



REPORT

REPORT TO: Chair and Members of the Planning, Public Works and Transportation Committee

REPORT FROM: Rob Stribbell, Senior Policy Planner

DATE: December 19, 2019

REPORT NO.: PD-2020-0006

RE: Employment Land Needs Assessment Phase 1 and 2 – Final Report

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PD-2020-0006, Dated December 19, 2019, regarding the Employment Land Needs Assessment Phase 1 and 2 Final Report, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT the Town Clerk forward a copy of the Employment Land Needs Assessment Phase 1 and 2 Final Report to the Director of Planning and Chief Planning Official at the Regional Municipality of Halton;

AND FURTHER THAT the recommendations regarding sites with potential conversion opportunities outlined in the report be incorporated into a future Local Official Plan Amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Through Report PLS-2018-0010 Town Council approved the Terms of Reference for the completion of the Employment Land Needs Study. The Study was to be broken down into 2 phases and would determine if the current supply of available employment lands in the Town was sufficient to the 2041 planning horizon. Town staff retained Watson and Associates to complete the study and provide a comprehensive review of the Town's designated employment lands. This review builds on past studies prepared for the Town of Halton Hills and the Region of Halton and is an important background document to the Town's Official Plan review and will provide input into Phase 1 of the Halton Region Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

COMMENTS:

Employment lands form a vital component of Halton Hills's land-use structure and are an integral part of the local economic development potential of the economic region. They are also home to many of the Town's largest private-sector employers. Through development of its industrial land base, the Town is better positioned to build more balanced, complete and competitive communities. As such, a healthy balance between residential and non-residential development is considered an important policy objective for the Town of Halton Hills.

Based on Watson's analysis, the Town's employment base is forecast to reach approximately 53,000 by 2041. This represents an increase of approximately 27,500 jobs by 2041, or an annual employment growth rate of 3.4%. Over the long term, additional employment is expected to provide increased local job opportunities for the residents of Halton Hills and improve the Town's employment-to-population balance. Between 2019 and 2041, the Town's employment activity rate (ratio of jobs to population) is forecast to increase from 39% to 44%.

Conversion Opportunities

As part of this study, all of the designated employment lands in the Town have been reviewed on a site-by-site basis to determine if potential conversions to non-employment uses are appropriate and justified from a planning and economic development perspective. In total, six potential conversion sites were identified for further review. One of the six sites has been identified as having long-term conversion potential, totaling 1.7 ha (4.2 acres) and two of the six sites have been identified to broaden permitted non-residential uses 2.3 ha (5.6 acres). The site identified for long-term re-designation, 344 Guelph Street, is a developed industrial parcel accommodating a large employment use. The site is surrounded by commercial corridor uses and offers limited opportunity for expansion of the existing use.

Two sites in Acton form a mature industrial area near the intersection of Wallace Street and Perth Street. This mature industrial area is independent of existing or planned Employment Areas within Acton. Conversion of these lands to provide for a broader range of uses over the long term would support the Town's M.T.S.A. objectives. The conversion of these sites should consider a wide range of permitted uses that would enable the area to develop as a mix-use area over the long-term. These sites may provide opportunities for office (a range of office uses, including multi-tenant office buildings smaller than 20,000 sq.ft.) retail and commercial services, and high-density or live-work residential uses.

Through the preparation of a draft Official Plan Amendment, which would propose additional land use opportunities on these sites, Town staff will meet with the owners of the sites to discuss the results of the Employment Land Needs Study and any potential future opportunities and permissions.

Major Transit Station Areas

The Town of Halton Hills has a well-established industrial base and its Employment Areas are an integral part of the Town's economic development potential. Based on the results of this study, it is anticipated that there are opportunities for intensification on employment lands within the Town's established Employment Areas in Acton and Georgetown. The Town's proposed Major Transit Station Areas (M.T.S.A.s) within Acton and Georgetown are anticipated to accommodate a modest amount of employment growth. It is important to recognize that increasing intensification levels on the Town's existing employment lands has a minor impact of the Town's land needs, as close to 90% of employment growth on employment lands is anticipated for the Premier Gateway Employment Area. Further, while the M.T.S.A.s provides opportunities to accommodate office development, it is anticipated that the Town-wide demand for standalone, multi-tenant office space is anticipated to be primarily accommodated within larger Employment Areas.

Future Employment Land Need

The Town's remaining inventory of designated, vacant, employment lands available over the forecast horizon of 2041 is estimated at 376 net ha (929 net acres), of which approximately 89% is located in the Premier Gateway Employment Area. In order to ensure that employment lands within the Town of Halton Hills are adequately protected, serviced and phased, and based on the analysis completed and the findings by the consultant, it is recommended that in an effort to accommodate forecast employment lands employment growth, an additional 270 net hectares (667 net acres) or 338 gross hectares (835 gross acres) of lands be brought into the Town's urban boundary and designated as Employment Area through the Regional Official Plan Review exercise.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

The recommendations of this report directly support the following Strategic Directions, Goals and Objectives of the Town of Halton Hills Strategic Plan:

C. Foster a Prosperous Economy

- C.1 To ensure an adequate supply of employment lands to provide flexibility and options for the business community and provide a range of job opportunities.
- C.3 To facilitate a rebalancing of the residential to non-residential assessment ratio to provide for the Town's long-term financial viability.
- C.4 To protect strategic employment lands from conversions to non-employment uses.
- C.5 To aggressively promote all of the Town's employment areas, including the opportunities provided by the 401/407 Employment Corridor.
- C.7 To promote the Town's strategic location in the Greater Golden Horseshoe for economic development purposes.
- C.9 To promote the establishment of more viable live/work relationships to reduce commuting.

G. Achieve Sustainable Growth

G.5 To ensure that new growth contributes in a positive manner to the Town's short and long term economic and fiscal viability and sustainability.

G.6 To ensure that sufficient fully serviced employment lands are designated to 2031 to accommodate new and expanded business activities that provide employment opportunities for local residents and provide greater balance between residential and non-residential assessment in the Town.

G.8 To promote the identification of strategic employment land reserves to accommodate employment growth beyond 2031.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no direct financial impact as a result of this report.

CONSULTATION:

Members of the Project Liaison Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee were consulted throughout the duration of the project. These committees included Town Staff, relevant agencies and members of the public.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Project information was made available on the Town's website as well as the public online engagement platform 'Letstalkhaltonhills.ca' throughout the study. This included an on-line survey and links to relevant documents and background material.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life.

The recommendation outlined in this report advances the Strategy's implementation.

This report supports the Economic Prosperity and Social Well-being pillars of Sustainability and in summary the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is Good.

COMMUNICATIONS:

It is recommended that staff report PD-2020-0006 and the Employment Land Needs Assessment Phase 1 and 2 Final Report prepared by Watson and Associates attached as Appendix 1 be provided to the Region as input to their on-going Official Plan Review exercise.

CONCLUSION:

The Phase 1 and 2 Report prepared by Watson and Associates attached as Appendix 1 to this report, recommends that an additional 270 net hectares (338 gross hectares) of employment land be brought into the Town's urban boundary in order to meet the employment land needs for the Town to the year 2041. The precise location of the additional lands will be determined as part of the Regional Official Plan review.

As such, it is recommended that staff continue discussions with the Region regarding the Town's employment land needs as part of the Regional Official Plan Review exercise and that the recommendations regarding sites with potential conversion opportunities outlined in the report be incorporated into a future Local Official Plan Amendment.

Reviewed and Approved by,

Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning and Development

Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer