



Report to: Development Services Committee

Report Date: March 19, 2013

SUBJECT: Draft Official Plan 2012 – Public Consultation Overview

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REVIEWED BY: Marg Wouters, Senior Manager, Policy and Research

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the report entitled “Draft Official Plan 2012 – Public Consultation Overview” dated March 19, 2013, be received;
- 2) That the correspondence relating to the Draft Official Plan attached in Appendix ‘C’ to this report, be received;
- 3) That a statutory Public Meeting to consider the Draft Official Plan be scheduled for April 23, 2013, preceded by an Open House on April 11, 2013;
- 4) That applications for employment land conversions be considered at a DSC meeting in May 2013 for Committee and Council direction on whether removal of the lands from the employment land supply is appropriate;
- 5) And that staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Since the release of the Draft Official Plan, staff and Council have been engaged in public consultation to obtain input on the new Plan. A public meeting was held in November 2012 to launch the new Plan followed by four Community Open Houses, attended by over 400 people in total. In addition, over 90 written submissions were received from the general public, landowners, industry associations, and agencies.

The Draft Official Plan has been very well received by the community and agencies. The Plan is recognized as a progressive document that provides a framework to create a more urban, sustainable and complete City. Some of the key themes identified through the consultation program included:

- Transportation and Transit (e.g., concern improvements will not be built quickly enough to keep pace with Markham’s current and planned growth)
- Intensification (e.g., protection of existing communities)
- Protection of heritage communities
- Requests for site specific policies to reflect current permissions or permissions being requested through active planning applications
- Comments regarding the Future Urban Area
- Requests for a different land use designation
- Employment land conversion requests
- Community infrastructure (e.g., how to accommodate schools, places of worship etc. in multi-storey mixed use development)
- Affordable housing (e.g., how will targets be implemented)
- Process (e.g., timing for updating secondary plans)

A number of requests have been received to convert approximately 130 hectares (321 acres) of employment lands to non-employment uses. Provincial policy restricts consideration of employment conversion requests to the time of a municipal comprehensive review, which is currently underway. The current Official Plan Review determined that Markham's current employment lands, plus the new employment lands in the urban expansion area, are required to meet employment targets to 2031. Staff therefore have very serious concerns with the applications for employment conversions, and recommend that the applications be considered at a future Development Services Committee meeting for a recommendation from Committee to Council regarding corresponding policy direction in the new Official Plan.

At the time of the Official Plan's release in September 2012, there were a number of planning matters relevant to the new Official Plan that were still under review. Revised draft parkland policies have been prepared and released for public review, and area and site specific policies have also been released to the public for review.

Staff are in the process of addressing all of the comments received and preparing for the Open House and statutory Public Meeting, prior to bringing forward a revised Official Plan document for Council adoption. An Open House is being scheduled prior to the Public Meeting to provide the public with the opportunity to review additional Draft Official Plan policies which have been released since the Community Open Houses were held in the fall of 2013. An informal Open House is scheduled for Thursday April 11, 2013 in the Civic Centre with the statutory Public Meeting to follow on Tuesday, April 23, 2013. An additional DSC meeting is also anticipated in May, 2013 to consider employment conversion requests. Staff anticipate bringing forward a revised Official Plan and recommendation report for Council adoption prior to the summer recess.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to report on comments received to date through public consultation on the Draft Official Plan in anticipation of the statutory Public Meeting in April, 2013. The report also identifies employment land conversion requests, and provides an update on a number of additional outstanding matters related to the Draft Official Plan.

BACKGROUND:**1.0 Draft Official Plan released for public consultation in September 2012**

Part I of the new City of Markham Draft Official Plan was released for public comment in September 2012. Part I contains city-wide goals, objectives and policies for guiding land use and development in Markham to 2031. Parts II and III of the Plan (Secondary Plans and area and site-specific policies, respectively) were not available at the time.

Since the release of the Draft Official Plan, staff and Council have been engaged in public consultation to obtain input on the new Plan. Details of the public consultation program are provided in Appendix 'A'.

