

Breakout Discussion – Detailed Notes

Group 1 – Facilitator: Ann Joyner Recorder: Barbara Jeffrey

What should new communities look like?

- Different looks and criteria in each community, there should be a *Sense of Place*; e.g. Nobleton vs. Vaughan Corporate Centre
- Look at redesign of road network – need to tighten up the standards with reduction of pavement width – should be linked to scale and function of the roadway – there should be regional road widths, suburban street widths with different standards
- Character of community tied to road infrastructure – need alternative development standards; Regional options/actions, shared space roadway. Needs to be a dialogue between planners and roads operations and utility companies
- Need to get people out of their houses; safe streets, public parks; an issue of scale of amenities.
- Communities must be connected
- High quality urban forest – shrink streets, replace with permeable surfaces, plant trees and sustainable vegetation
- Connectivity of natural forests must be addressed and strengthened
- Should be Community Energy Plans; “site generation” from renewable energy sources
- Need to consider where sun is in designing developments to capture passive/active solar gain
- Need to work with existing landscape/grades; reduce mass grading
- Need presentation and workshop of selected best practices with practitioners there to discuss

Implementation:

Landscape Design

- Need to move towards more undulating grading
- Need more detailed “how-to” workshop on grading/character and stormwater management cost reduction – infrastructure standards
- Site co-ordination dialogue
- Need third party review of grading plans to determine if it meets landscape objectives

Energy

- Community Energy Plan (new neighbourhoods) – more than just the site level – satisfies adjacent community needs – on-site generation
- Local energy/infrastructure makes individuals accountable for behaviour – can use an in-home display of energy consumption
- Encourage PPP – waste/water
- Community Energy Plan has to be undertaken in advance of development planning
- Need building code changes

Roads

- Detailed Implementation to achieve alternative standards
- Vehicle size is an issue - reduce car/truck/fire truck sizes

- Alternative standards for stormwater management
- Transit incentives/incentives for auto-dependency reduction
- Green index “Seattle’s” green thresholds
- Overall review of standards and education required
- “Shared space roadway”
- Don’t have roadways as barriers
- On roads – winter maintenance – reduce salt usage – make public assume “risk”
- Examine/educate public and builders of alternative standards – agencies/planning/operations
- Should revisit GREAT Regional Streets Report – wider streets become barriers
- Need to examine concept of “scenic parkways”
- Look at greening of right of ways
- Examine other benefits → bring characters

Barriers:

Landscape, Energy, Roads

- Official Plan updates should identify “character areas” – for special characteristics
- Expectation of the public that roads are wide, fast, clear of snow – need education
- Cost relates to affordability → people need education to accept the high cost of green buildings
- Make standards consistent
- Customer expectation of house sizes and finishes

Energy

- Lack of education – people, municipalities need to understand the costs, sources and options for renewable energy
- Lack of third party certification for green infrastructure e.g. in Toronto only 3 Energy Star verifiers
- e. g Solution → make all public buildings in Ontario at least LEED Silver
- In Ontario we have separation of utility generation and delivery; should be integrated, e.g. need a pilot project to get local generation and distribution
- Codes and standards – e.g. Clean Water Act identifies solar thermal as a high risk of ground water contamination; need pilot → use public facilities to pilot out barriers

Top Ideas

1. Need to educate and change expectations of consumers
2. Re-evaluate standards for roads and infrastructure to determine alternative standards
3. Need a further best practice workshop with examples/practitioners of specific best practices
4. Recognize and value ecosystem function in community design as a means of obtaining multiple benefits, such as reduction of stormwater; maintenance and increase of base flow; improvement of biodiversity; increasing forest cover
5. Built-form details paramount
6. Planning process should acknowledge assessment of projects based on triple bottom line
7. Community Energy Plans should be pursued for efficiency and cost savings

Group 2 – Facilitator: Karen Antonio-Hadcock
Recorder: Anthony Ierullo

What do new communities look like?

