

TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL

OFFICIAL PLAN TASK FORCE

October 1, 2009

SRPD.09.086

Planning and Development

Planning

SUBJECT: Recommended Major Policy Directions for the Town's New Official Plan (SRPD.09.086)

File Numbers D10-CO-IN, D10-ST-EN, D10-ST-EC, D10-ST-HO

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this staff report is to present the Recommended Major Policy Directions for the Town's new Official Plan, based on the Environmental Policy Review, Economic Policy Review, and Housing and Residential Intensification Study.

RECOMMENDATION:

- a) That the Official Plan Task Force endorse the Recommended Major Policy Directions outlined in SRPD.09.086 and refer all comments back to Staff for consideration in the preparation of the draft new Official Plan; and
- b) That the staff report on Recommended Major Policy Directions for the Town's New Official Plan (SRPD.09.086) and appended Recommended Directions Reports (Environmental Policy Review, Economic Policy Review, and Housing and Residential Intensification Study) be posted on the Town's Official Plan website for comment until November 30, 2009.

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INTRODUCTION

For the past two years, the Town has been developing a future Official Plan (OP) Vision for Richmond Hill based on extensive public consultation through People Plan Richmond Hill and numerous background studies and papers. Recognizing the changing land use context within Richmond Hill, the OP vision is intended to direct the Town's transformation over the next 25 years through growth, development and management of its resources. Major policy directions derived from the background studies and consultation complete a key stage in developing the Town's new OP Vision and will be translated into OP policies. The purpose of this staff report is to present the Recommended Major Policy Directions based on the Environmental Policy Review, Economic Policy Review, and Housing and Residential Intensification Study Recommended Directions Reports.

BACKGROUND

Richmond Hill's integrated OP process is based on a top-down, bottom-up approach that merges Provincial and Regional policy direction from the top-down and local community input and technical expertise from the bottom-up. Building the Town's future OP vision includes the integration of three major components:

- *guiding principles* to articulate the desired goals and parameters for making land use policies and decisions;
- *urban structure* to help visualize the physical make-up of the Town over the long-term planning horizon; and
- *major policy directions* to identify how we can begin to achieve those goals (both tangible and abstract).

In March 2009, Council approved the final Official Plan Guiding Principles for the Town's new OP (SRPD.09.021). As the foundation for the new OP, these ten principles are intended to provide clear guidance and direction for the Town's new planning policies and ensure that public policies and decisions are based on what is best for the public good. The guiding principles are rooted in core directions reflective of the community's vision from People Plan Richmond Hill – complete communities, environment, economy, place-making, and connectivity/mobility (see Appendix A for Council approved OP Guiding Principles).

In July 2009, Council endorsed the Recommended Urban Structure which is the spatial framework for directing growth and determining land use in the new OP (SRPD.09.036). By envisioning the Town through a series of policy and thematic layers (e.g. housing, environment, economy, transportation, etc.) – each with their own significant points, lines and surfaces - a new urban structure emerged. Elements of the urban structure were identified based on Provincial and Regional policy direction, the background studies, and input from the public. By combining the guiding principles with the spatial framework, direction for the Town's new OP Vision began to take shape - the Town must manage growth by developing an urban structure with a series of centres and corridors that promotes a compact, transit-supportive, pedestrian-friendly built form while protecting environmental and employment areas over the long term (see Appendix B for Council endorsed Recommended Urban Structure).

Based on research and analysis from the background studies and consultation, the Recommended Major Policy Directions highlighted in this report provide the goals and objectives necessary to begin drafting OP policies. These key policy directions are the building blocks in the development of the Town's new OP Vision. The guiding principles identified what is important to the community in Richmond Hill within a land use context; the urban structure identified what and where we need to focus growth, development and management of resources; and the major policy directions tell us how we can achieve that vision through land use policy. These three components combined act as the blueprint for writing the Town's new OP.

CONSULTATION

In keeping with the People Plan Richmond Hill approach, key stages of public consultation for the new OP were designed to feed into each major component of the Town's future OP vision. Public consultation workshops at the beginning of 2009 first started with abstract guiding principles, followed by a series of topic-specific roundtables, open houses and discussion forums under the three major background studies: the Environmental Policy Review, the Economic Policy Review, and the Housing and Residential Intensification Study. These topic-based consultation events included: an affordable housing discussion forum; residential intensification workshops; a stakeholder roundtable on the economic policy review; an urban structure workshop (related to residential intensification and employment); a stakeholder roundtable on the environmental policy review; and an environmental policy review open house. An additional open house on transportation was held for the Transportation Master Plan Update to help inform the urban structure.

To help lead discussions at these consultation events, a series of on-line discussion papers was developed during the background research and analysis stage of each study. The discussion papers were intended to highlight key challenges and opportunities in the Town and obtain input from the public on what they felt were the most important priorities to address. Feedback at these meetings and written submissions helped staff and consultants develop the draft urban structure for the Town as well as the background research and analysis reports, which were also made available on-line.

The next stage of public consultation was the discussion of major policy issues at the Official Plan Summit. This two-day event provided an opportunity for the community to learn about the OP process, the draft urban structure, and provide input on major policy issues through topic-based roundtable discussions on: housing; economy; urban design; intensification; transportation; environment; heritage; and parks. Highlights of the OP Summit roundtable discussions on Environment, Economy, Housing and Intensification (the three background studies discussed in this report) are included in Appendix C.

Overall, feedback on major policy issues discussed throughout the OP consultation has been constructive and generally positive. As anticipated, intensification issues related to height and density of future developments has raised some concerns, though the majority of participants have indicated support for the framework for growth and development reflected in the Recommended Urban Structure (endorsed by Council on July 13, 2009). Throughout the People

Plan process, residents and stakeholders expressed their desire for more complete communities in Richmond Hill. Aside from conforming to Provincial and Regional policy direction, Town staff and consultants have explained that intensification is needed in order to curb urban sprawl, conserve and manage our resources better, increase transit and amenities, and improve the “live-work” balance so desired in complete communities. The result has been a better understanding of the urbanizing context of the Town and trade-offs between intensification versus sprawl. Furthermore, Town staff and consultants have placed a great deal of emphasis on education and awareness by conveying to the public that there are different types and forms of intensification ranging from mid to high rise buildings, low-rise walk-ups, townhouses, infill development and secondary suites. In general, participants supported the idea that the highest forms of intensification at an appropriate scale would be directed to locations serviced by rapid transit such as the Regional Centre and Regional Corridors. Participants were also receptive to images of redevelopment and infill projects reflecting good design/aesthetics, pedestrian-friendly compact form and mixed use developments. As with other components of the OP vision, public input was considered in the preparation of the major policy directions.

RECOMMENDED MAJOR POLICY DIRECTIONS

The recommended Major Policy Directions outlined below provide guidance on the goals and objectives necessary to begin drafting the Town’s new OP. The recommended Major Policy Directions are synthesized from the Recommended Directions Reports prepared by the consultants retained to complete the Environmental Policy Review (Senes Consultants), the Economic Policy Review (Hemson Consulting), and the Housing and Residential Intensification Study (GHK International). These major policy directions speak to how the Town’s transformation over the next 25 years can and should take place - through a sustainable approach to growth and development that integrates the Town’s urban and natural landscapes and leads the way through innovation in environmental, economic, and housing land use policy. The Recommended Directions Reports referred to in this staff report are included in Appendix D, E, and F. Previous recommendations from the Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy and Richmond Hill Regional Centre Design and Land Use Study will be integrated with applicable policy directions for those areas. In subsequent reports, additional policy direction will be brought forward for transportation, parks, urban design, heritage, infrastructure, and other policy study areas (e.g. Section 37, institutional uses) in the fall of 2009. These additional reports will fill out the remaining policy directions required to draft the Town’s new OP.

