

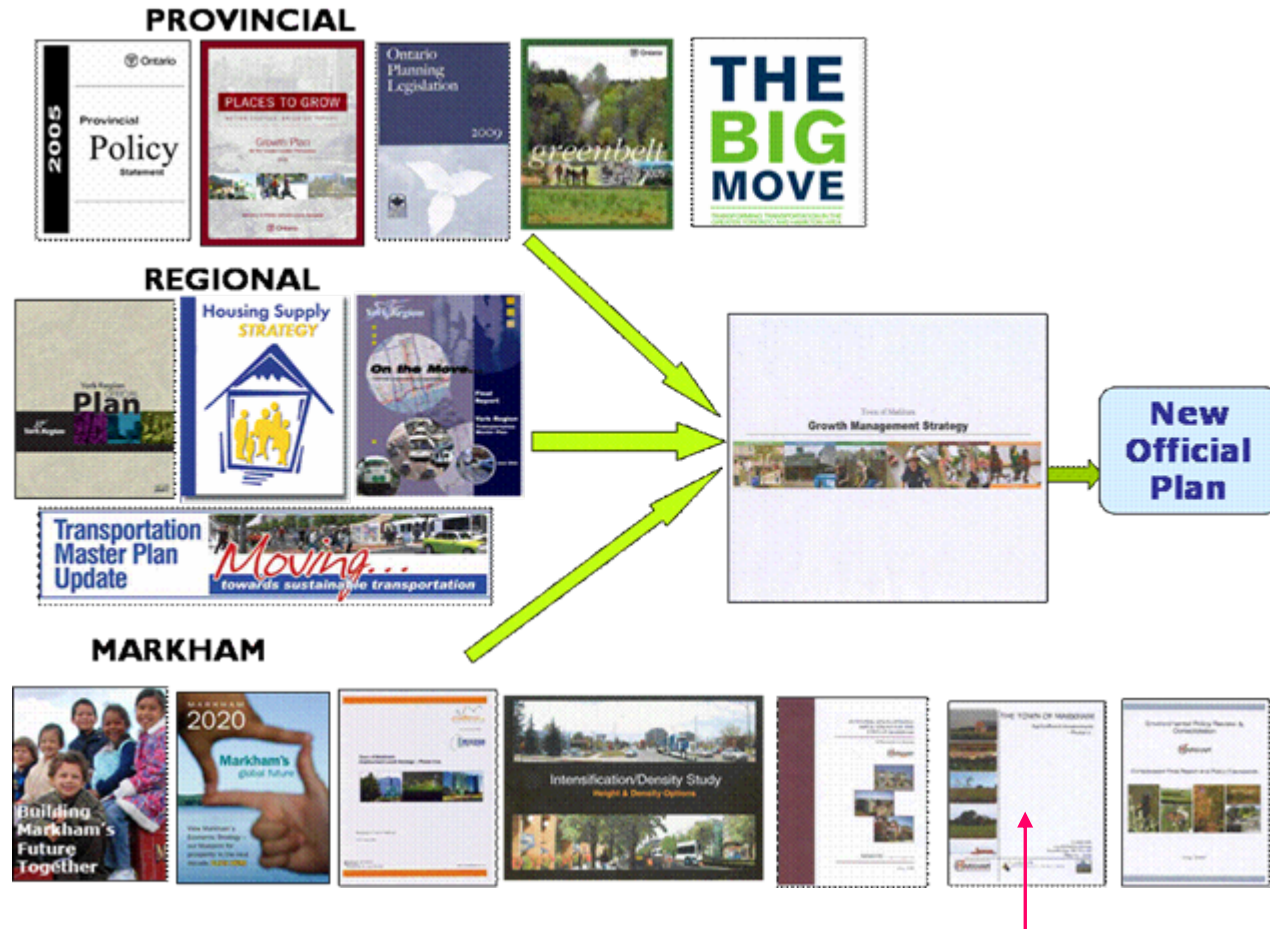
TOWN OF MARKHAM

AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT PHASE 3: Recommendations

COUNCIL
December 1, 2009



TOWARDS A NEW OFFICIAL PLAN



AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT STUDY PROCESS

- **April 2008** **Study Process Initiated**
- **June 2008** **Stakeholder Meeting**
- **October 2008** **Part A DSC – Phase 1: Agricultural Assessment**
- **October 2008** **Public Information Meeting**
- **January 2009** **Farmer's Meeting**
- **May 2009** **Part A DSC – Phase 2: Agricultural Options**
- **June 2009** **Public Information Meeting**
- **November 2009** **Phase 3: Final Report and Recommendations**

AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

THE CHALLENGES

- Cost of land for purchase
- Conflicting non- agricultural uses
- Short term leases discourage crop diversity and investment
- Uncertainty regarding public lands
- Highly regulated industry
- Aging farm population
- Urban growth pressures
- Land fragmentation
- Deteriorating farm infrastructure
- Competition for land
- Lack of agricultural support services
- Rouge Park plans and other re-naturalization programs
- Lack of public knowledge about farming
- Categorizing “good crops” vs. “bad crops”

THE OPPORTUNITIES

- Greenbelt lands support permanency
- Municipal support for local food
- Class 1 soil and good climate
- Lands not required for growth in ‘whitebelt’ can continue to be farmed
- Strong markets
- Committed farm population
- Rouge Park is supporting Park agricultural
- Growing recognition of value of agriculture
- Farms as environmental stewards
- Partnership between NHS and agriculture
- Cultural and historical contribution
- Abutting agricultural areas in the east
- Opportunity for community sustainability

AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Significant Area of Agricultural Land Remains**

Notwithstanding the constraints and opportunities to agricultural in Markham, there is an opportunity to retain protected agricultural land within the context of the Growth Management Study. The staff preferred Growth Management Strategy identifies 41% of the Town remaining outside of the current settlement boundary.

2. **Policies Need to Be Updated**

Town should enhance and update its agricultural policies to reflect the requirements of Greenbelt Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement.

3. **Farming Operations Need to be Supported**

Town may also choose to support additional programs and initiatives which could enhance agricultural sustainability and farming opportunities in Markham. Protected agricultural land does not guarantee the lands will be farmed.

OFFICIAL PLAN

- **Update Official Plan policies and mapping**
- **Identify specific policy areas for the Agricultural Area, Rouge Park Agricultural Area and Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Agricultural Area.**
- **Determine agricultural boundaries through the Growth Management Strategy – retain agricultural lands closer to Greenbelt for medium and long-term agriculture.**
- **Include policies to address current agricultural approaches such as local food, food security and urban agriculture.**



FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

- **Review opportunities for additional tax rebates over the 75% property tax reduction.**
- **Take active role in participating in existing Provincial programs and encourage the Province to provide new financial opportunities and incentives to encourage farming innovation, agricultural best practices and support food security objectives.**

LAND STEWARDSHIP

- Continue to support the Rouge Park efforts in Eastern Markham for long-term sustainable agriculture including programs to address agricultural infrastructure and wildlife impacts.
- Encourage and support public land owners (Province, TRCA and Federal Government) in providing long-term agricultural leases.



ECONOMIC, CULTURAL and GREENPRINT STRATEGIES

- Review the role and function of agriculture relative to future updates to the Town's Economic Strategy and cultural programs and strategies.
- Review site specific program recommendations including Local Food Charters, community gardens, farmer's markets, urban agricultural programs through the Greenprint – Community Sustainability Plan process.



IMPLICATIONS

- All recommendations support the sustainability of long term agriculture in Markham.
- All recommendations require a shared vision between the Town, Rouge Park and Federal Government.
- All recommendations require the formation of meaningful, effective partnerships with landowners and the agricultural community.



COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS (Summary)

- **Agricultural Assessment Study Final Report be endorsed in principle**
- **Report recommendations forwarded to Green Print – Community Sustainability Plan, Finance, Economic and Cultural Departments for consideration and implementation of applicable initiatives**
- **Provincial Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs be encouraged to provide new opportunities to support farming innovation, best practices and food security issues**
- **Pre-consultations with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Region of York staff to discuss a potential municipal request to Grow the Greenbelt in Markham**
- **That the Town of Markham hold a Public Meeting to discuss the Agricultural Assessment study and the Rouge Park agricultural land and transition plan on Tuesday January 12, 2010;**
- **And that the report be forwarded to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Region of York and the Rouge Park Alliance.**
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THANK YOU