



INCORPORATED 1855

TOWN OF WHITBY REPORT

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

REPORT TO: Planning and Development Committee	REPORT NO: PL 21-08
DATE OF MEETING: February 11, 2008	FILE NO(S): N/A
PREPARED BY: Planning Department	LOCATION: N/A
REPORT TITLE/SUBJECT: Survey on Community's Preference for Future Growth - Final Report and Presentation by Environics Research Group	

1.0 RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Planning Report Item PL 21-08 be received as information;
2. That Environics Research Group's "Final Report: Town of Whitby – Public Opinion on Community Growth" be given further consideration through the Whitby Official Plan Review process; and,
3. That a copy of Report No. PL 21-08 and a copy of Environics Research Group's "Final Report: Town of Whitby – Public Opinion on Community Growth" be forwarded to the Region of Durham Planning Department for consideration through the Region's "Growing Durham" Growth Management Study.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

N/A

3.0 ORIGIN:

In July 2007, Environics Research Group was retained by the Town to undertake a public opinion survey regarding the community's preference for future growth (see Planning Report, PL 98-07). The approved Terms of Reference and work program require that the consultant prepare a Final Report and present their findings to the Planning and Development Committee. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the growth survey process to date, and to provide a brief summary of the findings contained in Environics' report. The consultant, Laurie Logan-deCaux from

Environics, will also present their findings at the February 11th, Planning and Development.

A complete copy of Environics' "Final Report: Town of Whitby – Public Opinion on Community Growth" has been distributed to the Mayor, members of Council, and Department Heads under separate cover. A hard copy of the report will also be made available for viewing at the Planning Department and on the Town's website.

4.0 BACKGROUND:

In April, 2007, Council directed the Planning Department to report back to Planning and Development Committee regarding a proposed methodology to obtain input on the community's preference for future growth (PL 46-07 and PL 77-07).

In July, 2007, Planning Staff prepared a draft survey to be used by various pre-qualified consultants to determine a preferred methodology and rough cost estimates to undertake the Growth Survey (see Planning Report, PL 98-07).

During the summer of 2007, Planning Staff prepared a Terms of Reference and sought and received quotation submissions from six qualified, nationally recognized, public opinion survey companies. Planning Staff undertook an in-depth review, comparison and analysis of all of the submissions using several evaluation criteria. Subsequently, Environics Research Group was selected to undertake the Growth Survey.

In October, 2007, Council endorsed the public opinion survey prepared and recommended by Environics Research Group, as the survey to be used to obtain public opinion on the community's preference on future growth (see Planning Report, Item PL 119-07). Council also recommended that the sample size be increased to 950 persons, and that the additional service of a self-complete survey (i.e. available for pick-up or download, and mail-in, fax-back, or drop-off) be included in Environics' work program.

In November and December of 2007, Environics undertook the telephone survey. Self-complete surveys were also forwarded to the consultant for review and consideration. The consultant subsequently analyzed the results of both the telephone survey and the self-complete survey, and compiled their findings in a Final Report. As required by the Terms of Reference and the approved work program, Environics will present their findings to the Planning and Development Committee.

5.0 DISCUSSION/OPTIONS:

Environics' Final Report:

Environics' Final Report is generally structured as follows:

- Executive Summary
- I – Introduction (overview of work program and survey objectives)
- II – Survey Methodology
- III – Main Findings (outline of survey results from each of the questions)
- IV – Self Complete Survey Findings
- V – Additional comments
- VI – Conclusions/Recommendations
- Appendix (copy of the survey)

Survey Findings:

Environics' key findings, as outlined in their executive summary, are as follows:

- Six in ten Whitby residents agree that the rate or pace of population growth in Whitby has generally been too fast and express a moderate degree of concern about the issue. Traffic congestion, overdevelopment, urban expansion and insufficient infrastructure and roads are common growth-related concerns articulated by residents.
- Despite some concern related to population growth, most residents agree that Whitby's future rate of growth, as well as its share of Durham's population, should generally remain about the same as it is today.
- The possibility of future job creation is important to the vast majority of residents, most of who believe that it is either very or somewhat important that they have the opportunity to work in or close to the Town of Whitby.
- Support for 'greenfield' development, or new residential subdivisions on underdeveloped land or farmland, is low as about two-thirds of residents say they are not very or not at all supportive of this type of development. However, when considering specific future urban expansion areas, residents are more apt to agree with 'greenfield' development. Although still not a majority view, about four in ten residents generally agree with a future expansion urban area west and north of Brooklin or of west Whitby to Lakeridge Road.
- In general, support for intensification or more residential development in already existing or built up urban areas is also relatively low, as about six in ten residents say that they are not very or not at all supportive of urban intensification. However, support for this type of development in certain locations of the community is higher. Specifically, most residents agree with increased development near public transit and in commercial areas. However, support for intensification in downtown areas of Whitby and Brooklin, and existing low density neighbourhoods is low.
- When prefaced with protecting and preserving agricultural land and natural heritage systems, support to accommodate new growth in existing urban areas increases. In fact, six in ten Whitby residents report being very or somewhat supportive of new growth in current urban areas as a way to protect and

preserve agricultural land and natural heritage systems. This may directly link to the fact that the vast majority of residents say they are very or somewhat concerned about the preservation of natural environment features in Whitby.