A) ENVIRONMENT

Building a Holistic Environmental Policy Approach

Through the People Plan process we heard that residents want the Town to provide leadership and innovation in environmental protection and management. Provincial and Regional policy directs the Town to protect and enhance the environment over time and in order to do this, the Town needs to expand its environmental policy approach. The Town’s existing environmental policy approach is rooted in protecting the natural environment by separating it from the built-up

area. In order to protect and enhance the Town's environment as Richmond Hill becomes a more mature, urban area, a holistic environmental policy approach is recommended. The recommended holistic environmental policy approach will:

- Protect what is protected today (in both Town, Provincial, and Regional policies/plans); and
- Improve the Town's environmental policies by providing direction for how the system will be enhanced, restored, and actively managed over the time horizon of the new OP.

The recommended holistic approach is rooted in integrating the built and natural environments, harnessing the process of urbanization as a positive force on the landscape. This new approach will allow the Town to position itself as:

a leader in environmental protection and management by protecting, enhancing, restoring, and actively managing the environment through the process of urbanization.

The recommended Major Policy Directions that will be used to build the holistic environmental policy approach differ from those outlined in the Town's current OP. Whereas the Town's existing policies simply protect the environment by designating environmental features and functions, the recommended holistic environmental policy approach will focus on:

1. Planning a connected Greenway System;
2. Managing the Greenway System over the long-term;
3. Creating a more sustainable Richmond Hill;
4. Providing clarity and certainty through land use policies; and
5. Providing visible leadership in environmental protection and management.

Planning a Connected Greenway System

Provincial and Regional policies direct the Town to plan for a connected Greenway System. The Greenway System is envisioned as the overarching framework for the Town's new environmental policies, protecting environmental features and functions that must be protected and connecting these features and functions with linkages among stormwater management ponds, parks and other public lands, streetscapes/boulevards, and rural (or countryside) areas on the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM). From a policy perspective a comprehensive Greenway System will allow the Town to move from the existing "patchwork quilt" of environmental policies developed over numerous decades, to a set of harmonized, consistent policies. The Greenway System will protect a large portion of the Town's landmass in a green and/or open space condition for the benefit of future generations (see Appendix D). The recommended policy directions for the Greenway System include:

- Identifying a connected Greenway System;
- Protecting environmental features and functions that must be protected (under Provincial and/or Regional policies) as part of the Greenway System, including all lands within the ORM Natural Core, ORM Natural Linkage, and ORM Countryside designations, all lands within the Greenbelt Plan area, and all habitat of Species at Risk (identified by the Province);

- Carrying forward and including all environmental lands designated by the Town's existing OP/OPAs as part of the Greenway System (e.g. all lands within Environmental Protection Area, Open Space, Hazard Land, Parkway Belt West Plan, and other similar environmental designations);
- Carrying forward all existing Special Policy Areas (an area within a community that has historically existed in the floodplain and where site-specific policies provide for the continued viability of existing uses) as part of the Greenway System;
- Identifying Special Study Areas which may or may not add lands to the Greenway System subject to further study; and
- Protecting contiguous linkages among stormwater management ponds, parks and other public lands as part of the Greenway System.

Managing the Greenway System over the long-term

To begin enhancing the Greenway System, the Town must commit to managing the system over the long term. In order to maximize resources, recommended management policies for the new OP must be strategic measures that will allow the Town to channel its efforts towards a common goal. Based on what we have heard through the People Plan process, what we know about Richmond Hill's environment today, and existing Provincial and Regional policy direction, three recommended management directions have been identified to enhance the Greenway System over time:

- ***Restoring*** the Greenway System (e.g. by improving natural cover, biodiversity, or habitat either through the development process or through a publicly initiated capital project);
- ***Improving Connectivity*** (e.g. by creating new linkages or improving existing linkages either through the development process or through a publicly initiated capital project); and
- ***Protecting groundwater features and functions*** throughout the Town (e.g. by incorporating appropriate watershed-scale planning policies, carrying forward the Town's ORM Conservation Plan conformity amendment (OPA 218), requiring sustainable development techniques, as outlined below).

Creating a More Sustainable Richmond Hill

Sustainable development techniques are an essential component of integrating the built and natural environments and enhancing the Greenway System over the long-term. By improving the quality of built form and site design within Richmond Hill, the Town can directly affect the impact of urbanization on the environment. Provincial and Regional policy provides direction for the Town to require and encourage minimum sustainable development measures. The Draft Regional OP (ROP) requires that certain uses be built to varying sustainable development standards over the next 25 years (i.e. the draft ROP includes policies which require that new buildings in York Region's new communities and Regional Centres and Corridors be constructed to LEED or alternative equivalent standards).

In July 2006 Council directed Staff to “include principles and policies related to implementing measures of Smart Growth and LEED Buildings in the Town’s new OP” (SRPD.06.107). In May 2007 Council approved the Sustainable Design and Construction Policy for Town Facilities (SREPW.07.048), and in January and June 2008 Council endorsed the draft final Rouge River Watershed Plan (SRPRC.08.06) and draft final Humber River Watershed Plans (SRPRC.08.45) as guiding documents. Given this direction, the recommended sustainable development directions for the new OP include:

- Requiring sustainable development techniques for the following types of development (as directed by the Draft ROP):
 - all new mid and high-rise residential, mixed-use, major office, commercial, and institutional development;
 - all new ground-related residential units; and
 - all new residential, mixed-use, commercial, major office, and institutional development in the Regional Centres and Regional Corridors.
- Establishing phasing policies over time to increase the minimum sustainable development standard required for the types of development outlined above (as directed by the Draft ROP);
- Requiring sustainable development techniques for all new public buildings with a gross floor area over 500 m² (as outlined in the Council-approved *Sustainable Design and Construction Policy for Town Facilities*);
- Requiring that approved secondary plans that are not completely built within the designated greenfield area be re-examined to achieve 50 residents and jobs per hectare in the developable area (e.g. West Gormley, North Leslie) as directed by the Draft ROP;
- Encouraging that secondary plans and subdivision plans within the designated greenfield area that are not approved be developed in accordance with the Draft ROP complete and vibrant communities policies (as directed by the Draft ROP);
- Encouraging landscape adaptation and mitigation design measures where appropriate throughout the Town to proactively address the impacts of climate change (e.g. planting species tolerant to fluctuations in water levels; incorporating bioswales, permeable pavers, and other water retention devices in site design; incorporating greywater recycling/irrigation systems in site/community design; using bio-indicator species to monitor landscape-scale changes to the environment);
- Requiring sustainable site, landscape, and stormwater management design for ground-related development as recommended in the Rouge, Humber, Don, and East Holland River Watershed and Sub-Watershed Plans and their supporting documents to ensure that groundwater features and functions are protected and that the water balance within the portions of these watersheds in Richmond Hill is maintained and improved through the urbanization process;
- Encouraging sustainable development techniques beyond the above Town-wide (e.g. green roofs, white roofs, street tree planting, community gardens, urban and near-urban agriculture).

Providing Clarity and Certainty through Land Use Policies

Through the *People Plan* process we heard that residents and stakeholders want the Town's new environmental policies to provide clarity and certainty in terms of what is anticipated within and adjacent to the Greenway System. To provide clarity and certainty, the Town must harmonize the existing environmental policies developed over numerous decades to a new set of policies that protect and enhance the Greenway System consistently Town-wide. In order to ensure consistent environmental policies Town-wide, the recommended environmental land use directions for the new OP include:

- Formulating environmental land use policies based on the most current legislation requirements that apply to the Town including:
 - Carrying forward the policies outlined in the Town's ORM Conservation Plan conformity amendment (OPA 218);
 - Harmonizing the existing environmental policies for the settlement areas on and off the ORM with the most recent environmental policies in force or adopted at the time of the drafting of the new OP and incorporating new policies to provide flexibility for small-scale developments while maintaining the intent of the new harmonized policies;
 - Expanding the application of the "ORM Natural Core" designation, which applies to core natural features and functions within the central corridor of the ORM (which includes lands on the ORM outside the Town's settlement area) to core natural features and functions outside of the central corridor of the ORM that must be protected under Provincial or Regional Policy to provide consistency throughout Richmond Hill;
 - Recognizing that Natural Linkage areas outside of the central corridor of the ORM have a different role/function from Natural Linkage areas within the central corridor of the ORM. Natural Linkage areas within the central corridor of the ORM are intended to maintain, improve or restore the ecological integrity of the ORM and/or provide regional-scale open space linkages between core natural features and functions. Natural Linkage areas outside of the central corridor of the ORM are located within the urbanizing area of Richmond Hill and are therefore envisioned to function as more urban connecting links between core natural features and functions of the Greenway System;
- Establishing appropriate and consistent Town-wide environmental policy definitions.