The general public was engaged through an initial Public Meeting and four subsequent Community Open Houses in the fall of 2012. Staff have also met with a number of City Committees and advisory groups, ratepayer groups, and First Nations and Métis groups. Consultation with First Nations groups included an overview presentation at a York Region work session in November, 2012, and a one-day work session organized by Markham staff in January 2013 to review the environmental and archaeological policies in the new Plan. A meeting with Métis representatives was held in early March, 2013.

The Draft Official Plan was made available on the City's website, and in hard copy at City libraries. A more reader-friendly Guide to the Official Plan was also prepared and distributed at all presentations, and made available at the Community Services and Development Services counters within the Civic Centre.

In addition to meeting with the public, staff have also met with the Developers Round Table, a number of individual landowners, developers, and industry associations and have met with and/or received written comments from agencies including York Region, Toronto Region Conservation Authority, Metrolinx, school boards, utilities and neighbouring municipalities.

Staff have also been consulting with various City departments to ensure the Plan aligns with the goals and objectives of other City strategic initiatives such as the Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan, Markham Transportation Strategic Plan, the Integrated Leisure Master Plan, the Culture Plan and the Diversity Action Plan.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

1.0 The Draft Official Plan has been very well received

Overall, the Draft Official Plan has been very well received. The Plan is recognized by the community and agencies as a progressive document that provides a framework to create a more urban, sustainable and complete City. The most common topics raised by the public had to do with intensification and transportation. Residents appear to understand the rationale and need for intensification and providing for travel alternatives, but have concerns about timing and funding of the infrastructure required to support intensification.

An overview of comments received from various groups consulted is provided below. For each group, the comments are summarized by topic, and examples provided of the types of comments that were made. Responses to the written submissions will be provided, as appropriate, in the final report.

Public Meeting and Community Open Houses

Approximately 250 people attended the initial Public Meeting and almost 160 people attended the four Community Open Houses last fall. Residents are generally supportive of the Official Plan's direction to achieve a more urban, sustainable and complete City. The majority of questions at the community meetings centred on transportation, transit and intensification. There were also questions on the planning process, technical clarifications, second suites, and inquiries from individual property owners. The questions and comments heard at the Community Open Houses are summarized below.

Transportation and Transit

- Concern with congestion along Highway 7 and certain Regional Arterial Roads.
- Existing transit capacity is limited.
- Existing transit system is not suitable for an aging population.
- Concern that the required transit infrastructure will not be built quickly enough to keep pace with Markham's current and planned growth.
- Suggested that we should continue to "plan for the car".
- Need additional bicycle paths to connect existing neighbourhoods and residential and commercial areas.
- Create a car free and user friendly environment suitable for seniors.

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- Ideas for decreasing car use included limiting the number of parking spaces in new development and community education.
 - Need to expand transit, particularly in the Langstaff area.
 - Improve transit by expanding the subway to Highway 7 and expanding VIVA east to 9th Line.

Intensification

- Concern that established neighbourhoods and heritage areas such as Thornhill and Markham Village will be impacted by intensification, in particular the introduction of high-rise buildings.
- Should intensification create the need for transportation infrastructure or should infrastructure be built first to be followed by development?
- How will community values be respected during intensification?
- Some support for intensification in general.

Planning Process

- Concern that secondary plans cannot be updated quickly enough.
- Reassurance that the public will be involved in secondary plan reviews and local planning issues.
- Section 37 – how are priorities for the use of these funds established?

Technical Clarifications

- Will the Thornhill Secondary Plan be repealed?
- When will the zoning by-laws be updated to implement the new Official Plan?
- When will the Markham Centre Secondary Plan be updated in light of the proposed arena?
- Is there a limit on the number of storeys a high-rise building can have?
- How can we find out about planned road expansions?
- How are the Provincial Policy Statements and Provincial Growth Plan reflected in the new Official Plan?

Second Suites

- Does the new Official Plan provide policy guidance for second suites?
- Will the zoning by-law be changed to allow second suites?
- How will potentially negative impacts be dealt with such as loss of front lawns to parking, health and safety?

