



## REPORT

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**TO:** Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

**FROM:** Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy

**DATE:** June 30, 2021

**REPORT NO.:** PD-2021-0045

**SUBJECT:** Halton Region Official Plan Review – Growth Concepts

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### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PD-2021-0045 dated June 26, 2021 regarding the Halton Region Official Plan Review – Growth Concepts be received;

AND FURTHER THAT the Town continue to advance a three-pronged growth strategy to the 2051 planning horizon comprised of the following elements:

- Intensification inside the Georgetown and Acton Built Up Area (BUA) with a focus on key strategic growth areas such as the Georgetown GO Station/Mill Street Corridor, Downtown Georgetown, the Civic Centre District, the Guelph Street Corridor and Downtown Acton/Acton GO in accordance with locally approved policies as may be updated from time to time;
- Compact residential and mixed-use development within Designated Greenfield Areas (DGA);
- Development within designated Employment Areas;

AND FURTHER THAT the Region be advised that the general scale of growth associated with **Concept 2** (70% Densification, Limited Greenfield Expansion) is considered to align with the general direction in the Town's Strategic Plan and three-pronged growth strategy;

AND FURTHER THAT in keeping with the findings and objectives of the Town's Employment Lands Needs Study (2020), Economic Development and Tourism Strategy

(2021), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Strategy (2020), and the Business Concierge Program (2021), the Region of Halton be advised that Council is supportive of the provision of approximately 450 to 500 hectares of additional employment lands within the Town to the 2051 planning horizon;

AND FURTHER THAT building on the strategic location, development and investment attraction momentum, and designation as a Provincially Significant Employment Zone in accordance with *A Place to Grow: The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, the Halton Hills Premier Gateway be prioritized for the location of additional employment lands to the 2051 planning horizon;

AND FURTHER THAT in keeping with the complete communities provisions of *A Place to Grow: The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* as well as the general direction set out in the Town's Strategic Plan, the Region of Halton be advised that Council is supportive of a modest expansion to the Georgetown Urban Area, similar in scale to that approved through the Sustainable Halton process (ROPA 38 and OPA 10) of approximately 400 hectares to accommodate compact residential and mixed use development once the existing DGA are substantially built out in the mid to late 2030s along with providing opportunities for the proposed redevelopment of the Georgetown Hospital;

AND FURTHER THAT any new additional urban lands be subject to appropriate phasing policies to ensure a seamless and moderate scale and pace of development is in keeping with the direction set in the Town's Strategic Plan and Official Plan;

AND FURTHER THAT development be in accordance with the Town's Green Development Standards as updated from time to time and low carbon opportunities continue to be pursued in keeping with the direction set out in the Town's Strategic Plan, the Official Plan and the Low Carbon Transition Strategy once finalized;

AND FURTHER THAT the balance of the "whitebelt<sup>1</sup> lands" in the Town of Halton Hills remain in the Agricultural System to the 2051 planning horizon;

AND FURTHER THAT the foregoing recommendations be utilized by the Region of Halton in the development of a Preferred Growth Concept for purposes of updating the Regional Official Plan to the 2051 planning horizon.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "whitebelt" refers to those lands that are located outside of the Town's Urban Area, Greenbelt Plan Protected Countryside, and Niagara Escarpment Commission areas. The area is referred to as "whitebelt" as it has historically been depicted in the colour white on Growth Plan mapping.

## KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Region of Halton is currently undertaking a review of its Regional Official Plan. The Region is required by Provincial legislation to bring its Official Plan into conformity with the various Provincial Plans including *A Place to Grow: The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (“*A Place to Grow*”) and ensure consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement. The deadline for the Region to complete this review as it relates to growth management matters vis a vis *A Place to Grow* is July 1, 2022<sup>2</sup>. This was recently confirmed in a letter dated April 27, 2021, from the Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. A copy of the letter is attached to this report as Schedule One.
- *A Place to Grow* requires the Region to accommodate a total population of 1.1 million and 500,000 jobs by 2051. The basis for the growth forecasts is set out in a report entitled “Greater Golden Horseshoe: Growth Forecasts to 2051” dated August 2020 prepared by Hemson Consulting. Among other matters, the report notes that the GGH is “...primed for continued rapid long-term growth with population and economic growth closely linked”. Immigration, which is set annually by the federal government, is the most important component of growth in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.
- The 2021-2023 Federal Immigration Levels Plan (the “Plan”) identifies that over the next 2 years, Canada will be welcoming admissions at a rate of 1% of the current population of Canada. This equates to an additional 401,000 permanent residents in 2021, 411,000 permanent residents in 2022 and 421,000 permanent residents in 2023. This reflects a significant increase of 60,000 people in 2021 and 2022 from previous targets.
- Highlights of the Federal Immigration Levels Plan include:
  - an increase in admissions over the 3 years of the plan to make up the shortfall in 2020.
  - a focus on economic growth, with about 60% of admissions to come from the Economic Class.
  - a continued focus on innovative and community-driven approaches to address diverse labour and demographic needs across the country.
  - the Plan identifies that these increased admissions will result in short-term economic recovery and long-term economic growth.

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<sup>2</sup> In consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic, Town Council through Resolution No. 2021-0025, requested that the Province extend the review to allow for in person consultation/public engagement. A similar Resolution was also requested by Region Council.

- The Region, in consultation with the four local municipalities, must allocate the 1.1 million population and 500,000 jobs to the City of Burlington and the Towns of Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville as required by *A Place to Grow*. The Growth Plan also provides substantial policy direction on growth management including promoting intensification; providing a mix and range of market-based housing; designation of employment lands; settlement boundary expansions and protections for natural resources. The Region’s current population is estimated to be 621,000 with 281,300 jobs. The last major Regional Official Plan review, referred to as Sustainable Halton, anticipated that Halton Region would reach a population of 780,000 and accommodate 390,000 jobs by the 2031 planning horizon.
- As part of the Official Plan review, the Region has prepared five growth concepts showing how growth could be potentially accommodated to the 2051 planning horizon. The Region is currently seeking input from various stakeholders on the growth concepts including the local municipalities. This input will assist the Region in preparing a Preferred Growth Concept that will form the basis for the updated Regional Official Plan. It should be noted that a Preferred Growth Concept may be a “hybrid” which combines elements from the different concepts.
- Each municipality within Halton Region is at a different stage of evolution and has different, locally specific needs. The Town of Halton Hills has a unique community structure. We are comprised of two separate Urban Mixed Use Areas (Acton and Georgetown), three Employment Areas (Acton, Georgetown and the Premier Gateway), numerous hamlets and rural clusters, and vast Agricultural and Natural Heritage System lands, all within our community boundaries. These elements help to define and shape our community and make us distinctive within the Regional context.
- To date, the Region has held several virtual Public Open Houses on the growth concepts, including a Halton Hills focused session on May 4, 2021. The Town held a Council Workshop and received public delegations on June 21, 2021. A presentation was delivered by SGL Planning & Design Ltd. and Watson and Associates Inc. to provide additional context on the growth concepts and the implications for the Town. A copy of the presentation is available [here](#).
- This report recommends that the Town continue to advance a three-pronged growth strategy to the 2051 planning horizon comprised of the following elements:
  - Intensification inside the Georgetown and Acton Built Up Area (BUA) with a focus on key strategic growth areas such as the Georgetown GO Station/Mill Street Corridor, Downtown Georgetown, the Civic Centre District, the Guelph Street Corridor and Downtown Acton/Acton GO in accordance with locally approved policies as may be updated from time to time;

