

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE FEBRUARY 6, 2006**

**"PLACES TO GROW, BETTER CHOICES. BRIGHTER FUTURE. – PROPOSED GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE" ONTARIO MINISTRY OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL – NOVEMBER 2005**

**Recommendation**

The Commissioner of Planning recommends:

1. THAT Committee of the Whole endorse the recommendations and content of this report; and,
2. THAT the City of Vaughan request that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Minister Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Region of York address these recommendations and the matters upon which they are based as outlined in this report respecting, "Places to Grow - Better Choices. Brighter Future. – Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe" released November 24, 2005; and,
3. THAT the City of Vaughan advise the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal that it supports the Region of York in its position that the aggressive intensification required by the Proposed Growth Plan be seen as targets that cannot be achieved without: significant provincial commitment to infrastructure investment; construction approval for critical infrastructure; new planning and financial tools; and, Provincial commitment to long-term capital planning and actual funding commitments; and,
4. THAT the City of Vaughan strongly request that the Province take every possible measure to expedite and complete the current Highway 427 EA as soon as possible; and,
5. THAT The City of Vaughan strongly request that the Province take every possible measure to expedite and complete the East-West "Future Goods Movement" EA as soon as possible and, in the interim period, take necessary steps to protect land for key links; and,
6. THAT York Region be requested to include the City of Vaughan as part of the Sub-Area Assessment process once undertaken by Public Infrastructure Renewal and other Provincial Ministries and the Region; and,
7. THAT The City of Vaughan should strongly request that the Province make funding support for the Yonge Street and Highway Seven Transitways and the extension of the Spadina Subway from Downsview Station to Highway Seven in the Vaughan Corporate Centre a first priority as part of the Proposed Growth Plan's, "Moving People" policies; and,
8. THAT the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal be requested to clarify whether completed Sub-Area Assessments will be required prior to municipalities bringing their Official Plans into conformity with the approved Growth Plan; and,
9. THAT the province be requested to provide supportive tools for good urban design, heritage conservation and environmental practices in the form of regulatory, fiscal and educational direction within the "Community Infrastructure" and "Protecting What is Valuable" sections of the Proposed Growth Plan.

**Economic Impact**

There will be significant economic impact on the City of Vaughan to bring official plan documents into conformity with an approved Growth Plan within three (3) years of its approval, the costs of

which cannot be determined at this time. However, this work can be accommodated within a comprehensive official plan review/consolidation that should take place commencing in 2007.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to:

1. Outline the main points from "Places to Grow - Better Choices. Brighter Future. – Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), released by the Provincial Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal on November 24, 2005;
2. Provide comments and advice to Committee of the Whole and Council with respect to the Proposed Growth Plan;
3. Provide recommendations to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Region of York for consideration by Committee and Council.

### **Background – Analysis and Options**

In June of 2004 the Ontario Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal released a Discussion Paper entitled, "Places to Grow - Better Choices. Brighter Future. – A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe". On October 13, 2004 Staff reported to the Committee of the Whole Working Session with a number of conclusions on the "Places to Grow" Growth Plan Discussion Paper document. The Committee comments from that meeting formed the basis for the recommendations to the October 25, 2004 meeting of Council. Council's direction was subsequently sent to the Ministers of Public Infrastructure Renewal and Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Region of York, for their consideration (Attachment 1).

On February 16, 2005 the Ontario Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal released, "Places to Grow - Better Choices. Brighter Future. – Draft Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe" (i.e. the first draft) prepared by the Ministry following receiving input on the 2004 Discussion Paper. The ministry requested that municipalities provide their comments by April 18, 2005.

