



TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL

OFFICIAL PLAN TASK FORCE

February 26, 2009

SRPD.09.021

Planning and Development

Planning

SUBJECT: Official Plan Guiding Principles for the Town's New Official Plan -
(SRPD.09.021)
File No. D10-CO-IN

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this staff report is to present the final Guiding Principles for the Town's New Official Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Official Plan Task Force receive Staff Report SRPD.09.021 on the Official Plan Guiding Principles for the Town's New Official Plan.

That the Official Plan Guiding Principles as outlined in Staff Report SRPD.09.021 be approved.

Contact: Maria Flores, Senior Planner (Policy), extension 5438
Paul Freeman, Manager of Policy, extension 2472

Submitted by:

Ana Bassios
Commissioner of Planning and Development

Approved by:

M. Joan Anderton
Chief Administrative Officer

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this staff report is to present the final Official Plan Guiding Principles for the Town's new Official Plan (OP).

BACKGROUND

Staff report SPRD.09.011, "Draft Guiding Principles for the Town's New Official Plan" (dated January 22, 2009) was received for information at the Official Plan Task Force meeting on February 5, 2009.

The principles for the Official Plan are intended to provide clear guidance and direction for the planning policies in the new Official Plan, and to ensure that public policies and decisions are based on what is best for the public good. The OP Guiding Principles will serve as the foundation on which to build planning policies and will give guidance to how we achieve the future land use vision for the Town.

Consistent with the Top-Down, Bottom-Up Approach¹ to developing the OP, key directions and principles recommended through the Strategic Plan, various background studies, and technical experts were considered. The draft guiding principles were rooted in core directions reflective of the community's vision from People Plan Richmond Hill:

- Complete Communities
- Environment
- Economy
- Place-making
- Connectivity and Mobility

Process diagrams are contained within Appendix A and B to illustrate how directions from People Plan Richmond Hill feed into the Town's Strategic Plan and Official Plan process and how these two documents are related.

A list of ten draft guiding principles was developed and presented to the public for consultation through the OP website and through a series of public workshops held in late January and early February, 2009 at the Oak Ridges Recreation Centre, Elgin Barrow Arena, and the Town Municipal Office. Posters and newsletters advertising the consultation were placed in the media and throughout the Town's community centres and libraries. E-mail notices were sent through the Town's bi-weekly MyRH e-mail announcements and to those on the OP Notification List. Comments at the workshops were collected and documented by staff; and comments through the on-line form and workbook were received during a two and a half week period between January 28 to February 13, 2009. A separate meeting was held with public agencies (York Region, school boards, conservation authorities, and VIVA/YRT) and staff from other departments to gather their feedback on the draft guiding principles.

¹ The Top-Down, Bottom Approach merges Provincial and Regional policy direction from the top-down and local input from the ground-up and is further strengthened by informed research through the background studies.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

Approximately 70 people provided comments on the draft guiding principles through the public workshops, agency and stakeholder consultation meeting, and on-line forms. Staff documented and analyzed these comments on the draft guiding principles in general and summarized them according to each specific theme and statement.

General Comments

- Overall, feedback on the draft guiding principles was very positive.
- Participants understood the direction from the Province and Region to manage growth within the existing settlement areas and generally agreed that, if done properly, intensification could be used to promote a more vibrant mix of land uses, support increased transit services, and maintain sensitive environmental areas.
- Comments received on the draft principles reinforced the core directions and ideas that surfaced through earlier People Plan Richmond Hill consultation events.
- Aside from comments directly related to the principles, some participants commented on site-specific issues, which related to how growth may impact their existing neighbourhoods. Comments ranged from traffic and parking issues, to housing affordability, environmental impacts, provision of services, enforcement of by-laws, the need to communicate the development approvals process, and moving the Town Hall back to the downtown core.²
- Participants were also complimentary of the Town's People Plan Richmond Hill approach to consultation which enabled residents and businesses to provide early input through the Strategic Plan and more detailed input as the process continues for the Official Plan.