Effects on Individual Development Parcels

- Some questions were raised by individual property owners with respect to their land use designations. Planning staff offered to meet with those individuals to discuss their particular situations.

Other

- How does the new Official Plan deal with Markham's diversity and mix of cultures?
- Will heritage conservation districts be affected by the new Official Plan?
- Will there be community gardens?
- What type of public art does the new Official Plan envision?
- Yonge Street should be emphasized or highlighted as a Main Street in the Official Plan.
- Concerned with the loss of agricultural land to residential development.

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- How will the Official Plan's four key themes for sustainable growth be prioritized when there are conflicts among them?
 - Importance of good urban design was emphasized.
 - Consider permitting places of worship in employment areas.

City Committees and Advisory Groups

Staff consulted with 10 City Committees and Advisory Groups and 2 ratepayers groups between November 2012 and January 2013. A more detailed summary of the comments and questions heard at these meetings is provided in Appendix 'B' and summarized below.

Agriculture

- Support for the approach taken in the Draft Official Plan in protecting remaining agricultural lands from non-agricultural uses and ensuring policies are included to support secondary uses to support viable farming operations.

Environment

- How defensible is the 30 metre vegetation protection zone?
- How will the small streams noted in Appendix B of the draft Official Plan Part 1 be protected?
- Consider providing flexibility to ensure that existing agricultural operations can continue on lands that could become a vegetation protection zone.

Land Use

- Sod and horse farms should be identified as an agricultural use.
- Lands within the Greenway should also adhere to the provincial minimum distance separation formulae.
- Community gardens should be permitted in all land uses, where appropriate and feasible.
- Interest in providing for a possible university campus in Markham.

Built Form and Design Criteria

- Consider providing flexibility for location of buildings associated with secondary uses within the Countryside designation.
- How can we ensure buildings are appropriate for the surrounding neighbourhood?

Housing

- Need to plan for affordable seniors housing.
- What are the affordable housing targets – where, when and how much?

Parkland

- Cash-in-lieu of parkland should be used to buy parkland in the immediate area of the development.

Transportation

- Will Markham be widening any roads?
- How do you get people to take transit?
- How do you coordinate transit with employment?
- City should not intensify without the transit infrastructure being in place?
- Rapid transit route along Highway 7 is providing transit in the wrong direction. Most people in Markham commute north to south to go to work.

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- How does the Official Plan align with the Metrolinx Plan?
 - Concerned with mixed use and residential use being constructed in Cornell Centre prior to the construction of an enhanced transportation system.

Employment

- There does not appear to be enough employment land in Markham.
- How do we make sure employment remains in Markham?
- The arena is taking up lands that should be used for employment in Markham Centre.
- Need sufficient employment lands in the Future Urban Area to serve the 'Future Neighbourhood Area', otherwise new residents will have to travel south to commute to work.

Implementation

- Develop enforceable strategies such as a heritage property standard by-law.

First Nations and Métis

Comments received at the November 2012, January 2013 and March 2013 meetings included:

- The need for a better understanding by municipal planners of First Nations culture.
- The need for consultation at both a staff and political level.
- Wording suggestions for the cultural heritage and archaeological policies, including policies regarding the discovery of burial grounds.
- Comments regarding the undertaking of archaeological assessments and the possibility of Métis representatives being present during the assessments (Métis).
- Interested in parks and open spaces and environmental stewardship (Métis).

In addition, a written submission was received from Curve Lake First Nation regarding:

- The City's obligation to notify should excavation unearth bones, remains or other such evidence or a native burial site or any archaeological findings.
- The obligation under the Cemeteries Act to notify the nearest First Nation Government or other community of Aboriginal people if a burial site is found.
- The need for a First Nations or other community of Aboriginal people representative to be present before remains and associated artifacts can be removed from a site.

