



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

Development Activity Update: “How Does The City Grow?”

Date:	April 19, 2007
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	City Planning Division
Wards:	All
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SUMMARY

This report summarizes the findings of new research into development trends across Toronto. The bulletin “Profile Toronto: How Does The City Grow?” is attached and has been posted to the City’s website. This report also fulfills a request from Council to report on the disposition of applications to convert employment lands to non-economic use.

Toronto is on track to accommodate the residential growth anticipated by the Official Plan to 2031.

- As of the fourth quarter 2006 there were 120,000 residential units in the development pipeline.
- Since Council adopted the Official Plan in November 2002 City Planning Division staff have dealt with 1,904 development projects.
- 68,637 residential units are proposed in the priority growth areas in keeping with the growth management strategy of the Official Plan (Downtown, the Centres and the Avenues).
- There has been a resurgence of commercial development activity Downtown with 6 active projects at year-end 2006 representing 423,500 m² of gross floor area.
- 1.3 million m² of commercial and industrial space has been built or is proposed in the Employment Districts since November 2002.
- Since November 2002 there have been 27 proposals for residential uses on 137 ha of employment land in the Official Plan Employment Districts for a total of 7,619 units.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts arising from this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of October 26, 27, 28 and 31, 2005 Council took action to improve the economic competitiveness of Toronto by adopting a plan to shift a portion of the property tax incidence from the business sector to the residential sector (“Enhancing Toronto’s Business Climate: It’s Everybody’s Business”). At that time Council also amended and adopted a number of staff recommendations with respect to the City’s future economic prospects. Among these recommendations was a request for the Chief Planner to “... report on development patterns since Council adoption of the Official Plan, highlighting the disposition of current applications to convert employment lands to residential use.” This report addresses this recommendation.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

There is a need for regular reporting on development activity, the pace of development and to analyse where and how the City is growing. Such a summary of development activity keeps Council apprised of emerging market trends to inform decision-making, is useful to City staff for service planning, and is regularly requested and highly valued by the development industry, the business community and to residents and other stakeholders.

COMMENTS

Development trends since Council’s adoption of the Official Plan indicate that Toronto is well on its way to providing sufficient new housing for the anticipated population growth. Moreover, development activity is largely taking place in the priority locations articulated in the growth management policies of the Official Plan. The housing market remains robust with Toronto housing starts exceeding 10,000 per year since 2001, representing one-quarter of all housing starts across the Greater Toronto Area.

Development Levels – November 2002 to December 2006

- 120,000 residential units are in the Development Pipeline.
- 1,904 development projects have been proposed within the City of Toronto.
- 75% of the residential units proposed since November 2002 - 68,637 - are proposed within the City’s priority growth areas (Downtown, Centres, Avenues and other Mixed-Use locations).

Downtown and Central Waterfront

- There are 6 active development proposals for commercial office space in the Downtown totaling 423,500 square metres of gross floor area.
- There are 155 residential projects in the development pipeline for a total of 39,198 units.
- 39 proposals are for mixed-use projects for 21,654 units and 682,900 m² of gross floor area.
- 38 projects are for buildings with 30 or more storeys.
- 42 projects are for buildings between 13 and 29 storeys.
- 39 projects are for mid-rise buildings between 5 and 12 storeys in height.

Centres

- 46 projects are located in the Centres, totaling 10,427 residential units – 5 of these are for mixed-use projects totalling 3,319 residential units and 35,700 m² of gross floor area.
- 20 non-residential projects are proposed for the 4 Centres, totaling 30,130 m² of gross floor area.

Avenues

- 307 development projects are proposed along the Avenues, for 19,012 residential units.
- Proposals along these corridors are characterized largely by mid-rise buildings (5 – 12 storeys), with 39 projects proposed for buildings within this height range totaling 4,625 residential units.
- Many of the taller Avenue projects are located just outside of the Downtown, along Yonge Street or the Sheppard Subway corridor, or other areas with a taller built form such as the Etobicoke waterfront or the Don Valley corridor.
- 160 of these Avenue projects will add nearly 165,000 m² of commercial gross floor area.

Employment Districts

- 1.3 million square metres of commercial and industrial space has been built or is proposed in the Employment Districts since November 2002.
- Applications to convert employment lands to residential use were prevalent during the period between Council's adoption of the Official Plan and its approval by the Ontario Municipal Board (in July 2006). Since November 1, 2002, there have been 27 projects proposed for residential uses in the Employment Districts, totaling 7,619 units. If all proceed, these 27 projects will remove about 137 ha of employment land from the City's supply of land for long term economic growth.
 - 12 of these projects were approved by Council for 1889 units
 - 11 projects are still pending for a total of 5249 units
 - 4 projects were appealed to the OMB and 3 of these were approved.
- Many of these applications pre-date the OMB's approval of the Official Plan which brought the Plan into force, as well as the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Places to Grow). With the introduction of changes to the Planning Act, effective January 1, 2007, there is now a full suite of policy objectives that effectively deal with improving Toronto's competitive position, with respect to, commercial and industrial development in the Employment Districts identified in the Official Plan.

Moving Forward

Implementation of the Official Plan is much more complex than the management of the development approvals process. Secondary Plans, Avenue Studies, Community Improvement Plans and other strategic initiatives will engage the residents, the business community, and other stakeholders along with City staff in shaping Toronto's future. Ongoing monitoring of changing social, economic and environmental conditions is important to guiding the work of community engagement and understanding how the City is growing.

Each Centre has a Secondary Plan and Community Improvement Plans are being developed which will help to improve the competitiveness of the Centres for commercial office development. A number of Secondary Plans have been completed since Council's adoption of the Official Plan, helping to manage the reurbanization process.

To date, nine Avenue studies have been completed and the implementation of zoning to realize the product of these community engagement projects is complete or in progress. Six more Avenue Studies are currently underway or nearing completion.

The health of Downtown is critical to the City's future prosperity and to the realization of our growth management goals. In 2001, almost 395,000 people worked Downtown, or 30% of all workers within the City of Toronto. Almost three-quarters of Downtown workers lived within the City, and 70% of those used transit, walked or cycled to get to work. Additionally, of the total Downtown population, 30% or 39,600 also worked Downtown.

In the five years since 2001, almost 17,000 new residential units were built and occupied Downtown, which means that one-quarter of our recent residential growth has occurred on 3% of the City's total land area.

A survey of households in the Downtown has recently been completed. The survey will tell us who is living in the new housing units, where they have come from and why they choose to live in the Downtown. Results from this survey will be published later in 2007.

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ATTACHMENTS

"Profile Toronto: How Does The City Grow?"
<http://www.toronto.ca/planning/pdf/grow.pdf>