

DATE: August 14, 2001

TO: Chairman and Members of the Planning and Development Committee

FROM: Thomas S. Mokrzycki, Commissioner of Planning and Building

SUBJECT: **Toronto Plan - A Land Use Strategy for Toronto**
MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 4, 2001

ORIGIN: Planning and Building Department

BACKGROUND: This report is part of the ongoing program to update City Council on the significant planning initiatives in adjacent municipalities. In the summer of 2000, the City of Toronto released a report titled "*Toronto at the Crossroads: Shaping Our Future*". Staff reported on the above to Planning and Development Committee on November 20, 2000.

In June 2001, the City of Toronto published a newsletter titled "*A Land Use Strategy for Toronto*" (attached under separate cover). It provides information on the proposed land use policies and designations, as well as the proposed approach to accommodate 1 million more people by strategically directing population and employment growth.

The intent of the Land Use Strategy is as follows:

- *Direct where new people, jobs and services should go;*
- *Guide development of new neighbourhoods and businesses;*
- *Help determine where transit improvements should be made;*
- *Preserve the physical character of established*

neighbourhoods;

- *Protect open space;*
- *Promote good urban design.*

The Strategy will become a major component of the new Official Plan for the City of Toronto.

COMMENTS:

The Land Use Strategy recognizes the significance of the relationship of Toronto with the surrounding area of the GTA. It stresses that not only in Toronto but, throughout the GTA, it is necessary to direct as much housing and job growth as possible to the existing urbanized areas, and at densities that support an efficient public transit system.

The intention of the City of Toronto's new Official Plan is to establish an important role for the City in achieving growth for the region by attracting more people and jobs to Toronto and setting out an implementation framework for how this will be accommodated. It is further emphasized that in order for an urban area to be successful it needs to grow and attract people for the following reasons:

- *Growth is a catalyst - Toronto benefits from growth-related (private and public) investment to improve buildings and neighbourhoods as well as the spin-off benefits of improved public streets, public safety, community services and facilities.*
- *More people means more support for local community businesses like small stores, restaurants, services, cultural activities, etc. and more tax revenues to pay for City services.*

- *Young families bring a better mix of ages to Toronto - without growth the City's population will be much more 'top-heavy' by 2030, with a growing older population and a shrinking middle.*
- *Growing cities become large enough to build clusters of firms in burgeoning industries (e.g. bio-medical) providing new opportunities for our children to live and work in the City.*
- *Growth in the City means more sustainable growth for the region and for future generations of the City.*

The Strategy identifies the areas which can accommodate potential population and employment growth as follows:

1) The Avenues (Example: Finch/Weston)

The focus of "the Avenues" is to have gradual intensification along major arterial roads;

2) Centres (Example: North York Centre)

These areas have already been designated for high density residential and commercial uses but will be further studied to explore future growth opportunities.

3) Employment Areas (Example: Tapscott Employment Area)

It is anticipated that a large supply of serviced and accessible employment lands can accommodate projected business growth and expansion. It is proposed that these areas will comprise much of the projected employment growth.

4) Central Waterfront and Downtown

Downtown continues to undergo renewal and there are still many opportunities for new offices, stores, hotels and residential development. There are numerous surface parking lots and vacant lands, including railway lands, which can accommodate new growth.

With the transformation of the waterfront it has been projected that 100,000 people could be housed on underused public lands alone, and 25,000 jobs in 21st century industries could be accommodated.

5) Rapid Transit Stations and GO/TTC Connections

Toronto has identified strategic stations that have large vacant lots as well as opportunities to build above existing subway stations.

6) Large Vacant Parcels

Not including the Waterfront area, there are about 800 ha (1 976 ac) of large vacant or under utilized parcels of land in Toronto that could become areas for new employment or new neighbourhoods.

PROPOSED LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Currently, as a result of the consolidation of the Metro Toronto municipalities in 1998, there are 7 Official Plans with over 112 land use designations and over 1,500 site-specific exception clauses. As a result, the existing framework is complex and does not provide a unified and consistent vision for the new City.

Toronto staff are proposing one Official Plan with 8 land use designations. *For each designation the Plan will set out:*

- *the uses permitted;*
- *City Council's strategic objectives; and,*

- *the policies and criteria that will be used to help shape our future by guiding change.*

Many of the inherited Official Plans repeat detailed numbers that are contained in the zoning by-laws to regulate heights, densities, and minimum lot sizes or lot frontages. Often, what is lacking are the words that tell what the principle is or the reason behind the numbers. The City of Toronto is proposing to make the Official Plan and the Zoning By-law work better together by putting the principles and criteria in the Official Plan and leaving the detailed numerical site standards to the implementing zoning by-laws, where they are supposed to be under the Planning Act.

