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Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019 Information Report to Council

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In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any member of Council may make a request to the Town Clerk that this Report be placed on an upcoming Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of: a) the proposed changes to A Place to Grow: A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019; b) Planning staffs' comments on these proposed changes, which will be submitted to the Province by July 31, 2020; and c) brief overview of the proposed Land Needs Assessment methodology.

Background

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was originally approved in 2006. It had gone through multiple amendments/versions over the years. The in-force "A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe" (Growth Plan 2019) came into effect in May 2019.

On June 16, 2020, the Province of Ontario (the Province) released proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan 2019 and proposed Land Needs Assessment (LNA) methodology for public consultation. Commenting period for both the proposed amendment and proposed LNA will end on July 31, 2020.

The purpose of proposed Amendment 1 is to increase the planning horizon to 2051 and introduce policy changes to better align with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS 2020) and the "More Homes, More Choices" Housing Supply Action Plan.

Proposed Amendment 1 to Growth Plan 2019

In accordance with the policy of Growth Plan 2019, upper-tier and single-tier municipalities have to use a methodology issued by the Province when assessing the quantity of land required to accommodating forecasted growth to the horizon of Growth Plan 2019. The proposed LNA is to serve this purpose.

Discussion

Proposed Amendment 1 can be categorized into three main themes, which will be discussed further in the following subsections:

- Growth Forecasts;
- Policy; and,
- Housekeeping.

Growth Forecasts

The proposed Amendment 1 includes the following key changes relating to growth forecasts:

- Extend the population and employment growth forecast horizon from 2041 to 2051;
- Replace Schedule 3 in Growth Plan 2019, which currently contains population and employment growth forecasts for upper-tier and single-tier municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe to 2041, with one of the following growth outlooks: Reference Growth Forecasts, High Growth Scenario, or Low Growth Scenario. The Reference Forecast represents the most likely future growth outlook. The High and Low Scenarios are variations based on different assumptions for comparative purposes. The proposed 2051 forecasts for York Region are listed in the Table 1 below; and,

Table 1 Proposed 2051 Population and Employment Forecasts for York Region

2051 Population and Employment Forecasts						
	Reference Growth (likely)		High Growth		Low Growth	
	Population	Employment	Population	Employment	Population	Employment
York Region	2,020,000	990,000	2,110,000	1,040,000	1,930,000	950,000

- The new Schedule 3 will be applied as “minimums” rather than as “targets” to upper-tier and single-tier municipalities; however, upper-tier and single-tier

municipalities can establish higher forecasts through their municipal comprehensive reviews (MCR).

It is unclear at this point if major urban boundary expansions would be required to achieve the proposed forecasts until municipalities complete the LNAs. Since the forecasts in Schedule 3 will be applied as minimums and municipalities may establish higher forecasts, additional controls are required to better manage future growth. It is recommended that, through Amendment 1, the Province establish policies that prioritize growth in areas where sufficient existing water, wastewater and transit infrastructure are already in place. This will ensure the achievement of infrastructure-aligned growth, make efficient use of infrastructure, and better support Newmarket's Urban Centres.

The province has stated that the proposed extension of the Plan horizon from 2041 to 2051 is to *“ensure municipalities have sufficient land to support the fostering of complete communities, economic development, job creation and housing affordability”*. Staff submit that increasing the supply of housing does not necessarily equate to more affordable housing. As a recommendation, the Province should implement policies through Amendment 1 that require affordable housing by allowing inclusionary zoning outside of major transit station areas (MTSAs).

It should also be noted that the date to conform to Growth Plan 2019 remains the same, being July 1, 2022. If the proposed Amendment 1 is approved, Municipal Comprehensive Reviews currently underway, such as York Region's, are required to adjust projections to conform to the new Schedule 3 by this date.

Policy Changes

The proposed Amendment 1 includes the following key policy changes:

- Allow employment land conversion for lands identified as Provincially Significant Employment Zone (PSEZ) and within MTSAs to occur outside of an MCR, and
- Removal of the prohibition on new mineral aggregate operations, wayside pits and quarries from habitats of endangered species and threatened species within the Natural Heritage System.

These proposed policy changes are not anticipated to significantly affect the Town, as there are no PSEZs or mineral aggregate resource areas located in Newmarket. The intent to allow employment land conversion to non-employment uses outside of MCR is to allow mixed-use developments in PSEZs that are within MTSAs to be initiated faster to support the densities required within MTSAs. Generally, staff has no objection to this change given it only applies to PSEZ that are within MTSAs. In addition to the proposed changes, the Province will begin to examine how PSEZs can support post-COVID economic recovery, retention and expansion of existing industrial and manufacturing operations, and how the zones can attract investment.

Housekeeping

The proposed Amendment 1 includes the following key housekeeping changes:

- Update references to Provincial Policy Statement 2014 (PPS 2014) to Provincial Policy Statement (PPS 2020);
- Update or add terms/definitions to be consistent with PPS 2020 (eg. Change “second units” to “additional residential units”; update definition of “cultural heritage landscape” etc.);
- Strengthen language related to requiring planning authorities to engage with Indigenous communities.

Planning staff support the proposed housekeeping changes as they provide consistency between PPS 2020 and Growth Plan 2019.

Land Needs Assessment

In addition to the proposed changes to the Growth Plan 2019, the Province is also consulting on the proposed LNA methodology, which will be used to guide the preparation of land needs analyses for development across the Growth Plan 2019 planning horizon to 2051. As previously mentioned in this report, the LNA will be used by upper-tier and single-tier municipalities. In summary, the LNA methodology involves two components:

- Community Area LNA, which intends to identify the amount of land required to accommodate the population forecasts in Growth Plan 2019; and
- Employment Area LNA, which intends to identify the amount of land required to accommodate the job forecasts in Growth Plan 2019.

The results of the LNA can be used to determine whether there is a need for a settlement area boundary expansions for employment areas or community areas.

Conclusion

The Province is seeking comments on the proposed Amendment 1 to Growth Plan 2019 to better align with PPS 2020 and the “More Homes, More Choices” Housing Supply Action Plan. As outlined in this report, Planning staff make the following recommendations:

1. The Province ensure infrastructure planning is coordinated with growth as stated in Growth Plan 2019 in order to maximize efficient use of existing water, wastewater and transit infrastructure and prioritize growth to such areas; and
2. The Province allow inclusionary zoning outside of MTSAs as an effective means to address housing affordability.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

- Long-term Financial Sustainability
- Extraordinary Places and Spaces
- Economic Leadership and Job Creation

Consultation

None

Human Resource Considerations

None

Budget Impact

None

Attachments

None

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Approval

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