

Town of Whitby Staff Report

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Report Title: Envision Durham - Growth Management Study - Alternative Land Needs Scenarios Assessment Summary Report

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: April 4, 2022

Report Number: PDP 23-22

Department(s) Responsible:

Planning and Development Department
(Planning Services)

Submitted by:

R. Saunders, Commissioner of Planning
and Development

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell, Chief
Administrative Officer**

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1. Recommendation:

1. That Report PDP 23-22 be endorsed as the Town's comments on the Envision Durham – Growth Management Study – Release of Alternative Land Need Scenarios Assessment Summary Report #2022-INFO-19 [Region of Durham File D12-01]; and,
2. That the Clerk forward a copy of Report PDP 23-22 to the Durham Region Planning and Economic Development Department and the Durham area municipalities.

2. Highlights:

- The Region released an Alternative Land Needs Summary Assessment Report on March 11, 2022, [Region Report #2022-INFO-19], for review and comment until April 14, 2022 (refer to Attachment #1).
- The alternative land needs modeling report was requested by the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee in response to public and

- stakeholder feedback regarding the initial Land Needs Assessment (LNA) Technical Reports, released by the Region in the summer and fall of 2021.
- The LNA is required to demonstrate how the Region will accommodate the Provincial Growth Plan forecast for Durham of 1,300,000 people and 460,000 jobs by 2051.
 - The initial LNA reports included an Employment Area density of 26 jobs per gross hectare for vacant lands. It also forecasted a Regional housing unit mix for new units to be built during the 2021 to 2051 timeframe of 22% low density units, 31% medium density units, and 47% high density units.
 - The initial LNA recommended a 50% intensification rate, and a Designated Greenfield Area (DGA) density target of 60 people and jobs per hectare (excluding the Seaton lands in the City of Pickering.)
 - The Region reported concerns raised by some stakeholders that the LNA proposed housing mix was too heavily weighted towards high density development. Others found the targets to be either appropriate, or requiring an increase to minimize Settlement Area Boundary Expansions (SABE's).
 - To address these concerns, the Region is reviewing two (2) alternative Employment Area Land Need Scenarios, which account for recently endorsed Employment Area Conversion Requests, updated draft Natural Heritage System Mapping, and a reassessment of current development applications.
 - The Region is considering an employment density of 27 jobs per gross hectare on vacant lands, and an employment intensification rate of 20% on existing employment sites, to limit the need for new additional lands.
 - The Region also considered five (5) alternative Community Area Land Need Scenarios that range from the lowest density housing mix and highest land need, to the highest density housing mix and lowest land need. Key variables include the estimated intensification target, and DGA density target.
 - The Region's Consultant is recommending Scenario 4, based largely on the original scenario presented in the initial LNA Technical Reports, with some adjustments. This scenario has a forecasted new unit housing mix of:
 - Low Density (singles and semi-detached): 28%
 - Medium Density Units (townhouses): 28%
 - High Density Units (apartment dwellings): 41%; and,
 - Secondary units (typically located in low-density unit types): 3%.
 - Descriptions of each scenario, and related staff comments, are provided in Section 4 of this report. Key staff recommendations include that the Region:
 - Consider unique local circumstances across the Region, and recommend a tailored scenario for each area municipality (e.g. higher

- and/or lower targets as appropriate), which would balance out achieving the overall Regional targets for intensification and DGA density;
- Develop a scenario that more accurately reflects the Town of Whitby Official Plan policies approved by the Region in 2018, as well as local development trends, which may differ from other parts of the Region;
 - Recognize that despite having a high supply of Employment Area lands in Whitby, continued protection is needed to balance increased population growth with employment growth. Policies for Employment Area intensification should consider local circumstances, and compensation should be provided elsewhere for any approved Employment Area conversions, in consultation with the Town;
 - Recognize that much of the vacant Community Area Lands in Whitby are already committed and in the process for plans of subdivision in the West Whitby and Brooklin Community expansion areas. Secondary Plans for these areas were approved by the Region, and are planned to achieve a DGA of 50 people and jobs per hectare;
 - Consider additional principles as part of the assessment framework for determining a preferred scenario, including taking a more balanced approach to growth and intensification, which recognizes that not all Regional Centres, Intensification Areas/Corridors, and Protected Major Transit Station Areas are the same across the Region, and considers each unique local circumstance;
 - Consider that the Town of Whitby is currently undertaking a Mature Neighbourhoods Study regarding infill and intensification, and an update to the Downtown Whitby Secondary Plan, which is a Regional Centre; and,
 - Provide more adequate time for area municipal staff to review and obtain Council endorsed comments on materials released as part of the Envision Durham process. The current comment period for the Alternative Land Needs Summary Assessment Report is insufficient, given the significant impact this modelling will have on the final Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA), and subsequently on land use planning and development over the long term in the Region of Durham.

