
From: Switzer, Barbara <Barbara.Switzer@york.ca> **On Behalf Of** Regional Clerk
Sent: Tuesday, November 2, 2021 10:07 AM
To: Aguila-Wong, Christine <caguila-wong@markham.ca>
Subject: Regional Council Decision - Supplementary Report - City of Markham Comments on York Region's Growth Forecast and Land Needs Assessment to 2051

On October 21, 2021 Regional Council received your communication dated October 21, 2021 and referred it to staff. Council made the following related decision:

1. Council direct staff to include urban expansion lands based on a 50-55% intensification scenario in the updated Regional Official Plan, specifically 50% intensification annually to 2041 and 55% intensification annually from 2041 to 2051, as outlined in the September 16, 2021 report.
2. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the local municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and to the Region's Members of Provincial Parliament.

Please note four additional related motions affecting the updated Regional Official Plan were adopted and can be found in the [minutes](#) of the meeting (See Items H.1, H.2, H.3, H.4).

The original staff report is attached for your information.

Please contact Paul Bottomley, Manager of Policy, Research, and Forecasting at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71530 if you have any questions with respect to this matter

Regards,

Christopher Raynor | Regional Clerk, Regional Clerk's Office, Corporate Services

The Regional Municipality of York | 17250 Yonge Street | Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1
O: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71300 | christopher.raynor@york.ca | york.ca

Our Mission: **Working together to serve our thriving communities – today and tomorrow**

The Regional Municipality of York

Regional Council
Planning and Economic Development
September 16, 2021

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios in Response to Consultation

1. Recommendations

1. Council direct staff to proceed with a phased 50-55% intensification scenario in the updated Regional Official Plan, specifically 50% intensification annually to 2041 and 55% intensification annually from 2041 to 2051.
2. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the local municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and to the Region's Members of Provincial Parliament.

2. Summary

In [March 2021](#), Regional Council was presented with a preliminary 2051 land needs assessment and a distribution of the 2051 York Region forecast to the nine local municipalities. The forecast was prepared using the Growth Plan minimum 50% intensification target and a designated greenfield area density target of [60 residents and jobs per hectare](#). Since March, consultation has occurred with local municipalities, stakeholders, and the public. A key outcome from the consultation was the need to consider different land need scenarios based on alternative intensification and density target assumptions.

This report is to summarize input received through consultation, present an overview of alternate scenarios, and recommend a growth scenario for inclusion in the draft Regional Official Plan.

Key Points:

- Input received from local municipalities, Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), Building Industry and Land Development (BILD), other stakeholders and the public have prompted consideration of five alternative forecast scenarios:
 1. Modifications to the proposed March 2021 50% intensification target and 60 residents and jobs per hectare designated greenfield area density target scenario
 2. Phased 50-55% intensification target scenario
 3. 55% intensification target scenario

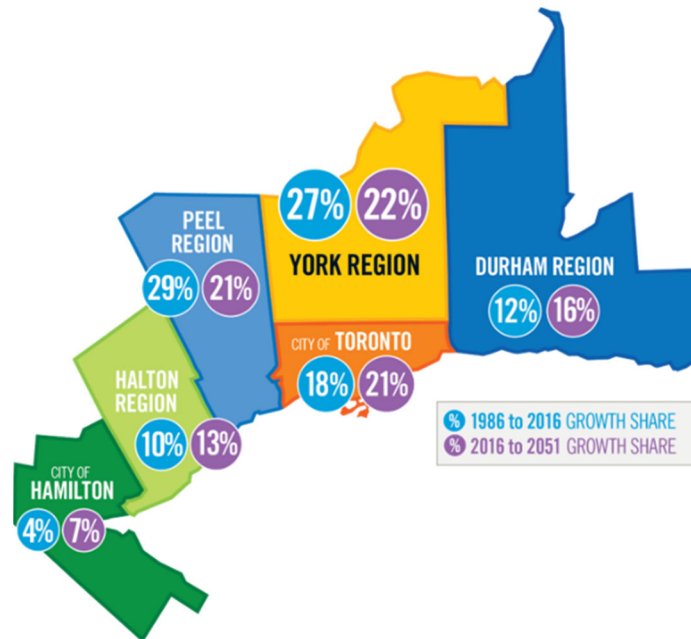
4. 60% intensification target scenario
 5. Designated greenfield area density target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare scenario
- Growth scenarios considered were limited to those that conform with Provincial legislation which constrain where and how the Region can grow, including prohibiting urban expansion within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan areas
 - Municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe are considering intensification and designated greenfield area density targets that exceed Growth Plan minimums
 - Striking the right balance to address stakeholder comments, in the context of good planning and market realities is important
 - Scenarios exceeding a 55% intensification target or that assume a designated greenfield area density of 50 residents and jobs per hectare are not recommended as they are not reflective of what the market is likely to deliver
 - A phased 50-55% intensification scenario is recommended as an achievable growth scenario that best addresses stakeholder feedback

3. Background

York Region is required to plan for Provincial Growth Plan forecasts for a population of 2.02 million and 990,000 jobs for York Region by 2051

The Growth Plan provides long-term direction to municipalities to plan for and manage growth, including where and how to grow as well as population and employment forecasts for upper- and single-tier municipalities. York Region is forecast to grow to a population of 2.02 million and 990,000 jobs by 2051. This represents growth of approximately 800,000 people and 345,000 jobs between 2021 and 2051, the highest of any Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) municipality, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Distribution of Historical and Forecast Growth by GTHA Municipality



Municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, including York Region, are required to use Provincial forecasts and policies in the Growth Plan predicated on protecting the Greenbelt and the natural environment and building complete communities that are financially sustainable and well integrated with infrastructure investment as the basis for land use planning and managing growth. The Growth Plan sets minimum targets of 50% intensification and 50 residents and jobs per hectare in the designated greenfield area, respectively. As minimums, higher targets are reasonable based on the urbanizing context and market realities in each municipality. The Regional Forecast presented to Council in March 2021 assumed an intensification rate of 50% and a designated greenfield area density of 60 residents and jobs per hectare. This was based on past reporting and direction by Council through commenting on Provincial changes to the Growth Plan and MCR.

