Town of East Gwillimbury

University Visioning Session

OUTCOMES REPORT

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Submitted by:

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Introduction

As part of its plan to address the growing demand for university spaces in the GTA and York Region, the Town of East Gwillimbury conducted a design charette on Monday, September 24, 2012 focused on establishing a local university campus. Following introductory remarks from Mayor Virginia Hackson, Tom Webster (CAO), and Carolyn Kellington (Town Planner) that characterized the Town's commitment, potential and understanding of educational space design, invited guests (numbering 33), representing the provincial, regional and local governments as well as education (including students), social agency, property development, business and community leaders, spent three hours discussing several topics (see Appendix, p. 11, for some details) that can serve as guides for university planning:

- Key trends affecting the future of post-secondary education,
- Benefits derived from a university's presence in a community, and
- Important attributes for a university's urban design and operations.

The following report provides a top-line summary of the outcomes of those discussions.

Key Trends

- Consideration of the true 'value' and 'purpose' of an education – is it focused on employment/career or on personal/academic development or both?

- Increasing costs of post-secondary education and a focus on affordability

- Prominence of e-learning for today's student and its impact on physical plant considerations re: post-secondary education spaces

- Need for lifelong learning (as a result of the changing nature of business and industry) as part of a person's career and personal development

- Centre of Excellence concept as a defining feature of many universities

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- Growing importance of hybrid learning (a blend of technology-enabled and traditional learning methodologies)

- Distance learning – on-line from anywhere – and its appeal to today's and tomorrow's learners

- Broadband implications for all of these technology-mediated forms of learning

- "More with less" continues to govern the public agenda; implications for buildings' use, innovation, sustainability, etc.

- Growing numbers of multi-cultural learners and the different needs they bring to the teaching and learning environment

- Older learners becoming a greater part of the post-secondary population mix and the different needs they bring to the teaching and learning environment

- A growing emphasis on post graduate specialization programming (especially within colleges and institutes of technology), which impacts the types of students and professors on campus

- Post-secondary education as a 'global business' with international competition for students

Benefits from a University

For the Region

Selected as the **most important** benefits through small group discussion:

- Incubator; incubation hubs

- Economic development; the multiplier effect of every dollar invested

- Better educated workforce/population

- Visibility, profile, identity, sense of place and identity it gives to the town (opportunity for branding); the "heart" of the Region; a competitive identity

- Attract investment; attract industry

- Completes the community: live – work – play – learn

- Keep students local

- Better access to higher education

Other mentions:

- Spirit of innovation

- Creation of affordable housing

- Advantage to a growing community

- Proximity to York Region and neighbouring communities

- Globally competitive

- Transit /transportation (so that commutes switch northbound)

- Creates jobs

- Opportunities for general growth

- Shared infrastructure among levels of government and private sector (e.g., transit and the opportunity for partnerships)

For the Town

Selected as the **most important** benefits through small group discussion:

- Economic vitality and growth (springboard for growth, e.g. Cambridge); revitalization of town / community (e.g., enhanced services)

- Vibrancy (public art, culture, theatre, welcoming community, youthfulness)

- Local opportunity (e.g., affordable post-secondary education); keeping growth in the community

- Increase in diversity

Other mentions:

- New business development /partnerships; entrepreneurial growth (e.g., businesses benefit from the presence of the university)

- More local jobs, full- and part-time

- Another service available to community – related to infrastructure (i.e., conventions, meeting space, recreation)

- Community profile enhanced within the Region (at the local level)

- Sense of pride for community based on opportunity and community engagement with the university

- Cultural impact (e.g., performing arts, music)

For the Neighbourhood

NB: None selected as "most important"

- Safer community

- Vibrant, lively community

- Walking, cycling, transit opportunities

- Broaden community to get connected

- Catalyst – enhancing what the town has to offer

- Revitalization or creation of more of a town 'community'

- Local opportunity to facilitate mature learner (i.e., more affordable)

- Capital spending opportunity

- Gives opportunity and critical mass to support innovative and sustainable forms of energy

- Can lead to 'perpetual growth'

Important University Attributes

Design of the Campus and its Built form

Selected as the **most important** attributes through small group discussion:

- Compact urban-form campus

- One iconic structure – architecture
    o Supports identity / branding
    o Can facilitate integration with the community

- Amenities, malls, etc. – connections to culture, heritage, sense of place and community

- Need pedestrian connectors, walking trails

- Satellite campus (to start out), evolving to a main campus over time

W e s t e r n   M a n a g e m e n t   C o n s u l t a n t s

- Scalable, i.e., flexible buildings and able to grow over time

- Map out and identify local partnership opportunities and global partnership opportunities now; try to have them on board and at the table from the beginning (to help reduce costs and attract enrollment)

- 24-hour accessibility (e.g., study space, working space, meeting space)

Other mentions:

- Space to house students

- Does it feel like home?

