

# The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole  
Planning and Economic Development  
October 15, 2020

Report of the Commissioner of Corporate Services and Chief Planner

## Proposed Employment Area Mapping and Employment Conversions

### 1. Recommendations

1. Council **approve** the following site-specific employment area conversion requests, which Local Municipal Councils either support or don't object to, as outlined in Attachments 4 and 5:
    - a) A1, A2, A3, A8
    - b) K2
    - c) M5, M6, M9, M13
    - d) N1, N2, N3
    - e) RH2, RH3, RH6, RH9, RH11
    - f) V1, V16, V17, V21, V28
    - g) WS1, WS2
  
  2. Council **not approve** the following site-specific employment area conversion requests that are either not required to accommodate the proposed use and/or are not supported by Local Municipal Councils as outlined in Attachments 4 and 5:
    - a) A4, A5, A6, A7
    - b) G1, G2
    - c) K1, K3
    - d) M2, M8, M12
    - e) RH4, RH5, RH7, RH8
    - f) V6, V8, V9, V10, V11, V12, V14, V19, V20, V23, V27, V29
  
  3. Council **not approve** the following site-specific employment area conversion requests that have been supported, or deferred for later consideration by Local Municipal Councils as outlined in Attachments 4 and 5:
    - a) M3, M4, M7, M10, M11
    - b) RH1, RH10
    - c) V3, V4, V5, V7, V13, V15, V18, V22, V24, V25, V26, V30
  
  4. Council endorse employment areas proposed for designation in the Regional Official Plan in Attachment 3.
-

5. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Clerks of the local municipalities.

## 2. Summary

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) and Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) require municipalities to plan for employment by ensuring land is available in appropriate locations to accommodate employment growth to 2051 and beyond. This includes a new provincial requirement to designate employment areas in the Regional Official Plan and assess site-specific requests for employment area conversion at the time of a Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR). This report sets out recommendations on 70 site-specific requests for employment area conversion and proposes employment area mapping.

### Key Points:

- Protection of strategically located employment areas is important for the Region's long term prosperity and viability
- Staff worked collaboratively with local municipalities to complete a comprehensive assessment of the Region's employment areas, including evaluation of 70 site-specific employment area conversion requests
- Extensive public and stakeholder consultation has been ongoing since March 2019 providing opportunity to comment on proposed employment area mapping and conversion requests
- 24 conversion requests are supported and an additional 8 have been deemed to not require an employment area conversion

## 3. Background

### **The Province requires York Region to assess employment area conversion requests and designate employment areas in the Regional Official Plan**

Employment policies in the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) and Growth Plan place emphasis on the need to protect and preserve employment areas for current and future uses. The Growth Plan requires upper and single-tier municipalities to designate and set density targets for employment areas in the Regional Official Plan (ROP) and to assess requests for employment area conversion. These are new Regional responsibilities whereas previously, employment designations were only included in local municipal official plans. Following completion of the Region's current Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), the ROP will include an employment area designation. Assessing employment areas and conversion requests through the MCR process allows for the comprehensive application of all policies in the Growth Plan and for the assessment of cumulative impacts on local and regional land and infrastructure needs.

## **Protection of employment areas supports complete community objectives by ensuring a sufficient supply of land for a variety of employment types**

Provincial and regional planning policies direct municipalities to create complete communities where residents can fulfill all or most of their daily requirements. This includes an appropriate mix of jobs, local stores and services, a full range of housing, transportation options and public service facilities. Ensuring the availability of a range of employment opportunities for residents in a variety of locations is a key component of complete communities. Complete communities should incorporate a mix of employment uses that will provide a full range of opportunities for residents and contribute to a diversified economic base. While some types of employment uses can be accommodated within a mixed use setting, other employment uses have specific locational requirements. York Region's employment areas provide landowners and end users with a broad range of market choice with respect to site selection, size, and transportation access/exposure. Protecting a diverse range, size and mix of employment areas for employment uses, including lands protected from incompatible uses, not only ensures a competitive economic environment, but also provides employment opportunities closer to home for residents working within these sectors.

