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PLACES TO GROW – FINAL GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE - JUNE 2006

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, May 4, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Staff continue with the growth management work commenced in 2005 and that the Places to Grow population and employment forecasts, intensification expectations and anticipated municipal obligations be achieved within the context of this work.
2. Regional staff continue consultation and discussions with area municipalities, the Province and other stakeholders on implementation of Places to Grow, including commenting, discussions and modifications to the built boundary established by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal when it becomes available.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to:

- Advise Committee and Council of the key provisions of the final version of Places to Grow – The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), released by the Province of Ontario on June 16, 2006.
- Advise Committee and Council of the municipal obligations outlined in the Places to Grow Plan.
- Identify the next steps to implementing Places to Grow as part of the Region's growth management exercise.

3. BACKGROUND

Over the past 2 years, the Provincial Government has released and (in a number of cases) approved a number of initiatives, Statutes and Plans which will profoundly change the way development occurs in the Province.

Regional Council has responded to the iterations of the Places to Grow initiative at the following points:

1. The Places to Grow Discussion Paper, summer of 2004 - comments were provided to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (PIR) in September 2004, through Council's endorsement of 32 recommendations contained in Clause 10 of Report 8 of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee.

2. The Draft Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, February 2005 and considered by Council at its meeting of April 21, 2005, through its endorsement of Clause 1 of Report 4 of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee.
3. Regional Council at its meeting of April 21, 2005 adopted Clauses 2 and 3 of Report 4 of the Planning and Economic Development which detailed the infrastructure projects required for growth and requesting the Province's assistance in funding and approvals for critical infrastructure projects to accommodate the anticipated growth in the Region.
4. Regional Council at its meeting of January 26, 2006 adopted recommendations in Clause No. 6 in Report No. 1 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee (with revisions) which advised the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal that York Region could "only support or implement the policies of the Places to Grow Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, subject to a Provincial commitment to significant infrastructure funding and tools to implement the Plan."

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Final version of Places to Grow was released on June 16, 2006 and contains few changes from previous drafts. The Plan is now a legislated document and the Region's compliance is required. *Attachment 1* to this report compares the Final Growth Plan provisions to Regional Council's January 26, 2006 recommendations. Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee at its meeting of June 14, 2006 was circulated a briefing note of the changes.

The Growth Plan is divided into five main sections:

- **Where and How to Grow** - establishing the growth forecasts and urban development standards for this growth
- **Infrastructure to Support Growth** - establishing the Province's priorities for infrastructure improvements
- **Protecting What is Valuable** - identifying the natural heritage protection system which builds on that already contemplated within the Greenbelt Plan; and,
- **Implementation and Interpretation** - establishing the ways and means of establishing the Growth Plan in municipal documents.

As well, the Plan contains a detailed Definitions Section as well as Schedules dealing with the growth concepts, population and employment forecast table, conceptual maps of the Urban Growth Centres and Conceptual Transportation and Transit networks.

In addition to the Growth Plan, the Province also enacted a Regulation establishing the transition rules for applications already in process.

4.1 Key Provisions of the Approved Growth Plan

4.1.1 Where and How To Grow - Growth Forecasts

Population and Employment Forecasts for York Region are confirmed at 1.5 million and 780,000 for 2031 respectively, with 5-year review of forecasts by Province in consultation with municipalities. Household Forecasts, originally included on the Schedule 3 Table in the Proposed Growth Plan, have been removed from the Provincial forecast.

Intensification Targets

By 2015, the Plan requires that a minimum 40% of all residential development occurring annually in each upper tier municipality be within the *built-up area*. Furthermore, all municipalities are required to develop official plan and other supporting document policies to phase-in and achieve the intensification targets, including:

- density targets for urban growth centres
- plan for a range and mix of housing taking into account affordable housing targets
- encourage secondary suites throughout the built-up area.

