

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Wednesday, May 20, 2020

WARD(S): ALL

**TITLE: REQUEST FOR COMMENTS: YORK REGION EVALUATION OF
EMPLOYMENT LAND CONVERSION REQUESTS**

FROM:

Bill Kiru, Acting Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To seek Council endorsement of City staff recommendations on the 30 employment land conversion requests submitted by landowners to York Region as part of the Region's 2041 Municipal Comprehensive Review.

Report Highlights

- The Region has received 71 employment land conversion requests and 30 of these are within Vaughan
- In March 2019, York Region Council endorsed criteria to be used when assessing employment land conversion requests
- Vaughan Staff also established criteria to assess the employment land conversion requests
- City staff are generally aligned with the Region's assessment of conversion requests

Recommendations

1. THAT Council support the conversion of employment area lands to allow non-employment uses, identified in Attachment 5 to this report, in the 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review for the following sites:
 - a. 4600 Steeles Ave West (ID 17)
 - b. Various landholdings in Concord GO Center Secondary Plan area (45, 65, 85, 115 Bowes Road and 1950 and 1970 Highway 7, Vaughan) (ID 1)
 - c. 163 and 175 Bowes Road (ID 16)
 - d. 140 Doughton Road (ID 21)
 - e. 130 Doughton Road (ID 28);
2. THAT Council not support the conversion of employment area lands to allow non-employment land uses, identified in Attachment 5 to this report, in the 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review for the following sites:
 - a. 233 Four Valley Drive and 1040-1080 Edgeley Boulevard (ID 3)
 - b. 11, 27 and 37 Jacob Keefer Parkway (ID 4)
 - c. 7625 Martin Grove Road and 211 Woodstream Boulevard (ID 5)
 - d. 661 and 681 Chrislea Road (ID 6)
 - e. Lots 26 to 35, Vaughan Concession 5 and Lot 1, King Concession 5 (3440 Kirby Road and 11720 Jane Street) (ID 7)
 - f. 8083 Jane Street (ID 8)
 - g. Part of Lot 14 and 15, Concession 5 (Anland) (ID 10)
 - h. 6241 Rutherford Road (ID 11)
 - i. 2739 Highway 7 (ID 12)
 - j. 2267 Highway 7 and 7700 Keele Street (ID 13)
 - k. 201 Millway Avenue (ID 15)
 - l. 7777 Keele St and 2160-2180 Highway 7 (ID 18)
 - m. 7171 Jane St. (ID 20)
 - n. 676 to 696 Westburne Drive (ID 22)
 - o. 2780 Highway 7 (ID 23)
 - p. 705 Applewood Crescent, 200, 207 & 225 Edgeley Boulevard, 10, 11, 38 & 27 Buttermill Avenue and 190 Millway Avenue (ID 24)
 - q. Part of Lots 4 and 5, Concession 9, South of Highway 7 (Adjacent) between Huntington Road and Highway 427 (ID 25)
 - r. 2104 Highway 7 (ID 26)
 - s. 80, 82 and 220 Doney Crescent (ID 27)
 - t. 7250 Keele Street (ID 29)
 - u. 20 Roysun Road (ID 30);

3. THAT Council not support the conversion of employment area lands to allow non-employment land uses because a conversion is not required for the request, identified in Attachment 5 to this report, in the 2041 Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review for the following sites:
 - a. 8821 Weston Road (ID 9)
 - b. 156 Chrislea Road and 15 Jevlan Drive (ID 14)
 - c. 31 Jevlan Drive and 172 Chrislea Road (ID 19); and
4. THAT this report and Council's decision be forwarded to York Region as Vaughan Council's input on the Region's review of employment conversion requests in the City of Vaughan, as part of the 2041 Municipal Comprehensive Review.

Background

Planning Act

The *Planning Act* sets the legislated rules for land use planning in Ontario, including the authority of the Province to identify matters of provincial interest through provincial policy statements.

