

Growth Plan, 2019 Clarification from Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on Urban Expansions

December 9, 2019

Context

- The Province released A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2019 (Growth Plan, 2019), which took effect on May 16, 2019
 - York Region is required to bring its official plan into conformity with the Growth Plan by July 1, 2022
 - Markham is required to bring its official plan into conformity with the Region's Official Plan within one year of it coming into effect
- York Region, in consultation with area municipalities, is in the process of completing its 2041 municipal comprehensive review (MCR)



The Minister's Letter

- On November 12, 2019, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing sent a letter to Heads of Council providing clarification on two policy matters in the Growth Plan, 2019:
 - the municipal comprehensive review process
 - settlement boundary expansions up to 40 hectares outside of a MCR process

Municipal Comprehensive Review Process

Context:

- The Growth Plan, 2019 defines an MCR as “a new official plan or an official plan amendment, initiated by an upper-or single-tier municipality under Section 26 of the Planning Act that comprehensively applies the policies and schedules of the Plan”

Minister's Clarification:

- Municipalities may choose to undertake a phased MCR through multiple official plan amendments, rather than a single official plan amendment

Implication:

- No impact anticipated to the City of Markham as MCR's can now only be undertaken at the regional level

Settlement Expansion – Up to 40ha

Context:

- Growth Plan, 2019 provides that a settlement boundary expansion may occur outside of a MCR for up to 40-hectares of land provided certain provisions are met such as
 - meeting the minimum greenfield density target
 - avoiding agricultural areas and provincial Natural Heritage System wherever possible, and not in the Greenbelt Area
 - ensuring appropriate community infrastructure and reserve capacity
 - York Region accounting for the lands and forecasted growth and in the next MCR process

Minister's Clarification:

- There is no limit to how often a municipality can undertake settlement boundary expansions of up to 40-hectares outside of an MCR and that these settlement boundary expansions may be municipally or privately initiated

Settlement Expansion – Up to 40ha (Cont'd)

Implication:

- The letter confirms a significant policy shift that could result in ad hoc urban expansions being approved without demonstrated need and outside of comprehensive growth management planning, which was a pillar of the Growth Plan in 2006
- York Region and the City of Markham may receive privately initiated planning applications for settlement boundary expansions of up to 40 hectares, which would be very difficult to review outside of a comprehensive land needs analysis
- If approved, the expansions it would have to be accounted for in the Region's MCR process, which could result in an oversupply of lands

Settlement Expansion – Up to 40ha (Cont'd)

Note:

- York Region is responsible for determining land needs across the region to 2041 and is preparing a land needs assessment (draft anticipated Q1 2020)
- A settlement expansion would have to be approved in the York Official Plan prior to a Markham Official Plan Amendment being adopted
- Planning Act does not allow for appeals of privately initiated settlement area boundary expansion applications