Submissions Received (Residents, Landowners and Industry Associations)

Over 70 submissions have been received to date from individual landowners and industry associations. The majority of these submissions related to requests to include sites specific policies to reflect current permissions or permissions being requested through active planning applications. These submissions are categorized below by key theme. A more detailed summary of the submissions and the original correspondence are attached as Appendix 'C'.

- Comments regarding Future Urban Area
 - Requests for inclusion of certain properties within the Future Urban Area.
 - Proposed changes to policies regarding the planning framework for the Future Urban Area.
 - Request for deferral of policies/land use designations for Future Urban Area until York Region Official Plan appeal has been decided.

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- Request for area and site specific policies
 - Requests to have policies reflect current permissions or permissions being requested through active planning applications.
 - Request for a different land use designation
 - Requests for a land use designation that is different than the designation in the existing OP or Draft OP?
 - A number of these submissions relate to employment designations.
 - Employment Land Conversion
 - Requests to assign a designation other than an employment designation - these requests are discussed in more detail in Section 2.0 of this report.
 - General Comments
 - Agriculture
 - Concern for the loss of farmland – should help remaining farmers.
 - Environment
 - Clarify if setbacks to previously approved boundaries (e.g. plans that are registered and zoned) will be challenged to provide a vegetation protection zone if a property were to redevelop.
 - Land Use and Built Form
 - Allow for development of new cemeteries.
 - Retail policies are overly restrictive to retail development.
 - Protect existing communities (interface between intensification and existing residential).
 - Drive-Through Facilities (from industry associations)
 - Concern with prohibition of drive-through service facilities on Regional Rapid Transit Corridor and restrictions around the location of a vehicle stacking lane.
 - Drive-through service facilities should be permitted on collector roads.
 - Recommend design objectives related to location of drive-through service facility, parking areas and stacking lanes be addressed in Markham's Drive-Through Facilities Design Guidelines.
 - Hamlets
 - Prevent non-residential uses such as landscaping and paving businesses.
 - Consider additional uses that are permitted in the Hamlets of Locust Hill and Cedar Grove in the Hamlet of Almira.
 - Healthy Neighbourhoods and Communities
 - Include reference to senior friendly as it relates to housing options and street network.
 - A swimming pool and aquatic facility needs to be provided for at the Thornhill Community Centre.
 - How will affordable housing policies be implemented? Concerned with the requirement of housing statements which apply only to mid and high rise development.
 - Recommend that open space be considered as part of the parkland dedication process.

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- Current parkland policies are overly onerous on high density development and serve as a disincentive to intensification and compact development.

Heritage

- Impact of development and redevelopment on historic Markham Village and Main Street North.
- Implement stronger rules to preserve Heritage communities.
- Consider including policies that would allow the establishment of a Heritage Committee of Adjustment to ensure more efficient and informed decision-making of applications within Heritage Areas.

Transportation

- Concern with traffic along 16th Avenue, Major Mackenzie and Highway 7.
- Rebuild the Richmond Hill/Langstaff rail line to a double track.
- Not appropriate to phase development growth in major mixed use neighbourhoods and intensification areas in order to ensure a balance of travel demand and transportation capacity.
- Recommend that additional GO stations be identified in Map 2 to accommodate the projected growth and intensification.

Implementation

- Timing for updating Secondary Plans.
- Premature to complete public consultation and adopt Official Plan until Region's Official Plan has been approved.
- Defer consideration of Future Urban Area and associated policies until ROP and ROPA3 have been approved by OMB.
- Appears that the cumulative costs of all the studies that are required in Chapter 6 will result in the inability to deliver a housing product that meets or addresses in a meaningful way the affordability requirements.
- Request that the City allow the preparation of the studies (e.g. Subwatershed Study, Conceptual Master Plan) for the Future Urban Area on a smaller geographic basis rather than the entire Future Urban Area.
- Allow flexibility to the landowners in the Future Urban Area to address Phasing Development and Detailed Planning.
- Clarify how the draft Official Plan may apply to Markham Centre and recent approvals.

