

York Region – Residential Intensification Study

INTRODUCTION:

York Region, with a June 30 2004 population of 873,000 people, has grown at an average rate of approximately 40,000 new people a year for the past 5 years. This growth rate is projected to level off somewhat but will continue to be high as the Region is anticipated to reach 1.091 million by 2011.

The Region recorded the 5th highest number of residential building permits issued in Canada in the past year, issuing over 12,500 permits. Much of the construction in the Region has been “Greenfield” development as raw land was readily available and easier to develop than other alternatives. However, with the demographics of York Region’s population and the maturing of our communities, some level of infill, more compact development and intensification has begun to occur.

These levels will increase as intensification becomes more politically and economically feasible (due in part to diminishing developable land and planning policies). The Provincial Government’s recent release to the Provincial Policy Statement, and *Places to Grow - A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, and the Region’s adoption of the Cores and Corridors Strategy and ongoing work on the Regional Official Plan Amendment 43 -*Regional Centres and Corridors* all demonstrate a commitment by various levels of government to support more compact forms of development.

The 1994 Regional Official Plan aimed to “target 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 by redevelopment of underutilized areas and areas in transition.” (Policy 5.2.4).

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 residential intensification and more compact development.

PURPOSE:

This study is a status report to Regional Council on the progress toward achieving the Regional Official Plan’s long term target of 20% intensification. The study looks at growth within York Region’s centres and corridors as well as older developed areas to review the urban intensification that has occurred there.

In order to do this the report tracks residential intensification levels and maps the multi unit development (i.e. rows, apartments, condominiums) occurring in the past thirteen years across York Region's more urbanized areas (the inverted "T" of York Region - Newmarket, Aurora, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Markham).

FINDINGS:

Urban intensification has been defined as the creation of higher densities in urban areas through more compact development by infilling, redevelopment and conversions. Intensification is seen as a method of countering the effects of urban sprawl and helping make Smart Growth a reality. For York Region purposes, intensification can better be defined as the creation of more compact development within the developed areas of existing urban boundaries.

In this study, residential intensification was tracked in the built area of the Region as of 1990. 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. Individually the 5 most urban municipalities' intensification levels, measured by the construction of multi units in the past thirteen years, ranged from 9.7% to 21.8%.

The details of this residential intensification compared to the amount of growth in the 1990 built area of each of the municipalities are outlined in *Table 1*. Based on the initial findings of the 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 time period, the level of intensification achieved in the Region fell slightly short of the 20% target.

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			

The number of additional new multi units under construction is also of interest. The multi units outside the 1990 built area are outlined on *Table 2* as well as the new development under construction.

Table 2 –Multi Unit Development outside 1990 Built area or New Compact Development

	Multi units constructed outside 1990 built area (1990-2003)	New compact development (stars on the maps)*
		Proposed # units
Aurora	1,365	372
Markham	2,296	1,654
Newmarket	2,159	1,463
Richmond Hill	2,342	1,709
Vaughan	4,635	3,867
total	12,797	9,065

*New compact development (multi units currently under construction or being marketed)

The new compact development (multi units currently under construction or being marketed) and the compact development occurring inside the Regional Official Plan built area (Maps 1- 5) indicate that the rate of intensification has been increasing in the Region. The 15,444 multi units (16.7% intensification) in the 1990 built area of the Region were constructed during the thirteen year study period. The new compact development inventory of multi units (9,065) represents an approximate supply for the three year period 2004-2006. Assuming that total housing growth over the next 3 years will continue at the 3 year historical average (11,500 units per year), the 9,065 multi unit supply would equate to an intensification figure of over 25% across the Region.

Maps 1- 5 illustrate the location of intensification projects constructed over the period 1990 -2003 in each of the area municipalities (Aurora, Newmarket, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Markham) in York Region. Compact development that has occurred during the same time period but outside the 1990 built area, within the ROP urban boundary of 1994 of each municipality is also shown. The new compact development (multi units currently under construction or being marketed) is also shown as stars on Maps 1-5.

Map 6 illustrates the location of new multi unit construction across the most urbanized municipalities of the Region. Many of these new developments are within the designated Regional centres and along corridors. Map 6 demonstrates what is being achieved across the Region. The new developments continue to support the Region's intensification.

