



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: September 14, 2020

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**SUBJECT:** Provincial Approval of Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Land Needs Assessment Methodology, 2020

**PREPARED BY:** Liliana da Silva, RPP, MCIP, Senior Planner, Policy & Research (ext. 3115)

**REVIEWED BY:** Marg Wouters, RPP, MCIP, Senior Manager, Policy & Research

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the report entitled “Provincial Approval of Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Land Needs Assessment Methodology, 2020” dated September 14, 2020, be received.

**PURPOSE:**

This report provides an update on Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan and the associated Land Needs Assessment Methodology as approved by the Province.

**BACKGROUND:**

In June 2020, the Province released proposed Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) and a proposed land needs assessment (LNA) methodology for public comment. Among other things, proposed Amendment 1 updated the Growth Plan 2019, planning horizon, population and employment forecasts that upper- and single-tier municipalities must plan for in their municipal comprehensive reviews (MCRs). The LNA provides the methodology to be used in assigning growth forecasts to local municipalities.

Markham Council provided comments on proposed Amendment 1 and the proposed LNA methodology in late July, prior to the July 31, 2020, deadline for comments (see Appendix A). On August 28, 2020, the Province released a decision on both Amendment 1 and the LNA methodology, which are now in effect.

Changes to the Growth Plan resulting from Amendment 1 and the new LNA methodology will impact York Region’s Growth Plan conformity update through its Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR). The revised Growth Plan does not change the deadline date for conformity for upper- and single-tier municipalities, which is July 1, 2022.

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**DISCUSSION:**

The main changes to the Growth Plan resulting from Amendment 1, and comparison with Council's comments, are provided below.

**1. The planning horizon and Schedule 3 growth forecasts are extended to 2051; Schedule 3 forecasts can now be exceeded**

The Growth Plan now:

- Provides only 2051 population and employment forecasts in Schedule 3, "Distribution of Population and Employment for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to 2051". 2031 and 2041 forecasts have been removed (Schedule 3)
- Allows upper- and single-tier municipalities through an MCR to plan for growth forecasts higher than those provided in Schedule 3 (Policies 2.2.1, 5.2.4)

The proposed amendments with respect to the forecasts were unchanged. Council's concerns with extending the planning horizon to 2051 without providing municipalities with the ability to phase urban expansion lands, as well as the potential use of higher growth forecasts, were not addressed. The reference (middle) forecast approved in Schedule 3, allocating 2.02 million population and 990,000 jobs to York Region by 2051, was supported by York Region Council.

**2. Employment conversions are now permitted in Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) within Provincially Significant Employment Zones (PSEZs)**

The Growth Plan now:

- Allows conversion of employment areas identified as PSEZs if located within MTSAs until the next MCR. (Policy 2.2.5.10)

The proposed amendments with respect to this issue were unchanged. Council's concern with increased pressures for conversion of employment areas along Highway 7, and particularly in the Highway 7/404 Corridor, was not addressed. Council's concern with the ambiguity of the language "until the next MCR" was also not addressed.

**3. No provincial guidance on required engagement with indigenous communities; proposed changes affecting mineral aggregate operations was not approved**

No further guidance was provided for the required engagement with indigenous communities as requested. A proposed policy change that would have removed a prohibition on new mineral aggregate operations, wayside pits and quarries from habitats of endangered species and threatened species within the Natural Heritage System was not approved.

**The approved Land Needs Assessment Methodology includes the consideration of market-based preferences in determining land needs**

The Methodology replaces the previous more detailed 2018 LNA and provides direction at a high level on assessing:

- Community Area land needs - taking into account population forecasts, housing need, market preferences, allocation of housing needs, housing supply potential

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- by policy areas, community area jobs, and need for additional land/identification of excess land; and
  - Employment Area land needs - taking into account employment forecasts, allocation, existing employment area potential, and need for additional land/identification of excess land.

Markham Council did not have specific concerns with the proposed LNA as York Region is responsible for implementing the methodology, although staff noted a concern that the increased emphasis on considering market demand/preferences for housing types in the forecasts may result in pressure for more ground-related housing, resulting in potentially more extensive urban boundary expansions. In the previous 2018 LNA, market preference was not a primary consideration, as the intent of the Growth Plan was to shift market preferences towards intensification in order to support transit and ensure a full range of housing types were delivered.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Not applicable.

**HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:**

Not applicable.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

The Provincial Growth Plan relates to growth management, which supports Goal 3 – Safe, Sustainable, and Complete Community of Building Markham’s Future Together, 2020-2023.

**BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Not applicable.

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

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Arvin Prasad,  
Commissioner of Development Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Appendix A: Council Resolution and July 13, 2020 Report on City of Markham  
Comments on Proposed Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan