



Report to: Development Services Committee

Meeting Date: October 12, 2021

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**SUBJECT:** Supplementary Report: City of Markham Comments on York Region's Growth Forecast and Land Needs Assessment to 2051

**PREPARED BY:** Marg Wouters, MCIP, RPP, Senior Manager, Policy & Research (ext. 2909)

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1) That the staff report entitled "Supplementary Report: City of Markham Comments on York Region's Growth Forecast and Land Needs Assessment to 2051" dated October 12, 2021 be received;
- 2) That in the absence of further detailed analysis of the 55% and 60% intensification scenarios with respect to assumptions and implications for Markham, Council support the Phased 50-55% intensification scenario as the preferred scenario;
- 3) That Markham staff work with the Region to confirm the location of lands to be included in an urban area expansion in Markham;
- 4) That any whitebelt lands in Markham that are not needed to accommodate 2051 growth not be designated as 'Future Urban Area', but rather maintain a non-urban (agriculture or similar) designation in the Regional Official Plan and Markham Official Plan;
- 5) That the Region's proposed employment area expansion lands be reconfigured to exclude the Almira hamlet as shown in Attachment 2 to this report;
- 6) That the Region's Transportation Master Plan Update consider the option of maintaining the current 2-lane cross-section for 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue through the Almira hamlet;
- 7) That the Region's Transportation Master Plan Update explore the opportunity for higher order transit and expansion of the Frequent Transit Network to service the proposed expansion lands in north Markham;
- 8) That this report and associated Council resolution be forwarded to York Region as Markham Council's comments on the proposed 2051 forecast and land needs assessment;
- 9) And that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report provides supplementary growth forecast analysis regarding the York Region forecast and land needs assessment to 2051 as requested by Development Services Committee in July 2021, as well as updated recommendations for Markham comments to the Region.

On September 16, 2021 Regional staff, in response to comments heard from local councils and stakeholders during consultation on their March 2021 forecast, presented alternate growth scenarios to Regional Council with a recommendation for endorsement of a preferred scenario.

Five alternate scenarios were provided as summarized in Table 1 in this report, responding to various requests for changes to levels of intensification, urban expansion and designated greenfield densities from the local municipalities and stakeholders.

Scenarios 1 and 2, based on a modified 50% region-wide intensification rate and a phased 50-55% region-wide intensification rate respectively, were analysed at the local municipal level. The implications of the two scenarios for Markham, relative to the March 2021 forecast considered by Development Services Committee in July 2021, are provided in Table 2 in this report. Regional staff recommend endorsement of the phased 50-55% intensification scenario.

Scenarios 3 and 4, based on a 55% and 60% region-wide intensification rate respectively, were considered by Regional staff not to be achievable due to the amount of apartment development that would need to be delivered annually by the market within the planning horizon. A motion requesting that Regional staff undertake further analysis of the 60% intensification scenario was tabled for further discussion at a Regional Council meeting on October 21, 2021. Scenario 5, based on a lower designated greenfield area target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare, was also not analyzed in detail as new communities in the Region are already being developed at densities higher than this target.

Of the scenarios presented by Regional staff to date, Markham staff support the phased 50-55% intensification scenario. Under the Phased 50-55% scenario, the amount of required whitebelt land in Markham decreases by 345 ha, the intensification rate for Markham increases to 56%, and the 2051 population decreases by 17,000. The increase in the intensification rate for Markham from 52% to 56% reflects an increase of 700 intensification units (or 1%) or the 2016-2051 period over the March 2021 proposed forecast.

The Region is proposing that the reductions in urban expansion lands in Markham, under both Scenarios 1 and 2, occur in the most easterly whitebelt lands in Markham, between the Little Rouge Creek and 9<sup>th</sup> Line, as shown in Attachment 1 to this report, and that remaining whitebelt lands not needed for expansion to 2051 be designated 'Future Urban Area'. For any scenario that does not include all of Markham's whitebelt lands, staff will work with the Region to confirm the location of the lands to be included in the urban area expansion, and will provide further comments when reporting back on the draft Regional Official Plan. Markham staff also recommend retaining a non-urban (agriculture or

similar) designation on the remaining whitebelt lands rather than the proposed 'Future Urban Area' designation.