Municipalities are required to use the standardized Provincial Land Needs Assessment methodology to determine land needs to 2051. The methodology defines components, such as achieving the Growth Plan minimum intensification target, that must be assessed on a Region wide basis when determining the quantity of land needed to accommodate forecasted growth, including the need for any urban expansion.

A preliminary 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment was received by Council for the purposes of consultation and engagement in March 2021

In March 2021, Regional Council was presented with a [Proposed 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment](#) based on the 50% intensification and designated greenfield area density of 60 residents and jobs per hectare targets. The report included proposed population and employment forecasts to 2051 for all nine municipalities as well as proposed mapping of the 3,400 hectares of urban expansion, or 80% of the Region's remaining Whitebelt lands,

required to accommodate provincially directed growth. Included in this figure was 2,300 hectares of Community Land primarily for residential uses and 1,100 hectares of Employment Land. Through receipt of the report, Regional Council directed staff to consult on the proposed forecasts and land needs assessment results. Part of the consultation process included a request for local municipal Council endorsed comments on the proposed forecasts by July 15, 2021.

4. Analysis

Eight local municipalities provided Council-endorsed positions on proposed forecasts

Between April and June 2021, Regional staff attended seven local municipal Council meetings to present the proposed 2051 forecast and land needs assessment. Staff provided an overview of the results of applying the provincially mandated Land Needs Assessment Methodology at a Regional scale as well as a detailed summary of the assumptions informing proposed growth by local municipality. Through these and subsequent Council sessions, eight of nine local municipal Council endorsed comments on the draft forecast. Markham staff comments were presented to Council but were referred back to staff for supplemental analysis. A summary of local municipal Council positions is presented in Table 1 below while Attachment 1 provides more detailed comments.

Table 1
Summary of local municipal comments on draft forecast

Local Municipality	General Direction
Aurora, Georgina	Support forecasts as proposed
King, Richmond Hill, Vaughan	Forecasts likely to be met or exceeded
Markham ¹ , Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville	Request for higher growth / intensification
East Gwillimbury	Request for entirety of Town's Whitebelt
Markham ¹	Request for less Whitebelt expansion
King	Request for redistribution of Whitebelt growth to Township's villages

¹ Markham comments reflect staff recommendations, referred back to staff for further consideration

In addition to comments on population and employment forecasts, several local municipalities also noted the importance of key transportation and servicing infrastructure projects that would be required to support growth to 2051.

Input from local municipal Councils, York Region Planning Advisory Committee, BILD, agriculture community, and the public has prompted staff to consider alternate forecast scenarios

In addition to comments received from local municipalities, input on the proposed forecasts has also been received from stakeholders. Comments from BILD request that the Region consider alternative growth scenarios in determining 2051 land needs. Specifically, a consultant technical submission proposed a growth scenario that included the entirety of the East Gwillimbury Whitebelt as urban expansion.

Input from the Planning Advisory Committee, and the agricultural community through the York Region Federation of Agriculture expressed concern with the quantum of agricultural land that would be lost because of proposed urban expansion to 2051 under the 50% scenario. The York Region Federation of Agriculture also expressed concern about the impact on local food supply for current and future York Region residents, particularly considering the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the Region's housing and growth management consultation campaign, input was received from the public regarding potential impacts of proposed growth on climate change, housing supply and affordability as well as on the agricultural system. During the campaign that ran between June 28 and July 30, 2021, 186 people participated in an online survey and over 90 people attended a Public Open House on July 27, 2021. More detailed comments are included in Attachment 1.

The breadth of comments received from local municipal Councils and other stakeholders prompted staff to recommend adjustments to the March 2021 50% intensification scenario as well as assess four additional growth scenarios.

Municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe are considering intensification and designated greenfield area density targets that exceed Growth Plan minimums

Municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), including York Region, are required to use the standardized Provincial Land Needs Assessment methodology to update their Regional Official Plan forecasts to 2051. As municipalities advance through their Municipal Comprehensive Review processes, many have, or are considering the results of, increased intensification and designated greenfield area density targets. Table 2 summarizes the range of scenarios being considered by municipalities across the GGH, where available.

Table 2
Summary of intensification and density targets being considered by municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe

Municipality	Intensification (% annually in built up area)	Density (residents and jobs per hectare)
Peel	55%	65
Halton	50%-54%	65
Durham	Not available	Not available
Hamilton	50%-no urban expansion	65-77
Waterloo	55%-60%	60-65
York	50%-60%	50-60

Source: Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario

As shown in Table 2, several municipalities are considering intensification targets higher than the minimum 50% target in the Growth Plan. All municipalities are applying density targets at or above 60 residents and jobs per hectare, exceeding the Growth Plan minimum of 50. This is consistent with the assumption used in the Region's March 2021 proposed forecast following a report to Regional Council in [June 2020](#) indicating that recently built or under construction communities in York Region were achieving an average 62 residents and jobs per hectare. Table 2 confirms that in a number of communities across the GTHA and beyond, communities are being planned at greater than 60 people and jobs per hectare.

Intensification and density targets in other municipalities are informative when recommending a forecast to 2051 for York Region. Apart from the City of Toronto, York Region is the only municipality in the GGH with access to an existing and additional future subway. As evidenced by the recent opening of the Spadina Subway Extension in Vaughan, subway stations are catalysts for intensification and major office development. When planning for growth to 2051, consideration should be given to the risk of the Province prioritizing transit in municipalities who may be planning for higher rates of intensification and/or designated greenfield area densities.

