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The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee
From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report: #2024-P-10
Date: May 7, 2024

Subject:

2024 Durham Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Strategy

Recommendation:

That the Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That the 2024 Durham Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Strategy be endorsed as a toolbox of common reference points in the process of planning and designing TOD Places in Durham Region; and
 - B) That the guidelines within the 2024 Durham TOD Strategy that have implications on designing and constructing Regional infrastructure be considered as part of future annual business plans and budget processes for those capital projects.
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Report:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and seek Regional Council's endorsement of a Durham Region specific Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Strategy, which identifies 36 TOD Places in Durham Region characterized by eight distinct TOD Place types: i) GO Train Areas; ii) Large Retail Centres; iii) Mixed-Use Hubs; iv) Historic Centres; v) Rapid Transit Corridors; vi) Institutional Nodes; vii) New TOD Areas; and viii) Rural Regional Centres.

- 1.2 The TOD Strategy supports growth and design through a series of guidelines within each distinct TOD Place, including: mobility, public realm, land use, built form, parking management and design, and transit station design. The TOD Strategy also identifies next steps for implementation including partners, collaboration opportunities, and key performance measures for ongoing monitoring and management of TOD in Durham.
- 1.3 The TOD Strategy is intended to provide more specific direction to the Regional Official Plan and area municipal official plans, including secondary plans, by outlining a comprehensive set of guidelines for reviewing development proposals and/or plans within the TOD Places.
- 1.4 This report will be accompanied by a staff presentation to Committee.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Region initially developed a TOD Strategy in 2010 to support development and transit-supportive design around existing and future transit in Durham including GO stations and along major transit corridors.
- 2.2 Since 2010, there have been significant changes to provincial planning policies and guidelines, including the Provincial Policy Statement (2020), A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020 Consolidation) and the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan (2018). These documents provide a greater emphasis on: transit-supportive development; intensification within built-up areas; and higher densities in both redeveloped and newly developing areas, to achieve complete communities. Coupled with the increased demand for housing and a broader mix of unit types, an update of the Region's TOD Strategy was required to effectively plan for TOD across the Region.
- 2.3 The new Council-adopted [Regional Official Plan](#), in policy 8.1.3, as well as action #3 of the [Durham Transportation Master Plan \(2017\)](#), identifies the development and implementation of regional TOD Guidelines as one of the principles for achieving TOD, with a particular focus on Strategic Growth Areas such as Urban Growth Centres, Regional Centres, Major Transit Station Areas, and along Regional Corridors.
- 2.4 The updated 2024 TOD Strategy incorporates the evolving nature of development patterns in Durham, leveraging opportunities for further implementation within the various TOD Places outlined within the Strategy. It also integrates the results of Envision Durham, the Region's municipal comprehensive review process, and the

policies of the new Regional Official Plan to further transit-supportive development in Durham.

- 2.5 Urban Strategies Inc. (USI) was retained in June 2023 to conduct the update to the TOD Guidelines and facilitate meetings with Regional staff and the area municipalities. USI created the 2010 TOD Strategy.

3. Consultation and Area Municipal Engagement

- 3.1 The consultation and engagement process included staff from the Planning and Economic Development, Works, and Social Services departments, Durham Region Transit, the Rapid Transit & Transit Oriented Development Office, as well as staff from each of the eight area municipalities.
- 3.2 In summer 2023, workshops were held with Regional and area municipal staff to provide an overview of the 2010 TOD Strategy, an understanding of its current use, changes to policy and development context over the last 10-15 years, review of best practices, and establishing a vision for the updated Strategy.
- 3.3 On February 15, 2024, an additional workshop was held with Regional and area municipal staff to provide an overview of the draft TOD Strategy and its component guidelines. Input from area municipal staff on the draft document has been incorporated into the final Strategy.

4. Overview of the 2024 Transit-Oriented Development Strategy

- 4.1 The following provides a high-level overview of the key components of the 2024 TOD Strategy (Attachment #1).
- 4.2 Section 3 “TOD Guidelines,” identifies a series of best practices to support TOD, providing detailed direction to achieve the seven regional priorities outlined in section 1.2 of the TOD Strategy, the seven priorities being: i) Complete Communities; ii) Mix of Uses; iii) Active Modes of Travel; iv) Diversity; v) Vibrant Communities; vi) Investment Opportunities; vii) Health and Wellbeing.
- 4.3 The Guidelines have been organized into the following six components:
 - i. **Mobility** – creating a well-connected and balanced transportation system for all modes, enhance the mobility patterns within TOD Places, and offer a range of transportation options with a priority for sustainable transportation;