None of the scenarios assumed changes in the amount of employment expansion land required either Region-wide or at the local level. However, in response to comments heard through Markham's consultation process, Regional staff are proposing to revise the boundary of the urban expansion employment lands adjacent to the Almira hamlet by providing more community lands immediately adjacent to the hamlet as shown in Attachment 1 to this report. The majority of the proposed employment lands in the eastern portion of the concession block (bounded by Warden Ave, Kennedy Road, Elgin Mills Rd and 19h Ave) remain unchanged. Regional staff maintain that all of the employment lands proposed in their March 2021 forecast are needed to accommodate the 2051 employment forecast for York Region and that a suitable location for this amount of new employment land is not available elsewhere in the Region.

Markham staff continue to support the reduction in employment lands (about 110 ha) as shown in Attachment 2 to this report. A motion regarding this position is expected to be discussed at the Regional Council meeting on October 21, 2021. The reduction in the amount of employment lands in this concession block as recommended by Markham staff, could result in a further reduction of whitebelt lands needed for community lands elsewhere in Markham.

Markham staff also continue to support the July 12, 2021 staff recommendations that 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue through the Almira hamlet be maintained as a 2-lane road, and that the Region's Transportation Master Plan Update explore the opportunity for higher order transit and expansion of the Frequent Transit Network to service the proposed expansion lands in north Markham.

It is recommended that Council endorse this staff report as Markham's comments on York Region's Proposed 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment and that the report and corresponding Council resolution be forwarded to York Region. Staff will report back to Committee on any future York Region reports regarding the Region's MCR, including a new draft Regional Official Plan, which is expected to be released for comment in November.

**PURPOSE:**

This report provides supplementary growth forecast analysis regarding the York Region forecast and land needs assessment to 2051 as requested by Development Services Committee in July 2021, and also provides updated recommendations regarding Markham comments on the Region's forecast to 2051.

**BACKGROUND:**

In March, 2021 York Region released a Proposed Growth Forecast to 2051 for public consultation prior to endorsement by Regional Council. The forecast is being undertaken as part of the Region's municipal comprehensive review (MCR) and Regional Official Plan update in conformity with the Growth Plan.

A Markham staff report providing preliminary comments on the forecast was considered by Development Services Committee on [April 19, 2021](#). At that meeting, Committee directed staff to undertake public consultation on the forecast before reporting back to Council with final comments.

Markham staff reported back to Committee on July 12, 2021 with recommended comments to the Region based on the input received during consultation (see Appendix 'A'). Following considerable discussion, Committee requested further analysis on the impact of a higher intensification target for Markham and the proposed reconfiguration of the employment area expansion lands on the need for Markham's whitebelt lands (discussed further below), prior to making a decision on the staff recommendations.

**Regional staff have since presented alternate growth scenarios based on higher intensification rates and are recommending a scenario based on a phased 50-55% intensification rate**

On September 16, 2021 Regional staff presented a [report](#) to a Special Regional Council meeting containing analysis of alternate growth scenarios to 2051, most of which are based on higher intensification assumptions. This analysis was conducted in response to comments heard by Regional staff during public consultation regarding concerns with, among other things, the amount of whitebelt land expansion being proposed in the regional forecast.

In place of the March 2021 Proposed Forecast to 2051, which was based on a Region-wide intensification rate of 50%, Regional staff are now recommending a growth scenario based a phased Region-wide intensification rate of 50-55%. The recommended scenario would result in a reduction of 345 hectares of the whitebelt lands needed for new Community lands in Markham. Regional Council deferred a decision on the recommended Alternate 2051 Forecast to a Regional Council meeting on October 21, 2021 to allow for further discussion.

In light of the updated Regional staff growth forecast recommendation, this report provides:

- A summary of the Region's September 16, 2021 analysis of five alternate growth scenarios; and
- Revised Markham staff comments and recommendations to the Region regarding the growth forecast and land needs assessment to 2051.

**OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:**

**The amount of whitebelt land expansion needed in Markham is determined by the Region-wide intensification rate, rather than the intensification rate chosen by local municipalities**

The analysis requested by Committee in July 12, 2021 regarding the impact of a higher Markham intensification rate (such as 60, 65 or 70 %) on expansion land needs in Markham cannot be undertaken in isolation for Markham alone. Population and

employment forecasting and land needs assessment is directed by the Growth Plan to be undertaken at a region-wide level. There are a number of inter-related factors in the forecast and land needs assessment that need to be considered on a regional basis to ensure that local decisions are consistent in achieving the growth management objectives of the Growth Plan.

Although Markham Council did not provide formal comments to the Region in the form of a Council resolution, Regional staff either directly participated in, or monitored the public consultation undertaken by Markham staff. The comments heard from Markham residents and Development Services Committee, regarding a desire for more intensification and less whitebelt expansion were considered in the development of the five alternate growth scenarios as documented in the Region's September report. The additional growth scenario analysis undertaken by Regional staff is therefore presented in this report as the response to the additional analysis requested by Committee.

**Five alternate growth scenarios were assessed at a regional level by Regional staff in response to public consultation; Regional staff are now recommending a 2051 growth scenario based on a phased 50-55% region-wide intensification rate**

The five alternate growth scenarios assessed by the Region are as follows:

1. Modified March 2021 50% intensification/60 residents and jobs per hectare scenario, with minor shifts in intensification and whitebelt expansion between local municipalities
2. Phased 50-55% intensification scenario
3. 55% intensification scenario
4. 60% intensification scenario
5. 50% intensification scenario and reduction of designated greenfield area density to 50 residents and jobs per hectare

None of the scenarios assumed changes in the amount of employment expansion land required either Region-wide or at the local level.

Scenario 5, which addressed requests by East Gwillimbury for lower designated greenfield area (DGA) densities and more urban expansion, was not analyzed in detail as the York Region market is already delivering higher DGA densities, and the resulting growth would require infrastructure investment not expected to be delivered prior to 2051.

With respect to Scenarios 3 and 4, Regional staff consider a forecast based on an intensification rate at or above 55% to be potentially unachievable, not because of lack of supply of intensification units, but rather because of the significant market shift that would be needed within the 2051 planning horizon with respect to higher density building types accommodating larger sized family households. That is, there is a risk the quantity of higher density units (apartments) needed to achieve a higher intensification rate may not be delivered within the timeframes assumed in the forecast, resulting in the population forecast not being achieved. As investment in infrastructure is dependent on the forecast assumptions, Regional staff maintain that a forecast based on a region-wide

intensification rate at or above 55% would result in a potentially unrealistic forecasted mix and distribution of growth over the 30-year horizon, which presents more risk to the Region from an infrastructure alignment and financial sustainability perspective.

Detailed analysis, including implications for the nine local municipalities was provided for only Scenarios 1 and 2, i.e., the Modified 50% Intensification and Phased 50-55% Intensification scenarios, respectively. At the September 16, 2021 Regional Council meeting, a motion requesting further staff analysis of the 60% scenario was tabled for discussion at the October Regional Council meeting.

Table 1 provides a summary of the assumptions and general impacts of the five scenarios.

<b>Table 1: Description of Scenarios 1 through 5</b>				
<b>Scenario</b>		<b>Assumptions</b>	<b>General Impacts</b>	<b>Community Land Needs Region-wide</b>
Base	March 2021 Proposed Forecast	50% Intensification Region-wide 60 residents + jobs/ha in designated greenfield areas (DGA) (growth = 58% ground-related/42% apt units)		2,300 ha
1.	50% intensification (modified)	March 2021 base scenario with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional growth allocated to Newmarket and Whitchurch-Stouffville</li> <li>Shift of approx 100 ha of new Community lands from Markham to East Gwillimbury (58% ground-related/42% apt units)</li> </ul>	Provides additional growth to East Gwillimbury without requiring second expansion of Upper York Water Reclamation Centre  Results in minor revisions to population growth in all other municipalities	2,300 ha
2.	Phased 50-55% intensification	50% intensification to 2041, and 55% intensification from 2041-2051  Modest shift towards higher density building types (56% ground-related/44% apt units)	Reduces urban expansion lands throughout the Region by 250 ha Accommodates a slight urban expansion in East Gwillimbury	2,050 ha
3.	55% intensification	Higher intensification and a more significant shift towards higher density building types (54% ground-related/46% apt units)	Further reduces urban expansion lands throughout Region, including Markham	1,500 ha
4.	60% intensification	Even higher intensification and the most significant shift towards higher density building types (51% ground-related/49% apt units)	Even further reduces urban expansion lands throughout Region, including Markham	700 ha
5.	50% intensification 50 residents+jobs/ha	Intensification rate unchanged from March 2021 forecast; DGA density is reduced to 50 residents + jobs/ha (59% ground-related/41% apt units)	Results in more whitebelt expansion in East Gwillimbury	2,700 ha