- At a general level, the findings reported do not vary dramatically across the population, as defined by demographic characteristics or general attitudes. However, a notable distinction can be found among younger residents and newer residents to Whitby (less than two years residing in Whitby). These groups generally tend to have fewer concerns about population growth, feel that the past rate of growth in the community has been too slow or about right and believe the future rate of growth in Whitby should increase. Additionally, these residents are more apt to be supportive of 'greenfield' development and intensification of existing urban areas. In contrast, as age and length of residency increases so do residents' concerns and apprehensions regarding growth-related issues in the community.
- Results also reveal several geographical sub-area differences. Specifically, urban Whitby residents are more uneasy about the pace of growth in Whitby, while traffic congestion tends to be more of a concern among Brooklin residents. However, the most prominent distinction is among rural Whitby residents. While still not a majority view, findings suggest that rural Whitby residents tend to have fewer population related concerns and are slightly more supportive of 'greenfield' development in Whitby.
- While results of the self-complete survey should be considered qualitative in nature, findings indicate that those residents who participated in the self-complete survey share similar views on population growth in Whitby to those residents who participated in the telephone survey.

Overall Observations:

- Overall, study results reveal that residents have some degree of concern about how Whitby has grown in the past and are apprehensive about the effects of future growth and development. In particular, traffic congestion and insufficient road and highway infrastructure is a repeated concern among residents. As the Town of Whitby continues to manage population growth it will be important to ensure that the accompanying infrastructure needs are addressed.
- It is also important to recognize that the degree of concern associated with population growth in Whitby is generally moderate. Whitby residents recognize that growth is unavoidable and are supportive of a balanced and planned approach to managing the population demands in their community.
- Generally, Whitby residents perceive proper planning, ample green spaces, and an increase in businesses, industries and amenities, as well as employment opportunities with what they consider to be the benefits of "good" growth. They also envision an adequate mix of low and high density neighbourhoods with appropriate population growth and community planning.
- It will be important for the Town of Whitby to continue to clearly communicate with residents about the growth demands in their community. An opportunity

exists for the Town of Whitby to engage residents in decisions related to population growth, thereby increasing resident's awareness and understanding of matters related to urban expansion and development within their community.

Further Consideration

The general purpose and objective of the public opinion survey was to assist Council in gauging the community's preference for future growth. It was also intended that the results of the survey would provide input into the Whitby Official Plan Review.

Additional analysis may still be required to determine the implications and full impacts of the survey's findings on how to proceed with and develop growth management policies through the OP Review. Staff recommend that further consideration of the survey findings be undertaken through the OP Review.

6.0 COMMUNICATION ISSUES/PLAN:

Self-complete Survey

As noted, Council authorized Environics to include a self-complete survey as part of their work program. Respondents were to complete and return the self-complete survey by December 7th, 2007, to coincide with the completion of the telephone survey. The self-complete survey indicated that it was to be faxed or mailed directly to the consultant to ensure confidentiality. The self-complete survey was made available for pick-up at the Planning Department, for download from the Town's website, and for completion at both of the kick-off meetings for the Whitby Official Plan Review (November 28th, 2007 in Whitby, and on December 6th, 2007 in Brooklin – those in attendance were encouraged to complete and return the survey). The majority of the 20 self-completed surveys were received in sealed envelopes at the OP Review meetings as well as in a drop-off box at the Planning Department, which were then forwarded to the consultant for review on December 8th, 2007.

It should be noted that the findings from the self-completed survey should only be considered qualitative in nature.

The Planning Department received only one (1) email from a member of the public which sought to complete and return a survey electronically, for convenience (e.g. via email or through online form) and for environmental reasons (e.g. reduced amount of paper). Planning advised that the approved budget and work program for the survey did not include a web-based survey for completion online, due to significant increases in costs associated with set-up and maintenance of a web-based survey.

7.0 CONSIDERATIONS:

A. PUBLIC
N/A

B. FINANCIAL
N/A

C. IMPACT ON & INPUT FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS/SOURCES
N/A

D. CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
N/A

8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Environics has completed their analysis of the survey results and provided a Final Report for consideration by Council. As required by the approved Terms of Reference and work program, Environics will present their findings to Planning and Development Committee. Planning Staff recommend that the survey findings be further considered through the Whitby Official Plan Review and through the Region's ongoing "Growing Durham" Growth Management Study.

9.0 ATTACHMENTS
N/A

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