



Staff Report for Council Meeting

Date of Meeting: February 26, 2020

Report Number: SRPRS.20.004

Department: Planning and Regulatory Services

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: SRPRS.20.004 – York Region’s Municipal Comprehensive Review (Part 2): Major Transit Station Areas, Settlement Area Expansion, and Agricultural System

Purpose:

To provide Council with a summary of York Region’s Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) process to update the York Region Official Plan (ROP) as it relates to Major Transit Station Areas and Prime Agricultural Areas, and to seek Council’s endorsement of recommendations related to the Region’s MCR.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That SRPRS.20.004 be received;
- b) That Council endorse the staff recommendations contained in SRPRS.20.004 for modifications to the identification, boundaries, and resident to job ratios of York Region’s proposed Major Transit Station Areas, as follows:
 - i. Staff Recommendation 1: Link the Richmond Hill Centre and Bayview MTSAs,
 - ii. Staff Recommendation 2: Investigate through the OP Update the inclusion of lands on the east side of Bathurst Street in the Bathurst/Highway 7 MTSA,
 - iii. Staff Recommendation 3a: Consider Employment Conversion requests in setting of residents to jobs ratio,
 - iv. Staff Recommendation 3b: Increase Bayview MTSA to a ratio of 80 residents to 20 jobs, and
 - v. Staff Recommendation 3c: Increase Weldrick MTSA to a ratio of 80 residents to 20 jobs;

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- c) That Council continue to direct City staff to communicate to the Region the desire to include the Richmond Hill (Newkirk) GO Station as a MTSA in the Region's intensification framework.
- d) That in response to Item #14.4(4) of Councillor Muench's Member Motion dated November 20, 2019, wherein Council requested that staff investigate the lands in the vicinity of the Gormley GO Station as an expansion to the Settlement area and potential designation of an MTSA, Council may choose one of the following options:
 - i) Pursue an expansion to the Urban Settlement Boundary and possible designation of an MTSA, whereupon Council direct staff to approach the Region and the Province alongside the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville (who seek a similar expansion of their urban settlement boundary on lands on the east side of Highway 404);
 - ii) Not pursue an expansion to the Urban Settlement Boundary and possible designation of an MTSA, whereupon Council inform the Region that it does not wish to pursue such an expansion or designation.
- e) That Council support Regional Staff's proposed refinement of the Provincially identified Prime Agricultural Areas within the City of Richmond Hill; and
- f) That York Region be advised of Council's support for the recommendations as set out in report SRPRS.20.004, and that the City Clerk forward a copy of the report to York Region as input to York Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review Process.

Contact Person:

Patrick Lee, Director, Policy Planning, phone number 905-771-2420

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Regulatory Services

Approved by: Mary-Anne Dempster, City Manager (Acting)

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

Summary:

This staff report is an addition to SRPRS.20.003 regarding the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) process, and it highlights specific workplan components that affect policy and land use planning in the City of Richmond Hill, including Major Transit Station Areas and planning for Prime Agricultural Areas. This report generally

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supports the initial recommendations endorsed by Regional Council with respect to MTSAs. The report notes that, with the exception of two MTSAs, the current Official Plan policy framework and urban structure supports meeting and exceeding the minimum density targets proposed by the Region for each of the MTSAs.

Furthermore, the report indicates that given the findings provided in SRPRS.20.003 regarding conversion of employment lands, as well as other technical matters, staff recommend that Council endorse the comments regarding MTSA identification, boundaries, and resident to job ratios provided in this report.

This staff report also investigates the potential for settlement area expansion in the vicinity of Gormley GO Station, which if supported, would also be a matter that would require consideration as part of the Regional MCR process. Despite a Provincial policy environment that is not conducive to a settlement area expansion or identification of an MTSA, in this area, if Council wishes to pursue such an endeavor, they could approach the Region and Province alongside the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville who seek a similar expansion to facilitate the designation of additional serviced employment lands on the east side of Highway 404 south of Stouffville Road.

Finally, with respect to the designation of Prime Agricultural Areas the report notes that the Region is prepared to designate lands generally located west of Highway 404, south of Bloomington Road, east of Leslie and north of Bethesda as Prime Agricultural Area. Given that these lands are designated Oak Ridges Moraine Natural Linkage where agricultural uses are permitted and available for agricultural use, staff support this designation.

Background:

This report is a continuation of SRPRS.20.003. It focuses on two additional components of the Regional MCR:

1. Major Transit Station Areas, and
2. Prime Agricultural Areas.

This report also responds to a request from Council at the November 20, 2019 Council Meeting wherein staff was asked to investigate the potential expansion of settlement areas near the Gormley GO Station.

Major Transit Station Areas (MTSA):

Provincial Policy Direction

The Growth Plan directs that planning is to be prioritized for MTSAs on “priority transit corridors” in manner that comprehensively implements the policies of the Growth Plan. Accordingly, upper and single-tier municipalities, in consultation with lower-tier municipalities, are directed to delineate the boundaries of MTSAs in a transit-supportive

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manner that maximizes the size of the area, and the number of potential transit users within walking distance to the transit station.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019 (the “Growth Plan”) defines a MTSA as an area that is within an approximate 500 to 800 metre radius of an existing or planned higher order transit station or stop within a settlement area, or the area around a major bus terminal in an urban core; this distance represents approximately a 10-minute walk. The Growth Plan defines higher order transit as transit that operates in partially or completely dedicated rights-of-way, which allows the transit services to achieve levels of speed and reliability greater than in mixed-traffic. This includes heavy rail (e.g. subways and inter-city rail), light rail, and buses that operate in dedicated rights-of-way.

For MTSA’s that are located on a priority transit corridor identified on Schedule 5 of the Growth Plan, the Growth Plan also establishes minimum density targets for residents and jobs that every MTSA must be planned to meet:

- Subway Stations: 200 residents and jobs per hectare;
- Bus Rapid Transit Stations: 160 residents and jobs per hectare;
- Go Rail Stations: 150 residents and jobs per hectare

While Urban Growth Centres are prescribed to achieve a certain density target by 2031, the Growth Plan does not prescribe a time period by which an MTSA is expected to achieve its minimum density target.

The *Planning Act* allows for upper-tier municipalities to identify MTSA’s as protected. This is a Province-wide provision of the Planning Act, and as such the identification of Protected MTSA’s is not limited to those that are identified in the Growth Plan; but, in a two-tier system do require the identification of the PMTSA in the Upper Tier (i.e. York Region) Official Plan. There are a number of benefits to having a Protected MTSA. First, the planning appeal rights of the Official Plan and Zoning designations at both the regional and local levels are limited within Protected MTSA’s. Secondly, recent *Planning Act* changes introduced by Bill 108 will allow municipalities the ability to apply Inclusionary Zoning By-laws for lands within PMTSA’s, thereby ensuring that uplift in density within these future station areas can contribute towards the provision of affordable housing over the long term.