## **Extensive research, consultation and background work has been undertaken to inform proposed employment area boundaries and site-specific employment area conversion recommendations**

Planning for employment is a key component of the MCR. Council has been provided with a series of reports on employment trends, the process of assessing employment areas and site-specific conversions requests since March 2019. Council directed Regional staff to host a Public Information Centre (PIC) in June 2020 to conduct additional consultation on the proposed employment area mapping and employment area conversion recommendations. In September 2020, a special meeting of Council was held to provide the public the opportunity to express opinions on the site-specific employment area conversion requests. The following reports to Council and background work support planning for employment in the Region and were used to inform the recommendations on the proposed employment area boundaries and site-specific employment area conversion requests found in this report:

- [March 2018:](#) York Region 2017 Employment Land Inventory report
- [March 2019:](#) 2018 Employment and Industry Report
- [March 2019:](#) Employment Area Conversion Criteria report
- [May 2019:](#) Planning for Employment Background Report including historical and future employment trends, Employment Area Profiles and the Hemson Consulting Future Employment Trends study
- [October 2019:](#) Employment Area Conversion Process Update report
- [March 2020:](#) Planning for Employment and Employment Conversions report

## 4. Analysis

### **The Region received 70 requests for employment area conversion to be considered through the Municipal Comprehensive Review**

Through the York Region MCR, a total of 70 requests for employment area conversion were received by the November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019 deadline. This deadline was established to provide time to assess and consult on each employment area conversion request to make an informed recommendation to Council, and to meet the timelines of this MCR. Together, these requests cover approximately 652 hectares (1,611 acres) of employment land, which is the equivalent of approximately one and a half concession blocks (See Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Total Number of Conversion Requests**

Municipality	Number of Conversion Requests	Total Gross Area (Ha)
Aurora	8	25
East Gwillimbury	0	0
Georgina	2	24
King	3	31
Markham	12	82
Newmarket	3	37
Richmond Hill	11	55
Vaughan	29	412
Whitchurch-Stouffville	2	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>695</b>

### **A comprehensive evaluation was undertaken to inform Regional employment area mapping and site-specific conversion recommendations**

To identify areas appropriate for designation as employment in the ROP, Regional staff, in partnership with local municipal staff, undertook a broad analysis and assessment of employment areas in the Region, including areas with and without site-specific employment area conversion requests. York Region's [employment land inventory](#), which is based on

lands designated employment within local municipal official plans, was used as the basis for assessment of employment areas.

The evaluation of, and recommendations on site-specific employment area conversion requests was completed through application of [Regional Council endorsed conversion criteria](#), presented to Council in [March 2019](#) and can be found in Attachment 1. The criteria were integral to inform recommendations on whether a conversion request is appropriate and enhances policy objectives in the ROP, or if it will negatively impact the long-term supply and/or viability of an employment area. A complete summary of the comprehensive employment planning process can be found in the [October 2019](#) Council Report and the [March 2020](#) Council Report.

Public and stakeholder consultation also informed employment planning decisions. Regional staff engaged with landowners and the public through a series of landowner meetings and a mail out to property owners near the conversion requests. Regional staff hosted landowner meetings and contacted property owners within 120 metres of each conversion request between 2019 and January 2020. A summary of public and stakeholder consultation undertaken through the employment planning process can be found in Attachment 2.

### **Regional staff hosted a virtual public information centre in June 2020 to obtain input on proposed employment area mapping**

In March 2020, Regional Council directed staff to host a Planning for Employment public information centre (PIC) to allow stakeholders and the public opportunity to review proposed employment area mapping and provide feedback on recommendations for site-specific employment area conversion requests. Due to COVID-19, the PIC was hosted online. The Planning for Employment PIC campaign ran for 12 days in June 2020 and consisted of an online interactive mapping platform and a live webinar held on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Notice of the PIC was shared through various communication channels including newspaper ads, the Region's social media platforms, and targeted emails to members of the Region's MCR distribution list, Ratepayers Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) and Local Municipal Economic Development Offices.

The live interactive webinar held on June 16<sup>th</sup> provided an overview presentation and the opportunity for the 33 attendees to make comments and ask Regional staff questions during the Q&A portion of the webinar as well as collect input with the use of polling questions.

The online interactive mapping platform allowed interested parties to comment on proposed employment area mapping and/or site-specific employment area conversion requests. A total of 29 comments were received through the online mapping platform. Approximately 70% of the comments received were submitted by consultants representing existing conversion requests restating their positions on site-specific employment area conversion requests. Additional comments were received from residents and property owners. The nature of those comments ranged from expressing support for the proposed recommendations on site-specific employment area conversion requests to sharing views on the importance of protecting lands for employment to provide job opportunities for residents. Input received during the PIC campaign was considered when reviewing the proposed

employment area boundaries and recommendations on site-specific conversions requests included in this report. A summary of input received through the PIC can be found in Attachment 2.

