



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Consultation Stage 1 Interim Report – Official Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Reviews

Date:	October 17, 2011
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	Pg11041

SUMMARY

This is an interim report highlighting Stage 1 consultations to date as part the Five Year Review of the Official Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Review.

Over the past months City Planning staff have met with various stakeholder groups, held six Open Houses and launched online consultations including a survey. Feedback from these initial consultations cover a range of city-building topics including the general success of the Official Plan's growth management strategy; ensuring amenities, services and transportation systems keep pace with development; strengthening housing options and affordability; elevating design and built form standards; the importance of parks and natural areas; the role of stable employment lands; increasing heritage protection; opportunities for a different mix of uses in certain areas; protecting neighbourhood character; and enhancing community engagement in all aspects of city building. It is anticipated that many areas of feedback will be reaffirmed in the remaining Stage 1 consultations. A final consultation report summarizing feedback, and identifying themes and proposed areas for policy amendments will be prepared at the conclusion of the Stage 1 consultations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. The Planning and Growth Management Committee receive this report for information.

2. The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning report to Planning and Growth Management Committee in the first quarter of 2012 on the complete Stage 1 consultations for the 5 Year Review of the Official Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Reviews and proposed thematic areas for policy amendments.

DECISION HISTORY

At its May 30, 2011 meeting, Planning and Growth Management Committee approved the recommendations in the Five Year Review of the Official Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Review Report dated May 10, 2011. In doing so, the Committee adopted the consultation strategy approach outlined in the report, directed staff to schedule open houses and roundtable meetings with key stakeholder groups, and to report back on the results of the consultation. The report is available online at:

www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/pg/bgrd/backgroundfile-38172.pdf

In approving the report's recommendations, the Planning and Growth Management Committee also identified a number of items to be considered by the Chief Planner in the Reviews' work program, and requested the Chief Planner to consult with faith groups and educational groups, to hold a stand-alone meeting to obtain public input on affordable housing policies as well as ward meetings if requested by the local councillor. The Committee's clause is available online at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.PG5.2>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Planning Act and Growth Plan

The *Planning Act* requires municipalities to review their Official Plan not less frequently than every five years after the Plan comes into effect. The City of Toronto Official Plan was adopted by Council in 2002, and brought into force by the Ontario Municipal Board in June 2006. Accordingly, the City of Toronto is required under Section 26 of the *Planning Act* to commence an Official Plan Review by June 2011. The City of Toronto may review any portions of its Official Plan that Council considers need review. However, there are aspects of the Official Plan that the *Planning Act* requires to be looked at, such as employment land policies and designations; matters that Council has referred to be part of this Official Plan Review; and issues that will arise as a result of Committee and Council deliberations and public consultation.

It is important to recognize that this is a review to consider what policies of the existing Official Plan are working, what policies need to be updated, revised or deleted, and what new policies are required to be added. The purpose of this review is not to create a new Official Plan from first principles.

The *Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* states that municipalities may permit the conversion of lands within employment areas to non-employment uses

only through a Municipal Comprehensive Review where a number of key criteria are met.

Council may authorize a Municipal Comprehensive Review at any time, independent of the statutory review of the municipal Official Plan. Since the *Planning Act* requires that the City of Toronto review the policies and designations for employment lands as part of the 5 Year Review of the Official Plan, the Growth Plan's Municipal Comprehensive Review for areas of employment is being undertaken concurrently with this Official Plan Review.

Review Stages

The Official Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Reviews have three stages with public consultation at each stage.

Stage 1 (current stage) of the Reviews involves gathering information and public engagement. Information gathering includes research on growth trends and studies on specific topics like heritage and employment lands. Public engagement has three components: online consultation, stakeholder roundtable meetings and six public open houses.

Stage 2 of the Reviews involves identifying directions and potential changes to the Official Plan in response to Stage 1 research and consultation as well as Council referrals. A second round of public engagement will occur to obtain feedback on potential changes to the Official Plan. Public engagement will include online and public meeting formats.

Stage 3 of the Reviews involves City Planning staff preparing a final report with recommendations for City Council's consideration. The *Planning Act* contains special public consultation requirements that apply to the 5 Year Review of the Official Plan including holding a special public meeting of Council.

COMMENTS

Stage 1 consultation consists of stakeholder meetings, online consultation and six open houses. To reach as many people as possible information about the Reviews was distributed through a variety of methods, including:

- multiple ads in Mirror and Guardian papers reaching over a million households;
- radio ads on the City's space on Boom 97.3, Virgin 99.9 and 1010 Talk Radio;
- an online ad on Spacing Toronto website, and an ad in the Toronto Star;
- tweets from the City's Twitter account reaching approximately 5,000 followers;
- inserts in various City e-newsletters reaching thousands of subscribers;
- postings on the City's main webpage and Living in Toronto page
- creating a dedicated website and sending e-updates on the Reviews;
- videos on the City's YouTube channel;

- a July letter introducing the Reviews and September Open Houses followed by the September Open House Flyer mailed to the Clerks' list for resident groups, historical societies, various community groups, business improvement associations, etc, (over 400 addresses);
- September Open House Flyer mailed to over 200 interested parties;
- e-invites with the September Open House Flyer sent to various resident groups, business improvement associations and special interest groups for distribution to their members; and
- a brief overview along with the September Open House Flyer provided electronically to Councillors along with a request to distribute the flyer to their various constituencies and include open house and website information in any upcoming constituency newsletters.

Attachment 1 provides additional details on the communications outreach for the Reviews.

Website

A website dedicated to the Official Plan and the Municipal Comprehensive Reviews was launched August 30, 2011 at www.toronto.ca/opreview. The website contains a welcome video, an overview video, a short survey, questions and answers, background reports, open house material, and the opportunity to submit comments and sign-up for e-updates. The site is an effective tool for the public to learn about and get involved in the Reviews.

Fast Feedback Survey

The initial survey seeks to engage people around the topic of city building to help ensure Toronto continues to be a great place to live, work, invest, and play. The survey, available online and in paper form at the open houses, ran between August 30 (website launch) and October 17. Over 700 people completed the survey. Respondents had the option to enter the first three digits of their postal code at the conclusion of the survey. The majority of respondents have and results show completed surveys from across Toronto. City Planning staff are currently reviewing the responses and a summary of survey findings will form part of the final Stage 1 consultation report.

Stakeholder Meetings

Initial meetings have been held with the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), the Toronto Industry Network (TIN), the four school boards, an independent school association and housing providers. Scheduled stakeholder meetings are ongoing including meetings with faith groups, aboriginal groups, the Province and the Design Review Panel in late October and November.

Heritage Advisory Committee and Town Hall

A Heritage Advisory Committee with representatives from groups involved in heritage resource conservation has been established to help guide proposed policy amendments for Council's consideration of the Official Plan's heritage policies. A public Heritage Town Hall is scheduled for December 1, 2011.

September Open Houses

Six Open Houses were held at civic centres across Toronto in September. Each Open House ran from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. providing information about the Official Plan and growth trends in Toronto, and an opportunity for participants to share what they feel is working with the current Official Plan and what areas could be improved.

Over 300 people representing a broad range of groups including resident associations, school boards, special interest groups (e.g. developer, industry, tenant, heritage, faith groups), students and the general public participated in the Open Houses. A professional facilitator was retained to facilitate and report on each open house. A summary of each open house is posted on the dedicated website.

Feedback

Feedback identified through the Open Houses and stakeholder meetings to date is summarized below. It is anticipated that many areas of feedback will be reaffirmed in upcoming Stage 1 consultations. At the conclusion of the Stage 1 consultations all feedback will be organized by themes and addressed in a final Stage 1 consultation report.

