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GROWTH MANAGEMENT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT - UPDATE REPORT

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, July 31, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the attached report be received for information purposes.

2. PURPOSE

Regional Council at its meeting of June 22, 2006 received Clause 2 of Report 6 of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee discussing the results of the Phase 1 public engagement for Planning for Tomorrow, the Region's Growth Management work.

One of the recommendations of that report was to report back at the September meeting of Planning and Economic Development Committee with the final results of the consultation.

3. BACKGROUND

Regional Council at its meeting of December 15, 2005 endorsed Clause 2 of Report 10 of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Department which reported on the status of Growth Management workplan components and outlined the public information and engagement program for the balance of 2006.

The June report identified the range and format of public engagement opportunities undertaken. Since that time, consultation has taken place with two additional interest groups: Urban Development Institute (UDI), which meeting was referenced in the June report, but the comments not included, and the Chambers of Commerce.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

As reported in June, key issues identified in public forums included the following:

Growth/Congestion and the Provision of Services

The majority of residents at the public meetings recognized that growth was likely going to happen, however there was significant discussions regarding the pace of growth. As well, questions were raised as to whether our human services, transit and transportation systems and water and sewer services can keep pace with the growth.

Natural Heritage

Protection and investment in a linked natural heritage system remains a strong concern for the majority of York Region residents. There was considerable focus on Lake Simcoe and ground and surface water resources.

Intensification

Intensification needs to be strategically planned to ensure it locates in regional and local centres and along corridors and fits with surrounding uses.

Quality of Life/Urban Design

The maintenance of the quality of life enjoyed by the Region's residents was part of most discussions at the public meetings. Aspects raised included the amount of time spent commuting, the quality of community design and the availability of human services.

Agricultural Lands

The GTA Agricultural Action Plan outlines some 37 recommendations to assist in ensuring that Agriculture remains a viable industry within the GTA

Sustainability

Many people and organizations expressed the opinion that future growth and development be sustainable from a number of perspectives including energy, security of food sources, water, air and the natural environment and financial resources. Adoption of a triple bottom-line analysis (natural environment, economy, community) of major decisions would assist in this regard.

4.1 UDI and Chambers of Commerce Feedback

Regional staff met with the Urban Development Institute York Chapter on May 19, 2006 and again in Workshop format on May 24, 2006. The meeting with Chambers of Commerce took place on June 30, 2006. Summary feedback from these two groups is appended as *Attachments 1 and 2*.

Key issues identified by both UDI and Chambers of Commerce reflected similar issues as other stakeholders, but from a business and industry perspective.

4.1.1 UDI Key Issues

- Provincial population forecasts for York Region are higher than the forecasts in the Regional Official Plan but may be low if immigration continues to rise.
- Perhaps the development industry should be producing more affordable housing and rental housing.
- Affordability is driven by land supply. There is an opinion that the land supply may be constrained in the GTA, particularly in York Region
- The Region should take on a strong leadership role to communicate growth management issues and appropriate policy responses to support intensification
- Densities in Greenfield developments should be higher than in existing residential developments.

- Transit is the key to accommodating forecasted growth and is becoming increasingly critical across the whole GTA Region - how about getting VIVA onto the 404 to connect with the subway terminus?
- Intensification often has higher unit costs. In York Region, the condo market is generally directed at higher quality units and markets.
- The problem for developers is how to get intensification approved in some municipalities. I.e. The only way to get an 8 storey building in some municipalities is through an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board.
- It is important that Growth Management work be tied into the Transportation Master Plan process – transit, intensification and affordable housing and mixed housing are all related issues.
- Financial planning needs to be incorporated into the process as well.

4.2. Chambers of Commerce Key Issues

- There is a mismatch between the skill sets of York Region residents and the needs of York Region industries. This mismatch is notable in the lower-paying end of the job spectrum as well as in highly technical white-collar industries and an inability to fully utilize the skill sets of new Canadians due to accreditation issues.
- The lack of affordable housing in the Region (i.e. inappropriate housing mix) results in many people commuting into and out of the Region daily for employment. This trend is more pronounced in some industries than others.
- Have there been any serious cost-benefit analyses done for bike studies, which consider the fact that many cyclists use their cars during the winter months?
- In addition to reducing traffic congestion, bike lanes also increase the durability of the roadways by providing a wider paved shoulder and promote a better quality of life for residents.
- There is a need for the Chambers of Commerce to view themselves as public educators when approaching these growth management issues.

The issues of both UDI and the Chambers of Commerce relate to the business implications of growth and the ability of York Region to continue to compete in a global economy. There is recognition of the need for affordable housing.

Resident stakeholders at the public forums in the spring also recognized the need for additional affordable housing opportunities. As well issues relating to the workforce, including the continuing availability of a skilled workforce and the inability to fully utilize the skill sets of new Canadians due to accreditation issues were brought forward by the Chambers, but have also been highlighted in the Region's own research included in the report entitled *Housing and Our Economy - Remaining Competitive, 2004* and the *Employers Opinion Survey, 2004*.

Similarly there is recognition from all participants that transit and transportation improvements are a necessary component of the Region's future growth and that the conduct of the Transportation Master Plan Update must be closely aligned with the Region's growth management work.

4.3 Update on Additional Stakeholder Contacts

The *Planning for Tomorrow* website contains background information and staff reports reporting on growth management issues, the results of the Sustainability Symposium, presentations made by speakers, Summary Notes from each sessions and a feedback and contact form. This website is maintained and kept up-to-date and will continue into 2007 as new information and growth options are introduced. Visits to the website were heaviest in March (1,000 visits) and April (1,100 visits), coinciding with media coverage and town hall meetings. In May, June, and July visits were somewhat lower (at 1000, 831 and 793 hits respectively) coinciding with the reduction in media coverage

The June report contained a listing and description of correspondence and submissions received from stakeholders to that point in time. There have been no additional submissions in the intervening weeks.

The growth management presentation boards were also used during open houses for the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan, to explain the context in which that study is occurring.

4.4 Next Steps

Regional staff is continuing technical work, including initial distribution of population and employment forecast to area municipalities, residential and employment land budget calculations, intensification potential (subject of a Report on the same agenda) and a 25-year fiscal impact analysis to support a range of growth scenarios in early 2007. Staff are meeting with their area municipal counterparts in early fall to discuss the population and employment forecasting and distribution.

As well, the built boundary information from Places to Grow will be used as a basis for determining the capacity to accommodate intensified development in existing areas and municipal distribution of the Growth Plan intensifications targets. Regional staff has been in contact with PIR staff to determine the timing of this built-boundary information, but at the date of writing of this report, no estimated time of delivery or review has been announced.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Phase 1 growth management work has been undertaken within the existing 2006 Planning Department budget and staff complement. Phase 1 of the public information and consultation work is being undertaken within the existing staff complement and 2006 approved budget of the Planning Department.

Further phases of the growth management work plan will be funded through the 2007 and subsequent budgets.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Regional staff is working with local municipalities in the growth management process. Further consultations, starting in the fall of 2006, will be required as forecasts and distribution are formulated. Similarly growth scenarios will be determined in consultation with area municipal staff.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Phase 1 public engagement and discussions have taken place during the spring and early summer of 2006. The results of these were reported to Committee and Council in June. Since that time an additional two meetings, with UDI and with the Chambers of Commerce have been summarized and are discussed in this report. Key issues, reported in June, have remained the same.

Further technical work is underway to support future growth scenarios and area municipalities are in the process of being consulted on the distribution of forecasts population and employment.

Additional work, including growth scenarios will be brought forward Committee and Council consideration early in 2007. It is recommended that this report be received for information.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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