- Compact residential and mixed-use development within Designated Greenfield Areas (DGA);
  - Development within designated Employment Areas.
- It is recommended that in keeping with the findings and objectives of the Town's Employment Lands Needs Study (2020), Economic Development and Tourism Strategy (2021), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Strategy (2020), and the Business Concierge Program (2021), the Region of Halton be advised that Council is supportive of the provision of additional employment lands within the Town to the 2051 planning horizon. In addition, building on the strategic location, development and investment attraction momentum, and designation as a Provincially Significant Employment Zone in accordance with *A Place to Grow*, the Halton Hills Premier Gateway be prioritized for the location of additional employment lands to the 2051 planning horizon. The specific geographic boundaries should be determined as part of the preparation of the Preferred Growth Alternative.
  - It is also recommended that in keeping with the complete communities provisions of *A Place to Grow* as well as the general direction set out in the Town's Strategic Plan, the Region of Halton be advised that Council is supportive of a modest expansion to the Georgetown Urban Area, similar in scale to that approved through the Sustainable Halton process (ROPA 38 and OPA 10) of approximately 400 hectares to accommodate compact residential and mixed use development once the existing DGA are substantially built out in the mid to late 2030s. The additional DGA would also present an opportunity to accommodate the potential redevelopment of the Georgetown Hospital, which could serve as an anchor for a new, compact, greenfield community. The specific geographic boundaries should be determined as part of the preparation of the Preferred Growth Alternative.
  - Once the revised urban boundaries are confirmed, the balance of the "whitebelt" lands in Halton Hills should remain within the Agricultural System to the 2051 planning horizon.
  - New development should be in keeping with the Town's Green Development Standards as updated from time to time and low carbon opportunities continue to be pursued in keeping with the direction set out in the Town's Strategic Plan, the Official Plan and the Low Carbon Transition Strategy once finalized.

## **REPORT PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to:

- Briefly summarize the five Growth Concepts released by the Region as part of the on-going Regional Official Plan Review;
- Summarize the input received by the Town to date; and
- Provide recommendations on the scale and magnitude of growth that would be appropriate for the Town to the 2051 planning horizon.

## **BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:**

### **Background**

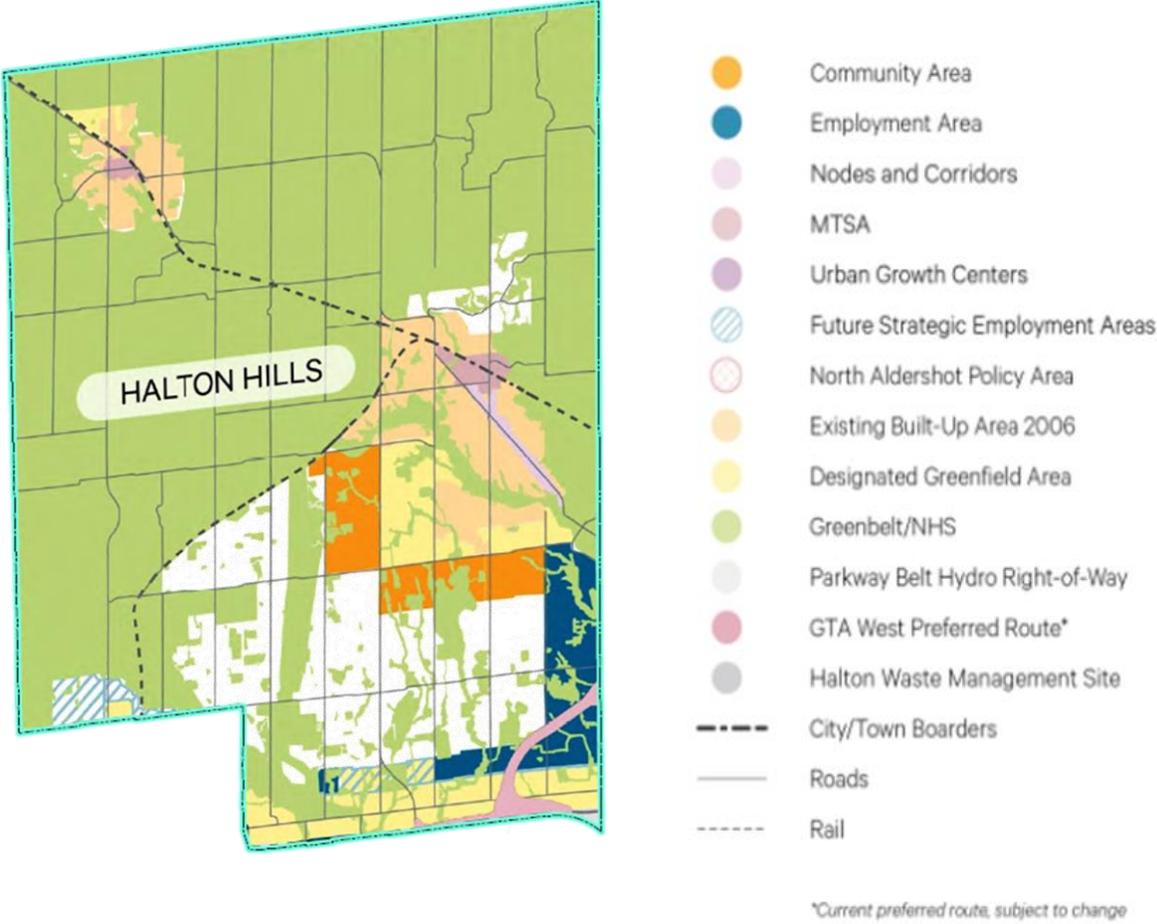
Halton Region has designed five different Growth Concepts to demonstrate where and how Halton will grow, accommodating new population (people) and employment (job) growth to the 2051 planning horizon, as is required by the Provincial Growth Plan. Each of these Growth Concepts provide options which demonstrate how theoretically, the Region can accommodate another 482,000 people and 222,000 jobs to 2051 in order to meet the Growth Plan forecasts of 1.1 million people and 500,000 jobs over the next 30 years.

Each of the five Growth Concepts are broken down as identified below.

*Concept 1 – 60% Densification/Moderate Greenfield Expansion*

This Concept proposes:

- a minimum of 50% of all new housing will be located within the existing Built-Up Area (BUA)
- all new Designated Greenfield Area (DGA) would be planned for a density of 65 persons and jobs per hectare (ha)
- 50% densification<sup>3</sup> would occur between 2021 and 2031
- additional 10% densification would occur from 2031 through to 2051 (60% total)
- Region wide total of 95,600 apartments
- Region wide total of 78,300 ground-related units
- Total estimated Region wide Community Area DGA of 1,460 ha
  - Halton Hills estimated share of 740 ha (approximately 2 Vision Georgetown's)
- Total estimated Region wide Employment Area DGA of 1,170 ha
  - Halton Hills estimated share of 680 ha