- Dependent upon partner and academic programme

- Conference facilities (i.e., space for large format events)

- Incubator /accelerator – spin-off to businesses / companies; access to space for start-up businesses; access to mentors

- Meeting areas with access to technology

- Multi-use facilities

- Mixed campus – university and college

- Campus could be a 'living lab' (depending on programme mix)

- Integrated into community

- Flexible in community uses

- Student residence (can be large)

- Need some visual identity

- E-learning

- Parking – will it dominate space? (e.g., Queen's has underground parking; be creative)

- Designed with safety in mind

- Depends on the partner for a satellite campus

- Integrate well with the community (both ways)

- Friendly partners available

- Pick small handful of natural advantages and pursue (technology, finance and agricultural , environmental)

Land-Uses Surrounding the Campus

Selected as the **most important** attributes through small group discussion:

- Natural Heritage

Other mentions:

- Community organizations – connections to community

- Research centres – surrounding employment (but differentiated in some way)

- Advanced manufacturing – connection with research

- Student housing

- Faculty housing

- Vibrant business community

- Recreation lands, passive and active (shared)

- Promotion of green spaces

- Sports field

- Shared facilities within the community (e.g., libraries)

- High rise apartment style buildings going up for students – rental possibilities

- Open space

- Sustainability – thinking green
    - Holland Marsh / River
    - Take advantage of existing features

- Think 12 months of the year

- Undergraduate experience or post graduate university – could change land use implications

- Technology support and its implication for land use

- Plan this for 25 – 50 years out (needs to be adaptable and capable of evolving over time (including building design) i.e., libraries being replaced by learnings commons (technology, help functions, peer support)

- Make it unique / special (don't just copy others) variety in architecture

- Need places for people to live nearby

- Need relationship between university and green spaces

- Need to be able to get around – to get there, to leave, to park

Infrastructure

Selected as the **most important** attributes through small group discussion:

- Ultrafast, affordable connectivity for faculty, students, surrounding businesses

- Transportation – transit – access and use of existing transportation corridors (i.e., GO train)

- Security – safe, secure environment (particularly foreign students)

- Affordable housing

Other mentions:

- Ensure that the infrastructure is in place (technology, broadband, servers, highways and transportation,) for 100 years out and its available on a timely basis

- Technology – integrated in board rooms and throughout the campus

- Broadband plus access to ultra-fast broadband

- Power – reliable

- Element of sustainability

- High end

- New, integrated into community plan and development

- Social infrastructure

- Transit – tap into a system for access

- Parking space and safety issues (e.g., lighting, snow/ice clearance)

- GO station

- RFP to universities – who interests us

- Sustainability and greening

- Need shuttle service from campus to downtown core (Toronto)

- Environmental sensitivity

- Values of town and region will matter

- Focus on a commuting university

- Private [sector] will need to drive land use around campus

- Student Centred Institution: What is a student really interested in? – students will follow the right program (e.g., career opportunity – not just a job)

"For a University to be successful in East Gwillimbury, the most important consideration is...."

Individual submissions:

- Financial partnerships - both public and private

- Transit easily accessible and on campus

- That the University is accessible (Go Station directly on campus) and that the University is fully incorporated / accepted by the Community

- Integrated with Community; students to community; community to students

- Must decide what it wants to be: "A World Class Centre of Learning Excellence" – " Go Big AND STAY Home"

- Collaboration to include all municipalities, thereby reducing competition. Combine with community college based offerings.

- Vision: What will East Gwillimbury specialize in, what will it be known for and how will it be different? GO WORLD CLASS

- To offer a program that has a growing demand and will continue to be important to society

- Location that builds upon existing infrastructure – roads, sewers, transit, open space

- The ability to attract and retain enrolment

- To have a clear vision of what it wants as a town. What kind of school, for whom, how will it be cross-beneficial?

