

Report to: Development Services Committee

Date: March 2, 2010

SUBJECT: Information Report: Growing the Greenbelt**PREPARED BY:** Lilli Duoba, Senior Project Coordinator
Environmental Planning & Rouge Park

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the staff report entitled "Information Report: Growing the Greenbelt", dated March 2, 2010, be received;
- 2) And that the report be forwarded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Region of York for information;
- 3) And that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Provincial Greenbelt Plan, created under the Greenbelt Act, provides permanent protection for natural heritage and agricultural lands in southern Ontario. Markham Council, in considering the recent Environmental Policy Review and Agricultural Assessment Study (background studies to the Town's Official Plan Review), has requested staff comment on the possibility of expanding the Greenbelt lands in Markham.

Any Town initiated process seeking to expand the Greenbelt in Markham would be a significant public policy initiative and one that would face strong viewpoints from the public, landowners and the media. Potential Greenbelt expansion lands could include the Greenway System lands in the rural area, Greenway System lands in the urban area and/or agricultural lands in the rural area. All expansion options in Markham would include privately owned lands.

A Greenbelt expansion process would require that the Town undertake a study to determine an appropriate boundary and provide the rationale and justification to ensure the proposed boundary meets the Provincial criteria. A public consultation program would be required. A Greenbelt expansion process would need to consider and balance the constraints and opportunities that the legislation provides, and all other municipal and Provincial priorities related to growth management and municipal finances.

It is the opinion of staff, in consultation with the Province and the Region, that a decision on the Town's preferred growth alternative needs to be made in order to inform any Greenbelt expansion process. The Town's Community Sustainability Plan will also address agriculture and local food production and this study should also be completed to provide corporate direction on these issues. At this point, it would appear to be premature to initiate a review of the Greenbelt expansion in Markham. However, if Council wishes to further consider such a course of action, this report identifies the next steps in moving forward. This would which require that Council identify lands for further Greenbelt expansion study, direct staff to bring forward a report including a

budget, staffing requirements and consultation program, and request Provincial and Regional staff participation in the Town's process.

PURPOSE:

On December 1, 2009, Council directed that staff undertake pre-consultations with the Region of York and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to discuss municipal opportunities to grow the Greenbelt in Markham. This report reflects the discussions undertaken with the Ministry and Region with respect to the process that would apply to the review and consideration of a proposal to expand the Greenbelt.

BACKGROUND:

The Greenbelt Act, enacted by the Province in 2004 and followed by the release of the Greenbelt Plan in early 2005, identifies 1.8 million acres of environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands in the Greater Golden Horseshoe for protection from urbanization. Within the Region of York, the Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan comprise 69% of the Regional municipality. The Province will be undertaking a mandatory review of the Greenbelt Plan in 2015.

In Markham, the Greenbelt Plan extends along the Major tributaries of the Rouge River north of Major Mackenzie Drive and also includes the Transport Canada lands and Rouge Park lands in eastern Markham. The Oak Ridges Moraine lands in Markham are also included in the Greenbelt. The Greenbelt in Markham encompasses 5,191 hectares (approximately 25% of the Town). When combined with the Town's proposed Greenway System, 35% of the Town is identified for permanent natural heritage and agricultural protection. The "Whitebelt" lands in Markham (i.e. lands outside the current urban boundary and not subject to the Greenbelt Plan nor the Town's proposed Greenway System) comprise approximately 13% of the Town. Much of the Whitebelt lands are currently used for farming, but a portion of the Whitebelt lands may be required for urbanization to meet Provincial and Regional growth requirements.

The framework and draft Greenbelt conformity policies have been prepared as part of the Environmental Policy Review and Consolidation Study, which was endorsed by Council in June 2009. The detailed implementation of the Town's Greenway System, which includes the Greenbelt policies, will be done through the Official Plan Review as informed by Growth Management Strategy, currently underway. The Greenbelt Plan area boundary identified as part of the Town's Greenway System is shown on 'Figure 1', attached.

Council Direction and Context

As directed by Council, in December 2009 Town staff met with representatives of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Region of York to discuss requirements and issues related to possible expansion of the Greenbelt in Markham.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:***Growing the Greenbelt Principles and Criteria***

The Province released the final 'Growing the Greenbelt' criteria in August 2008. The document was prepared to assist municipalities who have an interest in exploring local opportunities to grow the Greenbelt. To date, there have been no formal requests made by single tier or upper tier Regional municipalities as required by the Growing the Greenbelt initiative, to grow the Greenbelt.

The criteria and the process to consider requests to grow the Greenbelt are based on the following principles established by the Province:

- Reductions or deletions of lands in the Greenbelt will not be considered
- Land in the Greenbelt will not be swapped or traded for land outside the Greenbelt
- Current Greenbelt policies will continue to apply
- Mandated 10 year review will not be replaced (2015)
- The ability of the Minister to propose other amendments is not affected
- The Greenbelt Amendment process is not changed.

The Ministry has identified six criteria outlined below, which must be met, to the Minister's satisfaction before a request will be considered (see Appendix 'A'). The following requirements would apply to any request initiated by Markham:

1. **Municipal Request.** The formal request to 'Grow the Greenbelt' must be from the Region of York supported by a Markham Council resolution.
2. **Additions to the Greenbelt.** The Town must demonstrate a clear functional relationship of the proposed expansion lands to the existing Greenbelt area and how the Greenbelt policies will apply.
3. **Embraces the Greenbelt Purpose.** The Town must show how the proposed expansion lands meet the Greenbelt vision and one or more Greenbelt goals.
4. **Connections to Greenbelt Systems.** The Town must demonstrate a functional relationship of the Greenbelt expansion lands to the Natural Heritage, Agricultural and/or Water Resource system based on the same Provincial scale that was used for the Protected Countryside approach of the Greenbelt Plan.
5. **Complements the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.** The proposed area for Greenbelt expansion cannot impede the implementation of the Growth Plan.
6. **Timing and Relationship to Other Provincial Initiatives.** The Town must demonstrate that the proposed Greenbelt expansion complements and supports all other Provincial initiatives.

Technical Review and Public Consultation Required in advance of any Formal Request to Region

The Greenbelt expansion criteria require that a request to grow the Greenbelt come from a regional or upper-tier municipality and be supported by a local Council resolution. In this regard, the Region of York is the authority empowered to make the request of the Province. In order to make the request to the Province, the Region must be satisfied that all six criteria have been met and that the additional lands being proposed for Greenbelt designation are justified and supportable within the Regional context.

This would require the Regional staff to work with the Town throughout the review and consultation processes to ensure that the Region's requirements are met. Once the Town has completed the review and consultation process and prepared the necessary supporting documentation addressing all the Provincial criteria, Markham Council would pass a resolution requesting the Region to pursue a Greenbelt expansion with the Province.

What Lands Could Be Considered?

Lands that might be considered in Markham for inclusion in a Greenbelt expansion can be categorized into three specific geographic areas each involves different study and justification requirements:

- A. Rural Greenway Lands outside of the current Greenbelt boundary, outside of the current settlement boundary**
- B. Urban Greenway Lands inside the current settlement boundary**
- C. Agricultural Lands not required for Growth outside of the current Greenbelt boundary, as determined through the Town's endorsed Growth Management Strategy and approved Official Plan**

Town's Proposed Greenway System

In November 2009, Council endorsed a proposed Greenway System for the Town. The Greenway System identifies lands that should not be available for development. The identified Greenway System includes all the lands in Markham identified in the Provincial Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine and existing natural heritage lands and associated enhancement and buffer lands.

Table 1 breaks down the composition of the Town's Greenway System by area. Table 2 identifies the number of properties which would be affected by a potential Greenbelt expansion as noted in the specific geographic areas noted above. Table 1 and 2 are located on Appendix 'B'.