Providing Visible Leadership in Environmental Protection and Management

Through the *People Plan* process we heard that residents want the Town to provide visible leadership in environmental protection and management. To provide visible leadership, the Town must commit to implementing the Greenway System over the long term. The recommended environmental implementation directions for the new OP include:

- Defining the vision for implementing a holistic, connected Greenway System Town-wide; and

- Providing direction for Town-initiated policy documents, special policy area boundary modifications, monitoring mechanisms, capital projects, guidelines/detailed studies, and governance mechanisms (e.g. awards, land securement strategy, etc.) to implement the Greenway System over the time horizon of the new OP.

B) ECONOMY

Planning for Economic Opportunities in the Long-Term

Richmond Hill maintains a strong economic position in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) - its strategic location, transportation infrastructure, skilled and educated workforce and high standard of living, among other things, have made it an attractive place to do business. The local economy is well served by its business parks (comprised of designated employment land) and the Town benefits from an array of retail and commercial uses, mostly along the Yonge Street spine with concentrated nodes at major intersections.

One of the key challenges facing Richmond Hill is its limited supply of greenfield land to accommodate future employment land designations. Recent Provincial initiatives such as the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Greenbelt Plan have also curtailed expansion of the Town's designated employment land along the Highway 404 corridor. In order to sustain and improve Richmond Hill's economic vitality, the Town must adopt strong land use policies to accommodate and support economic growth and opportunities in the long-term.

Through the *People Plan* process, we heard that continued viability of the Town's local economy is a priority. Residents and businesses acknowledged the need to protect the Town's valuable employment lands, the need to diversify Richmond Hill's economic base, as well as a desire to increase "live-work" balance and access to retail/commercial amenities within the community. These goals are consistent with Provincial and Regional policy direction that sets employment growth targets for the Town and a focus on centres and corridors containing a mix of uses serviced by rapid transit.

To adapt to the Town's changing circumstances, a new approach to planning for long-term economic opportunities in Richmond Hill is needed. The future economic land use vision for the Town is for continued strong economic performance on its employment lands with an increased emphasis on its centres and corridors as a focus of economic activity. Specifically, the Economic Policy Review for the Town's new OP identifies the following Major Policy Directions:

- Protect the Town's limited employment land supply over the long term;
- Establish policies to direct appropriate economic growth within the Employment Areas;
- Encourage a more intensive use of land within the Town's Employment Areas as well as the centres and corridors;
- Encourage a better integration and diversity of retail and commercial uses as part of mixed-use intensification areas;
- Direct retail uses towards the centres and corridors, in a more compact urban form; and

- Provide direction for home occupations and live-work forms of development within the Town.

Consistent with the Town's OP guiding principles for the economy, a new approach to maximizing economic potential in the Town is recommended for the new OP that will:

1. Continue to Protect Employment Areas over the Long-Term;
2. Provide a Balanced and Diverse Range of Employment Opportunities within the Urban Structure (both within and outside of the employment lands); and
3. Support Economic Vitality through the Provision of Targets, Incentives and Infrastructure.

The following discussion outlines the recommended Major Policy Directions from the Economic Policy Review Recommended Directions Report and organizes them according to the Town's new approach to land use planning for the economy.

1. Continue to Protect Employment Areas over the Long-Term

Faced with limited land supply and increased pressure to convert employment lands to non-employment uses (e.g. residential, retail), the Economic Policy Review recommends that existing employment land designations be protected and strengthened over the long-term in order to meet employment growth targets set by the Region and the Province.

Currently, the Town's Official Plan Amendment (OPA) No. 246 contains employment land non-conversion policies designed to protect its employment lands (designated "Industrial") from re-designation and from the addition of non-employment uses, other than those permitted in the current OP. The policy specifies that non-employment uses include residential, commercial and retail uses. OPA 246 is consistent with Provincial and Regional direction that supports the designation and preservation of employment areas by municipalities for current and future uses. Under this policy, conversion to non-employment uses can only occur through a municipal comprehensive review or five year Official Plan Review where a number of conditions must be demonstrated, such as an existing shortfall in the inventory of appropriately designated non-employment generating lands and that the proposed redesignation would not adversely affect the overall viability of the employment area. Through the OP review, the Housing and Residential Intensification Study and the Economic Policy Review found that, outside of the employment areas, there is adequate residential land supply to accommodate population growth through intensification and that the projected increase in demand for retail and commercial uses could be met by intensifying the existing stock of retail and commercial development. Therefore, there is no justification for redesignating the Town's employment lands.

The recommended policy directions for protecting employment areas over the long-term include:

- Harmonizing the existing employment land designations into one general "employment area" designation for the Highway 404 employment corridor and the Newkirk employment area that clearly identifies land uses that are permitted and prohibited;
- Establishing conditions and criteria that need to be met in order to permit employment-related uses not identified in the general employment area designation within the employment area; and

- Strengthening the Town's existing employment land non-conversion policy (OPA 246) by:
 - Further clarifying the definition of "employment area land" based on the proposed "employment area" designation and the overall objective of the non-conversion policy; and
 - Incorporating additional tests to ensure that the Town's ability to meet employment forecasts established by the Region would not be compromised and that the ability of other employment uses in the area to continue is not adversely affected.

2. Provide a Balanced and Diverse Range of Employment Opportunities within the Urban Structure

Ensuring that there is a balanced and diverse range of employment opportunities in the Town will make the local economy more resilient to economic downturns and allow it to adapt better to shifts in the economy. Planning to achieve a balance and range of employment requires the identification of appropriate locations for key types of employment activity. The Town's recommended urban structure provides the opportunity to direct appropriate types of economic activity to the employment areas, the centres and corridors, as well as the neighbourhoods and to maximize employment through intensification.

Employment Areas

Traditionally, the Town's designated employment areas have provided for industrial uses such as manufacturing, processing (including the processing of information, research and development), servicing, warehousing and bulk storage of goods, and wholesaling. Given the near build-out of the Town's developable land supply, opportunities to locate future industrial uses in the Town are limited. With the availability of large parcels of land, proximity to transportation, and separation of incompatible land uses, the business parks provide an ideal location for land-intensive and industrial activities. The Economic Policy Review highlights the need to make better use of employment areas by intensifying permitted uses, incorporating sustainable design and built form in the business parks, and ensuring that the land use policies are flexible enough to adapt to changes in the economy.

The recommended policy directions for land use in the employment areas include:

- Directing and permitting employment land uses (i.e. manufacturing, processing and other industrial uses) in the employment areas, particularly those that would not be compatible with other land uses elsewhere, while allowing enough flexibility for new sectors to evolve within the same location.
- Ensuring mitigation policies (e.g. traffic, noise, pollutants) are in place to minimize impacts from employment area uses on adjacent residential neighbourhoods – specifically around Newkirk, the western portion of Beaver Creek, and along Leslie Street in the remaining business parks.
- Establishing policies to help support intensification of employment uses by:
 - Adopting alternative standards for landscaping, setbacks, and buffers;

- Enabling the shared use of facilities such as entrances, truck turning lanes, and the provision of structured parking; and
- Siting of major office buildings to maximize the potential for future redevelopment of parking areas and peripheral uses.
- Establishing urban design and streetscaping improvements to:
 - Help retain existing business, encourage renovation (rather than displacement) and attract new business;
 - Encourage transit use, walking and cycling; and
 - Create a sense of place in the Town that will work in synergy with these businesses.

Centres and Corridors

In addition to employment areas, economic activity should be directed to the centres and corridors which are planned to be compact, higher density, mixed-use development hubs and conduits that are pedestrian and transit-oriented. Given the Town's limited land supply and forecasted employment growth, intensification and higher density forms of employment will be required. The Commercial Needs Study component of the Economic Policy Review concluded that while there will be demand for additional retail space to serve the local and regional population as residential growth continues within the urban areas, it should be accommodated through intensification of existing commercial areas. In addition, the public has shown strong support for greater amenities, jobs and services closer to home as part of their desire for complete communities and achieving a greater "live-work" balance.

For each element of the urban structure, the Town must consider the unique character of each location, opportunities to maximize economic potential in proximity to economic clusters and/or cultural/natural heritage features, and determine the appropriate mix of economic uses, built form and design. Recommendations from area specific studies for the Downtown and the Regional Centre should also be taken into account as well as future studies pertaining to other elements in the urban structure (e.g. Oak Ridges Local Centre).

The recommended policy directions for economic activity in the centres and corridors include:

Regional Centre and Regional Corridors

- Establishing the Regional Centre and Regional Corridors as a focus of economic activity in addition to the Town's employment areas.
- Planning for a diverse mix of economic uses in the Regional Centre and Regional Corridors to provide vibrant, live-work-shop opportunities, including major office, commercial (including business and professional [non-major] office), retail, government, institutional, educational, cultural and entertainment.
- Recognizing the Regional Centre and Regional Corridors as the preferred location for major office uses and developing incentives to attract major office uses to these locations.
- Requiring major office developments to use structured or underground parking.
- Encouraging and/or requiring, where applicable, mixed use structures with commercial and retail uses at grade (and/or below grade in the Regional Centre) with office and/or

residential uses above. Stand alone major office buildings may also be permitted provided that there are commercial and retail uses at grade.

- Providing an overall resident to employee target ratio of 1:1 in the Regional Centre.

Key Development Areas(KDA)/Employment KDA

- For the KDAs at 16th Avenue/Yonge Street and Bernard Avenue/Yonge Street:
 - Establishing these KDAs as mixed-use service hubs with a combination of residential, office, commercial and retail amenities serving the surrounding community and future redevelopment on Yonge Street. These KDAs presently contain large, single-storey commercial and retail developments (including major retail) that could be redeveloped, intensified and integrated into a more compact, urban form of development; and
 - Requiring new development or redevelopment to be mixed-use by incorporating commercial and/or retail at grade with office and/or residential above.
- For the Employment KDA at Leslie/Highway 7:
 - Encouraging intensification of existing employment uses and mixed-use employment development that may include a combination of major office and other economic uses permitted under the Employment Area designation;
 - Directing ancillary retail to the base of mixed-use office and commercial development fronting the arterial and collector roads; and
 - Directing hotels to front along the arterial and collector roads serviced by rapid transit.
 - Residential uses should not be permitted on the Regional Corridor through the Employment Area. Similarly, any retail uses should be ancillary to the Employment Area.

Local Centres

- Outside of the Regional Centre, the Downtown and Oak Ridges Local Centres should be established as a focus of economic activity. Consideration should be given to built form and urban design to maintain the historic character of the Downtown and to create a “destination” in the Oak Ridges Local Centre.
- In the Downtown Local Centre:
 - Establishing a pedestrian-oriented, compact and mixed-use centre, with high quality design and heritage structures integrated with new development;
 - Encouraging higher concentrations of employment uses to support the existing employment in administrative, institutional, information and cultural industries, and health care and social assistance located within and in proximity to the area; and
 - Requiring retail, commercial and/or institutional uses at grade.
- In the Oak Ridges Local Centre:
 - Creating a “main street” mixed-use area concentrated on Yonge Street and King Road. Built form and design should be emphasized and any new residential development should incorporate commercial and/or retail uses at grade; and

- Creating a destination-style centre with jobs related to tourism and recreation to maximize the competitive advantage of the character of the Oak Ridges community and its proximity to the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Local Corridor & Local Development Areas (LDAs)

- Establishing the Major Mackenzie Local Corridor as an important east-west connector linking employment, commercial and residential uses.
- Recognizing existing commercial and retail uses along the Local Corridor and requiring mixed-use with retail and/or commercial uses at grade for new development and redevelopment.
- For portions of the Local Corridor within an Employment Area:
 - Encouraging intensification of employment uses and recognizing that, where sections of the Local Corridor cross an Employment Area, only employment uses shall be permitted consistent with uses permitted under the Employment Area designation; and
 - Directing ancillary retail to the base of mixed-use office and commercial development fronting the Local Corridor.
- Establishing LDAs as smaller-scale, mixed-use service hubs to serve the surrounding neighbourhoods with a combination of office, institutional, commercial and/or retail employment in keeping with the character of the LDA.
- York-Central Hospital LDA:
 - Establishing a mixed-use employment node by providing opportunities to attract other health-related industries to complement York-Central Hospital;
 - Increasing permissions for office and medical offices uses, as well as complementary commercial, retail, institutional and residential uses to correspond with employment in the area; and
 - Providing opportunities for home occupations, particularly those supporting the health-related industries.
- GO Station LDA:
 - Establishing a pedestrian-oriented centre focused on access to transit and building on the existing employment and residential uses in proximity to the station;
 - Maintaining lands within the Newkirk Employment Area for employment uses consistent with the OP's employment land non-conversion policy;
 - Ensuring mitigation policies (e.g. traffic, noise, pollutants) are in place to minimize impacts from industrial activities on adjacent residential neighbourhoods; and
 - Encouraging the intensification of employment uses, including offices uses, within proximity to the GO Station. Residential intensification in this LDA will be encouraged outside of the Employment Area.
- Bayview & Major Mackenzie LDA:
 - Establishing a mixed-use sub-centre that builds on the current commercial and retail focus of the area;
 - Maintaining the existing commercial and retail uses with flexibility to intensify over time; and

- Encouraging new development and redevelopment to incorporate a mix of uses including residential and/or office with commercial and retail uses at grade.

Neighbourhoods

Throughout the consultation, the public expressed support for live-work opportunities and professional home offices within the neighbourhoods. There was also support for population-serving commercial uses in close proximity to the neighbourhoods. This idea was reinforced by the Commercial Needs Study recommendation to retain local-serving and small-scale retail/commercial uses to serve the immediate surrounding neighbourhoods.

The recommended policy directions for economic activity in the neighbourhoods include:

- Providing for appropriate home occupations and live-work forms of development where appropriate subject to a number of compatibility criteria related to:
 - Location and function of the occupation;
 - Built form;
 - Type of occupation; and
 - Impacts to adjacent dwellings (including parking, traffic, signage and noise).
- Carrying forward the existing permissions for small-scale commercial/retail uses within the neighbourhoods for sites fronting onto major arterial or collector roads. Any new commercial developments will be required to undertake a commercial needs analysis to demonstrate that there is a need to service the local neighborhood population.

3. Support Economic Vitality through the Provision of Targets, Incentives and Infrastructure

The Economic Policy Review Recommended Directions Report states that once economic-based land use policies are in place, the Town will need to continue with its economic development initiatives and municipal support to attract and retain the type of business and development envisioned. The Economic Policy Review identifies a number of directions for economic development initiatives that the Town may wish to consider and explore further through the Town's forthcoming Economic Development Strategy. Those recommendations which have a land use planning component are presented in this staff report for consideration in the new OP as follows:

- Establishing targets to promote increased employment in the Town (e.g. activity rates in the Regional Centre and the Town overall consistent with Provincial and Regional direction).
- Establishing targets to promote intensification of employment uses (e.g. average employment densities in the business parks, higher densities in mixed-use centres and corridors).
- Exploring incentives to redevelop, design and build higher density forms of employment in the employment areas and encourage major office in the centres and corridors (e.g. establishing a parking authority and promoting access to transit, utilizing development

tools such as Community Improvement Plans and Brownfield Redevelopment and Tax Increment Financing to facilitate redevelopment and/or improvements).

- Advocating, supporting and planning for the provision of infrastructure necessary to facilitate employment intensification and attract businesses (e.g. transit improvements such as the Yonge subway line extension, expansion of GO services, and planned light rail and bus rapid transit; sustainable stormwater management and water and waste water servicing capacity and design; district energy or other alternative sources of renewable energy; and wireless telecommunications).