The *Planning Act* identifies the uses permitted in areas of employment: manufacturing, warehousing, office, as well as retail and facilities that are associated with these uses. The *Planning Act* also requires municipal Councils to have regard for the adequate provision of employment opportunities and restricts the ability to remove lands from employment areas, unless the request to remove lands is made during a municipal comprehensive review.

Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)

The PPS requires municipalities to keep their official plans up to date with the PPS. All land use decisions of Council must be consistent with the PPS. Provincial policy requires York Region and the City of Vaughan to plan for employment and protect employment area lands. Section 1.3 of the PPS provides policy direction to promote economic development and protect employment areas by:

- i. providing for an appropriate mix and range of employment and institutional uses to meet long-term needs;
- ii. providing opportunities for a diversified economic base, including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for employment uses which support a wide range of economic activities and ancillary uses, and take into account the needs of existing and future businesses;

- iii. encouraging compact, mixed-use development that incorporates compatible employment uses to support livable and resilient communities; and
- iv. ensuring the necessary infrastructure is provided to support current and projected needs.

Protection of employment lands is further reinforced in Section 1.3.2, specifically by allowing planning authorities to convert employment areas to non-employment areas only through a municipal comprehensive review, only where it has been demonstrated that the land is not required for employment purposes in the long term, and that there is a need for conversion. The following policies apply:

- i. protecting and preserving employment areas for current and future uses;
- ii. within employment areas planned for industrial or manufacturing uses, planning authorities shall prohibit residential uses and prohibit or limit other sensitive land uses that are not ancillary to the primary employment uses in order to maintain land use compatibility. Employment areas planned for industrial or manufacturing uses should include an appropriate transition to adjacent non-employment areas;
- iii. protecting employment areas in proximity to major goods movement facilities and corridors for employment uses that require those locations; and
- iv. providing the opportunity to plan for (but not designate lands) beyond 25 years for the long-term protection of employment lands.

Growth Plan 2019

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019 (Growth Plan 2019) builds on the policy foundation of the PPS with planning policies that manage employment lands in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Municipalities are required to bring their Official Plans into conformity with the Growth Plan 2019, and municipal planning authorities' decisions related to planning matters must conform with this Plan.

The updated Growth Plan 2019 provides employment forecasts to 2041 that upper-tier municipalities must plan for. The Growth Plan 2019 policies address a range of employment land matters including protection of employment lands. Some of these protections include:

- a) protecting employment lands from introducing sensitive non-employment uses (i.e. residential and retail);
- b) establishing a structure for employment by identifying where specific types of employment uses should be directed;
- c) identifying employment lands in upper-tier and lower-tier official plans;

- d) minimize and mitigate adverse impacts on industrial and manufacturing;
- e) identifying provincially significant employment zones; and
- f) promoting intensification and higher densities in employment lands to encourage active transportation.

The Growth Plan 2019 now requires the assessment of employment land conversion requests to occur through a Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) and the designation of employment areas in the Region's Official Plan.

York Region Official Plan

The Regional MCR is now underway and conversion requests are being evaluated. Assessing employment conversion requests through an MCR is an important component of planning for employment lands at a regional level. Now that the Regional MCR is underway, it is appropriate for conversion requests to be considered comprehensively with the Regional land budget exercise.

York Region is forecasted to grow to 790,000 jobs by 2031 with approximately 266,100 of those jobs located in Vaughan by 2031. The updated Growth Plan 2019 requires York Region to designate employment areas in the York Region Official Plan (YROP) to help accommodate these jobs.

The YROP is required to conform to the Growth Plan 2019. The Vaughan Official Plan in turn is required by the *Planning Act* and Growth Plan 2019 to conform to the YROP.

