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**PUBLIC MEETING AND
INFORMATION REPORT FOR A PUBLIC MEETING ON A REQUEST TO
AMEND THE YORK REGION OFFICIAL PLAN TO FACILITATE
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VAUGHAN OPA 637**

Pursuant to Section 17(15) of the Planning Act, as amended, the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee held a Public Meeting to inform the Public and receive comments regarding:

A request by the City of Vaughan to amend the York Region Official Plan to Facilitate the Implementation of Vaughan OPA 637.

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

1. The presentation by Sean Hertel, Senior Planner, Community Planning, be received;
2. The following deputations be received and referred to staff:
 - (a) C. Principe, President, Vaughanwood Estates Homeowners Association, and communication dated October 3, 2006, regarding Highway 400 North Employment Lands Secondary Plan Study, ROPA 52;
 - (b) R. Humphries, President, Humphries Planning Group Inc., on behalf of the Highway 400 North Landowners Group; and
3. The recommendation contained in the following report, September 6, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services, be adopted:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that comments made at the October 4, 2006 public meeting regarding this matter, together with responses made to the public circulation of the proposed amendment, be reviewed by staff and that staff report their recommendations to a future meeting of the Planning and Economic Development Committee.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide background information for the required public meeting to be held in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning Act*.
- Identify Regional interests associated with the application made by the City of Vaughan for a Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA).

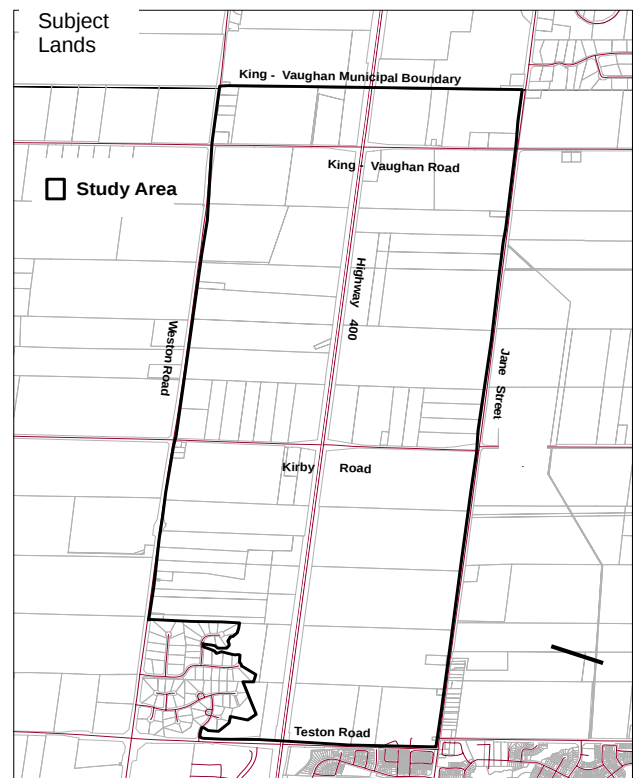
3. BACKGROUND

Notice of this public meeting was provided by the Region through newspaper advertisements in the *Toronto Star* and *Vaughan Citizen* on September 14, 2006. In addition, government and related agencies were notified of the meeting by post, as well as those persons who previously requested to be notified of any upcoming meetings.

3.1 Reason for Public Meeting

The Council of the City of Vaughan initiated Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 637 to bring approximately 800 gross hectares (2,000 acres) of agricultural land into the city's urban boundary for employment uses (see *Figure 1 – Proposed Amendment Area*). The OPA was adopted by City Council on June 26, 2006 and received by the Region on July 6, 2006. Regional staff provided an information report to the Regional Planning & Economic Development Committee on this city-initiated planning exercise on November 30, 2005.

Figure 1 – Proposed Amendment Area



The June 26, 2006 adoption of OPA 637 also included a formal request for the Region to initiate the appropriate Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) to facilitate the proposed urban expansion, consistent with the provisions of Section 17 of the *Planning Act*. This public meeting is the first step in that process; which includes a comprehensive analysis as outlined in section 4 of this report.

