



Staff Report for Council Meeting

Date of Meeting: December 8, 2021

Report Number: SRPI.21.118

Department: Planning and Infrastructure

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: **SRPI.21.118 – Request for Endorsement: Official Plan Update Key Directions**

Purpose:

The purpose of this staff report is to seek Council endorsement of the Key Directions Report for the Official Plan Update, which is provided in Attachment 1 to SRPI.21.118.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Staff Report SRPI.21.118 be received, and that Council refer all comments back to staff; and
- b) That the Key Directions Report appended to SRPI.21.118 as Attachment 1 be endorsed by City Council, and that staff utilize the key directions to guide the update to the City's Official Plan in support of the City's 2041 planning vision.

Contact Person:

Brian DeFreitas, Senior Planner, (Policy Planning), 905-771-5431

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure

Approved by: Mary-Anne Dempster, City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the report's approval are attached.

Background:

This staff report provides an update to Council with respect to the Official Plan ("OP") Update process and more specifically provides information on the proposed Key Directions Report for the Official Plan Update (see Attachment 1). With Council's endorsement, which is sought through this staff report, the Key Directions Report will inform the next phase of the Official Plan Update process as a foundational document

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for the preparation of future amendments to the City's OP. The forthcoming amendments that implement the proposed key directions will collectively form a full update of the City's OP. Consultation on the amendments will occur in Phase 3 of the update process, which is expected to commence in 2022.

What are Key Directions and why are they important?

The Key Directions Report provides a comprehensive set of directions for how and in what ways the Official Plan should be updated to meet Provincial, Regional and Local expectations. It provides a critical path forward in the City's OP Update process. These key directions are important because collectively highlight the total scope of work that is required to complete the update of the City's OP.

What Key Directions are being proposed for the Official Plan Update?

In essence, the key directions are three-fold:

- 1) Articulate a 2041 vision for city planning;
- 2) Establish an urban structure that:
 - (i) directs the majority of growth to a network of Centres and Corridors;
 - (ii) supports economic development by enabling more jobs within the City; and
 - (iii) ensures development is environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable; and
- 3) Address key issues affecting the City, including:
 - i. housing affordability;
 - ii. out-migration of residents for jobs;
 - iii. climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
 - iv. accommodating a diversity of lifestyles among city residents and workers.

Accordingly, the key directions touch on several important themes (highlighted below in bold text) and provides:

- Direction to update the City's **vision** and **urban structure** to reflect new growth areas and major transit station areas where growth will be focused to support investments in public transit;
- Direction on **built-form** to continue the OP's objective of "place-making" and to consider the appropriate contexts that affect built form (i.e. the physical, environmental, social, and economic attributes of a community that makes it a place that people "want" to live, work, and play);
- Direction on planning for the City's need to increase the supply of **employment** opportunities by consulting with the business industry and considering policy changes that attract and retain investment;
- Direction on how the City can address the impacts of a **changing climate** through land use planning;

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- Direction to enable the use of tools provided in the *Planning Act* to improve and enhance **implementation** of Official Plan policies geared to the provision of affordable housing and protection of the natural environment, and to improve public engagement in general and with Indigenous communities; and,
- Direction for **technical** updates to the OP to clarify policies and to address conformity with Provincial Plans and the Regional Official Plan.

What is the Content of the Key Directions Report?

The proposed key directions respond to themes and questions arising from the Official Plan Update initiation staff report in November 2019 (refer to [SRPRS.19.053](#)). The themes include: *Urban Structure, Built Form, Intensification, Employment, Climate Change, Implementation, and Technical.*

The Key Directions Report is organized as follows:

- The **Executive Summary** provides the purpose of the report, highlights high-level key directions, and outlines next steps;
- **Section 1: Introduction** provides the 2041 city planning vision and explains the pillars of the OP Update;
- **Section 2: Key Directions** identifies and describes the key directions to consider during the OP update process and provides supporting rationale for each. This section is grouped by the themes noted above in relation to the OP Update initiation staff report;
- **Section 3: Next Steps** describes next steps following Council's endorsement of the Key Directions Report;
- **Section 4: References** provides a list of all studies, strategies, plans and reports that support the key directions, alongside a description of each study and its status; and
- The **Appendix** provides a summary of all of the Key Directions by theme, for quick reference.

