

Committee of the Whole Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 02, 2019

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: PROPOSED AMENDMENT 1 TO THE GROWTH PLAN (2017)

FROM:

Jason Schmidt-Shoukri, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To advise Council of the Ontario government's proposed amendments to the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2017); to update the originating March 19, 2019 report to Council to allow for the consideration of the recent actions of York Region Council; and to obtain Council's endorsement on comments to be submitted in response to the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) posting of the proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, subject to any further comment that Council may provide.

Report Highlights

- The Province has proposed amendments to the Growth Plan (2017)
- The proposed amendments have a potential impact on major elements of the municipal planning system in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, including the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review and the City's Official Plan Review
- Regional Council passed resolutions recommending to the Province that the intensification density target in the Growth Plan be lowered to 50%, that the density target for the designated greenfield area be lowered to 50 people and jobs per hectare and that the Highway 400 North Employment Lands in Vaughan not be identified as a Provincially Significant Employment Zone in the Growth Plan and that the current level of employment land protection in the upper-tier official plans be maintained

Recommendations

1. THAT the comments and recommendations contained in the staff report entitled “Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan” (March 19, 2019 Council Agenda, forming Attachment No. 1 to this report) be endorsed as the City’s comments on the proposed amendment to the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2017), subject to the superseding modifications set out in 2 below;
2. THAT should Council wish to support the York Region modifications, the Province be requested to implement the following modifications to Amendment No. 1 to the Provincial Growth Plan:
 - a) Reduce the intensification target in York Region from 60% to 50%;
 - b) Continue to exclude the Provincially Significant Employment Zone (PSEZ) designation in the City of Vaughan along the Highway 400 Corridor, from approximately Major Mackenzie Drive to the King-Vaughan border and that the current levels of protection in the 2017 Growth Plan with respect to upper tier official plans should be maintained including the prohibition of institutional and sensitive land uses in employment areas that would have qualified as Prime Employment Areas; thereby continuing to afford the protection of employment lands while allowing for the potential consideration of any future conversion requests.
 - c) If PSEZs are included in the Growth Plan, that prior to recommending mapping changes, Regional and City staff be provided the opportunity for further discussion with Provincial staff regarding the criteria for selection of the mapped employment areas, the intent and use of the PSEZ, and the refinement to the mapping to reflect local planning considerations;
 - d) Reduce the targeted minimum density in the Designated Greenfield Areas to 50 residents and jobs per hectare from 60 residents and jobs per hectare.
3. THAT this report be forwarded by the City Clerk to the Province, the Region of York and the Members of Provincial Parliament representing the City of Vaughan as the City’s comments on the proposed Amendment No. 1 to the Provincial Growth Plan; and
4. THAT Council shall ratify the actions taken.

Background

On March 19, 2019, Council had before it a report entitled “Proposed Amendment 1 to the Provincial Growth Plan”. The purpose of the item was to put forward a potential City-response to the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) posting regarding Amendment No. 1 to the Provincial Growth Plan. At that time Council referred the item to the April 2, 2019 Committee of the Whole meeting. This report updates the March 19, 2019 report to allow for the consideration of additional information emerging from the actions of York Region Council.

Recent Action of York Region Council on Amendment No. 1 to the Growth Plan

On February 28, 2019 Regional Council considered a staff report entitled, “Comments on Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan”. At that meeting Regional Council identified a number of modification requests, including a resolution asking the Province to reduce the intensification target for York Region from 60% to 50% within the Delineated Built-up Area.

At its meeting on March 21, 2019 Regional Council reconsidered its previous actions on Amendment No. 1 and articulated additional positions relating to other matters. The Regional Council minutes from March 21, 2019 form Attachment No. 2 to this report. Regional Council continued to endorse the earlier report (Regional Council – February 28, 2019), including its Attachments 1 and 2, and actions in response the four postings on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO), with additional requests for modifications. The major changes include recommendations that the Province:

- Reduce the intensification target in York Region from 60% to 50%;
- Not include the Provincially Significant Employment Zones (PSEZ) in the Growth Plan for the City of Markham and along the 400 corridor from approximately Major Mackenzie Drive to the King-Vaughan border (as shown on Attachment 2, page 3 of the Region’s original submission) for the City of Vaughan, the current levels of protection in the 2017 Growth Plan, with respect to upper tier official plans should be maintained including the prohibition of institutional and sensitive land uses in employment areas that would have qualified as Prime Employment Areas;
- If PSEZs are included in the Growth Plan, that prior to providing recommendations on mapping changes, Regional staff be provided the opportunity for further discussion with Provincial staff regarding the criteria for selection of the mapped employment areas, the intent and use of the PSEZ, and the refinement to the mapping to reflect local planning considerations;
- The reduction of the targeted minimum density in York Region’s Designated Greenfield Areas to 50 residents and jobs per hectare from 60 residents and jobs per hectare.

Consideration of the Region’s updated recommendations to the Province, in establishing the City’s position on the proposed Amendment No. 1 to the Growth Plan, is appropriate and any comments to the Province should reflect this analysis.