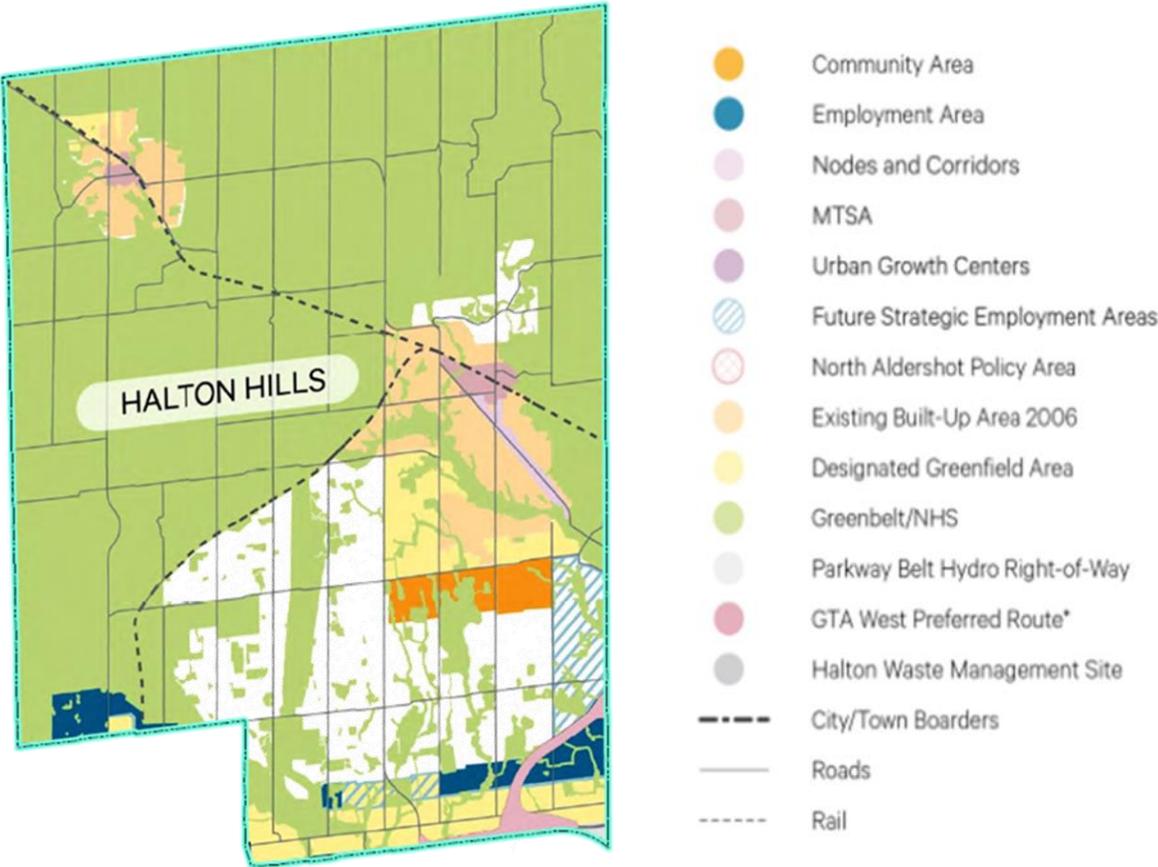


<sup>3</sup> Densification is described by Halton Region as the increasing density and additional apartment development in Designated Greenfield Areas in addition to intensification within the Built-Up Areas.

*Concept 2 – 70% Densification/Limited Greenfield Expansion*

This Concept proposes:

- a minimum of 50% of all new housing will be located within the existing BUA
- all new DGA would be planned for a density of 65 persons and jobs per ha
- additional 20% densification between 2031-2051 (70% total)
- Region-wide total of 106,700 apartments
- Region-wide total of 68,000 ground-related units
- Total estimated Region wide Community Area DGA of 730 ha
  - Halton Hills estimated share of 330 ha (approximately 1 Vision Georgetown)
- Total estimated Region wide Employment Area DGA of 1,100 ha
  - Halton Hills estimated share of 500 ha

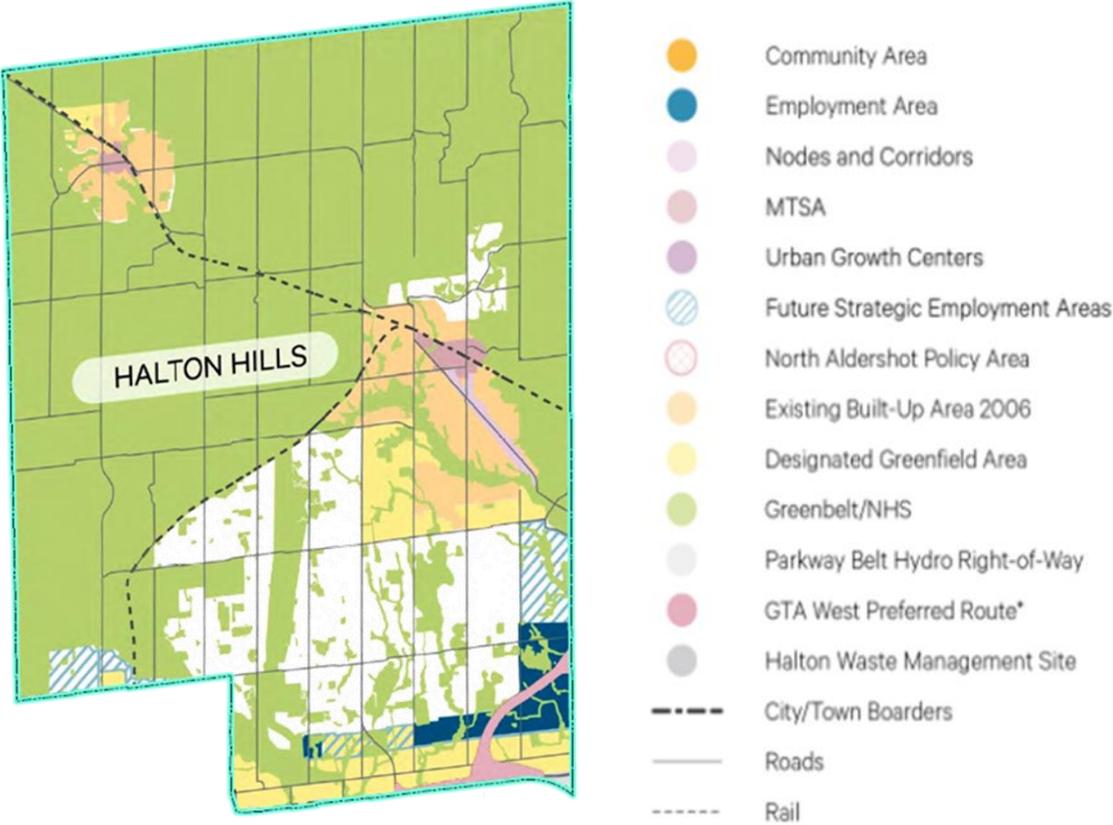


*\*Current preferred route, subject to change*

*Concept 3A – 80% Densification/Employment Only Greenfield Expansion*

This Concept proposes:

- a minimum of 50% of all new housing will be located within the existing BUA
- additional 30% densification from 2031-2051 (80% total)
- Region-wide total of 118,200 apartments
- Region-wide total of 56,000 ground-related units
- A DGA expansion only for employment purposes
- Total estimated Region-wide Employment Area DGA of 980 ha
  - Halton Hills estimated share of 450 ha

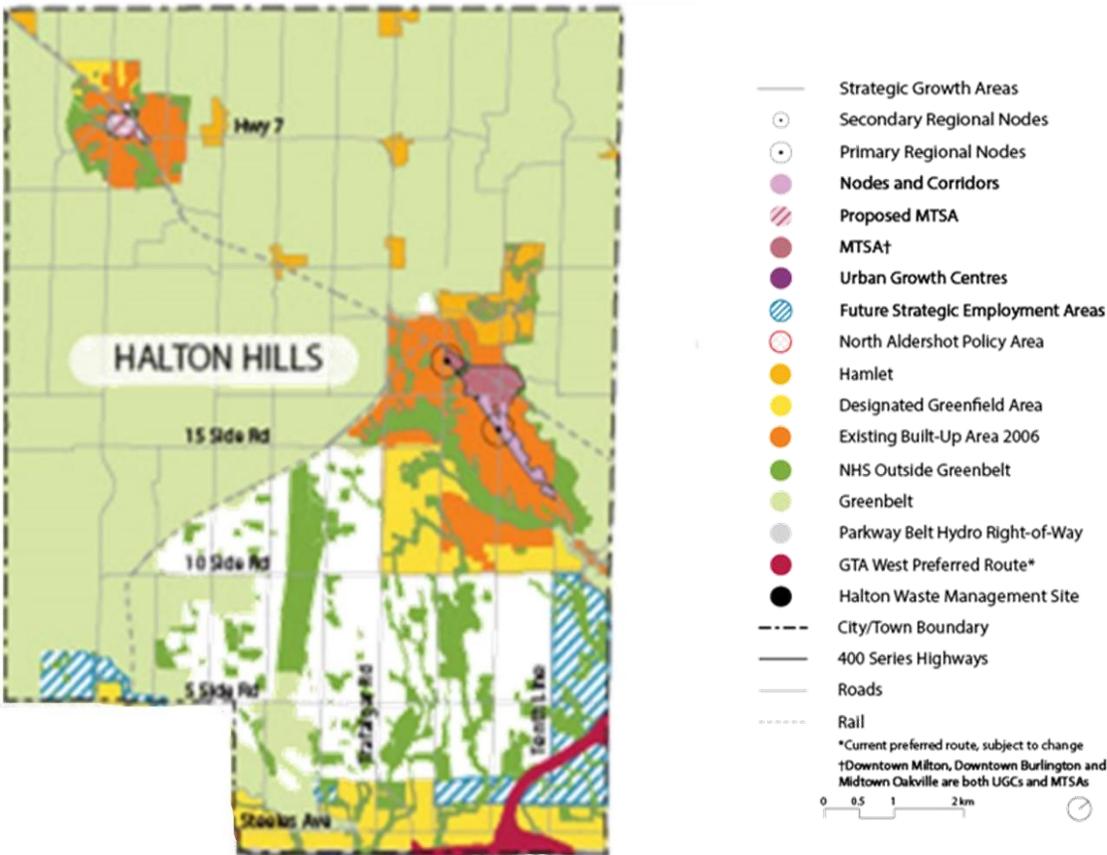


\*Current preferred route, subject to change

*Concept 3B – 80% Densification/No Greenfield Expansion*

This Concept proposes:

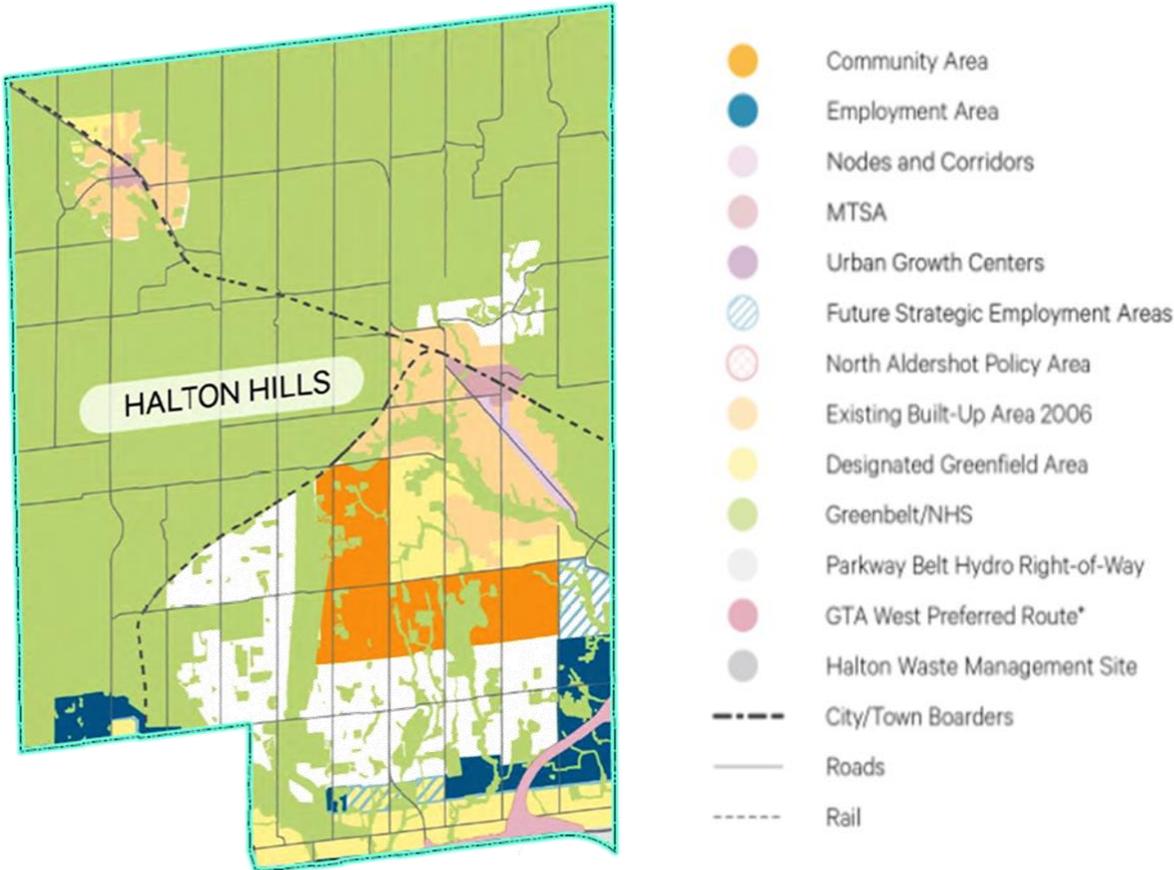
- a minimum of 50% of all new housing will be located within the existing BUA
- additional 30% densification from 2031-2051 (80% total)
- Region-wide total of 111,800 apartments
- Region-wide total of 56,000 ground-related units
- No DGA expansions are proposed with this Concept



*Concept 4 – 50% Intensification/Greatest Greenfield Expansion*

This Concept proposes:

- a minimum of 50% of all new housing will be located within the existing BUA
- all new DGA would be planned for a density of 65 persons and jobs per ha
- Region-wide total of 84,000 apartments
- Region-wide total of 89,200 ground-related units
- Total estimated Region wide Community Area DGA of 2,080 ha
  - Halton Hills estimated share of 1,360 ha (approximately 3-4 Vision Georgetown's)
- Total estimated Region wide Employment Area DGA of 1,220 ha
  - Halton Hills estimated share of 670 ha



*\*Current preferred route, subject to change*

As it relates to Halton Hills, the five Growth Concepts represent very distinctive choices and outcomes ranging from very limited growth beyond what is currently planned to the 2031 planning horizon (Concept 3A as it relates to residential development; Concept 3B as it relates to both residential and employment development), to a large-scale expansion that would significantly accelerate the pace of growth in the Town, going well beyond the parameters of the Town's Strategic Plan (Concept 4).

## **What we heard**

The Town held a Special Council Workshop and received public delegations on June 21, 2021. A presentation was delivered by SGL Planning & Design Ltd. and Watson and Associates Inc. to provide additional context on the growth concepts and the implications for the Town.

The following provides a summary of comments that were received via delegations at the June 21, 2021 Council Workshop.

- 3 residents spoke about the Georgetown GO Station MTSA boundary as identified in ROPA 48.
- Concerns were focused on the impacts of intensification with the Region's proposed MTSA boundary on existing, stable, low density residential uses; the differences between the Georgetown MTSA and those elsewhere in the Region; that the burden of intensification is falling within the Georgetown GO Station Area neighbourhood and concerns regarding increased densities without height restrictions/limitations.
- 3 residents spoke in favour of Concept 3B to freeze the urban boundary and promote increased intensification opportunities within the existing community.
- Comments suggested that Concept 3B is the only option that aligns with the Town's Climate Emergency and Truth & Reconciliation process; that the opportunity exists to transform existing low density, car dependent neighbourhoods into something more sustainable; that any loss of trees or farmland is unacceptable; that the Town should be building up and not out; that Concept 3B is the only one that helps young people and that increased intensification will lead to more public transit opportunities.
- One individual delegated on behalf of his clients, the South Georgetown Landowners Group. He spoke to the Town's Climate Change Emergency declaration and protecting farmland as important priorities. He noted other priorities of growth such as property tax and municipal asset management considerations. He noted that the Town must also adhere to Provincial policies such as the Growth Plan and that Council must make a decision about balanced growth. He also spoke to an opportunity for his clients to provide an Olympic size pool/skating rink should their lands be included in a future urban boundary expansion through this IGMS process.

It should be noted that the Region's staff report on ROPA 48 is included on the July 7<sup>th</sup> Regional Council Agenda. Town staff have worked with the Region to incorporate policies that ensure that development within stable residential neighbourhoods located inside the MTSA boundaries is contextually appropriate. A further update to the Georgetown GO Station/Mill Street Corridor Secondary Plan is scheduled to commence later this year.

### **Three-Pronged Growth Strategy**

During the Sustainable Halton process, the Town developed its approach to Growth Management by way of a three-pronged growth strategy. These three prongs consist of:

- Intensification inside the Georgetown and Acton Built Up Area (BUA).
- Compact residential and mixed-use development within Designated Greenfield Areas (DGA) of Vision Georgetown and Southeast Georgetown, along with the rounding out of Stewarttown as a character area.
- Development within Designated Employment Areas with a focus on an expanded Premier Gateway.

