



Staff Report for Special Council Meeting

Date of Meeting: July 23, 2020

Report Number: SRPRS.20.109

Department: Planning and Regulatory Services

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: **A Place To Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Proposed Amendment 1**

Purpose:

To inform Council of proposed amendments to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) and its associated Land Needs Assessment Methodology, and seek Council endorsement of comments to be shared with the Province and Region of York regarding these proposals.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That staff report SRPRS.20.109 be received.
- b) That the Region of York, when allocating the Region's share of the Growth Plan's forecast population and jobs to lower tier municipalities, duly account for the considerable growth potential of Richmond Hill afforded by the impending Yonge Subway extension, the completion of the bus rapid transit system along Yonge Street and Highway 7 and Richmond Hill's GO stations.
- c) That the Region of York, when undertaking the Region's Land Needs Assessment, duly account for how Richmond Hill's exemplary intensification levels would facilitate the designation of the lands around the Gormley GO Station as a MTSA without impacting the ability of the City to meet the Growth Plan's minimum 50% intensification target.
- d) That the above documents also be forwarded by the City Clerk to the Clerk and Chief Planner of York Region for information.

Contact Person:

Sybelle von Kursell, Manager, Policy, Policy Planning

Report Approval:

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

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Approved by: Mary-Anne Dempster, City Manager

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.

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Background:

On June 16, 2020, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced that he is proposing to amend the Growth Plan and take complimentary actions regarding the Growth Plan Land Needs Assessment Methodology and Provincially Significant Employment Zones, see Attachment 1.

This announcement was also posted on the Environmental Registry (see [ERO 019-1680](#)).

Proposed Amendment to the Growth Plan

As outlined in the attached letter, the proposed Growth Plan amendment, if passed, would:

- Extend the planning horizon to 2051
- Extend the population and job forecast (Schedule 3) to 2051 (Note: These forecasts are informed by a [report](#) prepared by Hemson Consulting taking into consideration 2016 Census data and Ministry of Finance forecasts, demographic and economic trends, among other things.)
- Permit upper and single tier municipalities to apply higher forecast numbers than those provided in the updated Schedule 3; and
- Permit an employment area conversion for lands that are located in both a Provincially Significant Employment Zone and a Major Transit Station Area, outside of a municipal comprehensive review process.

A copy of the proposed amendment is provided in Attachment 2 of this report. At this time, three possible growth forecast scenarios are provided: (1) Reference, (2) Low, and (3) High. Furthermore, there are two options for each scenario, one providing growth forecasts in 10-year increments, and the other only providing the 2051 forecast. As noted in the Supporting Document provided in Attachment 3, the Reference Forecast represents the most likely future growth outlook and is the result of extensive modelling and analysis. The High and Low scenarios represent other possible growth outlooks based on different assumptions.

The selected forecast will help to inform Provincial and Regional decision-making regarding the use of land to support residential and economic growth, and will inform financial strategies to recover growth-related capital investments related to infrastructure and transit, among other matters. Accordingly, it is important to determine the most likely scenario for growth at the provincial, regional and local scale.

The Reference Forecast for York Region is 2,020,000 residents and 990,00 jobs by 2051. This forecast for continued population and job growth within the Region bodes well for the City's growth aspirations.

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Proposed Transition Regulation

The Province is also proposing a minor change to the Places to Grow Act's Ontario Regulation 311/06 regarding transition. The effect of the change would mean that the amendment once passed will come into effect; meaning all planning applications, including the York Region MCR, must conform with the Growth Plan as amended. Furthermore, the proposed regulatory change does not change the timing for the Region to ensure that its plan conforms with the Growth Plan – which is by July 1, 2022.

Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology

Complementary to the proposed amendment, the Ministry is also consulting on the development of a new Land Needs Assessment Methodology (LNA) see [ERO 019-1679](#). The proposed methodology is a major departure from its predecessor issued in 2018, as it is largely a list of principles and general directions rather than a step-by-step guide to determining land need. The LNA requires the application of Growth Plan policies, including the consideration of intensification and density targets, as well as the forecasted growth to Upper and Single Tier municipalities. The Region of York is responsible for undertaking a LNA prior to proposing any expansion to its urban boundary, when undertaking its municipal comprehensive review (official plan update).