Considerations for Option 'A' – Rural Greenway Lands (Figure 2).

Within the Town's rural area, the proposed Greenway System accounts for approximately 5,748 hectares of which approximately 5191 hectares are already subject to the Greenbelt Plan. There are approximately 403 properties wholly or partially inside the proposed Greenway System.

The lands comprising the rural portion of the Greenway System outside of the Greenbelt are predominately in private ownership. Should Council pursue "Growing the Greenbelt", the Province will be looking for a public consultation program that ensures all landowners are provided with an opportunity for input. It is likely that many landowners will not view a Greenbelt expansion proposal on their lands in a positive manner and the Town will need to demonstrate that the protection policies inherent in the Greenbelt Plan are warranted and justifiable in the context of the Town's proposed Greenway System policies. The addition of these Greenbelt requirements and the policy regime of the Greenbelt Plan would need to be shown to be preferable to more familiar Town policy controls, through the Official Plan and Zoning By-laws.

The rural Greenway lands generally meet the Provincial criteria for connectivity to the existing Greenbelt. However, there is some question as to whether these lands can be substantiated under the criteria requiring a 'Provincial scale' system, and requires further technical review. Further review is also necessary to determine if current uses on these lands would preclude consideration for Greenbelt purposes (ie. golf courses, etc.).

Considerations for Option 'B' – Urban Greenway System (Figure 3 and 4)

The Urban Greenway System is approximately 1,725 hectares and includes both public and private lands. The private lands are scattered throughout the system with a significant amount in the Thornhill community, golf courses and older urban areas of Markham. There are approximately 3,445 properties wholly or partially inside the urban Greenway System. Figure '4' identifies the private land ownership in the Greenway System of the urban area.

The Greenbelt Plan is not intended to address urban conditions and applying the Greenbelt Plan policies into an urban context will present challenges. However, Provincial staff indicated that they would not preclude consideration of an expansion proposal in the urban area. The challenge of the Greenbelt Plan in the urban area is the application of the performance standards and buffers is likely not implementable given the already defined edges of the features adjacent to development lands and the lack of undeveloped lands to accommodate additional buffering. In addition, there are uses already located on some of these lands that would not be consistent with the policies in the Greenbelt Plan, including active parkland and municipal infrastructure such as stormwater management facilities. Finally, the need for a Greenbelt designation on these lands may not be justified given their current protected status both by existing policy, and in many cases public ownership.

Considerations for Option C – Agricultural Lands not Required for Growth as per the staff Preferred Growth Management Option (Figure 5).

The staff preferred growth alternative identifies approximately 900 hectares or 4% of the total area of the Town for proposed new community lands to 2031. The total whitebelt lands comprise approximately 2,676 hectares (13% of the Town) which leaves approximately 1,776 hectares (9% of the Town) remaining as agricultural lands outside the Greenway System, not required to accommodate growth in the 2031 planning horizon.

Should Council wish to pursue the expansion of the Greenbelt onto whitebelt, it will be necessary to develop a rationale for such an expansion. This may require a detailed inventory of existing uses and farm sizes to determine which lands would meet the agricultural only use permission of the Protected Countryside designation of the Greenbelt Plan. Consideration would also need to be given to existing day camps, golf courses, small scale commercial and industrial uses, places of worship, cemeteries and other existing non-agricultural uses in the rural area. The Town also has existing rural residential uses, predominantly along 19th Avenue, Major Mackenzie and Elgin Mills that will need to be evaluated against the Greenbelt Plan policies.

The Province has identified that they will not consider any changes to the policies contained within the Greenbelt Plan. Any potential landowner expansions would be subject to the restrictive policy regime of the Greenbelt Plan. Within the agricultural area, a Greenbelt expansion would reduce the Town's flexibility to allow any use other than the agriculture related uses and land severances would generally not be permitted. Although uses such as large recreational facilities, cemeteries, places of worship as well as land severances are not permitted as-a-right within the Agricultural designation of the Town's Official Plan, Council maintains the decision making authority to permit these uses if justification is provided and determined to be appropriate, through amendments to the Official Plan. This Council decision-making authority would be removed under the Greenbelt Plan.

The Town's agricultural area including components of the Greenway System lands includes approximately 567 properties. A public consultation program will also need to be developed to address and respond to potential concerns raised by landowners and other stakeholders.

Public Consultation

The Province requires that the municipalities wishing to grow the Greenbelt undertake a consultation program with landowners, agencies, public and aboriginal communities. In terms of consultation with the aboriginal communities, the Province has suggested that consultation programs similar in scale to the consultations undertaken for the Regional Official Plan be used, which includes consultation with the First Nation and Metis communities.

The Town should also plan for enhanced consultations and communications with landowners, since all Greenbelt expansion options provided for review would include private lands. The Province requires that all affected stakeholders be consulted and all property owners be notified. Depending on the Greenbelt expansion option considered for study, there could be as few as 267 affected property owners, or as many as 5,482 affected property owners.

Should Council wish to proceed with this process, staff will report back on an appropriate consultation process and budget (based on the option pursued).

Work Plan Framework for a Potential Greenbelt Expansion

Council direction to pursue an expansion of the Greenbelt would have significant resource implications, including:

- Determine appropriate land option (Rural Greenway, Urban Greenway, Agriculture or combination) for study and consultation (Council Direction)
- Prepare budget to address technical consulting services to prepare justification report, rationalization and mapping, landowner facilitation and consultation program, aboriginal consultation program, notifications and communications budget and staff resource requirements
- Undertake study process including consultation program
- Identify technical advisory group comprising regional, TRCA and provincial staff and Consultation Committee with Members of Council.

It is estimated that the overall review and consultation could become a multi-year process and would require potentially significant funding for technical review, facilitation, consultation and related matters.

Staffing Resources needed to support Greenbelt expansion process

'Growing the Greenbelt' represents a major policy planning process and would be an issue of significant community interest. In addition to consulting services to support the justification and rationalization documentation and public consultation program, Town staff resources will need to be identified (hired or seconded) to support and manage the process and project deliverables.

CONCLUSION:

The option of requesting expansion of the Greenbelt would be a significant public policy initiative, that would require additional financial and staff resources as well as direct Council participation in extensive community consultations. There is intense public interest in how best to protect agricultural lands and how to accommodate new growth and urbanization in Markham.

The following broad considerations should be examined in advance of considering any Greenbelt expansion program:

- Council must determine if additional Provincial control is warranted. Do the benefits of the Provincial Greenbelt Plan outweigh the controls that the Town has at its disposal to protect natural heritage and agricultural lands including the Provincial Policy Statement, Official Plan policies, TRCA regulations, zoning, conservation easements, public ownership and other municipal by-laws?
- Council must consider if giving up their decision-making authority to approve planning policy and changes in land use is in the public interest. Under the Provincial Greenbelt Plan, Council would no longer have the ability to approve amendments and/or rezonings for changes in land uses (places of worship, cemeteries, day camps, recreational facilities and other non agricultural uses which tend to locate in rural areas) or even minor boundary changes.

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- Council must consider how best to manage extreme positive and negative reactions from environmental groups, landowners, ratepayers and the media. This initiative would generate significant public interest, and require considerable facilitation and consultation.
 - Given the five year time frame for the mandated 2015 Provincial Greenbelt review, Council should consider the timing of a Town Greenbelt expansion review relative to completion of the Town's Growth Management Study, Sustainability Plan and new Official Plan.