Proposed MTSA Boundaries

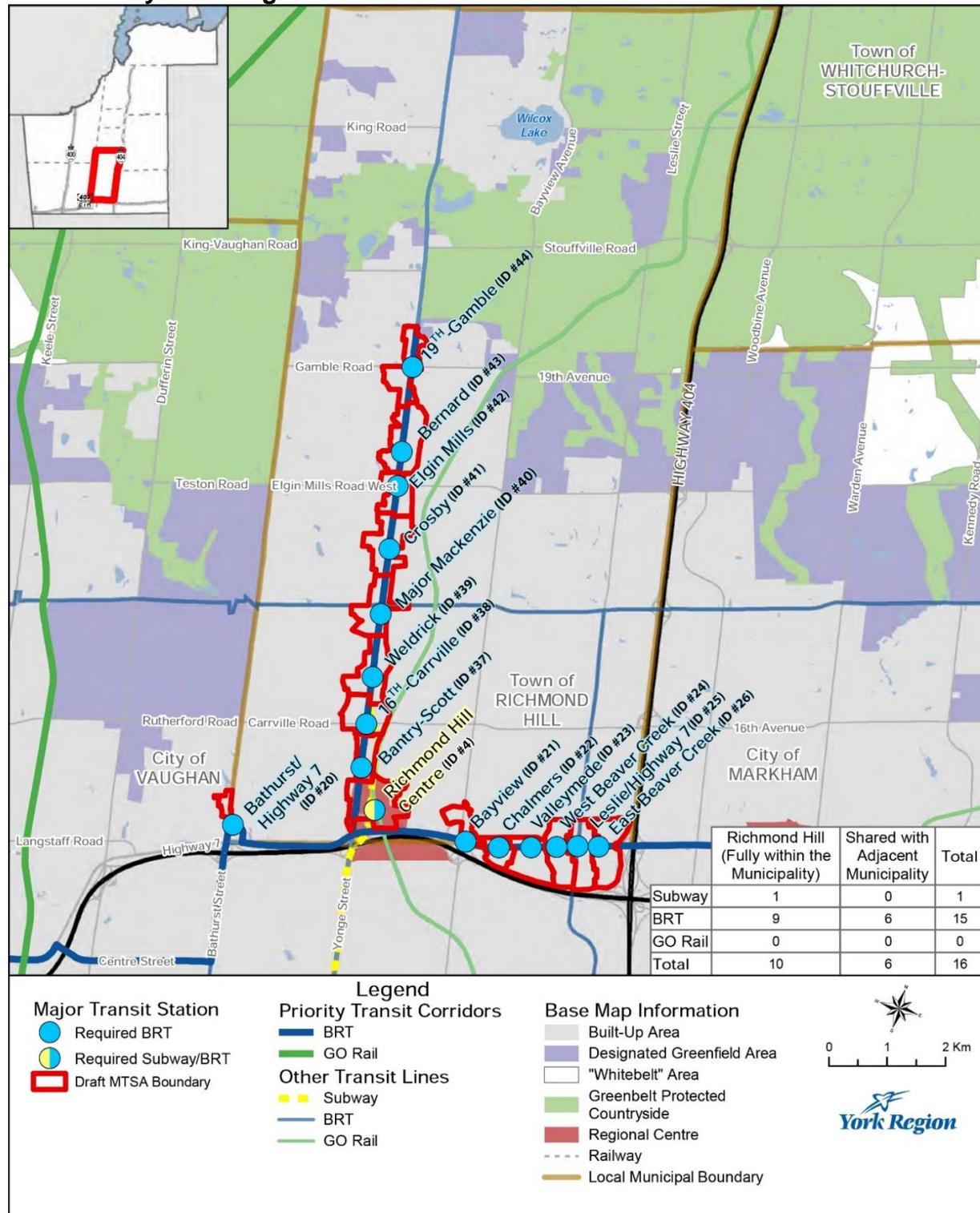
Within York Region, Schedule 5 of the Growth Plan designates portions of Yonge Street, Highway 7, and Davis Drive as “priority transit corridors”, as well as portions of the Barrie and Stouffville GO Train lines.

The Richmond Hill GO Train line is not identified in the Growth Plan as a Schedule 5 “priority transit corridor” given its limited service (one-way service and only at peak times).

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In Richmond Hill, all of Highway 7 and the portion of Yonge Street between Highway 7 and 19th Avenue/Gamble Road are considered as Schedule 5 “priority transit corridors.” York Region has identified 16 MTSAs within Richmond Hill, all of which are located along these two priority transit corridors. The 16 MTSAs, as well as their proposed boundaries, are shown on Map 1. Additional mapping showing delineations of each MTSA boundary are provided in Appendix A. Table 2 provides an overview of the Region’s proposed targets for each of the MTSAs in terms of minimum density of residents and jobs, as well as the ratio of residents to jobs. The table also indicates the current City of Richmond Hill Official Plan land uses that are included within the MTSA boundary.

Map 1: Location and Boundaries of Major Transit Station Areas in Richmond Hill Identified by York Region



Source: York Region Planning for Intensification Background Report. Attachment 2 (pg.7)
<https://yorkpublishing.escrimemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=4119> (April 11, 2019)

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Table 1: Richmond Hill Major Transit Station Areas and Corresponding Density Targets

Growth Plan Minimum Density Target (residents and jobs per hectare)	Corresponding MTSA Location and ID (Richmond Hill)	York Region proposed Density Target (residents and jobs per hectare)	York Region proposed Population/ Job Split	Priority Transit Corridor	Current Official Plan Land Use Designation
Subways 200 r+j/ha	#4 – Richmond Hill Centre	500	50% residents 50% jobs	Yonge Street (Yonge Subway Extension)	Richmond Hill Centre; Neighborhood; Utility Corridor
Light Rail or Bus Rapid Transit 160 r+j/ha	#38 – 16 th Carville BRT	300	65% residents 35% jobs	Yonge Street	Key Development Area
	#44 – 19 th /Gamble BRT	160	80% residents 20% jobs	Yonge Street	Regional Mixed-Use Corridor; Neighborhood
	#37 – Bantry-Scott BRT	200	80% residents 20% jobs	Yonge Street	Richmond Hill Centre; Regional Mixed-Use Corridor; Neighborhood
	#20 – Bathurst/Highway 7 BRT	0	n/a	Highway 7	Parkway Belt West
	#21 – Bayview BRT	160	90% residents 10% jobs	Highway 7	Neighborhood; Utility Corridor; Natural Core
	#43 – Bernard BRT	200	80% residents 20% jobs	Yonge Street	Key Development Area; Neighborhood; Regional Mixed-Use Corridor; Natural Core
	#22 – Chalmers BRT	200	75% residents 25% jobs	Highway 7	Regional Mixed-Use Corridor
	#41 – Crosby BRT	160	55% residents 45% jobs	Yonge Street	Neighborhood; Employment Corridor; Employment Area; Regional Mixed-Use Corridor; Downtown Local Centre
	#26 – East Beaver Creek BRT	250	5% residents 95% jobs	Highway 7	Employment Area; Employment Corridor
	#42 – Elgin Mills BRT	160	65% residents 35% jobs	Yonge Street	Regional Mixed-Use Corridor; Employment Area; Neighborhood
	#25 – Leslie/Hwy 7 BRT	250	10% residents 90% jobs	Highway 7	Employment Corridor; Employment Area
	#40 – Major Mackenzie BRT	160	70% residents 30% jobs	Yonge Street	Downtown Local Centre; Neighborhood; Local Mixed-Use Corridor

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Growth Plan Minimum Density Target (residents and jobs per hectare)	Corresponding MTSA Location and ID (Richmond Hill)	York Region proposed Density Target (residents and jobs per hectare)	York Region proposed Population/ Job Split	Priority Transit Corridor	Current Official Plan Land Use Designation
	#23 – Valleymede BRT	250	90% residents 10% jobs	Highway 7	Regional Mixed-Use Corridor
	#39 – Weldrick BRT	200	90% residents 10% jobs	Highway 7	Regional Mixed-Use Corridor; Neighborhood
	#24 – West Beaver Creek BRT	160	100% jobs	Highway 7	Employment Corridor; Employment Area
GO Rail Transit 150 r+j/ha	None	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: York Region Planning for Intensification Background Report. Attachment 2 <https://yorkpublishing.escrimemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=4119> (April 11, 2019) and City of Richmond Hill Official Plan (2018 Consolidation)

Regional staff established guidelines which set out criteria for delineating the MTSA boundaries and setting density targets for each MTSA. Richmond Hill staff worked closely with Regional staff to identify draft boundaries for each MTSA based on the existing and planned context of each station area.

