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VISUALIZING THE LOOK OF INTENSIFICATION IN YORK REGION: PRELIMINARY REPORT

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The presentation by Paul Bottomley, Manager, Growth Management Economy and Information Research, Long Range and Strategic Planning, and Andrew Satterthwaite, Manager, Business Solutions, Geomatics, be received; and**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report dated May 13, 2008, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services, be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional staff collaborate further with the Area Municipalities as they complete their local intensification strategies.
2. Regional staff prepare an *Intensification Best Practices Discussion Paper* that identifies the components of creating the next generation of sustainable and quality compact development with a focus on the Regional Centres and Corridors.
3. Regional staff prepare a photographic catalogue of intensification examples in York Region to be used as a public engagement tool.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present current Regional and Municipal intensification visualization work to further clarify what 40% intensification means in terms of units, density and urban design.

3. BACKGROUND

ONTARIO PLACES TO GROW PLAN SETS TARGET OF 40% INTENSIFICATION

In June 2006, the Ontario Government released the final Growth Plan, “*Places to Grow*” for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area which stipulates:

- “By the year 2015 and for each year thereafter, a minimum of 40 percent of all residential development occurring annually within each upper- and single-tier municipality will be within the built-up area.”
- A density target of 200 people and jobs per hectare by 2031 or earlier applies to urban growth centres, specifically in the Regional Centres of Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Vaughan.

In April 2008, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (MPIR) concurrently released the final revised built boundary for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and a technical paper on the proposed general size and location of the urban growth centres. Both documents were presented to Council in April 2008.

In May 2008, Regional Council endorsed the minimum 40% intensification scenario as the preferred growth scenario to be used as the basis of the Region’s Growth Plan.

YORK REGION ADVANCES CITY-BUILDING PROCESS

Initiatives that the Region has undertaken to enhance the planned urban structure served by rapid transit include:

- *Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA 43)*, July 2005, that strengthens policies in the ROP regarding development in the Centres and Corridors.
- *Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines*, adopted by Regional Council in September 2006.
- *Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA 60)*, approved in February 2008, enables the Region to adopt Regional Community Improvement Plans and to participate in local community improvement plans.
- In March 2008, Regional Council adopted a plan to implement a policy to provide a 20-35% increase in servicing allocation for intensification development proposals that meet specific LEEDTM criteria.

SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL PROGRESS ON INTENSIFICATION POLICY

The Region put in place guidelines that provide a framework for how and where intensification will take place

Major advancements in Regional intensification policy include:

- Council endorsement of the minimum 40% intensification scenario as the Region’s preferred growth scenario. This scenario will be used as the basis in future public consultation and in calculating the implications on growth planning until 2031.
- Detailed municipal intensification assignments based on the minimum 40% intensification scenario including a preliminary estimate on key areas where this growth will occur within each municipality.

- The Region's Intensification Guide that provides a framework for collaboration with the Area Municipalities as they complete their own intensification strategies. The Guide asks Area Municipalities to verify and revise their assignments as required and indicate where and how intensification will occur.

The Region has always promoted the nodal approach which strategically places intensification areas along centres and corridors that are served by rapid transit. This nodal approach will focus intensification in certain areas which, in turn, identifies areas that will not redevelop. In this way, large scale development is not continuous along the corridors and intensification is not dispersed and disorganized throughout the built-up area.