Stakeholder Meetings

The following represents preliminary areas of feedback on the Official Plan provided in initial meetings with stakeholders to date.

i) School Boards

- support for current Official Plan structure of permitting schools in every land use designation except for *Employment Areas*, *Utility Corridors*, and *Parks and Open Spaces*;
- interest in continuing existing Official Plan policies that would allow community hubs at school properties in *Neighbourhoods*; and
- interest in participating in heritage policy discussions.

ii) Toronto Industry Network (TIN)

- support the Official Plan's recognition that diverse land use supply enables a full range of economic activities in Toronto including industry;
- concern about sensitive uses encroaching on existing operations and affecting their viability including certificates of approval;
- would like to see better protection of *Employment Areas* from sensitive land uses through measures such as buffering;
- would like to see land use designation specifically for traditional manufacturing and industrial uses;
- support for transportation / infrastructure investment for *Employment Areas*; and
- refinement of *Employment Areas* policies to direct where retail should be permitted.

iii) Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD).

- concern that *Neighbourhood* policies are overly protective and would like to see opportunity to identify neighbourhoods where reasonable intensification could occur;
- would like to see more flexibility in *Employment Area* uses and consideration of residential permissions in some areas;
- would like the City to consider inclusion of a retail employment land use category for employment lands; and
- support the City's current practice of capping the parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu policies.

iv) Affordable Housing Providers

- support for the Official Plan policies protecting the existing rental housing units;
- would like to see more effective policies for affordable ownership housing;
- interest in using inclusionary zoning to secure new affordable housing in development if Province provides the authority;
- would like to see the definitions of affordable rental and ownership updated; and
- concern that the large site and Section 37 policies are not being effectively utilized to secure affordable housing.

September Open Houses

The facilitator has prepared a summary report of the six open houses. The report is a compilation of the feedback received at the open houses. The report's Executive Summary identifies five areas of feedback:

1. Considerable support for where the City is directing growth and change

Participants expressed considerable support for where the Official Plan directs growth and strongly supported the Official Plan policies that protect neighbourhoods. Minor refinements to these policies were suggested to: ensure the scale of new development on Avenues is compatible with the character of the local community; limit the encroachment of incompatible uses in Employment Areas; and to address concerns about “monster home” developments that dramatically change the character of a particular neighbourhood.

2. Transit, services and affordable housing need to keep pace with development

Several participants discussed the relationship between land-use, density and transportation. Transportation and affordable housing were consistently raised as areas in need of improvement and investment. Many participants felt that a greater emphasis should be placed on providing improvements to transit and cycling infrastructure. Many also felt that there was an important need to build more affordable housing in Toronto.

3. Opportunities to strengthen community engagement and OP implementation

There were participants who expressed concern about the process through which the Official Plan is implemented. Specific proposals to make public participation in the planning process more integral to the Official Plan were offered including, enshrining community consultation earlier in the development review process, increasing communication between City Planning and communities, and creating more secondary plans.

4. Interest in stronger Urban Design & Heritage policies and more Mixed-Used developments & Parks

There were a number of specific policy areas in which participants suggested minor refinements including strengthening urban design policies, revamping heritage policies to align with strengthened legislation, encouraging sustainable practices through additional environmental policies, incorporating elements of the Tower Renewal Initiative into the Official Plan, maintaining and expanding parks in growth areas, and ensuring mixed use buildings are truly mixed.

5. A lot of agreement on what makes Toronto liveable

Unique neighbourhoods, cultural diversity and an exceptional system of ravines, parks and natural areas were all viewed as Toronto's key strengths.

The Facilitator's full report is appended in Attachment 2 and available online.

Next Steps

Stage 1 consultations continue with additional stakeholders meetings and a public Heritage Town Hall. A final consultation report will be prepared at the conclusion of Stage 1 consultations. This report is anticipated in the first quarter of 2012.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Communications Outreach for the Reviews
Attachment 2: Open House Summary Report by facilitator

Attachment 1: Communications Outreach for the Reviews

The communications outreach was developed with support from the City's Cluster B Communications Team. To help publicize the Reviews the identifier, **OUR CITY OUR FUTURE**, with the below banner design was selected.



A number of traditional (e.g. print, radio) and new media (e.g. Twitter) outlets have been used to distribute information about the Reviews.

City Media Release

A media release on the Official Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Reviews was issued on August 30, 2011. The release highlights public engagement including the website launch and the September Open Houses.