Who was involved in the development of the Key Directions?

The key directions have been developed in consultation with various stakeholders and agencies including the general public, landowners, the development industry, members of Indigenous communities, as well as the related Steering Committee, members of the Technical Advisory Team (made up of internal and external public agency and prescribed body staff), and the Official Plan Update Committee (OPUC). This consultation commenced in February 2020 with the first OPUC meeting during Phase 1 of the OP Update process and continued during Phase 2, as summarized below.

Phase 1: Vision and Urban Structure

While OPUC and Steering Committee meetings took place in 2020, public engagement took place in earnest starting on February 18, 2021, when the City held its first virtual Open House and issued an online survey wherein it presented and sought feedback on

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a number of proposed foundational elements respecting the OP Update. These elements include: the proposed city planning vision to 2041, the four pillars of the OP Update, and information related to “big moves,” which highlighted changes to the City’s urban structure. The City posted what was heard from these engagement events on its website through a formal [Phase 1 “What We Heard Report.”](#) During this time, staff also held meetings with prescribed bodies and Indigenous communities to advise them of the City’s process to update its OP, and to better understand what their interests and concerns are and how they would like to be involved in this process.

Overall, the City heard through the Phase 1 consultation that there is general support for the proposed 2041 city planning vision, and support for three proposed “big moves” to: (1) accommodate major transit station areas in a context specific manner, (2) designate new mixed use areas to develop more transit supportive compact complete communities, and (3) permit employment area conversions only in key locations that are supported by transit.

Phase 2 (Part 1): Developing Key Directions

In April 2021, the City entered Phase 2 of the OP Update engagement process, and embarked on a subsequent round of public and stakeholder consultations in order to better understand what elements of the Official Plan require updates to address population and employment growth. To begin this phase, the City hosted a workshop with the business community as well as the general public to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and constraints of the City’s current OP, particularly from the perspective of business and industry professionals.

The City also held six workshops in April and May 2021 with the public respecting several existing and emerging locations in the City where future growth and intensification could be accommodated. Namely: *Bathurst and Highway 7; Bayview and Highway 7; East Beaver Creek and Highway 7; Yonge and 16th/Carrville Road; the Village and Richmond Hill GO Station; and the Oak Ridges Local Centre.* The City used these events to gain a better understanding of what should be considered when establishing a vision for each area, and when planning for growth and intensification.

Following the area-specific workshops, the City continued its consultation efforts and held a focus group session with members of the business community, and meetings with representative landowners within each of the six aforementioned areas. Unlike the initial consultations, these engagements were more focused and were used to discuss how the planning policy context and the public response from the initial workshops aligned (or did not align) with emerging issues and landowners’ development aspirations.

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The City released its Phase 2 “What We Heard Reports”^{1,2} in August 2021, which described the feedback received during the Phase 2 consultation events. A number of observations were made during this phase of the OP Update engagement process. For instance, while the business community workshop and focus group session were primarily focused on economic development, it became clear that planning for Centres and Corridors and the City’s Neighbourhoods are important to the City’s business community, because they rely on employees and clients that live within and near Richmond Hill. Similarly, when conducting the area-specific centre workshops, staff heard from participants that planning for these areas cannot focus on residential development alone. Thus, the City must ensure that these areas provide a mix of uses, and become destinations in their own right for people to live, work, connect, innovate, shop and play.

In August, the City also shared “[Planning for Change](#),” prepared by David Dixon, the City’s retained urban visionary from Stantec’s Urban Places. “Planning for Change” is a guiding document for Council, staff and the public on how to successfully implement the updated Official Plan. The report highlights many important aspects of city planning and utilizes perspectives gained from other jurisdictions that are facing similar opportunities and challenges as Richmond Hill. A key takeaway from this report is that amid an era of rapid change, unprecedented opportunities to foster community benefit can appear through new development. Furthermore, “Planning for Change” notes that the City is well-poised to address the issues it is facing, and should leverage the OP Update to be more future-focused.

Phase 2 (Part 2): Key Directions

On September 21, 2021, City staff shared emerging key directions with the Official Plan Update Committee, and a similar presentation was presented to the general public at a second Open House held on October 14, 2021. A copy of the Emerging Key Directions was also provided on the City’s webpage to assist the public in completing an online survey respecting the proposed key directions. The survey took place from September 30 – October 21, 2021. Over 100 responses were received, with a majority of respondents indicating that they agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed key directions.