In some instances, the Region is proposing a higher minimum density target than what is required by the Growth Plan. The Region’s proposed targets were established taking into account a number of factors including the applicable minimum density targets set out in the Growth Plan, as well as the minimum density targets presently identified in the Region’s OP for areas identified as Regional Centres and Corridors. The Region has also considered both existing/approved developments as well as the potential build-out density based on the City’s current Official Plan permissions when setting the minimum density target in each MTSA.

Presently, the focus of the Region has been to identify and delineate the MTSA boundaries. Staff note that these boundaries are not intended to be used as land use designations; instead, the MTSA boundary is intended to be used for long-term monitoring of the implementation of Growth Plan and Regional land use policies encouraging the provision of compact, complete communities. As of the writing of this report, the Region has yet to release details on Regional Official Plan policies that will be associated with the identified MTSA’s. Staff will continue to monitor the MCR process and work with Regional staff as more details on the MTSA policy framework emerge.

Analysis of MTSA’s in Richmond Hill

As noted in Table 1, all of the MTSA’s identified by the Region in Richmond Hill are located along either the Yonge Street or Highway 7 priority transit corridors. This

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generally matches with the City's existing Urban Structure, which was designed to promote intensification along the Yonge Street and Highway 7 corridors in support of Viva and future rapid transit. The Region's proposed boundaries of each MTSA generally includes the following land use designations: the Highway 7 Regional Mixed-Use Corridor (from Bayview Avenue to Valleymede Drive); the Yonge Street Regional Mixed-Use Corridor (from Highway 7 to 19th Avenue/Gamble Road); the two Key Development Areas; the Downtown Local Centre; and the Employment Corridor designations along Highway 7 and Yonge Street south of Elgin Mills Road. In some unique circumstances, where appropriate given the local context, the boundaries of some MTSAs were extended beyond the 500 to 800 metre radius from the transit station/stop to account for areas where there was existing medium- to high-density transit-supportive development that could still be considered to be within walking distance of the transit station/stop. Accordingly, the Region's proposed MTSA boundaries reflect a combination of the existing context and current intensification permissions set out in the City's OP.

With the exception of two of the 16 MTSAs in Richmond Hill, the City's existing Urban Structure is able to accommodate growth that meets and exceeds the minimum density targets required in the Growth Plan as well as the targets proposed by the Region. The Bathurst/Highway 7 (ID #20) and Bayview (ID #21) MTSAs are the only ones in Richmond Hill where current planning permissions are not able to meet the minimum density targets in the Growth Plan. A review of land use permissions in the Bayview MTSA will be incorporated into the City's Official Plan Review, while the Region is recommending seeking an alternative density target for the Bathurst/Highway 7 MTSA.

The following subsections contain comments on the Region's MTSA proposals, grouped into three categories: MTSA boundaries, resident to job ratios, and the addition of a MTSA at the Richmond Hill (Newkirk) GO Station.

Consideration of expanding some MTSA boundaries (ID #4, 21, 20)

Staff Recommendation 1: Link the Richmond Hill Centre and Bayview MTSAs

As part of the delineation of MTSA boundaries, the Region has made a conscious effort to link each MTSA with its neighbouring MTSA, in order to create a continuous corridor of intensification that would be subject to similar targets and protections. While all stations along the Yonge Street corridor are linked in this manner, there is a gap in the Highway 7 corridor between the stations at Yonge Street (Richmond Hill Centre) and Bayview Avenue. The Official Plan currently designates the land between these MTSAs as Neighbourhood and Utility Corridor, which if built out to the maximum permissions would not meet the minimum density targets required by the Growth Plan. However, as the City is currently embarking on the Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan and the update to the Official Plan, there is potential to utilize these lands in a more efficient manner, which could enable them to meet the minimum density targets in the Growth Plan. As such, it would be appropriate to extend the boundaries of the

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Richmond Hill Centre (ID #4) and/or the Bayview (ID #21) MTSA so they connect with each other, while allowing for a smoother and more gradual transition of density moving eastward from the Richmond Hill Centre into the Regional Corridor designation.

Staff Recommendation 2: Investigate the inclusion of lands on the east side of Bathurst Street in the Bathurst/Highway 7 MTSA

The Region is recommending seeking an alternative density target for the Bathurst and Highway 7 MTSA (ID #20), as all of the land within Richmond Hill's portion of the 500 to 800 metre radius from the transit station is protected under the Parkway Belt West Plan. Much of this area is also designated as an Urban River Valley under the Greenbelt Plan. As an alternative to seeking a reduced target, the Region could investigate with the Province the possibility of the removal of some of the lands on the east side of Bathurst Street that are not part of Natural Heritage features or their buffers from the Parkway Belt West Plan, enabling that land area to be added to the MTSA, and allow redevelopment of this area to contribute to ridership at the Bathurst and Highway 7 BRT station.

Consideration of changing resident to job targets

Staff Recommendation 3a: Consider Employment Conversion requests in setting of residents to jobs ratio

Each MTSA identified by the Region proposes a different resident to job ratio for each MTSA, based on the current underlying land uses. Three of them (Leslie/Highway 7, East Beaver Creek, and Crosby MTSA) contain locally designated employment lands that are subject to active employment conversion requests with the Region (for more information on these conversion requests, please refer to Staff Report SRPRS.20.003). If the Region is to support these requests, the underlying assumptions on the residents to job ratios would need to be adjusted. As such, if the conversion requests were to be approved, City staff recommend that the Region apply a target ratio of 50 residents to 50 jobs for the Leslie/Highway 7 (ID #25) and East Beaver Creek (ID #26) MTSA, and a ratio 70 residents to 30 jobs at the Crosby (ID #41) MTSA.

Staff Recommendation 3b: Increase Bayview MTSA to a ratio of 80 residents to 20 jobs

As mentioned in the previous subsection, the Bayview MTSA (ID #21) is currently designated Neighbourhood in the City's OP, and as such the residents to jobs ratio was based on the maximum development potential of a predominately residential land use type. City staff recommend that this MTSA adopt a residents to job ratio more consistent with MTSA located in mixed-use designations, such as one of 80 residents to 20 jobs.

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Staff Recommendation 3c: Increase Weldrick MTSA to a ratio of 80 residents to 20 jobs

The current proposed residents to jobs ratio for the Weldrick MTSA (ID #39) is 90 residents to 10 jobs. The adjacent MTSA to the south (16th-Carrville) and north (Major Mackenzie) both have higher ratios, and City staff would recommend increasing the ratio at Weldrick MTSA to provide for greater continuity along this section of the corridor.

