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YORK REGION – RESIDENTIAL INTENSIFICATION STUDY

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

1. The presentation by Dianne Pomeroy, Senior Planner, Long Range and Strategic Planning, be received; and
2. The recommendations contained in the following report, August 20, 2004, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services, be adopted:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. This report and the York Region – Residential Intensification Study (*Attachment 1*) be received.
2. Regional Staff, in consultation with area municipalities, continue to track intensification and more compact development in our Regional centres and corridors.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Committee and Council of the amount and location of residential intensification in the Region.

3. BACKGROUND

The approved Regional Official Plan targeted “ a minimum of 20% of the Region’s projected population increase to existing built up areas, towns, villages, in keeping with the centres and corridors structure of ...(the)... plan and the redevelopment of underutilized areas and areas in transition.” Ten years after the Plan was approved in 1994 represents an appropriate time period for review of the success of the Plan’s policies in regard to intensification and more compact development.

The York Region Residential Intensification Study (*Attachment 1*) tracks compact or concentrated development patterns across York Region’s more urbanized municipalities occurring in the past thirteen years. The study is a status report to Regional Council on the progress toward achieving the Regional Official Plan’s target of 20% intensification.

The proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment 43 – *Regional Centres and Corridors* proposes that the minimum 20% target be increased to 30%. Further, the recently released Provincial discussion paper *Places to Grow - A Growth Plan for the Greater*

Golden Horseshoe proposes that a minimum of 40% of the expected growth in Regions occur through intensification in existing developed areas.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Intensification/more compact development can take a number of different forms. For the purposes of this Residential Intensification Study, the development tracked as intensification included structures which contain more than two dwelling units (does not include semi detached or single family homes). This study tracks development using Ontario property assessment data (OASYS) and data definitions.

4.1 Regional Official Plan Context

As part of York Region's growth management strategy the Regional Official Plan has set out land use policies for Urban Areas including:

- compact urban form (i.e. higher residential densities) and mixed uses
- a firm Urban Area boundary
- incorporation of the centres and corridors structure of the ROP
- promotion of infill and redevelopment
- provision for efficient and compact communities
- proposes a network of transportation and public works to service anticipated development

Intensification is one tool of the growth management strategy. Focusing growth and infrastructure investment in Regional centres and corridors is a key goal of the Regional Official Plan. The Regional Official Plan policy states:

5.2.4 To target a minimum 20% of the Region's forecasted population increase to existing built-up portions of urban areas, towns and villages in keeping with the centres and corridors structure of this Plan and by redevelopment of under-utilized areas and areas in transition.

Regional initiatives including Vision 2026, the Transportation Master Plan, York Region Rapid Transit Plan and the York Region Centres and Corridors Strategy have reaffirmed the need for and benefits of more compact and concentrated development patterns as a means of supporting investment and improving the overall quality of our communities. The Proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment 43 - *Regional Centres and Corridors* proposes that the minimum 20% target be increased to 30%.

4.2 Provincial Policy Context

The current Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) under the *Planning Act* came into effect on May 22, 1996 and sets out a Provincial policy direction on land use planning matters. Included within this, is a Policy requiring approval authorities to “have regard to” providing opportunities for intensification and redevelopment in areas with sufficient infrastructure.

In Early June 2004, the Province released a series of discussion papers relating to Planning Reform and a draft of a revised Provincial Policy Statement. This draft Policy Statement, besides requiring that approval authority decisions “be consistent” with the PPS, also requires that new development take place in designated growth areas and in a compact form that comprises a mix of uses and densities that allow for the efficient use of land and infrastructure.

Regional Council at its meeting of June 24, 2004 endorsed Clause 9 of Report No 6 of the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee dealing with the Discussion papers on Planning Reform in which Regional staff supported this change to the PPS

In July 2004, the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Renewal released the discussion Paper *Places to Grow - A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. Following on the lead established by the Planning Reform discussion papers, this paper proposes that a minimum of 40% of the expected growth in Regions occur through intensification in existing developed areas. This discussion paper is the subject of an additional report on the Planning and Economic development Committee agenda of September 8, 2004.

4.3 Key Findings and Conclusions

Based on the initial findings of the Residential Intensification Study the percentage of intensification for the 1990-2003 time period for York Region was 16.7%. The Regional Official Plan, adopted in 1994, contains a long term target of 20%. For this period the level of intensification achieved in the Region fell slightly short of the 20% target.

