The interest in green buildings was strong at each Town Hall meeting, many referencing that East Gwillimbury's Energy Star and LEED program should be implemented everywhere in the Region. In particular, people indicated that the new communities in the "whitebelt" needed to be carefully planned and designed to be more efficient and sustainable.

Subsequent to the Phase 1 consultations in 2006, the Region released the draft Sustainability Strategy. The strategy was distributed at the Town Hall meetings to all interested participants to provide feedback.

Natural Heritage is an Important Component

Many residents expressed that natural heritage features, including terrestrial resources and ground water resources need to be protected. There is a particular interest to ensure that natural heritage is integrated into new communities and within infrastructure projects.

York Region Needs More Affordable Housing

The issue of affordable housing was raised at all 6 Town Hall meetings. Residents wanted to ensure a stock of affordable housing for both the young and older populations, and to ensure that we have an affordable housing stock for the people who work in York Region. Affordable housing needs to be integrated with other housing forms; not isolated and needs to have access to public transportation, jobs and human services.

Provide Human Services for a Growing Population

The availability of human services for all residents needs to be addressed to ensure an adequate supply of services that are well located and integrated into the community.

Intensification Needs to be Well Designed and Located

While there is a general acceptance of intensification in principle as an element of the Region's growth management strategy, there is still a general concern about compatibility of intensification with adjacent uses, the size, location, and urban design.

Agriculture Needs to Be Protected

There is a desire to ensure protection of local agricultural resources, and food supply. In York Region with approximately 69% of the land area within the Greenbelt (including the ORMCP portion) much of the land area has been protected, however challenges relating to taxation and farmland assessment and diversification of the industry among others remain outstanding.

Transportation and Infrastructure

The planning, design, and construction of transportation facilities (both transit and roads) was discussed at each session including comments that transit service improvements are necessary to get more people using transit, particularly GO train service, and that coordination of transit services and pedestrian linkages to transit facilities and more commuter parking is necessary. While there is a general support for Regional initiatives on transit, pedestrians and cycling, and transportation demand management; concerns regarding congestion remain high.

There were several comments on the coordination of infrastructure and growth and concern with the increased demand on services with existing limitations on infrastructure.

4.4 Local Municipal Consultation

There has been ongoing discussion with the local municipalities throughout the growth management work program. A Technical Advisory Committee of Local Municipal staff have met on several occasions and will continue to meet. Regional staff have also presented to some Local Municipal Councils.

Consultation with the local municipalities has included the determination of the built boundary and the limits of the urban growth centres, and growth scenarios and allocation. There has been a general acceptance by the local municipalities. Some refinement of the forecasts is required which will occur throughout the next phase of the work program.

Through conversations with local staff, councils, and residents it is evident that the issues vary throughout the local municipalities. For example, there is considerable interest about growth and intensification in Aurora, Georgina emphasised the costs of growth, and how it will be paid for, and Markham has issues with the timing of growth and urban area expansions.

It is evident that the understanding of the issues is increasing across the Region; however, it is important to continue the dialogue on growth management and emerging issues.

4.5 Next Steps

Following the Phase 2 consultation, Regional Staff will be:

- Refining the growth management numbers (Fall 2007);
- Completing a 25 year fiscal impact analysis of growth scenarios (January 2008);
- Conducting an environmental analysis of growth scenarios (Fall 2007);
- Coordinating with the infrastructure master plans (water and waste water and transportation) (ongoing through to Fall 2007);
- Broadening the growth scenarios to include a 50% intensification scenario (Fall 2007);

The overall public engagement and consultation work plan approved by Regional Council in 2005 includes a third phase of consultation on the preferred growth scenario

selected by Regional Council and the implementing Regional Official Plan Amendment. This is anticipated to proceed in 2008 and will be coordinated with ongoing Master Plan work including the Water and Waste Water Master Plan, and the Transportation Master Plan.

4.6 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 direct costs of Phase 2 Public Consultation amounted to less than \$12,000.00 and were undertaken within the approved Planning Department budget allocations and staff complements for 2007. These costs included newspaper advertisements, equipment rental and printed materials distributed to all individuals and groups on the departmental mailing list, and participants at each Town Hall and public engagement meeting.

Regional staff will be conducting a 25 year fiscal impact analysis of the growth. This analysis will provide an analysis of the costs of growth including an examination of revenues and expenditures, capital and operating costs, and impacts on the tax levy.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities are being consulted as the Region proceeds with growth scenario development through the Technical Advisory Committee. Regional Staff have been also working with individual local municipalities on the determination of the built boundary and urban growth centres, and growth scenarios and allocation.

Regional staff also made presentations to the Councils of Vaughan, Georgina, Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville, King, East Gwillimbury and Markham.

A number of area municipalities are undertaking their own growth management and official plan update work and consult with regional staff on an on-going basis.

7. CONCLUSION

Regional Planning Committee and Council approved a three phase growth management public engagement and consultation process in 2005. Phase 1 was conducted in spring 2006, the results of which were reported to Committee and Council in June and October 2006. Phase 2 engagement and consultation was conducted in spring 2007, with an upcoming meeting of regional environmental groups in September 2007. In Phase 2,

there were 6 Town Hall meetings (Vaughan, Markham, Richmond Hill, Aurora, East Gwillimbury and Newmarket) and an additional 22 consultation sessions with other stakeholders.

The key messages raised throughout the Town Hall meetings included the pace and impact of growth, ensuring quality employment for York Region residents, addressing sustainability, providing affordable housing and human services, locating and designing intensification, protecting natural heritage and agricultural resources, and ensuring infrastructure is efficient, well designed and keeps up with the pace of growth.

There are also a number of emerging implementation challenges; ensuring a supply of affordable housing, integrating the natural heritage system into new “whitebelt” communities, alternative approaches transportation while addressing congestion, and the fiscal impacts of growth.

These issues and challenges assist in informing the next phase of the growth management work program, where these issues will be further explored.

A future Phase 3 consultation will occur when Council has endorsed a growth strategy and staff will be proceeding with the implementing Regional Official Plan Amendment.

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

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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