

York Region Employment Area Conversion Criteria

Employment Area conversion requests have been assessed using criteria. The provincial Growth Plan employment area conversion criteria have been incorporated into the Region's criteria as listed below. Table 1 provides more detailed information of each criteria and their importance in being considered when evaluating a conversion request.

The conversion of lands within employment areas to non-employment uses may be permitted only through a Municipal Comprehensive Review where it is demonstrated that:

Growth Plan Criteria

1. The lands are not required over the horizon of the Growth Plan for the employment purposes for which they are designated (Growth Plan 2.2.5.9 b).
2. The Region and local municipality will maintain sufficient employment lands to accommodate forecasted employment growth, including sufficient employment land employment growth, to the horizon of the Growth Plan (modified Growth Plan 2.2.5.9.c).
3. Non-employment uses would not adversely affect the overall viability of the employment area or the achievement of the minimum intensification and density targets and other policies in the Growth Plan (modified Growth Plan 2.2.5.9 d).
4. There are existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities to accommodate the non-employment uses (e.g. sewage, water, energy, transportation) (modified Growth Plan 2.2.5.9 e).
5. There is a need for the conversion (Growth Plan 2.2.5.9 a).

York Region Criteria

6. The following employment areas will not be considered for conversion as they have not yet had the opportunity to develop due to servicing constraints or have recently been brought into the urban boundary to accommodate employment land employment growth to 2031: Keswick Business Park, Queensville, Highway 404 - East Gwillimbury (ROPA 1), ROPA 3 - Markham, and Highway 400 North, Vaughan (ROPA 52).
7. The conversion will not be considered if the entire perimeter of the site is surrounded by lands designated for employment uses.

8. Conversion of the site would not compromise the Region's and/or local municipality's supply of large sized employment area sites (i.e. 10 ha or greater) which allow for a range uses including but not limited to land extensive uses such as manufacturing, warehousing, distribution and logistics.
9. The conversion will not destabilize or adversely affect current or future viability and/or identity of the employment area with regards to:
 - a) Hindering the operation or expansion of existing or future businesses
 - b) Maintaining lands abutting or in proximity to the conversion site for employment purposes over the long term
 - c) Attracting a broad range of employment opportunities and maintaining clusters of business and economic activities
 - d) Providing appropriate buffering of employment uses from non-employment uses.
10. The conversion to a non-employment use is compatible with the surrounding uses such as existing employment uses, residential or other sensitive land uses and will mitigate existing and/or potential land use conflicts.
11. The site offers limited development potential for employment land uses due to factors including size, configuration, access and physical conditions.
12. The proposed site is not adjacent to 400-series highways, or is not located in proximity to existing or planned highways and interchanges, intermodal facilities, airports and does not have access to rail corridors
13. The proposed conversion to a non-employment use does not compromise any other planning policy objectives of the Region or local municipality.
14. Cross-jurisdictional issues have been addressed.

Table 1: York Region Employment Area Conversion Criteria Descriptions

Theme Area	Criteria	Description
Supply	1. The lands are not required over the horizon of the Growth Plan for the employment purposes for which they are designated (<i>GP 2.2.5.9 b</i>).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended to ensure an appropriate amount of land designated as employment to accommodate the employment forecast over the planning horizon.
Supply	2. The Region <i>and local municipality</i> will maintain sufficient employment lands to accommodate forecasted employment growth, <i>including sufficient employment land employment growth</i> , to the horizon of the Growth Plan (<i>modified GP 2.2.5.9.c</i>).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended to ensure that both York Region and the local municipal land needs assessments will be considered when evaluating conversion requests. • Additionally, the words “sufficient employment land employment growth” were added to identify that protecting ELE jobs is a Regional priority as employment lands are home to the majority of the Region’s jobs.
Viability	3. Non-employment uses would not adversely affect the overall viability of the employment area or the achievement of the minimum intensification and density targets and other policies in the Growth Plan (<i>modified GP 2.2.5.9 d</i>).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended to ensure that the viability of the employment area is maintained and that density (Designated Greenfield Area, Employment Area) and intensification (Urban Growth Centres, Strategic Growth Areas, and Major Transit Station Areas) targets can be met.
Infrastructure	4. There are existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities to accommodate the non-employment uses (<i>e.g. sewage, water, energy, transportation</i>) (<i>modified GP 2.2.5.9 e</i>).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When evaluating conversions consider if the existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities are available to support the non-employment uses.