AREA MUNICIPAL INTENSIFICATION POLICY WORK

Area Municipalities are advancing their intensification policy work by emphasizing the Region's nodal approach to more compact development

Area Municipalities are also advancing their intensification policy work to achieve a more compact built form. This work emphasizes the Region's nodal approach towards intensification by strategically placing high density development clusters along the Regional corridors served by rapid transit. This includes:

- The Town of Markham's *Avenue Seven Corridor Study* identifies potential key development areas for intensification such as Langstaff, Commerce Valley, Woodbine/404, Markham Centre, Markville and Cornell (*Attachment 1*).
- The City of Vaughan's *Avenue Seven Land Use Futures Study* and subsequent Highway 7 Official Plan Amendments outline a planned urban structure based on a hierarchy of centres for higher density development served by higher order transit. The hierarchy of centres consists of the Vaughan Corporate Centre Node, GO Transit Centres, the 7/427 Centre, transit nodes and corridors (*Attachment 2*).
- The City of Vaughan also embarked upon a growth management program, "*Vaughan Tomorrow*". The extensive public engagement phase includes a public speaker series and community visioning workshops.
- The Town of Markham/ City of Vaughan Yonge/Steeles Corridor Studies
- The Town of Richmond Hill has identified strategic areas along Yonge Street that are best suited to accommodate intensification. These areas include, Richmond Hill Centre/Bayview Glen, Yonge/16th-Carville Ave, and Yonge Street between Major Mackenzie and Elgin Mills. The Town is also commencing an update study of the Richmond Hill Centre.
- The Town of Newmarket identified several centres that will be the focus of intensification in their new Official Plan including the Yonge Street Regional Centre, the Historic Downtown Centre and the Regional Healthcare Centre. The Town is partnering with the Region to begin a visioning exercise of the Yonge Street Regional Centre which includes a visualization component.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Region is having success in implementing 40% intensification

The Region completed a preliminary intensification forecast which indicates that approximately 85,000 new units within the provincial built boundary would be required to meet the 40% intensification target as specified in the *Places to Grow Plan*. Regional analysis indicates that approximately 49,000 of these intensification units are already planned within the provincial built boundary. This figure does not include single- or semi-detached structures.

Intensification Monitoring

Preliminary intensification monitoring between January 2006 and December 2007 indicate that the Region received 42 applications for medium and high density development which translates into approximately 26,800 potential new units. Of these applications received, approximately 34 applications and 20,700 potential new medium and high density units could fall within the provincial final built boundary.

Planned Intensification Growth

Based on the Region's Vacant Residential Unit Supply Inventory (VRUSI), 2006, there are approximately 49,000 row and apartment-type units in the development pipeline that qualify as intensification growth in the provincial built boundary. The breakdown and distribution of this anticipated growth is outlined in Table 1:

Table 1
York Region Anticipated Intensification Growth (2006-2031)
Based on Secondary Plans and Applications Received

Location	Growth (Units)
Markham Centre	14,000
Vaughan Corporate Centre	7,500
Cornell Centre	8,800
Langstaff - Markham	3,000
Other Site Plans and Applications Received	15,700
Total Anticipated Intensification Growth	49,000
Total Intensification Required to Meet 40% by 2031	85,000
Additional Growth Required to Meet 40% by 2031	36,000

Source: York Region Planning Department, May 2008

1. Based on York Region Vacant Residential Unit Supply Inventory (VRUSI), mid-2006.

2. Intensification Growth excludes single- and semi-detached units.

3. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

4. Growth figures represent anticipated development and are subject to change pending approval.

5. Site plans also includes areas on the Regional Corridors.

Additional Intensification will be focused in Strategic Nodes

In addition to these 49,000 units that are included in existing applications, Area Municipalities are working on a number of additional intensification nodes. These areas, which are identified in Section 3.4, include:

- Langstaff Master Plan
- Yonge/Steeles Corridor Studies
- Yonge Street/ 16th-Carville Avenue
- Yonge Street/ Major Mackenzie to Elgin Mills.
- The City of Vaughan Hierarchy of Centres
- The Town of Newmarket, Regional Centre, Regional Healthcare Centre and Historic Downtown Centre.