Previous Reports/Authority

The previous report addressing this matter forms Attachment 1 to this report and can be found at the following link;

[Council Report entitled Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan \(2017\), dated March 19, 2019.](#)

Analysis and Options

Implications for the City of Vaughan

Changes to the Intensification Target and Designated Greenfield Area densities may affect how and where the City grows

The impact on the City of Vaughan of the reduction of the Intensification target from 60% to 50% within the delineated built-up area (annually by the time the next Municipal Comprehensive Review is approved and in effect) and the reduction of the targeted minimum density in the Designated Greenfield Areas to 50 residents and jobs per hectare from 60 residents and jobs per hectare cannot be definitively determined at this time. These parameters are applied Region-wide and their implications can only be assessed through the Land Budget being prepared by the Region through its MCR. The resulting product would be the allocation of population to each local municipality and an individual intensification target and potentially a minimum density assignment.

Both measures would represent a decrease in development density throughout the Region's urban areas. Preliminary indications are that there is sufficient capacity in the existing Intensification Areas within Vaughan's current Settlement Area to accommodate the potential population growth to 2041. However, if it is determined that the Settlement Areas are to be expanded, based on fulfilling the criteria set out in the Growth Plan, the location of the expansion areas would be determined through the Region's MCR, subject to criteria specified in the Growth Plan. City staff will need to participate in and comment on the development of the land budget and the assessment of boundary expansion alternatives, as these exercises will play an important role in shaping the future of the City.

City staff are satisfied that it is possible to effectively plan for scenarios involving Settlement Area boundary expansions or alternatively, maintaining the current boundaries and relying on intensification to meet the projected 2041 population. However, each presents a different set of challenges. Major considerations would include the environmental impacts, the implications for transportation/transit, housing mix, the creation of complete communities, effects on hard and soft infrastructure and population and population distribution. Notwithstanding the outcome, the City would respond through the Growth Management Strategy update and the Official Plan Review.

The preservation of the City's Employment Lands should continue to be prioritized

The resolution of Regional Council requests that Provincially Significant Employment Zones not be designated in Markham or along the 400 corridor from approximately

Major Mackenzie Drive to the King-Vaughan border (area specifically defined in Attachment 2, page 3 of the Region's original submission) in the City of Vaughan, with the caveat that the current level of protections in the 2017 Growth Plan be maintained, including the prohibition of institutional and sensitive land uses in areas that would have qualified as Prime Employment Areas. This resolution continues to protect employment lands while allowing for the potential consideration of any future conversion requests.

The affected area in Vaughan encompasses the City's Employment Areas extending from Major Mackenzie Drive to the King-Vaughan border and includes the Highway 400 North Employment Area and the employment uses located between Cityview Blvd and Highway 400. These areas were excluded from the PSEZ designation in the draft Regulation and the Region's action supports their continued exclusion.

The Employment Land protections in the 2017 Growth Plan currently rely on the Municipal Comprehensive Review to assess potential Employment Land conversions. Of particular concern is the potential effect of residential uses being introduced into Employment Areas. In these cases, there is the need for a full review of the need for the residential use, the impacts on the employment area (compatibility), the resulting quality of the residential environment and the impact on the local and regional land budget.

In addition, questions of precedent, prematurity and prejudice respecting the degree the conversion may constrain future public and private sector actions should also be taken into consideration. Typically, this is best undertaken through the Municipal Comprehensive Review, in the context of the Growth Plan's conversion criteria. It is noted that the Region has received 17 Land Use Conversion requests for the City of Vaughan, which are currently being reviewed through the Region's current Municipal Comprehensive Review. This includes requests for conversions in the Vaughan 400 North Employment Area. In some cases the conversion request seeks to convert only a portion of the lands subject to the request. This work is under way and the Region is still accepting proposals for Employment Land Conversions.

In this context staff have no objection to this modification.

Financial Impact

There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report.

Conclusion

Staff have reviewed the proposed amendments to the Provincial Growth Plan (2017) and the comments emerging from the actions of York Region Council on March 21, 2019, which include the following substantial recommendations:

- Requesting a reduction in the intensification target in York Region from 60% to 50%;

- requesting a reduction of the targeted minimum density in York Region's Designated Greenfield Areas to 50 residents and jobs per hectare from 60 residents and jobs per hectare; and
- requesting that the PSEZ designation in the City of Vaughan along the Highway 400 Corridor, from approximately Major Mackenzie Drive to the King-Vaughan border continue to be excluded and that the current levels of protection in the 2017 Growth Plan with respect to upper tier official plans be maintained...

Staff is of the opinion that the major changes adopted by Regional Council identified above, can be accommodated through the consultation process that will take place through the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review and the City's forthcoming Official Plan Review. Should Council wish to support the Region's position, it is recommended that the comments set out in the City's report to Council on March 19, 2019 (Attachment 1 hereto) be endorsed, subject to the superseding amendments originating at Regional Council and set out in the Recommendation section of this report. It is further recommended that this report be forwarded to the Province, the Region of York and the Members of Provincial Parliament representing the City. Finally, it should be noted that the final recommendation "That Council shall ratify the actions taken", was included so that the City's comments could be provided to the Province immediately, instead of waiting for the Committee's decision to be ratified in May; thereby potentially missing an opportunity to have the City's comments considered by the Province.

For more information, please contact: Fausto Filipetto, Manager of Long-Range Planning, ext. 8699.

Attachments

1. Council Report titled Proposed Amendment 1 to Growth Plan (2017), dated March 19, 2019
2. Minutes of York Region Council, Item J.2, March 21, 2019 "Comments on Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan"

Prepared by

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