

Requesting Planning and Regulatory Services / Policy Planning

Sybelle von Kursell, Manager, Policy

Business Case – Growth & New Capital Official Plan Update

Background

Under the *Planning Act*, as amended, municipalities are required to review and update their Official Plan within 10 years of it coming into effect (i.e. by 2022 for the City of Richmond Hill), and every 5 years thereafter. This mandatory review is to ensure that municipalities update their Official Plan to reflect changes in provincial planning documents and to ensure that the Official Plan remains current within the local context. Presently, the City is undertaking many studies and initiatives within the next couple of years that contribute to the work that is needed to complete an Official Plan Update. These include the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan, the Comprehensive Zoning By-law, the Community Energy and Emissions Plan, Transportation Master Plan (TMP), the Urban Master Environmental Services Plans (UMESP), the Affordable Housing Strategy, Sustainability Metrics update, and an update to the Development Charges By-law (DC By-law). All of these aforementioned studies and plans inform and implement the policies of the Official Plan. The Official Plan Update process overall is explained in staff report SRPRS.19.053 (see October 2, 2019 Committee of the Whole).

While the majority of the aforementioned projects are presently funded through various capital and operating budget line items, there is a need to allocate capital budget funding specifically for the updating of the Official Plan, for undertaking technical studies beyond the scope of currently funded specific projects, and for providing a cohesive public engagement process.

Project Description

The Official Plan Update is anticipated to take 2 years, starting in late fall 2019 and concluding in summer of 2021. At the conclusion of the Official Plan Update project, Council will be able to adopt an amendment to the Official Plan that will address all matters of conformity with respect to Provincial and Regional policy, and will ensure that the Official Plan provides a clear vision for planning and development to 2041. The policy direction within the updated Official Plan will inform other land use planning related projects such as the TMP, UMESP, the Comprehensive Zoning By-law and the DC By-law update. Ultimately, the updated official plan will provide guidance for the public to understand the City's growth and development vision and will facilitate new development that is compliant with the Official Plan to occur in an expeditious manner.

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Capital Forecast

Funding for the Official Plan has been allocated to the 2020 Capital Budget within the Ten Year Capital Forecast. The amount budgeted is \$450,000.

Comparative Analysis

Undertaking Official Plan updates in a comprehensive manner with other land use planning related initiatives is a common practice among Ontario municipalities, as it is mandated by the province through the policies of the Provincial Policy Statement. York Region is in the midst of its Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) which includes undertaking its Official Plan update alongside updates to its Master Water and Waste Water Plan as well as its Transportation Master Plan. The Region is undertaking this work largely in-house and is relying on consultants to undertake discrete research and analysis throughout this process.

Alternatives

As noted above this Official Plan Update is being undertaken in combination with several other planned or in process initiatives. As such, staff have found many efficiencies by appropriately timing and staging this project. Should the proposed additional funding not be provided, more in house resources will be required which would mean that the timing of this project and the associated projects may be prolonged, or that other business processes may have to be delayed in order for staff to conduct the additional work.

Project Costs and Benefit

Specific to the budget request, there is a need for a public engagement consultant that has experience in conducting planning related public/stakeholder facilitation workshops, website design, graphic design, and large-scale consultation project management. The funding required for the consultant is anticipated to be \$200,000, to:

- prepare a brand for the OP Update, including a logo,
- prepare a comprehensive consultation plan that connects the public/stakeholder engagement components of the OP update with the other land use planning related initiatives (i.e. TMP and CZBL) to reduce consultation fatigue among the public and stakeholders,
- prepare a web-page for the Official Plan update, inclusive of info-graphics, texts and photographs, that:

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- explains the official plan process and how it relates to other City initiatives;
- is updated regularly to advise the public of status and engage them in events; and
- seeks feedback on matters as the update process continues;
- working with communications staff, identify social media platforms to promote the Official Plan update and engage the public, prepare social media posts/videos as appropriate,
- working with staff, prepare meaningful on-line surveys for the public to respond to various matters related to the MCR, inclusive of photos, info-graphics, and mapping,
- perform facilitated public workshops (approximately 11 - 14) to address common thematic and geographic specific elements of the sub-projects of the MCR, including a workshop that is specific to the Yonge and Bernard KDA as early as December 2019, and
- provide summary memos of each consultation event outlining lessons learned, common themes, and providing recommendations regarding next steps and policy and/or mapping changes to consider as part of the Official Plan update.

Funding is also required to retain contract staff within the Policy Team. The funding required for such staff is approximately \$200,000. These additional staff, who currently reside in the Department and are covering a maternity leave and a secondment, will be responsible for various aspects of the update, which include:

- conducting research and analyse regarding updates to the OP related to provincial and regional conformity;
- preparing a digital model for the whole of the City to assist with developing a city-building vision for Council, public and stakeholders;
- working with the public engagement consultant, preparing on-line surveys and analysing the survey results;
- along with the engagement consultant, participating in public workshops;
- leading stakeholder discussions
- intake and processing of all correspondence received from the public and stakeholders regarding the Official Plan Update (including designing and populating a database to ensure all comments are meaningfully recorded and addressed);
- leading technical advisory teams on specific components of the OP Update;

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- preparing mapping to inform public consultation and updates to schedules of the Official Plan;
- drafting proposed policy and mapping changes that are responsive to the research, analysis and feedback received;
- preparing staff reports for Committee and Council's consideration;
- drafting an overarching amendment to the Official Plan for public and stakeholder feedback;
- conducting a statutory Open House;
- preparing a presentation for a statutory public meeting; and
- finalizing the amendment for Council's consideration and adoption.

An additional \$50,000 is required to undertake technical work that may need to be undertaken to address emerging technical issues that arise during the MCR process and to cover costs associated with marketing and promotion materials that will assist with the public consultation process.

Benefits

Updating the Official Plan ensures that the City's planning vision and planning policy direction is current and based on a meaningful consultation process, which is responsive to public feedback as well as policy direction from both the Province and the Region of York. Updating the policies and schedules of the plan clarifies to all stakeholders how and where the City is intended to grow to 2041. Retaining public engagement consultants and contract staff to assist with the update, ensures that the OP Update as well as the other related projects are undertaken within the timelines committed for these projects. Undertaking the Official Plan update in a timely manner positions the City well to attract new development, as the OP and associated planning documents will be well aligned and the City's new vision will be seamlessly implemented.

Funding Source

This project would be funded by the General Government DC Reserve Fund (90%) and Cash to Capital Reserve Fund(10%).

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Conclusion

The 10-year Capital forecast anticipated \$450,000 in order to undertake this City's Official Plan update starting in 2020. This Business Case provides a summary of how this funding will be used to update the Official Plan. The funding will ensure a comprehensive public engagement process over the next two years and that there is sufficient staff within the Policy Team to undertake the update to the Official Plan in a timely manner.