4.1 PURPOSE OF VISUALIZING INTENSIFICATION

Intensification visualization photographically illustrates how to incorporate higher densities into an existing community using urban design and architectural standards

An intensification visualization exercise has a number of benefits:

- Further clarify what 40% intensification means in terms of distribution, buildings, density and urban design.
- Act as a public engagement tool to communicate the look of intensification and compact development.
- To address public wariness towards intensification and high density development.
- To assist with the arrangement and proportion of land uses, functions and building types.
- To illustrate that higher densities can be achieved using various building forms and design features to ensure compatibility and fit within the existing character of the community. Such design features can involve: varying building footprints, parking standards and structures, and an appropriate quantity and mix of pedestrian connections and meeting places.

4.2 EXISTING REGIONAL VISUALIZATION WORK

Visualizations of the potential evolution of the Regional Centres

As part of the 2001 *Centres and Corridors Strategy*, the Region photographically envisioned the evolution of the Regional Centres. These 4-stage visuals illustrate a Regional Centre's progression of development, transit, built form and design from existing conditions to 2031. These illustrations represent one outlook of what future intensification could look like in the Regional Centres if desirable urban design features are incorporated (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Evolution of Vaughan Corporate Centre



Markham Centre visualization work illustrates the “look” of approximately 200 people and jobs per hectare

Regional and Municipal staff estimate that Markham Centre could achieve approximately 200 people and jobs per gross hectare based on a preliminary analysis of anticipated development. The Town provides the status of development in Markham Centre on their public website which includes photographs and artists’ renderings of the anticipated developments. Some of these developments include:



**DOWNTOWN MARKHAM
REMINGTON GROUP
BENCHMARK MANOR - PHASE I**

Location: North east quadrant of Enterprise
Boulevard and West Valley Drive.

Development Status: Site Plan endorsed by Council, June 2006.
Construction anticipated to
commence spring 2007.

Total Land Area:

- 6.18 ha (15.3 acres)
- 175 townhome units, including
a local park 0.3 ha (0.74 acre).



**DOWNTOWN MARKHAM
REMINGTON GROUP
BIJOU PHASE II - BUILDINGS PROMENADE & ARBOUR**

Location: North side of the Civic Mall, east of West Valley Drive.

Development Status: Site Plan endorsed by Council, November 2006.
Construction anticipated to commence spring 2007.

- Total Land Area:
- 0.68 ha (1.69 acres)
 - 244 apartment units, within 2 buildings, seven storeys each.



**UNIONVILLE GARDENS
LEE DEVELOPMENTS**

Location: West of Village Parkway, east of Verclaire Gate, north of Highway 7 East.

Development Status: Processing on hold pending resolution of servicing issues.

- Total Land Area:
- 1.4 hectares
- Total Residential Units:
- 50 townhouses,
 - 181 apartment units



MARKHAM CENTRE URBAN PARK

Location: North of Enterprise Boulevard, south of the Rouge River and west of re-aligned Tributary 4.

Development Status: Design Charette/Workshop held April 2004. Winning Design Concept selected May 2004. Design unveiled on-site June 2004. The winning team retained to undertake the detailed design of the park 2005-2006. Public meeting February 2006. Phase I – Implementation 2008.

- Total Land Area:
- 4.0 ha (10.0 acre) urban park in the heart Downtown Markham
 - Strong environmental approach to design
 - Design integrates art and culture in harmony with the environment

SOURCE: Markham Centre Status of Development, 2007, Town of Markham website.

4.3 EXAMPLES OF SITE SPECIFIC INTENSIFICATION

Preliminary site analysis indicates that higher floor space indices (FSIs) can be achieved in buildings that are generally 10 storeys or less

Preliminary analysis of site-specific of intensification reveals that higher densities are not always directly related to higher buildings. Higher densities can be achieved in generally 10 storeys or less by varying factors such as, among others, building coverage and parking standards and structures. Regional staff are currently completing and refining this preliminary intensification photographic catalogue.



53 Woodbridge Avenue, Vaughan

- 2.13 FSI
- 6 storeys
- 105 units
- Parking: Below Grade, 2.3 spaces per unit.