Theme Area	Criteria	Description
Region Wide	5. There is a need for the conversion (GP 2.2.5.9 a).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need can generally be defined by considering land supply and the urban structure. When applying this criteria, the following questions should be asked: • Is there not enough land to accommodate the development objectives elsewhere? • Are there specific characteristics of the proposed site that would result in a non-employment use being better integrated with the regional or local urban structure or better support Regional and local planning objectives?
Supply	6. The following employment areas will not be considered for conversion as they have not yet had the opportunity to develop due to servicing constraints or have recently been brought into the urban boundary to accommodate employment land employment growth to 2031: Keswick Business Park, Queensville, Highway 404 (ROPA 1), ROPA 3, and Highway 400 North (ROPA 52).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the nature, character, and potential success of these employment areas, time to develop should be given prior to considering these areas for conversion. • Queensville: Secondary Plan was approved for this employment area in 1998. Water/wastewater servicing is not available to this area and is contingent on the Upper York Sewage Solution – currently scheduled for 2026. • ROPA 1: Brought into the urban boundary through YROP-2010. Minimal opportunity for development exists in this employment area as full build out is contingent on the Upper York Sewage Solution – currently scheduled for 2026. • ROPA 3: Brought into the urban boundary through the YROP-2010. Additional infrastructure is required to support the full buildout of this employment area. • ROPA 52: Brought into the urban area through YROP-2010. The Northeast Vaughan sewer upgrade (currently scheduled for 2028) is required to support the full buildout of this area. • Keswick Business Park: Secondary Plan for this employment area was approved in 2004. Despite having regional servicing available, the area has no local water/ waste water servicing.

Theme Area	Criteria	Description
Viability	7. The conversion will not be considered if the entire perimeter of the site is surrounded by lands designated for employment uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An important component of employment area viability is location. If a site proposed for conversion creates a “hole” in the employment area, the employment area becomes disconnected. If a site becomes disconnected, it has the potential to impact a larger area than just the site being converted as well as sites immediately adjacent. • This can also impact market attractiveness and limit choice of different sized sites for new businesses or existing business expansions in the surrounding area. It can also open the door to future land use compatibility issues depending on the type of non-employment use permitted on those converted lands.
Supply	8. Conversion of the site would not compromise the Region’s and/or local municipality’s supply of large sized employment area sites (i.e. 10 ha or greater) which allow a range uses including but not limited to land extensive uses such as manufacturing, warehousing, distribution and logistics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting a diverse range, size and mix of employment areas ensures a competitive economic environment as stated in policy 2.2.5.1b of the Growth Plan. The Region has been experiencing substantial growth in many land extensive sectors such as manufacturing, warehousing, distribution and logistics, a trend that is likely to continue with automation and artificial intelligence. Preserving these sites for prospective employers is important. • What is the size of the proposed site? • Does the site have the potential to accommodate land extensive uses?
Viability	9. The conversion will not destabilize or adversely affect current or future viability and/or identity of the employment area with regards to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Hindering the operation or expansion of existing or future businesses b) Maintaining lands abutting or in proximity to the conversion site for employment purposes over the long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended to determine if the proposed conversion will impact the current or future viability of the employment area. • There are many factors that can be used to measure the impact a conversion may have on the success of an employment area. • This criteria is supportive of Growth Plan policies 2.2.5.1a and 2.2.5.7c

Theme Area	Criteria	Description
	<p>c) Attracting a broad range of employment opportunities and maintaining clusters of business and economic activities</p> <p>d) Providing appropriate buffering of employment uses from non-employment uses.</p>	
Viability	10. The conversion to a non-employment use is compatible with the surrounding uses such as existing employment uses, residential or other sensitive land uses and will mitigate existing and/or potential land use conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The land uses adjacent to a conversion site must be considered when evaluating the conversion request. • Will the conversion potentially enhance the character and condition of that proposed site? And will it be compatible with existing and future uses in the area?
Viability	11. The site offers limited development potential for employment land uses due to factors including size, configuration, access and physical conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment areas are not equal in their attributes and desirability. Existing functional attributes of an employment area such as size, configuration, access and physical conditions are an indication of the area's current and long-term viability.
Access	12. The proposed site is not adjacent to 400-series highways, is not located in proximity to existing or planned highways and interchanges, intermodal facilities, airports and does not have access to rail corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This criteria supports the Growth Plan and Regional Official Plan policies around preserving employment areas located near major goods movement corridors to support employment activities that require heavy truck and rail traffic (OP policy 4.3.6, GP policy 2.2.5.1.b, 2.2.5.8). Additionally, these sites offer highway frontage, which is a desirable feature for attracting new investment to the Region (Goal 5 of the Economic Development Action Plan)
Region Wide	13. The proposed conversion to a non-employment use does not compromise any other planning policy objectives of the Region or local municipality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When evaluating conversion requests, all Regional and Local planning objectives must be met. In the event that a particular conversion request does not meet one of the planning objectives of the Official Plan, but does meet the criteria, a rationale as to why the conversion is not recommended will be considered under this criterion.

Theme Area	Criteria	Description
Region Wide	14. Cross-jurisdictional issues have been addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended to ensure that potential conflicts / shared access/servicing with neighbouring upper- and single-tier municipalities (Peel, Toronto, Durham, Simcoe) as well as local municipalities are considered and addressed when evaluating a conversion request