Cornell

- Maintain the village character and design in Cornell.
- Ensure that new mixed-use development within neighbourhood residential areas are directed to frontage along Bur Oak, do not exceed low to mid-rise development heights and are designed and buffered to be sensitive to adjacent/existing low rise residential homes.

Staff continue to meet with the various property owners to address their concerns and provide clarification on the new Official Plan policies. Staff's general response to the concerns/comments contained in the submissions will be provided in the final report.

Agency Comments

The Draft Official Plan was very well received by commenting agencies. The Plan is recognized as a progressive document that comprehensively addresses Provincial and Regional policies and interests.

The key points from agency comments are summarized below with more details provided in Appendix 'D'.

Ministry of Municipal Affairs

- Recommend non-agricultural uses such as publicly owned and operated community facilities, including libraries, community centres and recreation centres, publicly owned parkland and cemeteries not be permitted on agricultural lands designated 'Countryside'.
- Region is requested to make a deferral or withhold approval on the draft Special Policy Area policies/mapping until such time as the changes have been approved by the Province.
- Request a policy that indicates that for the lands within the Future Urban Area that are located within the Minister's Zoning Order (MZO), development will not occur until the MZO has been removed or amended to permit the proposed development.

York Region

- Recommend that the Greenway System component should include Highly Vulnerable Aquifer Areas (HVA's), and recommend that a map be included to reflect HVA's outside the Oak Ridges Moraine.
- Consider revisions to policies prohibiting dewatering - dewatering may be required in some locations under certain circumstances, which is managed by the Ministry of the Environment and the Water Resources Act.
- Recommend referencing the water and energy targets identified in the Regional Official Plan.
- Include reference to limiting ancillary uses on employment lands by not exceeding 15% of an employment area, in accordance with the 2010 Regional Official Plan.
- Clarify how the ancillary uses collectively will not exceed 15% of an employment area.
- Clarify the classification and function of Reesor Road.
- Recommend including a policy that seeks to promote the early implementation of transportation facilities that require crossing of natural or man-made barriers, such as railway tracks and the 400 series highways.
- Development should be phased in all instances not just in mixed use and intensification areas to align with transportation infrastructure.
- Recommend that Markham adopt a property standards by-law that sets minimum standards for the interior dwelling units pursuant to s.15 of the Building Code Act.

TRCA

- Consider including policies that encourage the 're-establishment of lost linkages' within the Plan due to past development/agricultural practices.
- Consider using the term stormwater management facility, as it would promote various alternative methods to stormwater management, as opposed to limiting facilities to traditional ponds.
- Recommend clarification of policies related to locating stormwater management facilities in valley corridors.
- Consider including policies for stormwater outfall.

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- Consider including the requirement for an official plan amendment should intensification be contemplated in a Special Policy Area.
 - Consider including the requirement for a feasibility study to understand the impacts related to increase in density or land uses on natural systems (above and below grade).

Durham Region

- Lands within the Future Urban Area that are within Minister's Zoning Order 104/72 are prohibited from development until the MZO for the Pickering Airport is lifted.

Town of Richmond Hill

- Concern with the potential traffic that would be generated from the possible flyover shown as an extension of Valleywood Drive/Apple Creek Blvd with a potential connection over Hwy 404 into Richmond Hill.
- Confirm why two mid-block crossings are proposed over Highway 404 between 16th Avenue and Highway 7, as the Regional Official Plan only contemplates one.

Metrolinx

- Identify the McCowan Rapid Transit project as part of the 25 year plan.
- Indicated that the four locations listed as 'Potential Secondary Mobility Hubs' are not identified as mobility hubs in The Big Move and do not meet the criteria to designate a mobility hub. Suggested that these locations be identified as Major Transit Station in the Official Plan.
- Recommended that policies be amended to acknowledge the ongoing process to determine location of stations on the Havelock line and feasibility of introducing a new station at Thornhill Centre.

Parks Canada

- The boundaries of the Locust Hill and Cedar Grove Hamlets should follow lot lines
- Support the additional uses allowed in the Hamlets (e.g. food, accommodation and other services to park visitors) and recommend that these uses be given priority for any new development in Locust Hill and Cedar Grove.
- Support the national park's role in the provision of environmental corridors.