131 Woodbridge Avenue, Vaughan

- 2.59 FSI
- 4-6 storeys
- 150 units
- Parking: Above and Below Grade, 2.1 spaces per unit



62 & 48 Suncrest Blvd, Markham

- 4.4 FSI
- 1.5-11 storeys
- 428 units
- Parking: Above Grade and 2 Levels of Below Grade, 1.5 spaces per unit.



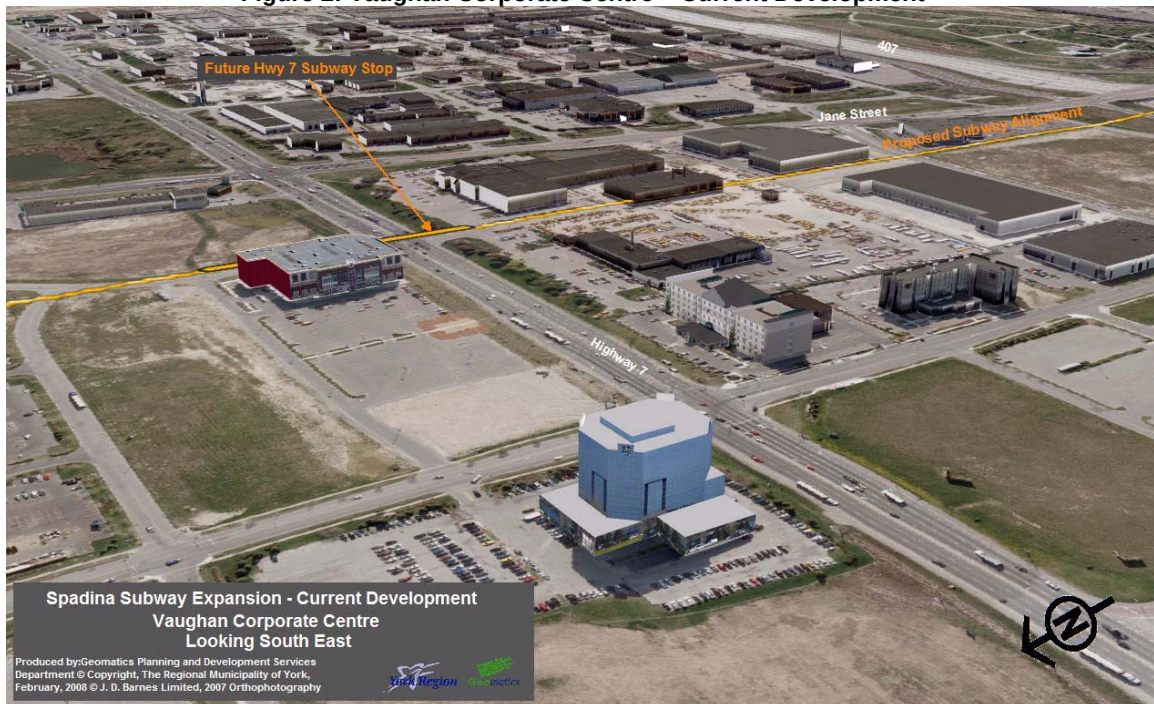
The Renaissance at Yonge and Church Street,
Richmond Hill.

- 2.85 FSI
- 7 storeys
- 180 units
- Parking: Majority is Below Grade, 1.5 spaces per unit.