3. Background:

The Region is undertaking a Growth Management Study (GMS) as part of the Envision Durham, Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) of the Regional Official Plan (ROP).

A Land Needs Assessment (LNA) is required as part of Phase 1 of the GMS. The LNA will quantify the amount of Settlement Area Boundary Expansion (SABE) needed to accommodate future population and employment growth forecasted at 1,300,000 people and 460,000 jobs for the Region of Durham by 2051, as

identified by Schedule 3 in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020).

The LNA also recommends an intensification target for the Region with consideration of the minimum target of 50% established by the Growth Plan. The intensification target refers to the amount of development within the existing 'built up areas' at a higher density than what currently exists. Intensification is intended to reduce urban sprawl, increase transit-oriented development, and promote the efficient use of existing infrastructure, among other objectives stated in the Growth Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement.

From July to October of 2021, the Region released the following four (4) technical reports constituting the LNA:

- [Region-Wide Growth Analysis: Report #2021-INFO 71](#)
- [Housing Intensification Study: Report #2021-INFO 94](#)
- [Employment Strategy: Region Report #2021-INFO 97](#)
- [Community Area Urban Land Needs Report: Report #2021-INFO 100](#)

Key findings from each of the four (4) LNA Technical Reports included:

- A proposed Region-wide intensification target of 50% of the population growth to 2051, in conformity with the Growth Plan, representing a 10% increase from the previous Growth Plan target of 40%.
 - Intensification is directed to Strategic Growth Areas (SGA's) (e.g. Regional Centres, Major Transit Station Areas, Intensification Areas/Corridors).
 - The Town of Whitby, City of Oshawa, and Town of Ajax had the highest intensification rates (2006 to 2019), of 49%, 47% and 44% respectively.
- A forecasted housing intensification capacity for Whitby of 18% of Regional capacity (roughly 31,900 units of the 177,700 Regional total).
- A forecasted Regional housing unit mix for new units to be built during 2021 to 2051 timeframe of 22% low density units, 31% medium density units, and 47% high density units
 - A forecasted housing unit mix for Whitby of 1,100 low density units; 7,200 medium density units; and 24,800 high density units.
- Recommendations on Employment Area conversions, an overall Employment Area density target of 26 jobs per hectare by 2051, and an additional Region-wide Employment Area land need of 1,164 hectares.
 - The largest share of developed Urban Employment Area land in the Region is within the Whitby South Employment Area near Hwy 401 (22%), and the largest net vacant land supply is within the Whitby North Urban Employment Area (18%) near the Hwy 407 area.

- A recommended Region-wide Designated Greenfield Area (DGA) density target by 2051, of 60 persons & jobs/ha (excluding Seaton Lands), and an additional Community Area land need of 737 hectares.
 - The largest supply of vacant Community Area DGA lands within Durham Region identified within the Town of Whitby (24%).

The Town of Whitby provided comments to the Region on the four (4) technical reports [Report [PL 71-21](#)]. Key feedback included requesting that the Region:

- Base the overall housing mix for new development in Durham Region on the projections developed by Hemson Consulting as the basis of the Growth Plan projections to 2051;
- Consider less ambitious assumptions regarding housing intensification potential capacity (i.e. the supply side), and consider the practical realities of redevelopment (i.e. demand side) in Durham Region;
- Recognize that not all Regional Centres, Intensification Areas/Corridors, and Protected Major Transit Station Areas are the same across the Region, and consider each unique local circumstance;
- Consider that the Town of Whitby is currently undertaking a Mature Neighbourhoods Study, and an update to the Downtown Whitby Secondary Plan, which is a Regional Centre;
- Recognize that despite having a high supply of Employment Area lands in Whitby, continued protection is needed to balance increased population growth with employment growth for creating complete communities;
- Compensate elsewhere for any lands approved via Employment Area conversions, through Phase 2 of the GMS, in consultation with the Town;
 - Two Employment Area conversion requests were endorsed by the Region for the Town of Whitby, including CNR-06 (Victoria St. and Montecorte St.) and CNR-29 (Anderson St. and HWY 407); and,
- Recognize that much of the vacant Community Area Lands in Whitby are already committed and in the process for plans of subdivision in the West Whitby and Brooklin Community expansion areas.

Alternative Land Needs Scenarios Assessment Summary Report

In response to stakeholder feedback on the four (4) Technical Reports, Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee directed Regional staff to undertake additional land need scenario modelling.

The Region reported that some stakeholders were concerned with the proposed housing mix being heavily weighted towards high density development, while others indicated that the targets were appropriate, or could be increased, to limit SABE's.

The Region released an Alternative Land Needs Summary Assessment Report on March 10, 2022, [Region Report #2022-INFO-19], for public review and comment (refer to Attachment #1).

The Region’s Report includes two (2) Employment Land Need Scenarios and five (5) alternative Community Area Land Need Scenarios. All scenarios accommodate the Growth Plan forecast for Durham Region. The Region applied an assessment framework based on a number of principles to evaluate each scenario.

4. Discussion:

Employment Land Need Scenarios

The initial Employment Area Land Need was updated from the fall of 2021, primarily to reflect additional Employment Area conversions endorsed by Regional Council, as well as the Region’s recently updated draft Natural Heritage System mapping, and recent development applications. This review has resulted in the Region identifying an increased Employment Area land need.

The Region’s two (2) Employment Area Land Need Scenarios are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Employment Area Land Needs Scenario – Overview		
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Vacant Employment Area Density Target	27 jobs per hectare	27 jobs per hectare
Employment Intensification Target	15 %	20 %
New Employment Area Land Need	1,350 hectares (3,335 acres)	1,170 hectares (2,891 acres)

The Region is considering Scenario 2, which includes an Employment Intensification Target of 20% to reduce the overall Employment Area land need in Durham Region by 2051. A reduction in new land required to accommodate job growth would have a lesser impact on the Region’s agricultural lands and rural systems. If a higher intensification target of 20% does not materialize, there would be an opportunity to reassess employment intensification patterns during the next Municipal Comprehensive Review.

Comments:

Staff generally agree that employment intensification may be achieved on some existing sites.

Staff also agree with statements in the Region’s report referring to recent trends in employment development showing a strong market for more land extensive logistics and warehousing uses in Durham, which result in low to moderate employment densities.

Staff continue to recommend that the Region:

- Recognize that despite having a high supply of vacant Employment Area lands available in Whitby, continued protection is needed to balance increased population growth with employment growth to create complete communities.
- Consider the unique local circumstances of each area municipality when developing the ROPA policies related to employment intensification.
- Recognize that the approved conversions in Whitby should be compensated for elsewhere, through Region’s Phase 2 of the GMS, in consultation with the Town.

Community Area Alternative Land Need Scenarios

The Region’s five (5) Community Area Alternative Land Needs Scenarios range from the lowest density housing mix and highest land need, to the highest density housing mix and lowest land need. Key variables also include the estimated intensification target, and designated Greenfield Area (DGA) density targets. The Community Area Alternative Land Needs Scenarios are summarized in Table 2.

Housing Unit Mix (new units)	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5
Low	56 %	39 %	34 %	28 %	20 %
Medium	23 %	26 %	30 %	28 %	31 %
High	19 %	32 %	33 %	41 %	47 %
Secondary Units	2 %	3 %	3 %	3 %	3 %
Intensification Rate	35%	45 %	50 %	50 %	55 %
DGA Density	50 p+j/ha	55 p+j/ha	57 p+j/ha	60 p+j/ha	64 p+j/ha
New Community Land Area Need	5,400 ha (13,344 acres)	2,600 ha (6,425 acres)	1,500 ha (3,707 acres)	950 ha 2,348 acres)	0

Scenario 1 implements the housing unit mix from the Growth Plan background technical report entitled: "[Greater Golden Horseshoe: Growth Forecasts to 2051](#)", prepared by Hemson Consulting (August 26, 2020). Scenario 1 does not meet the Growth Plan's required minimum intensification target

Scenario 2 increases the share of medium and high-density housing, but lower-density housing continues to have the greatest proportion. Scenario 2 does not meet the Growth Plan's required minimum intensification target.

