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NEW COMMUNITIES GUIDELINES UPDATE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated November 12, 2012, from the Executive Director, Corporate and Strategic Planning.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council receive this report for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report updates Council on feedback received from stakeholder consultation and on how the current Regional Official Plan appeal process influences the completion of the New Communities Guidelines.

3. BACKGROUND

The Sustainability Strategy was a driver for determining how to build New Community Areas.

The Sustainability Strategy (2007) recommended that York Region explore opportunities around developing new communities in a sustainable way to accommodate growth. On the basis of this recommendation, Regional staff initiated a phased workplan to identify, refine and incorporate new community areas criteria into the Regional Official Plan (ROP) 2010 update (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1: New Communities Strategy Workplan



In consultation with our stakeholders, it was determined that new community areas would need to be connected, inclusive, healthy, walkable, energy efficient and green. These compact and complete communities would be designed with a priority on people and liveability, offering a variety of housing, employment and transportation choices supported by mixed land-uses and high quality, attractive urban design.

Preparation of New Communities Guidelines is required by the Regional Official Plan

The new community areas criteria have been incorporated as regional policy in the Sustainable Building (Section 5.2) and New Community Areas (Section 5.6) sections of the approved Regional Official Plan 2010. Specifically, the ROP 2010 requires the preparation of *New Communities Guidelines* to assist in the implementation of these policy areas. Table 1 provides an overview of the ROP 2010 policy areas that are addressed in the *New Communities Guidelines*.

Table 1
Content of New Communities Guidelines

Chapters	Policy Areas
Complete Communities	• comprehensive secondary plans • minimum density requirements • affordable housing
Sustainable Transportation	• accessibility • interconnected mobility systems • walkable community design
Open Space and Natural Heritage	• greenlands system planning • integrated open space network • public art
Sustainable Buildings	• high energy efficiency in buildings • water efficiency • improved indoor air quality
Energy Efficiency	• community energy plans
Water Management	• comprehensive master environmental servicing plan • water efficient landscaping
Resource Management and Education	• construction waste management • three-stream waste capabilities (high-rise) • homeowner/building operator education.

The New Communities Guidelines apply to the new community areas in East Gwillimbury, Vaughan and Markham

Three new community areas that have been identified in the Town of East Gwillimbury, City of Vaughan and City of Markham (Regional Official Plan Amendments 1, 2 and 3). The *New Communities Guidelines* address development in these areas.

The *New Communities Guidelines* also addresses development on a region-wide basis where guidance is provided on sustainable buildings policies of the ROP. In addition, the document can be used as a reference tool to promote and encourage more sustainable development.

A draft version of the New Communities Guidelines was endorsed by Council for consultation

In January 2012, a draft version of the *New Communities Guidelines* was endorsed by Council for circulation and consultation. Regional staff received feedback and input on the draft guidelines through focused consultation, working groups, a multi-stakeholder workshop and through written submissions.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

A number of key stakeholders were involved in consultation

To date, formal consultation has occurred with representatives from Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario, Long Range Planners of Ontario, City of Markham, Town of Richmond Hill, City of Vaughan, and Town of Georgina. Substantial written comments were received from BILD, Toronto Region Conservation Authority, Don Regeneration Council and the City of Vaughan.

Consultation with East Gwillimbury occurred on an on-going basis throughout the development of East Gwillimbury's Sustainable Development Evaluation System. Regional staff participated in the development of these guidelines ensuring alignment with regional servicing incentive programs, official plan policy and the draft *New Communities Guidelines*.

York Region staff and BILD representatives collaborated to refine the draft New Communities Guidelines

York Region staff presented the draft *New Communities Guidelines* to the members of the York Region Chapter of BILD. Senior BILD members suggested the formation of a small working group to review and provide input on the draft guidelines. Regional staff partnered with BILD to create the working group. This process allowed for fulsome and

in-depth discussion. Once all revisions to the *New Communities Guidelines* have been completed, York Region staff will again meet with this working group to discuss the changes made.

Comments received informed the New Communities Guidelines Workshop

It became evident that several topic areas would benefit from further consultation in a collaborative setting with a broader range of stakeholders. As a result, York Region staff organized and hosted a New Communities Guidelines Workshop.

The Workshop was held on May 29, 2012 to facilitate consultation on 5 key topics with a wide range of stakeholders

The New Communities Guidelines Workshop was a half day forum held on May 29th, 2012. A total of 60 attendees participated in the workshop. The attendees represented a diversity of sectors including government, environment, community-based organizations and the development industry. Table 2 below provides a breakdown of attendees by industry sector.

