

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 26, 2010

Item 1, Report No. 1, of the Economic Development Committee, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on January 26, 2010.

1 ONTARIO GREEN BUILDING RESOURCE CENTRE (OGBRC)

The Economic Development Committee recommends approval of the recommendation contained in the following report of the Director of Economic Development, dated January 18, 2010:

Recommendation

The Director of Economic Development, in consultation with the City Manager, recommends:

1. That this report be received;
2. That Staff form an internal working group with representation from Economic Development and other relevant City Departments to define the requirements for locating the Centre in Vaughan and further explore a possible partnership with OGBRC.
3. The findings of the working group be brought back to a future meeting of the Economic Development Committee for review.

Contribution to Sustainability

Green Directions Vaughan Goal 4.3 indicates the City must “encourage the establishment of green businesses and sustainable practices” and Goal 5.1 indicates the City has a responsibility “to share sustainable best practices and ideas”.

Economic Impact

There is no additional economic impact resulting from the receipt of this report.

Communications Plan

Not applicable at this time.

Purpose

To provide background on an emerging project, the OGBRC; and to seek approval to explore a partnership between the City of Vaughan and the OGBRC with the ultimate goal of establishing the Centre and locating it in Vaughan.

Background - Analysis and Options

In 2008, the Province of Ontario funded a report (executed by Blue Wilderness Management Group) which identified the need for a green building manufacturing centre in the Greater Toronto Area. The report, titled “Envisioning Green Building Manufacturing Centre”, forms Attachment 1 of this report.

The Ontario Green Building Resource Centre (OGBRC) is envisioned as a resource for both connecting professionals to innovative, environmentally-friendly building products and assisting new entrepreneurs in green building product sector successfully move their products to the market. Broadly, the goal of the OGBRC would be to provide a facility for professionals (architects, interior designers, manufacturers, builders, the trades, etc.) to learn about and develop new ideas and technologies in the green building products, including the commercial and industrial sectors.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 26, 2010

Item 1, Economic Report No. 1 – Page 2

A second stage of this project involves developing a green product verification system. While a variety of international rating systems already exist, the challenge for both the public and the builder community is identifying which are reliable, robust sources of information, identifying truly best practices and which practices barely exceed the standard. Additionally, many of these rating systems focus only on one or two aspects of a materials' or products' impact, such as recycled content or indoor air quality. There is a need to develop a more comprehensive, independent verification system specifically related to building products which will be an aspect of the OGBRC's mandate.

An incorporated non-profit organization, the OGBRC, was formed to advance the project beyond the concept stage. The project is currently managed by Julie Scarcella of Blue Wilderness and overseen by the OGBRC board of directors with representatives from the public, private and non-profit sectors in the green building field. Partnerships are currently being formalized with the Province of Ontario, academic institutions, the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, the private sector and in discussion with the trade unions and other stakeholders.

Relationship to Economic Development & Sustainability

In August 2009, the Chair of the Economic Development Committee and staff from the Economic Development Department received a presentation on the OGBRC. A copy of the presentation forms Attachment 2 of this report.

The introduction of this initiative is timely given the current Employment Sector Strategy (ESS) Study being undertaken by the City of Vaughan. The ESS study specifically identifies environmental and green products, within the building products cluster as potential growth sector for the City. Additionally, this initiative also supports the objectives of the City's new Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan, Green Directions Vaughan.

Vaughan is particularly well suited for a project such as the Green Building Resource Centre in terms of logistics, demographics, skills and future growth:

- Easy access to transportation, including major highways, the airport and two future subways lines would make the Centre very accessible to a broad market.
- The City is home to an active and engaged building community, including trade schools, developers, builders, construction trades and a skilled labour force.
- Vaughan has a thriving, entrepreneurial small business community and an established history in manufacturing building and related products.
- The Kortright Centre located in Vaughan is home to the World Green Building Council and the Archetype Demonstration Homes.
- Intensification goals will spur the development of new products geared towards higher density and more energy efficient building forms.
- York Region is anticipating a 40% region-wide intensification, with 29% of the total residential and 34% of the total employment growth allocated to Vaughan.

For these reasons, in September 2009, Economic Development staff submitted a letter to the OGBRC board of directors (formerly the steering committee) indicating the City's interest in the Centre and facilitating its development in Vaughan.

In response to the Department's letter, the OGBRC board proposed the formation of a partnership with Vaughan, through Economic Development, to collaborate in developing the Centre. Given OGBRC's reciprocal interest, the proposed next step would be to form a staff working group to collaborate with OGBRC to explore this partnership further and develop a partnership agreement. This agreement will establish the parameters and nature of the partnership, respective responsibilities, and deliverables as well as ensuring the City's interests are protected. The draft partnership agreement will be brought to a future Economic Development Committee for comment and revisions.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 26, 2010

Item 1, Economic Report No. 1 – Page 3

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Regional Implications

The receipt of this report has no direct regional implications, however, the scope of the OGBRC will be regional in nature and as such, programs, resources and assistance will be available to builders, architects, product manufacturers, etc. across the region and the GTA. The York Region Economic Development Strategy identifies the importance of creating an environment for sharing and collaboration as a necessity for driving innovation in a knowledge-based economy. The development of the OGBRC in Vaughan broadly supports both the York Region Economic Development Strategy, as well as the York Region Sustainability Strategy.

Conclusion

While still in the feasibility and development stage, the OGBRC represents an opportunity for Vaughan to become an innovation centre in green building technologies. The OGBRC will create research and development synergies in the green building sector as well as promote local economic development (by connecting small scale manufacturers and entrepreneurs to the market) and job creation (through education and retraining programs). The Centre will also draw visitors to Vaughan from not only across the region and country but also internationally, as the green building industry grows.

Successful examples exist both in Canada (Vancouver) and internationally, where these centres share best practices and advance new technologies. The Ontario Green Building Resource Centre will be the first of its kind in the GTA and in Ontario (though a Sustainable Energy Centre currently exists in Sudbury).

The City of Vaughan has an unique opportunity to be involved in the preliminary stages of this project. Involvement at this stage, also improves the likelihood of the Centre's establishment in Vaughan. To proceed with this project, it is proposed that a staff working group be formed, the partnership be further explored and that a partnership agreement be developed with OGBRC to establish the parameters of a partnership and ensuring the City's goals are met and interests are protected.

Attachments

1. Envisioning Green Building Manufacturing Centre Report, 2008
2. For a Sustainable Future, PowerPoint Presentation, received August 24, 2009
3. Ontario Green Building Resource Centre Timeline

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(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 26, 2010

Item 2, Report No. 1, of the Economic Development Committee, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on January 26, 2010.



2

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY RFP

The Economic Development Committee recommends that the verbal report of the Director of Economic Development, be received.