It is the opinion of staff, in consultation with the Province and the Region, that a decision on the Town's preferred growth alternative first needs to be made by Council in order to inform any Greenbelt expansion process. The Region will not be in a position to evaluate a request to expand the Greenbelt until it is able to confirm that the Town's preferred growth alternative conforms with Regional Official Plan and Provincial Policy, and establishes a justifiable framework to accommodate forecast growth to 2031.

In the absence of an approved Growth Management Strategy and new Town Official Plan framework it is felt to be premature to initiate a review of Greenbelt expansion in Markham.

However, should Council wish to pursue this process the following actions are necessary:

1. Identify which lands in the Town (Options A, B or C identified in this report, or other alternative) should be identified for further study.
2. Direct staff to bring back a further report identifying study budget, Terms of Reference for consulting services, public and aboriginal consultation process and budget, communications process and staff resource requirements
3. Advise the Province and Region of the Town's Greenbelt expansion intentions and request their participation in the public review process.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE:

This report is not recommending a Greenbelt expansion request be supported at this time. However, should Council wish to pursue this matter, financial resources will need to be approved to support the study and consultation process.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

This report is not recommending a Greenbelt expansion request be supported at this time. However, should Council wish to pursue this matter, staffing financial resources will need to be identified to support the study and consultation process.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Strategic considerations relate to the Environment and Growth Management.

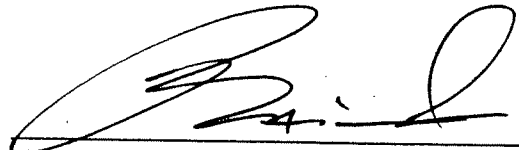
BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

This report has been reviewed by the Legal Department.

RECOMMENDED BY:



Valerie Shuttleworth, M.C.I.P, R.P.P.
Director of Planning and Urban Design



Jim Baird, M.C.I.P, R.P.P.
Commissioner of Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

- Figure '1' Greenway and Greenbelt Boundaries in Markham
- Figure '2' Rural Greenway Lands
- Figure '3' Urban Greenway Lands
- Figure '4' Urban Greenway Lands – Private Ownership
- Figure '5' Agricultural Lands not required for growth as determined through the
Town's endorsed Growth Management Strategy.

Appendix 'A' Provincial Growing the Greenbelt Criteria

Appendix 'B' Data Tables

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Figure 1

Proposed Greenway System and Provincial Greenbelt

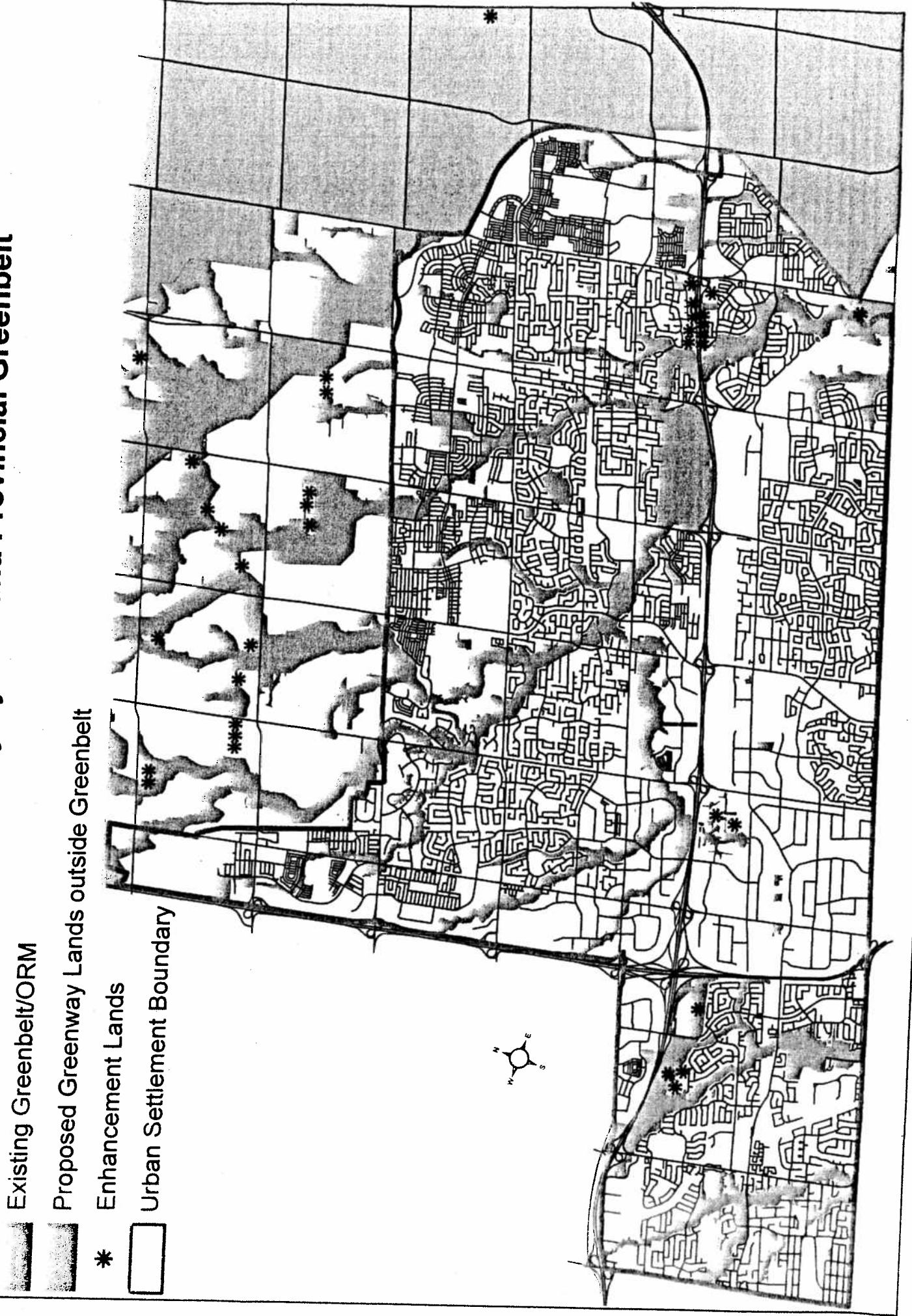


Figure 2

Growing the Greenbelt - Rural Greenway Option





-  Existing Greenbelt/ORM
-  Proposed Rural Greenway Outside of the Greenbelt (5748 ha, 258 properties impacted)
-  Enhancement Lands
-  Urban Settlement Boundary