- ii. **Public realm** – supporting high-quality, attractive, and livable public areas that incorporate complete streets, beautiful public spaces, and healthy settings to foster a sense of community and belonging;
 - iii. **Land use** – fostering a mix of uses that support transit ridership, including the clustering of residential, commercial, institutional, and employment uses, along with civic, and community amenities;
 - iv. **Built form** – incorporating effective design, densities, mixed uses, and arrangement of new buildings in TOD Places to create attractive and inclusive environments for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users;
 - v. **Parking management and design** – supporting careful design and placement of parking facilities to support pedestrian and transit-oriented environments; and
 - vi. **Transit station design** – promoting positive user experiences, safety, and accessibility within transit stations as strong community focal points.
- 4.4 Section 4, “Working Together to Deliver TOD,” identifies key tools, partnerships, and structures for effective collaboration, coordinated decision making, and successful advancement and implementation of the guidelines and strategies contained within the TOD Strategy.
- 4.5 The Strategy also includes opportunities and key performance indicators, including potential data sources, for measuring the success of TOD within the six guideline components included in Section 3.
- ## 5. Implementation of the TOD Strategy
- 5.1 The TOD Strategy will equip staff in the Planning Division and the Rapid Transit Implementation and Transit-Oriented Development Office with tools and guidelines to effectively review strategic projects and developments, as well as inform future growth and infrastructure considerations within TOD Places, especially within Strategic Growth Areas including the Protected Major Transit Station Areas as identified in the Council-adopted Regional Official Plan.
- 5.2 The TOD Strategy is also intended to support area municipal staff in development review within TOD Places, as well as provide guidance for the preparation of any secondary plans or corridor studies. The development industry can also apply the TOD guidelines in their preparation of development applications and block plans for larger development areas.

- 5.3 Given the above, it is recommended that the 2024 Durham Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Strategy be endorsed as a toolbox of common reference points in the process of planning and designing TOD Places in Durham Region.
- 5.4 There are certain guidelines that require consideration in the planning and design of transportation infrastructure projects led by the Region, such as road widenings, reconstruction, intersection improvements, new or upgraded bus stops, implementation of rapid transit corridors and cycling facilities. As such, it is recommended that the guidelines within the 2024 Durham TOD Strategy that have implications on designing and constructing Regional infrastructure be considered as part of future annual business plans and budget processes for those capital projects.
- 5.5 Regional staff intend to measure progress of TOD using the key performance indicators described in Section 4.4 of the Strategy, as part of its growth management monitoring. Further, Regional staff will consider establishing internal and external TOD working groups, either on a standalone basis or as part of other initiatives (e.g., Growth Management Data Working Group with the area municipalities) to collaborate on the planning, infrastructure and implementation of TOD Places.

6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
- a. Goal 1, Environmental Sustainability: Objective 1.5: Expand sustainable and active transportation.
 - b. Goal 2, Community Vitality: Objective 2.1: Revitalize existing neighbourhoods and build complete communities that are walkable, well-connected, and have a mix of attainable housing.
 - c. Goal 2, Community Vitality: Objective 2.5: Build a healthy, inclusive, age-friendly community where everyone feels a sense of belonging.
 - d. Goal 3, Economic Prosperity: Objective 3.3: Enhance communications and transportation networks to better connect people and move goods efficiently.
 - e. Goal 4, Social Investment: Objective 5.1: Optimize resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services and value.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The TOD Strategy was prepared to best advise Regional and area municipal staff on creating and implementing TOD Places in Durham Region through a set of guidelines organized around six components or themes. Advancing TOD requires coordination with various key partners and stakeholders including internal departments, advisory committees, Metrolinx, the province, landowners, developers, and area municipalities. While area municipalities do have area-specific urban design guidelines that are transit-supportive, a comprehensive strategy is necessary to promote opportunities for implement TOD within the identified 36 TOD Places as described in the Strategy.
- 7.2 The TOD Strategy forms a key component for the Region, with its key partners, to continue to advance opportunities that encourage growth patterns, community form and infrastructure investment that create more transit-supportive communities. The introduction and expansion and phased implementation of the higher-order transit network in Durham, the establishment of a Rapid Transit and Transit-Oriented Development Office and the ongoing planning in Strategic Growth Areas all contribute to ensure that complete, inclusive communities are being built close to existing and planned rapid and frequent transit services.

8. Attachments

Attachment #1: [Durham Transit-Oriented Development Strategy, May 2024](#)

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE
Commissioner of Planning and
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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