Vaughan Official Plan 2010

The Official Plan Review is underway, and the City is required to produce a plan that conforms to the Region's updated Official Plan

The City of Vaughan is undertaking its Official Plan Review, which has two purposes: to conform with the updated Regional Official Plan and to review the policies of Vaughan Official Plan 2010 (VOP 2010). Any employment lands that are identified through the Regional MCR must be reflected in the City's updated Official Plan policies and schedules.

VOP 2010 was developed with the objective of protecting Employment Areas to promote the long-term health of the industrial, manufacturing, and warehousing sectors. Vaughan Metropolitan Centre was planned to attract major office developments.

Employment areas are major drivers of economic activity within York Region

Emerging evidence indicates that the City's employment lands will be critical to the future economic health of both the Region and the City.

On May 9, 2019, York Region staff brought forward a "Planning for Employment Background Report" to Regional Council which gave an overview and analysis of key findings and recent employment trends. These include:

- Employment areas continue to be major drivers of economic activity
- York Region has developed into a top destination in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Canada for business across a number of industries
- York Region is also the home to the largest technology sector concentration in Canada
- York Region is well positioned to withstand the impacts of automation, which will likely create additional jobs in the long term
- Regional Centres and Corridors make the backbone of the Region's urban structure and support a range of employment opportunities
- Major office employment is projected to grow exponentially compared to all employment types
- Work environments that are accessible by transit and have access to amenities are necessary to attract and retain new employees
- Protection of employment areas is vital
- Higher densities in employment areas will be fueled by increasing office uses and intensification
- Retail locations will continue to be valuable as their role continues to shift

Vaughan is positioned to lead and respond to the trends identified above. Vaughan's supply of employment lands facilitates the Region's future employment growth: it accounts for 40% of the total vacant employment lands in York Region. The employment areas within the City of Vaughan are strategically located, with access to two national rail networks, the TTC subway, three 400-series highways, GO train and bus rapid transit service. Access to transportation infrastructure, corridors, and gateways is critical for employment lands. This is especially true with industrial development. The City is also in close proximity to the Toronto Pearson International Airport. Toronto Pearson contributes roughly \$42 billion annually to Ontario's economy, or about 6.3% of GDP, and piloted the Pearson Eco-business Zone with Partners in Project Green.

The Economic Development and Employment Sectors Study (EDESS) updates Vaughan's Economic Development Strategy (EDS) with new action plans to meet Vaughan's employment needs in the face of an evolving marketplace

The premise of the employment policies within the YROP and VOP are informed by a number of strategic plans and business plans. In addition to the Vaughan 2010 Economic Development Strategy: *Building a Gateway to Tomorrow's Economy*, the City recently completed its inaugural Business Satisfaction and Needs Survey, the Economic Development and Employment Sectors Study (EDESS) and prepared a Strategic Business Plan with alignments to the 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan.

The findings of the Economic Development and Employment Sector Study (EDESS) in particular are critical to updating employment land policies through the Official Plan Review. The trends and needs identified will be used in the policy development process to guide the outcome of those recommendations.

Employment areas are critical to the economic prosperity of the City of Vaughan

To position itself for sustained growth, the City will have to anticipate and respond to the evolving needs of businesses. The EDESS identifies employment lands which accommodate a significant share of the municipality's businesses and employment sectors as crucial to Vaughan's economic development potential. These include sectors like manufacturing, construction, wholesale trade, professional, scientific and technical services, and transportation warehousing. Construction, wholesale trade, scientific and technical service sectors alone accounted for 55% of the City's job growth over the last ten years.

