



MEMORANDUM


To: Chair and Members of Development Services Committee

From: Jim Baird, Commissioner of Development Services

Prepared By: Marg Wouters, MCIP, RPP, Senior Manager, Policy and Research

Date: October 19, 2015

Re: **Sustainability analysis supplementary to the October 5, 2015 staff report entitled City of Markham Comments on York Region Draft Growth Scenarios to 2041**



RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the Memorandum dated October 19, 2015 entitled "Sustainability analysis supplementary to the October 5, 2015 staff report entitled City of Markham Comments on York Region Draft Growth Scenarios to 2041" be received.

PURPOSE:

On October 5, 2015, Committee considered a staff report recommending comments to York Region regarding their three draft growth scenarios to accommodate population and employment growth to 2041. The draft growth scenarios were released in April 2015 as part of a Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) and Regional Official Plan Review. The draft growth scenarios are based on 40% residential intensification, 50% intensification, and no urban expansion (approximated at 65% intensification), on a Region-wide basis.

At the October 5, 2015 meeting, Committee deferred the report pending additional analysis regarding the sustainability of the growth scenarios, particularly the scenarios which assumed further urban expansion.

The supplementary analysis is provided below in two parts: the analysis undertaken as part of the City's 2031 growth management exercise; and comparison with the direction of Markham's Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan.

Sustainability analysis undertaken as part of the 2031 growth management exercise supported a focus on intensification while accommodating some growth through urban expansion

The Council endorsed 2031 growth alternative reflected in the 2014 Official Plan, which includes limited urban boundary expansion, was considered by staff and Council to be a sustainable approach to accommodating growth. Although the Greenprint had not yet been finalized at the time Council endorsed the preferred alternative of targeting 60% residential intensification over a 'no expansion' alternative, work on the Greenprint was well underway. The April 20, 2010 and November 17, 2009 staff reports recommending the preferred growth alternative document how various environmental, economic and social/cultural factors were taken into account in arriving at the recommended growth alternative. The reports specifically reference the draft Greenprint goals/priorities, and identify that the various

background studies undertaken as part of the Growth Strategy exercise (natural environment, agriculture, municipal servicing, transportation and transit, cycling and pedestrian networks, housing and employment, economic development etc), contributed to the development of the draft Greenprint goals at the time.

Specifically, the staff reports note the following with respect to environmental, economic and social/cultural sustainability:

- The 60% intensification alternative represents a balanced approach to managing sustainable growth;
- A 'no expansion' alternative was not considered to be as socially or economically sustainable as it relied too heavily on housing and employment forms that were not expected to be delivered or accepted by the market (i.e., reliance on delivery of a high number of apartments units and intensified forms of employment to meet population and employment forecasts), and did not adequately recognize the need for ground-oriented family housing and land-intensive forms of employment; the reports stressed the importance of working within a market context to ensure that growth, and the management of growth, remain viable;
- The 60% intensification alternative provided a realistic mix of an increased reliance on higher density apartment development to accommodate population growth, but also provided for some additional family-oriented housing in a limited expansion area (60% of growth accommodated through intensification within the built boundary; 20% growth accommodated through completion of OPA 5 communities; 20% growth accommodated through urban expansion);
- Infrastructure and financial studies undertaken indicated that the differences in a 'no expansion' versus other intensification alternatives under consideration at the time (including the 60% intensification alternative) were not significant enough to warrant these being the deciding factor in selecting an alternative; although a 'no expansion' alternative was anticipated to result in lower capital and operating costs than other alternatives that anticipated some urban expansion, the amount of intensification growth assumed under this scenario was not considered realistic, and therefore concern was expressed that selecting a 'no expansion' alternative could result in an increased burden on the City tax rate to fund infrastructure if the development charges related to anticipated growth did not materialize; and
- Preliminary results from a greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) analysis undertaken by the consultants retained to prepare the Greenprint indicated that there was not a significant variation in the modeled future GHG emissions of the growth alternatives being considered at the time (including the 60% and 'no expansion' alternatives).

The Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan does not preclude consideration of urban expansion in accommodating growth

The Greenprint was approved by Council in June 2011. Although all of the 12 priorities and respective recommendations identified in the Greenprint contribute to a sustainable community, the recommendations that align closest with growth management include the following:

- Reinforce Markham's commitment to creating compact and complete communities through the Official Plan and guidelines. Development should include work, live, play opportunities for all neighbourhoods. (#23)

- Help create 10,000 new jobs, at all levels, in partnership with other organizations through local economic development opportunities aimed at reducing poverty. (#25)
- Continue to shift community planning and development to place a greater emphasis on optimizing land use and public realm design to increase the viability of multi-modal transportation. (#132)
- Strategically identify underutilized areas such as brownfields, greyfields (auto-oriented retail places, strip malls, large format retail sites) and undeveloped sites in and around existing neighbourhoods to serve as neighbourhood centres and to increase residential densities to support transit. (#161)
- Continue to prioritize intense mixed-use development for new neighbourhoods. (#164)
- Adopt housing targets for new development according to the Markham Preferred Growth Alternative with 27% singles/semis, 19% townhouse, and 54% apartments for new residential units to 2031. This target helps to accommodate households experiencing increased affordability challenges including singles, youth, seniors and new immigrants. (#173)
- Work with builders and developers to construct a range of built forms including small lot singles, stacked townhouses, linked homes, apartment buildings and other innovative housing options. (#175)
- Continue to protect, enhance and maintain healthy streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands to support wildlife. (#191)
- Implement an interconnected Natural Heritage Network, working towards connectivity between existing green spaces and ensure they are of sufficient quality and size to support wildlife. (#215)
- Define a physical urban/rural boundary that preserves green spaces and agriculture by utilizing strong land use and design tools. (#218)

These recommendations focus on the protection of the natural environment and agricultural lands, and more efficient use of land and resources. They also speak to ensuring that a broad range of housing types and jobs are available to meet the needs of all residents. Planning staff maintain that all of these recommendations are consistent with the approach taken in the new Official Plan to accommodate 2031 growth, and that they do not preclude consideration of further limited urban expansion (only onto lands outside the defined Greenway System) to accommodate 2041 growth. Staff's position continues to be that Markham should consider growth alternatives that assign a high priority to intensification but that also provide a defensible balance between environmental, economic and social considerations.