



Town of East Gwillimbury

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT P2020-17

To: Council

Date: July 28, 2020

Subject: Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and Updated Land Needs Assessment Methodology – Supporting the Town’s Vision for Coordinated Growth and Complete Communities

Origin: Development Services, Planning Branch

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **THAT** Development Services Planning Branch Report P2020-17 dated July 28, 2020, entitled “Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and Updated Land Needs Assessment Methodology – Supporting the Town’s Vision for Coordinated Growth and Complete Communities” be received;
2. **THAT** Council support the proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan, which is in line with Council’s endorsement to include the remaining Whitebelt lands in Town as Urban Area as per report P2019-34 dated December 3, 2019;
3. **THAT** Council support the Province’s High Growth Scenario considered under the proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan, which will ensure that the necessary land availability and policy frameworks are in place to responsibly manage the long-term growth of the Town’s remaining Whitebelt lands;
4. **THAT** Council authorize the Town Clerk to forward a copy of this report to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as a statement of support for the proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology (ERO #019-1680 and ERO #019-1679); and
5. **THAT** Council authorize the Town Clerk to forward a copy of this report to the Regional Clerk for information.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Council about the Province’s proposed Amendment 1 and updated Land Needs Assessment Methodology for A Place to Grow:

Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (the Growth Plan) and provide comments to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to inform their review.

BACKGROUND

Purpose of the Growth Plan

The Growth Plan is a provincial document focused on planning for growth and development in a way that supports economic prosperity, protects the environment, and helps communities achieve a high quality of life. The Growth Plan sets regional growth management policies and provides population and employment forecasts for municipalities to help guide land use planning decision making at the local level. The Land Needs Assessment Methodology provides municipalities with direction on determining the quantity of land needed to accommodate growth to the planning horizon established by the Growth Plan.

The current Growth Plan policies were updated in 2019 to implement Bill 108: More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan

The current Growth Plan came into effect in May 2019, with policy updates designed to help implement the Province's Housing Supply Action Plan and create more housing supply and choice. Previous memos to Council on June 18, 2019 and on September 17, 2019 provided updates on Bill 108: More Home, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan and the resulting policy changes.

Although the current Growth Plan policies were updated in 2019, the population and employment forecasts have not been updated since 2013

While the Growth Plan was updated in 2019 to add policies that support the creation of new and diverse forms of housing, Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan – Distribution of Population and Employment for the Greater Golden Horseshoe – has not been updated since 2013. Similarly, the current Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe has not been updated since 2018.

The proposed Amendment 1 and updated Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Growth Plan proposes updated population and employment forecasts, the establishment of a new planning horizon to 2051, new policies for mineral resource extraction, and a new simplified direction for determining the quantity of land required to accommodate growth. These changes are meant to reflect the recent policy changes to the Growth Plan from 2019 as part of implementing the Province's Housing Supply Action Plan.

Council has endorsed the inclusion of the Town's remaining Whitebelt lands as Urban Area to complete communities and coordinate infrastructure planning

As a recognized growth municipality and the only northern York Region municipality with substantial Whitebelt lands remaining, East Gwillimbury is expected to accommodate

substantial new residential and employment growth over the next three decades. Recognizing the need to manage this anticipated growth ahead of time through proactive planning Council endorsed, on December 3, 2019, the inclusion of the Town’s remaining Whitebelt lands as Urban Area in order to complete communities and coordinate infrastructure planning.

The necessary secondary plans and phasing policies will be developed for these new community areas within the Whitebelt, and the proposed Amendment 1 and updated Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Growth Plan help support proactive long-term planning and will provide the framework for guiding this future growth responsibly.

ANALYSIS

Overview of Proposed Changes to the Growth Plan

The provincial government is proposing the following changes to the Growth Plan:

1. Updates to Population and Employment Forecasts

The Ministry is updating Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan to provide new population and employment forecasts for municipalities within the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Ministry is considering three growth outlooks – a Reference Growth Forecast, a Low Growth Scenario, and a High Growth Scenario. The proposed population and employment figures for York Region under each scenario are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1
Proposed Minimum Forecast Options for York Region (Schedule 3 of Growth Plan)

Year	Population			Employment		
	2031	2041	2051	2031	2041	2051
High Growth Forecast	1,590,000	1,790,000	2,110,000	790,000	900,000	1,040,000
Reference Growth Forecast	1,590,000	1,790,000	2,020,000	790,000	900,000	990,000
Low Growth Forecast	1,590,000	1,790,000	1,930,000	790,000	900,000	950,000

These forecasts confirm the current 2031 and 2041 Growth Plan forecasts as valid and show that significant additional growth is expected from 2041 to 2051. Since the Town’s Official Plan review process is beginning this Summer, it will have the opportunity to be brought into conformity with the approved Growth Plan forecast as well as the Region’s new Official Plan.