Phase 1 of EDESS provided the following recommendations:

1. Ensure that employment lands are well adapted to structural changes occurring in the evolving macro-economy
2. Provide stronger direction regarding employment-supportive uses in employment areas
3. Explore opportunities for intensification of employment lands
4. Undertake regular and ongoing monitoring of employment land supply and demand to assist with longer-term land use planning and land needs
5. Undertake a detailed employment lands competitiveness analysis

A critical factor for employment lands is the need for a variety of parcel sizes to accommodate a diverse number of employers. The City needs to ensure there is sufficient supply and market choice of employment lands to continue to be a competitive and attractive location for all employment sectors. The EDESS identified Vaughan as having a healthy supply of small to medium sized parcels, but there is a limited number of large vacant land parcels. Large employment lands are needed to accommodate and attract large-scale industrial employers such as manufacturers and distribution centres. The EDESS further identified that the City will need to provide a greater number of larger serviced industrial sites to remain competitive.

The City of Vaughan contains strategically valuable Employment Areas in York Region

The City's employment lands accommodated 67% of the City's jobs as of 2017, according to the EDESS. Vaughan's employment areas are expected to accommodate approximately 52% of the City's total employment growth until 2024 (11,800 jobs). Vaughan's employment base is expected to increase by 22,700 jobs, resulting in 261,000 jobs in 2024.

In York Region, Vaughan has the largest supply of vacant employment lands, accounting for 40% of the total vacant net inventory, a total of 1,042 net hectares. In addition, of all the local municipalities within York Region, the City of Vaughan has the largest portion of developed employment lands. The EDESS also made the following key findings:

1. York Region has 17% of the GTHA's developed employment lands
2. 50% of York Region's employment lands are located within the City of Vaughan
3. In 2017, 54% of York Region's employment was located in the Region's employment lands
4. York Region has an average employment density of 70 jobs per net hectare which is relatively high compared to the GTHA Average
5. Maintaining an appropriate supply of employment areas is critical to provide employers flexibility over the long term and attracting skilled and talented employees

To support the Region's continued employment growth, York Region's "Planning for Employment Background Report" identified that York Region needs to continue to protect employment areas in order to accommodate the needs of employers and increased demand for warehouse and distribution facilities.

As e-Commerce continues to grow, there is a strong demand for logistics and warehouse facilities. Employment areas in strategic locations along highway corridors and intermodal facilities are important assets for the Region's economy to grow. Of Vaughan's 2017 employment base within employment lands: 38% is located within the Concord /CN Railway Lands, 27% is located within the Highway 400 Industrial District, 25% is located within the Highway 407 Industrial District and 10% is located within the Highway 427 Industrial District. Large parcels of employment lands at strategic locations will support the goods movement sector which is an integral part of York Region's economy.

Previous Reports/Authority

NA

Analysis and Options

The Growth Plan 2019 has given York Region new responsibilities in planning for employment to be addressed through their Municipal Comprehensive Review

York Region is now required to designate and set density targets for employment areas in the Regional Official Plan (ROP) and assess requests for employment land conversions (Growth Plan 2019). These are new Regional responsibilities. Previously, employment designations were only included in local Official Plans.

The Growth Plan contains five tests for Employment Land Conversions

The Growth Plan 2019 contains requirements for the conversion of employment lands through Policy 2.2.5.9, chief among them that conversions may only be permitted through a municipal comprehensive review. During this process, a request must pass the five tests in the Growth Plan 2019. The five tests are:

1. There is a need for the conversion (Growth Plan 2.2.5.9 a).
2. The lands are not required over the horizon of the Growth Plan for the employment purposes for which they are designated (Growth Plan 2.2.5.9 b).
3. The municipality will maintain sufficient employment lands to accommodate forecasted employment growth, to the horizon of the Growth Plan (Growth Plan 2.2.5.9.c).
4. Non-employment uses would not adversely affect the overall viability of the employment area or the achievement of the minimum intensification and density targets and other policies in the Growth Plan (Growth Plan 2.2.5.9 d).

5. There are existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities to accommodate the non-employment uses (e.g. sewage, water, energy, transportation) (Growth Plan 2.2.5.9 e).