Figure 3

Growing the Greenbelt - Urban Greenway Option

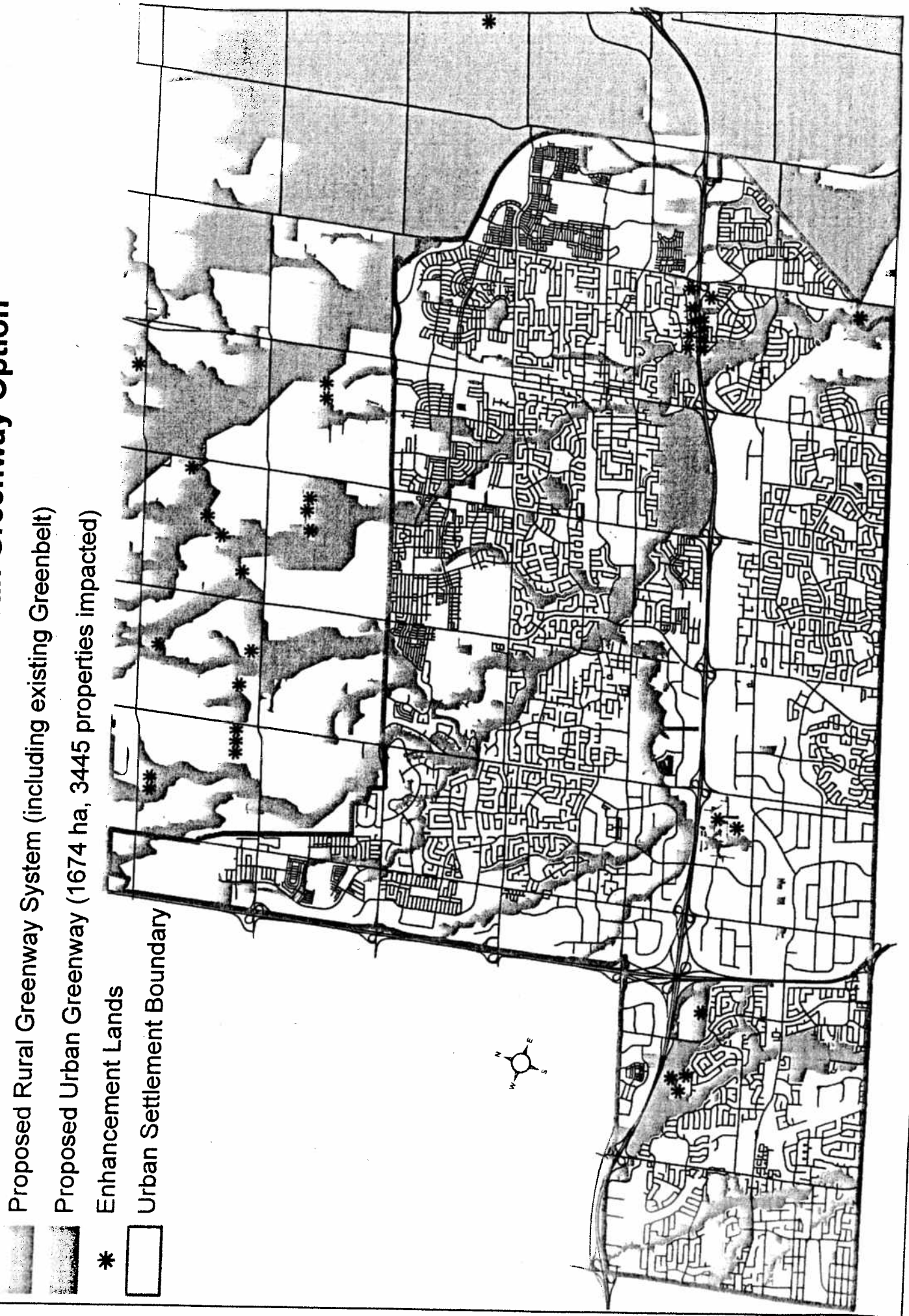


Figure 4

Growing the Greenbelt - Urban Greenway Option

(Private Ownership)

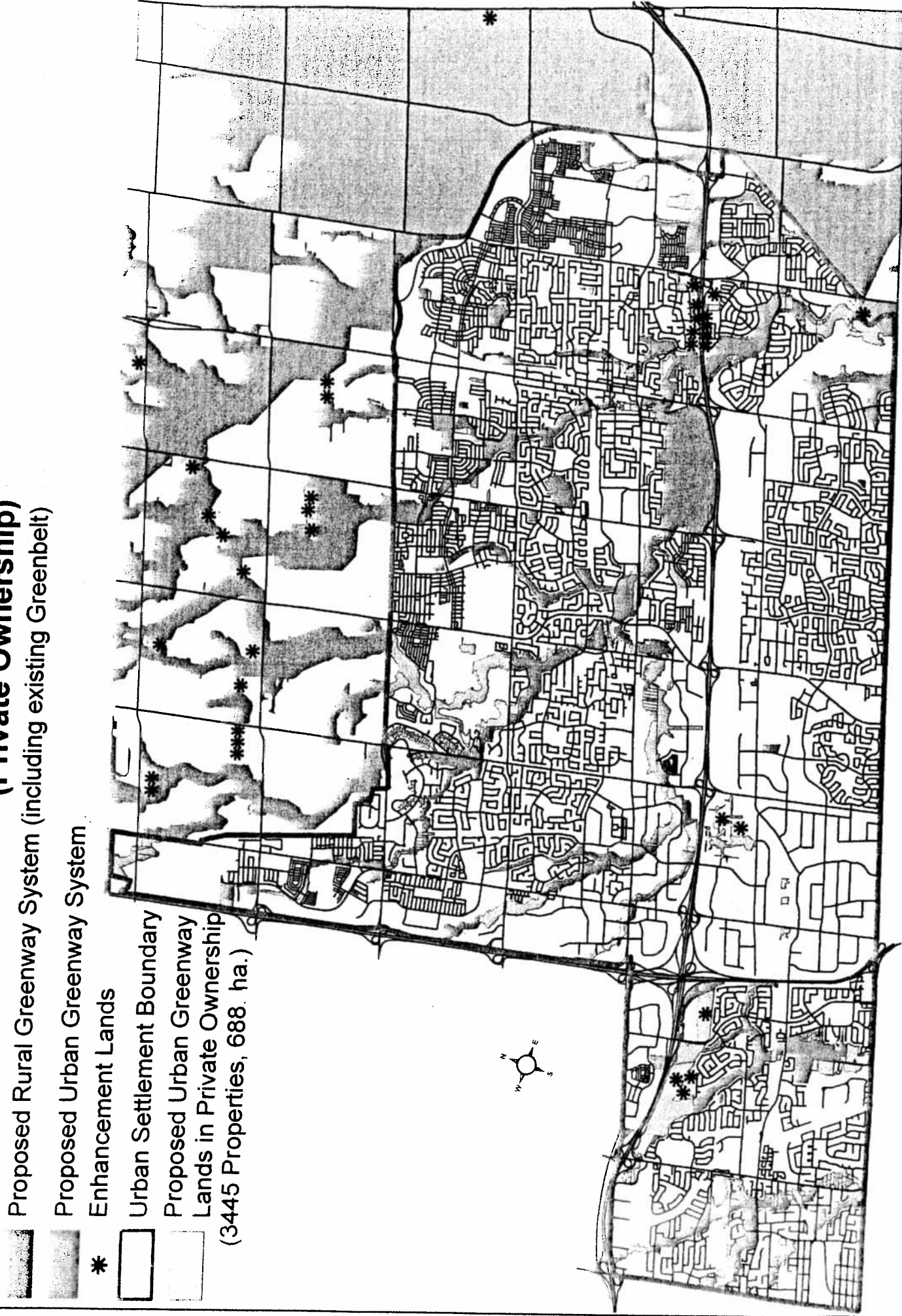


Figure 5

Growing the Greenbelt - Agriculture Lands not Required for 2031 Growth (Staff Preferred Growth Management Option)