The proposed Amendment 1 also contains a new provision which allows municipalities to plan for population and employment forecasts higher than what is listed under Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan if desired. This means that the numbers outlined in Table 1 are expected to be minimums and can be exceeded with the Region able to allocate growth beyond what is forecasted through their municipal comprehensive review (MCR) process. This emphasizes the need to prepare for long-term growth ahead of time, and the Province is providing municipalities with the flexibility to do so.

2. A New Land Needs Assessment Methodology

The purpose of the Land Needs Assessment Methodology is to provide municipalities with direction on determining the quantity of land needed to accommodate future residential and employment growth. The Land Needs Assessment Methodology focuses on providing steps for municipalities to follow as part of their municipal comprehensive reviews to ensure the appropriate amount of land is available to accommodate housing units and jobs to meet market demands.

The updated Land Needs Methodology has been simplified and streamlined by the Province to provide more flexibility for municipalities to meet the baseline population and employment forecasts established by Schedule 3 (as shown previously in Table 1). As part of the Land Needs Assessment Methodology growth scenarios focused on demographics, employment trends, market demand and concerns related to housing affordability were accounted for to determine community and employment area needs.

For municipalities conducting land budgeting exercises, the key components for assessing community area land needs are population forecasts, analysis of housing needs, housing allocation and supply inventory, and community area jobs analysis and reconciliation. The key components for assessing employment area land needs are employment forecasts, analysis of employment categorization and needs, and employment allocation and reconciliation. Assessment of both these community area and employment area components allows municipalities to determine where and how to grow over the duration of the planning horizon to 2051.

The Province is making it clear that municipalities can plan ahead for their unique housing and employment needs, and in the case of East Gwillimbury, it is the only northern York Region municipality with substantial Whitebelt land remaining to accommodate future employment and a broad range and mix of housing options as part of a complete community for residents.

As required by the Growth Plan, municipalities must at all times have enough land with servicing capacity to provide at least a three year supply of residential units available through lands suitably zoned in lower-tier municipalities, and municipalities shall also plan to maintain the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 15 years. It is a priority of the Province to ensure adequate land availability to provide for housing and jobs over the long-term, which supports Council's vision for complete communities within the Whitebelt area.

3. New Aggregate Mineral Resource Extraction Policies

The proposal under Amendment 1 would change the Growth Plan’s aggregate policies to remove the prohibition on new mineral aggregate operations, wayside pits and quarries from habitats of endangered species and threatened species within the Growth Plan’s Natural Heritage System outside of the Greenbelt. The Town will still be able to review any new aggregate mineral resource extraction facility proposals through the development approvals process.

4. Extension of Planning Horizon to 2051

The planning horizon for the Growth Plan is the amount of time into the future that the plan accounts for. The current Growth Plan provides a planning horizon to 2041, but the proposed Amendment 1 extends this planning horizon to 2051. This extension of the planning horizon to 2051 grants municipalities more flexibility to plan for long-term growth proactively. The extended planning horizon will allow municipalities to prepare for an extra decade’s worth of growth (2041 to 2051) ahead of time by being able to implement policies within their Official Plans and other planning documents now that help account and manage for the growth that is anticipated over the long-term future.

In East Gwillimbury’s case this extension of the Planning horizon to 2051 will allow the Town to proactively plan now for the approximately 32,000 people and 30,000 new jobs that are expected between just the ten-year period from 2041 and 2051 (see Table 2 in the next section below). Planning for a 2051 horizon gives the Town more flexibility to create the policies to guide future growth responsibly over an even longer term.

The Province’s High Growth forecast aligns with the Town’s anticipated growth and Council’s endorsement to include the Whitebelt lands as Urban Area

The proposed High Growth Scenario aligns with the expected growth that is anticipated for East Gwillimbury, where servicing through the York Durham Sewage System and the proposed Upper York Sewage Solutions project or any other servicing solution proposed for northern York Region are anticipated to accommodate 150,000 people and 75,000 jobs in Town by 2051, as shown in Table 2 below. Further, Council’s endorsement to include the Town’s remaining Whitebelt lands as Urban Area allows planning for the High Growth Scenario to be done proactively so that appropriate phasing policies and secondary plans can be developed for new community areas.