Scenario 3 shifts the share of low density units, towards medium and high-density units, to reach the Growth Plan intensification target of 50%. The Region's report states that this scenario may limit the ability to achieve high density intensification in some Regional Centres and Corridors because a high number of low-density units would be required.

Scenario 4 is the consultant recommended scenario that is based on the four (4) Land Needs Assessment Technical Reports from the fall of 2021. The Region's report states that Scenario 4 reflects the estimated current pipeline development trend toward high-density housing in the Region, while accommodating a sufficient proportion of low- and medium-density forms to offer a range of market-based housing options.

Scenario 5 applies an intensification rate of 55%, which exceeds the minimum Growth Plan target. Additional Community Area land is not required.

Comments:

Staff suggest that the Region:

- Consider the range of unique local circumstances across Durham, and recommend a scenario appropriate for each area municipality;
- Consider a range of higher and lower targets appropriate for each area municipality, which would balance out achieving the overall Regional targets for intensification and DGA density; and
- Recommend a Scenario for the Town of Whitby similar to Scenario 3, that meets Growth Plan requirements, while also providing flexibility for local circumstances, reflecting both the Town Official Plan policies recently approved by the Region in 2018, as well as local development trends, which may differ from other parts of the Region, including the following:
 - The Town Official Plan identifies a number of Intensification Areas and Corridors, and a Major Transit Station Area, which can accommodate and absorb intensification in appropriate locations. The Town of Whitby had the highest intensification rates in the Region from 2006 to 2019 at 49%;
 - The Town Official Plan permits a variety of low, medium, and high density built forms, as well as mixed-use developments, purpose-built

- seniors housing, assisted housing, and accessory apartments, all required to accommodate future population growth through a range of housing options that can offer affordability, and appropriate transition to adjacent built forms (e.g. mature neighbourhoods, heritage properties);
- The Brooklin Community and West Whitby Community expansion areas are planned to meet or exceed the DGA target in the Growth Plan of 50 people/jobs per hectare. These areas have Secondary Plans approved by the Region, and are already at the subdivision stage in the development approval process;
 - Over the last ten years, Whitby Council approved a total of 8,743 dwelling units in Plans of Subdivision, with a mix of 42% Single, Semi-detached and Linked residential units (SSLs), 31% Townhouse units, and 27% Apartment Dwelling units;
 - 1,223 new dwelling units were issued permits in 2020, comprising 52% SSLs, 34% Townhouses, 7% Apartment Dwelling units, and 7% Accessory Apartment units;
 - Since 2011, there has been an increase in demand for Accessory Apartment units in Whitby (85 permits issued in 2020), which offer intensification in an appropriate manner for some neighbourhoods; and,
 - Purpose-built seniors housing is also increasing in demand in Whitby, which contributes to increased density.

Assessment Framework

The Region's Assessment Framework measures and compares each scenario based on key theme areas to inform a recommended scenario. The principles, and their related key questions, are summarized as follows:

- Principle 1: Achieving Targets - Does the scenario achieve the minimum targets of the Growth Plan, before advancing additional settlement area boundary expansion?
- Principle 2: Housing Market Choice - Does the scenario provide for the development of a fulsome range of housing types? How does the scenario respond to market demand?
- Principle 3: Setting up Strategic Growth Areas for Success - Does the scenario support Urban Growth Centres, Regional Centres, Major Transit Station Areas, and Regional Corridors to achieve higher density, mixed-use, and transit supportive urban communities?
- Principle 4: Protecting the Rural System, preparing for Climate Change and achieving Sustainable Development - To what extent would the scenario negatively impact existing agricultural and rural areas; provide sustainable

development, including transit-oriented development; and respond to Climate Change?