This strategy employed a balanced approach to managing growth and development within the Town, having regard for the Town's geographic location, character, stage of development and other important priorities such as agriculture and natural heritage.

This three-pronged growth management strategy directly relates to many of the values in the Town's Strategic Plan 2019-2022. These include:

- Foster a Healthy Community - To maintain and enhance a healthy community that provides a clean environment and a range of economic and social opportunities to ensure a superior quality of life in our community.
- Preserve, Protect and Enhance our Environment - To preserve, protect and enhance our natural environment for the health benefits and enjoyment it provides to present and future generations.
- Foster a Prosperous Economy - To maintain and enhance the economic vitality of the Town through the provision of a wide range of opportunities for economic development.
- Achieve Sustainable Growth - To ensure that growth is managed so as to ensure a balanced, sustainable, well planned community infrastructure and services to meet the needs of its residents and businesses.

Looking out to 2051, staff believes that the Town should continue to further develop Council's vision and mission as entrenched in our Strategic Plan, while recognizing the priority areas of shaping growth, transportation, climate change and the environment, and fiscal and corporate management among others.

Ultimately, Council needs to consider whether to continue with its existing three-pronged growth management strategy to the 2051 planning horizon in keeping with the directions from the Town's Strategic Plan or pursue a different course. The ensuing sections of this report will provide observations of each of the prongs.

## **Employment Lands**

As discussed in past reports, the Town's Premier Gateway Employment Area enjoys a strategic location in the GTA with convenient access to Highways 401 and 407 ETR, proximity to major shipping hubs, and easy access to the GTA and US markets.

Halton Hills' economic prosperity is heavily dependent on the timely and efficient development of the Premier Gateway Employment Area. Approximately 90% of future employment growth projected for Halton Hills is anticipated to occur in the Premier Gateway. Continued investment and job growth in the Gateway will make a considerable contribution to the Town's financial health through non-residential assessment growth and a more balanced non-residential to residential assessment ratio, Halton Hills' overall economy and by extension support economic growth across the GTA and beyond.

The Premier Gateway is already home to millions of square feet of industrial and commercial development, occupied by numerous companies. Vacancy rates are very low, with demand for space outpacing supply.

Historically, the Town of Halton Hills has seen the manufacturing and retail industries perform as two of the most significant employment sectors, with employment land demand driven by manufacturing and logistics. There is increasing interest from knowledge-based or "Creative class" businesses. These trends have continued and are expected to remain key drivers moving forward through the 2051 planning horizon.

Macaulay Shiomi Howson (MSH) and Watson and Associates Inc. were retained by the Town in 2018 to complete an Employment Land Needs Study (ELNS) to the 2041 planning horizon<sup>4</sup>. This study identified several key factors regarding the Town's existing employment land base and future employment land needs, as is identified below.

- Between 2011-2019, Halton Region accommodated one fifth of all industrial development of the entire Greater Toronto Area.
- There are 53,000 new jobs forecasted to the Town between 2021 and 2041.
- An increase in the current employment activity rate from 39% to 44% is anticipated to 2041.

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<sup>4</sup> The 2017 Growth Plan required municipalities to plan to the 2041 horizon. As such, Watson & Associates and MSH completed the Town's Employment Land Needs Study with a focus on the 2019 to 2041 planning horizon.

- The Town's existing employment lands provide opportunities to accommodate export-based employment, which cannot be accommodated elsewhere in Town (i.e., in mixed use or live/work development areas).
- Advanced manufacturing uses require integrated operations on large, campus-style settings. This leads to an increased need for integrated, multi-purpose facilities, providing opportunities for combined processing, research, training, and warehousing.
- The logistics and goods movement sectors continue to evolve as the e-commerce market grows. As a result of this growth, there is an increased need for larger, regionally located logistics facilities which require large tracks of serviced employment land. The Town's Premier Gateway location along the 401 corridor is extremely desirable.
- The Town's recent leadership in developing and seeing Council approve both a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Attraction Strategy, and a 5-year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy are key to maintaining a strong employment land base and a diversified economy within the Town's municipal boundaries. A key objective of these strategies is to attract higher density employment uses and companies to the Town.
- A steady and adequate supply of shovel-ready employment lands is critical to enable Halton Hills to be economically competitive, attract non-residential investment (including higher density job generators), generate non-residential property tax revenue, create local job opportunities, and provide a choice of suitable locations for businesses that are already in Halton Hills to expand on and/or relocate within Halton Hills, rather than needing to relocate outside of the Town – resulting in local job and investment losses.
- The ELNS identified that the Town has limited opportunities to increase intensification of our existing employment lands, due to the nature of the businesses in the Acton, Georgetown and Mansewood employment areas.
- With respect to the office market, there are currently 8.7 million square feet of major office within Halton Region; 97% of that is located in South Halton (Oakville and Burlington) along the QEW corridor.
- The demand for major office has shifted to downtown Toronto over the past decade.
- A majority of new office space over the last 10 years has been accommodated in existing Employment Areas, through low and mid-rise office and flex-style buildings.
- Most office demand will continue to be within the Employment Areas through multi-unit and multi-purpose facilities encompassing both office and non-office uses.
- Region-wide, the MTSAs provide opportunities to accommodate some office development, however those opportunities are limited, especially within the Halton Hills context given the size and surrounding established low density neighbourhoods within the Acton and Georgetown MTSA boundaries.
- Given the amenities typically desirable for office development and the current stage of development across Halton, the communities of Oakville and Burlington

are seen as being more desirable for major office development. Nonetheless, the Town does actively pursue office opportunities wherever possible.

- Mixed-use, transit supportive areas are anticipated to be seen as increasingly attractive for future office space/development.
- The ELNS concluded that the Town only has 101 gross ha of vacant, shovel ready (serviced and available) designated employment land remaining.
- Given the significant demand for employment lands to the 2041 planning horizon, the demand exceeds the supply.
- Additional analysis completed by Watson & Associates on the Fiscal Impact Analysis recommends that in order to ensure the Town remains competitive and that it can provide the opportunity for local residents to have access to jobs within their own community, an additional 445 gross ha of employment land is required to the 2051 horizon.
- Currently, 42% of the Town's Labour Force commutes outside of Halton Hills for employment. This is 30% higher than the Provincial average.
- Increasing the Town's available supply of employment lands provides increased opportunity for better live work arrangements for residents of the Town.
- Increased ability to work within the Town's boundaries, also allows for growth of the Town's Transit Services Strategy, thereby reducing out commuting and reducing the impacts on climate change.

The five IGMS Growth Concepts propose the following additional employment land area to Halton Hills:

- Concept 1 proposes 680 ha
- Concept 2 proposes 500 ha
- Concept 3A proposes 450 ha
- Concept 3B proposes 0 ha
- Concept 4 proposes 670 ha

For comparison, the Town's existing employment land area totals are as follows:

- Phase 1A (largely located on the south side of Steeles Avenue, east of James Snow Parkway, west of Eighth Line) is approximately 360 gross ha.
- Phase 2A (located on the south side of Steeles Avenue, east of Eighth Line, west of Winston Churchill Blvd) is approximately 260 gross ha.
- Phase 1B (located on the north side of Steeles Avenue, east of Sixth Line, west of Eighth Line, including an additional 75 ha replacement employment lands) is approximately 150 gross ha.
- Phase 2B (located on the north side of Steeles Avenue, east of Eighth Line, west of Winston Churchill Blvd) is approximately 260 ha.

#### *Regional Analysis of Concept 3B:*

On March 24, 2021, Regional Council approved a Motion directing staff to complete "...an analysis that builds on Concept 3 and proposes to accommodate growth to 2051

based on no expansion at all of the existing Halton settlement area boundary...”. This Motion therefore required an evaluation and staff report be completed that would provide information to both Regional Council and the public regarding the implications of a complete freeze of the Halton settlement area boundary.