C) HOUSING & RESIDENTIAL INTENSIFICATION

Planning a Placed-Based Housing and Residential Intensification Policy Approach

Provincial and Regional policies direct the Town to develop strategies to manage growth and intensification and to appropriately plan for complete communities that are supported by rapid transit and infrastructure. The policies under the current Official Plan provide limited direction on where housing and residential intensification should be directed in order to promote transit-supportive development. While the current framework provides some direction for higher intensity forms of development, the policies do not direct intensification to appropriate areas nor do they speak to the creation of “places”. Places are identifiable areas that are integrated with the rest of the Town’s urban structure and which contribute to the creation of complete vibrant communities. Places are distinct, and generally draw from and enhance the local geography, socio-economic profile, natural features, linkages to surrounding areas and local materials or building forms.

In order to create identifiable integrated, vibrant and complete communities that are supported by transit, infrastructure and a mix of land uses, a place-based approach to housing and residential intensification is recommended. This approach focuses on the following recommended policy directions:

1. Directing intensification within a network of Centres and Corridors;
2. Integrating land use and design policies for the Urban Structure;
3. Ensuring compatible infill and transition to residential neighborhoods;
4. Providing policy direction for Affordable Housing and Secondary Suites; and
5. Providing community and design-based leadership in implementing housing and residential intensification.

1. Directing Intensification within a Network of Centres and Corridors

The recommended urban structure endorsed by Council defines the spatial framework for directing growth and determining land use. The urban structure identifies key areas where intensification should be directed, but not all forms of redevelopment and intensity will be appropriate universally across the intensification areas. For that purpose, a hierarchy of

intensification areas has been defined within a network of centres and corridors as a key policy direction by the Housing and Residential Intensification Study.

Each area of the urban structure within the network of centres and corridors is unique. New development and redevelopment in these areas will vary in functions, scale, height and intensity. **Figure 1A** summarizes the height and density for each element of the urban structure recommended by the Housing and Residential Intensification Study.

2. Integration of Land Use and Design Policies for the Urban Structure

A place-based policy approach to residential intensification builds on the recommended urban structure by establishing a new layer in the policy framework which integrates land use and built-form design. Each area of the urban structure is unique, and the corresponding land use and design policies in the new OP will have to be shaped to reflect the particular circumstances and uniqueness of each area.

In order to create a holistic approach to residential intensification in the new OP, the following land use and design policy directions are recommended for each area of the urban structure.

Design

The following design policy directions are recommended for each intensification area within the urban structure:

- Areas of intensification will require built-form requirements for all buildings to ensure transit-oriented and pedestrian-scaled development;
- Minimum distance separation between buildings are required to ensure that light, views, transition and privacy are maintained for adjacent neighborhoods;
- Floor plate requirements of generally less than 750m² for residential developments;
- New developments are required to incorporate transitional zones to ensure appropriate transition to residential areas and maintain light, views and privacy. Transitional zones will consist of a minimum 45 degree angular plane measured from the lot line of the adjacent residential area as well as requirements for minimum setbacks, roads and access;
- Parking and access within intensification areas are intended to serve multiple buildings and it is recommended that surface parking be minimized wherever possible and appropriately buffered from residential uses;
- Secondary Plans for the Oak Ridges Local Centre, the Yonge/16th Avenue KDA and the Bernard Avenue KDA are recommended and required by the Draft ROP;
- Detailed studies are recommended for the intensification areas along Yonge Street, Major Mackenzie Drive, Highway 7, the GO Station LDA, the Hospital LDA and the Bayview Avenue/Major Mackenzie Drive LDA to set out specific roles, ensure compatibility with the surrounding neighborhoods and appropriate integration with the existing local context; and
- Uses which detract from the enjoyment of the public realm such as automotive related uses, drive-through uses and single storey uses will be discouraged.

Land Use

The following land use policy directions are recommended for each intensification area within the urban structure. Recommendations on land use, height and density are identified for each intensification area and are summarized in **Figure 1A**.

Regional Centre

The Richmond Hill Regional Centre will be an urban environment with the highest intensity of development and greatest building heights and densities in support of the planned rapid transit and anchor mobility hub designation. The recommended land use, design and built-form policies for the Regional Centre will be recommended in a final report on the Regional Centre Study to the Official Plan Task Force in the Fall of 2009.

Regional Corridors

Yonge Street south of the Downtown

The area south of the Downtown is envisioned to intensify with mixed-use at a range of heights and densities in support of the planned rapid transit along Yonge Street. The recommended land use policy directions for this area include:

- A range of land uses including multi-unit residential, office, retail, commercial, service and institutional uses in mixed use or stand alone buildings. Townhouses should not be permitted along the Yonge Street frontage;
- A site density of 2.5 Floor Space Index for new residential or mixed use developments with the highest concentration of density directed to the Yonge Street frontage;
- A range of building heights between 3 storeys and 15 storeys in tower form;
- Buildings above 8 storeys will be permitted, provided they are located at intersections and on top of appropriately-scaled base buildings;

Yonge Street north of the Downtown

The area north of the Downtown is envisioned to intensify as a pedestrian-oriented mixed use corridor. The recommended land use policy directions for this area include:

- A range of land uses including multi-unit residential with office, retail, commercial, institutional and service uses in the base of mixed use buildings. Townhouses should not be permitted along the Yonge Street frontage;
- A site density of 2.0 Floor Space Index for new residential or mixed use developments with the highest concentration of density directed to the Yonge Street frontage;
- A range of building heights between 3 storeys and 15 storeys in tower form. Tall buildings above 8 storeys may be permitted in the area between the Downtown and the Bernard Avenue KDA provided they are located at intersections and on top of appropriately-scaled base buildings with minimum distance separations;
- In the area north of the Bernard Ave KDA, a maximum building height of 8 storeys is recommended;

Highway 7 between the Beaver Creek Business Park and Bayview Avenue

The area along the Highway 7 Regional Corridor between the Beaver Creek Business Park and Bayview Avenue is envisioned to evolve into a mixed use corridor characterized by medium density residential and employment uses which support the business park. The recommended land use policy directions for this area of Highway 7 include:

- A range of land uses including multi-unit residential with office, retail, commercial, institutional and service uses in the base of mixed use buildings. Townhouses should not be permitted along the Highway 7 frontage;
- A site density of 2.5 Floor Space Index for new residential or mixed use developments with the highest concentration of density directed to Highway 7;
- A range of building heights between 3 storeys and 11 storeys. A base building height of 4 storeys is recommended for the areas along Highway 7 in order to provide a continuous building frontage and pedestrian-scaled development;
- Maximum building heights in this area are required to comply with the flight path height regulations associated with the Buttonville airport located east of Highway 404 and south of 16th Avenue.

Key Development Areas

Yonge Street / 16th Avenue

Aside from the Regional Centre, the Yonge Street / 16th Avenue KDA will be a sub-centre for mixed use higher density development due to its proximity to higher-order transit along Yonge Street and the opportunity to intensify the existing low intensity retail uses which currently exist at the intersection. The recommended land use policy directions for this KDA include:

- A range of land uses including multi-unit residential, office, retail, commercial, service and institutional uses in mixed use or stand alone buildings. Townhouses should not be permitted along the Yonge Street frontage;
- A site density of 2.5 Floor Space Index for new residential or mixed use developments with the highest concentration of density directed to the Yonge Street frontage. An additional 0.5 FSI is recommended for those developments which integrate commercial floor space into mixed-use developments;
- A range of building heights between 3 storeys and 15 storeys in tower form with direction for a maximum building height of up to 20 storeys. A base building height of 4 storeys is recommended for the areas within the KDA along Yonge Street and 16th Avenue in order to provide a continuous building frontage and pedestrian-scaled development;
- Buildings above 8 storeys will be permitted provided they are located at intersections and on top of appropriately-scaled base buildings with minimum separation distance between buildings;

Bernard Avenue

The Bernard Avenue KDA is envisioned as a centre for mixed use which includes a mix of service and commercial uses serving the surrounding neighborhoods and future intensification along Yonge Street. The recommended land use policy directions for this KDA include:

- A range of land uses including multi-unit residential, office, retail, commercial, service and institutional uses in mixed use or stand alone buildings. Townhouses should not be permitted along the Yonge Street frontage;
- A site density of 2.5 Floor Space Index for new residential or mixed use developments with the highest concentration of density directed to the Yonge Street frontage on the site of the Bernard Terminal. An additional 0.5 FSI is recommended for those developments which integrate commercial floor space into mixed-use developments;
- A range of building heights between 3 storeys and 15 storeys in tower form. A base building height of 4 storeys is recommended for the areas within the KDA along Yonge Street and Elgin Mills Road in order to provide a continuous building frontage and pedestrian-scaled development;
- Buildings above 8 storeys will be permitted provided they are located at intersections and on top of appropriately-scaled base buildings with minimum separation distance between buildings;

Local Centres

Downtown Local Centre

As the historic centre of the Town, the Downtown is envisioned to remain as the heart of Richmond Hill providing opportunities for mixed use development at a pedestrian scale. Land use, built-form and design are outlined in the Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy Recommendations Report approved by Council in June 2009.

