

Sustainability Tools for New Developments

Program: Green Municipal Funds, Places to Grow Implementation Fund

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

From 2010 to 2014, Richmond Hill used funding from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund and Ontario's Places to Grow Implementation Fund to develop and integrate sustainability tools into the municipal planning process.

The vision of Richmond Hill's Official Plan is "Building a New Kind of Urban". Part of what this means is developing in a more sustainable way. To help realize this vision, Richmond Hill joined together with the Cities of Brampton and Vaughan to develop a consistent set of sustainability tools to be used as part of the planning process.

The first phase of the development of sustainability tools resulted in sustainability guidelines that are applicable to new developments. The second phase built on the sustainability guidelines and proposed over 45 targets that could be achieved through the municipal planning process. These targets were made available in a table format as well as an interactive digital 'Implementation Tool'. Phases One and Two were funded by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Green Municipal Fund with contributions from each of the three municipal partners.

The final phase of work on the sustainability tools took the policy and targets and incorporated them into Richmond Hill's planning processes. Workshops were held so representatives from the development industry, planners, commenting agencies and other Town departments could become familiar with the tools. A monitoring tool was developed to track the sustainability scores of planning applications over time and a cost-benefit analysis of the different point thresholds was undertaken. The final phase was funded in part by the Places to Grow Implementation Fund.

Project Highlights:

Shared federal, provincial and municipal investment in improving the sustainability of new development in Richmond Hill.

Features of sustainability tools:

- Clear and transparent resource to participants in the planning process
- A menu of sustainability targets to pick and choose from
- Ability to filter which targets are most appropriate for a specific application type
- Point based targets with different thresholds (Mandatory, Recommended Minimum, Aspirational)



The sustainability tools, approved by Richmond Hill Council, are now being applied to different types of new planning applications in Richmond Hill such as site plans and plans of subdivision. This project was the recipient of a 2014 Excellence in Planning Award from the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) in the Research/New Directions category.



Richmond Hill, where people come together to build our community.

PROJECT FACTS



Project Budget:	\$272 500
Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Funds:	\$ 83 000
Ontario Places to Grow Implementation Fund:	\$ 22 250
Municipal Partner Contributions:	\$ 95 000
Richmond Hill Contribution:	\$ 72 250
Completion Date:	March 2014

PROJECT BENEFITS

Together with municipal partners and participants in the planning process, and supported by innovative funding, Richmond Hill has integrated sustainability into planning practice using a new approach.

Integrating sustainability into the planning process

Richmond Hill has translated the idea of sustainability into planning practice by promoting a ‘menu’ of smaller sustainability actions that, when repeated over and over again, will make a significant improvement to the function of our community. Refining the planning process to focus on these small actions up front has the potential to transform and advance both municipal staff and the development industry’s thinking of what a *new kind of urban* looks like in Richmond Hill.

Unique funding and collaboration model

Working across municipal jurisdictions in the first two phases of the project, supported in part by the FCM Green Municipal Funds, allowed the leveraging of resources towards a common purpose – the establishment of consistent sustainability guidelines and targets. The final phase of the project, supported in part by the Ontario Places to Grow Implementation Fund, took the project from vision to action, incorporating the targets into Richmond Hill’s planning processes so they could be applied and influence new planning applications.



Clear, consistent and transparent process

Workshops with the development industry, commenting agencies and other participants in the planning process were held throughout the development of the sustainability tools. The development industry’s desire for a flexible approach resulted in a ‘menu’ of targets to pick and choose from, while still giving the municipality the certainty that a minimum sustainability performance would be met through the use of a “threshold score” that applications must meet. The new tools benefit all partners in the planning process by clarifying what the municipality wants up front, creating the potential for a shorter planning review process.



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