### **Public deputations made at the special meeting of Council on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 were referred to Regional staff and informed final recommendations**

On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 a non-statutory special meeting of Council was held to provide the public and landowners an additional opportunity to participate in the planning for employment process by expressing their opinions to Regional Council. A total of 14 deputations and 24 communications were made to Council at the special meeting, and referred to staff for consideration. Information presented at the Special Meeting of Council on September 17<sup>th</sup> was reviewed in detail. As a result, conversion requests M9, M13 and RH11 are now recommended for support. A detailed summary of assessment for each request can be found in Attachment 5.

### **Proposed employment area mapping was developed in consultation with local municipalities and reflects local and regional planning objectives**

Local municipalities are an important part of planning for employment as the unique context of each municipality is considered when determining where to plan for employment. Regional staff and local municipal staff worked together extensively to assess existing employment areas and site-specific employment area conversion requests through a series of workshops, one on one meetings, meetings with landowners and MCR working group meetings (see Attachment 2). Local municipal Council positions on employment area planning including site-specific employment area conversion requests have been received from seven municipalities and were considered through the development of final recommendations. Regional staff worked closely with local municipal partners to align on recommendations for site-specific employment area conversion requests where possible. In light of feedback received through public consultation and local municipal Council positions, the recommendations put forward in the March 2020 report were reviewed and reassessed.

### **Planning for employment in the right location is important to securing the economic viability of employment areas**

The changing nature of the economy, combined with the market value of residential land has created considerable pressure to convert employment areas in the Region. A number of the sites seeking conversion to non-employment uses are located on the edges of existing employment areas, some of which border Regional urban centres and/or intensification areas. Many of these sites bordering the outer edges of the employment area currently act as a buffer to protect core employment areas from encroachment of incompatible uses and/or act as a transition to surrounding residential development. In some instances, it may be more appropriate to permit more flexible employment uses and/or to support a conversion to allow for more mixed uses that provide improved integration with the surrounding area without compromising the economic viability of the remaining area. In other instances, it may not be appropriate to permit a conversion of this type as non-employment uses could result in a fragmented employment area.

## **The conversion of strategically located employment lands may result in the displacement of businesses to outside of the Region**

Not protecting the most strategic of employment areas can place conversion pressures on adjacent employment areas. Permitting uses such as residential or retail, increases market value and profitability and reduces the availability of employment lands at lower land costs and rental rates. The conversion of employment lands in core employment areas, especially those strategically located near major infrastructure can result in the displacement of businesses to outside of the Region, disrupt economic synergies in the area and the Region's role in the GTHA by reducing the diversity of future employment opportunities, impacting future business attraction and potentially result in job losses. A number of the Region's conversion requests are likely a result of this precedent-setting pattern, where past conversions places conversion pressures on adjacent remaining employment lands. Some examples of this include a cluster of requests in Markham located along Highway 404 and Elgin Mills Road, and requests in Markham and Richmond Hill clustered around Highway 404 and Highway 7.

## **The Region's employment policy framework will strengthen existing policies and reflect trends in the changing nature of employment**

Increased flexibility in employment area designations along corridors and major arterials will align with city building initiatives to capitalize on infrastructure investments, provide for a broader mix of employment uses and amenities and better integrate employment and non-employment uses to ensure compatibility. While a number of site-specific employment area conversion requests located at the edge of an existing employment area are not supported for non-employment uses, some of these sites offer the potential for more permissive employment uses. Work with local municipalities and other stakeholders continues to develop an employment policy framework that continues to protect strategic employment areas over the long term for a broad range of employment uses, identifies appropriate land use flexibility in suitable employment area locations, and plans for the changing nature of employment. The employment planning policy framework is anticipated to be presented to Council later in Q4 2020.

## **Regional objectives to plan and develop healthy, sustainable communities that provide a high quality of life for residents is a key consideration when evaluating conversion requests**

A key objective in the York Region Official Plan is to promote human health and well-being so people can live, work, play and learn in accessible and safe communities. A fundamental element to a healthy, complete community is to provide access to human services and community amenities. When assessing the appropriateness of a site for conversion to non-employment uses such as residential, consideration for whether the area will provide residents with a high-quality of life and provide access to a range of human services, schools, public spaces, transit and local amenities is vital.