Oak Ridges Local Centre

The Oak Ridges Local Centre is envisioned as a focal point for the Oak Ridges Community. Intensification of the existing single storey commercial areas into a pedestrian-oriented mixed use activity centre is envisioned for this area of the urban structure. The recommended land use policy directions for this Local Centre include:

- A range of land uses including multi-unit residential, office, retail, commercial, accommodation, service and institutional uses in mixed use or stand alone buildings;
- A site density of 1.0 Floor Space Index for new residential or mixed use developments with the highest density directed to the Yonge Street frontage;
- A range of building heights between 2 storeys and 4 storeys;

Local Corridors

Major Mackenzie Drive

The Major Mackenzie Drive Local Corridor is envisioned as an important east-west connector linking employment, residential and commercial uses with long term higher order transit. The recommended land use policy directions for Major Mackenzie include:

- A range of land uses including multi-unit residential and townhouse uses in mixed use or stand alone buildings with grade-related office, retail, commercial and service uses;
- A site density of 1.5 Floor Space Index for new residential or mixed use developments with the highest concentration of density directed to the Major Mackenzie Drive frontage;
- A range of building heights between 2 storeys and 4 storeys (outside of the LDA's);

- Residential intensification and retail will be encouraged in the areas outside of the employment areas along this corridor;

Local Development Areas

GO Station LDA

The GO Station LDA is envisioned as a pedestrian-oriented centre focused on access to transit building on the existing employment and residential uses surrounding the GO Station. The recommended land use policy directions for this LDA include:

- A range of land uses including employment uses in the Newkirk employment area consistent with the economic recommendations outlined in this report, multi-unit residential, office, retail, service and institutional uses in mixed use or stand alone buildings;
- A site density of 2.0 Floor Space Index for new residential or mixed use developments with the highest concentration of density directed to the Major Mackenzie Drive frontage. An additional 0.5 FSI is recommended for those developments which integrate commercial floor space into mixed-use developments;
- A range of building heights between 3 storeys and 15 storeys in tower form;
- Buildings above 8 storeys will be permitted provided they are located along the Major Mackenzie Drive frontage, and on top of appropriately-scaled base buildings with minimum separation distance between buildings;

Hospital LDA

The Hospital LDA is envisioned as a mixed use employment node focused around health-oriented and professional medical uses. Ancillary uses that support these industries are also encouraged. The recommended land use policy directions for this LDA include:

- Opportunities for home occupations, particularly those supporting the health-related industries and to attract other health-related industries to complement York-Central Hospital while increasing permissions for office and medical offices uses, as well as complementary commercial, retail, institutional and residential uses to correspond with employment in the area;
- A site density of 1.5 Floor Space Index for new residential or mixed use developments with the highest concentration of density directed to the Major Mackenzie Drive frontage;
- A range of building heights between 3 storeys and 8 storeys provided that building mass, density and height is directed to the Major Mackenzie Drive frontage;

Bayview Avenue/Major Mackenzie Drive LDA

The Bayview Avenue LDA is envisioned to remain as a mixed use node with a commercial focus with potential to intensify and include non-retail uses over time. The recommended land use policy directions for this LDA include:

- A range of land uses including multi-unit residential, retail, commercial and service uses as well as limited office and institutional uses in mixed use or stand alone buildings;

- A site density of 1.5 Floor Space Index for new residential or mixed use developments with the highest concentration of density directed to the Bayview Avenue and Major Mackenzie Drive and frontages and lower intensity adjacent to residential areas;
- A range of building heights between 3 storeys and 6 storeys provided that building mass, density and height is directed to the Major Mackenzie Drive and Bayview Avenue frontages;

Infill Along Other Arterial Roads

While the areas within the Centres and Corridors are expected to sustain the majority of intensification at the highest intensity levels, it is expected that a lower scale of intensification will also occur along the other major corridors that should be subject to a set of criteria to ensure that development is in a form that is appropriate to the surrounding context and physical patterns. The recommended land use policy directions within these corridors include:

- Generally limiting small-scale intensification to arterial roads at intersections with other arterial and collector roads;
- A range of land uses including low-rise multi-unit residential and townhouse uses in mixed use or stand alone buildings with retail, commercial and services uses at grade;
- A range of building heights between 2 storeys and 4 storeys;
- The highest concentration of density directed along the frontage of major arterials;

3. Ensuring Compatible Infill in Neighborhoods

Physical changes in neighborhoods are expected to be minimal. Opportunities for infill in these areas will need to be sensitive to the existing character of neighborhoods and should 'fit' within the surrounding context and physical patterns. Maintaining the character of these communities is recommended for the new OP and the policy framework will need to address the transition of built-form between residential intensification areas and neighborhoods. The recommended policy directions for ensuring compatible infill and transition to residential neighborhoods include:

- A requirement that infill be subject to a set of criteria in order to ensure compatibility with the existing physical character of the community. The criteria would require compatibility with:
 - Predominant building and dwelling types
 - Size and configuration of lots along with buildings heights, massing and scale
 - Privacy, sunlight and skyviews
 - Pattern of streets, lanes and blocks
 - Pattern of front, side and rear yard setbacks
 - Landscaping
 - Conservation of heritage buildings, structures or landscapes.

4. Providing Policy Direction for Affordable Housing and Secondary Suites in Residential Areas

Provincial and Regional policies direct the Town to plan for a range of housing options and affordability. Through the *People Plan* process and through the consultation completed as part of the Housing and Residential Intensification Study, the public expressed the need for more affordable housing options in the Town and that there will be a growing need for affordable housing options for those aged 55 years and over and for younger adults over the time horizon of the new OP.

One of the ways to provide affordable rental housing options and intensify existing residential areas without changing the physical character or the existing built-form of these areas is to allow for secondary suites or “accessory apartments”. Consistent with the direction from Provincial and the Draft Regional OP policies and the need to provide a range of affordable housing options, the following policy directions are recommended for the new OP:

- That secondary suites or “accessory apartments” as a form of affordable rental housing be permitted in all residential areas subject to the following criteria:
 - That one secondary suite be permitted per dwelling;
 - That adequate parking is provided on site;
 - That the existing structure or dwelling meet all building and fire code regulations and requirements; and
 - That physical changes to the existing dwelling be in keeping with the character of the street.
- That the Town establish affordable housing targets for the Regional Centre, Local Centres and other areas within the Town’s urban structure consistent with Provincial and Regional policy direction.

5. Providing Community and Design-Based Leadership in Implementing Housing and Residential Intensification

Throughout the *People Plan* process, the public expressed interest in learning about what is happening in their community. The new OP will ensure proper implementation of the recommended housing and residential intensification policy directions through leadership in design and community-based consultation with community stakeholders and the general public. In order to provide community and design-based leadership, the following major policy directions are recommended for the new OP:

- That the Town continue to undertake community-based consultation processes for the development of secondary plans, tertiary plans, detailed development plans and block plans as they relate to the elements of the urban structure;
- That the Town implement Bonusing policies that would guide Council where it would be appropriate to approve a density bonus in return for public benefits;
- That the Town continue to apply site plan control in accordance with Section 41 of the *Planning Act* to achieve site improvements and design enhancements through the development process; and

- That various methods to promote design excellence be considered, including the development of urban design guidelines, the use of a Design Review Panel and the issuance of urban design awards to celebrate outstanding projects.

