



TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL

OFFICIAL PLAN TASK FORCE

January 22, 2009
SRPD.09.011

Planning and Development
Planning

**SUBJECT: Draft Guiding Principles for the Town's New Official Plan - (SRPD.09.011)
File No. D10-CO-IN**

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this staff report is to present the Draft Guiding Principles for the Town's New Official Plan and describe the process for developing these principles for consultation as part of the development of the new Official Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Official Plan Task Force receive Staff Report SRPD.09.011 on Draft Guiding Principles for the Town's New Official Plan for information.

That staff be directed to report back to the Official Plan Task Force on final recommended guiding principles following the consultation with the public and stakeholders.

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 draft guiding principles for the Town's new Official Plan and describe the process for developing these principles for consultation as part of the development of the new Official Plan (OP).

WHAT IS A PRINCIPLE?

A *principle* is a basic rule that guides or influences thought or action, by stating or describing what direction should be taken on a matter. Where the OP is concerned, a principle provides the direction on the development of planning policies and land use planning decisions. It is through policy that a principle can be translated into more tangible goals and objectives. A *goal* is a broad statement about what you want to accomplish in the long-term. An *objective* is the measurable step(s) taken to reach the goal, often through quantifiable targets such as time and quantity.

As we develop the Town's new Official Plan, it is important to establish a set of principles that will guide us through the development of the OP and beyond. A set of draft guiding principles for consultation has been prepared, representing an amalgamation of ideas on what constitutes good planning in Richmond Hill. Feedback on the draft guiding principles will be used to develop a final set of guiding principles for the OP and will be reflected in the Town's planning policies. These policies will be a combination of goals and objectives that we want to accomplish as the Town's urban structure evolves towards a future land use vision.

WHAT OP GUIDING PRINCIPLES ARE INTENDED TO DO

The intent of having guiding principles for the new OP is to provide us with clear guidance and direction for the planning policies we need to develop and the decisions we need to make. The OP policies must be strong enough to withstand challenges from many directions, flexible enough to implement approaches or tools that can adapt to changing circumstances, yet meaningful enough to provide sage advice to Council, planners, and the Town's residents throughout a twenty-five year planning horizon. Put simply, if our land use planning principles are based on a solid foundation then the planning policies and decisions we make will be that much stronger.

Through Provincial and Regional policies we know what we are legislated to do and through People Plan Richmond Hill we have a strong sense of what the community values. However, in developing planning principles we must also remember to balance these directives with what we should do in the interest of the public good. The OP is the most powerful public policy document that a municipality has to guide future growth and development and meet the needs of its community. As the corporation responsible for maintaining and improving the well being of Richmond Hill as a whole, it is the Town's responsibility to ensure that public policy decisions are made not just from a strictly economic perspective, an environmental perspective or even a neighbourhood perspective but from the perspective of what is best for the public good. Based on the People Plan Richmond Hill consultation process, key findings and directions for the

Town's Strategic Plan were identified in the interest of the public good. The People Plan consultation process was established as a joint visioning approach to developing the Strategic Plan and the Official Plan and was organized to address the three pillars of sustainability (people, environment, economy). These pillars are inherent in the directions provided by the Strategic Plan and have been built into the draft guiding principles for the new OP.

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING DRAFT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To ensure that the draft guiding principles for the OP were rooted in core directions reflective of the community's vision from People Plan Richmond Hill to date, staff turned to the key directions identified in the Strategic Plan Key Findings and Directions Report. The original seven key directions were based on what was heard through the People Plan Richmond Hill consultation process. To make it more relevant to a land use planning context, these key directions for the Strategic Plan were further condensed into five Strategic Plan Directions for the OP:

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

The development of a series of background studies and discussion papers has begun as part of the integrated process to develop the new OP. These papers address the Policy Context, Urban Structure, Growth Forecasts, Environmental Policy Review, Economic Policy Review, Housing and Residential Intensification, Transportation, Parkland and Recreation, Infrastructure and Servicing, and Heritage and Urban Design. These studies/papers were designed to cover a wide range of topics or themes in order to develop a full understanding of the land use issues, planning policy direction, challenges and opportunities in Richmond Hill. Beginning with the local context, a preliminary set of draft guiding principles was synthesized from directions found in the Policy Context Background Paper, the Urban Structure Background Paper, and the Strategic Plan Goals and Outcomes developed out of the Strategic Plan Key Findings and Directions Report. Combined with further input and recommended principles from the other background studies, a comprehensive list of proposed principles was put together and reviewed against the five Strategic Plan Directions for the OP. Town staff and OP consultants representing a wide range of expertise were able to synthesize and condense the proposed list into the draft guiding principles for consultation.

The process for developing the draft guiding principles mirrored the top-down, bottom-up approach being used to develop Richmond Hill's Official Plan. This approach merges policy direction from the top-down and local input from the ground-up and is further strengthened by informed research through the background studies [Refer to Appendix 1 and 2 for diagrams on the Top-down Bottom-up Approach]. The draft guiding principles were prepared to help address planning policy and land use challenges and opportunities identified for Richmond Hill. Public consultation on the draft guiding principles will help solidify direction for the OP policies and will help to further define the future urban structure.

DRAFT GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE OFFICIAL PLAN

The following is the synthesized list of draft guiding principles recommended for consultation.

Complete Communities

- 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.
- Direct growth to built-up urban areas with existing infrastructure in a hierarchy of centres and corridors.

Environment

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

Economy

- Promote economic vitality and provide for a balanced and diverse range of employment opportunities.

Place-making

- Promote Richmond Hill's central position in the GTA.
- Recognize and enhance the inherent and unique aspects of Richmond Hill's urban structure.
- Create special places, focal points, gateways, experiences and landmarks.

Connectivity and Mobility

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

CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The OP Guiding Principles will serve as the foundation on which to build planning policies for the Town and will determine how we achieve its future land use vision. Given the significance of this task, it is important to ensure that the draft guiding principles proposed for the Town's new OP receive support and endorsement from a wide variety of stakeholders including: the community; development industry; Town staff; public agencies; and Council. These stakeholders are the people that will collectively be responsible for implementing future growth and development in Richmond Hill.

There are two ways to build the most prominent building in town. You can tear down everyone else's building, or you can build a strong foundation with good design and use great support.

- Based on a quote by David DeNotaris

Staff will be consulting with the public on the Draft Guiding Principles through a series of workshops to be held at the end of January and early February, 2009. Based on the consultation, staff will develop the final list of guiding principles for the Official Plan and will report back to the OP Task Force.

CONCLUSION

Town staff have gone through an extensive process to develop draft guiding principles for the OP based on: Provincial and Regional Policy direction; local input and feedback to date through the People Plan Richmond Hill consultation process; and recommendations provided by Town staff and consultants conducting background studies for the OP. Each draft guiding principle is rooted in core directions provided by the Town's Strategic Plan, which is based on what was heard from over 2,000 residents and businesses in Richmond Hill. Staff will be conducting public consultation sessions on the draft principles in late January and early February in order to establish a final set of guiding principles for the Town's new Official Plan.

Developing planning policy for the OP is a public policy process in itself. This means that the process of formulating and implementing OP policies should be about making good decisions in the interest of the public good. Coming up with the right OP guiding principles by which to base those decisions is significant, as these 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 established for the Town's new Strategic Plan.

NEXT STEPS

It is recommended that this staff report on Draft Guiding Principles for the Town's new Official Plan be received for information by the Official Plan Task Force. Staff will be consulting on the draft principles as part of the ongoing People Plan Richmond Hill consultation process. The results of the consultation will be used by staff and consultants to establish a final set of Official Plan Guiding Principles.

Appendix 1 – TOP-DOWN BOTTOM-UP APPROACH FOR THE OP