Table 2
New Communities Guidelines Workshop by Sector

Sector	Attendees (#)	Attendees (%)
Development Industry	17	28
Local Municipal Government	13	22
Conservation Authority	8	13
Regional Government (Internal Departments)	12	20
Regional Government (Workshop Support)	7	12
Other Agencies	3	5
TOTAL	60	100

The workshop included break-out sessions that focused on 5 key areas:

1. Creating vibrant community core areas
2. Providing mobility options and community connections through walkable community design
3. Implementing sustainable building design through a solar design strategy for communities
4. Integrating the Regional Greenlands System into new community areas
5. Innovative stormwater management

The breakout sessions generated discussion and practical suggestions on how to implement the policies and improve the draft *New Communities Guidelines*. Notes from

the breakout have been circulated to workshop participants and are available upon request.

Themes are emerging as a result of the on-going consultation on the draft New Communities Guidelines

Regional staff has identified a number of key themes that were consistently raised by stakeholders, including:

- Flexibility – successful implementation of the *New Communities Guidelines* will require flexibility in terms of approaches, methods and materials.
- Leadership – York Region should continue to demonstrate leadership in the areas of sustainable development through ongoing commitment to green building practices, research, and support for pilot programs.
- Integration/multi-use/multi-purpose – developing new community areas, we need to find avenues for working together in new and different ways.
- Education – implementation of new communities will require on-going education to ensure that all stakeholders involved in building these communities share a common level of understanding.
- Incentives – the Region has been encouraged to support the development of new communities through additional incentive programs.

Regional staff is currently revising the draft *New Communities Guidelines* to ensure that these themes are addressed.

The majority of policies in the New Communities Guidelines are currently approved, but the Ontario Municipal Board Order is pending

The draft *New Communities Guidelines* were prepared based on policy wording in the approved version of the ROP, 2010. As a result of extensive mediation, the Ontario Municipal Board has approved a significant portion of the ROP. The majority of ROP policies referenced in the *New Communities Guidelines* are currently approved (board order pending) or have been scoped and are now subject to site-specific appeal. Six of the policies referenced remain under Region-wide appeal and are related to the following areas; minimum density requirements, stormwater management, community core areas, parking management, and design of retail uses.

A final version of the New Communities Guidelines will be released once the Region-wide appeals on referenced ROP policies are resolved

The Regional Official Plan policies give effect to the *New Communities Guidelines*. While significant progress has been made in resolving ROP appeals, a number of the policies referenced in the guidelines are not yet in full force and effect. As a result, staff is recommending that the final version of the *New Communities Guidelines* be released once the Region-wide appeals on the referenced policies have been resolved. The draft

New Communities Guidelines will be revised to reflect any policy wording changes that result from resolution of appeals and Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) decisions on the Regional Official Plan.

Next Steps

Regional staff is using feedback on the draft *New Communities Guidelines* to refine and finalize the document. The next steps include:

- Finish revising and redesigning the *New Communities Guidelines* as a result of input received to date – Q4 2012
- Reviewing the proposed changes with key stakeholders including internal Regional departments, local municipalities and the development industry – Q4 2012
- Present the final *New Communities Guidelines* to Committee and Council for approval – Q2 2013
- Prepare the document for publishing in print and web-based forms – Q2 2013

Link to Key Council-approved Plans

Development of the *New Communities Guidelines* is an indicator of success under the Strategic Priority Area of Improve Social and Health Supports areas in the 2011 to 2015 Strategic Plan.

The *New Communities Guidelines* also directly support implementation of the Regional Official Plan, specifically the Sustainable Building and New Community Areas policies.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The completion of the *New Communities Guidelines* will be undertaken within the existing staff complement and 2012 budget allocation.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIP

The local municipalities are critical to ensure the successful implementation of the new community areas. In building the next generation of communities, our local municipal partners will lead the secondary plan process for new community areas in partnership with the development industry. Extensive consultation with stakeholders will assist in the successful implementation of the Regional Official Plan policies.

7. CONCLUSION

The *New Communities Guidelines* will ensure that new community areas in East Gwillimbury, Vaughan and Markham will be state-of-the art and planned as healthy,

inclusive and sustainable. These compact and complete communities will be designed with a priority on people and liveability, offering a variety of housing and transportation choices and supported by mixed land-uses and high quality, attractive urban design.

The guidelines will assist in the implementation of the Sustainable Buildings and New Community Areas policies of the ROP. The guidelines are intended to be a helpful tool that provide detailed explanations and identify a range of strategies that can be employed to successfully implement these policies.

The on-going consultation will result in an enhanced final document that is supported by both the local municipality and development industry. This approach will ensure that development within new community areas will implement the policy direction of the Regional Official Plan.

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Bottomley, Manager Growth Management at 905 830-4444, Ext. 1530 or Valerie Shuttleworth, Director Long Range Planning at Ext. 1525.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.