



Town of East Gwillimbury

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT P2019-34

To: Committee of the Whole Council
Date: December 3, 2019
Subject: Planning for Future Growth: Building Complete Communities as Part of the Urban Area through the Region's MCR process
Origin: Development Services Department
Corporate Services Department
Community Infrastructure & Environmental Services Department

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **THAT** Development Services, Planning Branch Report P2019-34, dated, December 3, 2019, entitled "Planning for Future Growth: Building Complete Communities as Part of the Urban Area through the Region's MCR process" be received;
2. **THAT** Council endorse the need to include the "Whitebelt" lands within the Town as part of the "Urban Area" in the Regional Official Plan (ROP) through the Region's current Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) process in order to create complete communities, coordinate infrastructure planning and accommodate residential and employment growth to the year 2041 and beyond;
3. **THAT** staff report back to Council on a work plan to undertake the Town's Official Plan Review and secondary plans for the new community areas; and
4. **THAT** the Town Clerk forward this report, as well as memos and reports P2019-21 and P2019-29 to the Regional Clerk to inform the Region's MCR.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement for the inclusion of the Town's remainder "Whitebelt" lands as "Urban Area" through the Region's MCR and ROP in order to allow the Town to comprehensively plan for future employment and residential growth.

BACKGROUND

The need to include the remainder of the Whitebelt lands as Urban Area has been established

The Town's 2010 Comprehensive Growth Management Strategy included the Whitebelt lands within the urban portions of the Town, recognizing the need to develop secondary plans for future community areas in the Whitebelt to effectively accommodate growth.

On May 22, 2019 Town staff provided report P2019-21 to Council, which provided updates on the Regional MCR process and upcoming Town Official Plan Review, and outlined that urban expansion lands will be required to meet residential and employment growth to the year 2041. The report was received and referred to a Council Workshop.

On June 11, 2019 a growth management workshop was presented to Council, which outlined that the Town should lead the planning exercise for the Whitebelt lands to inform the MCR process. The workshop further described the benefits of including the Whitebelt lands as Urban Area so that the Town could achieve sustainable growth to the year 2041 and beyond. The workshop presentation was received and Council requested that staff report back detailing the Town's obligations for growth management.

On July 16, 2019, Town staff provided report P2019-29 to Council, which gave a detailed overview of the Town's obligations from the Province and Region to accommodate growth in a sustainable manner. The report encouraged the Town to be proactive in its planning approach and develop the necessary phasing and secondary plan policies for the Whitebelt lands as a means of effectively managing the large population and employment growth that is anticipated for the Town. The report was received by Council.

ANALYSIS

As outlined in past Council reports, the remaining Whitebelt area comprises approximately 1,200 hectares (3,000 acres) and including these lands as part of the Region's Urban Area would enable the Town to plan complete communities to the year 2041 and beyond.

East Gwillimbury is a provincially designated growth municipality under the Growth Plan

The Growth Plan enables the development of regional growth plans that guide government investments and land use planning policies. The Town of East Gwillimbury is already recognized as having two additional Major Transit Station Areas – one for bus rapid transit at the intersection of Yonge and Green Lane, and the other for GO rail at the intersection of 2nd Concession and Green Lane. Further, Green Lane itself is recognized as a Regional Corridor in the ROP. The Growth Plan was amended on May 16, 2019 to introduce policies that encourage increasing the housing supply as part of the Province's Housing Supply Action Plan. The Growth Plan mandates a density target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare for Designated Greenfield Areas, and Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan requires York Region to accommodate 1,790,000 people and 900,000 jobs by 2041.

On August 15, 2019, the Province also indicated their intent to move forward with the Highway 400 – Highway 404 Connecting Link, which is expected to serve the major residential and employment growth anticipated for the Town. The Growth Plan identifies this future highway extension between Highway 400 and Highway 404.

In order to manage this anticipated growth, the Town must be proactive and develop the appropriate phasing and secondary plan policies for new community areas ahead of time.

Inclusion of the Whitebelt lands as Urban Area will ensure coordinated infrastructure planning

The Town’s Transportation Master Plan and Water and Wastewater Master Plan are both underway and being updated for 2020. An addendum to the Master Plans will be required for the inclusion of the Whitebelt lands as Urban Area. This will ensure that servicing is optimized and that pipes will not require upsizing or twinning to accommodate the inclusion of the additional lands as within the urban boundary.

Inclusion of the Whitebelt lands as Urban Area is critical to help pay for the servicing of new local employment uses

Including the Town’s remaining Whitebelt lands in the Region’s Urban Area and Town’s Settlement Area would ensure sufficient land is designated to supply housing and job growth over the long-term. The added supply of ground related housing will generate revenues to assist the Region in funding future growth-related infrastructure, such as the Upper York Sewage Solutions (UYSS) project. The UYSS will allow for the decommissioning of the Holland Landing sewage lagoons, and such growth related infrastructure is critical in allowing strategically located employment lands to be fully serviced (see Table 1). Providing additional lands by including the Whitebelt lands as Urban Area helps fund the Town’s required servicing infrastructure.