Report LPS45-21 dated April 21, 2021, discussed the Analysis that builds on Concept 3 and accommodates Employment Growth to 2051 without a Settlement Area Boundary Expansion. This is known as Concept 3B. The report states,

*“In contrast to the Sustainable Halton process, the Integrated Growth Management Strategy analysis (beginning with the Growth Scenarios based on ‘Local Plans and Priorities’ and continuing into the development of the Growth Concepts), has been based on recognizing a shift away from low density land extensive manufacturing and warehousing towards new employment forms focused on mixed use, compact urban form. This shift acknowledges that there will still be a smaller, but still significant proportion of employment growth in the Region that relies on employment uses requiring larger parcels of land in proximity to road and rail corridors.”*

The report describes the need for the Region to utilize the province’s established Land Needs Methodology when considering whether a future urban boundary expansion is required from an employment lands perspective. It describes the analysis completed by Hemson as part of the IGMS work, as well as the work completed by StrategyCorp which examined COVID-19 Impacts on the Economy and Employment.

LPS45-21 explains that the analysis which underpins the Growth Concepts has included the trend to work from home which has increased throughout the pandemic, causing a related increase in office vacancy rates.

The report also identifies that as a result of the pandemic,

*“...an acceleration in the growth and reliance on facilities that support the supply chain...has triggered demand for logistics and warehousing uses, and increased demand to accommodate Employment Land Employment.”*

Furthermore, the report clearly identifies that these findings appear to be consistent with the ideas that are presented by the StrategyCorp Whitepaper.

In addition to confirming that the IGMS analysis has been focused on a shift from low density, land extensive employment forms to that of mixed use, with a compact urban form, LPS45-21 identified there remains a significant Region wide need for larger parcels of employment land in proximity to road and rail corridors. The report explains,

*“To achieve the employment forecasts in the Provincial Growth Plan, with no urban boundary expansion, it would reflect a significant shift that may not be feasible from a land economics perspective. For example:*

- A shift from Employment Land Employment to Major Office Employment would assume that Halton Region would capture a significantly disproportionate large share of office growth relative to the balance of the*

*Growth Plan municipalities. There is risk and uncertainty in the market for Major Office uses given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

- *Employment land is needed to accommodate not only logistics and warehousing, but advanced manufacturing (and high paying jobs), which if not provided in Halton, will be provided elsewhere, resulting in a loss of potential assessment growth and the opportunity to improve the activity rate of Halton and its local municipalities. Capitalizing on the inherent market for Employment Land Employment opportunities would effect a greater diversification of economic activities in Halton.*

- *While there is some intensification potential for Employment Land Employment on existing designated Employment Lands, the amount of intensification required to negate the need for additional employment land would be significant. It is important that intensification targets (i.e. employment densities) are not overstated as it could have the effect of misaligning the required investment in infrastructure in relation to job and assessment growth. There could be an inherent financial impact to municipalities as a result.*

Given the opportunities within and in close proximity to the Town's Future Strategic Employment Areas, Halton Hills is well positioned to accommodate an appropriate proportion of the Region-wide Employment Land Employment growth to the 2051 planning horizon.

In keeping with the findings and objectives of the Town's Employment Lands Needs Study, Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, FDI Strategy, and the Business Concierge Program, in addition to the analyses completed by Hemson and StrategyCorp, staff recommend the provision of additional designated employment lands within the Town to the 2051 planning horizon.

Building on the strategic location, development and investment attraction momentum, and designation as a Provincially Significant Employment Zone in accordance with *A Place to Grow*, staff recommend that the Halton Hills Premier Gateway be prioritized for the location of additional employment lands of approximately 450 to 500 gross hectares to the 2051 planning horizon. Lands that are contiguous to the existing Premier Gateway in the southern portion of the Town represent the best opportunities for future employment growth.

Given the ongoing uncertainty with the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment and the outstanding appeals<sup>5</sup> to the Region's Corridor Protection policies, staff note that further discussions will be necessary with regional staff and consultants. The specific geographic boundaries as to the location of additional employment lands should be determined as part of the preparation of the Preferred Growth Alternative.

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<sup>5</sup> Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 43 regarding Corridor Protection remains under appeal at the Ontario Land Tribunal. At the request of Council, the Region's decision on the Town's OPA 21 is being held in abeyance..

## Intensification Opportunities and Challenges

A fundamental premise of the Provincial Growth Plan is that the use of land and infrastructure can be optimized by directing growth to existing Urban Areas. To this end, the Plan promotes increasing intensification within existing Built-Up Areas, with a focus on key urban centres, nodes and corridors. Intensification in these areas is to be concentrated to provide a focus for transit and infrastructure investment. Section 2.2.2.1a) of *A Place to Grow* requires that upper-tier municipalities (such as Halton Region), have a minimum of 50% of all residential development occur on an annual basis within the delineated Built-Up Areas.

The Town previously completed an Intensification Opportunities Study in 2010 that was incorporated into the Official Plan through OPA 9. The objective was to provide for residential and mixed-use intensification opportunities, while ensuring that the character and stability of established residential neighbourhoods and commercial areas was maintained and enhanced.

In 2019, the Town finalized an update to the Intensification Opportunities Study, evaluating potential intensification opportunities within the Town's BUA to the 2041 planning horizon. Hemson Consulting Ltd. was retained as part of the consulting team to complete a Market Assessment. That work identified that the Town's existing Official Plan target of 5,100 units by 2031 (as had been determined in the 2010 Intensification Study) was unlikely to be achieved due to a number of factors.

Similarly, Hemson's analysis completed on behalf of the Region through the IGMS work reflects that in order to achieve a 50% intensification target as required by the 2019 Growth Plan, more intense development within existing community areas is required. To that end, within the Town of Halton Hills, this results in a need for approximately **210 to 225 units per year from 2021 to 2051**. This represents a significant shift in what Council typically sees with respect to individual development applications. Given historic public concerns regarding intensification focused development proposals in the past number of years (i.e., 284 Queen Street and 12 Church Street in Acton; Amico at 42 Mill Street and the Mountainview Road and John Street Seniors' residence in Georgetown), the number of units the Town will have to accommodate in order to meet the minimum 50% intensification target requires a significant shift in the acceptance of new forms of housing by the public at large, as well as an equally significant shift in the pattern of housing choice for residents of Halton Hills.

The 2019 Intensification Opportunities Study identified a surplus of sites, as is recommended by the Hemson Market Analyses, suggesting that it is prudent to identify a surplus to ensure flexibility and opportunities for sites of varying sizes and locations should opportunities for redevelopment present themselves in the future.

Some general findings and key facts regarding intensification in the Town are summarized below:

- Since 2011, only 109 apartment units have been completed within Halton Hills. This is an average of **11 apartment units per year**.

- Based on the Land Needs Assessment Methodology completed as part of the Regional IGMS, the Town will be required to complete approximately **220 to 300 apartment units per year from 2021 to 2051**.
- It is imperative to note that accessory apartments (also known as basement apartments) are not reflected within this required apartment unit total. Accessory apartments are considered ground related units as per provincial direction.
- The 2019 Hemson Market Assessment completed as part of the Town's Intensification Opportunities Study Update, identified that the Town has historically been made up of predominantly ground related units occupied by large family households.
- The Hemson Assessment concluded that in 2016, 74% of the total households within the Town were dominated by families attracted to Halton Hills for affordable, ground related forms of housing. In 2001 that number was slightly higher at 75%.
- The Market Assessment identified that housing patterns within the Town have remained relatively constant for the past 20 years, with a slightly declining apartment share.
- A significant shift in housing market demand within Halton Hills is required in order to meet the minimum 50% intensification target required by the Growth Plan.
- Currently, families with 3 or more persons per household account for only 8% of current apartment dwellings.
- Looking forward, the Hemson Market Assessment estimates that 47% of household growth within Halton Hills will be in families with children living at home.
- As a result, a greater proportion of families will need to choose to live in apartments.
- Housing costs also play a significant role in housing choice. The Hemson Market Assessment identified (based on 2019 rates) that a 2,000 square feet (ft<sup>2</sup>) townhome had an average cost to develop of \$380/ft<sup>2</sup>, with a selling cost of \$760,000. Similarly, for the equal selling cost, one could instead choose to live in a 1,300 ft<sup>2</sup> apartment, which had an average construction cost of \$580/ft<sup>2</sup>.
- Hemson's Market Assessment also concluded that several factors need to align in order for change to occur as it relates to increased opportunities for intensification. These include:
  - Designation and pre-zoning of sites for higher density uses.
  - Landowners must have a desire to redevelop, suggesting that if a current low density commercial plaza is profitable, there is little incentive for the owner to change the current use.
  - Infrastructure capacity becomes a significant challenge.
  - The availability of existing community facilities, especially parkland must be considered.
  - Physical site characteristics must be evaluated, including parcel size, depth, access and the need for land assembly.
- Overall, redevelopment can be a very slow and unpredictable process.