Five alternate growth scenarios, including a modified March 2021 50% intensification scenario, were assessed at a Regional scale in response to consultation

In response to input from stakeholders and the interjurisdictional scan in Table 2, five alternate growth scenarios were prepared and assessed. For the purposes of this report, Scenarios 1 and 2, being the modified 50% scenario and the recommended phased 50-55% scenario, were broken down to the local municipal level while scenarios 3-5 were assessed

from a Regional planning perspective and were prepared by adjusting either the Region-wide intensification rate or the designated greenfield area density assumption in response to comments received.

1. **A modified March 2021 50% intensification and 60 residents and jobs per hectare designated greenfield area density scenario** – this scenario was prepared in response to comments received from local municipalities on the proposed March 2021 scenario. Proposed changes continue to support Regional objectives of supporting and encouraging investment in rapid transit infrastructure and growth management principles of aligning growth and infrastructure. The following highlights the most significant changes in this scenario with further details by local municipality provided in Attachment 2:
 - Additional growth allocated to Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville
 - Revisions to urban expansion mapping to shift approximately 100 Ha (and an estimated 8,000 people) of urban expansion growth from Markham to East Gwillimbury to increase the intensification rate in Markham and provide some additional growth in East Gwillimbury in a manner that would not require the second expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre
 - Minor revisions to population growth in all other municipalities
2. **Phased 50-55% intensification scenario** – a scenario that considers 50% intensification to 2041 and 55% between 2041 and 2051. Developed in response to requests from the Planning Advisory Committee and a number of local municipal Councils requesting higher growth through intensification, observed increases in secondary plan targets and planning applications in intensification areas as noted in the 2021 Capacity Assignment Update report, as well as comments from the York Region Federation of Agriculture and the public expressing concerns over the loss of Prime Agricultural lands. This scenario represents the most modest shift towards higher density structure types of the three higher intensification scenarios considered. Relative to the March 2021 scenario, this scenario results in a reduction in urban expansion in Markham (and increase in Markham's intensification rate) and a net urban expansion reduction overall while also accommodating a slight increase in urban expansion lands within the Town of East Gwillimbury in response to their request for additional urban expansion lands.
3. **55% intensification scenario** – a more significant intensification scenario developed in response to the requests noted above.
4. **60% intensification** – Compared to the phased 50-55% and 55% scenarios above, it represents the most significant shift of the three higher intensification scenarios which contemplate requests from a number of local municipal Councils requesting higher growth through intensification.
5. **Designated greenfield area density of 50 residents and jobs per hectare in urban expansion areas combined with 50% intensification** - developed in

response to a submission from East Gwillimbury landowners recommending this lower designated greenfield area density rate and to support the Town's request to incorporate the entirety of the Whitebelt lands by 2051.

Alternate intensification and density target scenarios determine the amount of new community land needed, number of intensification units, and the forecast housing mix

Table 3 summarizes key outcomes of each alternative growth scenario with respect to community urban expansion land needs, structure type mix, and assumed apartment units per year, providing context to assess the feasibility of each growth scenario.

Table 3
Results of alternate growth scenarios

Scenario	Community Land Needs	Structure Type Mix (ground-related/apartments)	Apartments per year (units/buildings)
1. 50% intensification (March 2021 and as modified)	2,300 Ha	58% / 42%	4,000 / 20
2. Phased 50-55% intensification	2,050 Ha	56% / 44%	4,100 / 21
3. 55% intensification	1,500 Ha	54% / 46%	4,300 / 22
4. 60% intensification	700 Ha	51% / 49%	4,700 / 24
5. 50 residents and jobs per hectare and 50% intensification	2,700 Ha	59% / 41%	3,800 / 19

Note – Scenarios 1-4 prepared using a designated greenfield area density of 60 residents and jobs per hectare.
Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development Branch

While the Region will re-evaluate the distribution of employment land requirements in conjunction with Council's direction on a growth scenario, there is not expected to be significant differences in the amount of employment lands needed between the different scenarios. Under any intensification scenario, the demand for employment area employment is anticipated to remain similar and it will be important for the Region to provide a broad range of choice for existing and long-term future employment land use needs.

The recommended growth scenario achieves the right balance to address stakeholder comments and Growth Plan objectives

The results in Table 3 have been considered in the context of comments received from local municipalities, the public, and other stakeholders as well as the principles for growth management in the Growth Plan, the Regional Official Plan and objectives introduced in the

[March 2021](#) report. Striking the appropriate balance between stakeholder input and broader growth management objectives summarized below is fundamental to staff's recommendation of a preferred growth scenario:

- The market feasibility of each growth scenario in the context of recently built communities, units under application in the development pipeline, the overall shift required in the Region's housing mix, and considerations relating to housing affordability
- Alignment with the provision of infrastructure within the 2051 planning horizon and the ability to pay for infrastructure required to support growth in a financially sustainable manner (including transit infrastructure that will require support from other levels of government)
- Ability for each growth scenario to address local municipal Council requests for higher intensification and balance requests from some local municipalities for more and less Whitebelt growth
- Requests from the agricultural community and the public to consider impacts of growth on Prime Agricultural lands, climate change, etc.

Scenarios address local municipal Council positions to varying degrees

Table 4 compares the five new alternate scenarios with comments received through the consultation process. The table considers how each scenario addresses feedback received from local municipal Councils as well as other stakeholders on the preliminary March 2021 50% intensification and 60 residents and jobs per hectare density scenario.