A number of conversion requests are requesting residential permissions in areas where such services and amenities are currently unavailable and unlikely to be provided in the

foreseeable future. Furthermore, permitting residential uses to locate in employment areas with incompatible uses and/or goods movement corridors can negatively impact human health and well-being. This is due to increased air/noise pollution, heavy truck traffic and lack of access to necessary community amenities such as recreation, schools, parks, cultural services and options for sustainable transportation. Permitting the conversion of employment lands in areas that lack these amenities does not contribute to achieving Provincial and Regional planning objectives around the development of healthy, complete communities.

### **Conversion of employment areas can increase demand on infrastructure**

Residential uses in employment areas generally place a greater burden on infrastructure. Traffic congestion will increase with population introduced in areas not originally contemplated to do so. Roads and transit infrastructure may not have been planned to support increased residential development and new residential uses may introduce conflict with goods movement corridors which support employment activities that require truck and rail traffic.

Conversion of employment land to residential uses may accelerate the need for new or expanded water and wastewater infrastructure. Employment area conversions to residential uses may result in water/wastewater servicing allocation needing to be re-distributed from other planned residential areas, resulting in competition for growth. Where employment land conversions are supported in areas of water or wastewater constraints, development will be subject to timing of infrastructure approvals and completion. The consideration and approval of new residential uses will need to be carefully managed by local municipalities to ensure adequate servicing allocation.

### **Thirty-two employment area conversion requests are supported or do not require a conversion**

Through the application of the conversion criteria, broader employment area assessment and input received through public and stakeholder consultation, of the 70 employment area conversion requests received in the MCR:

- Twenty-four requests are in a location that is appropriate for a broader range of uses and are therefore supported and not recommended for designation as employment in the ROP. These areas were assessed through the MCR and have met the requirements of Provincial conversion policies as well as Regional conversion criteria. Designation of the lands for employment or other uses is at the discretion of the local municipality.
- Eight requests were determined to not require a conversion to non-employment uses. Increased flexibility in the permitted uses for these sites, including the uses requested, can be accommodated through Regional and Local municipal employment area planning frameworks. It is recommended these sites be designated as employment in the ROP however Regional staff will work with local municipal staff as the Regional policy framework is updated to accommodate flexible employment uses in appropriate locations.



- Thirty-eight requests are not recommended for conversion to non-employment uses. These sites are part of viable, strategically located employment areas that contribute to the Regional and Local Municipal economic base and competitiveness. Many of these sites are part of high-functioning employment areas that contribute to key economic clusters in the Region and the GGH. Others are part of large vacant sites that offer the potential to attract future employment opportunities. It is recommended that these sites remain as employment and be designated as employment in the ROP.

Figure one provides a summary of the 70 site specific employment area conversion request by category.

**Figure 1**

**Breakdown of 70 site-specific employment area conversion requests**



**Recommendations on site-specific employment area conversion requests recommended for employment designation are mostly aligned with local municipal Council positions**

Recommendations are being put forward for all 70 site-specific employment area conversion requests. There are a total of 38 site-specific employment area conversion requests recommended for designation as employment in the Region’s Official Plan. As outlined in Table 2, Local Council positions align with recommendations on 16 of the 38 site-specific employment area conversion requests. Seven of the requests have no local municipal Council position and the remaining 15 requests are recommended for employment designation however have been supported for a conversion at the local municipal level.

Attachment 3 includes proposed employment area mapping and the location of the 70 site-specific employment area conversion requests. Attachment 4 includes a summary table of recommendations for each site-specific employment area conversion request and Attachment 5 provides a detailed summary of assessment for each site-specific employment area conversion request outlining the primary reasons for including or excluding each site from the employment area mapping.

**Table 2**  
**Summary of Local Council positions on conversion requests recommended for Regional employment designation**

Municipality	Local Council agree with recommendation - request not supported	Local Council - no decision or deferred	Supported by Local Council but not being recommended for conversion	Total
Aurora		3		3
Georgina	2			2
King	1			1
Markham	3	4	1	8
Newmarket*				
Richmond Hill	2		2	4
Vaughan	8		12	20
Whitchurch-Stouffville*				
<b>Total</b>	16	7	15	38

\*Local Council all agree to support conversion requests in Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville except for one request in Newmarket where there is no Council decision.

### **Some employment areas are more appropriately designated by local municipalities and not in the Regional Official Plan**

Through the local official plan conformity exercise, local municipalities will be required to maintain and protect employment areas identified in the ROP. Lands not designated employment in the ROP will be at the discretion of the local municipality. Many of the supported conversion requests are proposing a mix of medium to high density residential uses; however the requests were assessed on the merits of the lands being designated as employment in the ROP and not on the basis of the proposed uses. Comprehensive assessment of employment areas also resulted in some areas not subject to conversion requests being recommended for removal from an employment area. This includes small and isolated parcels, lands within the Greenbelt plan identified as legal non-conforming uses and minor rounding out/boundary modifications. The proposed mapping in Attachment 3 excludes these areas, in addition to the conversion request lands being supported.

A local municipality has the ability to maintain an existing employment designation for lands currently designated as employment in their local official plan or to change the designation to permit non-employment uses if not designated as employment area in the ROP. The new ROP will propose a policy framework which will encourage lands identified as employment at the local municipal level, but not at the Regional scale, to continue to be mapped and protected for employment uses in local official plans. These lands (if identified as employment at the local municipal level) will continue to be considered in the Regional employment land inventory.

### **Preserving employment area lands along 400 series highways is integral to meeting the Region's long term employment needs**

As noted in the "Potential for Employment Lands along 400 series highways" October 2020 Council report, lands adjacent to 400 series highways provide key employment opportunities integral to the Region's economic position in the broader Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) economy. York Region is centrally located within a one day drive to global markets in the United States, close to Toronto Pearson Airport, and home to the CP intermodal facility, CN MacMillan rail yard, and an extensive network of 400-series highways. The protection of sites in proximity to existing or planned highways and interchanges, intermodal facilities, airports and rail corridors for employment uses is a key theme in the Region's conversion criteria and is a policy directive in the PPS, Growth Plan and Regional Official plan. These sites are of strategic significance to the Region's employment needs and should be planned and protected for employment uses that require these distinct features. Not only do they provide efficient movement of goods and access to major transportation infrastructure, they are also very visible high profile areas, a desirable feature for attracting new economic development investments.

York Region employment areas in proximity to existing or planned highways and interchanges, intermodal facilities, airports and rail corridors are faced with pressure to convert to non-employment uses. In this MCR, there are a number of site-specific employment area conversion requests concentrated along or in proximity to existing or planned 400 series highways or the CN MacMillan yard. Many of these requests are proposing to convert the lands to allow for the development of residential uses, including affordable housing and seniors residences. Permitting the conversion of employment areas located along 400 series highways to allow for residential uses is not supported as residential uses are not compatible and permitting them is contrary to provincial policy directives and good planning principles.

### **Large new employment areas are key opportunities to attract or retain large or growing businesses**

The Region's ability to provide large parcels of lands for development is a major competitive advantage for large distribution uses and transportation/logistics providers in close proximity to the 400 series highways and intermodal facilities. These types of industries will continue to grow as we see an increase in ecommerce, automation and artificial intelligence. The new Walmart Distribution Centre opening in the Vaughan 400 North – Teston East employment areas is an example. This distribution centre will become a major employment anchor and will likely attract similar large format industrial opportunities in the area that are valuable for

the Region in terms of both job creation and tax base. Protecting these areas, including lands in the 400 North Employment area, will protect the supply of large-sized parcels with exposure and access to strategic goods movement corridors, maintaining the area's economic viability by not limiting the types of employment uses that can locate there, and maximizing future investment by employers seeking large parcels in strategically located employment areas.

In light of the aforementioned, and consistent with Council's criteria, it is recommended that employment area conversion requests in the following recently planned employment areas not be supported: Keswick Business Park, Queensville, Highway 404 in East Gwillimbury (ROPA 1) and north Markham (ROPA 3), and Highway 400 North (ROPA 52). In addition to their value as strategically located lands, conversion of lands in these areas is considered premature as they have not had the opportunity to develop and the nature and character of these areas has yet to be established. In many cases, this is due to pending servicing or the area may have only recently been brought into the urban boundary to accommodate future employment area employment growth to 2031.

### **Employment planning is a key input to the land needs assessment**

Employment areas are a direct input to the Region's land needs assessment to determine land needs to accommodate future growth. Accommodating residential uses on lands currently planned for employment uses impacts the land needs assessment. Given that many conversion requests propose higher density mixed use developments, the population potentially accommodated can be significant, in some cases hundreds of people per hectare.