- The collaboration between all stakeholders, everyone pulling in the same direction; a shared vision

- Incorporate a triple bottom line of social, economic and environmental sustainability – lead by example

- Innovative, out of the box thinking. Be different, leading edge.

- Program focus (and location); nature, range, and focus of programs

- A choice of a university partner (or partners)

- The right partnerships

- Partnership

- "Keep your eye on the prize" – Build internal /external partnerships required to make this happen

- That it be accessible and therefore used and able to grow in the community

- Build an attractive and functional campus that provides meaningful educational opportunities (focused, such as engineering and medical tech) to a variety of students (living on campus, commuting and e-learning). Then PROMOTE aggressively.

- Value-add program not a general program, e.g., specialize in health / medical or engineering

- Progressive; Student oriented; Technology oriented

- Program to be offered and the entire educational and cultural experience that can be created … also an adjunct question of who is the institutional partner

- LOCATION – proximate to existing urban areas with transportation/community and social opportunities in place as launching pad

- Focus on one very specialized faculty and only offer that specialization

- A proposal with leading edge partners up front:
    - GTA University
    - Global University/program
    - Business (IBM, Magna, etc.)
    - Post-secondary education (Seneca, Humber)

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- Transit linkages; must be able to connect to the rest of York Region and the GTA in order to attract students and long-term investment into the community

- A compelling set of programmatic foci and goals that will capture the demand of a new generation of students and the commercial partners to support

- Specifically target a discipline

- Start small, strategic focus with private partner; synergize academic focus with private sector business innovation and community integration. Have a vision; synergize land uses and business case for this venture.

- A dedicated steering committee that has the most appropriate and broadest range of skills and experience. This is a competitive challenge – other communities want to beat you and win one of the three prizes.

- The support from the local community and surrounding region in creating an innovative campus / educational experience.

- Connectivity with a major partner, i.e., Southlake Hospital, leading to economic development opportunities, i.e., bio-tech and med tech.

- It needs to incorporate leading, cutting-edge innovative sustainability features including energy systems.

APPENDIX

Discussion # 1: Vision for the University...

BENEFITS FOR OUR REGION, OUR TOWN, OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

This discussion has two parts – first, a quick listing of some of the potential benefits a university can have on the Region, Town and/or neighbourhood. Think about what positive impacts might accrue from a university located here. Then, go back and *select the top 5* that your table group seems to agree on.

Use the chart below to jot down your initial thoughts, and then go back and circle those that everyone begins to agree on as key or the most important (i.e., those you will mention when you report out on your discussion).

Remember **...** you have about 20 minutes for the small group discussion so there is time to hear from each group before we need to move on to the next agenda item.

	BENEFITS A UNIVERSITY CAN BRING? POSITIVE IMPACT?
REGION	
TOWN	
NEIGHBOURHOOD	

Notes:

Discussion # 2: Key Characteristics for a University Campus …

VARIOUS ATTRIBUTES AND THEIR RELATIVE PRIORITY

Please discuss the key characteristics you think are important for a university campus in East Gwillimbury, from the standpoint of urban design and operations.

We've listed four general categories below to get you started. Try to consider each of them, but you don't need to cover all the points listed in parentheses … those are just suggestions.   After about 30 minutes of discussion, go back among the characteristics you've talked about and, as a group, *select the top 3* that you think would be the most important for the successful development of a university campus in East Gwillimbury.

1. Design of the Campus and its Built form (site size, academic buildings, cultural buildings [e.g., library, performing arts, conference facilities], recreational, commercial, student housing, open space)

2. Land-uses surrounding the Campus (employment lands [commercial, research, office and other prestige industrial], student housing, open space and any other ideas about how land around the Campus might best be used)

3. Infrastructure (to campus [e.g., public transportation infrastructure , private transportation infrastructure, parking space] and within campus [e.g., internal circulation, pedestrian, cycling] and broadband)

4. Other broad-based issues (e.g., research synergies with other institutions/private sector, labour market needs, private sector partnerships / involvement, cost effectiveness [capital and operating], sustainability, branding)

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Concluding Hand-In:

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE

In conclusion, please fill this out individually and hand in the card as you leave today's session.

"For a University to be successful in East Gwillimbury, the most important consideration is...."