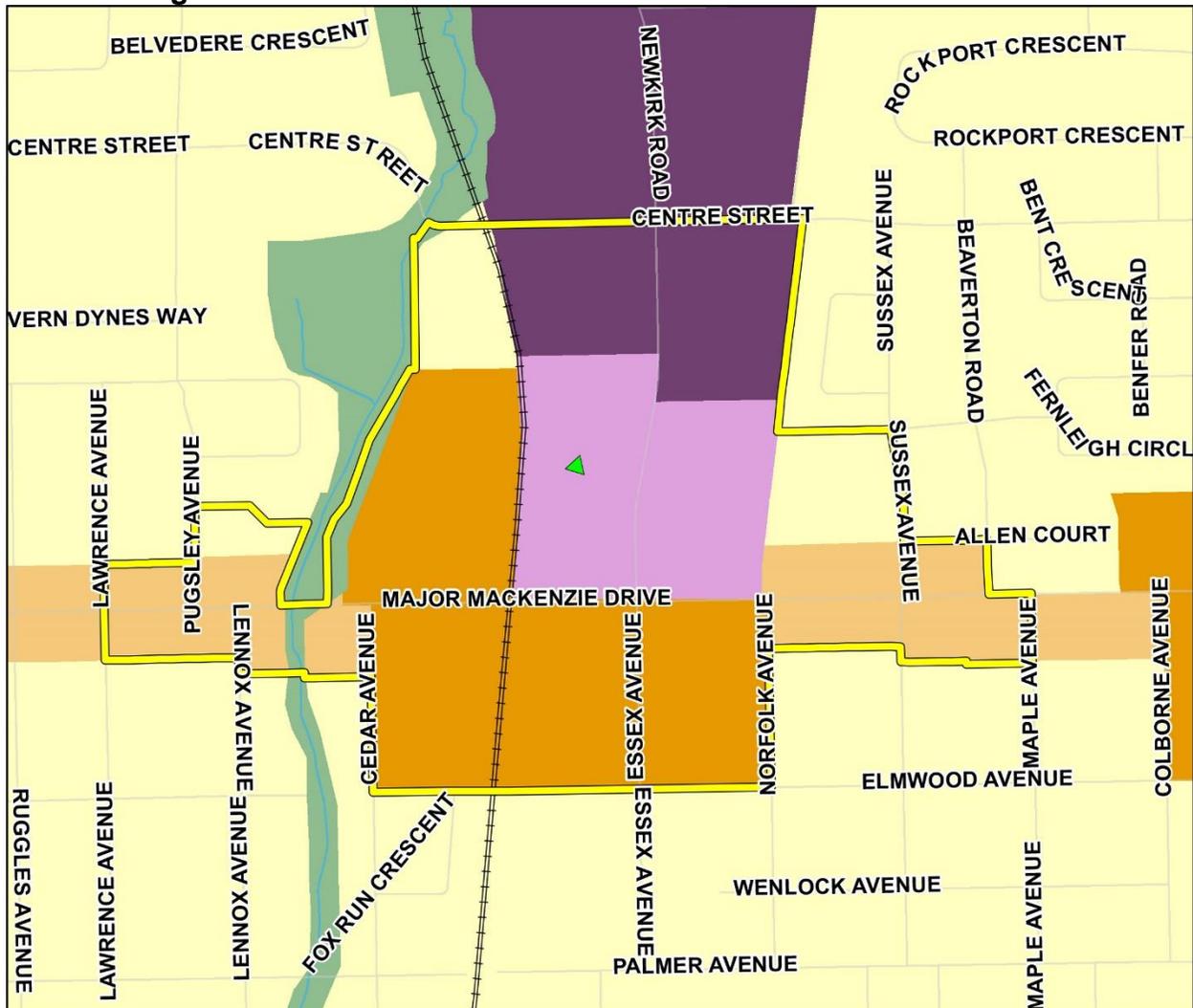
Consideration of June 2019 Council motion for additional MTSA

At their meeting on June 25, 2019, Council directed City staff to communicate to the Region the desire to include the Richmond Hill (Newkirk) and Gormley GO Stations as MTSA in the Region's intensification framework. The Gormley GO Station will be discussed in the following section, which discusses the potential settlement boundary expansion around the GO station.

The GO station located on Newkirk Drive at Major Mackenzie Drive East was not identified by the Region as a MTSA due to the Richmond Hill GO Train line not being a priority transit corridor under the Growth Plan. The area surrounding the station is designated as Local Development Area and Employment Corridor, which would support higher density redevelopment than currently exists. Notwithstanding its exclusion from their initial list released in April 2019, Regional staff have indicated they may support a MTSA at this location. City staff recommend its inclusion based on the context of the area to support redevelopment.

Map 2 provides a map of this area with staff's recommended boundaries for the MTSA. Staff will work with the Region to identify the appropriate density target and people to jobs ratio for this area.

Map 2: Richmond Hill (Newkirk) GO Station and Designated Land Uses in Surrounding Area



Legend

-  Newkirk GO Station
-  C.N.R.
-  Proposed Newkirk GO Draft MTSA Boundary

OP Land Use Designation

-  Natural Core
-  Employment Area
-  Employment Corridor
-  Local Development Area
-  Local Mixed Use Corridor
-  Neighbourhood

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Investigation into Potential Settlement Area Boundary Expansion:

The investigation into the potential expansion of settlement areas near the Gormley GO Station relates to two motions passed by City Council on June 25 and November 20, 2019.

On June 25, City Council directed City Staff communicate to York Region that both the Newkirk GO Station and Gormley GO Station should be included as MTSAs in the Regional Intensification Strategy. Subsequently, on November 20, City Council directed City Staff to investigate the potential expansion of settlement area near the Gormley GO Station to “support Province of Ontario and Metrolinx transportation investments”.

As noted above, in response to Richmond Hill’s request for additional MTSAs, staff from York Region has indicated that they are only supportive of adding the Newkirk GO Station in this current MCR.

The following subsections will consider opportunities and constraints regarding an urban settlement boundary expansion and identification of an MTSA.

Map 3: Richmond Hill GO Line



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Gormley GO Station

The Gormley GO Station is located on Stouffville Road between Highway 404 and Leslie Street. The station is served by five one-way trains that take passengers south to Union Station in the mornings and bring passengers back north in the evenings during weekday rush hours. Additionally, GO Transit bus route 61 runs northbound and southbound during and outside of peak periods. When the Growth Plan was updated in 2017 and 2019, it did not identify the Gormley GO Station as a part of the Priority Transit Corridor.

