

# **Comments on York Region's Draft Employment Framework - 2041 MCR**

**Development Services Committee  
September 23, 2019**

## Purpose of Report

To provide Markham Council input to the York Region 2041 municipal comprehensive review (MCR), specifically regarding the employment strategy work completed to date.

## Overview of Presentation

- 1) Markham's requirement to plan for employment
- 2) Markham's employment strategy to 2031
- 3) Planning for employment to 2041
- 4) Markham's Employment Areas and vacant land
- 5) Employment conversion requests - assessment and recommendations
- 6) Recommendations and next steps



# 1. Markham is required to plan for employment and protect employment land

- Province mandates planning for employment, and particularly the protection of employment lands, through the Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) and Growth Plan 2019.
- Provincial requirements are implemented through the Regional Official Plan.
- Markham has historically reserved lands along the 400-series highway corridors, as well as the Hwy 7 and Yonge Street rapid transit corridors – a strategy that has helped ensure Markham's success as a major employment centre within York Region and the GTA.

## 2. Markham's Employment Strategy to 2031 is reflected in the OP



- YROP assigned **240,400 jobs by 2031** to Markham
- Forecasts take employment type into account:
  - Major Office Employment (MOE) – 35%
  - Employment Land Employment (industrial) (ELE) – 35%
  - Population-Related Employment (PRE) – 30%
- **240,400 jobs = approx 2,200 hectares** (developed and vacant)
- 2,200 hectares of employment land are accommodated in a variety of OP land use designations

# OFFICIAL PLAN

## MAP 3 - LAND USE

as modified and approved by York Region June 12/14  
JUNE 2014

LPRF File Number PL140743 - April 9, 2016 Office Consideration:  
This map is subject to appeals to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. The  
numbered boxes depict lands owned by applicants of this map. The  
scope of any issues raised in those applications will be identified  
as part of Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Case No. PL140743

Map 3 - Land Use is subject to Appeal Nos. 1. (Issue 36, 224)  
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704. (Issue 4, 15)  
705. (Issue 18, 19)  
706. (Issue 18, 19, 20)  
707. (Issue 244)  
708. (Issue 245)  
709. (Issue 125, 205, 260)  
710. (Issue 267)  
711. (Issue 271, 272, 276, 278)  
712. (Issue 279, 280)  
713. (Issue 282)  
714. (Issue 289)  
715. (Issue 36, 224)  
716. (Issue 237, 239)  
717. (Issue 62, 224)  
718. (Issue 4,

### 3. Planning for Employment to 2041

*York Region is required to plan for 900,000 jobs by 2041 - additional 264,000 jobs from 2018*

#### Key Findings of York Region Future Employment Trends Study:

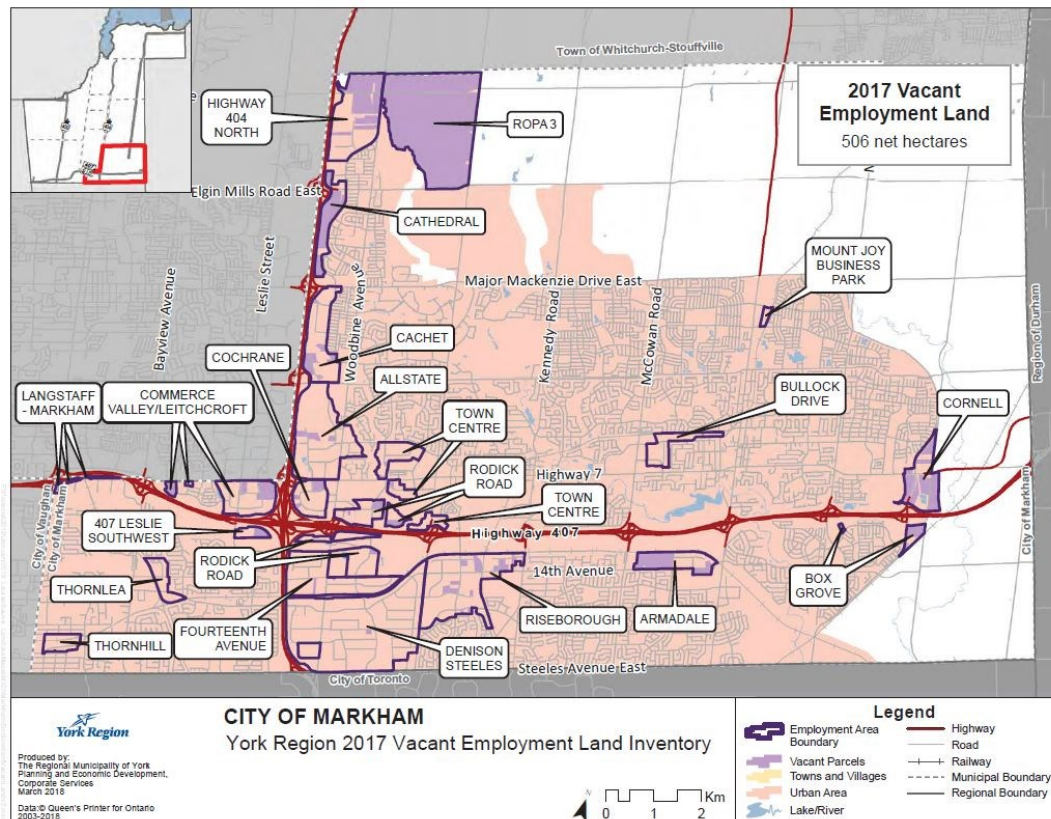
- Globalization of markets, automation, and the digital economy are key drivers shaping the Greater Golden Horseshoe economy.
- Automation has potential to create jobs in higher-skilled industries; York Region is well positioned to withstand the risks of automation with an economy increasingly focused on higher skilled activities; impact is expected to be gradual.
- The outlook for employment growth in York Region remains favourable:
  - Stable growth in manufacturing
  - Rapid growth in professional and service-based industries, including knowledge-based and creative industries.