OFFICIAL PLAN VISION

The recommended policy directions outlined in this staff report represent a significant shift in the Town's approach to land use planning in Richmond Hill. From building a holistic environmental policy approach that seeks to enhance and manage the Town's resources, to protecting and planning for a range of economic opportunities, and promoting a place-based approach to housing and residential intensification, the Town's new Official Plan will provide a proactive policy framework that encourages innovative solutions and emphasizes the importance of place-making and good urban design. This approach to "building a new kind of urban" for Richmond Hill is one that represents complete, vibrant and connected communities. It would incorporate compact form, mixed-use and transit-oriented development at an appropriate scale and sensitivity to the existing context. This vision for the Town's new Official Plan will carry forward as the policies for the new OP are developed and implemented.

The notion of developing complete communities extends beyond land use planning policy and is also dependent on other land-related programs and services spearheaded by the Town and upper levels of government, such as transportation, infrastructure, parks, urban design and heritage. Whereas the focus of transportation in the past was on roads, the new OP vision places increased priority on transit and mobility. Likewise, the development of infrastructure will also take on an approach based on sustainable design and the phasing of services to ensure adequate capacity and management of resources. For these reasons, Richmond Hill's integrated OP process encompasses a number of background studies to help inform the development of the new Official Plan. This staff report, based on the Environment, Economic, and Housing and Residential Intensification Studies, is the first in a series of staff reports outlining recommended Major Policy Directions for the new OP. Recommended Directions reports from other background studies will be presented to the Official Plan Task Force in the fall of 2009 to recommend direction on other policy areas required to draft the Town's new Official Plan.

CONCLUSION:

The recommended Major Policy Directions outlined in this report provide the vision, goals and objectives necessary to begin drafting environmental, economic, and housing policies for the new Official Plan. The directions are consistent with Provincial plans and legislation, the draft Regional Official Plan, as well as key directions specific to Richmond Hill that were identified through the Strategic Plan and the Policy Context background paper for the new OP. Guided by extensive public consultation through People Plan Richmond Hill, the recommended Major Policy Directions are the building blocks in the development of the Town's new OP vision based on the OP guiding principles and the Council-endorsed urban structure. The guiding principles identified what is important to the community in Richmond Hill within a land use planning context; the urban structure identified where we need to focus growth, development and management of resources; and the major policy directions tell us how we can define that vision

through land use planning policy. Combined, these three components act as the blueprint for writing the Town's new Official Plan.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

This staff report was produced in-house. The Recommended Directions Reports appended to the staff report were produced as part of the contracts for the Environmental Policy Review, Economic Policy Review, and the Housing and Residential Intensification Study. There are no financial, staffing, or other implications.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN:

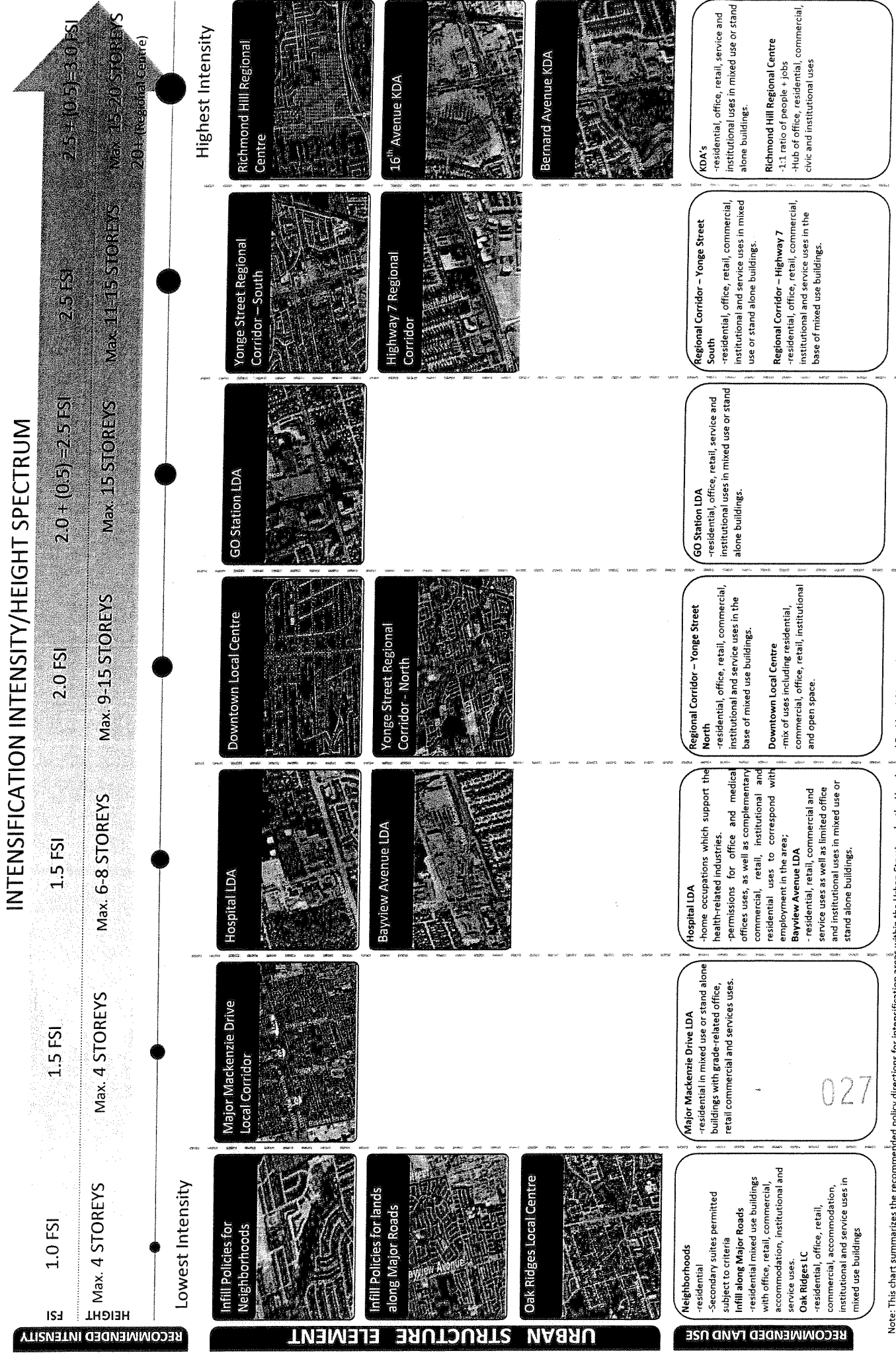
This staff report is consistent with the Strategic Plan – A Plan for People, A Plan for Change, which was approved by Council April 27, 2009.

NEXT STEPS:

It is recommended that the Major Policy Directions for the Town's new OP be endorsed and that all comments be referred back to Staff for consideration in the preparation of the environmental, economic, and housing and residential intensification policies in the draft Official Plan. It is recommended that this staff report and the appended Recommended Directions Reports (from the Environmental Policy Review, the Economic Policy Review, and the Housing and Residential Intensification Study) be made available for public and stakeholder comment and that the comments be considered in the development of the draft OP. The draft Official Plan is anticipated to be brought before Council in early 2010.

FIGURE 1.A – RECOMMENDED INTENSITY, HEIGHT AND LAND USE FOR INTENSIFICATION AREAS

SRPD.09.086



Note: This chart summarizes the recommended policy directions for intensification areas within the Urban Structure by the Housing and Residential Intensification Study and should be read in conjunction with SRPD.09.086, and the Recommendations Report prepared by GHK.

APPENDIX CONTENTS

- “A” – Official Plan Guiding Principles (approved by Council March 23, 2009)
- “B” – Recommended Urban Structure (endorsed by Council July 13, 2009)
- “C” – Highlights of OP Summit Roundtable Discussions on Environment, Economy, Housing and Intensification (May 27-28, 2009)
- “D” – Environmental Policy Review Recommended Directions Report (September 2009)
- “E” – Economic Policy Review Recommended Directions Report (September 2009)
- “F” – Housing and Residential Intensification Study Recommended Directions Report (September 2009)

Appendix "A"
Official Plan Guiding Principles
(approved by Council March 23, 2009)

Complete Communities

- Create an integrated, vibrant and diverse community that provides a mix of land uses, including a balance of housing, employment, community services, parks and open spaces.
- Direct growth to built-up urban areas with existing infrastructure and services in a network of centres and corridors.