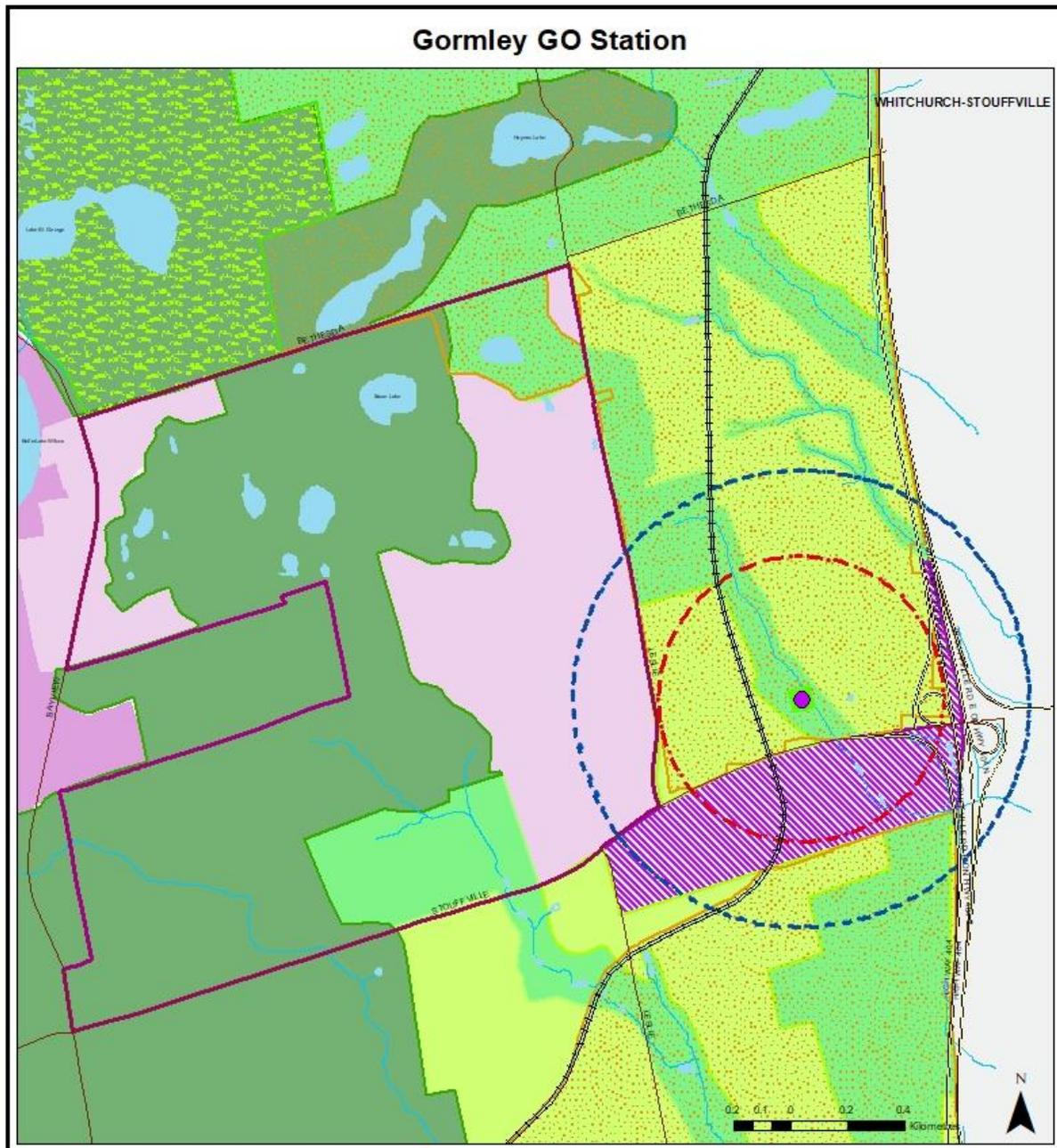
As shown on Map 3, presently, Gormley Station is the terminus for the Richmond Hill GO line. However, Metrolinx is extending this line to Bloomington Road and Highway 404 in Richmond Hill. This new Bloomington GO Station is anticipated to open in 2020.

According to Metrolinx's 2018 GO Expansion plan, the Richmond Hill GO line will remain a one-way service route that runs on diesel post 2030. Metrolinx cites technical difficulties to expanding this station to frequent all-day service. There are high risks of flooding along most of the corridor, and there are issues with sharing part of the corridor with CN Rail who operates intensive freight services. Hence, ridership for the Gormley GO Station is anticipated to not change by 2031, and may possibly grow marginally between 0% and 10% by 2055.

Provincial Land Use Designations

The Gormley GO Station is located in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP), within the Greenbelt Area. Map 4 on the next page displays the provincial land use designations within a 500-metre and 800-metre radius of the GO station.

Map 4: Gormley GO Station and Designated Land Uses in the Surrounding Area



Legend		
Gormley_Go_Station	Natural Core Area	Gormley Secondary Plan
500 m Buffer	Natural Linkage Area	400-Series Provincial Highways
800 m Buffer	Countryside Area	CNR Railway
Settlement Areas	Rural Settlement	Regional Roads
Built Boundary	Prime Agricultural Area	Waterbody
Designated Greenfield Area	Candidate Area	Watercourses
		City Boundary
		Adjacent Municipalities

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Despite the Gormley GO station's location within the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Greenbelt, two settlement areas exist within the 500 metre to 800 metre radius: the West Gormley Secondary Plan area is located west of Leslie Street and north of Stouffville Road, and the Hamlet of Gormley is located south of Stouffville Road. South of the Hamlet of Gormley are lands designated Countryside and Natural Linkage Areas in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

Most of the area within the 800-metre radius is proposed by the Province to be Prime Agricultural Area. However, it is noted that as a part of the refinement of the proposed Agricultural System during the municipal comprehensive review process, York Region will be recommending to the Province that this area not be designated as a Prime Agricultural Area; but that it remain rural given its critical function as an east-west link between prime agricultural areas in the southern part of the Region. This Prime Agricultural Area designation will be further discussed in the last section of this staff report.

Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) limits settlement area expansion by timing and by where an expansion can take place. The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act prohibits the re-designation of Natural Core and Natural Linkage lands. However, the Minister may make changes to the boundaries of Countryside Areas and Settlement Areas at the time of a 10-year review of the provincial plan. The latest review of the 2002 ORMCP started in 2015 and was finalized in May 2017. The next 10-year review will likely commence by 2027. If Council is interested in seeing an urban boundary expansion at this time, consultations should take place between the City, Region and Province to see if the Province might consider an interim change to the boundaries of Richmond Hill's settlement boundary between reviews.

The ORMCP directs that settlement area expansion can only be considered as a part of a municipal comprehensive review (MCR) in accordance with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan). This is reiterated by the Growth Plan policies 2.2.8(4)(d) and 2.2.8(5)(c), which prohibit settlement area expansion in the Greenbelt Area during the periods outside of an MCR and in advance of the current MCR. As such, the justification for this settlement area expansion near the Gormley GO Station will need to be supported in this current Regional MCR.

The ORMCP defers to the Growth Plan for specific policies on how a settlement area expansion may be considered. These policies will be explained in the next section.

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A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The Growth Plan permits a settlement area expansion through a two-step process during a MCR. The first step requires a single or upper-tier municipality to justify the need for more settlement area by demonstrating that:

1. A land needs assessment concludes that the forecasted growth cannot be accommodated through intensification and in the designated growth areas within the single- or upper-tier municipality and within the applicable lower-tier municipality, based the minimum intensification and density targets;
2. The proposed expansion would minimize land consumption and is based on a planning horizon to 2041; and
3. The timing of proposed expansion and the phasing of development in the designated greenfield area will not negatively impact the minimum intensification and density targets, as well as other policies of the Growth Plan.

After a single or upper-tier municipality demonstrates the need for settlement area expansion, they must then determine if the proposed expansion is in an appropriate location based on a number of feasibility tests, which includes:

- There is sufficient capacity in existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities to service the growth;
- The full life cycle of the infrastructure and public service facilities needed to service the growth is financially viable;
- The proposed expansion is informed by water, wastewater and stormwater management master plans;
- The planned water, wastewater and stormwater servicing for the expansion area, avoids, or if avoidance is not possible, minimizes and mitigates negative impacts on watershed conditions and the water resource system;
- Expansion into key hydrologic areas and the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan is avoided where possible;
- Expansion into prime agricultural area is avoided where possible;
- The proposed expansion complies with minimum distance separation formulae;
- Any adverse impacts on the agri-food network should be avoided, or if avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate negative impacts through an agricultural impact assessment; and
- the proposed expansion is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement regarding wise use and management of resources and protecting public health and safety.

Long Term Planning For the North Richmond Hill Highway 404 Corridor

Notwithstanding the location of the Gormley GO station outside of Richmond Hill's settlement boundary on lands within the ORMCP and Greenbelt, the location of such a station does lead to the specter of urban development in the area. GO Transit has made

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it known that it is interested in seeing transit oriented development occurring on and near GO stations where possible.

Although the lands in the concession block in which the Gormley GO station is located is one concession block north of the limit of contiguous urban development in Richmond Hill, there are two designated settlement areas within 500 metres of the Gormley GO station. The West Gormley Secondary plan area located on the west side of Leslie Street provides approximately 125 ha of land for low density residential use comprised of single detached, semi-detached and row houses. Planning approvals for development applications in this area are well underway. The second settlement area is the historic hamlet of Gormley located just south of Stouffville Road and east of Leslie Street. This area is home to the Gormley Heritage Conservation District which comprises 30 ha which include 42 dwellings all of which have protection under the Ontario Heritage Act. In addition to the Conservation District, there are approximately 10 additional ha that could be developed, however, land available for development will be diminished somewhat by the future Leslie Street/Stouffville Road intersection jog elimination.

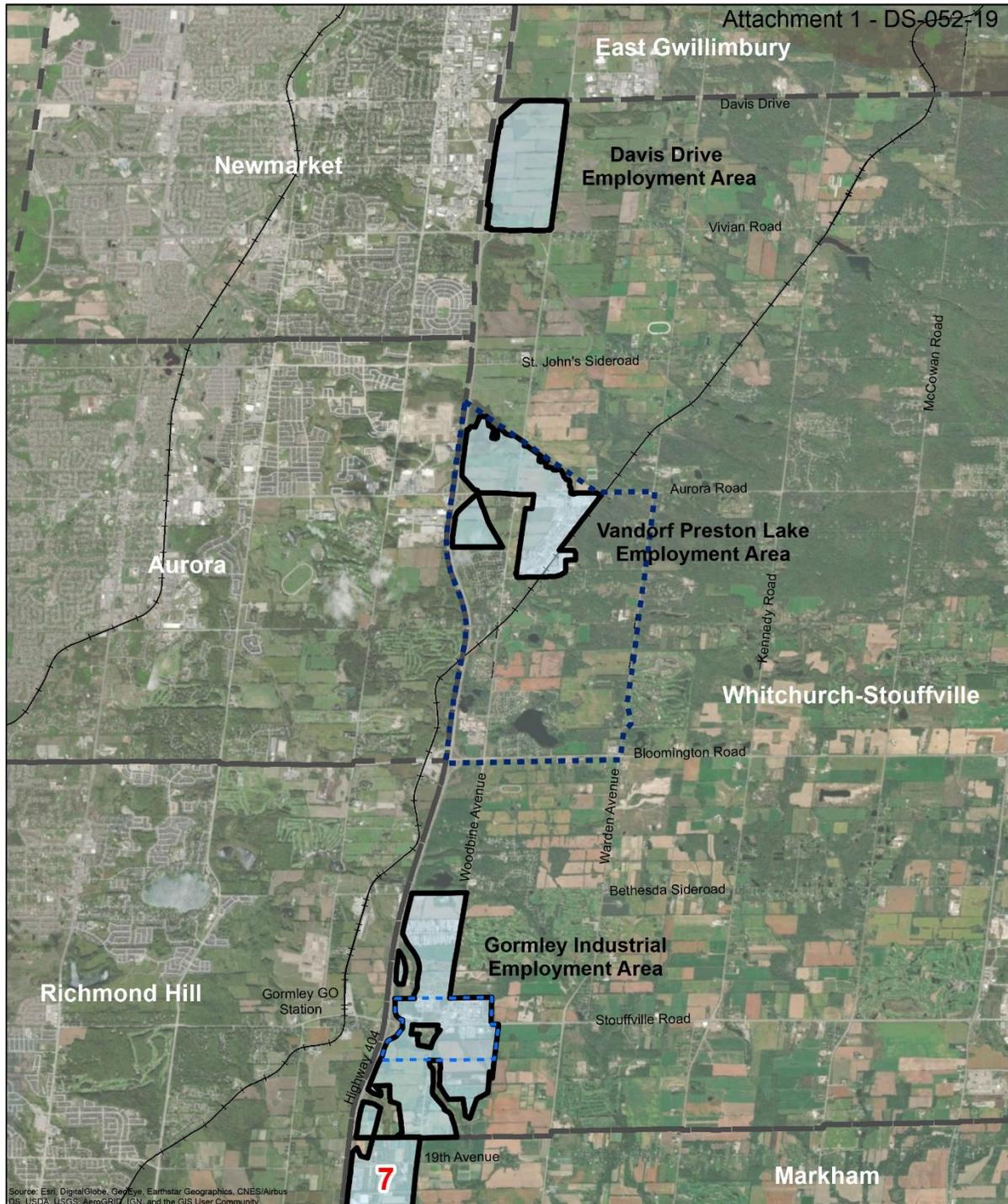
Despite the Provincial planning policy framework which may challenge an expansion to Richmond Hill's settlement boundary, the City can look toward the on-going efforts of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville who wish to see a settlement boundary expansion for lands on the east side of Highway 404 south of Stouffville Road to facilitate the expansion of the Gormley Industrial Area. These lands, similar to the lands in Richmond Hill are located within the Greenbelt and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

Whitchurch-Stouffville has recently lobbied the Region in a quest to have strategically located, serviced employment lands designated along the east side of the Highway 404 corridor. In March of 2019, Regional Council passed a resolution to:

“request the Province to designate the lands on the east side of Highway 404 in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, as identified in the attached map, Provincially Significant Employment Zone through Amendment #1 to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2017).”

Map 4 (a) below shows the lands referenced in the Regional Council resolution noted above.

Map 4 (a): Proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zone in Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

**Proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zone
 Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville**

Legend
 [Solid Blue Outline] Provincially Significant Employment Zone
 [Dashed Blue Outline] Vandorf Preston Lake Secondary Plan Area
 [Dotted Blue Outline] Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area