The Chief Planner for the Region provided a memo to York Region Council on June 25th regarding the proposed changes to the Growth Plan and the LNA, see Attachment 4. Regional staff have some concerns with the flexible approach to the land need assessment methodology. Regional staff propose to bring more detailed comments for Provincial consideration to a July 30th Regional Council meeting for Regional Council endorsement.

The proposed LNA methodology directs that at a minimum, 50% of residential growth must be directed to built-up areas as defined by the Growth Plan. For Richmond Hill, the “built boundary” is depicted in Schedule A3 of the [Official Plan](#), and is the majority of the City's settlement area. Over the past several years Richmond Hill has consistently exceeded the minimum 50% intensification target. Based on the current policy permissions for land use and density in the Official Plan and the recent trends of high levels of intensification in Richmond Hill, there is ample ability for Richmond Hill to continue to meet and exceed the 50% target.

On the basis of Richmond Hill's exemplary levels of intensification and Council's request to the Region to consider a MTSA for the lands surrounding the Gormley GO station; when undertaking its LNA, should the Region determine that there is a need for a settlement boundary expansion, consideration should be given to consult with the Province and consider lands surrounding this existing GO station.

To facilitate the foregoing, City staff will continue to monitor and participate in Local Municipal Working Group meetings to provide guidance and support to Regional staff,

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as they work to complete the Land Needs Assessment and prepare recommendations regarding the allocation of population and jobs to lower tier municipalities.

Provincially Significant Employment Zones

The province has identified most of the City's employment lands along highway 404 as a Provincially Significant Employment Zone. Through this recent announcement, the Province has committed to consider how Provincially Significant Employment Zones can support post-COVID economic recovery through engagement with businesses, municipalities, Indigenous communities and organizations, and the development industry. Accordingly, City staff will participate in the Provincial consultation.

Implications for the City Richmond Hill

Generally, the aforementioned changes do not have any direct impact on Richmond Hill at this time, given that the allocation of population and job forecasts and the undertaking of a Land Needs Assessment are both Regional responsibilities.

As the Region works through the Land Needs Assessment methodology and ensuing allocation of population and jobs forecast to local municipalities, it should have regard for the considerable growth potential of Richmond Hill as well as the ability to leverage the Gomley GO station as a MTSA. Accordingly, City staff will continue to work with the Region as they undertake their Land Needs Assessment.

Likewise, with respect to the Provincial consultation regarding economic recovery within Provincially Significant Employment Zones, City staff will participate in related discussions.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

None.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan:

This report supports Goal One of the Strategic Plan – Stronger Connection in Richmond Hill, wherein it states that the City should engage with other levels of government regarding issues. Monitoring and being aware of Provincial and Regional issues related to major land use policy changes, ensures that the City is apprised of proposed changes and is able to voice concerns where needed. This report provides information for Council's consideration and awareness.

Next Steps:

- Regional Council discussion regarding proposed changes, July 30, 2020
- Province to finalize and approve Amendment 1
- Province to update Land Needs Assessment Methodology

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- City staff to participate in discussions with the Province regarding economic recovery opportunities for businesses located in PSEZs.
- City Staff to report back to Council regarding these Provincial and the Regional initiatives.

Conclusion:

The Province has proposed an amendment to the Growth Plan and a new land needs assessment methodology, and is also considering economic recovery opportunities for businesses located in Provincially Significant Employment Zones (PSEZ). The proposed amendment largely impacts the Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review that is presently underway. The impact of these proposals to the City of Richmond Hill will not be known until the Region has disclosed the findings of its LNA and shared its proposed allocation of population and jobs to lower tier municipalities, and the Province has disclosed its plans for economic recovery within PSEZs.

Attachments:

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

- Attachment 1, Letter from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, dated June 16, 2020
- Attachment 2, Consultation Document: Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow
- Attachment 3, Supporting Document: Proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow
- Attachment 4, Memo from Paul Freeman, Chief Planner, to York Region Council, dated June 25, 2020

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPRS.20.109-Growth Plan Amendment 1.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- SRPRS.20.109-Att1-MMAHMinisterLetter.pdf- SRPRS.20.109-Att2-MMAHConsultation-ProposedAmendment1.pdf- SRPRS.20.109-Att3-MMAHSupportingDocument.pdf- SRPRS.20.109-Att4-YorkRegionMemo.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jul 20, 2020

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

Patrick Lee - Jul 20, 2020 - 9:06 AM

Kelvin Kwan - Jul 20, 2020 - 9:56 AM

MaryAnne Dempster - Jul 20, 2020 - 11:45 AM