Table 4
Addressing stakeholder consultations under alternate scenarios

Comment on March 2021 scenario	Scenario 1: Modified 50%	Scenario 2: Phased 50-55%	Scenario 3: 55% Intensification	Scenario 4: 60% Intensification	Scenario 5: 50 res&jobs/ha Density
More Whitebelt expansion in East Gwillimbury	✓	✓	X	X	✓✓✓✓
Less Whitebelt expansion in Markham	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	X
Shift Whitebelt Growth to Villages in King	X	X	X	X	X
Higher growth in Newmarket	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	✓
More intensification in King, Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Whitchurch Stouffville	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	X
Strive toward minimum of 60% intensification in Markham	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓	X
Less impact on Prime Agricultural lands	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓✓	X

Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development Branch

Note: Scenarios 3, 4 and 5 not forecasted to Local Municipal level to quantify outcome

Rating scale: X = Not Addressed, Slightly Addressed = ✓, Slightly-Moderately Addressed = ✓✓, Moderately Addressed = ✓✓✓, Fully Addressed = ✓✓✓✓

As illustrated in Table 4, each growth scenario addresses stakeholder comments to varying degrees, as indicated by the number of check marks. A higher number of check marks does not mean a more preferable scenario, but rather the degree to which the comment has been addressed. While a modified 50% intensification growth scenario allows for several

comments from local Councils to be addressed, it does not provide as much flexibility as higher intensification scenarios to address comments from municipalities desiring higher intensification and less urban expansion. Scenarios including and exceeding 55% intensification would not provide capacity for additional Whitebelt growth in East Gwillimbury. While higher intensification scenarios may not provide municipalities with their desired intensification rates, it is important to note that the Region's assigned intensification targets can be treated as minimums and local municipalities can plan for higher targets through local Official Plans.

Provincial policy prohibits Urban Expansion into the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan Areas

Several submissions have been received requesting urban designation and/or urban expansion on lands within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan Areas. This includes previous requests from the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and the City of Richmond Hill. As shown in Attachment 1, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has reiterated this request through their Council endorsed comments on the proposed forecast. As outlined in a report regarding potential employment lands along 400 series highways within Greenbelt Plan Area, received by Council [October 2020](#), Provincial Plan policies prohibit the approval of urban designations within the Protected Countryside. As a result, allocation of population or employment growth to these areas has not been considered in any of the scenarios assessed in support of this report.

A scenario at or above 55% intensification is not recommended as it is likely to require too significant a shift toward higher density structure types

Scenarios at or above 55% intensification require less community land urban expansion compared to the proposed March 2021 50% scenario. The 55% intensification scenario results in a need for 1,500 hectares of additional community land, while the 60% intensification scenario requires 700 hectares of urban expansion land for community land purposes. While a higher intensification scenario is desirable to support transit investment and would address desires for higher intensification targets from a number of municipalities, a forecast scenario at or above 55% intensification would require a significant, and potentially unachievable shift toward high density structure types. Specifically, the number of larger sized families forecasted to occupy higher density structure types rather than traditional ground-related product is likely to exceed what the market can currently support. This results in a potentially unrealistic forecasted mix and distribution of growth over the 30-year horizon – particularly in the short term – which presents more risk to the Region from an infrastructure alignment and financial sustainability perspective. Investment in infrastructure is dependent on the forecast assumptions.

A growth scenario premised on a designated greenfield area density target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare does not reflect what the York Region market is delivering

A growth scenario that is predicated on a designated greenfield area density of 50 residents and jobs per hectare is not appropriate for York Region. Forecasted designated greenfield

area density must reflect what the market is likely to deliver as it has implications on infrastructure timing and delivery, determining pipe size, planning for new roads and road improvements, and estimating future transit ridership. It also has impacts on how the Region calculates development charge rates and estimating development charge revenue. As illustrated in the June 2020 [Planning for Density in New Communities](#) report, recently built or under construction communities across York Region are delivering an average density of 62 residents and jobs per hectare. Since the York Region market is delivering over 60 residents and jobs per hectare in existing greenfield areas, planning for the minimum 50 density in the Growth Plan would leave the Region exposed to risk as it does not support infrastructure or financial planning in line with market reality. If planned growth and densities do not match market realities, development charge rates may not achieve effective cost recovery.

As noted in Table 2 above, 50 residents and jobs per hectare would also be lower than what is generally being realized and contemplated in other GGH municipalities. Not only does this suggest that the market is capable of delivering far greater than a 50 people/jobs per hectare density in new community areas but planning to a density target lower than other GTHA municipalities could impact funding decisions by the Province for future transit projects.

A key consideration throughout the Municipal Comprehensive Review has been to ensure that growth proceeds in a manner that is aligned with infrastructure and is financially sustainable. A growth scenario that assumes 50 residents and jobs per hectare in urban expansion areas would require the entire Whitebelt in the Town of East Gwillimbury and would challenge the Region's ability to achieve this principle and therefore carries significant risk. As noted above, given that the market is currently delivering over 60 residents and jobs per hectare in greenfield communities throughout the Region, assuming growth across the entirety of East Gwillimbury's Whitebelt lands would require the second of two expansions beyond the initial construction of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre plant facility. A second expansion project with its own Environmental Assessment approval cannot be anticipated within the 2051 planning horizon. Uncertainty surrounding the timing of the initial construction of the Water Reclamation Centre is a risk given the announcement by the Province to develop a Task Force to determine an appropriate recommendation for the project under Bill 306. Based on current information available, initial construction of the Water Reclamation Centre is not expected until 2029 at the earliest, with the first expansion anticipated for 2041 or beyond. A second expansion, required to support full build out of the East Gwillimbury Whitebelt, is not anticipated to occur before 2051.

The modified 50% scenario includes shifting some urban expansion from Markham to East Gwillimbury, while maintaining March intensification and density target assumptions

The modified 50% scenario provides additional growth to Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville and shifts approximately 100 Ha (and an estimated 8,000 people) relative to the March 2021 scenario of urban expansion growth from Markham to East Gwillimbury in order to increase the intensification rate in Markham and provide some additional growth in East Gwillimbury in a manner that would not require the second expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre. This scenario also includes minor revisions to population growth in the remaining municipalities.