Prepared February 2019
 Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

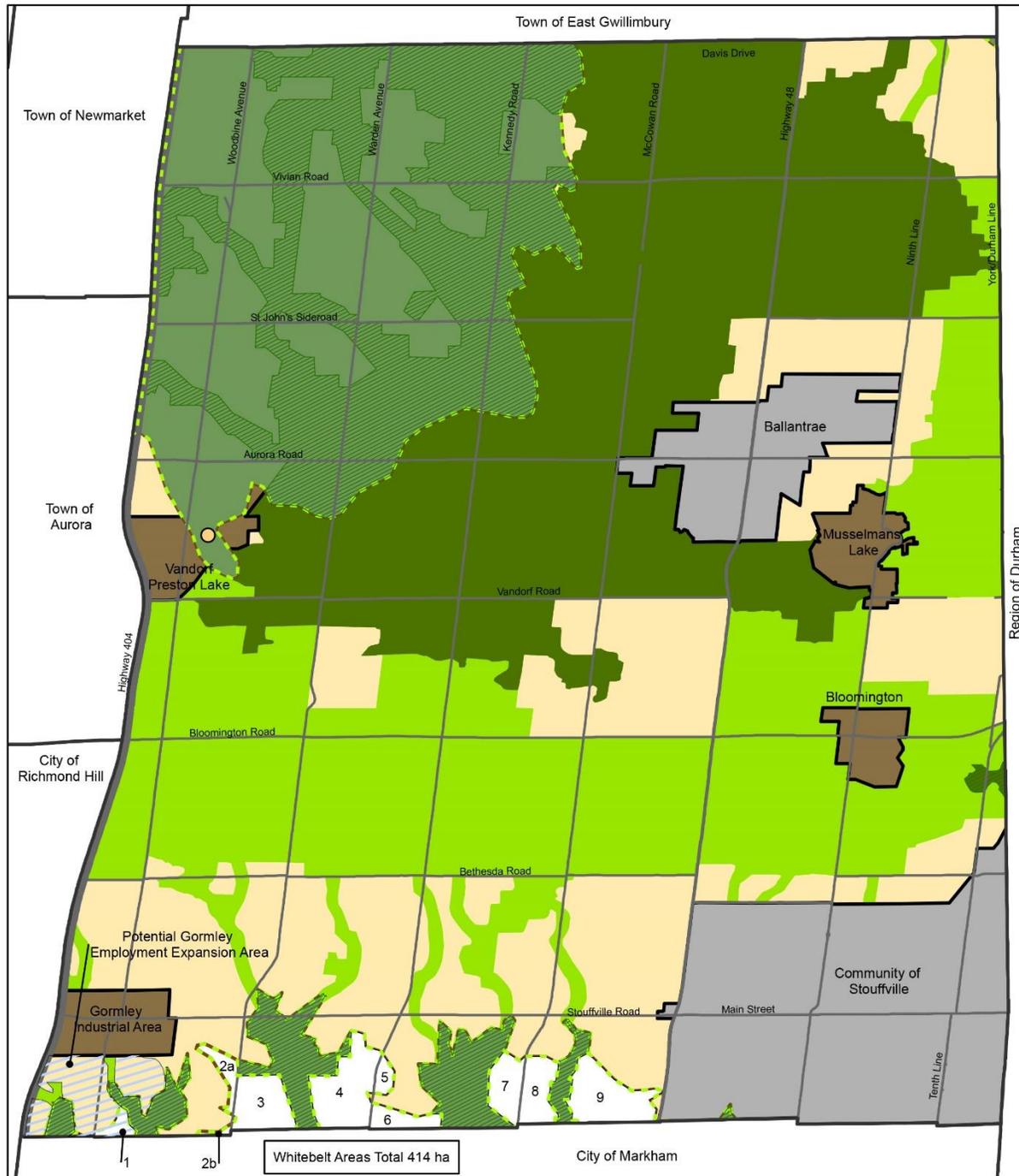
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A review of the December 2019 Provincially Significant Employment Zone mapping indicates that these lands have yet to be included.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, Whitchurch-Stouffville has recently focused its attention on an urban settlement boundary expansion south of Stouffville Road immediately abutting Highway 404 to facilitate an expansion of the Gormley Industrial Area. Although these lands are located within the Greenbelt and not available to be developed, the Town is proposing to convert “white belt” lands (lands potentially designated for future development) to become Greenbelt lands in exchange for an expansion of the Gormley Industrial Area into the Greenbelt. Richmond Hill staff are not aware of any decisions being made by the Province regarding this request. Unlike Whitchurch-Stouffville, Richmond Hill does not have any “white-belt” lands that can be converted to Greenbelt lands. Map 4 (b) shows the lands being considered by Whitchurch-Stouffville to be swapped between the Greenbelt and “white belt” to facilitate the expansion of the Gormley Industrial Area.

Map 4 (b): Proposed Gormley Employment Expansion Area in Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

Attachment 2 - DS-052-19



Provincial Plan Designations and Whitebelt Areas

Legend

- ORM Plan Boundary
- ORM Natural Linkage Area
- Greenbelt Boundary
- Greenbelt Hamlet
- ORM Countryside Area
- Settlement Area
- Greenbelt Protected Countryside
- Whitebelt Areas
- Rural Settlement
- Natural Heritage System



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Potential Strategy to Facilitate an Urban Settlement Boundary Expansion

Should Richmond Hill Council wish to pursue an urban settlement boundary expansion, a possible strategy would be to jointly approach the Region and the Province with the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville to discuss long term planning of the Highway 404 corridor. Lands on each side of Highway 404 represent considerable opportunity for development and economic growth. Whereas, there is a decided direction for Whitchurch-Stouffville to pursue serviced employment lands on their side of Highway 404, Richmond Hill would need to determine whether it wished to see lands in the Gormley GO Station concession block to be a mixed use MTSA or employment lands. In either case, a coordinated set of discussions between Richmond Hill and Whitchurch-Stouffville with the Region and the Province may provide the best opportunity for success.

Prime Agricultural Areas

As noted earlier in this report, the Province released updated Provincial Plans in May 2017, which took effect on July 1, 2017. New policies in the Growth Plan direct the Province, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to identify an Agriculture System across the GGH. A Province-wide agricultural system was introduced as part of the updates to the Provincial Plans and the Province has produced draft mapping for municipalities to use as the basis for identifying the agricultural system in OP's. The Provincial Plans require upper-tier municipalities like York Region to implement the agricultural system through updated policy and mapping. This will occur through the Region's MCR process.

The purpose of identifying the Agricultural System is to ensure a consistent approach to agriculture production across the GGH, and to support a diversified economy by promoting the agri-food sector. OMAFRA's mapping divides the Agriculture System into two components as follows:

1. An agriculture land base comprised of prime agriculture areas, including specialty crop areas, and rural lands that together create a continuous productive land base for agriculture; and
2. An agri-food network, which includes infrastructure, services and assets important to the viability of the agri-food sector.

OMAFRA initially identified certain areas within Richmond Hill to be designated as prime agricultural areas (refer to EBR posting #013-0968). Generally, these areas included lands outside of the City's Settlement Area and included lands designated ORM Natural Core, ORM Natural Linkage, and ORM Countryside in the City's OP. Prime Agricultural Areas are areas that generally include specialty crop areas and areas where prime agricultural land (Canada Land Inventory [CLI] Classes 1 to 3) predominates. Richmond Hill responded with reasons to exclude the majority of the proposed lands identified as prime agricultural areas in a report to Council in September 2017 (refer to