Environment

- Protect and enhance natural environmental systems, functions and resources over the long term.
- Incorporate and promote sustainable development practices and initiatives.

Economy

- Promote economic vitality and provide for a balanced and diverse range of employment opportunities.
- Protect employment areas over the long term.

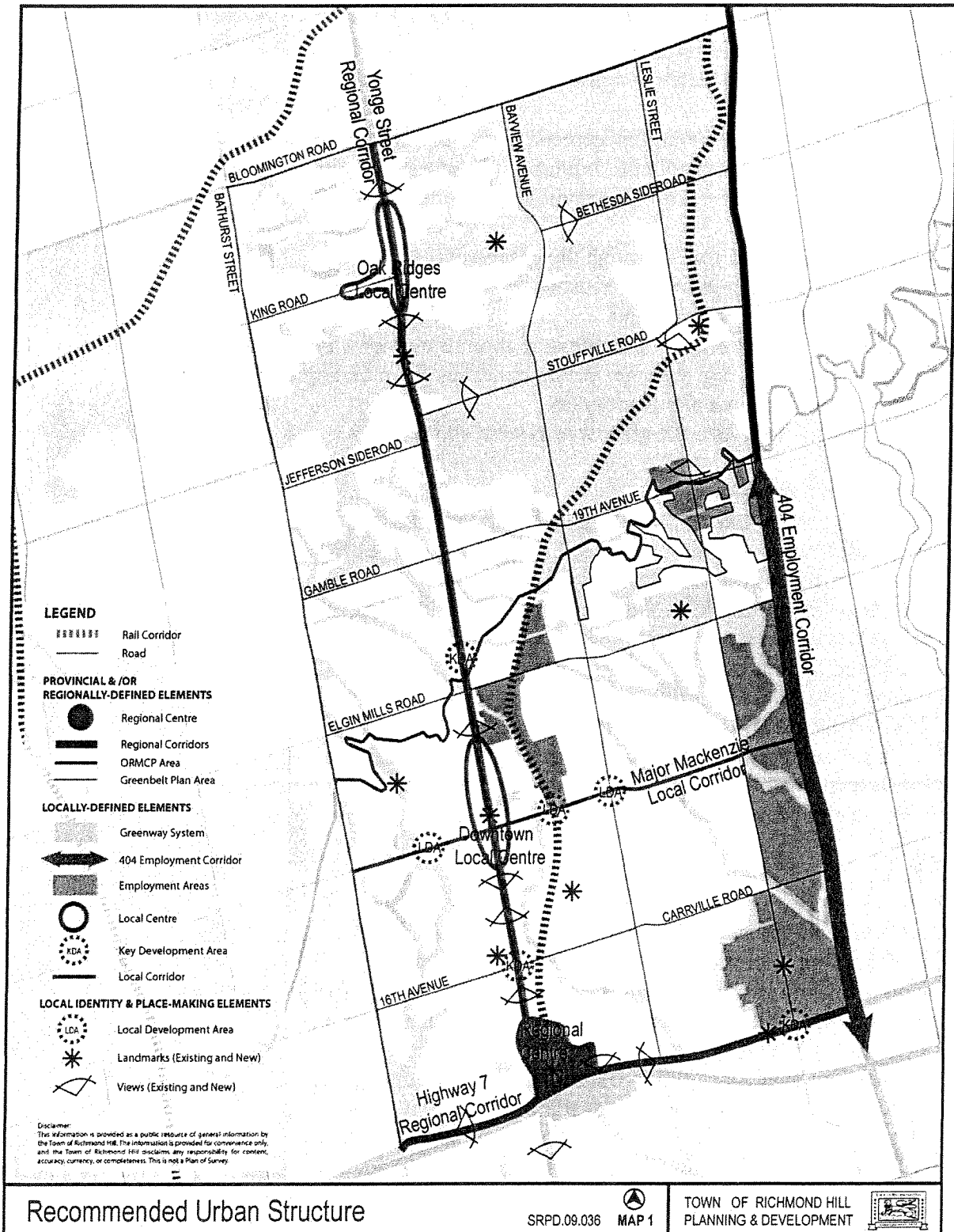
Place-making

- Recognize and enhance the inherent and unique aspects of Richmond Hill and create focal points, gateways, experiences and landmarks.
- Strive for design excellence in the public and private realm.

Connectivity and Mobility

- Plan for transit and pedestrian oriented development.
- Promote connectivity, mobility and accessibility within and between neighbourhoods, employment areas, parks and open spaces.

Appendix "B" Recommended Urban Structure (endorsed by Council July 13, 2009)



Appendix “C”
Highlights of OP Summit Roundtable Discussions on
Environment, Economy, Housing and Intensification (May 27-28, 2009)

Environment

- Sustainability within built-up areas should be enhanced by:
 - incorporating sustainable design standards, e.g. permeable pavements, green roofs, natural
 - landscaping, stormwater management, and water/energy conservation;
 - developing/enforcing policies/regulations to protect natural heritage features, e.g. buffer zones, site alteration and tree cutting by-laws, restrictive covenants/building envelopes, etc.
 - creating parks and trails through the greenway;
 - managing existing greenspaces using less water and
 - with more native species; and
 - increasing education and awareness of about the greenway and existing programs and policies in place, e.g. signage, public buildings as an example of sustainable design, promotion of native plants program.
- To ensure its effectiveness, the greenway system should also consider:
 - alternative energy;
 - various trail options for different activities and needs (e.g. separate pathways for bikes, asphalt for accessibility, permeable or natural surfaces for passive recreation, better signage, maps and trail markers, etc.)
 - more connectivity throughout the Town and with adjacent municipalities;
 - sustainable design features – both indoor and out (e.g. living walls, roof gardens);
 - interpretive/educational opportunities and facilities; and
 - community-based initiatives and public-private partnerships to encourage a sense of stewardship among local residents, children and businesses.
- Natural areas within the greenway system should be managed through the enhancement, monitoring and protection of these areas along with education to homeowners and youth about the importance of preservation.

Economy

- Protect employment lands from conversion and intensify existing employment uses through structured parking, increased transit, shared facilities, and incentives to developers/businesses to redevelop to a more compact urban form.
- Support appropriate types of commercial and retail uses within or adjacent to residential areas such as population serving (e.g. daycares, grocery stores, dry cleaning), local niche businesses (e.g. eco-tourism near Moraine), professional home occupations, and small offices.
- Major retail in the Town should be designed to integrate into the Regional centre and corridors through transit-oriented development and more compact urban form; otherwise they should be located on arterial roads away from main streets and outside of employment lands.

Housing

- Provide a range of housing for individuals at all stages of life, including housing that is affordable (e.g. smaller lots/units, condominium, co-op, rental).
- Protect existing affordable housing stock, provide incentives for developers to construct these housing types, and explore partnerships with the private and public sector.
- Permit and regulate accessory apartments to ensure safety and traffic concerns are met while providing a simple yet effective form of intensification.
- Encourage a range of accessible and flexible housing options for seniors in proximity to caregivers, medical services, amenities and other basic needs.

Intensification

- Ensure appropriate intensity and character in proposed nodes and corridors by considering the following:
 - availability and proximity to transit/stops
 - height consistent with nearby sites and/or transitioned to adjacent development
 - mix of uses (relative to location)
 - development that anchors corners of major intersections, integration of greenspace, creation/enhancement of sense of place
 - good design
 - walkability
 - people-friendly
 - community facilities/schools
 - comfortable public realm.
- To ensure compatibility between new and existing development, transition measures for intensification should consider the following:
 - shadowing
 - character of existing areas
 - pedestrian environment
 - visual appeal and functional design of new projects (e.g. setbacks, stepping, terraces, etc.)
 - streetscaping
 - infrastructure/community service needs
 - transit implications