Existing Greenbelt/ORM

Proposed Greenway Lands outside Greenbelt

Enhancement Lands

Urban Settlement Boundary

Potential Growth

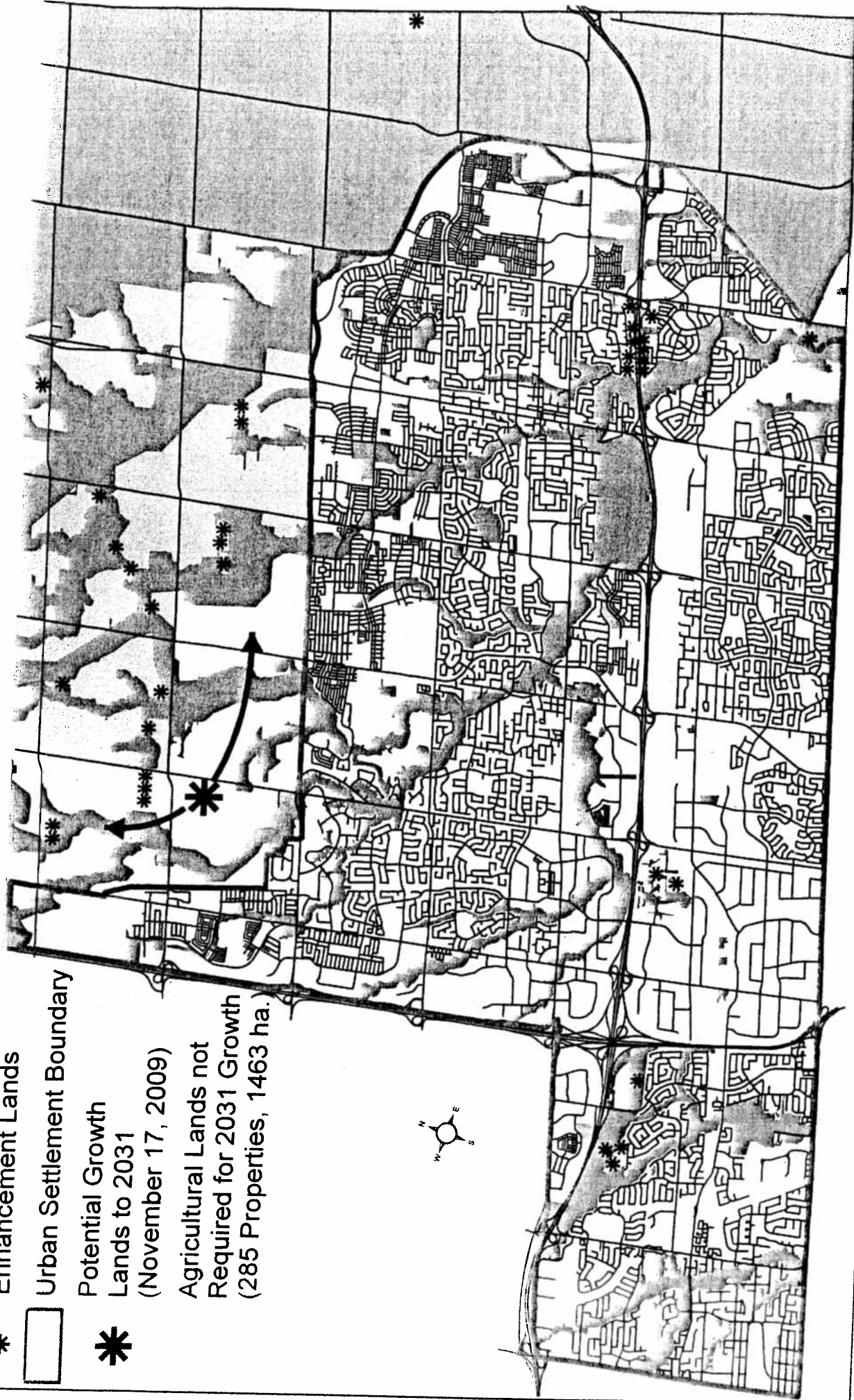
Lands to 2031

(November 17, 2009)

Agricultural Lands not

Required for 2031 Growth

(285 Properties, 1463 ha.)





Ontarians have come to value the Greenbelt since it was created in February 2005. It protects 1.8 million acres of environmentally sensitive and agricultural land around the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Growing the Greenbelt can do even more to improve Ontarians' quality of life.

In March and April 2008, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing consulted on draft criteria to be used to consider potential municipal requests to grow the Greenbelt. Based on this advice, the Ontario government has put in place criteria to assess requests from regional, county and single-tier governments to expand the Greenbelt.

This booklet provides some background information about the Greenbelt and outlines the criteria and process that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in consultation with partner ministries, will use to consider municipal requests to expand the existing Greenbelt.

THE GREENBELT ACT AND PLAN

The Greenbelt Plan and Greenbelt boundary were established under the Greenbelt Act, 2005. The act allows only the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to propose amendments to the plan. Only the Lieutenant Governor on the recommendation of Cabinet can approve such amendments.



Decisions on planning applications must conform with the Greenbelt Plan. Municipalities are also required to bring their planning documents (e.g. official plans) into conformity with the plan.

The act requires a comprehensive policy review of the Greenbelt Plan every 10 years. The review must be co-ordinated with the reviews of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. The first 10-year review is to take place by 2015.

The act also required the government to create the Greenbelt Council, an advisory body to the Minister on Greenbelt matters. The Greenbelt Council provides advice to the Minister on both the 10-year review and any proposed amendments to the plan.

The criteria for growing the Greenbelt do not replace the 10-year review or limit the ability of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to propose any other amendments to the plan. Amendments to the plan would follow the process outlined in the act.



What is the Greenbelt?

Ontario's Greenbelt is an area of permanently protected green space, farmland, communities, forests, wetlands and watersheds. The Greenbelt protects environmentally sensitive land and farmland in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe area from urban development.

In addition to providing agricultural and environmental protection, the Greenbelt contains important natural resources and supports a wide range of recreational, tourism and cultural opportunities.

The Greenbelt includes the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Niagara Escarpment and land that is known as "Protected Countryside" that lies at the heart of the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The Greenbelt is a cornerstone of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Ontario's over-arching strategy for managing growth for the area. The Greenbelt Plan identifies where major urban growth cannot take place. The Growth Plan focuses growth where it makes sense to revitalize our urban areas, away from environmentally sensitive and prime agricultural areas.

PROCESS

This booklet outlines the Province's approach to consider requests from regional, county and single-tier municipalities that want to grow the Greenbelt. The process provides an opportunity for municipalities to identify areas that would become protected countryside by including them in the Greenbelt. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in partnership with other ministries, has developed criteria that will be used to evaluate such municipal requests to grow the Greenbelt.

In preparing a submission to grow the Greenbelt, municipalities need to demonstrate how they have addressed each of the criteria. They are encouraged to build on existing municipal resources and data such as official plan mapping. A request should include a detailed proposal and supporting information such as maps and reports. Municipalities considering proposing an expansion should initiate early discussions with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing before making a formal submission.

Staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and from partner ministries (Ministries of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Natural Resources; Energy and Infrastructure; Transportation; Environment; Tourism; Culture; Health Promotion; Aboriginal Affairs; Economic Development and Trade and Northern Development and Mines), are available to meet with municipalities to discuss their proposed submission to grow the Greenbelt.

Discussions may help to clarify existing Greenbelt policies and how those policies may apply to the proposed expansion area. Discussions could also include determining data and information needs, forms of engagement and possible refinements to the proposal that may be needed to demonstrate that the municipality has addressed the criteria.



Upon receiving a formal submission, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, with technical support from partner ministries, will review the submission to determine how the municipality has addressed all of the criteria. Based on this review, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing may initiate the process to amend the Greenbelt Plan.

Under the Greenbelt Act, 2005, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is required to consult with affected public bodies including the Greenbelt Council, affected municipalities and the public on a proposed amendment before recommending it to Cabinet for approval. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing may use a variety of ways to consult with key stakeholders and engage with Aboriginal communities on a proposed amendment to the Greenbelt Plan. This may include public meetings, one-on-one meetings, workshops or open house sessions. Information about a proposed amendment would be posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry. Only the Lieutenant Governor, on the recommendation of Cabinet, can approve an amendment to the Greenbelt Plan.