- Cannot be car dependant
- Pedestrian, cycling and transit oriented
- Access to recreation/green space
- Full range of uses, i.e. entertainment, within walking distance
- Density and mixed use
- Grid network – development pattern relates to urban structure and transit
- Effective urban design to accommodate density
- Connected, healthy, safe
- Energy, Water Conservation → links to urban design
- Targets → Realistic → Achievable → Balanced
- Variety of housing types → low density must continue to play a role
- Complete communities to accommodate the complete life cycle
- Flexibility in regulations
- Beginning with the end in mind
 - o May help to promote flexibility
- Communities should be able to evolve
- Road pattern etc. should be long term
- 25/50 year outlook
- Municipalities should allow for this flexibility
- Engineering standards should be constantly reviewed and less rigid
 - o Allow for flexibility
- Street lighting, stormwater management
 - o Linked to water conservation
- Sense of place
- York Region is unique place to take advantage of local producers
- Green infrastructure should play a role
- Difference between urban natural systems vs. natural heritage system
- Natural spaces should not be isolated
- Segregated uses → move towards integrated uses → greater efficiencies → live/work balance
- Site design – street orientations, passive solar design, topsoil levels
- Too many rules in regulations – policy constraints limit innovation
- Recycling aggregates
- Green buildings → linked to outcomes
 - o Targets for all aspects of the communities
- Allow for local energy generation
- Visioning to provide direction for implementation
- There are risks to changing the model
 - o Engineering standards are linked to function and operational issues
 - o Municipalities must also consider their economics
- All parties need to be aware of their relative economics
- By-laws that regulate light use

- Greening offices

Energy

- District energy – Heating
 - o Ground source heating
 - o District ground source heating
- Passive solar design
- Energy efficiency from mixed use
- Better education (i.e. CMHC, Welcome Wagon)
- Putting the onus on the user
 - o Measurement tools
 - o Help home owners understand their role and the costs
 - o Toronto's garbage program could be an interesting case study
- Empower the user to make changes in the consumption patterns

Water Management

- Green roofs
- Reuse of grey/rain water
- Mapping and protecting natural areas
- Move beyond current efforts
- There are links between Water and Energy
 - o Obvious potential for synergies
- Onsite water management should be rewarded
 - o York Region Allocation program
- Consumers do not understand the full costs of water
 - o This would change consumer behaviours
- "Public good" should it become a commodity
- Society has a "bulk discount approach" – should be reversed

Vibrant Communities

- Roundabouts
- Rest stops
- Public realm → urban parks, trails, parkettes, small scale recreation space
- Smaller parks close to homes are effective for the home owner and link natural heritage space, which is key for larger environmental systems
- Parkland dedications should allow for neighbourhood parks
- Compact consistent communities
- Trails to promote and allow for pedestrian use
- Safety should be a key design consideration

Transportation

- Bike lanes
- Trail system
- Put alternative transportation up front in design, rather than retrofitting communities
- Transit

- Dedicated BRT
- Active uses to support transit
- Break down barriers to transit, cycling

Green Space

- Seattle model → minimum green coverage

Natural Heritage

- Green sites → Better integrate the Natural Heritage System with urban areas
- Map features to understand the role of each feature within the larger system

Obstacles

- Affordability for energy
- Flexibility in land use, zoning, development standards
- Development Charge credits for innovation
- Education in the industry
- Political interferences, cultural changes appear to be on the way
- Focus on results, rather than process
- Raise the floor across the industry
- Residents opposing density – pre-zoning corridors and transit nodes is a possible solution
- Better communication is needed
 - Realize that everyone is after the same goal
 - Dialogue is necessary

Top Ideas

1. Long term vision (property communicated to the community) [The Plan]
 - Flexible urban landscape
 - Residents understand and expect “vision” and change
 - Education
2. Shift in standards/flexibility [The Policy]
3. Results oriented approach – measurement [Measuring/Goals/Outcome Oriented]
 - End result rather than process focused
 - Full cost accounting
4. Incentives
 - Help to promote transition
 - Bonusing
5. Economics
 - Graduated costs
 - Full cost accounting
 - Education – better understanding of how costs are distributed – sustainability training
 - Better understanding of the full costs

Group 3 – Facilitator: Sean Hertel
Recorder: Dawn Seetaram

What does the optimum new community look like?

- Innovative Engineering in municipal planning
- Minimal discharge off the site (stormwater management)
- Mixed use/urban, integrated
- Engineering model based on innovation and forward thinking, instead of historical trends
- Stormwater management ponds specialized functions (cistern, green roofs, etc...)
- Use multi-functionality for open/green space
 - o Park, stormwater management, infiltration underground
- Multi-dimensional efficiency → economics, three facets of sustainability
- Public/private stakeholder education
- Design for employment in 30 years, i.e. work at home, live/work relationship, type, commuting patterns, transit, changing economy
- “Adjacency” function/land/use
- Promote active lifestyle – trails, sidewalks, bike lanes
- Integrated uses and building forms for easy connectivity
- Efficiency and sustainability on community level
- Compact community that is marketable
 - o Resolve conflict from various interests
- Energy facilities → i.e. district energy, part of community master plan
- On-site services
- Infrastructure plan include energy plan (or as part of Regional Official Plan)
- Build true mixed-use (residential/employment/retail) development especially in intensification areas
- Link intensification areas to district energy plan
- Consider land economic metrics – i.e. build 1,000,000 square feet within 1 km
- Multi-storey big box
- (Discouragement of development, i.e. street retail not economically feasible in suburban big box area) → Barrier
- Consider incentives through development charges or property tax to create desired urban form, i.e. no development charges for ground-floor retail
- Fuller cost-accounting – exemptions/active negotiations for developers (i.e. public benefits)
- Focus on public value, not just giving bonusing (i.e. density, or development bonus)
- Incorporate green building features into Section 37 of the Planning Act (i.e. Tridel Circa)
- Move towards comprehensive new standard
 - o Infrastructure
 - o Fiscal and fees (development charges, etc...regime needs to harmonize to new standard)
 - o Lifecycle for infrastructure extended → size of pipes reviewed
 - o New building code

- LEED, etc...
- Finance based on savings
 - Residential homes → fund based on retrofits, if new construction not affordable for some consumers
- Tenants/owner education → (Cost could be discouraged – Barrier)
- Risk taker should receive the incremental value (building and operation), i.e. how does Tridel capture savings in operation
- Cost benefits analysis → (developers, consumers, municipalities...)
 - How do they distribute? → (affordable housing, rental, tenure, etc...)
- Education program; multi-level to address all sector issues

Top Ideas

1. The Region and local municipalities should adopt a performance-based approach in evaluating the cost-benefits of alternative planning and building designs, especially for “green” buildings
2. The Region should establish a performance-based, revolving fund to encourage sustainable approaches to planning and building (e.g. loans for “green” infrastructure)
3. Master Plans and Development Charges for long-term/ultimate infrastructure requirements (e.g. sanitary sewers) should be modeled based on usage levels that correspond to more efficient housing forms and related infrastructure (e.g. decreased wastewater flows arising from more efficient toilets, decreased energy consumption, etc.).
4. New community criteria in the Regional Official Plan should require the submission of an “energy plan”
5. New community criteria in the Regional Official Plan should also address resident safety and health, especially for children

Group 4 – Facilitator: Michel Trocmé Recorder: Laura Atkins-Paul

- Green – open space – transition between open and urban space, tree canopy helps to make this transition
 - Now we draw lines around green space as a landscape element vs. integrated system with development
 - There should be green that is not part of development
 - “Stick trees” are not beneficial
- Old model is silo-based; need a more functional, integrated approach
- Natural greenery needs to be used vs. just a no touch green space – people should be able to use it
- Consider allocating 3% of \$ in green space to make pedestrian friendly and useable communities, with linkages to natural green spaces
- Municipalities cannot afford to maintain green space. Valleys are maintained by Mother Nature – let people get out into these areas

- Need to focus on investing in high quality green space (vs. spending \$ on a drainage ditch as a water feature)
- Need to think of the elderly and their proximity to transit
- Need to look at the transition between higher densities and single family homes
- Too much green space impacts the ability to increase density
- Interesting challenges with affordability, densities and the balance between the two. Often housing located near green space is more expensive. Should also allow for more affordable housing near green space.
- Putting high density in the wrong locations, transit is too far from green spaces – should be more accessible to transit
- Utilize green partnerships for innovative development market
- Use full cost accounting and provide better incentives for developers
- Eco-industrial parks – co-generation, energy from waste – e.g. Pearson Eco Business Zone led by the TRCA, which incorporates stormwater infiltration volume control, green energy partnerships, implemented on a large block scale; it may not look different on the ground but people are working more effectively to support green energy and waste through community partnerships
- In new development areas of the Region, need concentrations of use in the community – e.g. work/live, transit, places of interest. Concentrations need to be closer to transit and green spaces.
- People need to wake up looking at green space
- Stormwater management ponds do not work, should have one or two for a mega site and turn it into lakes with rowboats and recreational activities and the developer should get credit
- There are many theories on how to deal with stormwater, should use stormwater as a water feature in our communities
- Parking should be hidden in back to encourage people to walk and use transit
- Communities still need to include cars – but need to create more opportunities to get people out onto the street
- New greenfield development encourages a pedestrian safe environment but why do people still choose to use their cars
- The design of a community is key in making people comfortable on foot – need to look at addressing why – even in denser communities – they are not comfortable
- We do not need strip malls
- Parking is too convenient and shouldn't be given priority in our communities
- There is an emphasis on big box vs. smaller scale, locally focussed development
- Because of the scale of big box malls, people can't walk from store to store, they need to drive from one parking lot to another
- Need a balance between big box and local retail
- Communities should look like new communities we are building
- We need to talk about aging population and its percentage increase, and where they are going to live, walk, and what amenities they are going to use; as well as new cultures and new Canadians in terms of urban and built form
- The Province is pushing for everyone to use busses, which also contributes to congestion and pollution, need to focus on rail

How can we create new communities?