York Region developed conversion criteria based on Growth Plan 2019 conversion criteria

On March 7, 2019, Regional Council endorsed the draft Regional employment land conversion criteria, which have been applied by Regional staff to analyze the employment conversion requests within York Region. The Regional criteria (Attachment 1) build on the five conversion tests provided in the Growth Plan 2019 to support a comprehensive and equitable review process. Existing policies in York Region and other Ontario municipalities informed the development of the Region's criteria and were refined through consultation with local municipal staff.

The Region's criteria will assist with assessing employment conversion requests in the context of the Region's employment areas. The Region's criteria address Regional objectives to ensure a diverse and adequate supply of employment lands and protect employment areas adjacent to major transportation corridors such as the 400 series highways, and CP and CN rail corridors. City staff has continued to engage with regional staff throughout the employment conversion evaluation process.

The Region has provided 14 separate employment conversion criteria which were organized into five theme areas: Supply, Viability, Access, Infrastructure and Region-Wide Interests. These five themes represent core principles that are considered during the review of each employment conversion request. Further detail on each theme is listed below:

- **Supply** – Preserving an adequate and diverse supply of employment lands and protecting lands planned beyond the 2041 planning horizon. The Region's criteria will preserve large-size employment parcels and prohibit employment area conversion in largely vacant employment areas in order to meet the future needs of businesses.
- **Viability** – The ability of the employment area to operate and sustain success over the long-term. The Region's criteria prohibit the consideration of requests if the site is entirely surrounded by lands designated and intended to remain designated for employment purposes.
- **Access** – The location of the site, specifically, if the site will be valuable for goods movement purposes, and if the site has access to major transportation infrastructure.

- **Infrastructure** – Recognizes and considers the importance of ensuring high quality public services and infrastructure systems are available to residents and employers.
- **Region-Wide Interests** – Ensures that local or regional municipal planning objectives are not compromised, and consideration is made for potential issues that cross regional boundaries.

Overall, the Region has received 71 site-specific employment land conversion requests with 30 requests located within Vaughan. Staff will continue to engage with York Region staff during their assessment of final recommendations for each conversion request, the Region's employment forecast, policy updates, and designation of employment areas in the Regional Official Plan.

York Region has undertaken a review of the conversion requests received

On October 10, 2019, Regional staff updated Regional Council on the Employment Area Conversion Process. The report addressed work completed to-date, outlined the preliminary results of Regional staff's Phase 1 review of requests submitted to that date, set a cut-off for requests to be received as of November 29, 2019, and outlined next steps in the process. The next step in the review of conversion requests for the Region was a Phase 2 review of all requests received up to the November 29, 2019 cut-off date.

The Phase 1 process included one-on-one meetings with applicants seeking a conversion request with Regional and local planning staff. As part of these Phase 1 discussions, at each meeting, staff clarified the evaluation process, and noted that consideration of requests would continue in Phase 2 to consider the range of employment uses and potential for more sensitive uses.

Phase 2 of the employment area conversion evaluation process included a broader analysis of employment lands, their implications on the land budget and infrastructure, as well as the employment context within Regional and Local structure. Following the completion of Phase 2, York Region staff provided results of the final assessment and preliminary recommendations to Regional Council on March 12, 2020.

The Region has requested local Council to provide endorsed positions on Employment Land Conversion Requests

As part of the next steps discussed in the October 19, 2019 report, Regional staff requested local municipal comments to help inform the review process. The

recommendations contained in this report will be forwarded to Regional Council as Vaughan Council's input to-date on the conversion requests forming part of the MCR.

City staff have prepared additional criteria to provide Council with local context for Employment Land Conversion Requests

Unwise employment land conversions present a risk to local municipalities. Employment land conversion requests are typically submitted to pursue uses that would not be permitted in employment areas, such as residential or major retail. There are inherent risks associated with these types of conversions. The approval of an employment area conversion could contribute to the destabilization of the adjacent employment lands by introducing a non-compatible use and creating expectations that the surrounding area may be converted in the next Municipal Comprehensive Review. This could result in disinvestment and the decline of the area, resulting in the loss of productive businesses, business parks, and physical decline.