In addition to the information provided above, staff believe Council should also be aware of some of the risks in relying solely on intensification to accommodate all future growth. These risks include:

- The BUA in Acton and Georgetown are relatively small in comparison to other more mature Urban Areas throughout the Region and GTA.
- The protection of mature neighbourhoods and stable residential areas must be balanced against the promotion of intensification.
- Relatively recent greenfield developments including substantial portions of Georgetown South, Trafalgar Country and the Acton East lands are located within the BUA, but cannot be expected to be candidates for intensification until well beyond the 2051 planning horizon.
- There is an absence of lands to accommodate existing land uses that would need to relocate in order to facilitate redevelopment.
- Development within the Hamlets of Glen Williams and Norval is expected to be limited due to the planning objectives for these communities, and no longer counts towards the Town's intensification targets.
- The vast majority of the larger, vacant land parcels with good site characteristics have been developed or are already the subject of approved or in-process development applications.
- The configuration of parcels is often not conducive to redevelopment.
- Many of the intensification sites are Brownfields (i.e. subject to site contamination from previous industrial uses) that require costly clean-up, which must be factored into any cost-benefit analysis on these sites.
- Existing land uses are in many cases comparatively new, and/or may remain profitable, thereby resulting in a disincentive to redevelopment.

Notwithstanding the above constraints, the Town has supported a number of appropriately scaled intensification proposals within the BUA. The Town has taken a proactive approach to incentivize intensification within appropriate growth areas, nodes and corridors. Updates to studies such as the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) program, Intensification Opportunities Study and Downtown Georgetown Secondary Plan represent recent examples where staff have taken steps towards appropriately identifying and managing growth within existing community areas, as is directed by Provincial and Regional policy.

### **Designated Greenfield Area**

Through the Sustainable Halton exercise, the Georgetown urban boundary was expanded to include:

- the Vision Georgetown lands bounded by Trafalgar Road, Fifteen Side Road, Eighth Line (Main Street) and 10 Side Road;

- the Southeast Georgetown lands bounded by Tenth Line, 10 Side Road and the hamlet of Norval; and
- lands adjacent to the hamlet of Stewarttown bounded by the CN Railway line and the Protected Countryside Area of the Greenbelt Plan.

The DGA lands added through the Sustainable Halton exercise were premised on the notion that they would be appropriately phased for development and built out between the 2021 and 2031 planning horizon. As is identified below, due to several factors, development within both the pre-and post-2021 Region-wide DGAs are currently behind schedule.

Based on the recent analysis and work undertaken by Hemson Consulting on behalf of the Region through the required Land Needs Assessment Methodology, contained in the [IGMS Growth Concepts Discussion Paper](#), Hemson now estimates that it will likely be the mid-2030s before the Sustainable Halton land supply is effectively built out. Page 37-38 of the IGMS Growth Concepts Discussion Paper explains,

*“The build out of the DGA delineated by the Sustainable Halton plan is behind the schedule anticipated when the Plan was prepared. Among the reasons why the build out of these lands and growth is currently behind the pace anticipated, including:*

- *Densities that are being achieved in the current DGA are higher than originally anticipated, thus requiring less land than originally anticipated;*
- *There was a slowdown in urban development generally associated with the recession of 2008; and*
- *Secondary Plans that provide for the development of Designated Greenfield Areas now have to be supported by detailed technical studies (e.g., subwatershed studies), therefore requiring additional time for analysis and consultation.*

*In fact, it should be noted that there are still elements of growth identified in the HUSP that have not yet been built out.*

*In preparing the Land Needs Assessment for this current exercise, all concepts assume that DGA previously identified through the HUSP and Sustainable Halton plans will be fully developed prior to any new development occurring within any new urban expansion areas. It is anticipated that these lands can reasonably satisfy greenfield demand into the 2031-2041 time period.”*

Given the requirement to plan to the 2051 horizon, it would be prudent for the Town to consider adding a modest amount of DGA similar in scale to that approved through the Sustainable Halton process (ROPA 38 and OPA 10) of approximately 400 hectares to accommodate compact residential and mixed-use development once the existing DGA is substantially built out in the mid to late 2030s. This will ensure the direction established in the *Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)* including efficient land use and development patterns, the promotion of strong, liveable, healthy and resilient communities, protecting the environment and public health and safety and facilitating

economic growth are each appropriately managed by the Town of Halton Hills. A modest amount of additional greenfield growth in the mid to late 2030s timeframe will also ensure the Town can accommodate an appropriate affordable and market-based range and mix of residential units, as is required by the PPS and Growth Plan.

## **Community Facility Needs**

As was presented during the June 21, 2021, Council Workshop, consideration must also be given for required community facilities and future land needs, including Community Centres, schools, parks, hospitals, libraries, etc.

Halton Hills is not alone in considering the difficulty in acquiring and magnitude of land costs when attempting to find sites for these types of community facilities within existing, developed urban areas. Redevelopment of existing sites is not an easy process, often leaving growing municipalities with potentially inadequate community facilities, especially for residents of newly developed intensification areas.

## **Georgetown Hospital**

Halton Healthcare submitted a letter dated June 18, 2021, for Council's consideration during the Growth Concepts deliberation. The letter is appended as Schedule Two to this report. The letter provides an update regarding the status of the Georgetown Hospital's ongoing planning process and explains that space constraints and aging infrastructure have become obstacles to delivering the comprehensive care that patients deserve. It notes that "there is no doubt the redevelopment of the Georgetown Hospital is required to meet the growing needs of our communities and accommodate state-of-the-art technology and evolving models of care".

The letter further explains that the planning process has advanced through the first stage of the Ministry's planning process, including a documented need for the redevelopment through the development of a business plan.

Halton Healthcare notes that while all options for redevelopment are being considered, they believe there is a likelihood that the existing Georgetown Hospital site may not be suitable to support the redevelopment currently contemplated. As such a new greenfield redevelopment site in the magnitude of approximately 40 to 45 acres is required to accommodate the new construction. The letter states,

*"...Simply put, parcels of land of that size are not available inside the existing Georgetown urban boundary.*

*The redevelopment of Georgetown Hospital is a transformative capital project for our community, the likes of which has not been seen for many decades. Please consider the future healthcare needs of the residents of your community and the future growth needs of the Georgetown Hospital during your planning and growth options deliberations."*

The Hospital and surrounding lands could be designed as a transit-oriented, compact and walkable campus-style development, incorporating institutional, residential, office and research and development types of employment, all within a new community hub. In addition, the new Georgetown Hospital could serve as an anchor point and establish Halton Hills as a leader for a new, low carbon energy, mixed-use area.

Based on discussions and correspondence with Halton Healthcare, a summary of the Georgetown Hospital Redevelopment Project is attached as Schedule Three.

### ***Other Considerations: Need for additional Town-wide Park***

In 2015, the Town embarked upon a Parkland Acquisition Study, which is intended to identify the Town's parkland needs to the 2031 planning horizon.

A key result of the Parkland Acquisition Study is the identification that the Town will need to look outside of the current urban area boundaries to acquire parkland in order to meet the community's needs to 2031.