On April 4, 2005, Committee of the Whole considered a Staff Report (Report No. 19, Item 51) respecting the "Places to Grow - Better Choices. Brighter Future. – Draft Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe", February 2005. Further to the recommendations of Committee, on April 11, 2005, Council (Attachment 2) made the following recommendations:

- 1 "THAT the City of Vaughan advise the Ministers of Public Infrastructure Renewal and Municipal Affairs and Housing that the recently released, "Places to Grow – Better Choices. Brighter Future. – Draft Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe" contains proposed policies that infringe upon long standing areas of local jurisdiction in land use planning; and,
- 2 THAT the respective Ministers be advised that in consideration of the above, the City of Vaughan strongly objects to those portions of the Draft Growth Plan that enter into established areas of local planning interest; and,
- 3 THAT, given the magnitude and importance of the Draft Growth Plan, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, The Honourable David Caplan, be advised that the Council of the City of Vaughan requests a commenting extension of six (6) months from April 18, 2005 to permit a detailed analysis of the proposed Draft Growth Plan, its implementation and required infrastructure; and,

Should an extension not be granted, the following recommendations be endorsed in addition to those setout in the Committee of the Whole Report No. 19, Item 51:

- a) The province be advised that the City of Vaughan cannot support Provincial Growth Forecasts as proposed in the Draft Growth Plan because of the disconnect between the proposed Provincial Plans and the lack of Provincial commitment to long term infrastructure funding;
- b) The contents of the Sub-Area Growth Strategies should be limited to high level issues, including Provincial infrastructure, and not intrude into local planning decisions, such as the assignment of population on local municipal level and assignment of intensification locations;
- c) The Province be requested to hold a Growth Summit and invite the regions, municipalities and other stakeholders to participate; and,

By approving that this report be forwarded to AMO and all municipalities with a population of 100,000 and over.

- 4 THAT the Region of York be requested to withhold any comments to the province on the "Places to Grow – Better Choices. Brighter Future. – Draft Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe" until such time as the City of Vaughan, and other local municipalities in York Region have had an opportunity to jointly discuss and determine their respective responses to the "Draft Plan" document.
- 5 THAT the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Regional Municipality of York be advised of the above concerns of the City of Vaughan and be requested to provide sufficient additional time for municipalities to respond with a proper response."

(Note: The third clause replaced clause 3 of the Staff recommendations.)

Since the province granted no extension for comments, these recommendations stand as the comments from the City of Vaughan on the Growth Plan process to date.

On November 24, 2005, the provincial Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal released a second (final) draft titled, "Places to Grow - Better Choices. Brighter Future. – Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe". The Proposed Growth Plan, once approved, will become provincial policy. It derives its authority and legislative framework from the *Places to Grow Act, 2005*, given Royal Assent on June 13, 2005. (It will come into effect through an Order in Council made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council under that Act.) Section 14 of the Act states that official plans and planning decisions made by municipalities, the Province and other authorities will conform to the Growth Plan prepared under the Act

It should be noted that the Proposed Growth Plan is to be read together with other Provincial initiatives/plans. These include the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) and the Greenbelt Protection Act and Greenbelt Plan as well as the revised Provincial Policy Statement (released on March 2, 2005). Once in place, the Growth Plan will be subject to a review every ten (10) years.

Also, the government gave first reading to Bill 51, an Act to Amend the Planning Act and the Conservation Land Act (and some other related amendments to other Acts). This Act is intended to provide further support to the Growth Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement. Consideration of Bill 51 is contained in a separate Staff Report to today's Committee of the Whole.

It is this second, and final draft, of the "Growth Plan" (referred to as the "Proposed Growth Plan" in the balance of this report and appended as Attachment 3) is the subject of this Staff Report.

## Analysis

The second iteration of the Proposed Growth Plan contains a somewhat revised vision and strategy for managing growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe to the year 2031 from that contained in the initial "Draft Growth Plan".

The Proposed Growth Plan is structured into four main sections followed by a Definitions Section and Six (6) Schedules (primarily maps), and Appendices. The main sections are:

- Where and How to Grow;
- Infrastructure to Support Growth;
- Protecting What is Valuable; and,
- Implementation and Interpretation.

These sections were also contained in the February 2005 Draft Growth Plan. Notably, the earlier section on "Sub-Area Growth Strategies" has been removed and the term, "Sub-Area Assessments" has been introduced to the section on Implementation and Interpretation. Sub-Area Assessments will be undertaken by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal and other provincial ministries in consultation with upper- and single-tier municipalities. The City of Vaughan is not a single-tier municipality and will rely on York Region to include the City in the Sub-Area Assessment process.