A copy of the latest “What We Heard Report” in relation to this phase of public consultation is provided in Attachment 2 to this staff report. The feedback received on the proposed key directions through this engagement process will be addressed, and will inform consultation, during Phase 3 of the Official Plan Update process.

¹ What We Heard, Phase 2 Report, Centre-Specific Workshops Engagement Summary Report <https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/shared-content/resources/documents/City-Plan-2041-What-We-Heard-Phase-2-Centre-Specific-Workshops-Engagement-Summary-Report.pdf>

² What We Heard, Phase 2 Report, Business Community Summary Report <https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/shared-content/resources/documents/City-Plan-2041-What-We-Heard-Phase-2-Business-Community-Summary-Report.pdf>

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Why should the proposed Key Directions be endorsed by Council?

The Key Directions Report responds to various opportunities and challenges that are resulting from rapid change in demographics, economy, innovation, and so much more. Council endorsement of the Key Directions Report set out in Attachment 1 ensures that we all have a clear understanding of the scope of changes to the Official Plan that we should consider and consult on during this Official Plan Update.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

This report has no financial or staffing implications.

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

Endorsement of the Key Directions Report directly responds to and aligns with all four of Council's Strategic Priority areas. These directions seek to: promote intensification in transit supported areas along with the protection of greenspace and natural heritage to balance growth and green; continue to advance the City's OP as a guide for place-making so as to create a strong sense of belonging; promote a mobility hierarchy that prioritizes active modes of travel to improve how we get around in the City; and, promote economic investment, through the attraction and retention of businesses, jobs, and talent, as well as to use public infrastructure effectively and efficiently to maintain the City's financial health.

Climate Change Considerations:

Endorsement of the Key Directions report strongly considers climate change. In developing the proposed Key Directions, staff paid particular attention to the City's Community Energy and Emissions Plan GHG reduction recommended actions related to: natural heritage; compact community; smart, renewable energy; efficient buildings; and transportation transformation. Accordingly, many of the proposed key directions identify means in which the Official Plan could be updated to enable or require development that, if implemented, will result in reduced GHG emissions.

Next Steps:

As noted in Section 3.0 of the Key Directions Report, amendments to the Official Plan are proposed to be brought to Council in three or more batches, starting in July 2022, when the Regional Official Plan is anticipated to be adopted by the Region. Subsequent amendments are anticipated to be brought to Council in early 2023 (following Provincial approval of the Regional Official Plan) and late 2023 when consultation on the balance of amendments has concluded. Staff will report back to Council on these matters as they come forward.

As noted in Section 4.0 of the Key Directions Report, there are several City initiatives that have informed the key directions. While some of these initiatives are complete and/or approved by Council, others are still in-process. While the Official Plan update process continues, staff will continue to work to ensure that these ongoing initiatives are

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aligned. By doing so, we establish common goals, and achieve efficiencies in terms of time and resources.

Conclusion

The Key Directions Report forms the foundation for future amendments to the OP, and has been shared with stakeholders and the public to provide clarity on the total scope of work that is proposed in order to complete the update of the Official Plan. Accordingly, this staff report seeks Council endorsement of the Key Directions Report set out in Attachment 1 to guide the next phase of the City's Official Plan update process.

Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. All attachments have been reviewed and made accessible. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

- Attachment 1 – Key Directions Report
- Attachment 2 – Phase 2: What We Heard Key Directions Engagement Summary Report

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.21.118 - Request for Endorsement - Official Plan Update Key Directions.docx
Attachments:	- SRPI.21.118 - Attachment 1_Key Directions Report.pdf - SRPI.21.118 - Attachment 2_Phase 2 What We Heard Key Directions Engagement Summary Report (AODA).pdf
Final Approval Date:	Nov 18, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Patrick Lee - Nov 17, 2021 - 10:36 AM

Task assigned to Kelvin Kwan was completed by delegate Paolo Masaro

Kelvin Kwan - Nov 17, 2021 - 10:53 AM

MaryAnne Dempster - Nov 18, 2021 - 11:54 AM