Table 2 provides the implications of Scenarios 1 and 2 for Markham with respect to the intensification rate, the amount of whitebelt lands needed for urban expansion and the resulting population.

<b>Table 2: Implications of Proposed Forecast and Alternate Scenarios 1 and 2 for Markham</b>			
	<b>March 2021 Proposed Forecast</b>	<b>Scenario 1 Modified 50% Intensification</b>	<b>Scenario 2 Phased 50-55% Intensification</b>
Intensification Units (2016-2051)	50,300	49,400	51,000
Intensification Units per year	1,440	1,410	1,460
Intensification Rate	52%	55%	56%
New Community land needed (hectares)	1,270	1,175	925
Employment land needed (hectares)	220	220	220
Population in 2051	619,200	608,600	602,200
Source: Derived from York Region report: Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios in Response to Consultation, September 16, 2021			

Under the Modified 50% scenario, the amount of whitebelt land needed for community lands in Markham decreases by 75 hectares, the intensification rate for Markham increases to 55%, the number of intensification units decreases by 900 units (re-assigned to other municipalities), and the population decreases by 10,600 persons.

Under the Phased 50-55% scenario, the amount of required whitebelt land in Markham decreases by 345 ha, the intensification rate for Markham increases to 56%, and the 2051 population decreases by 17,000. The increase in the intensification rate for Markham to 56% reflects an increase of 700 intensification units (or 1%) over the March forecast.

The Region is proposing that the reductions in urban expansion in Markham occur in the most easterly whitebelt lands in Markham, between the Little Rouge Creek and 9<sup>th</sup> Line, as shown in Attachment 1. The 75 ha reduction under Scenario 1 is proposed to apply to lands immediately west of 9<sup>th</sup> Line. The larger 345 ha reduction under Scenario 2 is proposed to apply to most, but not all, of the whitebelt lands east of the Little Rouge Creek.

Markham staff support the Phased 50-55% scenario. Although the 2051 population is lower under this scenario than in the original March 2021 forecast, the number of intensification units is higher, which is more in keeping with the intensification objectives in Markham's Official Plan. In addition, the increase of 700 units over 35 years represents a marginal increase (1%) in the number of intensification units per year assumed under the March 2021 scenario which staff considered reasonable for the market to deliver. Further, the Region-wide intensification target is a minimum which can be exceeded by local municipalities.

For both scenarios, the whitebelt lands not needed to accommodate growth to 2051 are proposed by the Region to be designated as 'Future Urban Area' in the Regional Official

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Plan. Markham staff do not support the designation of the remaining whitebelt lands east of the Little Rouge as 'Future Urban Area'. Instead the lands should continue to have a non-urban (agriculture or similar) designation and remain outside of the Urban Area in both the Regional Official Plan and Markham Official Plan. Any further urban expansions in Markham, beyond the 2051 planning horizon, should only be considered through a future municipal comprehensive review and regional and local official plan amendments.

Staff have not had sufficient opportunity to consider the reconfigured urban expansion mapping. For any scenario that does not include all of Markham's whitebelt lands, staff will work with the Region to confirm the location of the lands to be included in the urban area expansion, and will provide further comments when reporting back on the draft Regional Official.

In the absence of more detailed analysis for the 55% and 60% Scenarios with respect to assumptions and implications for Markham, staff support the Phased 50-55% scenario as the preferred scenario.