Table 2
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	

East Gwillimbury is well positioned to accommodate employment growth and additional population through a variety of housing types in northern York Region

East Gwillimbury is the only northern York Region municipality with substantial Whitebelt lands remaining (see Appendix 1). Council has endorsed the inclusion of the Town's approximately 1,000 hectares of Whitebelt lands as Urban Area, which provides the necessary land supply to accommodate future residential and employment growth in line with the Growth Plan. In this regard, East Gwillimbury is distinct in that it can accommodate a range of ground related housing types that will be more affordable for residents in northern York Region.

Future growth in East Gwillimbury is also supported by substantial infrastructure investments and commitments. On August 15, 2019, the Province indicated their intent to move forward with the Highway 400 – Highway 404 Connecting Link, which is already a recognized highway extension in the Growth Plan and is expected to serve the major residential and employment growth anticipated for the Town. Further, with the anticipated EA approval for the Upper York Sewage Solutions project or any other servicing solution proposed for northern York Region, the detailed community planning and phasing exercises for new communities can be completed so that development approvals keep pace with the delivery of infrastructure and demand for ground-related housing options and employment within the northern York Region area.

The High Growth Scenario forecast will help the Province rebound from the COVID-19 Pandemic and East Gwillimbury can accommodate the additional employment opportunities and variety of housing options needed to meet the demand in northern York Region to the year 2051

Encouraging new housing and development as part of the High Growth Scenario for the Greater Golden Horseshoe will help the Province rebound from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing jobs and supporting economic development. Fast-tracked housing development in line with the Province's Housing Supply Action Plan will create more construction related jobs and stimulate the economy while also providing residents with a greater housing stock and variety of housing options. The anticipated financial benefits from development of East Gwillimbury's Whitebelt lands are further outlined in the Financial Implications section of this Report below.

Conformity to the Growth Plan is required by York Region's current Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) Process and the Town's Official Plan

York Region is currently undertaking a Municipal Comprehensive Review to update its Official Plan. The new Regional Official Plan (ROP) is required to conform with the policies and forecasts of the Growth Plan and Proposed Amendment 1, if approved. Similarly, the Town's Official Plan will also be required to conform with the new updates to the Growth Plan and the new Regional Official Plan. The Town is beginning its Official Plan Review process this Summer and will implement phasing policies for new community areas as determined by the inclusion of the Town's Whitebelt lands as Urban

Area in the ROP, based on the need to ensure adequate land availability as required by the Province under the Growth Plan.

Planning to 2051 and including the East Gwillimbury Whitebelt lands as part of the Urban Area will provide a greater supply of land for housing in York Region, which will reduce constraints in providing a range of housing options and will help with holding prices to more affordable levels.

As mentioned earlier, the proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan also includes a provision which would allow the Region to plan for population and employment forecasts higher than what is approved under Schedule 3, which again emphasizes the need to include the Town’s remaining Whitebelt lands as Urban Area in the ROP to be able to proactively plan for and accommodate future residential and employment growth. The Province has set July 1, 2022 as the date for municipalities to bring their official plans into conformity with the amended Growth Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The servicing needs of future urban expansion lands will be determined based on the appropriate secondary plans for each new community area. Once 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 Urban Area would generate revenues to help pay this outstanding debt.

It is estimated that between 60,000 to 90,000 construction related jobs would be created through the development of the Whitebelt lands. Further, Table 3 and Table 4 below outline the potential development charge and annual property tax revenue that would be anticipated by including the Whitebelt lands as Urban Area:

Table 3
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 4
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

The Province released the proposed Amendment 1 and updated Land Needs Assessment Methodology on June 16, 2020 and will be receiving comments back until July 31, 2020.

As the Town’s Official Plan Review process is undertaken throughout the course of the next year, extensive public engagement will occur to ensure appropriate phasing and secondary plan policies are in place to help manage new community growth in a responsible and logical manner.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

The recommendations of this report align with the following Strategic Priorities:



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

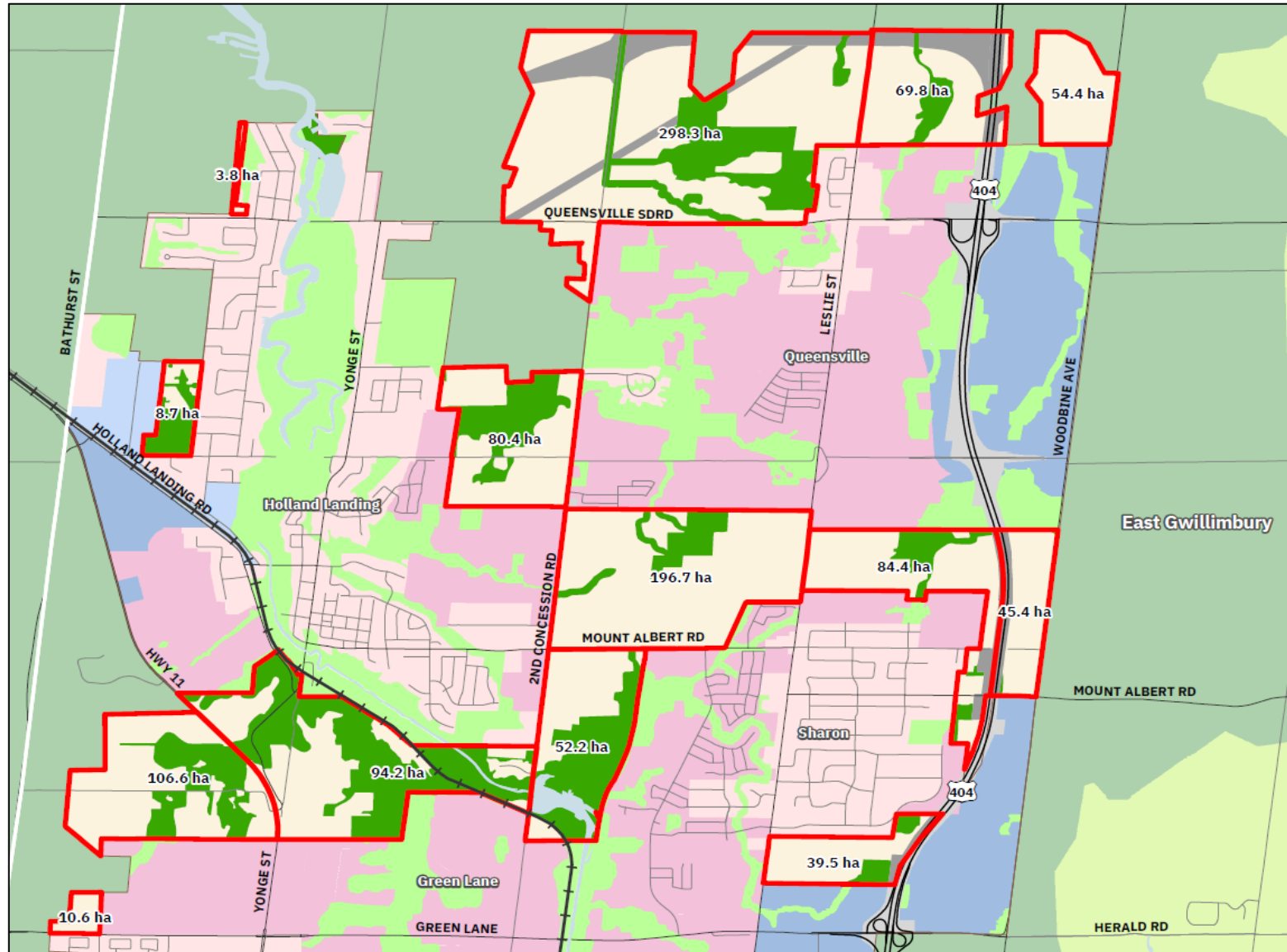
East Gwillimbury is expected to grow substantially over the next three decades and this new growth can be managed proactively through appropriate phasing policies for new communities ahead of time. It is responsible planning to ensure that an adequate supply and range of housing and employment opportunities are provided over the long-term as part of developing a complete and balanced community for residents. The proposed changes to the Growth Plan should be supported as they provide the tools for municipalities to plan for long-term growth proactively and they also align with Council's endorsement to include the remaining Whitebelt lands in Town as Urban Area in order to help build complete communities and coordinate infrastructure planning.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Map of Whitebelt Lands within East Gwillimbury

<p>Prepared by:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Original signed by</i></p> <p>Adam Robb, M.PL, MCIP, RPP Senior Planner</p>	<p>Reviewed and Recommended by:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Original signed by</i></p> <p>Lawrence Kuk, MCIP, RPP Manager of Planning</p>
<p>Reviewed and Recommended by:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Original signed by</i></p> <p>Marco Ramunno, MCIP, RPP General Manager, Development Services</p>	<p>Approved for Submission by:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Original signed by</i></p> <p>Thomas R. Webster Chief Administrative Officer</p>

APPENDIX 1 – Whitebelt Lands within East Gwillimbury (red boundary)



*Land areas are approximate, equating to a total Whitebelt area of approximately 1,000 hectares.