Ensuring an adequate long term supply of employment land is a requirement of Provincial planning policies. While it is an important factor when considering whether a site is appropriate for conversion, there are a range of additional factors outlined in the Region's conversion criteria that were considered when identifying lands to be protected for employment uses. This report seeks endorsement of the proposed employment area mapping and recommendations of site-specific employment area conversion requests to proceed with the detailed forecasting and land budgeting.

### **Some employment lands are no longer integral for accommodating employment land employment**

Through the MCR, York Region is required to update population and employment forecasts and Regional Official Plan policies to be consistent with policies of the Growth Plan. Regional staff are currently working to update Regional and local forecasts and are assessing how much land is needed to accommodate forecasted population and employment growth to the new planning horizon. Preliminary analysis indicates that all of the employment lands proposed in this report will be required to meet the 2051 Growth Plan forecast, with potential for additional land being required to accommodate employment growth to the planning horizon.

Despite potential for additional employment land need, staff continue to support site-specific employment area conversion requests as outlined in this report. These sites are in areas where non-employment uses are supportive of the evolving Regional or local urban structure

and the number, size and location of supported requests will not have adverse impacts on the land budget, servicing or the development of complete communities.

### **Regional staff will continue to explore options to address the existing Buttonville Regional Official Plan site specific policy**

The Toronto Buttonville Municipal Airport lands, located at Highway 404 and 16th avenue, are subject to Regional Official Plan site specific policy 7.2.92 which states “when airport operations at the Buttonville Airport cease, the significant majority of the subject lands shall be retained for business park use, and the balance for a mix of urban uses”. The proposed employment area mapping in Attachment 3 proposes to designate the lands as employment in the Regional Official Plan which is reflective of the existing land use designation of business park employment in the City of Markham Official Plan. The intent of policy 7.2.92 is supported, however, further discussions are required to determine how to address the site-specific policy in the new ROP in a manner that conforms with Provincial policy. To proceed with the land needs assessment, staff will assume the significant majority of the lands as employment in accordance with the existing site specific policy. Regional staff will continue to work with the Province, City of Markham staff and the proponent on a solution for the new ROP that will reflect the intent of the existing ROP policy while conforming with the Growth Plan.

## **5. Financial**

Employment areas play a central role in the Region’s current and future economy. The availability of a wide range of employment land is integral to the fiscal health of a community and can directly affect economic development and diversification of the assessment base. Employment growth also has the potential to generate spinoff economic benefits. Insufficient strategically located employment lands could result in the displacement of businesses outside of the Region and in turn negatively impact the Region’s diverse economic base. Additionally, conversions supported beyond those recommended could have financial implications due to the introduction of infrastructure beyond what was initially planned for in the area.

## **6. Local Impact**

Local municipalities are key partners in the ongoing preservation, enhancement and planning of employment areas. Extensive consultation with local municipal staff and consideration for local municipal council decisions was used to inform recommendations on site-specific employment area conversion requests and the proposed employment area mapping in the ROP. As staff continue to work through the MCR, York Region will continue to engage with local municipal staff on updating the Region’s population and employment forecast and developing an employment policy framework for the ROP. Planning for sites where employment area conversion requests have been comprehensively assessed and are supported can proceed at the local municipal level. These requests are deemed to have met the requirements of Growth Plan policies and Regional employment area conversion criteria through the Region’s current Municipal Comprehensive Review.

## 7. Conclusion

Employment areas are strategic and vital to the Regional economy and act as major drivers of economic activity in the Region. Demand for jobs in employment areas is expected to remain strong in the future. Maintaining an adequate supply of employment lands in the right location will be important for all types of industry to provide flexibility for employers in high quality locations over the long term. A comprehensive assessment of employment areas, including the evaluation of site-specific employment area conversion requests, identified a number of areas that contribute to the Region's economic vitality and should be protected for the long term and are proposed to be mapped as Regional Employment Areas in the Regional Official Plan. The assessment also identified areas where the introduction of non-employment uses is appropriate and conducive to the evolving urban structure and surrounding context.

Local municipalities, through their official plan conformity exercise, will be required to designate and protect areas designated as employment in the ROP. Regional staff continue to work with local municipalities and other stakeholders in developing the employment policy framework that continues to protect strategic employment areas for traditional uses while identifying employment areas with increased flexibility. This work is anticipated to be presented in Q4 of 2020.

---

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Bottomley, Manager, 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 25, 2020  
Attachments (5)  
#11475564