City-based conversion criteria highlight the importance of community building and ensuring quality residential development and viable employment areas. The criteria are set out below.

Local Criteria to Assess Employment Land Conversion Requests

1. The conversion involves the introduction of a sensitive use (i.e. residential) into an area that is predominated by uses that are incompatible with sensitive uses.
2. The conversion is located close to major public infrastructure that, either individually or cumulatively, provides a further level of incompatibility (e.g. rail yards, major highways).
3. The conversion is in an area that would constitute an unplanned expansion of a defined secondary plan area that is either approved or identified as an area requiring a secondary plan.
4. The conversion is located in an area where its approval would constitute piecemeal planning, potentially prejudicing the future of the current uses and creating expectations of further conversions.
5. The conversion is located in an area that is deficient in the appropriate urban design/streetscape and services, (e.g. for residential) such as walkability, parks, community level retail and amenities, schools and community facilities.

6. The conversion area is part of a logical planning unit. In this case, the conversion request is considered to be premature and identifies the need for a comprehensive planning exercise to establish the long-term future (e.g. via a secondary plan) to confirm the appropriate uses and densities, and ensure that all the required infrastructure (e.g. internal roads and accesses, water, sewers, stormwater management), services and amenities are in place to support the community.

To maintain integrity of local community planning, employment land conversions should be assessed in a comprehensive manner

An issue that is not well addressed in the Growth Plan 2019 employment conversion criteria is the impact that employment land conversions can have on local planning. The ability to introduce retail and more particularly residential uses into employment areas entirely on the basis of the Growth Plan 2019 conversion criteria is highly problematic. Local municipalities plan employment areas and residential communities holistically, not on the basis of one-off site-specific approvals. It is assumed that the local planning system will absorb and adapt to the conversions and maintain the integrity of community planning and all the considerations this would entail. This would include the avoidance of incompatible uses, connections to transit, the provision of community services such as parks, community centres, schools, shopping, and foremost an attractive and highly livable community environment.

Granting approval on the basis of the level of information provided in a typical employment land conversion request is risky from a community development perspective given the over-arching objective in the Growth Plan 2019 to build complete communities. Building complete communities requires a comprehensive community planning process that examines logical planning areas and allows for the provision of required services and amenities and may result in the creation of a new community area or form the logical extension of an existing community planning area.

While the Growth Plan 2019 criteria are important considerations, local municipalities also need to examine the impacts of all conversions on the overall community planning regime, especially since the need for such conversions is difficult to demonstrate. The City should only support conversions that are strategically beneficial to the City and its current and future residents and businesses. As such, this is a lens that staff have applied to the requests that have been received by York Region for the City of Vaughan in developing responses to the Region's request for comment.

Piecemeal development creates a number of challenges that need to be considered as part of the conversion requests

Staff have identified several sites as constituting piecemeal development through the review of the employment land conversion requests. Piecemeal development is an important consideration in this process, and the following description provides background to this consideration.

The challenge of piecemeal development is particularly acute in the employment land conversion process. The following provides a breakdown of this process:

1. Conversions only occur during a municipal comprehensive review (MCR), which can only happen every five or ten years (as required by the *Planning Act*);
2. If a conversion is approved at the edge of an employment area, the surrounding area needs to be studied to determine the necessary land uses, amenities, roads, and other elements that would make a viable community area;
3. Those elements identified through study cannot be approved until the next MCR, which may occur five or ten years in the future; and
4. The lands approved for conversion are effectively isolated from any community attributes that may exist nearby or would have no planned community elements that could be approved until the next MCR.

Piecemeal development can risk creating residential areas that are isolated from larger community areas, lacking walkability, schools, parks, and other community amenities. It is critical that areas being considered for residential uses, particularly those being considered for higher density development, be considered in the context of the wider area that support complete community objectives.