- How is community defined? It's more than just people living in a bedroom community. It's more than just our own neighbourhood – it is Regional, Provincial and National.
- We are missing the energy issue piece in developing new communities; what is the development industry and planners doing in terms of orienting houses to take advantage of passive solar, also local by-laws prohibitions around windows prevent cross ventilation
- High rise buildings are all glass blocks – glass covers both the windows and the “mechanical” sections of buildings, the development industry should look at installing solar panels on the non-window portions of buildings
- Balcony railings are made of tempered glass, these could be solar panels
- Forget green roofs. They don't do anything.
- Greater care in community design for active and passive energy
- A broader approach is needed; utilities, etc. operate independently of each other – these could be combined to take advantage of heat from sewage, water recycling, etc.
- Make more effective use of resources and “waste”
- Tie infrastructure together to work more efficiently
- Function of things like drainage swales in their current form are not effective, they can be used better and smarter by doing things like combining underground stormwater storage and soccer fields. We also need to look at the barriers to doing this and address them.
- Also need to look at how to deal with long-term ownership and maintenance – municipalities and others need to set out expectations
- Both public and private need to take ownership of stormwater management issue and work together creatively to resolve this
- Public standards vs. prescriptive standards – let engineers, architects, etc. come up with solutions
- Municipalities must use different standards to allow more green built form – e.g. paved driveways – use different standards to allow permeability
- How do we all take ownership?
- Longer term maintenance in terms of public education (e.g. maintain permeable pavement → use taxes or incentives) ...imperviousness tax for residential, commercial and industrial uses
- Functions of time and education (e.g. Smokers) it's now “cool” to have a rain barrel and bullfrog power sign on your lawn
- Municipalities need new tools and rules and incentives to encourage people to think and walk the talk.
- Need incentives and reduced costs to do the right thing
- Reality of what the development community can build and market – there is a business side to this when asking for small retail, permeability, then a percentage of the building goes up and no longer becomes possible or realistic
- We need to look at social costs outside realm of what we now look at – need to look at full cost accounting: ecosystem goods and services, stream erosion and infrastructure \$\$'s

- Need to think about a new approach to working together – e.g. school boards working with the community and developers on sharing greenspace to achieve multiple objectives
- Make permeable pavement part of subdivision agreements
- What does a new community that includes employment look like?
- Can a new community really provide enough space for the scale needed by manufacturing and industry?
- Bulk of new job being created in packaging, processing, logistics, warehousing and are run by robotics; they need big ceilings, truck access on roads, highway access etc.
- That doesn't mean the face of it can't be urban
- The *Places to Grow* prohibition of retail in these areas is a mistake, these areas could provide the “street face” to industrial areas
- Integrating housing areas are essential to have competitive businesses
- Commercial and industrial areas are not necessarily transit friendly due to lower density, so there will still be car use, especially with inter-Regional travel
- No one taking buses in these areas because transit doesn't coordinate with shift work, YRT needs to have discussions with industrial tenants in the areas they are servicing
- The bulk of new employment will be lower paying service jobs, which will need to be focussed in centres and corridors for the increased levels of transit for employees to get to work

Key Best Practices

- Alignment of multiple levels of government having the same common goal – e.g. Provincial contributions to new school construction should take into consideration multi-functional use of these buildings by the community
- Need \$ to act on sustainable initiatives
- So far experiences have been bottom up – e.g. municipalities dictate what the school board should do – funding model is one mechanism that needs to change
- Need to align all levels of government to make change
- Some approaches, including benchmarking and monitoring need to be undertaken to understand if the “green” building design is operating as it should
- Is there an accounting procedure to analyse the success of new community design pre and post development?
- Is there any benefit to the developer once this accounting is done, e.g DC credits? What is the cost benefit to the developer?
- Sustainable financing is an issue – its difficult to justify densities and affordability – so development needs to minimize density and cost because taxes don't pay their way to support municipal services
- Develop in ecological context (Gord Miller Report). The old way of building is not sustainable. Look to nature to look at carrying capacity of site.
- Water management is not just an end of pipe issue. We need to see water systems as an integrated resource and solution – how do we see rain water, drinking water and sewage as one system.