Regional staff have been engaged in discussions with Town of East Gwillimbury staff to explore alternative financing options for the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre. While staff support opportunities to advance development opportunities in the Town's Whitebelt lands, there is continued concern that infrastructure required to address the entire Whitebelt in the Town will not be delivered in time to support full buildout of these lands within the 2051 planning horizon. A fundamental consideration of a preferred growth scenario is that the second expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre, currently planned beyond 2051, is not required for designating land within the planning horizon.

Furthermore, this scenario would result in there being a fragmented piece of Whitebelt land east of the Little Rouge corridor in Markham.

A phased 50-55% intensification scenario is recommended as it best supports stakeholder feedback and continues to provide balanced growth

Following an assessment of the alternative scenarios, as summarized in Table 4, the phased 50-55% intensification scenario provides for an appropriate balance between addressing stakeholder comments, market realities and conforming to the Growth Plan. A phased 50-55% growth scenario provides additional flexibility with respect to intensification and reduces the overall quantum of prime agriculture lands proposed for urban expansion. It also strikes a balance between reducing urban expansion in Markham and some additional urban expansion in East Gwillimbury relative to the March 2021 50% intensification and 60 residents and per hectare jobs scenario. This scenario balances a number of Regional objectives:

- Provides increased flexibility to address comments from local municipal and other stakeholders requesting higher growth and/or intensification targets
- Maximizes the growth potential associated with the initial construction and first expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre under current Environmental Assessment assumptions and proposes 275 hectares of East Gwillimbury Whitebelt expansion, an addition of approximately 100 hectares when compared with the preliminary March 2021 scenario
- Reduces the overall quantum of Whitebelt land required and therefore preservation of more agricultural lands
- Demonstrates to the Province that the Region is committed to supporting intensification and is a key location in the GTHA for additional transit investment
- Reflects what the market is currently delivering and what is proposed in the development pipeline and secondary plans with respect to both designated greenfield area density as well as high density development in the built-up area
- Provides more opportunity for a gradual and reasonable shift toward families locating in townhomes and apartments that are more affordable

- Considers changing demographics and an aging population which is likely to increase demand for higher density structure types as well as result in a number of low-density units “turning over” to younger, larger families
- Aligns with infrastructure planning and Development Charges By-law work undertaken to date
- Aligns with higher rates of intensification and designated greenfield area density target assumptions in other GGH municipalities
- A summary of impacts at the local municipal scale is further shown in Attachment 2

A phased in 55% intensification scenario would continue to be achievable from an intensification perspective and may be more likely to provide additional opportunities for affordable housing types through increased demand for medium and high-density structures that are traditionally more affordable. That said, more detailed Regional plans and programs are required to help address affordability challenges.

Allocation of growth based on recommended phased 50-55% scenario can be accommodated without major shifts in infrastructure and financial planning undertaken to date

The Municipal Comprehensive Review is being undertaken in a comprehensive and collaborative way to ensure alignment of land use, infrastructure, and financial planning. In this regard the ROP update is being coordinated with Infrastructure Master Plan updates and the Development Charges bylaw update, with considerable work having been undertaken to date. The preliminary forecast presented in March 2021 included assessment of infrastructure required to service growth, and how it could be phased to maintain financial sustainability.

Based on preliminary analysis, the recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenario can be accommodated within the infrastructure program being proposed in updated master plans. Given that several MCRs, Master Plan, and DC Bylaw updates will be undertaken between now and 2051, there will be opportunities to monitor and adjust growth projections as necessary at multiple stages in the planning horizon. Identifying the remaining Whitebelt lands as “Future Urban” beyond 2051 in either scenario also acknowledges the reality of the future long-term function of these lands and allows for comprehensive planning in advance of subsequent municipal comprehensive reviews.

As a result of no major shifts in infrastructure being required, Regional Council direction to proceed with the recommended phased 50-55% growth scenario means that local municipal forecasts, presented in Attachment 2, can be included in the draft Regional Official Plan anticipated for Council consideration this year. The 55% and 60% intensification growth scenarios and the full build out of East Gwillimbury lands available for urban expansion under a 50 residents and jobs per hectare scenario would necessitate a significant redistribution of population growth across the Region which would require further analysis and consultation with local municipalities. This and further evaluation of infrastructure needed to support

growth and financial implications would be required, requiring modifications to the current MCR, Master Plan, and DC Bylaw update work plans.

Population and employment growth beyond the existing and planned infrastructure capacity in Nobleton is not proposed

The scenarios considered, including the recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenario, do not address comments from both King staff and a technical consultant submission on behalf of Nobleton landowners to consider additional growth in Nobleton instead of growth in the King Whitebelt lands. As indicated by the Region in March, preliminary estimates indicate that expanding the water and wastewater capacity in Nobleton beyond the 10,800 people currently contemplated in an ongoing Environmental Assessment range from \$100 to \$200 million and therefore would not be financially sustainable given the amount of additional growth that could be realized. While discussions between York Region and Township staff, as well as landowners are ongoing, the current MCR has assumed a maximum population of 10,800 people in Nobleton.

Final mapping of urban expansion lands to be determined through further consultation with local municipal staff

Both the modified 50% and recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenarios propose adjustments to the geography of urban expansion lands as presented in [Attachment 4 of the March 2021 scenario](#). The modified 50% scenario proposes to remove approximately 100 hectares of urban expansion land in east Markham, as shown in Attachment 3, and add it to the 180 hectares of urban expansion initially proposed in East Gwillimbury for a total of 275 hectares of Community Land expansion.

Similarly, the phased 50-55% scenario proposes to remove all of the Whitebelt lands east of the Little Rouge corridor from Markham and include a total of 275 hectares of urban expansion in East Gwillimbury under the phased 50-55% scenario (as shown in Attachment 3). If this scenario is endorsed by Regional Council, the geographic distribution of these lands would be determined in consultation with the Town.