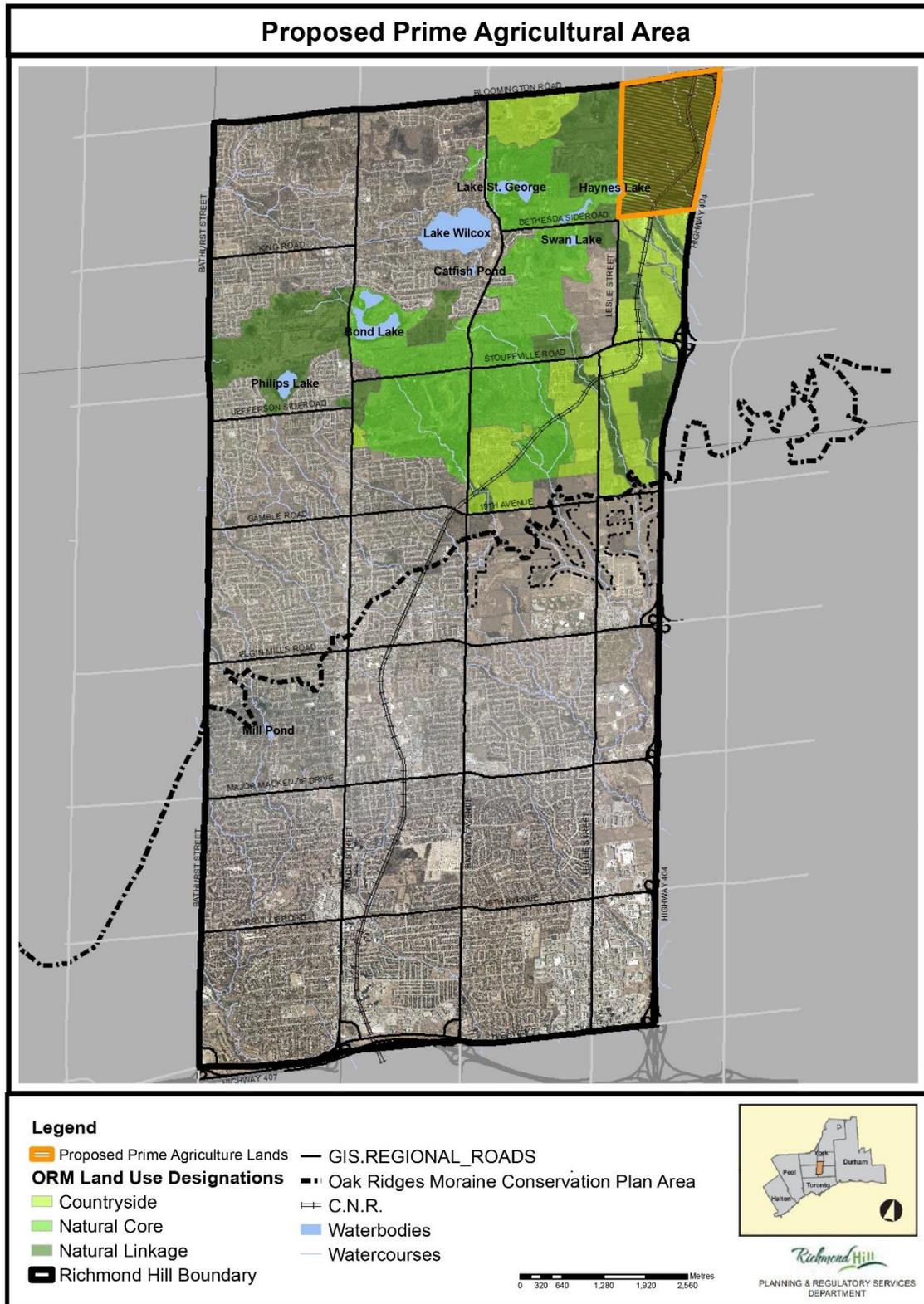
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SRPRS.17.148) given the existing land use in the area and the prevalence of natural heritage features.

As part of the Region's MCR process, Regional staff retained a consultant to compare and assess differences between the proposed Provincial mapping of prime agricultural areas to the Region's current agricultural and rural area mapping set out in the ROP. The technical analysis was based upon criteria described in the [consultant's report](#) and the [Province's Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe](#). The Region's analysis resulted in a further refinement to the Province's identified Prime Agricultural Area than what was suggested by City staff through their desktop analysis for the City of Richmond Hill.

City Staff met with Regional Staff to discuss the agricultural system as it relates to Richmond Hill. As shown on Map 5 on the next page, the Region's report dated June 13, 2019 recommends identifying lands that are generally located between Leslie Street to the west, Bloomington Road to the north, Bethesda Side Road to the south, and Highway 404 to the east as Prime Agricultural areas. Accordingly, this area may be considered by the Region for inclusion into the Region's agricultural designation as illustrated on Map 8 of the current ROP. The majority of these lands are designated Oak Ridges Moraine Natural Linkage Area, which permits agricultural land uses. Presently, the use of land in this area is predominantly farming or lands with farming potential. Accordingly, Staff have no concerns with the Region's proposed refinement. Regional Council directed Regional Staff to proceed with consultation on the proposed agricultural system as part of the MCR. Final agriculture mapping and policy directions and updates will be included in the draft ROP anticipated in Q2 2020. Once York Region has finalized the boundaries for prime agriculture lands in the ROP, and the Province has rendered its approval of the revised Prime Agricultural Area, Richmond Hill will need to update its OP to reflect mapping and policies that pertain to prime agriculture lands in order to conform with the regional and provincial agriculture system policies. This conformity exercise will take place through the City's OP Review process (see SRPRS.19.053).

Map 5: Proposed Prime Agricultural Area and ORMCP Land Use Designations



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Next Steps:

Local municipalities are an important part of the work and input to the Region's MCR. The Region will continue to engage local municipalities throughout the MCR process on policy development for the ROP. Richmond Hill staff have provided input into the process and form part of the Local Municipal Working Group to the MCR. It is recommended the Clerk forward a copy of this report and Council's recommendations to the Region for its consideration.

With respect to the City's Official Plan, it will need to conform to the changes to the ROP via the MCR process. As noted in this report, chief among these are updates to the City's OP to address ROP conformity requirements related to local municipal intensification targets and policies, including MTSA's, updating the City's urban structure to ensure conformity to the Region's urban structure, and planning for prime agricultural areas.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

This report has no financial or staffing implications.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan:

This report responds to Goal 1 (Stronger Connections in Richmond Hill) of the Strategic Plan which directs for the development of stronger connections, including physical networks such as roadways, transit, environmental connections and planning for a connected community by working with other levels of government and agencies to meet the needs of the community.

Conclusion:

York Region is currently in the process of undertaking a municipal comprehensive review to update the Regional Official Plan (2010). The updated ROP is scheduled for adoption by Regional Council in Q4 2020. Local municipalities will need to bring their official plans into conformity with the ROP once it has been approved by the Province.

This staff report provides Council with a summary of the Region's MCR process. It identifies specific workplan components that have an effect on land use planning in the City, including Major Transit Station Areas and Prime Agricultural Areas. With respect to MTSAs, the City is generally well-positioned to accommodate the minimum MTSA density targets set out in the Growth Plan as well as the density targets proposed by the Region. There are a few adjustments to the identification, boundaries, and resident to job ratios that the Region should consider before finalizing the MTSAs and overall Intensification Framework. Some of these adjustments will be contingent on the Region's decisions related to employment land conversions (see SRPRS.20.003).

With respect to the investigation into the potential settlement area expansion of lands in the vicinity of the Gormley GO Station, City Staff has reviewed the provincial and

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regional land use framework regarding these subject lands and staff has concluded that there is no justification for a settlement area expansion in this MCR period.

Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. If you require an alternative format please call contact person listed in this document.

Appendix

- Appendix A – Location and Boundaries of Major Transit Station Areas in Richmond Hill Identified by York Region

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPRS.20.004 - York Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review-Part 2-MTSAs, Settlement Expansion, Agricultural System.docx
Attachments:	- SRPRS.20.004 - Appendix A - Location and Boundaries of Major Transit Station Areas in Richmond Hill.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Feb 19, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Patrick Lee - Feb 19, 2020 - 12:36 PM

Kelvin Kwan - Feb 19, 2020 - 12:39 PM

MaryAnne Dempster - Feb 19, 2020 - 3:49 PM