## Key Findings of Future Employment Trends Study (cont'd):

- **Major office** employment is expected to outpace growth in other employment types in York Region; amenity rich and transit accessible work environments will be critical to attract and retain talent (e.g., Regional Centres and Corridors).
- **Employment areas** continue to be major drivers of economic activity; demand for employment land is expected to remain strong (increasing demand for warehouse and distribution facilities, flex-office space); therefore protection of employment areas is essential.
- **Retail locations** remain important as their role evolves to incorporate different types of retail delivery and support online retailers.



## 4. Markham's Employment Areas and Vacant Land

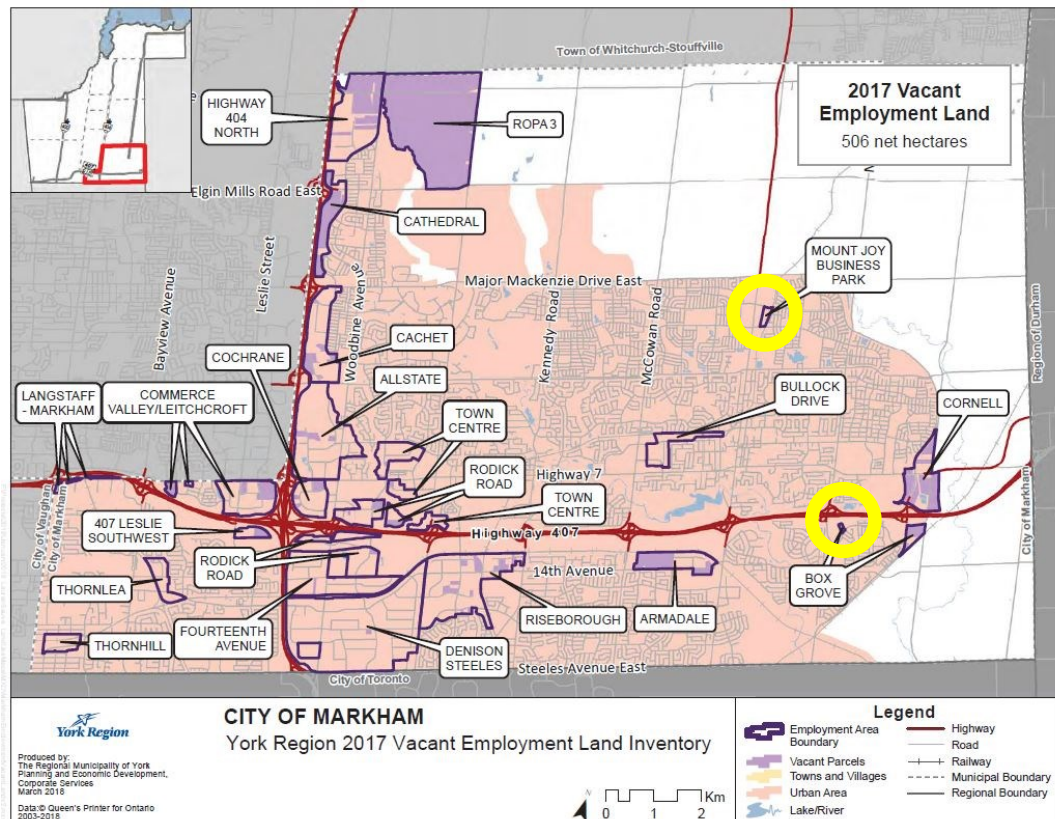


### Employment Area lands:

- Defined and subject to protection policies in PPS and Growth Plan; now to be identified in YROP
- Total lands = 1,776 ha (4,388 ac)
- Vacant lands = 506 ha (28% of total)
- Fully serviced vacant lands = 197 ha (39% of vacant lands)

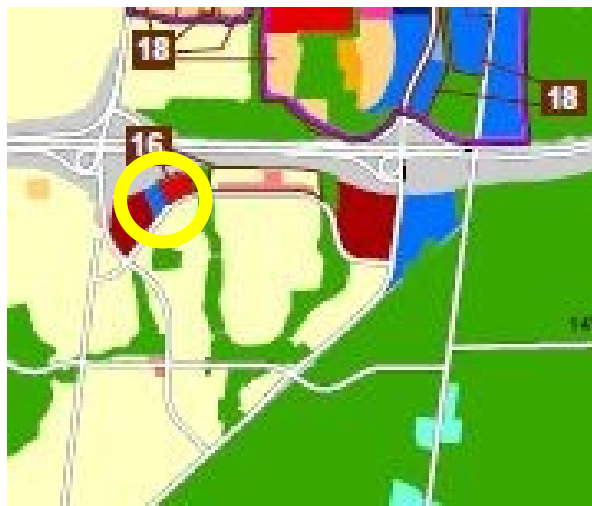


## 4. Markham's Employment Areas and Vacant Land (cont'd)



### Staff recommendations:

- Keep employment area designation in YROP at high level (staff to confirm boundaries)
- Consider a non-employment designation for the remaining 1 ha employment area along Copper Creek Dr in Box Grove
- Review appropriate designation for Mount Joy Business Park lands (4 ha) through Secondary Plan study



## 5. Requests to Convert Employment Area Lands to Non-Employment Uses

### Provincial Policy:

- Decisions regarding conversions are now the responsibility of upper-tier municipalities
- For employment lands identified as provincially significant (i.e., within PSEZ mapping), conversions can only be considered as part of a Regional MCR
- Growth Plan tests must be met

### York Region has received over 50 requests to date:

- 10 requests (70 ha) in Markham

## Growth Plan 2019: 5 tests

The conversion of lands within employment areas to non-employment uses may be permitted only through a municipal comprehensive review where it is demonstrated that:

- a) there is a **need** for the conversion;
- b) the **lands are not required over the horizon of this Plan [2041]** for the employment purposes for which they are designated;
- c) the municipality will **maintain sufficient employment lands** to accommodate forecasted employment growth to the horizon of this Plan;
- d) **the proposed uses would not adversely affect the overall viability** of the employment area or the achievement of the **minimum intensification and density targets** of this Plan, as well as other policies of this Plan;
- e) there are **existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities to** accommodate the proposed uses.