PRINCIPLES

The criteria and the process to consider requests to grow the Greenbelt are based on the following principles:

- Reductions or deletions to the Greenbelt area will not be considered.
- Land in the Greenbelt will not be swapped or traded for land outside of the Greenbelt.
- Current Greenbelt Plan policies continue to apply and will not be changed.
- The mandated 10-year Greenbelt Plan review is not replaced. The plan's policies and mapping will be subject to a comprehensive review by 2015.
- The ability of the Minister to propose other amendments is not affected.
- The legislated Greenbelt Plan amendment process remains unchanged. Only the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing can propose amendments, and only the Lieutenant Governor, on the recommendation of Cabinet, can approve amendments.

"By allowing expansions to the Greenbelt, the McGuinty government is giving municipalities the power to protect valuable land in their communities. I encourage municipalities to seize this opportunity to safeguard Ontario's precious greenspace for generations to come." – Dr. Rick Smith, Environmental Defence

EXPANSION CRITERIA

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will consider municipal requests to grow the Greenbelt that address the following six criteria. The ultimate discretion rests with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing as to whether an expansion proposal addresses the criteria.

1. Municipal Request

The request is from a regional, county or single-tier municipal government and is supported by a council resolution.

In a region or county, the lower-tier host municipality (or municipalities) in the proposed expansion area supports the request through a council resolution.

For regions and counties, a council resolution is needed from the upper-tier council as well as the lower-tier council of the host municipality (or municipalities) where the proposed expansion to the Greenbelt would be located. The submission should consider and build on existing municipal data and resources such as official plan mapping and policies. Municipalities will need to provide documentation and supporting rationale as to how they have addressed the criteria and are encouraged to work together in preparing a submission.

The municipality documents how it has addressed the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's expectations for:

- *Engagement with the public, key stakeholders, and public bodies such as conservation authorities, including notification of affected landowners.*
- *Engagement with Aboriginal communities.*



Council will need to demonstrate what measures it has taken to engage the public, affected landowners, key stakeholder organizations and public bodies about growing the Greenbelt in its municipality. Considerations for engagement should build on the consultation process municipalities use for a comprehensive official plan amendment such as the five-year review of a municipal official plan.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing expects that engagement will occur early in the process and will include notifying all affected landowners, adjacent municipalities and the public. Engagement would also include notifying and working with public bodies such as local conservation authorities, the Niagara Escarpment Commission and key stakeholder organizations. Notification can be achieved by mail and supported by ads in local newspapers. Municipalities are encouraged to hold public open house(s) or meeting(s) to allow council to hear all viewpoints on the proposed expansion.

Council will also need to demonstrate how it has engaged Aboriginal communities. Sharing information

upfront and early in the process should be part of the municipality's regular business practices and can help build co-operative relationships and mutual respect. Initial considerations should include identifying Aboriginal communities who may have Aboriginal or treaty rights or other interests in the area under consideration for Greenbelt expansion.

There are a number of ways that municipalities can engage Aboriginal communities. Initial contact could be made through personal mail delivery with follow-up phone calls. Council should also work with Aboriginal communities to determine appropriate timing, methods and approaches for any proposed meetings to explain and discuss the process for growing the Greenbelt.

"The criteria represent an important step forward in the process of expanding the Greenbelt. I am of course pleased that the Ontario Government is responding to the Greenbelt Council's advice to commence development of criteria to expand the Greenbelt." – Dr. Robert Elgie, Chair, Greenbelt Council

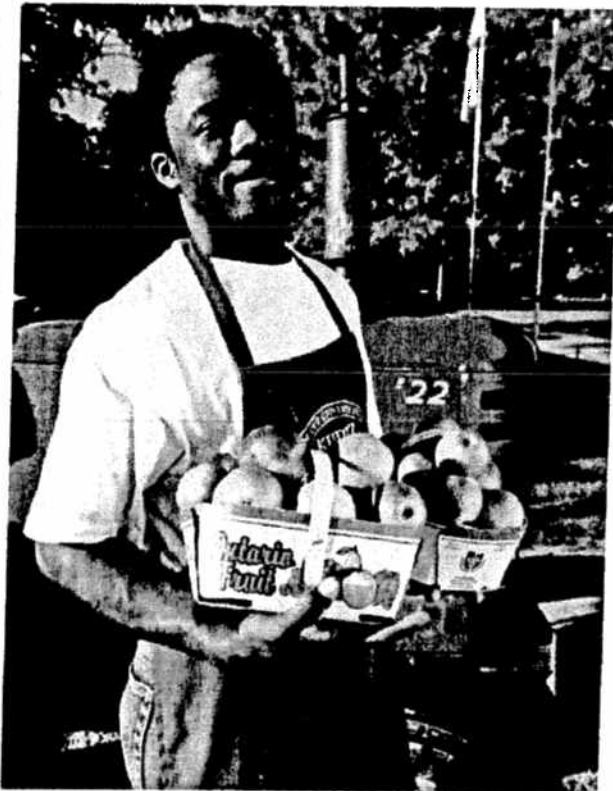
2. Additions to the Greenbelt

The request identifies a proposed expansion area that is adjacent to the Greenbelt or demonstrates a clear functional relationship to the Greenbelt area and how the Greenbelt Plan policies will apply.

Proposed additions to the Greenbelt should be connected to the existing Greenbelt area to add Protected Countryside areas to the Greenbelt Plan.

However, lands that are not immediately adjacent to the Greenbelt may also be considered for expansion where it can be demonstrated that there is a clear functional relationship to the Greenbelt.

A functional relationship is based on natural heritage, water resources or agriculture. For example, this could include the protection of headwaters, recharge areas and associated wetlands.



3. Embraces the Greenbelt Purpose

The request demonstrates how the proposed expansion area meets the intent of the vision and one or more of the goals of the Greenbelt Plan.

The Greenbelt Plan establishes its main purpose through its vision and goals. Municipal submissions to grow the Greenbelt need to demonstrate how the proposed expansion area meets the vision of the Greenbelt.

The Greenbelt plan aims to enhance urban and rural areas and overall quality of life in the Protected Countryside. While providing permanent agricultural and environmental protection, and supporting a strong agricultural and rural economy, the Greenbelt Plan also provides for a wide range of recreation, tourism and cultural opportunities. Municipal submissions to grow the Greenbelt need to demonstrate how the proposed expansion area meets one or more goals of the Greenbelt Plan.

A commitment to implement and support the existing policies of the Greenbelt Plan needs to be demonstrated. Changes to the existing policies of the Greenbelt will not be considered through this process.

Greenbelt Vision

The Greenbelt is a broad band of permanently protected land which:

- Protects against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and supports agriculture as the predominant land use.
- Gives permanent protection to the natural heritage and water resource systems that sustain ecological and human health, and that form the environmental framework around which major urbanization in south-central Ontario will be organized.
- Provides for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses.

Please refer to the Greenbelt Plan for more information on the Greenbelt's goals, available at www.greenbelt.ontario.ca

Greenbelt Goals

To enhance our urban and rural areas and overall quality of life by promoting the following matters within the Protected Countryside:

1. Agricultural protection
2. Environmental protection
3. Culture, recreation and tourism
4. Settlement areas
5. Infrastructure and natural resources

Please refer to the Greenbelt Plan for more information on the Greenbelt's goals.



4. Connections to Greenbelt Systems

One or more of the Greenbelt systems (Natural Heritage System, Agricultural System and Water Resource System) is identified and included in the proposed expansion area and their functional relationship to the existing Greenbelt system is demonstrated.

Municipal requests to grow the Greenbelt need to identify and include one or more of these systems in the proposed expansion area. The municipality will have to demonstrate a functional relationship between the proposed expansion area and one or more of the systems of the existing Greenbelt Plan.