**Recommendations:**

- That in the absence of further detailed analysis of the 55% and 60% alternate scenarios with respect to assumptions and implications for Markham, Council support the Phased 50-55% intensification scenario as the preferred scenario;
- That Markham staff work with the Region to confirm the location of lands to be included in an urban area expansion in Markham;
- That any whitebelt lands in Markham that are not needed to accommodate 2051 growth not be designated as 'Future Urban Area' but rather maintain a non-urban (agriculture or similar) designation in the Regional Official Plan and Markham Official Plan.

**Recommendations 3, 4, and 5 from the July 12, 2021 Markham staff report remain unchanged**

Recommendations 3 and 4 in the July 12, 2021 Markham staff report (see Appendix 'A') proposed changes to the proposed delineation of the employment expansion lands in Markham, and recommended maintaining 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue through the Almira hamlet as a 2-lane road. Markham staff continue to support these recommendations.

The mapping in the September 16, 2021 Regional staff report does not fully reflect the Markham staff recommended delineation, which represented a reduction of approximately half (110 ha) of the proposed total 220 ha employment lands in the concession block north of Elgin Mills Rd between Warden Ave and Kennedy Rd (see Attachment 2). The proposed reduction is intended to minimize impact on the Almira hamlet as discussed in the July 2021 Markham staff report. Although the Markham staff



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recommendations were discussed by Committee, a decision on the recommendations was not made at the July 12, 2021 meeting.

In response to comments heard through Markham's consultation process, Regional staff are proposing to revise the boundary of the urban expansion employment lands adjacent to the Almira hamlet by providing more community lands immediately adjacent to the hamlet, but have maintained the majority of the employment lands in the eastern portion of the concession block. Regional staff maintain that all of the employment lands proposed in their March 2021 forecast are needed to accommodate the 2051 employment forecast for York Region and that a suitable location for this amount of new employment land is not available elsewhere in the Region.

At the September 16, 2021 Special Regional Council meeting a motion was put forward that the Markham staff position regarding the employment lands be reflected in the Region's forecast and mapping. This motion is expected to be discussed at the October 21, 2021 Regional Council meeting. It is noted that the reduction of employment lands in this concession block as recommended by Markham staff, could result in a further reduction of whitebelt lands needed for community lands elsewhere in Markham.

Recommendation 5 in the July 12, 2021 Markham staff report was that the Region's Transportation Master Plan Update explore the opportunity for higher order transit and expansion of the Frequent Transit Network to service the proposed expansion lands in north Markham. This recommendation also remains unchanged.

**Recommendations:**

- That the Region's proposed employment area expansion lands be reconfigured to exclude the Almira hamlet as shown in Attachment 2 to this report;
- That the Region's Transportation Master Plan Update consider the option of maintaining the current 2-lane cross-section for 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue through the Almira hamlet; and
- That the Region's Transportation Master Plan Update explore the opportunity for higher order transit and expansion of the Frequent Transit Network to service the proposed expansion lands in north Markham.

**Next Steps**

It is recommended that Council endorse this staff report as Markham's comments on York Region's growth forecast and land needs assessment to 2051 and that the report and corresponding Council resolution be forwarded to York Region.

Regional staff intend to release a draft Regional Official Plan for consultation and comment later this Fall, with the intent of continuing discussions on the forecasts concurrently, if needed. The forecasts will be incorporated in the draft ROP once endorsed by Regional Council. Markham staff will continue to report to Committee as

appropriate on any future York Region reports regarding the MCR and the draft Regional Official Plan.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Not applicable.

**HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:**

Not applicable.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

Growth management is related to a number of strategic priorities including Goal 3 Safe, Sustainable and Complete Community of Building Markham's Future Together, 2020-2023.

**BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

All City departments were consulted on the Region's growth forecast and land needs assessment to 2051.

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

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Biju Karumanchery, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.  
Director of Planning and Urban Design

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Arvin Prasad, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.  
Commissioner of Development  
Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: York Region's Proposed New Community Lands in Markham under the Modified 50% and Phased 50-55% Scenarios

Attachment 2: Markham Staff Recommendation Regarding Employment Expansion Lands

Appendix 'A': July 12, 2021 Markham staff report "City of Markham Comments on York Region's Proposed Growth Forecast to 2051"