The lands subject to OPA 637 and the proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) are located outside of the current Regional and City urban boundary, and are unserved. These lands are designated "Agriculture Policy Area" and "Regional

Greenlands System” in the Regional Official Plan (ROP), and “Agriculture Area” and “Valley and Stream Corridor” in the Vaughan Official Plan (OPA 600). The existing and proposed Regional Official Plan land use designations are shown on *Attachment 1*.

The Region is the Approval Authority for OPA 637 and the required ROPA.

3.2 Additional Employment Lands Required

The objective of adopted OPA 637 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.

The Study, led by the Toronto-based planning consulting firm of McCaulay Shiomi Howson Limited, concluded that the City has an insufficient long-term supply of higher-order, “prestige” employment land for uses such as corporate headquarters, related office employment and “clean” manufacturing plants. Further, the consultant’s assessment confirmed that the study area is best-suited for employment uses; given its exposure and proximity to Highway 400.

The planning assessment of the OPA 637 lands is generally consistent with the 2005 *York Region Vacant Employment Land Inventory* and related conclusions. In particular, the inventory concluded that 682 net hectares (1,685 net acres) of Vaughan’s current 1,367 net hectare (3,377 net acres) vacant employment land inventory – almost half – is constrained pending the final determination of the Highway 427 alignment north of Highway 7. These findings were contained in Clause 6 of Report 7 of the Planning and Economic Development Committee adopted by Regional Council on September 22, 2005.

3.3 Proposed Planning and Development Framework

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*. The proposed land use plan is attached to this report as *Attachment 2*.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Planning Considerations

The Region’s review of OPA 637 and related ROPA requires a comprehensive planning analysis of Provincial, Regional and City policies. Forming a large part of this analysis will be the applicability of the Provincial *Growth Plan* and *Greenbelt Plan*, and the urban

expansion criteria of the Regional Official Plan. In particular, the Region's supply of employment land and 2031 employment and population forecasts will be important considerations when evaluating the study results against Provincial, Regional and City policies.

On a higher level, this proposed urban expansion provides an excellent opportunity to begin to address broader planning opportunities as we look towards the 2031 horizon. This "big picture" includes the potential role of those lands located outside of the Region's current urban boundary, generally south of the Oak Ridges Moraine and outside of the Greenbelt. Another opportunity is to begin to investigate the merits of a "Regional Employment" designation to establish the primacy of employment-generating land uses with the Urban Area. The lands subject to this proposed ROPA may be a candidate for such a designation.

The on-going growth management exercises of the Region and City are opportunities to address both the site-specific and broader planning considerations associated with the proposed urban expansion, as described above.

4.1.1 Provincial Policy

The Region's evaluation of and ultimate decision regarding OPA 637 and related ROPA will include a comprehensive review of the relevant policies of the *Provincial Policy Statement* (March 2005), *Greenbelt Plan* and *Growth Plan*. Further consultation with and formal comments from Provincial staff is critical. In particular, further information is required from the Province regarding urban boundary expansion criteria under the *Growth Plan* provisions, and details regarding the potential timing and alignment of a "Future Transportation Corridor" as shown on *Schedule 6* of the *Growth Plan*; which appears to impact lands in western Vaughan.

Formal comments from the Province regarding the adopted version of OPA 637 and related ROPA are still pending. However, Provincial comments are on file in response to Vaughan's circulation of the terms of reference for the city-initiated *Highway 400 North Employment Lands Secondary Plan Study*, as described in section 3.2 of this report. The Provincial comments, outlined in the letter dated December 23, 2005 (*see Attachment 3*), represent a preliminary analysis of the proposed urban expansion in the context of relevant Provincial legislation, including the *Provincial Policy Statement*, *Greenbelt Plan* and the then-proposed *Growth Plan*.

The Province's preliminary analysis concluded that, although it supports the general intent of the study to secure additional employment lands, "the study's focus should not assume an employment allocation which may be inconsistent with the Region's comprehensive review. As such, the timing of future amendments that would result from this study should be reserved until the Region of York has completed their formal analysis and comprehensive review in coordination with all the lower tiers."