Direction from Council to proceed with the recommended phased 50-55% scenario will require further discussions with Town of East Gwillimbury staff to determine the most appropriate urban expansion lands.

Comments on employment and community land designation boundaries were also received through the consultation

Input from stakeholders on the preliminary March 2021 growth scenario was also received on proposed employment designations in the Region's available Whitebelt lands. Through a local municipally led consultation process, concern was expressed in Markham with the proposed employment mapping adjacent to the existing hamlet of Almira. To address these concerns, Regional staff are proposing to revise the boundary of urban expansion employment land mapping in Markham as shown in Attachment 3 to provide more community lands around the Almira hamlet.

Through Markham's consultation process, concern was also raised about proposed residential uses east of the Little Rouge corridor. It was suggested that noise from the potential future Pickering Airport may prevent residential development on these lands. The Whitebelt lands proposed to be excluded from the urban boundary expansion east of the Little Rouge corridor, in the modified 50% and recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenarios will be identified as Future Urban Area. Decisions surrounding the most appropriate use of these lands can occur through subsequent municipal comprehensive reviews once a firm decision on the airport has been made, and regulations updated.

Concerns were also identified by Vaughan Council about the delineation of employment lands adjacent to the potential GTA-West Highway, given that a decision on the proposed highway is not expected by the Province until after the completion of the Municipal Comprehensive Review. Regional staff will continue to work with Vaughan staff on the appropriate use of these lands through the next Municipal Comprehensive Review.

5. Financial

While no major shifts in financial planning work is anticipated with the recommended phased 50-55% scenario, the March 2021 proposed forecast has been used to inform the update of the Regional development charges bylaw. The current bylaw is set to expire June 16, 2022 and a new development charges bylaw must come into effect on, or before, June 17, 2022 for the Region to continue collecting development charges. Council's direction to proceed with a growth scenario other than the modified 50% scenario or the recommended phased 50-55% scenario would have implications on key inputs to the Development Charges Background Study including the development forecast and infrastructure capital costs that will be reflected in the proposed DC rates.

Although it is difficult to assume the actual rate of growth over time with certainty, the recommended phased 50-55% forecast scenario is most achievable without compromising financial sustainability. It supports alignment of the growth forecast with infrastructure delivery to best match the actual rate and type of built form with the forecast, and more likely alignment between anticipated and actual development charges revenues.

Work associated with updated population and employment forecasts is included within the approved Planning and Economic Development budget.

6. Local Impact

The Region's forecast and land needs assessment to 2051 have direct implications on local municipalities. A key component of the MCR involves distributing updated population and employment forecasts to local municipalities considering assumptions for the level of intensification and amount of urban expansion needed in the Region to plan for provincially assigned population and employment growth. Local municipalities are key stakeholders in their forecast assignments and planning for future communities in growth areas.

Local municipal staff are working alongside the Region to update local official plans to reflect the policies in the Regional Official Plan generated through the Regional MCR once approved. Under the Planning Act, local municipal official plans are required to be updated to conform to the Regional Official Plan within one year of it coming into effect.

7. Conclusion

Consultation on the proposed 50% intensification scenario received by Regional Council in March 2021 resulted in Council positions and comments from local municipalities, as well as comments from the public, Planning Advisory Committee, BILD, York Region Federation of Agriculture, and other stakeholders. Comments ranged significantly from requests for higher growth and intensification to desires to include additional Whitebelt lands in the Town of East Gwillimbury. In response to these comments, the Region considered the results of five additional growth scenarios at a Regional scale through varying the key intensification and designated greenfield area density inputs. Through an assessment of alternate growth scenarios, a growth scenario exceeding 55% intensification or one which considered a lower designated greenfield area density are not likely to be realistic outlooks for York Region to 2051. In addition to not being aligned with what the market is currently delivering, or expected to deliver, these scenarios are likely to carry more financial risk.

A phased 50-55% intensification growth scenario is recommended as the most appropriate outlook for York Region to 2051. The phased 50-55% scenario strikes an appropriate balance, responds to feedback from all stakeholders to varying degrees, conforms to applicable Provincial plans, and is expected to be achievable. It also maximizes the capacity of the initial construction and first expansion of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre under current Environmental Assessment assumptions. Allocation of growth for the recommended phased 50-55% intensification growth scenario can be accommodated without major shifts in infrastructure and financial planning undertaken to date.

Regional Council direction to proceed with the recommended phased 50-55% intensification scenario can be included in the draft Regional Official Plan currently targeted for November 2021.

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Bottomley, Manager of Policy, Research, and Forecasting at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 71530. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

Paul Freeman, MCIP, RPP
Chief Planner



Dino Basso
Commissioner of Corporate Services



Approved for Submission:

Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

September 3, 2021
Attachments (3)
13178613

Summary of Comments on York Region Land Needs Assessment and Growth Forecast

This Attachment, on a site-specific basis, provides a summary of comments, recommendations, and local municipal Council positions.