## Additional York Region Conversion Criteria

**Supply** – preserving large sized parcels; and lands in recently designated areas (e.g., ROPA3/FUA) beyond 2041

**Viability** - prohibit if site is wholly surrounded by employment area lands

**Access** - consider location of site, particularly proximity to goods movement corridors (400-series Hwys, rail, etc)




**Infrastructure** – availability of infrastructure and community facilities

**Region-wide Interests** – consideration of other regional/local objectives and cross-regional impacts.

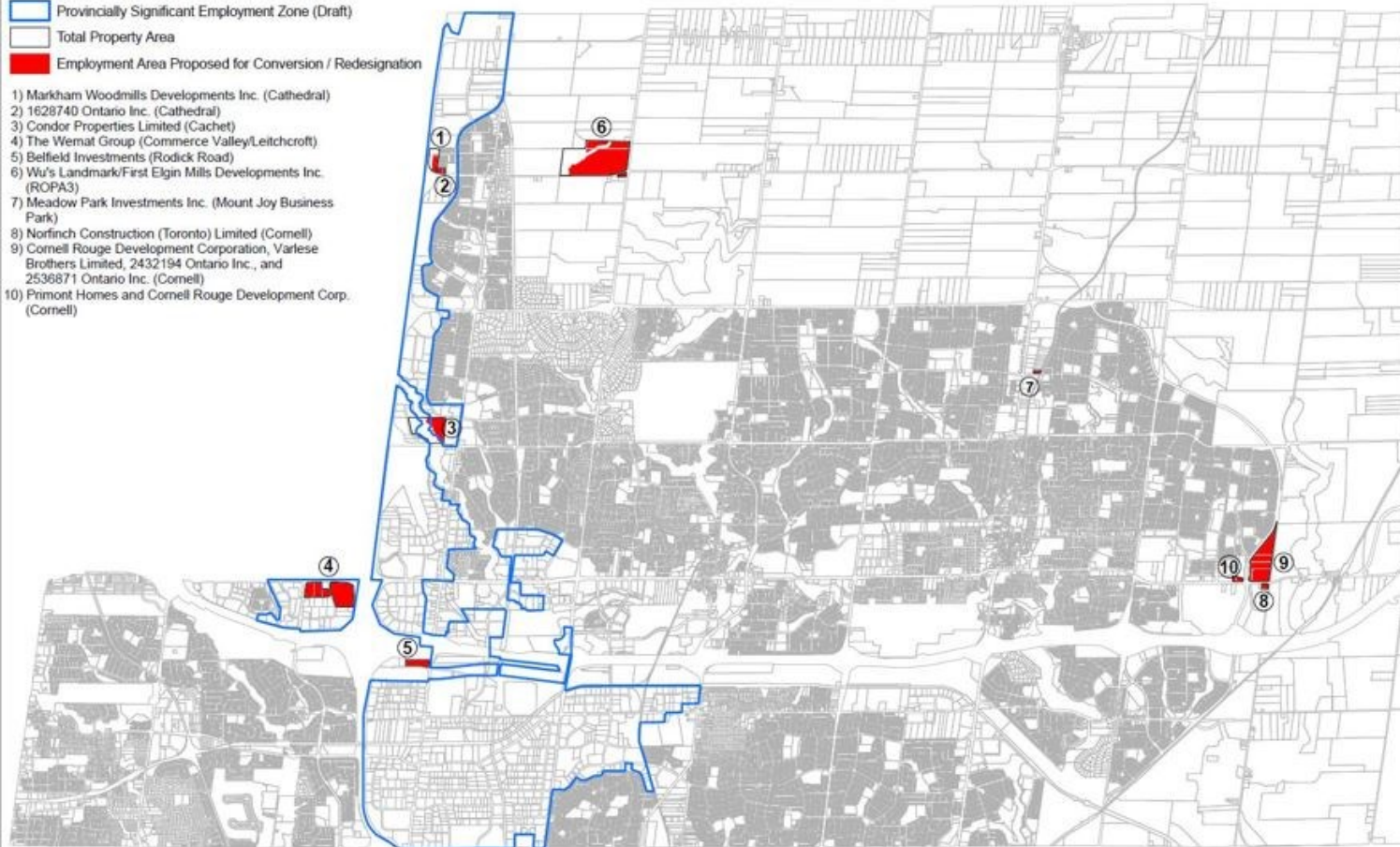




Figure 1: Employment Conversion Requests 2019

-  Provincially Significant Employment Zone (Draft)
-  Total Property Area
-  Employment Area Proposed for Conversion / Redesignation

- 1) Markham Woodmills Developments Inc. (Cathedral)
- 2) 1628740 Ontario Inc. (Cathedral)
- 3) Condor Properties Limited (Cachet)
- 4) The Wemat Group (Commerce Valley/Leitchcroft)
- 5) Belfield Investments (Rodick Road)
- 6) Wu's Landmark/First Elgin Mills Developments Inc. (ROPA3)
- 7) Meadow Park Investments Inc. (Mount Joy Business Park)
- 8) Norfinch Construction (Toronto) Limited (Cornell)
- 9) Cornell Rouge Development Corporation, Varlese Brothers Limited, 2432194 Ontario Inc., and 2536871 Ontario Inc. (Cornell)
- 10) Primont Homes and Cornell Rouge Development Corp. (Cornell)