Comments on the Draft Principles Themes and Statements

DRAFT PRINCIPLES	SUMMARY OF COMMENTS
Complete Communities	- Support for the idea of "complete communities" and the concept of "live, work and play."
<i>Create an integrated, vibrant and diverse community that provides a mix of land uses, including a balance of housing, employment, services, amenities, parks and open spaces.</i>	- Strong support for this comprehensive principle and the idea of balancing essential components of a complete community. - Other comments focused on capturing services related to the social and physical health of the community. - Some comments on the need for affordable housing.
<i>Direct growth to built-up urban areas with existing infrastructure in a hierarchy of centres and corridors.</i>	- Support for containing new growth within the built-up urban areas. - Comments on the need to incorporate "services", since "infrastructure" is associated with hard

² Participants were informed about the specific OP background studies underway and the opportunity to comment on discussion papers and get involved in upcoming consultation events.

DRAFT PRINCIPLES	SUMMARY OF COMMENTS
	services such as sewers and roads.
Environment	- Strong support for including environmental principles.
<i>Protect and enhance the natural environmental systems, functions and resources over the long term.</i>	- General agreement that protection and enhancement (which includes restoration) is needed throughout the Town's environmental systems and watersheds.
<i>Incorporate and promote sustainable design practices.</i>	- Comments to broaden this to "sustainable development" practices (not just the building) and support for other programs or initiatives that lend themselves to sustainable development. - Strong support articulated for the need for sustainable design features like green roofs, LEEDS, alternative energy and low impact development.
Economy	- Overall support for this core direction, but received comments on the need for a principle to speak to corporate business parks, industry and maintaining those areas.
<i>Promote economic vitality and provide for a balanced and diverse range of employment opportunities.</i>	- General agreement with this principle and the need to "promote" the Town's economy. - Support for the idea of "live-work" in the Town and promoting employment in many different ways, including home occupations.
Place-making	- General agreement and support for creating and promoting vision and identity in Richmond Hill. - Comments that beauty and good urban design need to be supported through the principles.
<i>Promote Richmond Hill's central position in the GTA.</i>	- Agreement with the idea that Richmond Hill is ideally located as a destination within the GTA, but participants questioned whether this should be an OP principle.
<i>Recognize and enhance the inherent and unique aspects of Richmond Hill's urban structure.</i>	- General support for this principle, which generated discussion on aspects unique to Richmond Hill - examples ranged from the Oak Ridges Moraine, the new theatre, and character neighbourhoods such as the Village Core.
<i>Create special places, focal points, gateways, experiences and landmarks.</i>	- General support for this principle with lots of discussion on current examples (e.g. M.L. McConaghy Centre, David Dunlap Observatory) and the potential for more (e.g. Regional Centre, Oak Ridges Community Centre).
Connectivity and Mobility	- Strong support for connections throughout the community and importance of transportation services.
<i>Plan for transit and pedestrian oriented development.</i>	- Agreement that growth and development should be linked to transit and facilitate pedestrian movement

DRAFT PRINCIPLES	SUMMARY OF COMMENTS
	through densities, streetscaping, building orientation and design, more bus stops and transit service. - Some comments suggested incorporating other transportation options such as cycling – others felt that alternative modes are already inherent in transit and pedestrian oriented development.
<i>Promote connectivity, mobility and accessibility within and between neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces.</i>	- Comments supportive of this principle and the idea of movement and getting around at various scales. - Support for the word accessibility. - Suggestions to connect to other areas of the Town such as the business parks. - Generated discussion on various modes of transportation (e.g. shuttle buses, subway, bicycle and pedestrian pathways, frequent GO service) and the need for stops at major destinations (e.g. theatre).

OFFICIAL PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Upon analyzing the comments received throughout the consultation period, staff revised and refined the list to more accurately reflect what was heard from the community. In finalizing the list, it was important to keep in mind what an Official Plan principle represents. A principle is a statement to provide direction on a matter based on what the community values. Throughout the consultation discussions, it was agreed that an OP guiding principle should provide enough direction to represent the community's vision, but remain flexible enough to enable a variety of policies and strategies over the course of the OP's 25-year planning horizon. Several suggestions for more detailed goals and objectives were also documented and will be considered during the drafting of the Official Plan.