One of the most innovative approaches that the City of Toronto is proposing is that they will not have densities pre-defined in the Plan. The rationale used for not including densities in the Plan is that *"it is sometimes assumed that rigid regulation of density will help control the kind of buildings which might be constructed. However such an approach is often an imprecise and unreliable way to assure the height and scale of development and its relation to adjacent properties."* Further, *"it is not possible to assign a single density number that reasonably addresses the tremendous variations in built form and built density among neighbourhoods in the City."*

The following land use designations are proposed to be incorporated into the new Official Plan:

1. Neighbourhood Areas

The 'Neighbourhood Areas' designation will be applied to low-scale residential neighbourhoods. 'Neighbourhood Areas' consist mainly of walk-up dwellings such as detached houses, semi-detached houses, duplexes, triplexes, townhouses and, in some older neighbourhoods, interspersed walk-up apartments. In some areas of the City, the underlying zoning by-law will be used to restrict the type of low-scale dwelling permitted in a

neighbourhood. Parks, schools and other local institutions that are important elements of neighbourhood life will also be permitted.

2. Apartment Areas

The 'Apartment Areas' designations will apply to areas that consist mainly of apartment buildings, and the local institutions, cultural and recreational facilities, retail stores and services that serve the needs of the people who live there. Low-scale residential uses provided for in 'Neighbourhood Areas' will also be permitted in the 'Apartment Areas' designation.

In 'Apartment Areas', the Plan will encourage investment, redevelopment and minor intensification that:

- increases, rather than diminishes, the supply of rental housing;*
- provides affordable housing to buy or rent;*
- produces buildings that are universally physically accessible, with units that are adaptable for persons with physical limitations;*
- organize, masses and places new buildings to minimize their impact on nearby residents and maintain comfortable sunlight and wind conditions on nearby streets and parks;*
- provides sufficient car and bicycle parking for residents and visitors, and supports the use of nearby public transit lines;*
- provides landscaped open space; and,*
- has the necessary schools and community services to serve new residents.*

3. Mixed Use Areas

The 'Mixed Use Areas' designation will be given to many areas earmarked for future growth and intensification: the Downtown, parts of the Waterfront, the arterial Avenues' and the City's larger plazas and malls. A wide variety of

retail, office, residential, institutional and recreational/open space uses will be permitted in 'Mixed Use Areas' - everything but industry.

4. Parks and Open Space Areas

The 'Parks and Open Space Areas' designation is intended to ensure that the form, function, natural beauty and character of our river valleys, ravines, waterfront and other open spaces will not be lost to development. The designated areas should be kept primarily in a natural state and used for outdoor recreation, and cultural and education activities. The exception is essential public works and utilities like flood control projects that have no other location alternative.

5. Regeneration Areas

This proposed new designation represents a new planning tool to help revitalize certain areas of the City (Example: King - Spadina), promote business development and employment growth and improve the City's capacity to attract and retain businesses.

It is important in these areas that new development:

- complement the area's built form and character where buildings are being reused;*
- preserve heritage resources; and,*
- offer a strategy for providing community services and facilities when the residential population is large enough to need them.*

6. Utility Corridor Areas

Most of the lands designated as 'Utility Corridor Areas' are hydro and rail rights of way. Corridors such as these cannot be replaced if they are ever interrupted and made non-continuous. The Official Plan emphasizes protecting the linear integrity of the corridors.

7. Employment Areas

The Official Plan will recognize that in today's economy there is a need to be flexible and accommodate a variety of activities within an employment cluster in the same 'Employment Area'. The designation will permit a wide array of manufacturing, warehouse, office, institutional, recreational, open space, retail and service uses.

The Plan will recognize the need to set aside certain 'Employment Areas' or parts of them, for heavy industry.

8. Institutional Area's

Larger concentrations of institutional uses, including government office districts, hospitals, university and college campuses, will be designated as 'Institutional Areas'.

CONCLUSION:

The City of Toronto has released a newsletter titled "A Land Use Strategy for Toronto" which proposes a simpler land use system, going from 112 land use designations to eight. The Strategy provides information on the proposed land use policies and designations and outlines the proposed approach for strategically directing population and employment growth across the City. The City of Toronto is anticipating presenting a new draft Official Plan to the Planning and Transportation Committee and City Council by the end of 2001.

Staff will continue to monitor the process of the new draft Official Plan for the City of Toronto and will report on the draft plan and any possible implications for Mississauga when it is released.

RECOMMENDATION: That the report titled "Toronto Plan - A Land Use Strategy for Toronto" dated August 14, 2001 from the Commissioner of Planning and Building be received for information.

Original Signed By: _____

Thomas S. Mokrzycki

Commissioner of Planning and Building