Table 1- Summary of comments on York Region 2051 Proposed Forecast as presented to Regional Council in March 2021

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
Local Municipalities		
Aurora	July 6, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Region's 2051 growth forecasts for Aurora were peer reviewed by the Town's Official Plan study consultant and were found to be reasonable and realistic targets • The proposed intensification target within the Town's Built-Up Area and the required residential units is appropriate given that growth will shift to the Built-Up Area given that Aurora's Designated Greenfield Area is expected to be built out by 2051 • The Region's population targets are less than past growth trends in Aurora and reflect an analysis of market demand • The density target and unit potential on the designated greenfield area as outlined by the Region reflects the actual potential on those lands • At the end of Q2 2021, servicing allocation balances are approximately 5,726 persons or 1,903 units, representing a five-year supply
East Gwillimbury	July 28, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of all Whitebelt lands within East Gwillimbury as 'Urban Area' for urban development through the ongoing MCR to facilitate appropriate comprehensive planning (Council endorsed recommendation on December 3, 2019) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Will ensure coordinated infrastructure planning ○ Helps pay for servicing of new local employment uses ○ Allows for ensuring adequate housing supply and to build complete communities ○ Land supply will be brought to market in a phased manner • Flexibility for the Town to comprehensively manage the long-term land supply over the entire 2051 planning horizon, to properly respond to the market and to ensure a competitive development environment • East Gwillimbury is well positioned to accommodate employment growth and additional population through a variety of housing types in northern York Region

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
Georgina	<u>June 3, 2021</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Town of Georgina supports the Official Plan Municipal Comprehensive Review proposed 2051 forecast for the Town of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Population - 71,900 persons ○ Employment - 21,900 jobs subject to adjustments to the assumed Employment Land Employment density and the incorporation of assumptions adding appropriate levels of “Major Office Employment” • That York Region be requested to place the expansion of the Keswick Water Resource Recovery Facility on the 10-year Capital Projects Plan in the earliest possible timeframe as the expansion is critical to meeting the population and employment targets for the Town in the York Regional Official Plan Municipal Comprehensive Review • That Council reiterate its request to York Region to include the expansion of the Sutton Water Resource Recovery Facility in the Region’s 10-year Capital Projects Plan in the earliest possible timeframe as the expansion is critical to meeting the population and employment targets for the Town in the York Regional Official Plan Municipal Comprehensive Review
King	<u>June 28, 2021</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on recent development interest and activity in the Township, the forecasted population of 49,600 appears to be easily achievable over the 2051-time horizon. With ongoing residential development applications and interest in the Villages of King City and Nobleton, achieving and surpassing the 2051 proposed forecasted population is very much likely • Planning for population growth in the Township’s Whitebelt represents a fundamental divergence in how growth is currently being planned in the Township. Planning staff find it appropriate and preferable to continue to plan for population growth within the Township’s Village Boundaries, as opposed to expanding community uses onto the Whitebelt lands • Staff note that while it is preferable to accommodate population growth within the existing Villages, the opportunity to provide for some additional employment growth in proximity to Highway 400 should be explored further with York Region in accordance with the Township’s Official Plan policy noted above • Planning for the Village of Nobleton should have a longer-term vision than the capacity of existing/planned infrastructure

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
Markham (note: not endorsed by Council – referred back to Markham staff)	July 12, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support development of a forecast scenario by York Region based on higher Region-wide and Markham intensification rates which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Result in a reduction in the amount of urban expansion (Whitebelt) lands in Markham needed to accommodate growth ◦ Reflect achievable volumes of high-density development in Markham's intensification areas over the 35-year planning horizon ◦ Consider loss of prime agricultural lands and impacts on greenhouse gas emissions • That the proposed employment area expansion lands be reconfigured to exclude the Almira hamlet • In addition, Markham Council requests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ That lands east of Almira be designated as Community areas ◦ Lands on the east of the Rouge corridor not be considered for urban expansion • Consider impacts of a 60%, 65% and 70% intensification scenario and further consider impact of loss of employment land adjacent to Almira
Newmarket	June 14, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town of Newmarket is likely to exceed York Region's forecasted population and employment growth • Regional staff should carefully reconsider the population and employment growth assigned to Newmarket and ensure that growth is aligned with Newmarket's needs • Concern with the annual population growth rate of 0.7% • Town of Newmarket will likely Exceed the Proposed Intensification target of 8,700 Units between 2016 and 2051 • Planning staff estimate that approximately 10,600 new residential units could be built within the Regional Centre, MTSAs and Regional Corridors between 2021 and 2051, subject to servicing capacity availability • Town of Newmarket will meet or exceed the Proposed Designated Greenfield Area density target of 40 residents and jobs per hectare
Richmond Hill	June 23, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Staff are in support of the emerging policy directions respecting the Region's growth forecast, intensification, and land needs assessment work as it relates to Richmond Hill • Intensification target is likely to be met or exceeded • DGA target of 70 achievable in context of secondary plans for North Leslie and West Gormley

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
Vaughan	<u>June 22, 2021</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaughan's experience with growth over the last ten years shows that forecasted growth has the potential to be exceeded, and the city must be prepared to plan for this density • The final amount of land designated as Community and Employment will be affected by the fate of the GTA West. The proposed forecast shows Whitebelt lands adjacent to the proposed GTA West alignment as employment lands. If the GTA West does not move forward, it is uncertain what the total amount of community and employment lands in Vaughan's Whitebelt would be • Growth management in Vaughan will need to respond to key regional challenges over the next 30 years such as housing affordability • The amount of potential growth that is directed at Vaughan creates a risk that many parts of the City will become underserved for parks, schools, and infrastructure • In consideration of this significant growth - and the need to attract young families to maintain growth, which is connected to affordability - it is imperative that York Region and the City examine effective policy for encouraging family-sized units and amenities in the urban area
Whitchurch-Stouffville	<u>July 20, 2021</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Region's minimum draft Growth Forecasts for the Town are fairly conservative. The growth allocation 'minimums' need to be highlighted more prominently as some communities are likely to grow at a faster rate than others • Additional growth should be considered in the Town's intensification areas such as the Gateway/ Western Approach, Lincolnville GO MTSA, Stouffville GO MTSA, etc. • The residential growth forecast allocation for the Town over the 2021 to 2041 period of 350 units per year is significantly lower than the recent housing development trends, while the residential growth within the Whitebelt lands for the 2041-2051 period is overstated • Staff are in support of the assumptions regarding persons per unit and dwelling type • The Region's employment growth outlook to 2051 is generally appropriate for the Town. However, the amount and location of designated and serviceable employment land remains a significant issue for the Town • Past Council positions on Town's Employment lands include adjustments to the Greenbelt Area along Highway 404 corridor and addition of lands to the settlement area • Staff recommend that the lands abutting the Gormley Secondary Plan area to the south be considered for settlement area expansion and designated as Employment Area through the Region's ongoing MCR