The appearance of provincial involvement in local decision-making found in the earlier Draft Growth Plan is not reflected in the new Proposed Growth Plan document. This is largely because the "Sub-Area Growth Strategies" approach has been replaced with "Sub-Area Assessments" whereby upper-tier municipalities will work with the province to address broad planning and infrastructure issues. The City will need to be involved through consultation with York Region during this process.

## Where and How to Grow

### Intensification

The Proposed Growth Plan continues to require intensification in built up areas, urban growth centres (e.g. the Vaughan Corporate Centre), intensification corridors (e.g. Highway Seven, Yonge Street), and at major transit stations (e.g. Steeles Avenue West, east of Jane Street), as well as in brownfield and greyfield sites. Such areas can support transit and infrastructure investment to support more intense development/growth.

The Plan requires that, by 2015, 40% minimum density for residential development occur within the defined built up area. Specifically, Section 2.2.3 states:

"1. By the year 2015 and for each year thereafter, a minimum of 40 per cent of all residential development occurring annually within each upper- and single tier municipality will be within the *built up area*."

Although this number applies to the upper tier municipality, it will need to be addressed in some way at the local level. The City is currently completing studies that will establish policies for high density in specific locations (along Highway Seven, on Steeles Avenue West, between Keele Street and Jane Street). This is in addition to existing policies for the Vaughan Corporate Centre. The two District Centres at Vellore and Carrville will also have higher densities in specific areas. Combined, these initiatives may achieve the 40% minimum density requirement of the Proposed Growth Plan. However, because development responds to market forces, making 40% a minimum density requirement may not be achievable by policy changes alone. For this reason, staff believes that the 40% minimum density requirement should be restated as a target.

Further to this, it is instructive to note that, in its January 11, 2006 Report to Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee, York Region staff indicated, that York Region cannot implement the aggressive growth and intensification targets in the Proposed Growth Plan unless there is provincial commitment to:

- Significant infrastructure investment
- Construction approval for critical infrastructure
- New planning and financial tools directed at urban areas
- Commitments to long-term Provincial capital planning

Recommendation: The City of Vaughan should advise the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal that it supports the Region of York in its position that the aggressive intensification required by the Proposed Growth Plan should be seen as targets that cannot be achieved without: significant provincial commitment to infrastructure investment; construction approval for critical infrastructure; new planning and financial tools; and, Provincial commitment to long-term capital planning.

The Vaughan Corporate Centre, one of the "Urban Growth Centres", is required to achieve a minimum gross density of 200 residential and jobs, combined, per hectare, by 2031. The Corporate Centre plan is already on target to achieve this.

Both Highway Seven and Yonge Street, identified as intensification corridors, are currently the subject of planning studies that will result in policies that will target transit-supportive development densities as put forward in the Proposed Growth Plan.

Major office and institutional uses will also be located in the growth centres and within intensification corridors. This is also in keeping with the City's current planning objectives.

With respect to the expansion of urban boundaries, Public Infrastructure Renewal, in consultation with York Region, will determine the need for, and maximum amount of, additional greenfield area for future development. Urban boundary expansion will only be permitted through a comprehensive review subject to the criteria in the Growth Plan. The city will take this into consideration when undertaking a comprehensive official plan review/consolidation that should take place commencing in 2007.

### **Infrastructure to Support Growth**

Infrastructure is a key component of the Proposed Growth Plan. This section commits Public Infrastructure Renewal to working with other ministries and other public sector partners, such as area municipalities, to identify strategic infrastructure requirements and to develop multi-year infrastructure plans through Sub-Area Assessments. One area that needs immediate attention is to expedite the completion of the Highway 427 Environmental Assessment (EA).

Recommendation: The City of Vaughan should strongly request that the Province take every possible measure to expedite and complete the current Highway 427 EA as soon as possible.

