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Town of Aurora

## Memorandum

Planning and Development Services

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**Re:** Green Development Standards Consultation

**To:** Environmental Advisory Committee

**From:** Matthew Volpintesta, Senior Policy Planner

**Date:** November 24, 2021

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### Recommendation

1. That the memorandum regarding Green Development Standards Consultation be received; and
2. That the Environmental Advisory Committee comments regarding Green Development Standards be received and referred to staff for consideration and further action as appropriate.

### Executive Summary

The Town of Aurora is undertaking the development of a Green Development Standards (GDS) program to promote environmentally conscious development and commit to a greener and more sustainable future. GDS represent an important policy tool used by municipalities to support Official Plan goals, sustainability and climate change objectives, and several other co-beneficial directives. The following report presents an update of the work completed to date, highlights the initial feedback from stakeholders, sets out next steps and the expected final deliverables and outcomes of the GDS.

- The GDS supports the Town of Aurora Official Plan policy goals of sustainability and climate change objectives, informed by a comprehensive review and extensive stakeholder consultation.
- The GDS is based on five theme areas, with measurable targets and parameters required to be achieved for each theme.

- The GDS will be implemented in phases. Next steps include testing the green development standards against active development applications, final refinement, and staff training ahead of implementation.

## Background

**The GDS supports the Town of Aurora Official Plan goals of sustainability and climate change objectives, informed by a comprehensive review and extensive stakeholder consultation**

The Town of Aurora (the Town) retained Prime Strategy & Planning to undertake a comprehensive review of green development standards (GDS) and to develop green development standards applicable to the Town of Aurora context.

The GDS will be a community-based approach that will apply across all forms of new development and will also apply to municipal projects and buildings as the Town has committed to lead by with sustainable design. The Town of Aurora GDS will support Section 5.2 of the Official Plan on sustainable development. The GDS sets expectations for high-performing buildings, community connectivity, and promotes access to low or zero carbon transportation options. Having a comprehensive GDS that approaches development at a community-wide scale encourages a compact built form that reduces demands on infrastructure while creating healthy, complete, and sustainable communities.

To provide technical expertise and guidance throughout the GDS development, the Town established a project steering committee inclusive of representation from the following departments: Planning and Development, Engineering, Operations, Parks, and Building. External stakeholders include local Conservation Authorities, York Region, applicable utility companies, and the development and building materials industry. Additionally, staff recognize the importance of Advisory Committees to provide input through the GDS development. The GDS project team are currently seeking input from the Environmental Advisory Committee, Accessibility Advisory Committee, and Business Improvement Association, and the Aurora Economic Development Corporation.

As part of the initial stage of the GDS development, a comprehensive review of GDS standards was undertaken which will be documented in a Discussion Paper.

## Analysis

**The GDS is based on five theme areas, with measurable targets and parameters required to be achieved for each theme.**

The GDS is currently structured around 5 themes; Energy, Water, Ecology, Complete Communities, and, Building Materials. Themes are informed by priority focus areas for the Town to support a net-zero pathway. Typically, a GDS includes voluntary and/or mandatory measures developed and implemented by municipalities to mandate a baseline level of sustainable development.

To assess performance, each theme category or focus area has a list of Tiers, some of which are mandatory criteria and easiest to achieve, and higher-level tiers which are voluntary and may be tied to incentives (phase 2 of implementation). A proponent must achieve mandatory tier one requirements and then has an option of fulfilling a minimum number of additional requirements intended to be more intensified in overall objective.

The GDS uses a framework provided from Clean Air Partnership based on tiered checklists. Net zero programs including Passive House, Canada Green Building Council Net Zero and Ontario Home Builders Association Net Zero have been considered as certification options in Phase 2 which could come in exchange for a monetary incentive or expedited approval, still to be determined.

A descriptive breakdown of criteria and rationale for each theme, including potential assessment metrics, reviewing parties and timing, are currently being reviewed with stakeholders and tested by staff.

**The GDS will be implemented in two phases. Next steps include testing the green development standards against active development applications, followed by final version refinement, and staff training ahead of implementation.**

The initial stages of the project included presenting a comprehensive municipal best practice review and delivery of a thorough discussion paper looking at scope of the GDS and potential tools for analysis and achievement. Through continuous updating and following consultation with the Town's Executive Leadership Team, including presenting the version 1 draft GDS to both the steering committee and stakeholder groups, specific mandatory and non-mandatory criteria have been proposed in two phases. Included with this criterion, are suggested timing for review, and associated staff responsibilities.

Phase 1 represents a set of mandatory requirements, which include optional expectations providing some flexibility. Some of these requirements are already being reviewed but fall under the umbrella or scope of the GDS and therefore will assist in the ease of implementation. The project team is currently assessing potential external incentives to support implementation which would not have a direct fiscal impact to the Town.

Phase 2 includes elevated performance which will include further improved building and site expectations and certification for net zero through third party programs. Incremental costing analysis will be required for Phase 2. It is expected that the Town will define incentives through a possible expedited development approvals program, CIP or other options as part of the planned cost-benefit analysis.

## Project Timeline & Deliverables

- Comprehensive best practice review and draft discussion paper (*April – August 2021*) *Completed*
- Draft version 1 guidelines and stakeholder and committee consultation (*July – November 2021*) *In progress*
- Progress Update to Council (November 2, 2021) *Completed*
- GDS test assessment using active development applications (*November 2021*) *In Progress*
- Final refined guidelines and implementation materials (*1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2022*) *Expected*
- Final Presentation of GDS to Council (*1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2022*) *Expected*

Staff are currently consolidating feedback from stakeholder consultations held through September to November. Based on steering committee review and stakeholder consultation, the GDS performance requirements will be refined and updated. The present format of the GDS represents a performance-based path for net zero and includes integration of the Town's energy plan expectations as well as other operational objectives.

Town staff and the consultant team are planning a test implementation of the program on two active development sites, including one Town initiated project. Once consultation with the advisory committees and test assessment is completed, the final first iteration of the GDS will be prepared for presentation to Council.

Extensive staff training including a procedural handbook will be provided ahead of implementation. Implementation of the GDS is proposed for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2022 pending Council endorsement. Staff training and roll-out would be expected throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2022. Staff expect the GDS to be reviewed on an annual basis and updated where required or when legislation permits.

A version of this report will be presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Environmental Advisory Committee, the BIA, and the Aurora Economic Development Committee for consultation in the coming weeks prior to finalizing the GDS and presenting it to Council for endorsement in 2022.

## **Attachments**

Attachment 1 - Presentation Green Development Standards