There are areas of strategic importance to the City of Vaughan that could be affected by several conversion requests, and requests in these areas should be considered in light of major corporate objectives

Several clusters of conversion requests have become clear since the request process closed. Near the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC), Keele St./Highway 7, and the Concord GO Centre Secondary Plan (Mobility Hub Study) Area, concentrated numbers of requests merit consideration of the wider implications that they would have on city building in Vaughan. These clusters are discussed below.

While there is no demonstrated need for any employment land conversions, conversion requests may best be understood as a means for advancing the City's corporate

objectives, such as securing a GO station or advancing the success of the current VMC Secondary Plan. The approval of certain sites will therefore support important corporate objectives.

Adjacent to the VMC – North side of Portage Parkway between Jane Street and Applewood Crescent – Conversion of land is not supported

There are two employment land conversion requests outside the northern boundary of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Secondary Plan (VMCSP). They are on the north side of Portage Parkway between Jane and Applewood Crescent (Attachment 5, ID 15 and ID 24) and together propose over 10 hectares of mixed-use residential uses. One of the requests consists of multiple properties that extend a significant length along the north side of Portage Parkway between Applewood Crescent and Millway Avenue. The other is a single site on the north side of Portage Parkway between Millway Avenue and Jane Street. Both are requesting employment land conversion to allow for mixed-use development including residential uses. These lands are part of the employment area known as Vaughan 400. The following outlines the main points that were considered in this review:

- Approximately 70% of mixed-use lands in the VMC remain vacant.
- The Vaughan 400 employment area (that these lands are part of) has the highest and fastest growing number of jobs of any employment area in the City.
- Portage Parkway is identified in the City's Official Plan as a truck route to bypass Highway 7.
- Portage Parkway has been a logical boundary between the VMC and the Vaughan 400 employment area since the VMC's inception.
- Residential growth is significantly out-pacing job growth within the Highway 7 intensification corridor.

The following points outline why staff does not support these conversion requests:

- VMC residential targets are being met and there is no need for additional residential lands.
- Conversion of lands north of Portage Parkway for residential uses will destabilize the surrounding employment lands, which are part of the largest and fastest growing employment area in the City.
- There is no existing east/west road north of the lands that are proposed for conversion, therefore this would create an unclear boundary between residential and employment lands.

- Portage Parkway is an appropriate boundary between residential and non-residential lands because it is a truck route and follows existing property lines.
- The subject lands are important employment lands and can be considered for further intensification for employment purposes.

Staff are undertaking further study to determine the future of the VMC

The City will be undertaking a review and update of the VMCSPP. As part of the update, an analysis of potential boundary expansion of the VMCSPP area will be undertaken to assess the benefits and drawbacks related to the potential expansion areas. Boundary expansion does not necessarily mean expanding residential uses but can consider intensification for both residential and employment uses.

Adjacent to the VMC – South of Highway 7, east of Maplecrete Road and west of Creditstone Road – Conversion of lands is supported

Staff is recommending the conversion of two sites east of Maplecrete Road and west of Creditstone Road, which are to the south and east of the VMC (Attachment 3, ID 21 and ID 28). The requests are supportable based on local and regional criteria.

Currently, the eastern boundary of the VMC is partly delineated by an unbuilt planned-for local road south of Highway 7, through the centre of a block. It is not a logical planning boundary such as a major collector road and does not follow existing property lines. This boundary has led to implementation issues: it has created split land use permissions on the block south of Highway 7, and inconsistently bisects properties.

These conversions will create a more logical employment area boundary on Doughton Road, an existing minor collector, where they each have frontage. This will also be consistent with land use permissions that share property lines immediately north of these properties, where the VMCSPP is in effect. As mentioned earlier, the VMCSPP update has identified this area to examine potential boundary expansion of the VMCSPP, which will ensure appropriate study and planning will take place for land uses in the area.