ANALYSIS:

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 with an accessory suite due to the difficulty in finding, locating and/or accurately determining the date of such conversions - except in Newmarket). This study tracked development units using the Ontario property assessment data (OASYS) and data definitions:

- Freehold townhouse/rowhouse
- Residential property with three, four, five or six self-contained units
- Multi-residence, more than six self-contained units; does not include row housing
- Row housing, with three to six units or seven or more units under one title
- Residential condominium including condominium conversion still rented with seven or more units in the condominium plan
- Co-operative housing – non-equity
- Retail with residential above or behind

The study found that intensification 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 or 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

Regional Official Plan policy: As part of York Region's growth management strategy the Regional Official Plan has set out land use policy 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 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. Proposed Regional Official Plan Amendment 43 - *Regional Centres and Corridors* anticipates that the minimum 20% target will be increased to 30%.

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. Brownfields are not specifically recognized and no intensification targets are provided.

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.

Following on the lead established by the Planning Reform discussion papers, 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.

CONCLUSIONS:

Policies are currently being strengthened, through such work as the Regional Centres and Corridor Strategy and ROPA 43, to promote more compact development. The ROP 20% target is long term and the 16.7% intensification figure that York Region has achieved in the past 13 years is a positive accomplishment.

In summary the conclusions from this study are,

1. significant amounts of 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.

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

Appendix 1: Summary Statistics from OASYS Database (1990 – 2003)

	Total multi units	Inside 1990 boundary	Outside 1990 boundary
Aurora Summary			
309 Freehold Townhouse	1,041	26	1,015
333 Res. Prop. 3 Units	12	12	0
334 Res Prop. 4 units	0	0	0
335 Res. Prop. 5 units	0	0	0
336 Res. Prop. 6 units	6	6	0
340 Res. Prop. >6 units	88	7	81
352 Row House 7+ units on title	0	0	0
370 Res. Condo.	471	270	201
374 Cooperative Housing	68	0	68
471 Retail with residential above or behind	1	1	0
626 Retirement Home	115	115	0
TOTAL Aurora multis	1,802	437	1,365

	Total multi units	Inside 1990 boundary	Outside 1990 boundary
Markham Summary			
309 Freehold Townhouse	2,317	907	1,410
333 Res. Prop. 3 Units	0	0	0
334 Res Prop. 4 units	0	0	0
335 Res. Prop. 5 units	0	0	0
336 Res. Prop. 6 units	0	0	0
340 Res. Prop. >6 units	340	340	0
352 Row House 7+ units on title	313	26	287
370 Res. Condo.	2,569	2,042	527
374 Cooperative Housing	91	91	0
471 retail with residential above or behind	18	18	0
626 Retirement Home	147	75	72
Accessory suites	500	500	--
TOTAL Markham multis	6,295	3,999	2,296

	Total multi units	Inside 1990 built area boundary	Outside 1990 boundary
Newmarket Summary			
309 Freehold Townhouse	757	0	757
333 Res. Prop. 3 Units	21	21	0
334 Res Prop. 4 units	16	16	0
335 Res. Prop. 5 units	82	82	0
336 Res. Prop. 6 units	6	6	0
340 Res. Prop. >6 units	538	280	360
352 Row House 7+ units on title	368	81	287
370 Res. Condo.	854	157	697
374 Cooperative Housing	218	159	59
626 Retirement Home	215	215	0
Accessory suites	542	442	100
TOTAL Newmarket multis	3,618	1,459	1,936

Richmond Hill Summary	Total multi units	Inside 1990 boundary	Outside 1990 boundary
309 Freehold Townhouse	3,253	1,284	1,969
333 Res. Prop. 3 Units	51	51	0
334 Res Prop. 4 units	0	0	0
335 Res. Prop. 5 units	5	5	0
336 Res. Prop. 6 units	0	0	0
340 Res. Prop. >6 units	591	574	17
352 Row House 7+ units on title	424	150	274
370 Res. Condo.	2,114	2,018	82
374 Cooperative Housing	479	479	0
471 retail with residential above or behind			
626 Retirement Home	56	56	0
TOTAL Richmond Hill multis	6,973	4,617	2,342

Vaughan Summary	Total multi units	Inside 1990 boundary	Outside 1990 boundary
309 Freehold Townhouse	4,016	1,219	2,797
333 Res. Prop. 3 Units	0	0	0
334 Res Prop. 4 units	4	4	0
335 Res. Prop. 5 units	0	0	0
336 Res. Prop. 6 units	6	6	0
340 Res. Prop. >6 units	178	157	21
352 Row House 7+ units on title	0	0	0
370 Res. Condo.	5,164	3,471	1,693
374 Cooperative Housing	14	14	0
626 Retirement Home	188	64	124
TOTAL Vaughan multis	9,570	4,935	4,635

\\Ykr-fs1\pl_lrsp\$\Development\D00 - Development General\Intensification Study\.....
G:\Policy\PO7 - Planning Committee\2004\September 2004\.....Residential_Intensification_Study_Attachment_3.DOC