As a result of the public, agency and stakeholder consultation, the following is the finalized list of recommended Official Plan Guiding Principles for the Town's new Official Plan.

Official Plan Guiding Principles

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.

CONCLUSION

This report presents a finalized list of Official Plan Guiding Principles developed for the Town's new Official Plan. Each guiding principle is rooted in core directions provided by the Town's Strategic Plan and informed by Provincial and Regional policy direction, the Official Plan background studies, technical experts and the community. Through a continuation of the People Plan Richmond Hill consultation process, feedback on the guiding principles was sought through a series of public workshops, meetings and on-line forms through the Town's OP website. As a result of the consultation process that has helped shape the principles, final Guiding Principles as outlined in this report are recommended for approval. Serving as the foundation on which to build Official Plan policies, these guiding principles will help set the tone for what future growth and development in the Town will look like and how it will take place.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/OTHER IMPLICATIONS

This staff report was produced in-house. There are no financial, staffing, or other implications.

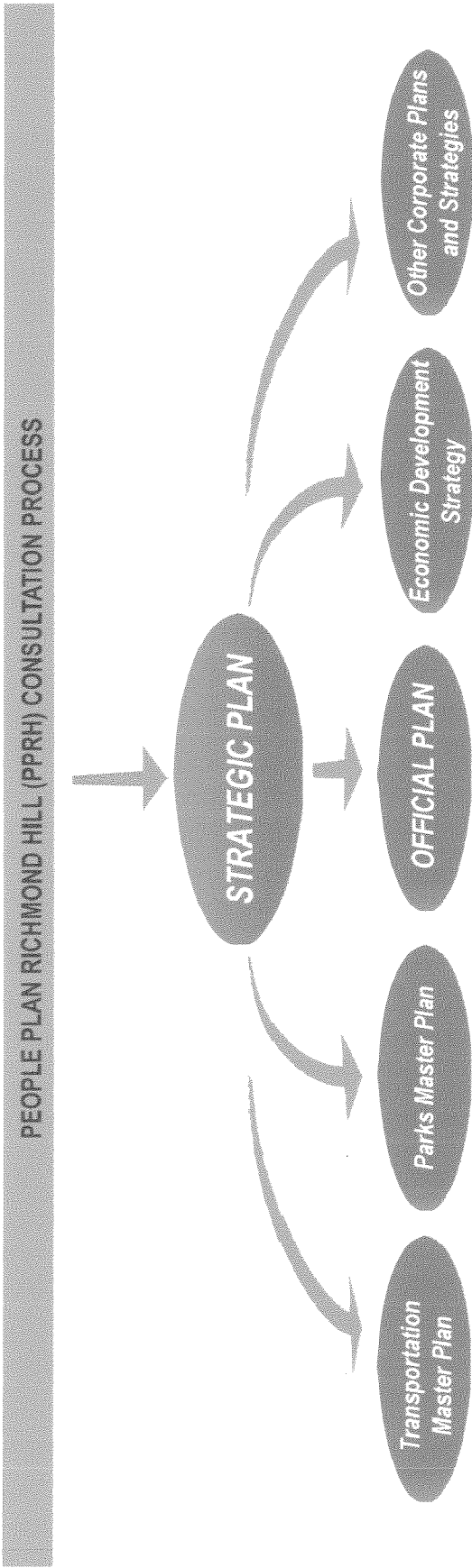
RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This staff report is consistent with key directions and goals established for the Town's new Strategic Plan.

NEXT STEPS

It is recommended that this staff report containing the final set of Official Plan Guiding Principles for the Town's new Official Plan be received for information and approved by the Official Plan Task Force.

Appendix 1 – Corporate Direction from People Plan Richmond Hill and the Strategic Plan



Appendix 2 – Relationship between Strategic Plan and Official Plan

