

SUBJECT: Information Report: Implications of the October 21, 2021 Regional Council Decision regarding a Preferred Growth Scenario to 2051 and Opportunity for Further Input

PREPARED BY: Marg Wouters, RPP, MCIP, Senior Manager, Policy and Research (ext 2909)

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the report entitled “Information Report: Implications of the October 21, 2021 Regional Council Decision regarding a Preferred Growth Scenario to 2051 and Opportunity for Further Input” dated December 6, 2021 be received;
- 2) And further that staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

As requested by Markham Council on October 26, 2021, this report provides an overview of the implications for Markham of the Regional Council decision on October 21, 2021 to base the 2051 growth forecast and lands needs assessment on a Phased 50-55% Region-wide intensification rate. The report also outlines the opportunity to provide further Markham Council input through commenting on the recently released Draft Regional Official Plan, and identifies next steps in confirming Markham’s intensification target.

BACKGROUND:

In March 2021, York Region released a Proposed Growth Forecast to 2051 for public consultation prior to endorsement by Regional Council. The forecast is being undertaken as part of the Region’s Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) and Regional Official Plan update in conformity with the Growth Plan. The proposed forecast was based on a Region-wide intensification target of 50% and assumed all of Markham’s whitebelt lands would be needed to accommodate growth to 2051. Under this scenario, Markham’s intensification rate was assumed to be 52%.

On July 12, 2021 Development Services Committee considered a [report](#) from Markham staff with recommended comments on the Region’s March 2021 proposed forecast to 2051, based on input received during consultation. The Committee requested further analysis on the impact of a higher intensification target for Markham prior to making a decision on the report recommendations.

On September 16, 2021, in response to comments heard from the public and local councils during consultation, Regional staff presented a [report](#) to a Special Regional Council meeting containing analysis of five alternate growth scenarios to 2051, most of which were based on higher intensification assumptions. Regional Council deferred a

decision on the alternate scenarios to a Special Regional Council meeting on October, 21, 2021, to allow for further discussion.

On October 12, 2021, Markham staff provided an [overview](#) of the Region's five alternate growth scenarios, along with updated Markham staff recommendations for Development Services Committee consideration, including a preference for the Phased 50-55% intensification scenario over the other scenarios presented to date. The Committee deferred its decision on the updated recommendations to a Special DSC meeting on October 18, 2021, to allow for further discussion. At that meeting, the Committee recommended that Markham Council support a Region-wide 60% intensification scenario rather than the phased 50-55% scenario (see DSC resolution in Appendix 'A'). The October 18 DSC resolution was forwarded to the Regional Clerk for consideration at a Special Regional Council meeting on October 21st, with a notation that Markham Council approval of the resolution, scheduled for the October 26th Markham Council meeting, was still pending.

At the Special Regional Council meeting on October 21st, Regional Council [endorsed](#) the Phased 50-55% intensification scenario and directed Regional staff to include urban expansion lands based on this target in the updated Regional Official Plan (see Regional Council resolutions in Appendix 'B'). Under this scenario, a 50% Region-wide intensification rate is assumed to 2041 and a 55% Region-wide intensification rate is assumed from 2041 to 2051. Regional staff's preliminary analysis indicated a 56% intensification rate for Markham under this scenario.

At the same meeting, Regional Council also passed a resolution to include the eastern portion of the concession block bounded by Warden Ave, Elgin Mills Rd, Kennedy Rd, and the City limit for community lands rather than employment lands (see Resolution H.4 in Appendix 'B'). This decision is consistent with Markham staff's recommendation to reconfigure the employment lands to minimize impact on the Almira hamlet, which was included in the October 18, 2021 Development Services Committee resolution (see Attachment 2 to the resolution in Appendix 'A').

On October 26, 2021, Markham Council, advised of the Regional Council decision, deferred a decision regarding the October 18, 2021 DSC resolution and referred the item back to staff for further information and clarification of the implications of Regional Council's decision for Markham.

More recently, a Draft Regional Official Plan (Draft ROP) dated November 25, 2021 was released which contains the updated forecast, urban expansion area mapping, and intensification targets based on Regional Council's October 21, 2021 decisions. The Region is seeking comments on the Draft ROP by the end of March 2022, with the intention of holding a statutory public meeting and bringing a final ROP back to Regional Council for adoption prior to the Provincial Growth Plan conformity deadline of July 1, 2022.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Based on Regional Council's decision to assume a Phased 50-55% Region-wide intensification scenario, the Draft Regional Official Plan contains a target of 51,000 intensification units for Markham by 2051 and inclusion of all whitebelt lands west of the Little Rouge Creek for new community and employment uses

Table 1 provides the analysis of the implications for Markham of the Regional Council endorsed growth scenario, with respect to the intensification rate, the amount of whitebelt lands needed for urban expansion and the resulting population as reflected in the Draft ROP policies and mapping.