Urban Growth Centres

The Growth Plan includes the 4 Regional Centres in the Regional Official Plan and requires that by 2031 or earlier, development achieve a minimum gross density of 200 residents and jobs per hectare. Further PIR, in consultation with municipalities having urban growth centres, will determine the approximate size and locations of these Centres and the boundaries will be delineated in municipal official plans. A copy of the Schedule 2 Places to Grow Concept is appended as *Attachment 2* to this report.

Major Transit Station Areas and Intensification Corridors

These areas are to be designated in Official Plans and planned to achieve increased residential and employment densities that support and ensure viability of existing and planned transit service levels. Uses will contain a mix of residential, office, institutional and commercial development wherever appropriate. Intensification corridors will generally be planned to accommodate local services.

Employment Lands

Major retail uses, which are not defined in the Growth Plan, are considered to be non-employment uses. This is a change from the previous plan. Municipalities are required to promote economic development and competitiveness by:

- Providing appropriate mix of employment uses including industrial, commercial and institutional
- Providing opportunities for diversified economic base including range of industries and choice of sites
- Planning for and protecting employment areas for current and future uses
- Ensuring provision of necessary infrastructure supplied to support current and forecasted employment needs.

Municipalities may permit conversion of lands within employment areas to non-employment uses only through a municipal comprehensive review.

Designated Greenfield Areas

Designated Greenfield areas are defined as “those areas outside of the existing built boundary, or in the case of a settlement without a built boundary, the entire settlement area.” By 2031 the Plan requires that a minimum density target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare will be achieved for new development. This density is to be measured over the entire designated greenfield areas of each upper tier municipality excluding identified natural features.

Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

Settlement Area Boundary Expansions are to occur only through a comprehensive municipal review, and only provide additional land sufficient for a time period up to 20 years. The inclusion of the 20-year time horizon for municipal designation is a new provision from previous drafts of the document.

4.1.2 Infrastructure to Support Growth

The final Growth Plan is predicated on the provision and use of transit to a higher degree than current levels. This is unchanged from previous drafts.

The Province continues to indicate its willingness to work with other Ministries and public sector partners to identify strategic infrastructure needs to support implementation of the Plan through multi-year infrastructure planning and sub-area assessments of transportation, transit and water and wastewater systems. These directions are largely unchanged from previous drafts.

One change requested by Regional Council and included in the approved Plan was the designation of the Yonge Street corridor from the Richmond Hill Regional Centre to Newmarket Centre as “Proposed Higher Order Transit to 2031”. However, the request to have this same designation for the rapid transit line to Markham Centre was not included. Nor has the extension of the Richmond Hill GO line to Bloomington been included.

Regional Council in its January 26, 2006 comments on the Proposed Growth Plan identified the critical infrastructure projects that are required in order to accommodate the forecasted growth. This resolution is appended to this report as *Attachment 3*. Of the infrastructure requested by Council, three projects have received approvals. These are the YDSS interceptor along 19th Avenue in March of 2006, funding for the Spadina Subway Extension and the start of the 404 extension. All other requests are outstanding.

4.1.3 Protecting What is Valuable

The Growth Plan provides that PIR, through the sub-area assessment and consultation with municipalities and other stakeholders, is intending to identify a natural system for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Planning authorities are also encouraged to identify natural heritage features and areas that complement, link or enhance natural systems.

A number of agencies, including both Conservation Authorities and the Ministry of Natural Resources and area municipalities, including Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and East Gwillimbury, as well as the Region through its undertaking of the Significant Woodlands Study and the natural heritage systems in the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan area, have linked systems. As well, the final report of the *Towards Sustainability in York Region Advisory Group* (TSYR) recommended that the Region, in consultation with conservation authorities and other stakeholders, develop a linked natural heritage system for the Region. Regional staff intends to hold a natural heritage planning workshop in the fall to further define and discuss this system. PIR staff will be invited to participate in this session.

4.1.4 Interpretation and Implementation

Conformity within 3 Years

As indicated in previous reports to Committee and Council, municipalities are required to bring Official Plans into conformity with the Growth Plan within 3 years of its release. Regional growth management work, including population and employment forecasting, 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, is well underway. At this time, Regional staff do not anticipate an issue meeting this deadline.

