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For Immediate Release

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RICHMOND HILL RELEASES DRAFT NEW OFFICIAL PLAN FOR “BUILDING A NEW KIND OF URBAN”

Draft New Official Plan Available for Public Review and Comment until June 9, 2010

RICHMOND HILL – After two years of extensive public consultation through the *People Plan Richmond Hill* process and numerous background studies, the Town of Richmond Hill released its draft new Official Plan today announcing its vision for “building a new kind of urban.” The draft new Official Plan is available for public comment until June 9, 2010.

“This draft Official Plan was created with support from our community. Our staff have worked very hard making public consultation a priority and the basis of this plan,” said Mayor Dave Barrow. “We are grateful for the community’s support and the public participation at all of our events, open houses and workshops.”

The Official Plan is one of the most powerful public policy documents that a municipality has to guide future growth and development and meet the needs of its community. It establishes land use policies for the physical, social and economic growth of the community, influencing how the community looks, feels and functions. Richmond Hill’s draft new Official Plan represents a fundamental shift in the Town’s approach to land use planning through its emphasis on *Environment First and Sustainability*, *City-Building*, and *Place-making*.

Environment First and Sustainability

Foremost, the draft new Official Plan recognizes the Town’s rich natural heritage both on and south of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Growth is directed away from environmental areas and a connected Greenway System is established throughout the Town in which important natural features will be enhanced over time along with linkages to urban open space. The draft policies also aim to provide leadership by fostering innovation in sustainable design through new development and redevelopment opportunities.

City-Building

The most significant underlying theme behind Richmond Hill’s draft new Official Plan is that it recognizes Richmond Hill is undergoing a transformation from suburban to urban, while respecting and enhancing the Town’s unique character and identity. Although this transformation will not happen over night, the draft policies seek to guide that transformation by balancing the community’s desire for managed growth at a scale that reflects the local context.



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Based on the Town's evolving urban structure, much of the Town's future growth will take the form of mixed-use development concentrated in a network of centres and corridors supported by public rapid transit and infrastructure. These areas will contain predominantly "mid-rise" forms of growth and will be pedestrian-oriented, compact and human-scaled, with the objective of promoting walkability, fostering social interaction and ensuring compatibility with existing development. These centres and corridors will be connected to the neighbourhoods where limited development will be allowed to take place, provided that it is a "good fit" with the surrounding area.

Place-making

Perhaps the most unique and innovative feature of Richmond Hill's draft new Official Plan is the direct integration of design and land use policies that focus on place-making. The draft policies accommodate intensification in a way that protects, promotes and enhances what people value about Richmond Hill. Each area of the Town, whether it be a business park, the Downtown or the Richmond Hill Centre, will continue to have an identifiable character and sense of place. The draft new Official Plan promotes the Town's existing cultural and natural heritage features and encourages the creation of more unique gathering places, focal points and landmarks through connectivity and design excellence.

"The draft new Official Plan's vision of 'building a new kind of urban' demonstrates our Town's unique and innovative approaches to land use planning that will create a community reflective of its residents input." said Mayor Barrow.

As a continuation of the Town's transparent and open approach to consultation through *People Plan Richmond Hill*, the Town is inviting comments on the draft new Official Plan from interested stakeholders, especially residents, businesses, landowners, agencies and other levels of government.

An electronic copy of the draft new Official Plan is available on the Town's website at www.richmondhill.ca/draftOP and a hard copy is available at the Town's Planning and Regulatory Services Department. Hard copies will also be made available for purchase starting May 12. Written comments on the draft new Official Plan may be submitted to the Town on or before June 9, 2010.

An Open House under the *Planning Act* will be held on Wednesday, May 12 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the McConaghy Seniors' Centre (10100 Yonge Street, Richmond Hill) to allow members of the public and stakeholders to learn and ask questions about the draft new Official Plan. Also, a special Public Meeting under the *Planning Act* will be held on Wednesday, June 9 at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers of the Town's Municipal Office (225 East Beaver Creek Road) to give the public an opportunity to attend a formal presentation on the draft new Official Plan and provide comments to Council.

Additional information on the draft new Official Plan, including specific area and background studies, can be viewed on the Town's website at www.richmondhill.ca/draftOP.