4.3.1 Methodology

In the Residential Intensification Study, intensification was tracked in the 1990 built area of the Region. The “built area” was defined as those lands showing urban development in 1990 using air photos along with lands designated in the approved ROP as Regional Centres. Multi unit development (townhouses, apartments, rows, high rises, etc.) defined and identified in the Ontario Assessment System (OASYS), built or converted between January 1, 1990 and end of 2003 were mapped and units counted. The number of new multi units, added within the 1990 built area during the thirteen year time frame of the study was calculated as a percentage of the total number of all new units constructed in each municipality during the same thirteen year period. The municipal intensification rates do not reflect new compact development construction outside the defined 1990 built area boundaries. Appendix 1 of the attached report shows the significant number of multiple units that were constructed in areas outside the 1990 built area.

4.3.2 Findings

The details of this intensification compared to the amount of growth in the 1990 built area of each municipality are outlined in *Table 1*. Individually the most urbanized municipalities’ intensification levels measured by the construction of multi units in the past thirteen years ranged from 9.7% to 21.8%.

Table 1- York Region Residential Intensification 1990-2003

	*Total new units constructed 1990 - 2003	**number of multi units constructed within 1990 built area	% of multi units constructed within 1990 built area
Aurora	4,508	437	9.7%
Markham	24,719	***3,999	16.2%
Newmarket	8,173	***1,459	17.9%
Richmond Hill	21,145	4,617	21.8%
Vaughan	33,914	4,935	14.5%
Total	92,459	15,444	16.7%

* Based on CMHC housing completion figures for the entire municipality
 ** From Residential Intensification Study
 ***Includes accessory suites in existing dwellings

It was found that intensification and more compact development can occur in most of York Region however the characteristics of some areas make them more suitable for such development. Some of the characteristics of locations most attractive/suitable for intensification include:

- Regional centres and corridors
- Easy access to jobs, entertainment and community services
- Proximity to major roads and transit links
- Existing concentration of mixed-uses and a mix of residential building types
- Existing residential compact development, often in a mixed-use development pattern
- An older population and dwelling stock which makes them subject to redevelopment pressures

Staff analysis of the new development under construction and the compact development occurring indicates that the rate of intensification has been increasing in the Region. Based on the inventory of compact development under construction and assuming that total housing growth over the three year period 2004-2006 will continue at the 3 year historical rate, the Region's rate of intensification would equate to an intensification figure of over 25% across the Region. As communities mature it is expected that the rate of intensification will also increase.

In summary the conclusions from this study are,

1. significant amounts of residential intensification/more compact development has occurred in York Region
2. intensification falls just short of the 20% Regional Official Plan long term target
3. policy changes are being put in place to promote more of this intensification
4. there is a need to monitor intensification on a more regular basis

In York Region, intensification/more compact development should be focused in our Regional centres and along our major corridors to make the best possible use of transit. It is expected that these centres and corridors will intensify as vibrant, mixed-use, high-density activity environments. Intensification/more compact development may also occur in built areas as a result of infilling or redevelopment.

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

Many of the goal areas of Vision 2026 have reaffirmed the need for and benefits of more compact and concentrated development patterns as a means of supporting investment and improving the overall quality of our communities. This study tracks the implementation of more compact development through the Region over the past 13 years.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications associated with this study as it was conducted within the existing Planning and Development Services Department staff complement and within approved budget allocations.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The York Region Residential Intensification Study is the first study of its kind to track intensification or compact development across the Region. It has been reviewed by municipal staff and may help to broaden our understanding of the implementation issues and opportunities in the future.

7. CONCLUSION

Since the Regional Plan was approved in 1994 it has contained a target of 20% of growth through intensification in existing developed areas. The target is long term and the 16.7% intensification figure that York Region has achieved in the past 13 years is a positive accomplishment.

Proposed ROPA 43 - Regional Centres and Corridors and the approved Regional Centres and Corridor Strategy are directed at strengthening the policy context and promoting more compact development.

In order to achieve the 30% residential intensification target envisioned by ROPA 43 or the even more ambitious 40% intensification target envisioned by the Province's Discussion Paper *Places to Grow - A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, more proactive implementation will be required.

It is recommended that the attached York Region – Residential Intensification Study be received for information purposes. It is proposed that staff, in consultation with area

municipalities, continue to monitor in order to track intensification and more compact development in our Regional centres and corridors.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the Attachments has been forwarded to each Member of Regional Council with the September 8, 2004 Planning and Economic Development Committee Agenda. A copy of Attachment 1 is included with this report.)