Near Keele Street and Highway 7, conversion of lands is not supported

There are four large conversion requests centered around Keele Street and Highway 7. Together they constitute a large portion of the employment lands between Bowes Road and the Rail Yard on the Highway 7 axis. Individually, they would constitute piecemeal

development as they propose development of sensitive uses (residential) in an area with several compatibility issues.

Two of the requests are immediately adjacent to the CN McMillan Yard and have spur lines leading directly to those properties. The other two requests located in the northeast of Keele Street and Highway 7 intersection are within and at the edge of a large employment block.

Granting these conversion requests would destabilize that employment area by creating a condition where more conversions may be expected. This would in turn push up land values and rents, driving out long term employers.

Support for these requests is considered premature on the basis that they are part of a currently functioning employment area that is not needed to accommodate future population growth by the City or Region. Instead, it is an important node of employment activity.

Given the risk of putting unplanned residential community in the area, these conversion requests should not be supported.

***Within the Concord GO Centre Secondary Plan (Mobility Hub Study) Area,
Conversion of lands is supported***

The Concord GO Centre Secondary Plan (Mobility Hub Study) is currently underway and will support the case for the corporate priority of attracting a GO station. The underlying studies that support the Mobility Hub Study will determine the appropriate land uses. The “market-based approach” to the delivery of the station is currently being explored. The study will include the accommodation of the GO station and its infrastructure to inform the future Transit Project Assessment.

The study needs to maintain momentum in order to achieve the priority of attracting a GO station. A change in the scope will jeopardize the achievement of this objective by adding another level of complexity given the premature nature of the conversion requests around Keele Street and Highway 7. For this reason, conversion requests for the lands east of Bowes Road and in the Concord GO Centre Secondary Plan MHS Area are recommended for consideration.

City of Vaughan staff identified employment land conversion requests that do not require an employment land conversion

Select sites within the City of Vaughan have been submitted to be considered for an employment land conversion to allow more flexibility to the permitted use and excludes more sensitive uses. Increased flexibility in the permitted uses for these sites can be accommodated within the City's existing employment lands framework. Therefore, City staff found that the following employment land conversion requests do not require an employment land conversion, and are recommending that these conversion requests are not supported:

- 8821 Weston Road (ID 9)
- 156 Chrislea Road and 15 Jevlan Drive (ID 14)
- 31 Jevlan Drive and 172 Chrislea Road (ID 19)

Financial Impact

There are no direct financial implications to the City as a result of this report. There are potential indirect financial implication and economic implications which could result from the conversion of employment lands.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The Growth Plan 2019 now requires the assessment of employment land conversion requests to occur through a Regional MCR, and the designation of employment areas in the Region's Official Plan. The Regional MCR is underway and requests for employment land conversion will be considered comprehensively with the Region's land budget exercise. Of the 71 employment land conversion requests, 30 are in the City of Vaughan: the most in the Region. The City of Vaughan's employment land conversion requests could therefore have major implications on the Region's employment lands and overall land budget.

Conclusion

City staff have evaluated the 30 conversion requests originating in the City and have provided Council with recommendations on their disposition. Out of the 30 conversion requests evaluated, staff have identified three requests that do not require an employment conversion. Of the remaining 27 requests evaluated, staff recommend support for five requests and do not recommend support for 22 requests. These requests, particularly in areas of strategic importance identified in this report, could have substantial and long-term impacts on the viability of the employment lands in the City, which form the backbone of Vaughan's economic success and potentially impact the City's community planning process. Utilizing the strengths of Vaughan's infrastructure

assets to support businesses operating in Vaughan will ensure long-term economic stability and growth.

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

Attachments

1. York Region Conversion Criteria
2. City of Vaughan Conversion Criteria
3. Map of All Conversion Requests in the City of Vaughan
4. Summary Table of Staff Recommendations
5. Staff Recommendations for each Request

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