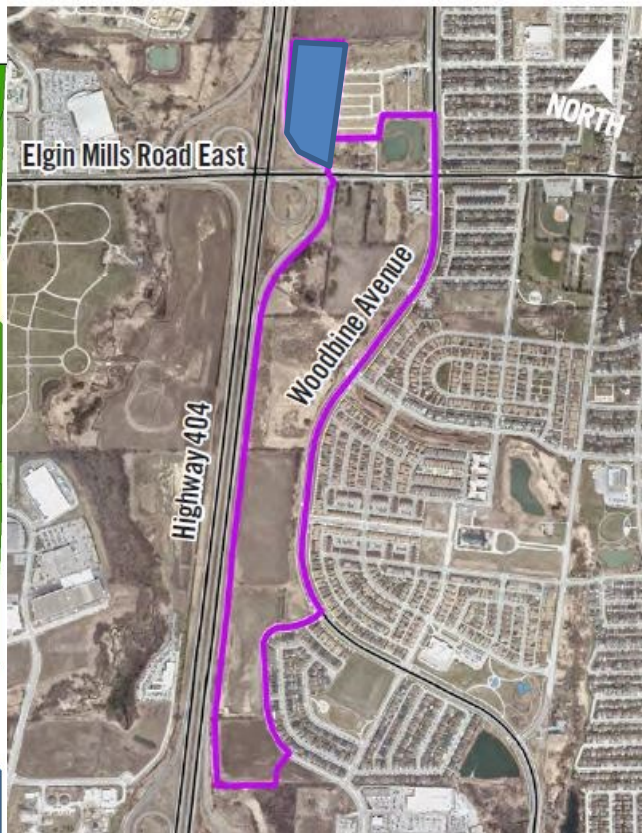
## Staff Response to Common Arguments Supporting Conversion Requests

1. Mathematical comparison of jobs in current vs proposed designations not undertaken by staff – the type of job/business is equally or more important than the total number of jobs in ensuring a range of job opportunities and diversity in the assessment base.
2. There is a need, and appropriate location, for both mixed use employment environments (e.g., Markham Centre, Langstaff Gateway) and protected employment areas (Highway 404 corridor and Cornell Centre/Box Grove).
3. Fiscal impact – development of lands for employment uses also has a positive impact on City's overall financial health and can ease pressure on residential tax base.
4. Provision of affordable housing is not, in and of itself, a criteria for considering conversion.

# 1. Markham Woodmills Development

SE Hwy 404/Elgin Mills Road  
(Cathedral)

1.9 net ha (4.7 ac)



## Request:

Conversion of 1.9 ha for mid-rise (4-6 storey) residential; remainder of property (1.3 ha) to remain as Employment for small scale office

## Recommendation:

Do not support.

## Rationale:

Identified as regionally and provincially significant (PSEZ) due to location along Hwy 404 and Elgin Mills interchange; should consider flexibility in uses to reflect site context but lands should be maintained as Employment rather than Residential

## 2. 1628740 Ontario Inc

2718 and 2730 Elgin Mills Road  
(Cathedral)

1.0 ha (2.5 ac)



### Request:

To redesignate from Service Employment to Residential Low Rise as continuation of residential subdivision to north

### Recommendation:

Support, subject to York Region confirming no access from Elgin Mills Rd to employment lands to west is possible through these lands

### Rationale:

Although within PSEZ, access is currently restricted to local residential road through approval of subdivision to north



### 3. Condor Properties Ltd 2920 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Cachet)

5.9 net ha (14.6 ac)



#### **Request:**

To redesignate from Business Park Employment to permit a variety of commercial and residential uses

#### **Recommendation:**

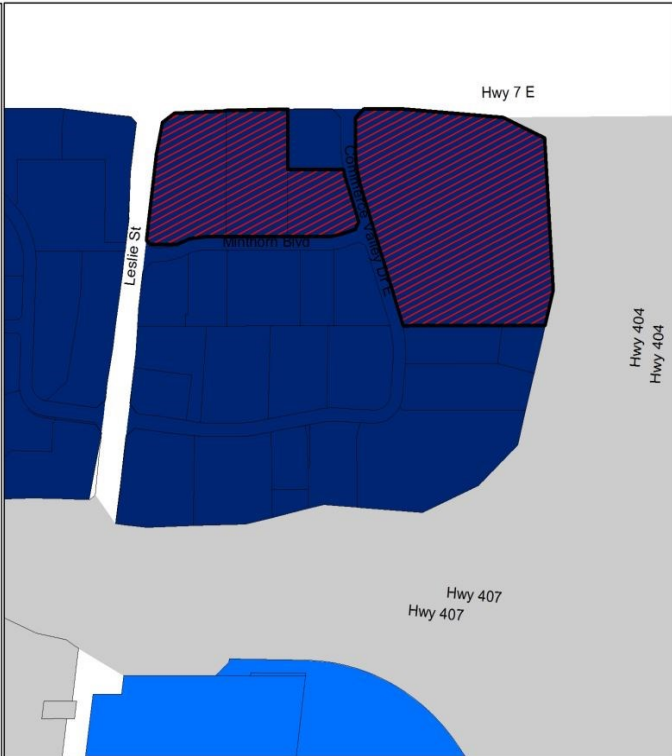
Do not support.

#### **Rationale:**

Lands have good visibility from Hwy 404; within PSEZ mapping; large site; will adversely affect the viability of remaining employment parcels northward along Markland St; access possible from Markland

#### 4. The Wemat Group SW Hwy 404/Hwy 7 (Commerce Valley/Galleria)

17 ha (42 ac)



#### Request:

To permit high-rise residential ,  
hotel and convention centre,  
major office and mixed use

#### Recommendation:

Do not support.

#### Rationale:

Lands have excellent visibility  
and access from Hwy 404, Hwy  
407 and Hwy 7; within PSEZ  
mapping; large site;  
introduction of residential will  
adversely affect the viability of  
remaining employment parcels



## 5. Belfield Investments

8050 Woodbine Ave

(Rodick Road)

3.3 ha (8.1 ac)



### Request:

To add residential permissions to current employment permissions, to achieve high density mixed use site consistent with location near future Hwy 407 Transitway.



### Recommendation:

Do not support.

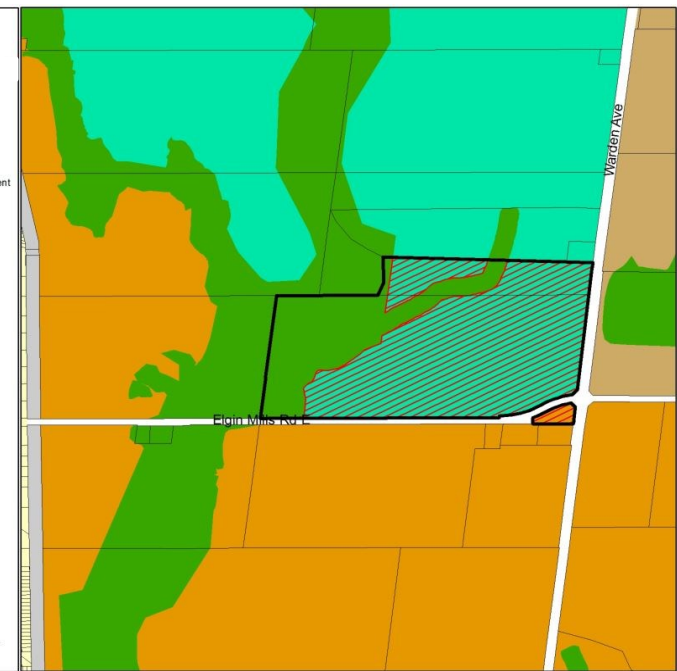
### Rationale:

Within Hwy 404/Woodbine employment corridor; not within PSEZ but Council has requested it be included; introduction of residential uses would adversely affect surrounding employment uses



**6. Wu's Landmark & First Elgin Mills Development**  
**10900 Warden Ave and 3450 Elgin Mills Rd**  
(ROPA 3 – FUA Employment Block)

29 net ha (71.6 ac)



**Request:**

To redesignate to a Mixed Use designation to permit medium and high density residential, at-grade retail, office and recreational uses

**Recommendation:**

Defer to Employment Block Secondary Plan study.