Another is the East-West Future Goods Movement Corridor (formerly called an "Economic Corridor) shown on Schedule 2, "Places to Grow Concept" map. This corridor may be located south of the Greenbelt along the City's northern boundary and may link with an extended Highway 427 and/or Highway 400. The Province has indicated that the Environmental Assessment for this corridor could take up to ten years to complete. During such a long process many corridor options will likely be closed due to the progression of development. The Province should expedite the Environmental Assessment for this corridor and, in the interim period, take necessary steps to protect land availability for identifiable key links.

Recommendation: The City of Vaughan should strongly request that the Province take every possible measure to expedite and complete the East-West “Future Goods Movement” EA as soon as possible and, in the interim period, take necessary steps to protect land for key links.

Transit is identified as the first priority for this planning and investment. The relationship between transit investment and supportive land use is central to this. A key area for transit is Provincial support for higher order transit infrastructure. This includes the Yonge Street and Highway Seven Transitways and the extension of the Toronto Transit Commission’s Spadina Subway from Downsview Station to York University and the Vaughan Corporate Centre. Proposed Growth Plan Map 5, “Moving People” shows these initiatives as they apply to Vaughan. Section 3.2.3 – 1 of the Proposed Growth Plan states that, “Public transit will be the first priority for transportation infrastructure planning and major transportation investments.” The City of Vaughan should strongly request that the Province make funding support for the Yonge Street and Highway Seven Transitways and the extension of the Spadina Subway from Downsview Station to Highway Seven in the Vaughan Corporate Centre a first priority as part of the Proposed Growth Plan’s, “Moving People” policies.

Recommendation: The City of Vaughan should strongly request that the Province make funding support for the Yonge Street and Highway Seven Transitways and the extension of the Spadina Subway from Downsview Station to Highway Seven in the Vaughan Corporate Centre a first priority as part of the Proposed Growth Plan’s, “Moving People” policies.

This section also identifies water and wastewater planning. Public Infrastructure Renewal, through the sub-area assessments in consultation with upper the tier municipalities, will analyze capacity and service requirements to accommodate growth forecasts.

Community infrastructure has also been added to this section. It is defined as land, buildings or structures that support the quality of life by providing public services for health, education, recreation and affordable housing (among others). Services planning is encouraged, including funding and service delivery sectors to develop community infrastructure strategies to co-ordinate land use infrastructure and investment.

One aspect of the delivery of communities and their constituent parts is the quality of urban design, heritage conservation and environmental practices. The Proposed Growth Plan presents an opportunity to establish provincial policy to strengthen the quality of community design within the planning process. One important aspect of this would be for the province to provide supportive tools for this in the form of regulatory, fiscal and educational direction within the community infrastructure section of the Proposed Growth Plan

Regions will be required, in consultation with area municipalities and other stakeholders, to develop a Housing Strategy.

The Housing Strategy is to set out a plan, including Official Plan policies, to meet the community’s needs, including needs for affordable rental and home ownership, and the planning and development of a range of housing types and densities to achieve the Growth Plan intensification and density targets.

Much of the infrastructure requirements addressed in this section are the responsibility of York Region. Regional Council has consistently identified critical York Region infrastructure projects that are required to support the growth forecasts and identified Provincial responsibility for:

- Preparation and funding of a long term Provincial capital infrastructure program
- Provision of funding for a transit, affordable housing and human services on a long term sustained basis
- Formulation of a streamlined planning and environmental approval process.

## **Protecting What is Valuable**

The Proposed Growth Plan recognizes that the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) and the Greenbelt Protection Act (February 24, 2005) and the Greenbelt Plan, finalized on February 28, 2005 (but effective retroactively to December 16, 2004). Both these plans have been incorporated into the City's planning structure.

Outside of these plans the Proposed Growth Plan will identify a natural system for the Greater Golden Horseshoe through the sub-area assessments. This system will comprise natural heritage features and areas and sensitive surface and groundwater features. Prime agricultural and specialty croplands will also be identified.

In this section, the Proposed Growth Plan also advocates a "Culture of Conservation" that includes water conservation, recycling, energy conservation alternative energy generation and distribution, air quality improvements, integrated waste management systems and cultural heritage conservation. The relationship of this "policy direction" to existing local and regional initiatives is to be determined.

*Recommendation:* The province should provide supportive tools for good urban design, heritage conservation and environmental practices in the form of regulatory, fiscal and educational direction within the community infrastructure section of the Proposed Growth Plan.

## **Implementation and Interpretation**

The Proposed Growth Plan will be implemented through the amendment of regional Official Plans and area municipalities' conformity to regional plans. Under the Proposed Growth Plan, Sub-Area Assessments will provide greater detail of implementation requirements and tools.

### Sub-Area Assessments

The previous February 2005 Draft Growth Plan referred to "Sub-Area Growth Strategies", now renamed "Sub-Area Assessments". The main focus of the Sub-Area Assessments will be:

- Regional economic assessment to guide planning for employment and identify Provincial significant employment areas and economic clusters;
- Transit and transportation sub area assessment to focus on transportation infrastructure planning and investment;
- Water and Sewer capacity to service the projected growth forecasts;
- Natural Heritage system identification and protection; and,
- Prime agricultural and specialty crop area protection.

Sub-Area Assessments are to be carried out by Public Infrastructure Renewal and other ministries, in consultation with the regions. Sub-Area Assessments will provide further refinement to the Growth Plan's policies and inform implementation strategies at a smaller scale than the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The ministry intends that the completion of the Sub-Area Assessments will be carried out within eighteen (18) months from the approval of the Proposed Growth Plan. The City of Vaughan is not a direct participant in the preparation of the Sub-Area Assessments, but must rely on York Region to consult with the City during the process.

Recommendation: York Region should be requested to formally include the City of Vaughan within the development process for the Sub-Area Assessment covering York Region.

The Proposed Growth Plan does not indicate whether or not the Sub-Area Assessment needs to be completed prior to municipalities bringing their Official Plans into conformity with the approved Growth Plan. This should be clarified in the final Growth Plan.

Recommendation: The ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal should be requested to clarify whether completed Sub-Area Assessments will be required prior to municipalities bringing their Official Plans into conformity with the approved Growth Plan.

### **Conformity With the Proposed Growth Plan**

York region, in consultation with the area municipalities, has the main responsibility to carry out the studies and work to bring their plans into conformity with the Proposed Growth Plan. This represents a significant amount of work and expense that will not be borne by the Province. The "Places to Grow Act" requires that this work be completed and plan amendments adopted within three (3) years of the approval of the Proposed Growth Plan. The existing planning approvals process remains in effect, however, and possible OMB applications contesting plan changes could significantly affect this timetable.

A number of studies will be necessary to bring the City's plans into conformity with an approved Growth Plan. These include, but may not be limited to:

- Official plan policies/strategies respecting intensification targets;
- Transit-associated development density targets;
- Policies and strategies for minimum land requirements, including greenfields, to meet development growth forecasts (e.g. urban boundary expansion);
- Establish minimum housing targets, including affordable housing; and,
- Data, analysis and review, with York Region, respecting such studies.

Staff is unable to determine the cost of carrying out such work at this time although it will be substantial. Such work could be accommodated as part of a comprehensive official plan review/consolidation that could take place commencing in 2007.

### **Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007**

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council.

### **Conclusion**

Should Council concur, the recommendation of this report should be adopted and forwarded to the Ministers of Public Infrastructure Renewal and Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the Region of York for their consideration.

### **Attachments**

1. October 13, 2004 Staff Report to Committee of the Whole (Working Session Report No. 72), and October 25, 2004 Council Direction on "Places to Grow Discussion Paper, June 2004" – **Members of Council ONLY**
2. April 11, 2005 Staff Report to Committee of the Whole (Item 51, Report No. 19), adopted by Council, as amended, April 11, 2005 – **Members of Council ONLY**
3. "Places to Grow - Better Choices. Brighter Future – Proposed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe" Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, November 2005 – **Members of Council ONLY**



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Respectfully submitted,

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