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REGIONAL TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) GUIDELINES

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report August 17, 2006, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council endorse the final version of the Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines, as set out in *Attachment No. 1* to this report.
2. The Regional Clerk circulate a copy of this report and attachment to each of the nine local municipal planning departments for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council adopt the final version of the Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines (hereafter called “the guidelines”) as shown in *Attachment No. 1* of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

The final version of guidelines is the result of a “Made-in-York” process that began in March 2005 with Regional Council’s adoption of five guiding principles to further implement ROPA 43, Regional Centres and Corridors. Since that time, Regional staff have consulted extensively with stakeholders to develop these guiding principles and achieve consensus on a draft version, which was then presented to Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council in June 2006.

Final consultation involving various stakeholders, including the Urban Development Institute (UDI)–York Chapter, each of the nine local municipalities and York Region Transit/VIVA, subsequently occurred in order to receive feedback to refine the draft into this final version. There was a general consensus from the feedback received that this approach is timely in planning for tomorrow, and managing development to support sustainable communities linked together by a strong network of transit infrastructure.

3.1 Consultation

Regional staff engaged in extensive consultation involving the stakeholders, which generated positive and valuable feedback in drafting the guidelines. Specifically, the staff workshop held in February led to a general consensus among stakeholders on key

components for the draft guidelines, while circulating working draft copies in May, confirmed the overall direction of this planning document by stakeholders.

Formal and informal consultation continued into June 2006 in support of the guidelines, most notably a presentation was made to UDI – York Chapter on June 16th, where the guidelines were well received by the developers’ group. Feedback focused not only on the specific needs of development within the Region, but also on how to deliver the strategy effectively through encouraging good planning and design practices within a concise and user-friendly document. Changes made to the draft TOD guidelines were based on value-added feedback received which enhanced the quality of the final version.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Adoption of the Regional TOD Guidelines will assist in the implementation of the Region’s planned urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors, served by rapid transit. Using the guidelines as a tool to implement this urban structure supports the Region’s long-term investment in transit, assists local municipal community-building initiatives, and represents good planning. Furthermore, the final version of the guidelines is consistent with Provincial, Regional and local planning objectives as outlined in the June 14th, 2006 staff report.

The final version of the guidelines remains consistent with the draft version presented recently in June 2006, but includes alterations based on feedback representative of the challenges local municipalities are encountering.

4.1 Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines

The Regional TOD Guidelines are an information and implementation tool to support existing planning policies and programs at the Provincial, Regional and especially at the local municipal level. The guidelines are not new policy, but are a tool to assist the Region and its nine municipal partners to implement planning for well-designed, pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive development.

The guidelines will also serve as a useful tool for elected officials, residents, businesses and the development industry. They will help inform, in a clear and easy-to-read format, the public’s understanding of Regional and local planning objectives and the importance of public transit. Furthermore, the guidelines can be regarded as a customer service tool for prospective developers and property owners within the Regional Centres and Regional Corridors.

The “Made-in-York” approach of developing the guidelines has resulted in a planning document that is concise and user-friendly. To further advance the implementation of transit-supportive development and policies, the guidelines provide highly visual and instructive examples of best practices already implemented around the Region.

4.2 Feedback

Changes made to the draft TOD guidelines were based on feedback received from the stakeholders and, ultimately, enhanced the draft guidelines into this final version, while maintaining its consistency with local planning objectives. These changes are representative of the goals addressed within secondary plans, policies and program initiatives of the local municipalities, as well as the development industry.

Of particular note, a formal letter dated August 11th, 2006 from UDI, outlined their understanding and support of the Region's approach in implementing the guidelines. In their letter, UDI highlighted their appreciation of being consulted on the project. They also indicated the appropriateness of monitoring the implementation of the guidelines, prior to any next steps of moving towards policy.

The final version incorporates some further comments and suggested enhancements received from stakeholders over the summer. For example, minor wording changes were made to reflect comments from the Town of Markham ensuring the guidelines supported parking/transit policy initiatives in the Markham Regional Centre.

4.3 Implementation Checklist

The final version of the guidelines does contain the addition of an implementation checklist. After formally consulting with UDI-York Chapter and the local municipalities, it was apparent that in order to make the guidelines as concise and user-friendly as possible, an implementation checklist summarizing TOD elements would be valuable. This "checklist" offers the opportunity to assess how well a development, design or policy incorporates essential TOD elements.

4.4 Next Steps

Upon adoption, the Regional TOD Guidelines will be printed and distributed to stakeholders, including local municipal planning departments for use.

Staff will work with the Corporate Communications Branch, if deemed necessary by Council, to write a *Message from Council* for their approval to be included as page two of the guidelines following the adoption of this final version. The message space included in the attached version of the guidelines is a placeholder, for when a message is decided upon.

In addition, a further amendment to the Official Plan may be appropriate to enshrine the guidelines as Regional Policy. Staff, after consultation with local municipalities and the development industry, may report to Regional Committee and Council in 2007 to discuss the benefits of, and options for, such an amendment.

4.5 Relationship to Vision 2026

The adoption of Regional TOD Guidelines which advances the implementation of the Region's planned urban structure is consistent with all eight goal areas of Vision 2026,

specifically “Infrastructure for a Growing Region,” Quality Communities for a Diverse Population,” and “Managed and Balanced Growth.”

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The Regional TOD Guidelines were developed through consultation undertaken with the in-house staff resources of the Regional Planning and Development Services Department.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Adoption of the Regional TOD Guidelines will not only be instrumental in the implementation process through the administration of local official and secondary plans, zoning by-laws, and site plan control, but will also function as a educational resource for municipal staff.

Consultation and feedback from the local municipalities was instrumental in producing a planning document which has been developed to respond to the needs and challenges within the Region, while also highlighting TOD elements emerging within developments, policies and programs. The adoption of Regional TOD Guidelines will serve to assist local municipalities in these efforts.

7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the final version of the Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines be adopted by Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council. The adoption of Regional TOD Guidelines will further the implementation of the Region’s planned urban structure of Regional Centres linked by Regional Corridors, served by rapid transit. With a highly visual, concise and user-friendly format, these guidelines are consistent with Provincial, Regional and local policies and programs to advance transit-supportive development, and represent good planning.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)