The Region is making advances in three-dimensional modelling of intensification

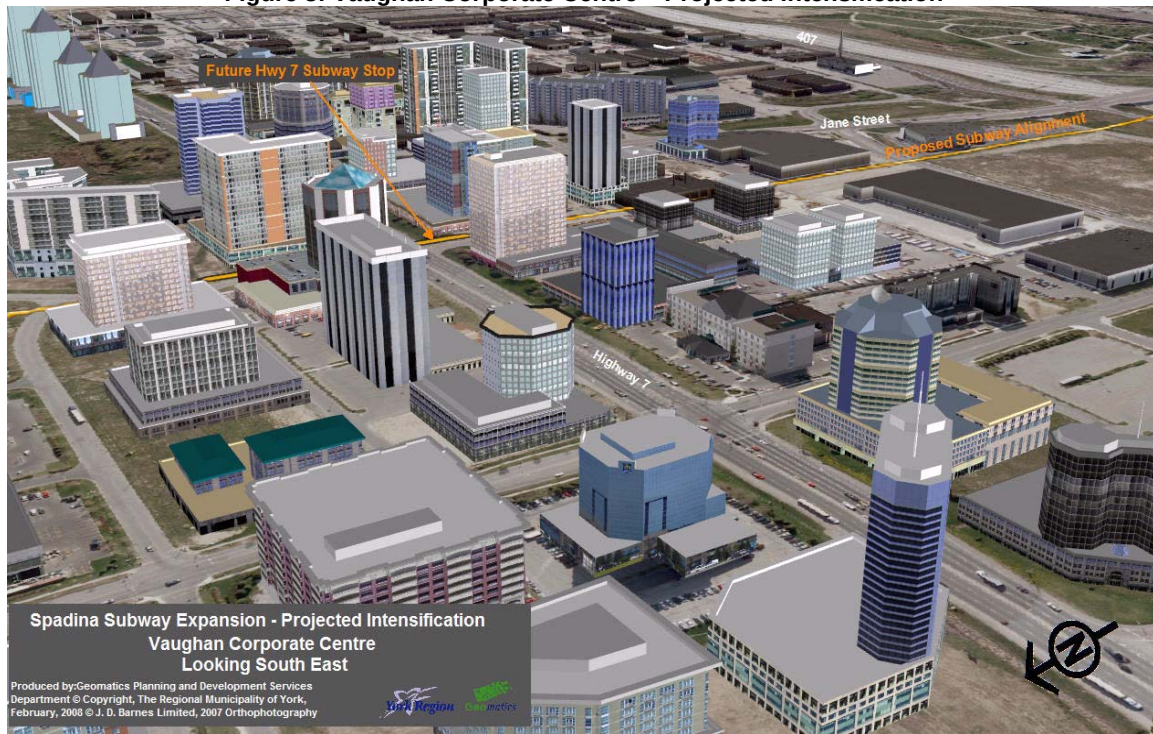
As part of the Spadina-subway expansion work, the Region's Geomatics branch is conducting three-dimensional modelling of intensification in the Vaughan Corporate Centre. Figure 2 shows current development and built form surrounding the planned subway stop in the Vaughan Corporate Centre.

Figure 2: Vaughan Corporate Centre – Current Development



Using various building heights and floor spaces indices that are supported within the City of Vaughan's current policy, a conceptual three-dimensional model of what Vaughan Corporate Centre could look like at full-build out was developed as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Vaughan Corporate Centre – Projected Intensification



This preliminary analysis is based on a maximum building height of 25-storeys and a maximum floor space index of 5.0.

Next steps in three-dimensional intensification modelling include refining the Vaughan Corporate Centre model and modelling all the Regional Centres.

4.4 INTENSIFICATION VISUALIZATION NEXT STEPS

Regional next steps in completing intensification work include:

- Collaborate further with the Area Municipalities as they complete their local intensification strategies.
- Prepare an *Intensification Best Practices Discussion Paper* that identifies and discusses the integral components of creating the next generation of sustainable and quality compact development with a focus on the Centres and Corridors.
- Prepare a photographic catalogue of intensification examples in York Region to be used as a public engagement tool.
- Work with the Area Municipalities to illustrate what intensification would look like in smaller towns and villages in the Region.

- Complete the three dimensional modelling and the Geoconnections/Atlas Plus project for intensification that is currently underway in the Region's Geomatics division. This project is an item on this Committee Agenda.