Further, PIR is committed to working with other stakeholders on key analysis pieces for places to Grow, including:

- verification of the built boundary
- assessment of need for new designated greenfield area
- determination of size and location of urban growth centres
- regional sub-area assessments focussing on:
 - regional economic analysis and Provincially significant employment area
 - transportation network
 - implications of growth on water and wastewater servicing
 - natural systems
 - prime agricultural identification
 - identification of significant mineral aggregate resources.

Co-ordination, Monitoring and Performance Measures

A new section has also been added that provides overall direction regarding:

- Coordination of Plan between the Province and municipalities on implementation issues across municipal boundaries

- Upper tier/ lower tier co-ordination for forecast distribution and density target identification.

As well, policies commit PIR to developing a set of indicators to monitor implementation of the Plan.

Transition Regulation

Ontario Regulation 311/06 as amended by OR 324/06 establishes transition provisions for applications currently in process. Briefly:

- The Growth Plan applies in total to *Planning Act* and *Condominium Act* applications commenced after June 16, 2006.
- The Growth Plan applies to changes to official plans that propose to add 300 or more hectares to an existing area of settlement and sets out a few exceptions to this general rule.
 - Exceptions recognize that some applications are further advanced in the approval process than others, and that some matters are initiated by municipalities themselves. If a proposal for a boundary expansion greater than 300 hectares has been municipally initiated, or was approved, the matter will not be subject to the boundary expansion tests of the Growth Plan (policy 2.2.8). The rest of the Growth Plan still applies.
 - The Plan will not apply where the matter was appealed, and the hearing of the Ontario Municipal Board (or a Joint Board) has been completed and adjourned so the Board can make its decision.
- The transition regulation also applies the Plan to matters that are amended after June 16, 2006, where:
 - a proposed boundary expansion is increased above 300 hectares, reduced below 300 hectares, or changed to a new area of settlement; or
 - a proposal is amended while before the Ontario Municipal Board (or a Joint Board), to add any amount of land, or designate a new area of settlement.
- As well, the Growth Plan will not apply if the application includes some lands that were previously transitioned under the Greenbelt Plan.

Regional staff has been working on a decision tree to guide planners, although the Regulation is extremely complicated. The draft tree is attached as Figure 1, but is subject to further refinement as we continue to review applications, apply the transition provisions and find anomalies.

4.2 Municipal Obligations Included in Final Growth Plan

The Growth Plan establishes a series of obligations for upper and lower tier municipalities to provide information and input to sub area assessments and provide background information for conformity amendments. These are shown in *Attachment 4*, and include:

- Determining the approximate size and location of urban growth centres.
- Developing and implementing official plan policies and outline a strategy to phase in intensification targets and for Greenfield development areas.
- Designating Major Transit Stations and intensification corridors in Official Plans.
- Developing and implementing transportation demand management policies in official plan or other planning documents.
- Establishing minimum affordable housing targets.
- Developing a Housing Strategy, including OP policies to meet needs of affordable housing, rental housing and mix.

As staff meet with our municipal counterparts and staff of PIR during training sessions, tentatively identified for fall 2006, these obligations will become more focussed.

4.3 Next Steps

4.3.1 Growth Plan Implementation

Review and Confirm Built Boundary mapping

The built boundary information from Places to Grow will be used as a basis for determining the capacity of existing areas to accommodate intensified development and municipal distribution of the Growth Plan intensification 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 this report, no estimated time of delivery or review period has been announced. When the Boundary is available, Regional and area municipal staff will review the boundary, confirm when appropriate, and request changes or modifications where we feel they are necessary. Comments and recommended changes will be forwarded to PIR prior to their deadline date.

Transition Regulations

When the Plan was released, the Province also released Ontario Regulation 311/06 as amended by OR 324/06. The transition regulations together establish a complex set of rules to guide applications currently in process under the *Planning Act* and the *Condominium Act*. It is anticipated that it will take some time to determine their implication to on-going applications. However, a preliminary evaluation indicates four municipally initiated matters are caught by Growth Plan:

- Vaughan OPA 400
- Vaughan OPA 620
- Amendments to the Markham Cornell Plan
- Newmarket Official Plan.

As well there may be a number of private amendment applications currently in process that may be affected by the transition regulations. Regional and area municipal staff continue to review applications to determine applicability.

In addition, there is no mention of sub-area assessments and their role for transition applications under O.Reg 311/06. Regional staff will work with area municipal planning staff, as well as MMAH and PIR staff through the Province's one-window planning approach to determine the applicable policy framework.

Allocation of Population and Employment Forecasts to area municipalities

As identified in other reports, Regional staff is continuing technical work, including initial municipal 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 distribution of population and employment forecasts and intensification.

Regional Growth Management and Transportation Master Plan Update Initiatives:

Regional Growth Management and Transportation Master Plan Update projects are proceeding and will incorporate the Places to Grow standards and targets in the work.

Growth options are scheduled for early 2007 and are anticipated to examine a range of intensification levels and their impact on urban capacity. Further, staff continues to integrate the Region's sustainability approach into both the growth management work and transportation master plan update.

Input to Sub-Area Assessments

As indicated in *Attachment 4*, the Growth Plan identifies a number of municipal obligations for information and studies. Chief among these is municipal input to sub-area assessments to be undertaken by PIR in consultation with stakeholders. Sub- Area assessments will require information from Regional sources in the following areas:

- Regional economic assessment;
- Transportation infrastructure planning and investment.
- Water and Sewer capacity to service the projected growth forecasts
- Natural Heritage system identification and protection.
- Prime agricultural and specialty crop area protection.

This input will be undertaken as part of the growth management workplan in late 2006 and 2007.

4.4 Relationship To Vision 2026

The Growth Plan supports a number of Vision 2026 goal areas, including Managed and Balanced Growth, Infrastructure for a Growing Region, A Vibrant Economy, Enhanced Environment, Heritage and Culture, and Responding to the Needs of our Residents. The Growth Plan however, does not support the Vision's objectives relating to financial health largely due to the lack of detail and specificity relating to provincial financial commitments.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for Places to Grow policy implementation will be undertaken as part of the Region's Growth Management work and included within 2006 approved budget. Allocations in subsequent years will be subject to normal budget deliberations.

Regional Council at its meeting of January 26 2006, advised the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Renewal that York Region could only support or implement the policies of the Places to Grow Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, subject to a Provincial commitment to significant infrastructure funding and tools to implement the Plan.

No additional fiscal or planning tools were announced in the Plan, no additional commitment to implementation beyond sub-area assessments have been provided and identifying strategic infrastructure needs to support implementation of the Plan through multi-year infrastructure planning has not resulted in additional funding.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Area municipalities are beginning work to incorporate Places to grow into planning documents. The first steps in this is to consider population and employment distributions works already underway here at the Region as part of the Growth Management work.

Further implementation at the municipal level will occur in consultation with the Region

7. CONCLUSION

Places to Grow, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was released in its final form on June 16, 2006. The Plan establishes population and employment forecasts of 1.5 million and 780,000 jobs to York Region at the Plan horizon year of 2031.

Further, the Plan establishes minimum intensification targets of 40% of residential development in existing built areas and a gross density not less than 200 persons and jobs

per hectare for each of the Region's Centres. Further, the Places to Grow Plan must be incorporated into municipal planning documents within 3 years of its release.

Regional Council at its meeting of January 26, 2006, previously advised the Province that York Region could "only support or implement the policies of the Places to Grow Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, subject to a Provincial commitment to significant infrastructure funding and tools to implement the Plan."

Few of the tools and no additional funding has been announced.

It is recommended that Regional staff continue with the growth management work commenced in 2005 and that the Places to Grow population and employment forecasts, intensification expectations and anticipated municipal obligations be achieved within the context of this work.

Regional staff continue consultation and discussions with area municipalities, the Province and other stakeholders on implementation of Places to Grow, including commenting, discussions and modifications to the built boundary established by PIR when it becomes available.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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