

REPORT

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

REPORT FROM: Bronwyn Parker, Senior Planner - Policy

DATE: February 8, 2019

REPORT NO.: PLS-2019-0017

RE: Employment Land Needs Study - Update

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report PLS-2019-0017 dated February 8, 2019 regarding an update to the Town's Employment Land Needs Study be received,

AND THAT the Phase 1 Background Report prepared by Watson & Associates (attached as Appendix 1 to this report) be received;

AND FURTHER THAT this report and the Phase 1 Background Report be forwarded to the Region of Halton as input into the Integrated Growth Management Strategy that is being developed as part of the Regional Official Plan Review;

AND FURTHER THAT staff be directed to continue to advance the Employment Land Needs Study, in keeping with the approved Terms of Reference.

BACKGROUND:

In March 2018, Council received report PLS-2018-0010 regarding the Terms of Reference for an Employment Land Needs Study. The intent of the study is to provide an analysis of the employment land needs of the Town of Halton Hills to the 2041 planning horizon.

As outlined in the approved Terms of Reference, the Study will also provide the determination as to whether or not the existing quantum of employment lands within Halton Hills is appropriate and if it meets the needs of the Town's current and future population.

The Study will form an essential component of the Town of Halton Hills Official Plan Review exercise and will provide critical input to the Region of Halton Integrated Growth

Management Strategy (Regional Official Plan Review), currently underway.

COMMENTS:

The Town has hired the consulting team of Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., with the assistance of Macaulay Shiomi Howson to complete the Employment Land Needs Study.

The study is being completed in two phases. Phase 1 involves the completion of a background evaluation and key policy review, focusing on an examination of the current land use policy framework; a best practices review; an analysis of the trends and existing conditions influencing employment land development and key stakeholder interviews. These elements, along with a forecast of employment growth and employment land needs for the Town of Halton Hills to 2041 have been considered and are demonstrated in the Phase 1 Draft Background Report, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

The Draft Background Report outlines the various opportunities and challenges for the Town with respect to the management and growth of our existing and future Employment Areas. It provides an examination of the current macro-economic trends influencing the global economy, and identifies the strengths of Halton Hills' current employment base.

Employment growth trends within Halton Hills are also discussed in the report. The total employment base for the Town has grown nearly 45% between 2001 and 2016, with an average annual increase of 2.5%. The report also identifies that the Town's employment activity rate (which is defined as the number of local jobs in a municipality divided by the resident population) has also increased between 2001 and 2016, moving from 33% to 37% respectively. These factors indicate that the local employment base is increasing at a faster rate than the local population base.

The primary employment sectors within the Town of Halton Hills include retail trade (22% of the total employment base), manufacturing (17%), health care and social assistance (9%) and educational services (8%).

The Draft Background Report also highlights the competitiveness of the Halton Hills employment lands. It examines the importance of quality of life as a key factor influencing both the decisions of individuals and families in terms of residential location, but also businesses and companies in relocation decisions. As the report identifies, in 2018, Halton Hills was ranked by MoneySense journal as one of the top 10 municipalities to live in Canada, due to its quality of life indicators.

The current supply of employment lands within the Town is likewise discussed in the Phase 1 Background Report. The supply inventory was completed in accordance with the Land Needs Assessment Methodology required by the 2017 Growth Plan, by evaluating the designated, available employment lands within the Town's urban area.

It is important to note that of the Town’s vacant designated employment lands, a large portion of them are impacted by the GTA West Corridor Protection Area/Northwest GTA Corridor Identification Study. The Report provides estimates of the total size of the proposed Northwest GTA Corridor; however, since the completion of the Draft Report, the Minister of Transportation has advised that the Province will once again re-ignite the GTA West Corridor Environmental Assessment. As such, the total potential impact of the Corridor on the Town’s vacant employment land supply continues to be a concern. Staff will continue to monitor the Corridor Study Area through the project lifecycle and report to Council as necessary.

The Background Report also focuses on the Town’s Employment Forecast to 2041, which includes an evaluation of the employment base as well as employment land needs. Key observations include that by 2041, the Town’s employment base is forecast to reach approximately 53,000 jobs. This represents an increase of approximately 27,500 jobs between 2019 and 2041, which equates to an annual employment growth rate of 3.4%.

The demand for employment lands within Halton Hills is also expected to continue to rise, most especially within the Premier Gateway Employment Area. Given the availability of designated, vacant employment lands, the forecast employment land density of 20 jobs per net hectare, and the anticipated employment land demand, the Town will require the designation of additional employment lands in order to ensure supply can keep pace with demand.

As is demonstrated in the figure below (Figure 6-9 from the Phase 1 Background Report), it is estimated that the Town of Halton Hills between the 2019 and 2041 forecast period, will require an additional 270 net hectares (667 net acres), or 338 gross hectares (835 gross acres) of employment lands in order to accommodate the forecasted employment growth.

Employment Land Needs, 2019-2041		
Land Demand		
Employment Growth on Employment Lands Adjusted for Intensification	12,920	
Forecast Employment Land Density (Jobs/Net ha)	20	
Employment Land Demand, Net ha	646	
Land Supply	Net ha	
	376	
Employment Land Needs	Net ha	Gross ha
	-270	-338

It is important to note that the estimated totals noted above assume that the 75 net hectares (185 net acres) within the OPA 31B lands are included in the land supply. It also assumes that the impact of the GTA West Corridor Protection Area is based on the refined Northwest GTA Corridor Study Area, which is approximately 180 gross hectares (445 gross acres) in total size.

Based on the information included within the report, it is recommended that the Town engage in discussions with the Region of Halton through the ongoing Regional Official Plan Review exercise, to add additional employment lands to the urban area of Halton Hills. Further, the report recommends that these additional employment lands be considered from the currently identified Future Strategic Employment Area, as additional urban lands within the Premier Gateway Employment Area.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

The Strategic Plan sets out a broad vision for the community contained in nine strategic directions. The proposed Employment Land Needs Study relates to the following Strategic Directions:

A. 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.

C. 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.

G. Achieve Sustainable Growth:

- To ensure that growth is managed so as to ensure a balanced, sustainable, well-planned community that meets the needs of its residents and businesses.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with this report. Through the 2018 Capital Budget process, Council approved the development of a land use planning study to evaluate the employment land needs of the Town of Halton Hills to the 2041 planning horizon.

CONSULTATION:

The first meeting of the Project Liaison Committee as established through the approved Terms of Reference has been scheduled for February 19, 2019. The Project Liaison Committee consists of the Mayor, Members of Council, local representatives from the Employment industry and a member of the Chamber of Commerce.

A Public Open House is tentatively scheduled for June, 2019.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

There is no public engagement associated with this report.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

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

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

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

COMMUNICATIONS:

The Project Liaison Committee has been established and acts as a key component of the community engagement for this study. A project specific web page will be created and the "Let's Talk Halton Hills" engagement platform will be utilized to seek community feedback.

CONCLUSION:

The Draft Background Report attached as Appendix 1 to this report outlines the various opportunities and challenges for the Town of Halton Hills with respect to the management and growth of our existing and future Employment Areas.

Based on the current demand for employment lands within Halton Hills, the availability of designated, vacant employment lands, the forecast employment land density, and the anticipated employment land demand, the report concludes that Town will require the designation of additional employment lands to the 2041 planning horizon.

As such, it is recommended that the Town engage in discussions with the Region of Halton through the ongoing Regional Official Plan Review exercise, to add additional employment lands to the Premier Gateway Employment Area of Halton Hills.

Reviewed and Approved by,