- Municipalities and the Region should give developers credit so they can pre-build in ground heat to communities during development
- Developers need to know if they will be compensated for expensive pieces of infrastructure, e.g. underground storage of stormwater that is then used on site
- Region needs to put their \$ where their mouth is
- Markham Centre – has live/work, reserve land for transit features, environment first and good “future proofing” – i.e. don’t design ourselves out of future solution
- Our gold-plated lifestyles aren’t sustainable – we need to go back to the way we used to live, e.g. an ice box really works, opening windows for cross ventilation in the summer works, but we need to accept that things won’t be as convenient and comfortable and that our lifestyle needs to change

Top Ideas

1. We need integrated policies – at all levels of government
2. We need integrated accounting and tracking at a broad community level
3. We need an integrated systems approach to infrastructure systems: water and energy → water and energy plans for neighbourhoods
4. Create development green infrastructure credits
5. Future proofing – more flexibility
6. Get out of gold standard lifestyle and comfort expectations, ease consumption
7. Accommodating density now and future proofing to allow for higher density in the future

Group 5 – Facilitator: Ronji Booroah Recorder: Paul Bottomley

- Identify clear measurable goals with specific measurable yardsticks
 - o i.e. 25 yr indicators
- Champion existing home grown projects in York Region
- Red carpet not Red tape
- Transportation targets – more people closer to more transit
- Better land use mix – employment destinations mixed better with residential
- More complete communities – live/work opportunities
- Better land use approach on corridors
- Provincial density standard of 50 people/jobs per ha too low
- High quality urban design/streetscaping
- GTA integrated Transit system
 - o Funding is key
- Have accessible community/lifestyle features/neighbourhood features
- Affordable housing within community for live/work opportunity
- Challenge – Social Shift Required
- What is the community going to look like?
- Consider health impact in community design (front and centre)
- Educate consumer on Health Benefits (Relationship to community and health)
- Educate general public including younger age groups

- Set a 5 minute standard for walk to transit in community design
- Economics → Health – Link
- 40 Intensification target is too low
 - o Market demand?
 - o Focus on shifting consumer demand
 - o Better transportation system may help
- Preference is for single family. Difficult to shift this.
- Options/Choice on housing is not there for public
- Trend for multiples exists for segments of population (i.e. first time buyers, empty nesters, seniors)
- Some cultures are used to apartments
- Look at innovative design that has range of public amenities
- Currently pay lip service to Bikes in community design
 - o Off road paths/trails should be part of community planning

Summary

- Mixed use → transit focussed environment with emphasis on better integration of employment uses and residential uses
- Notion of healthy community pedestrian focus
- Single family opportunities to participate in transit system → more car parks, etc.
- Services incorporated in community
- Require specific goals that translate Vision of community onto ground
 - o i.e. No ground related development fronting on arterial roads
 - o 200 metres within arterial → higher density built form
 - o Measure reduction in vehicle kms.
 - o Target of trip generation reduction of 75%
 - o Provide 5 – 10 minute headway in transit service on Arterials
 - o Convenience stores every 700 metres.
 - o Provide more people gathering places
 - o Neighbourhood park in centre
- Changes will be incremental over time
- Built form with multiple uses. Around nodes etc.
- Requirement for destination points for sidewalks, trails, paths
- Should also focus on infill/re-development opportunities → not just Greenfield
- Greenhouse gas indicators required
 - o Economic return
 - o Target carbon neutral communities
- Cost/benefit analysis/per dwelling/get credit for it
- Public should get credit (i.e. free transit) for changing lifestyle
- Tax parking spots → encourage transit
- Educate youth about lifestyle changes/benefits
 - o Will demand things in new communities
- Need \$ back from Federal government → (i.e. GST/land transfer tax)
- Tax Benefits to consumers who cycle/car pool – relate tax benefits to Health impact, etc.

Top Ideas

1. Have a clear Vision with goals and set clear targets (i.e. for water/energy, model split)
2. Financially attractive to all - Red Carpet not Red Tape
3. Educate general public → Continuous Cycle
 - Champion local projects
4. Stronger more detailed policies (clear firm targets)
 - Leadership → everyone on board
5. Changes to Provincial regulatory framework required
 - More balanced approach
6. Break Silos – full integrated planning (e.g. transportation, land use, environmental) for new communities