- Principle 5: Competitive Economic and Employment Conditions - To what extent does the scenario capitalize on the Region's economic strengths and provide for appropriate Employment Area land?

Comments:

Staff generally agree with the key principles of the Region's assessment framework. However, it is recommended that the Region consider other key principles, such as:

- Taking a balanced approach to growth and intensification, which considers unique local circumstances, not only across the Region, but also within, each area municipality;
- Consider different targets for each area municipality that take into account unique local area municipal circumstances, while still achieving the overall Region-wide target as expressed in Principle 1; and,
- Acknowledging that a broad range of low, medium, and high density housing forms under Principle 2, reflect not only the common housing forms described in the Region's report, but also mixed use developments, assisted housing, seniors housing, and increased demand in accessory apartments, which all contribute to achieving intensification targets .

Next Steps

Regional staff are scheduled to present the recommended land need scenario for both Community Areas and Employment Areas to the Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee in May of 2022.

The Region has not yet released recommendations for Settlement Area Boundary Expansion requests. The release of this information is anticipated in Phase 2 of the Growth Management Study, sometime in 2022. The draft Regional Official Plan Amendment is expected to follow.

Other elements of the Envision Durham MCR currently under review include:

- Draft Natural Heritage System: The Region released a map identifying the draft Natural Heritage System (NHS) on March 1, 2022 for public comment May 2, 2022 [Refer to Region [Report #2022-P-7](#) File D12-01].
 - The Region's NHS is required to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), and to conform to provincial plans such as the Growth Plan, the Greenbelt Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan). The Town's Official Plan is required to conform to the Region's NHS Official Plan Amendment.
 - Town staff have been, and continue to work with Regional staff on preliminary comments on the draft NHS mapping. The Town Official Plan

was approved by the Region in 2018, which updated the Town's Natural Heritage System mapping on Schedule C.

- Provincial Agricultural System: The province requires the Region to develop draft Regional mapping and a policy framework to conform to the Provincial Agricultural System, which was issued by the Province in 2018.
 - The Provincial Agricultural System is comprised of a group of inter-connected elements including the agricultural land base and agri-food network. The agricultural land base is comprised of Prime Agricultural Areas, specialty crop areas, and rural lands.
 - Town staff are currently working with Regional staff on preliminary comments. Changes to the Region's agricultural mapping may impact Schedule A of the Town Official Plan (e.g. Agriculture and Open Space land use designations), and the Oak Ridges Moraine Secondary Plan Schedule R (Land Use).
 - The Region is planning a future engagement opportunity for feedback on the Provincial Agricultural System.

Staff will report back to Committee and Council regarding further considerations for the Region's Envision Durham exercise, and regarding the draft proposed ROPA, as information is made available.

5. Financial Considerations:

Not applicable.

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

The Region has been undertaking a comprehensive community consultation program integral to the MCR process, including a project website, social media and surveys, Discussion Papers, and proposed policy directions for public and stakeholder comment. The Region maintains a distribution list to provide ongoing notification of the Envision Durham Project. No public engagement is required on the Town's behalf at this time.

7. Input from Departments/Sources:

Planning staff have worked with staff from Engineering Services (Transportation), Strategic Initiatives (Economic Development,) and other relevant Departments to analyze and provide comments on the Region's Envision Durham Municipal Comprehensive Review process. Planning staff will continue to work with relevant departments regarding future Envision Durham project components.

Planning staff are represented on the Region's Area Municipality Working Group for the Municipal Comprehensive Review, and will continue discussions with Regional staff, as well as staff in other Durham municipalities, as part of the Envision Durham process.

8. Strategic Priorities:

The proposed comments on the Region's Alternative Land Need Scenarios Assessment Summary Report align with Council Goals to remain the community of choice for families and become the community of choice for seniors and job creators; and to focus new growth around the principles of strong, walkable and complete neighbourhoods that offer mobility choices.

The comments presented in this report align with the Town's Corporate Plan Strategic Priority to be a high performing, innovative, effective and efficient organization, and aligns with Council Goals for affordability and sustainability.

9. Attachments:

Attachment #1 – [Alternative Land Needs Summary Assessment Report](#) [Region Report #2022-INFO-19]