Warren Harris, the Town's Commissioner of Recreation and Parks prepared a letter to Curt Benson, Director of Planning Services and Chief Planning Official for Halton Region on June 7, 2021. That letter is attached as Schedule Four to this report. The letter discusses several matters, including a request that the Region consider permissions for major public parks in areas outside of the existing urban area.

It is noted that even when using the Council approved reduced parkland provision standard of 2.2 ha per 1,000 persons, the Town maintains a deficit of 57.43 ha (141.91 acres) of land to meet parkland needs to 2031. This is similar in size to the existing Trafalgar Sports Park.

The additional estimated population growth between the five Growth Concepts to 2051 suggests an additional parkland need somewhere between 61 and 204 ha, depending on which Growth Concept is ultimately supported by Regional Council. In addition, as has been documented throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, increased apartments and a lack of personal outdoor space within dense communities creates an even greater need for available public park space.

Council must also consider the fact that it is neither suitable, financially feasible, nor in some cases, permitted, for the Town to look at brownfield redevelopment (prohibitive cost for rehabilitation, limited parcels of significant size, conflicts with other intensification goals), employment lands (conflicts with existing commercial/industrial uses and provincial Land Use Compatibility Guidelines), the Greenbelt Protected Countryside Area or Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) rural lands (land use policy restrictions) as suitable areas to develop a town-wide park.

Given the lack of available lands of suitable size within the existing Georgetown and Acton Urban Areas, in addition to the significant constraints within brownfields, employment lands, the Greenbelt and NEC areas, it is clear that additional parkland needs can only be met outside of the Town's current urban envelope.

## Summary

Based on the analysis contained within this report, **it is recommended that the Town continue with its established three-pronged growth management strategy to the 2051 planning horizon.** This would include a modest expansion to the Georgetown Urban Area and the Halton Hills Premier Gateway, along with intensification inside the Built-Up Area. As it relates to the Georgetown Urban Boundary and the Premier Gateway, the recommendations most closely align with the scale of development associated with **Concept 2.**

In keeping with the intent of the Town's Climate Emergency Declaration, all development should be in accordance with the Town's Green Development Standards (GDS), as amended from time to time. It should be noted that, building on the Town's leadership role in advancing sustainability in new construction, through endorsement of Report No. PD-2021-0024, Council recently approved an update to the Town's Green Development Standards Study<sup>6</sup>. The GDS Background Report also noted that there are significant opportunities for the development of low carbon communities on a comprehensive basis within a greenfield context suggesting a positive opportunity for the Town to work towards reducing the impacts of climate change and a working towards a net zero community in the future. Recommendations regarding the foregoing have been added to this report. In formulating these recommendations, and as was the case during the Sustainable Halton process, staff are also mindful of the Strategic Plan priority to ensure a vibrant agricultural community and preserve as much agricultural land as possible while accommodating a moderate amount of growth to the 2051 planning horizon. Currently, including the Greenbelt Plan, 83% of the entire Town of Halton Hills is made up of Rural/Agricultural lands. Should Council decide to endorse a modest expansion to the Georgetown Urban Area and the Halton Hills Premier Gateway, along with a focus on appropriate, well managed intensification inside the Built-Up Area, the Rural/Agricultural lands will remain a significant component of the Town's land base to the 2051 planning horizon. This includes retention of the vast majority of the "whitebelt" lands within the Agricultural System. A recommendation regarding the foregoing has been included with this report.

It should be noted that Halton Region has confirmed that an Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) report will be prepared as a component of the Preferred Growth Concept exercise, which will evaluate in detail the impacts to Agriculture Region-wide.

## STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

The recommendations in this report are well aligned with the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan values and priorities including:

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<sup>6</sup> To date, at least 1,400 residential units and 200,000 m<sup>2</sup> of commercial/industrial space have been covered by the Town's Green Development Standards.

- Harnessing future population and employment growth to provide new opportunities for residents, workers, businesses, and visitors.
- Working to ensure housing is accessible to all its residents at any age or stage in life.
- Growing in a way that embodies its values of social, economic, fiscal, and environmental sustainability. Staff engage with other levels of government to see that population growth in Halton Hills remains moderate.

The following focus areas support the shaping growth priority:

- Residential Greenfield Growth
- Intensification
- Downtown Revitalization
- Employment Lands
- Affordable Housing
- Water and Wastewater infrastructure

## **RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:**

Throughout the IGMS process, the Regional Climate Emergency as declared by Halton Region Council has been considered in the development of each of the five Growth Concepts.

The Town has identified that regardless of location, all development should be designed to be net zero (no fossil fuel energy), and all new development must follow the updated Green Building Design Standards (GDS).

The Town also emphasizes the need to direct discussions regarding growth and development toward building complete communities and highlighted the importance of the connection between land use and transportation, particularly the need for growth to support investment in transit infrastructure. This also includes the need and benefit of providing additional local employment opportunities, hence decreasing the likelihood of out-of-town commuting and the associated greenhouse gas emissions.

Town staff is of the opinion that drawing clear connections between land-use policies and climate change is absolutely essential and supports Regional initiatives to promote and enhance district energy, public transit, agriculture and the Natural Heritage System.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

Public Engagement has been conducted through a Special Council Workshop held on June 21, 2021 where public delegations were welcomed. Public Engagement is also being encouraged at the Special Council Meeting on July 6, 2021 where this report is being considered by Council.

The Region of Halton has conducted several Public Information Centres (PIC) throughout the development of the Growth Concepts. Each PIC included a presentation from Regional planning staff, a question and answer period and breakout rooms for discussion. Live polls were used during each session, with online questionnaires/surveys also being employed. The following virtual Growth Concepts PICs have been held:

- Halton Hills' specific PIC: May 4, 2021
- Milton specific PIC: May 6, 2021
- Burlington specific PIC: May 11, 2021
- Oakville specific PIC: May 13, 2021
- North Aldershot specific PIC: May 17, 2021
- Region-wide PIC: June 29, 2021

The Region also held a virtual Public Open House (June 9, 2021) and Statutory Public Meeting (June 16, 2021) regarding ROPA 48, which is the separate amendment that helps define and provide direction on urban structure, such as Urban Growth Centres, Major Transit Station Areas, Regional Nodes and employment areas. It is the first amendment to be considered by Regional Council as part of the Regional Official Plan Review.

#### **INTERNAL CONSULTATION:**

Various Town Departments/Divisions have been consulted in the preparation of this report, including Economic Development, Recreation and Parks, Transportation and Public Works, Climate Change and Finance.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

In order to inform Council's decision-making process on the Region's growth concepts, Watson and Associates were retained to undertake an order of magnitude fiscal impact analysis. The FIA focused on three distinct growth scenarios:

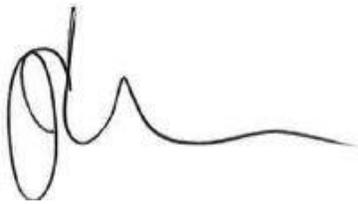
- Scenario 1 (builds on Regional Growth Concept 3B): Residential Intensification focus, No Additional DGA, No Additional Employment Lands
- Scenario 2 (builds on Regional Growth Concept 2): Residential Intensification, Limited Additional DGA and Employment Area Expansion
- Scenario 3 (builds on Regional Growth Concept 3A): No Additional DGA, Employment Area Expansion

Watson summarized their findings at the June 21<sup>st</sup> Council Workshop. From a fiscal perspective, Scenario 3 above generates the most favourable fiscal outcomes for the Town. This is not unexpected given the fiscal benefits associated with non-residential development. Scenario 2 is ranked next from a fiscal perspective. Scenario 1 presents

the least favourable outcomes. Staff note that under Scenario 1 there would be limited assessment growth and development charge revenue over an extended period once the existing DGA and the Premier Gateway are built out in the mid to late 2030s. This would be similar to the experience of the last few years due to low assessment growth.

Watson will be present at the July 6<sup>th</sup> Special Council meeting.

Reviewed and approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Linhardt', written in a cursive style.

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning and Development

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Mills', written in a cursive style.

Chris Mills, Acting Chief Administrative Officer