Dedicated Website

A dedicated Official Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Reviews website was developed (www.toronto.ca/opreview). The website includes a welcome video, an overview video, a short survey, questions and answers, background reports, open house material, and the opportunity to submit comments and sign-up for e-updates.

City's Website

Links on the City's main web page (image and text on scroll bar) as well as the Living in Toronto page directed users to the dedicated Official Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Reviews website.

Twitter

Tweets on the website launch and the September Open Houses sent via the City of Toronto's Twitter account (about@TorontoComms) reaching approximately 5,000 followers. A number of the tweets were re-tweeted by followers.

YouTube

Two videos - Official Plan Review & MCR Welcome video, and Official Plan & MCR Overview video - posted to the City's YouTube Channel in addition to the dedicated website.

City E-Newsletters

Inserts about the Reviews prepared for various City of Toronto e-newsletters: City Update (5,000 subscribers), Live Green (15,000 subscribers), Cyclometer (5,000 subscribers) as well as the Monday Morning News electronically distributed to City employees.

E-Updates

The dedicated website provides the opportunity to sign-up to receive e-updates on the Official Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Reviews. To date 185 people have subscribed and three updates (September 9, September 23, October 11) have been sent highlighting the September Open House dates; posting of Open House material online; and information on the Heritage Town Hall.

QR Codes

Two "Quick Response" Codes generated for the Open House Flyer and survey (paper format). Scanning the code with a smartphone links the user to the dedicated website or online survey.

Online Ad

An animated ad was created and placed on Spacing Toronto's website (www.spacing.ca/toronto) for the month of September. Clicking on the ad linked to the dedicated website.

Radio Ads

A 30-second spot was produced for the City's free space on Astral Media radio stations: Boom 97.3, Virgin 99.9 and 1010 Talk Radio. The spot played throughout September and early October.

Newspaper Ads

The September Open House Flyer was published in a number of local papers:

- Toronto Star (Tuesday, September 6)
- All Metroland papers (Thursday, September 8)
- Scarborough Mirror (Friday, September 16)
- City Centre Mirror (Thursday, September 15)
- East York Mirror (Thursday, September 15)
- York Guardian (Thursday, September 22)
- Etobicoke Guardian (Thursday, September 22)
- North York Mirror (Friday, September 23)

NRU Toronto Edition

Novae Res Urbis published information on the website launch and the September Open Houses in its Toronto edition's "City in Brief" and "Upcoming Events" sections, respectively.

Councillors

On August 30 the September Open House Flyer along with a brief overview was provided electronically to Councillors along with a request to distribute the flyer to their various constituencies, and include the open house and website information in any upcoming constituency newsletters. A number of Councillors also posted information to their own websites.

City Clerk's Community Association List

On July 27 individual letters were sent to the Clerks' list for resident groups, historical societies, various community groups, business improvement associations, etc, (over 400 addresses) introducing the Reviews and the September Open House dates, times, locations and format. The letter invited groups to provide their email address so the September Open House Flyer could be provided to them electronically for distribution to their members. A number of groups took advantage of this offer. The September Open House Flyer was also mailed to all addresses on the Clerks' list.

Interested Parties

The September Open House Flyer was mailed to 200 interested parties who had contacted City Planning requesting notice.

Adjacent Municipalities

On August 25, letters were sent to Planning Departments in the adjacent upper and lower tier municipalities, namely: Durham, York, Peel, Pickering, Markham, Vaughan, Brampton and Mississauga. The letter introduced the Reviews, dedicated website and requested a staff contact for the Reviews.

Other

The September Open House Flyer was electronically distributed to a number of organizations: Toronto Board of Trade, Toronto Industry Network, BILD, Urban Land Institute Toronto, school boards, People Plan Toronto, and planning schools at York University, University of Toronto and Ryerson University. The facilitator also sent the flyer to a number of organizations for distribution through their networks.

Issuu

In addition to the dedicated website, various reports and studies along with the Open House display boards were posted on Issuu, an online digital publishing platform that connects the Review material to a broader audience.

Attachment 2: Open House Summary Report by Facilitator

NOTE: Provided separately as a PDF file and posted under the Agenda Item for the Planning and Growth Management Committee's November 8, 2011 meeting.