Table 1. Implications for Markham of Regional Council decisions including Phased 50-55% Intensification Scenario	
Intensification Units (2016-2051)	51,000
Intensification Units per year	1,460
Intensification Rate	55%
Total Urban Expansion Required (ha)	1,145 (2,829 ac)
Community Land	1,030 (2,545 ac)
Employment Land	115 (284 ac)
Population in 2051	608,500
Employment in 2051	301,700
Source: York Region	

The Draft ROP shows all of Markham's whitebelt lands west of the Little Rouge Creek included with the Urban Area, as well as a small area of lands in the vicinity of 19th Avenue and Highway 48 east of the Little Rouge Creek, most of which were included in the Urban Area recently through a Minister's Zoning Order (see mapping in Appendix 'C'). The urban expansion lands total approximately 1,145 hectares, consisting of approximately 1,030 hectares of new community lands and approximately 115 hectares of new employment lands. The new employment lands have been restricted to the western portion of the concession block bounded by Warden Ave, Elgin Mills Rd, Kennedy Rd and the City limit, as requested by Markham (see Draft ROP Map 1A excerpt in Appendix 'C').

With respect to intensification, the Draft ROP contains a target of 51,000 intensification units for Markham to 2051, which represents approximately 1,460 units per year between 2016 and 2031. Although a specific intensification target as a percentage is not provided in the Draft ROP, the September 2021 Regional staff analysis of the Phased 50-55% Intensification scenario indicated an associated intensification rate of 56% for Markham. However, Markham's request to reduce the area of new employment lands to minimize impacts on the Almira hamlet and instead include the lands as community lands results in a slightly lower 55% intensification rate for Markham. Markham's ability to adopt a higher intensification rate than the minimum target reflected in the ROP is discussed further below.

Recommendations from the October 18, 2021 DSC resolution that have not been addressed in the Draft Regional Official Plan pertain to the designation of the remaining whitebelt lands, and roads and transit

Clauses #3 through #8 of the October 18th DSC resolution contain the policy recommendations related to the growth forecast and Draft ROP (see Appendix 'A'). As detailed above, the Draft ROP incorporates Regional Council decisions associated with clauses #3 and #6 of the resolution, namely the Region-wide intensification rate and the location of new employment lands in Markham, respectively.

With respect to recommendation #4, which directs staff to work with the Region to confirm the location of the lands to be included in the urban area, Markham staff intend to review the location of the draft mapping of the proposed new community lands and provide any comments when the report on the Draft ROP is brought to Committee.

Similarly, recommendation #5 which indicated Markham's objection to identifying the remaining whitebelt lands east of the Little Rouge Creek as 'Future Urban Area', can be dealt with through the upcoming report on the Draft ROP. It is noted that the Draft ROP continues to show the remaining whitebelt lands with a 'Future Urban Area' designation rather than a non-urban designation as recommended by Markham (see Draft ROP Map 1B excerpt in Appendix 'C').

Recommendation #7 of the October 18th DSC resolution requested that the Region's Transportation Master Plan Update consider the option of maintaining the current 2-lane cross-section for 19th Avenue through the Almira hamlet. Recommendation #8 indicated Markham support for the Region's Transportation Master Plan Update and higher order transit along Major Mackenzie and expansion of the Frequent Transit Network to service the proposed expansion lands in north Markham and that the Region and area municipalities continue to advocate for funding from the Province of Ontario that delivers the transit linked to the proposed growth. Both of these recommendations can be dealt with through commenting on the Draft ROP and/or the Draft Regional Transportation Master Plan.

Based on the above, staff are of the opinion that any further comments on the growth forecast can be incorporated in the upcoming report on the Draft ROP.

Markham Council can adopt a higher intensification rate than specified in the Regional Official Plan through the upcoming Markham Official Plan update, but it will not affect the amount of urban expansion lands identified in the Regional Official Plan

The Growth Plan identifies intensification targets as minimums, and Regional staff have confirmed that the local municipalities can have an intensification target that is higher than the intensification rate assigned to them in the ROP. A higher intensification in the Markham Official Plan would not affect the amount of urban expansion lands identified in the ROP but would signal Markham's commitment to continue to focus growth on centres and corridors supported by transit.

The Draft ROP requires municipalities to adopt intensification strategies which will need to meet or exceed the intensification targets identified by the Region. Markham's intensification strategy will be updated as part of a Markham Official Plan Review which will be formally initiated once the Regional Official Plan is approved (2022/2023). At that time, more details will be provided on the scope of the Official Plan Review, and the process for updating the intensification strategy.

Next Steps

It is recommended that Committee receive this report for information. There is opportunity for Council to provide further comments on the growth forecast to 2051 through the Region's consultation process for the Draft ROP. Staff anticipate reporting to Committee with comprehensive comments on the Draft ROP by March 2022.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The 2051 Growth Forecast relates to Goal 3 – Safe, Sustainable and Complete Community in Building Markham's Future Together, 2020-2023.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

All City departments were consulted on the Region's proposed growth forecast and land needs assessment to 2051, and will continue to be consulted on the Draft Regional Official Plan.

RECOMMENDED BY:

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Director, Planning and Urban Design

Arvin Prasad, R.P.P., M.C.I.P.
Commissioner of Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix 'A': October 18, 2021 Development Services Committee Resolution

Appendix 'B': Excerpts of Minutes of York Regional Council Special Meeting October 21, 2021

Appendix 'C': Excerpts from Map 1A – Land Use Designations and Map 1B – Urban System Overlays, Draft Regional Official Plan (Nov 25, 2021)