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town staff recommend that Strategic Employment lands be identified for employment growth beyond 2051
Other Stakeholders		
York Region Federation of Agriculture	June 10, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correspondence was sent to the Region in response to redesignation of Agricultural lands to Urban Areas proposed in Policy Directions Report III presented to Council on June 10, 2021 Through this letter, York Region Federation of Agriculture questions a complete and detailed analysis of the Agricultural redesignation displayed on draft Map 1A Concerns about loss of the Agricultural lands in the Whitebelt areas (3,400 ac) proposed for urban development by 2051 through the Land Needs Assessment report on March 18, 2021, which impacts local food production The York Region Federation of Agriculture continues to take the position that to protect, support and promote agriculture, the designation of prime agricultural areas in the Greenbelt needs to remain
York Region Planning Advisory Committee Meeting	May 19, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns raised about the amount of whitebelt land being proposed given the number of applications currently within the built-up area and the development potential through secondary plans in Regional Centres and Major Transit Station Areas Request for staff to consider different intensification scenarios
York Region Agricultural and Agi-food Advisory Committee Meeting	May 26, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns about amount of whitebelt land being proposed in 2051 forecast Concerns about food security if continue to develop agricultural lands – a risk intensified by the COVID 19 pandemic
Consultant Technical Submission on behalf of East Gwillimbury landowners	June 11, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed forecasts do not adequately address market demand More weight should be placed on Council resolution in East Gwillimbury to include the entirety of the Town's whitebelt as urban expansion to 2051 Regional staff should consider different scenarios Further choice for employment should be provided

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
Consultant Technical Submission on behalf of Nobleton Landowners Group	August 12, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The location of additional Community Lands should be within the Village boundaries, not in the Whitebelt, with the serviceability explored further at the direction of the Township • Nobleton represents the next logical location for urban expansion within King • The Region's cost estimates for servicing upgrades in Nobleton are overstated – based on a consultant's estimate, regional cost for water and wastewater upgrades would range from \$50.3 - \$82.8 million rather than the \$100 - \$200 as indicated in the Region's LNA. • The Regional LNA proposes to allocate 21,000 residents to King City by 2051 - it is unclear if King City has sufficient land supply to accommodate the additional growth beyond the Village's current 2031 forecast of 15,500 residents • The Region's increase in PPU assumptions, especially in high density units, could lead to an undersupply of housing in the Region
Public Consultation	June 28, 2021 – July 30, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The York Region Growth Management and Housing Affordability Survey was created to gather feedback from stakeholders. This Survey was available online and included 10 questions on housing and growth management. A summary of survey results from 186 participants is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Majority of respondents were York Region residents ○ Approximately 82% of the participants are living in ground-related housing types (i.e. single and semi-detached, townhouse) ○ Most respondents would like to live in the Region for the next 10 years ○ The preferred type of housing for participants in 10 years is Legacy Single-Family houses on large lots followed by New Single-Family houses on small lots ○ Parks, Public Elementary Schools, and Grocery Stores are the most important amenities for the respondents to be able to access within 15 minutes by foot ○ Most important amenities to access within 15 minutes by bike or transit are Employment Opportunities, Shopping Centres, and Community Centres ○ Participants believe that Low-income Households followed by Young Families (with or without children) are under-served or not currently served by the existing housing supply ○ To meet the housing needs of under-served households, participants believe more New small lot single family, mid-rise, and townhouse options are required ○ More than 60% of participants think that the right balance for population growth in the Region is to plan for half of the growth in existing areas through intensification and half to occur in new communities

Commentor	Date	Summary of Key Points
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition, an online Public Information Centre (PIC) session for Growth Management and Housing Affordability was held on July 28, 2021 to reach stakeholders – over 90 people attended and over 40 questions were asked and answered by Regional staff. Input was received on a number of topics including potential impacts of proposed growth on climate change, housing supply and affordability as well as on the agricultural system

**Local Municipal Impacts of
Modified 50% and Recommended Phased 55% intensification scenarios**

Municipality	March 2021 50% Scenario			Modified 50% Scenario			Recommended Phased 55% Scenario		
	2051 Population	Intensification Units (%)	Urban Expansion (hectares)	2051 Population	Intensification Units (%)	Urban Expansion (hectares)	2051 Population	Intensification Units (%)	Urban Expansion (hectares)
Aurora	84,900	4,600 (45%)		84,500	4,400 (45%)		84,700	4,500 (45%)	
East Gwillimbury	105,100	800 (3%)	180	113,700	700 (2%)	275	112,800	700 (2%)	275
Georgina	71,900	2,500 (28%)		70,000	2,600 (31%)		70,100	2,700 (32%)	
King	49,600	2,800 (35%)	70	49,900	2,900 (36%)	70	50,000	3,000 (37%)	70
Markham	619,200	50,300 (52%)	1,270	608,600	49,400 (55%)	1175	602,200	51,000 (56%)	925
Newmarket	110,700	8,700 (86%)		114,900	10,800 (89%)		115,900	11,100 (89%)	
Richmond Hill	317,000	33,100 (77%)		316,800	32,800 (77%)		319,600	33,600 (77%)	
Vaughan	568,700	49,100 (56%)	500	567,400	48,000 (55%)	500	570,400	49,900 (57%)	500
Whitchurch-Stouffville	92,900	3,600 (21%)	280	94,200	3,900 (23%)	280	94,300	4,100 (24%)	280
York Region	2,020,000	155,500 (50%)	2,300	2,020,000	155,500 (50%)	2,300	2,020,000	160,600 (52%)	2,050