Table 1
 Servicing for Estimated Population and Employment Growth in East Gwillimbury

Year	Population	Employment	Servicing
2016	24,000	7,000	YDSS
2018	32,000	10,000	
+/- 5 to 10 years	50,000	19,000	
2041	118,000	45,000	UYSS or Alternative
2051	150,000	75,000	

Numbers are approximate

The Whitebelt Lands need to be designated as Urban Area to build complete communities and ensure an adequate housing supply over the next 20+ years

The new provincial government has announced their intention to facilitate more housing supply and choice. With growth related policy changes being implemented by the Province

through Bill 108 (Housing Supply Action Plan), there are major consequences should the Town not be prepared for growth.

Shortfalls in housing development would have negative economic impacts through losses of municipal development charges, property tax revenue, education development charges, and construction jobs, amongst others. Further, not accounting for the appropriate level of anticipated growth will result in the underestimation of infrastructure needs, resulting in the insufficient allocation of critical services such as education and healthcare for a rapidly growing population.

Allowances in land supply are required as designating land as Urban Area does not necessarily mean the land will be brought to market within the planning timeframe

Numerous factors are considered by landowners when determining whether to bring their property forward for development or not. These factors include tax considerations, cash flow, marketability, estate planning, cash demands of business operations, borrowing capacity, ability to raise capital, cost of capital and borrowing, and risk tolerance, amongst others. As such, allowances must be made for these normal and real considerations so that an adequate land supply is available to account for anticipated population growth regardless of landowner desire to bring land forward for development or not.

New Growth Plan policies are in place that would allow no limit on individual applications to expand the settlement area boundary outside of an MCR

If the development of effective phasing policies and secondary plans for the Whitebelt lands becomes delayed until the next MCR process, the Town would become susceptible to disorderly and sporadic planning based on individual landowners being able to submit applications to expand the settlement area boundary 40 hectares at a time outside of an MCR as permitted under the new Growth Plan.

The ROP is scheduled to be adopted in Q3-Q4 2020, but the development of key background reports for the ROP that may impact the Town is currently ongoing

MCR background documents and consultation inform the development of ROP policies. Although the ROP is set for adoption in late 2020, the MCR process is scheduled to deliver key background reports in Q4 2019 and Q1-Q2 2020 that may impact the Town. According to the Region's Targeted Work Plan, a "Planning for Growth Direction Report" and "Growth and Development Review" are ongoing reports being completed. It is important timing for the Town to endorse the inclusion of the remainder of the Whitebelt lands within the Town as part of the Urban Area in the ROP in order to help inform the development of these reports as part of the MCR process and thereby ensure the sustainable development of the Town going forward.

The Town’s Official Plan is required to be updated in conformity with the new ROP

The MCR and ROP inform the Town’s own Official Plan Review process, which will be commencing in early 2020. Section 27 of the Planning Act requires that the Town update its Official Plan to conform with the ROP within one year of the ROP coming into effect. Staff will be preparing future reports regarding the Official Plan Review work schedule and phasing policies for the Whitebelt lands.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The servicing needs of the future urban expansion lands will be determined based on the outcome of the Official Plan update and required secondary plan/community design plans for each new community area. Once the servicing needs are determined through the secondary plans, further analyses will be required to determine financial impacts.

York Region has incurred significant financial debt which is anticipated to be repaid by future growth within the Region. The additional supply of ground related housing and employment lands that would become available with the inclusion of the Town’s Whitebelt lands as part of the current MCR process would generate revenues to help repay this outstanding debt.

It is estimated that between 60,000-90,000 construction-related jobs would be created through the development of the Whitebelt lands. Further, Table 2 and Table 3 below outline the potential development charge and annual property taxes revenue that would be anticipated by including the Whitebelt lands as Urban Area:

Table 2

Whitebelt Area – Potential Development Charge Revenues

	Estimated Collections
Town	\$650 - \$700 million
Region	\$1.0 - \$1.3 billion
School Board	\$100 - \$200 million
Total	\$1.8 - \$2.2 billion

Table 3

Whitebelt Area – Potential Annual Property Taxes

	Estimated Annual Collections
Town	\$30 - \$35 million
Region	\$35 - \$40 million
School Board	\$15 - \$20 million
Total	\$80 - \$95 million

Buildout of the non-residential component of the lands is also important to provide a balanced tax assessment base and help ensure the Town grows in a financially sustainable manner.

NEED FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Public meetings will be held to inform the public of the Official Plan Review process and receive comments. The development of future phasing policies and secondary plans will also involve extensive public consultation.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN



Responsible Growth & Environmental Protection

Ensure that communities are built in a respectful manner, with resident and business quality of life protected



Build Complete Communities

Effectively manage new and existing assets to deliver exceptional services to residents while ensuring a sustainable community



Quality Programs & Services

Continue to advocate for a safe and livable community for our residents while leveraging opportunities and partnerships



Culture of Municipal Excellence

Ensure strong fiscal responsibility and program delivery

CONCLUSION

The Town is required to undertake a review of its Official Plan and complete its conformity exercise with the Provincial Growth Plan and Regional Official Plan within one year of the Region's Official Plan being approved.

The long range planning work undertaken by the Town as part of its 2010 Official Plan update identified the remaining Whitebelt lands as future growth areas required to complete the planning for the Town's existing communities. The Region's current MCR and ROP update should include these lands as part of the Region's Urban Area. This would be the beginning of the process that would lead to the Town working with the Region

and other stakeholders to prepare detailed phasing policies and Secondary Plans to guide future development of the urban area in an effective and responsible manner.

APPENDICES

None.

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