York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board

- There are a number of challenges with delivering and funding urban schools and multi-storey buildings in a mixed-use format (e.g., underground parking, structured parking, and additional storeys above the current school model).
- Consider adding child care centres as a permitted use in all public schools.
- Concern with policies that encourage parking to be located underground, in parking structures or at the rear of buildings.
- Request that public schools be exempt from the minimum height, FSI and GFA maximums and any other requirements in the Residential and Mixed Use designations.
- School Board would like to review and comment on City wide parking strategy to ensure consistency with school needs to accommodate students.
- Suggest that Markham consider the role of Section 37 of the Planning Act in providing School Boards with additional tools to work with, to facilitate the delivery of more urban schools in a mixed-use and multi-storey building format. Schools should be identified in the list of community benefits in the Section 37 policies.

2.0 REQUESTS FOR CONVERSION OF EMPLOYMENT LANDS

As mentioned previously, a number of requests have been made to redesignate certain employment lands proposed on Map 3 – Land Use of the Draft Official Plan. The requests can be categorized as follows:

- a) Employment conversions – redesignations which would result in removing lands from an existing employment designation in the current urban area (e.g., from ‘Industrial’ to ‘Residential’ or ‘Commercial’);
- b) Requests for a non-employment designation in the Future Urban Area – redesignation of lands from the ‘Future Employment Area’ designation to the ‘Future Neighbourhood Area’ or other designation in the Draft Official Plan; and
- c) Requests to redesignate lands in the current urban area from one employment designation to another employment designation (e.g., General Industrial to Business Park Area).

Conversion requests and requests to remove employment designations in the Future Urban Area (the first two categories) are identified in Table 1 and mapped in Figure 1. These lands total approximately 130 hectares, representing about 17% of the vacant lands within designated ‘Employment Lands’ and ‘Future Employment Area’ in the Draft Official Plan.

Provincial policy restricts consideration of requests to convert employment lands to a municipal comprehensive review

The requests to redesignate employment lands to non-employment uses are considered to be employment conversions. The Provincial Policy Statement 2005 (PPS) and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) stipulate that municipalities may only consider employment conversions at the time of a municipal comprehensive review.

Markham’s current Official Plan Review is considered to be a municipal comprehensive review. Part of the review entails the development of a land budget to determine how the population and employment forecasts assigned to Markham in the 2010 York Region Official Plan (ROP 2010) will be accommodated.

The ROP 2010 provides a total employment forecast of 240,400 jobs in Markham by 2031. The Region’s employment land budget provides a breakdown of the total employment forecast by employment type as identified in Table 2 below. These forecasts by employment type are included in Markham’s Draft Official Plan.

**Table 1: Employment Land Conversion Requests
Preliminary Site Statistics***

		Existing 'Industrial' Designation (net ha)				Proposed Res. Units		
	Property	Total	Business Park	General Industrial	Business Corridor	Total	Grade Related	Apts
Requests for Conversion within the Urban Area								
1.	Lindvest (Cornell)	13-15	13-15	0	0	?	?	?
2.	Remington (14 th Avenue)	19	0	19	0	654	654	0
3.	Times (Leitchcroft)	12	12	0	0	2,830	68	2,762
4.	Box Grove Hill Developments Inc (Box Grove)	11	11	0	0	193	193	0
5.	Romandale (Cathedral)	15	15	0	0	?	?	?
6.	Condor-Canac (Thornhill)	3	0	0	3	108	108	0
	Subtotal	73-75	51-53	19	3	3,785+	1,023+	2,762+
	As % of vacant Empl Lands in Urban Area	±14%						
Requests for Non-Employment Designation within the Future Urban Area (FUA) - (gross developable hectares)								
7.	Catholic Archdiocese (19 th Ave)	27	na	na	na	N/A – proposed cemetery		
8.	Romandale (Snider Farm – 3450 Elgin Mills Rd)	32	na	na	na	?	?	?
	Subtotal FUA	59				?	?	?
	As % of total vacant FUA Empl Lands	±18%						
	Total Hectares	132-134						
		±17%						

*All figures are approximate.
? Number of units has not been provided.