Regional staff circulated the adopted version of OPA 637 to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for comments on July 13, 2006, consistent with the Provincial “One-Window” review process. A formal, written reply and detailed comments is expected by the end of October 2006.

4.1.2 Regional Official Plan

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.

Specific issues that will form part of this broader analysis include Regional infrastructure improvements, including Regional Road improvements, transit access, water and wastewater, and the potential for an additional Highway 400 interchange. This comprehensive analysis will determine the appropriateness of OPA 637 and related urban boundary expansion. This approach is consistent with the Province’s preliminary comments, outlined in section 4.1.1 of this report.

4.1.3 Regional Employment Land Supply

The retention and attraction of employment opportunities within York Region is an important policy objective. The Region’s 2005 vacant employment land inventory, outlined in section 3.2 of this report, underscores the importance of maintaining a viable, strategically-located, and long-term supply of employment land.

Key findings of the inventory include, that:

- York Region has a 11.8 year supply of vacant land, excluding those constrained lands in Vaughan, as described in section 3.2 of this report.
- The average annual absorption rate of employment lands built for employment uses was 119 net hectares (295 net acres) between June 1, 2001 and January 1, 2005.

- The limited supply of strategically-located lands along the 400-Series Highway needs to be preserved over the long-term for employment uses.

It is essential to take the long-term view in assessing employment land requirements in Vaughan and the balance of the Region as a whole. Aiming to match long-term employment needs with projected population increases, in particular, is key in ensuring long-term economic vitality and healthy communities. This analysis will be key to staff's final recommendations on OPA 637 and the related ROPA.

4.1.4 Regional Infrastructure

Expanding the Region's urban area will require significant investments in Regional and local water, waste water, and transportation infrastructure. The 800-hectare area subject to OPA 637 and the related ROPA is not serviced, and existing roads within the area are not constructed to urban standards. The Region's current 10 Year Capital Plan does not contemplate any infrastructure improvements within the proposed urban expansion area.

The Region has initiated Master Plans for critical Regional infrastructure including water, waste water and transportation. This process is on-going and could be completed by the end of 2007. Staff's analysis of infrastructure required to service the proposed urban expansion area will be informed through the Master Plan process.

Parallel to the Region's analysis of infrastructure requirements, the majority landowners within the proposed urban expansion area have recently initiated a Master Environmental Servicing Plan and Transportation Strategy for their lands, including other lands outside Vaughan's existing urban boundary. Staff from the Region and City have been consulted by the landowners as part of this process, and have had an opportunity to provide input into the Terms of Reference. This privately-initiated study will not replace Region's analysis of infrastructure requirements, but could serve to supplement that work. Regional and City staff are working with the landowners' consultants to that end.

5. FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The cost implications for the proposed urban boundary expansion contemplated by OPA 637 and the related ROPA are currently being determined by Regional staff, in consultation with the City. These implications will form part of staff's final analysis in a future report to Regional Committee and Council.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Expanding the Regional urban boundary to add approximately 500 net hectares of employment land along the Highway 400 corridor will create new, high-profile locations for business and industry within Vaughan. This proposed expansion was initiated by City

Council to ensure a ready supply of employment land while approximately half of the City's current available supply of vacant land remains constrained pending the determination of the final alignment of the Highway 427 extension.

7. CONCLUSION

This report provides information to support the statutory public meeting held to consider a proposed ROPA. The purpose of this ROPA is to add approximately 500 net hectares of "prestige" employment land along the northern segment of Highway 400 in Vaughan, as contemplated by adopted OPA 637. This planning process was initiated by City of Vaughan Council in mid-2005 to ensure a ready supply of marketable employment land while almost half of Vaughan's vacant supply remains constrained pending the determination of the final alignment of the Highway 427 extension.

Regional staff are currently assessing the planning, financial and infrastructure implications associated with OPA 637 and the related ROPA. The conclusions of this assessment, including final recommendations, will form the basis of a future report to Regional Committee and Council. The Region is the Approval Authority for OPA 637 and the required ROPA.

The comments received from the public meeting, including any comments received thereafter, will be considered by Regional staff as part of the planning review and analysis.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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