The Greenbelt Plan includes a provincial-scale Agricultural System and Natural System that also

maintain connections to the broader agricultural and natural systems of southern Ontario. The Natural System is made up of a Natural Heritage System and a Water Resource System. The area identified for Greenbelt expansion must be based on the same provincial scale systems approach that was used in the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan.

The Agricultural System is made up of specialty crop areas that include the Holland Marsh and the Niagara Peninsula tender fruit and grape areas, prime agricultural areas and rural areas. The Agricultural System is connected both functionally and economically to agriculture beyond the existing Greenbelt.

The Natural Heritage System includes natural heritage features and areas linked by natural corridors necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species and

ecosystems. The Water Resource System is made up of both ground and surface water features and their associated functions, such as primary recharge, headwater and discharge areas. These provide the water resources necessary to sustain healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and human drinking water sources.

"CIELAP strongly supports the Provincial Government's action on developing criteria to assess municipal requests to expand the Greenbelt. Growing Ontario's Greenbelt will strengthen the protection of valuable agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands." – Anne Mitchell, Executive Director, Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy.

Building the Greenbelt by Layers

The process of building the Greenbelt during 2004 and 2005 involved extensive consultation and collaboration. The Greenbelt Task Force, an advisory group, conducted public meetings and reported back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in August 2004. The Greenbelt Plan was drafted based on the task force's recommendations and advice. For more information on those recommendations, please review the task force's report "Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt" at www.mah.gov.on.ca/GreenbeltTaskForce.

The provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was developed at the same time as the Greenbelt Plan to identify where growth should take place and to reduce development pressures on rural and agricultural areas.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan form the backbone of the Greenbelt. The Greenbelt's Natural Heritage System includes and builds on the natural heritage systems in the moraine and the escarpment.

The final Greenbelt area was determined by identifying a natural heritage system and defining an agricultural system. Together, these components form the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt. The government also considered the amount of land required to accommodate anticipated growth.

The Natural Heritage System identifies major core areas containing high concentrations of natural features and linking areas that ecologically connect the core areas. Major valley corridors of rivers flowing from the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment also provide links from the Greenbelt to Lake Ontario.

The Agricultural System was identified based on a number of factors, including the Greenbelt Land Evaluation Area Review study, the existing pattern of agriculturally protected lands set out in municipal official plans and a consideration of projected future growth patterns. This method uses a scoring system and considers a number of potential factors such as soils, climate, productivity and land fragmentation. Studies were also done to identify two Specialty Crop Areas: the Niagara Peninsula tender fruit and grape area, and the Holland Marsh.



5. Complements the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

A municipality's request to expand the Greenbelt may be considered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing while the municipality is engaged in its associated Growth Plan conformity exercise. The proposed area for expansion cannot impede the implementation of the Growth Plan. The municipality must demonstrate how the expansion area supports the goals, objectives and targets of both the Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan.

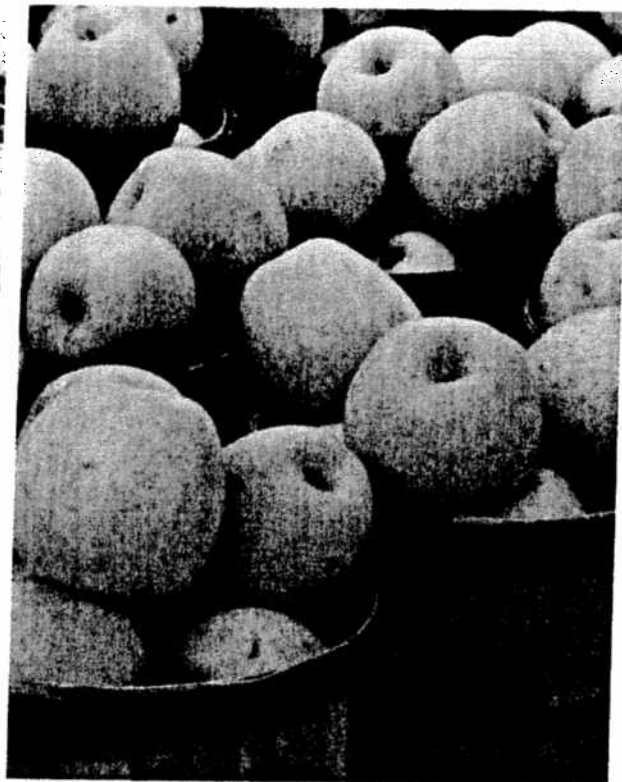
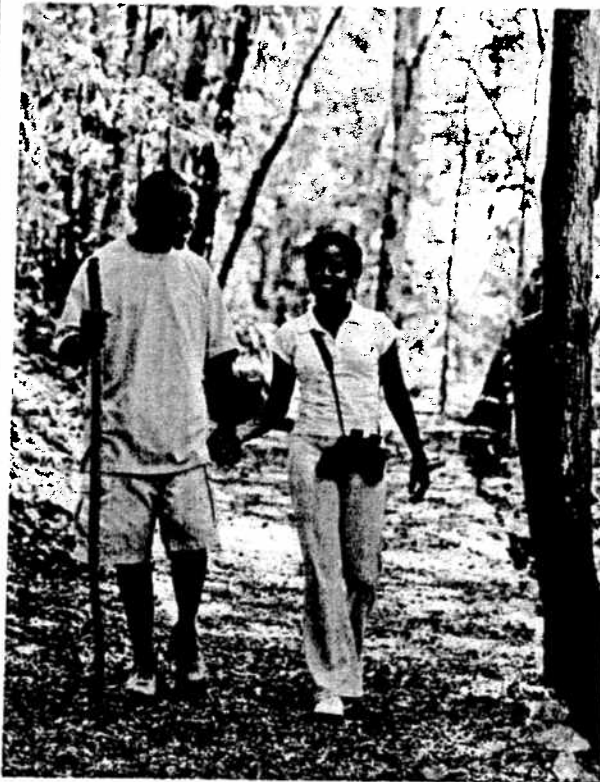
Expansions to the Greenbelt will be considered for areas that are outside of existing urban settlement areas. An exception may be considered for major natural heritage systems that are located within existing urban settlement areas. The natural heritage system must be designated within the municipal official plan.

The Growth Plan sets out a framework for managing growth and revitalizing existing urban communities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. It also steers growth away from environmentally sensitive and prime agricultural areas. The Greenbelt Plan identifies where major urban growth cannot take place.

Municipalities are required to bring their official plans into conformity with the Growth Plan by June, 2009. A municipality may initiate a request to grow the Greenbelt at the same time as it is undertaking its Growth Plan conformity exercise. However, it must demonstrate that the Greenbelt expansion area supports the goals, objectives and targets of both the Growth Plan and the Greenbelt Plan. This includes

addressing how its future growth needs will be met and how the Greenbelt expansion complements the municipality's Growth Plan conformity exercise.

Proposed expansions to the Greenbelt should be outside of urban settlement areas designated in municipal official plans. An exception may be considered for major natural heritage systems that are designated as part of an urban settlement area and a significant connection to the Greenbelt area can be demonstrated. This would not include lands that have been designated for public parks, or active recreation uses (e.g. sports fields) that have been approved as part of an urban community.



6. Timing and Relationship to Other Provincial Initiatives

A municipality's request to expand the Greenbelt may be considered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing while complementary provincial initiatives are being developed.