Table 2			
Forecast Employment Growth in Markham by Employment Type, 2006 to 2031			
Employment Type	2006 (total)	2006-2031 (additional)	2031 (total)
Major Office	47,300	37,500	84,800
Employment Land	50,000	33,000	83,000
Population Related	47,500	25,100	72,600
Total Employment	144,800	95,600	240,400
Source: York Region			

Staff have determined that, without any reductions, the lands designated within the Draft Official Plan (comprised of existing employment lands plus identified new employment lands in the urban expansion area) should be just sufficient to accommodate the employment growth assigned to Markham in the Region's land budget.

The PPS stipulates that municipalities may consider conversions only where it is demonstrated that the land is not required for employment purposes over the long term and that there is a need for the conversion. The Growth Plan also provides for the consideration of employment conversion requests as part of a municipal comprehensive review, and provides six tests that must be addressed as part of the review, as follows:

- a) There is a need for the conversion
- b) The municipality will meet the employment forecasts allocated to the municipality pursuant to the Growth Plan
- c) The conversion will not adversely affect the overall viability of the employment areas, and achievement of the intensification target, density targets, and other policies of the Growth Plan
- d) There is existing and planned infrastructure to accommodate the proposed conversion
- e) The lands are not required over the long term for the employment purposes for which they are designated, and
- f) Cross-jurisdictional issues have been considered.

Applications for Employment Conversion and Redesignation of Future Employment Area to be considered at a future DSC meeting prior to adoption of new Official Plan

In order to consider conversion requests as part of the current municipal comprehensive review, staff have required the submission of an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) application for each of the properties in question. The OPA applications are being considered in a two-step approach, the first step being consideration by Council of the appropriateness of the conversion of employment lands. As part of the first step, proponents have been asked to submit an application with sufficient justification to address the six tests set out in the Growth Plan mentioned previously.

Staff have had pre-consultation meetings with five proponents and informal discussions with at least two other landowners. Five OPA applications have been received to date. Staff are of the opinion that all of the employment lands identified in the Draft Official Plan are required to accommodate the employment forecasts to 2013, and therefore have very serious concerns with

the employment conversion applications. It is recommended that these applications, and any additional employment conversion applications received, be considered by Committee at a subsequent DSC meeting (tentatively in May, 2013). At this meeting, staff and applicants will present more detailed information regarding each application, and Committee will be asked to provide a recommendation to Council for each application regarding policy direction for the new Official Plan.

Among the additional information/analysis to be considered at the future meeting include:

- Additional adjustments to the employment land budget by employment type resulting from additional redesignation requests and staff corrections/adjustments reflecting comments received during consultation
- Impact on Markham's residential land budget, including impact on Future Urban Area land needs
- Impact on Regional land budget and ROP 2010/ROPA 3 OMB Hearing

All employment conversion applications are subject to approval by York Region. If Committee decides that one or more of the employment conversion applications is appropriate, staff will be required to demonstrate to the Region how the employment forecasts assigned to Markham can be achieved, and in what manner.

If Council were to support any of the employment land conversion requests, the OPA applications would then proceed in accordance with standard application processing procedures (the second step). The proponent would be required to submit any additional required studies (e.g., servicing and traffic studies) to support the proposed new use(s), and the application would proceed in the usual manner, including the holding of a Public Meeting for the application.

At the proposed May DSC meeting, Committee could also consider any applications which could potentially be dealt with through the new Official Plan, rather than through the second step of the OPA application process.