**Rationale:**

All of the FUA Employment Block lands were included in Urban Boundary to accommodate 2031 employment forecasts; premature to consider non-employment uses; consistent with 2013 Council decision

## 7. Meadow Park Investments

### 77 Anderson Avenue (Mount Joy Business Park)

0.4 net ha (1.0 ac)



### **Request:**

To redesignate from Service Employment to Mixed Use High Rise to reflect proximity to GO station

### **Recommendation:**

Defer decision to Markham Road-Mount Joy Secondary Plan study

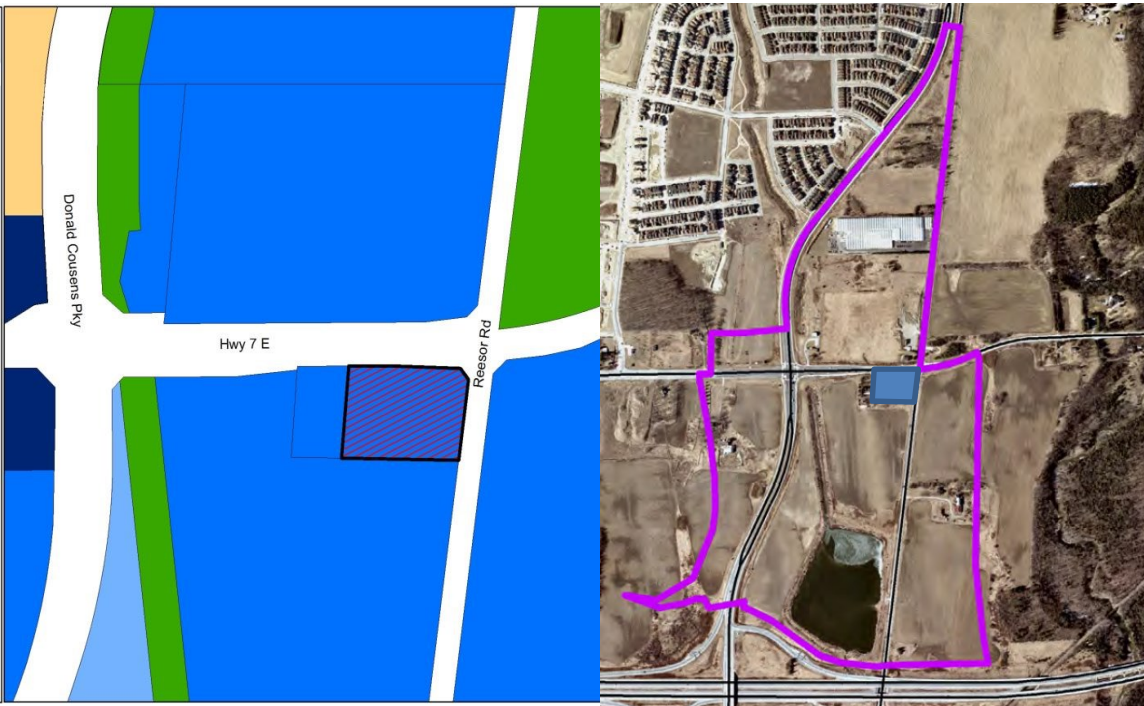
### **Rationale:**

Consider appropriate land use comprehensively for all 9 parcels (4 ha) in Mount Joy Business Park, given proximity to GO station and identification of draft MTSA around the GO station

## 8. Norfinch Construction (Toronto) Ltd

7485 Highway 7  
(Cornell)

0.75 ha (1.8 ac)



### Request:

To redesignate from employment to Mixed Use Mid Rise similar to other lands along Hwy 7

### Recommendation:

Defer decision to Cornell Centre Secondary Plan

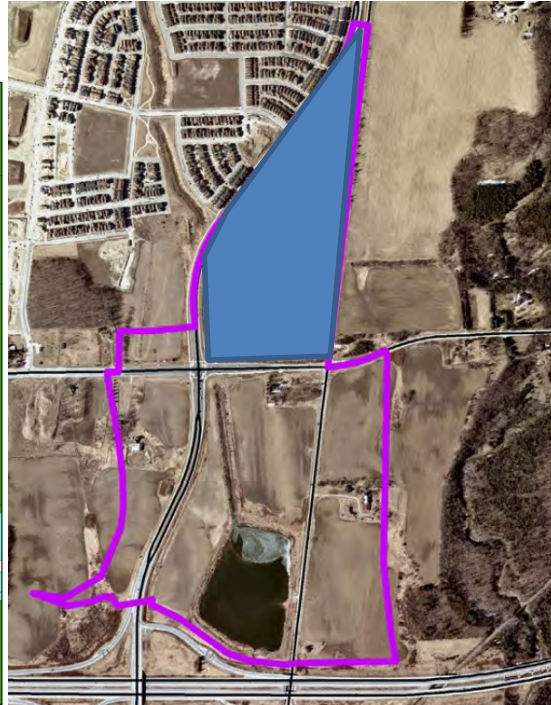
### Rationale:

Although lands are identified as regionally significant (proximity to DCP/Hwy 407 interchange), need to reassess current permitted uses in light of emerging vision for Rouge National Urban Park Gateway.



**9. Cornell Rouge Development Corp, Varlese Brothers, 2432194 Ontario Inc, 2536871 Ontario Inc**  
**7386-7482 Highway 7, 8600-8724 Reesor Rd**  
(Cornell)

17.9 ha (44 ac)



**Request:**

To provide for a mixed use community with employment, commercial and medium and high density residential uses

**Recommendation:**

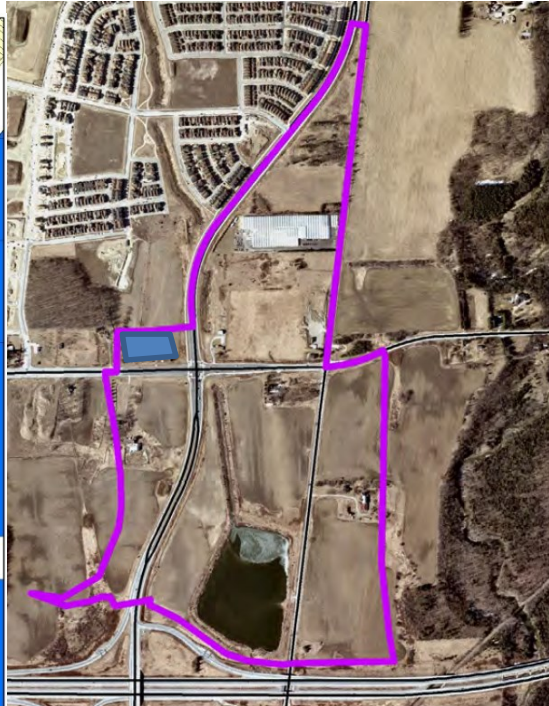
Defer decision to Cornell Centre Secondary Plan

**Rationale:**

Although lands are identified as regionally significant (proximity to DCP/Hwy 407 interchange), need to reassess current permitted uses in light of emerging vision for Rouge National Urban Park Gateway; adverse impact on viability of remaining employment lands is a concern.

**10. Primont Homes and Cornell Rouge  
Development Corp**  
**SW Hwy 7/Donald Cousens Parkway**  
**(Cornell)**

1.0 ha (2.5 ac)



## Request:

To redesignate from employment to a mix of uses, including residential, office and retail

## Recommendation:

## Support, to reflect OPA 252

## Rationale:

Markham Council adopted OPA 252 permits mix of uses including residential, office and retail; awaiting Regional approval.

## 6. Recommendations and Next Steps

That this report and recommendations be forwarded to York Region as the City of Markham's comments on the Region's 2041 MCR employment strategy to date, including recommendations on requests for employment land conversions as follows:

- Support for 2 requests: Primont Homes/Cornell Rouge Development, and 1628740 Ontario Inc (conditional)
- Deferral of 4 requests: Meadow Park, Wu's Landmark/First Elgin Mills, Cornell Rouge/Varlese Bros et al and Norfinch Construction to secondary plan studies
- Denial of 4 requests: Markham Woodmills, Condor Properties, Wemat Group and Belfield Investments



## 6. Recommendations and Next Steps (cont'd)

Markham staff will:

- Continue to work with the Region on finalizing employment areas to be identified in the Regional Official Plan
- Continue to work with the Province and Region on finalizing PSEZ mapping
- Report back to Committee once the Regional 2041 draft growth scenario(s) (forecasts and land budget) is released – early 2020.
- Report back on other components of the Regional MCR as required (e.g., comments on draft MTSAs).
- Initiate an amendment to Markham's Official Plan once the Regional Official Plan is updated.

## Discussion and Deputations