Relationship to Vision 2026

Intensification visualization supports the Vision 2026 goal areas of "Managed and Balanced Growth" and "Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region". In addition, intensification visualization also supports the "Healthy Communities" and the "Education, Engagement and Partnerships" theme areas in the Region's Sustainability Strategy.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The completion of the Intensification Visualization is being conducted within the existing Planning and Development Services Department staff complement and within approved budget allocation.

Any additional expenses related to completing the visualization exercises, such as professional photography and/or computer modelling will be reported to Council in subsequent staff reports.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Area Municipal collaboration is key to implementing the 40% intensification growth scenario across the Region. The Municipal Technical Advisory Committee, established to provide input into the Region's Growth Management program, will act as the conduit for completing all intensification work.

Area Municipal intensification planning work is well advanced. Area Municipal planning has already identified approximately 49,000 units in areas like Markham Centre and Vaughan Corporate Centre. Additional detailed planning work is underway by Area Municipalities for strategic areas that will identify significant additional units (e.g. Markham Langstaff, Vaughan Highway 7 and specific clusters on Yonge Street in Richmond Hill).

The Region held an Area Municipal working session on June 2, 2008 where a number of issues were discussed associated with implementing intensification. This working session is part of the Region's on-going collaboration with the Area Municipalities as they complete their intensification strategies as outlined in "*Enhancing York Region's Urban Structure: A Guide to Developing Area Municipal Intensification Strategies*", endorsed by Council in April 2008.

7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report is to present current Regional and Municipal intensification visualization work to further clarify what 40% intensification means in terms of density and urban design. The benefit of visualizing intensification is to clarify the “look” of intensification and the desirable design features necessary to create the next generation of compact development.

This work is premised on the nodal approach that strategically places intensification in certain areas such as the Centres and Corridors served by rapid transit. In this way, large scale development is not continuous along the corridors and intensification is not dispersed and disorganized throughout the built-up area.

The Region has made significant advances in intensification policy with the Council endorsed minimum 40% intensification scenario as the preferred scenario for the Region’s Growth Plan, municipal intensification assignments and the Region’s Guide to Area Municipal Intensification Strategies. Area Municipalities also have major initiatives underway such as the Town of Markham’s *Avenue Seven Corridor Study*. As well, the City of Vaughan’s is undertaking the *Avenue Seven Land Use Futures Study*, Official Plan Amendments and the Growth Management Program, “*Vaughan Tomorrow*”.

The Region completed a preliminary intensification forecast which indicates that approximately 85,000 new units within the provincial built boundary would be required to meet the 40% intensification target as specified in the *Places to Grow Plan*. Approximately 49,000 units represent the anticipated intensification growth that has already been captured in secondary plans and applications received as of mid-year 2006. A total of 85,000 intensification units required to meet the provincial target of 40% as per the *Places to Grow Plan*.

Additional detailed planning work is underway by Area Municipalities for strategic areas that will identify significant additional units, for example, in Markham Langstaff, Vaughan Highway 7 and specific clusters on Yonge Street in Richmond Hill.

Existing Regional and Municipal work to visualize this forecasted intensification includes: the 4-stage graphics of the Regional Centres’ evolution; the Town of Markham illustrations of Markham Centre development which is a likely representation of the 200 people and jobs per gross hectare; Regional examples of site-specific intensification; and, three-dimensional modelling of the Vaughan Corporate Centre.

Intensification next steps include further collaborating with the Area Municipalities as they complete their intensification strategies, producing an *Intensification Best Practices Discussion Paper*, preparing an intensification photographic catalogue, envisioning the look of intensification in the smaller towns and villages, and completing the three-dimensional modelling of the Regional Centres.

For more information on this report, please contact Dawn Seetaram, Planner at 905 830-4444 Ext. 1570, or John Waller, Director of Long Range and Strategic Planning, at 905 830-4444 Ext. 1525.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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