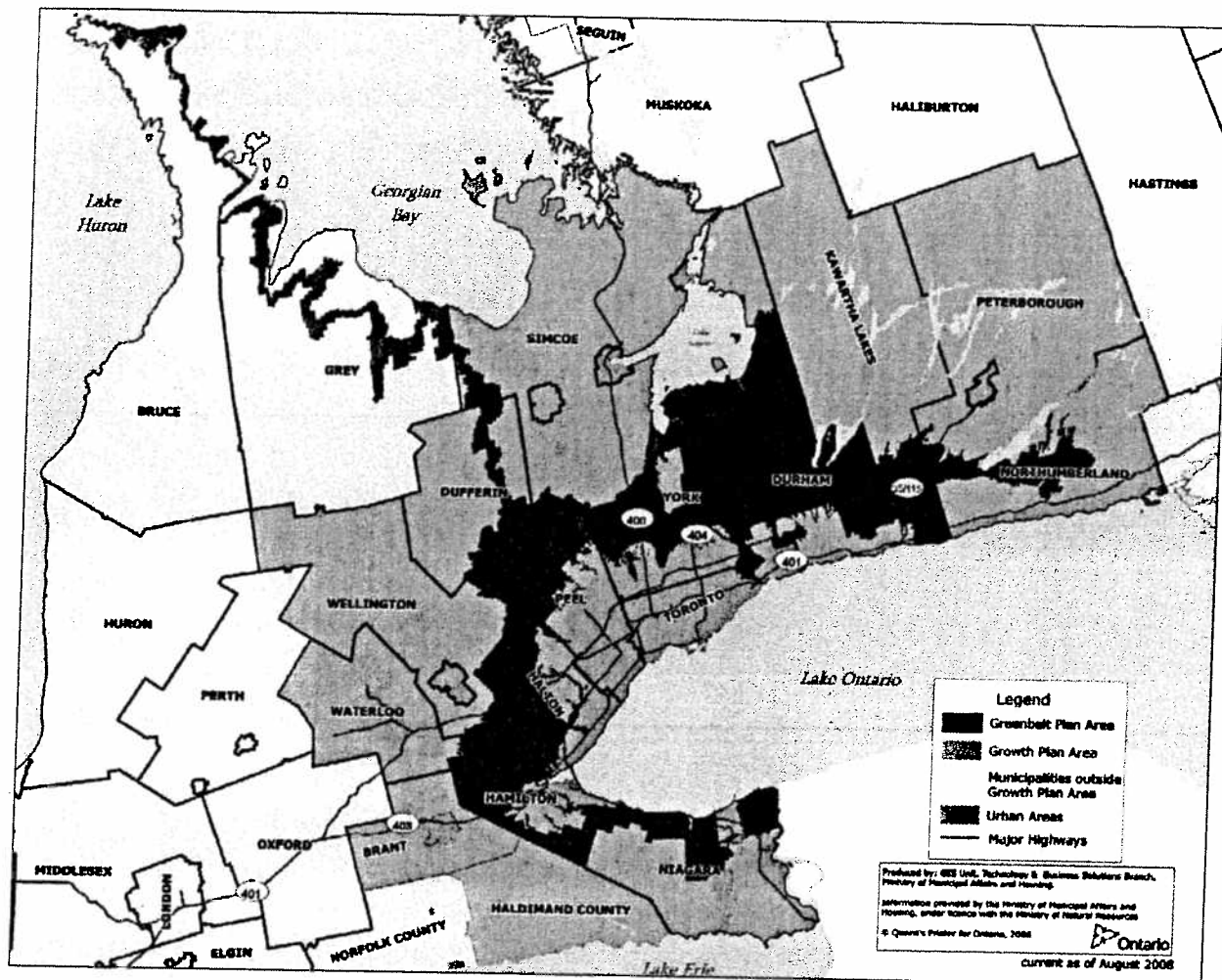
The request has to demonstrate that the proposed expansion area will not undermine provincial interests, or the planning or implementation of complementary provincial initiatives (e.g. Source Protection Plans under the Clean Water Act, 2006, Metrolinx's Regional Transportation Plan, proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Strategy.)

There are a number of provincial initiatives currently affecting the Greater Golden Horseshoe, including broader transportation/transit planning and protection of water resources. Some of these provincial initiatives include Source Protection Plans under the Clean Water Act, 2006, Metrolinx's Regional Transportation Plan, the Ministry of Transportation's planning, design and construction projects and the proposed Lake Simcoe Protection Strategy.

Municipal requests to grow the Greenbelt will need to identify the relationship to relevant provincial initiatives and demonstrate that the proposed expansion would complement and support them, and would not impede their planning or implementation.

"The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation welcomes the Province's effort to provide Ontarians with the opportunity to further protect our significant natural spaces through this Growing the Greenbelt initiative. As a key geological landform within the Greenbelt, the Oak Ridges Moraine's significant ecological features and functions will be further strengthened."
 - Debbe Crandall, Chair Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation

Greater Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt



Greenbelt Facts

- Total area of protected land in the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt is 1.8 million acres – an area larger than Prince Edward Island.
- Includes about 1 million acres of protected land, known as the Protected Countryside, in addition to the land protected by the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan.
- Extends 325 kilometres from the eastern end of the Oak Ridges Moraine near Rice Lake, to the Niagara River in the west. This is almost the direct distance between New York City and Washington D.C., 328 km (204 miles).
- Reaches 80 kilometres at its widest point from the mouth of the Rouge River to the northern tip of Durham Region.
- Includes about 535,000 acres in the Protected Countryside's natural system and provides full protection for about three-quarters of the Greenbelt's lakes, wetlands and forests. The rest of the natural heritage system within the Greenbelt is protected by the Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment Plans.
- Protects the headwaters of all major watersheds in the western Greater Toronto Area that were not protected by the Niagara Escarpment or Oak Ridges Moraine plans.
- Permanently protects about 100,000 acres of Niagara Peninsula tender fruit and grape specialty crop areas and the entire Holland Marsh specialty crop area of over 15,000 acres, located in York Region and Simcoe County. This is more than twice the size of the agricultural lands in California protected by the Napa Valley Land Trust.

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MORE INFORMATION:

For more information on the Greenbelt and how it was built, visit:

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing - Greenbelt
www.greenbelt.ontario.ca

Greenbelt Council
www.mah.gov.on.ca/greenbeltcouncil

OTHER RESOURCES

For more information on supporting and complementary programs and initiatives, visit:

Ministry of Natural Resources
www.mnr.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure – Places to Grow
www.placestogrow.ca

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
www.omafra.gov.on.ca

Ministry of the Environment
www.ene.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Transportation
www.mto.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Tourism
www.tourism.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Culture
www.culture.gov.on.ca

Metrolinx – Greater Toronto Transportation Authority
www.metrolinx.com

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Disponible en français sous le titre
Une ceinture de verdure croissante

APPENDIX 'B'

Table 1 – Greenway System/Greenbelt Plan Land Areas

Greenway System Components	Area (ha)	Town Coverage
Total Markham Land Base	21,200	100%
Current Settlement Area	12,686	60%
Current Rural Area	8,514	40%
Current Rural Area	8,514	40%
Rural Greenway System including Enhancement Lands	5,748	27%
Hamlets	90	.4%
Whitebelt (excluding hamlets and Greenway)	2,676	12.6%
Current Settlement Area	12,686	60%
Urban Greenway System including Enhancement Lands	1,725	8%
Urban Lands	10,961	52%
Total Greenway System including Enhancement Lands	7,473	35%

Table 2 – Private Properties Affected by Potential Greenbelt Expansion

Greenway System Component	Private, religious and school board properties within the Greenway System
Total Greenway System (rural and urban)	3848 properties (3703 properties not incl. existing Greenbelt)
Greenbelt/ORM Lands (located in rural area only)	303 properties
Greenway System (rural area only)	403 properties (258 properties not including existing Greenbelt)
Greenway System (urban area only)	3445 properties
Town Non-urban area (rural Greenway and Agriculture lands)	567 properties (285 properties on lands not required for 2031 growth)