3.0 UPDATE ON OUTSTANDING PLANNING MATTERS

At the time of the Official Plan's release in September 2012, there were a number of planning matters relevant to the new Official Plan that were still under review. The following provides an update of these matters.

a) **Revised Parks and Open Space System and Parkland Dedication Policies**

The Planning Partnership's final draft report regarding parkland dedication, as well as the City's parkland policies and practices was presented to Development Services Committee in January, 2013. The report included revised draft Official Plan policies reflecting the recommendations of the study. These revised policies have been posted on the City website and staff is in the process of consulting with the development industry and other interested stakeholder groups. Staff will be reporting back to Council on public comments and recommendations prior to adoption of the Official Plan.

b) **Proposed Rouge National Urban Park**

Discussions have been ongoing with Parks Canada regarding the Rouge National Urban Park. Parks Canada has proposed some minor technical and housekeeping revisions to the Official Plan, which will be incorporated in the final Plan. They have also identified the

importance of the Hamlets within the context of the future National Urban Park and support enhanced land uses with the Hamlet boundaries. A review of the boundaries of the Hamlets adjacent to the proposed Rouge National Urban Park is underway by staff in consultation with the TRCA, Infrastructure Ontario and Parks Canada.

- c) Thornhill Area Revitalization Working Group (Thornlea Industrial District)
An information report providing a summary of the alternative recommendations proposed by the Working Group and staff on future land use policies for the Thornhill Revitalization Area is expected to be considered by DSC on March 19, 2013. The report requests Council direction on the key points of difference between staff and Working Group recommendations, including the future use of the Canac site. Draft Official Plan policies will be prepared based on the direction of Council. It is noted that one of the employment land conversion requests mentioned previously in this report is for the Canac site, and an official plan amendment application has been submitted.
- d) Draft area and site specific policies released to public
Draft area and site specific policies were released for public comment in February, 2013. These policies were originally intended to form a separate Part III volume of the Plan, but will instead be incorporated as an additional Part I chapter. These policies are posted on the City website for public review and comment and have been circulated to agencies, stakeholders, ratepayers associations and the development industry for review and comment.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

With the public consultation phase of the Official Plan Review nearing completion, staff are in the process of addressing all of the comments received and preparing for a final Open House and statutory Public Meeting, prior to bringing forward a revised Official Plan document for Council adoption.

An Open House is being scheduled prior to the Public Meeting to provide the public with the opportunity to review additional Draft Official Plan policies which have been released since the community open houses were held in the fall of 2013. An informal Open House is scheduled for Thursday April 11, 2013 in the Civic Centre with the Public Meeting to follow on Tuesday, April 23, 2013.

As mentioned previously, an additional DSC meeting is anticipated in May, 2013 to consider employment conversion requests.

Staff anticipate bringing forward a revised Official Plan and recommendation report for Council adoption prior to the summer recess. The recommendation report will include staff comments on submissions received. Once adopted by Markham Council, the Official Plan will be forwarded to York Region for approval.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

To be considered in the recommendation report for adoption of the Official Plan.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

To be considered in the recommendation report for adoption of the Official Plan.

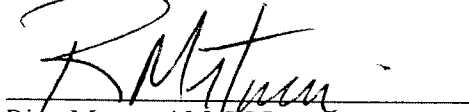
ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The Draft Official Plan relates to all strategic priorities of Building Markham's Future Together, and specifically addresses the Growth Management priority.

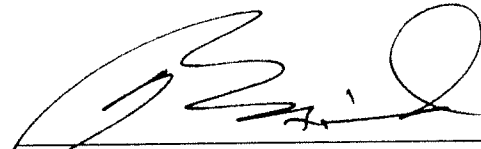
BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Business units across Markham have been consulted on the policies of the new Official Plan. Staff will continue to work with various representatives from the different Departments in refining the policies/maps of the new Official Plan.

RECOMMENDED BY:



Rino Mostacci M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Director of Planning and Urban Design



Jim Baird M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Commissioner of Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1: Location of Employment Conversion Requests

- Appendix 'A' Draft Official Plan Public Consultation Program (October 2012 to March 2013)
- Appendix 'B' Summary of City Committee and Advisory Group Comments
- Appendix 'C' Submissions Received (Summary and Original Correspondence)
- Appendix 'D' Summary of Agency Comments

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