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## **York Region 2051 Alternate Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios Staff Report to Council**

Report Number: 2021-68

Department(s): Planning and Building Services

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Meeting Date: October 4, 2021

### **Recommendations**

1. That the report entitled York Region 2051 Alternate Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios dated October 4, 2021 be received; and,
2. That The Regional Municipality of York be advised that the Town of Newmarket Council supports the proposed Phased 55% intensification scenario (Scenario 2) as a minimum intensification target; and,
3. That the report entitled York Region 2051 Alternate Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios dated October 4, 2021 be forwarded to The Regional Municipality of York for its consideration; and,
4. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide staff's comments on York Region's Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Use Assessment Scenarios for Council's consideration.

### **Background**

At the March 18, 2021 Special York Region Council meeting, Regional Council received the staff report titled [Proposed 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment](#), which

York Region 2051 Alternate Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios

provided population and employment forecasts for York Region as well as each of the nine local municipalities for the 2051 planning horizon. In this report, Regional staff identified that 50% intensification rate and a density target of 60 people and jobs per hectare in designated greenfield areas to be appropriate for the purpose of the 2051 forecast and land needs assessment.

Local municipal councils have since provided comments to Regional staff on the 2051 forecasts. As outlined in the Town's staff report [2021-42](#), it is Newmarket's opinion that the Region's proposed population and employment targets for Newmarket were low and, as such, the Town requested Regional staff to reconsider the growth assignments for Newmarket. In response to the comments received from all local municipalities, Regional staff presented a staff report titled [Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios in Response to Consultation](#) (Alternate 2051 Forecast report) to Regional Council at the special meeting on September 16, 2021. This report has been referred to Special Meeting of Regional Council on October 21, 2021.

## Discussion

In the Alternate 2051 Forecast report, Regional staff presented five alternate intensification scenarios:

- **Scenario 1: Modified 50%** - additional 4200 people allocated to Newmarket compared to the original March 50% scenario; additional growth allocated to Whitchurch-Stouffville; shift 100 ha of urban expansion growth from Markham to East Gwillimbury; and minor revisions to population growth in all other municipalities.
- **Scenario 2: Phased 55%** - 50% intensification to 2041 and 55% between 2041 and 2051. An additional 5200 people allocated to Newmarket compared to the original March 50% scenario. (Regional and Town Planning staffs' preferred scenario)
- **Scenario 3: 55%** - more significant intensification, but not recommended by Regional staff as it is likely to require too significant shift toward higher density structure types and less ground-related housing for larger sized families
- **Scenario 4: 60%** - most significant intensification, also not recommended by Regional staff for the same reasons as above
- **Scenario 5: Designated greenfield area density target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare in urban expansion areas combined with 50% intensification** – developed in response to Town of East Gwillimbury's comments to include the entire whitebelt lands as urban expansion area. This scenario requires the most amount of community lands, highest number of ground-related structures and least amount of apartments compared to other scenarios. A density target of 50 residents and jobs per hectare is lower than what

the market has been delivering in York Region at an average of 62 residents and jobs per hectare.

## **Recommended Phased 55% Intensification Scenario is Acceptable**

Attachment 1 to this report is a table prepared by Regional staff as part of the Alternate 2051 Forecast report, which compares local municipal impacts between the original March 50% intensification scenario, Scenario 1: Modified 50%, and the recommended Scenario 2: Phased 55%. Similar analysis on Scenario 3: 55% intensification and Scenario 4: 60% intensification were not provided in the Alternate 2051 Forecast report, but Regional Council has directed Regional staff to provide a preliminary analysis on the 60% scenario.

The 2051 population for Newmarket under the original scenario and alternate Scenarios 1 and 2 are listed in Table 1. The estimated numbers of intensification units and percentages of intensification to reach the corresponding 2051 population under each scenario are also presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Newmarket 2051 Population under Two Alternate Scenarios**

<b>Original March 50%</b>		<b>Scenario 1: Modified 50%</b>		<b>Scenario 2: Phased 55% (Recommended)</b>	
<b>2051 Population</b>	<b>Intensification Units (%)</b>	<b>2051 Population</b>	<b>Intensification Units (%)</b>	<b>2051 Population</b>	<b>Intensification Units (%)</b>
110,700	8,700 (86%)	114,900	10,800 (89%)	115,900	11,100 (89%)

Source: York Region Staff Report - Alternate 2051 Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios in Response to Consultation dated September 16, 2021

Town Planning staff previously estimated approximately 10,600 new residential units could be built in Newmarket within the Regional Centre, Regional Corridors and 11 major transit station areas (MTSAs) by 2051, subject to the availability of servicing capacity. The estimation excluded the Mulock GO MTSA (Mulock Station Area Secondary Plan) and assumed the Upper Canada Mall Master Plan would be at 50% built out by 2051. The Region's number of intensification units under the recommended Phased 55% scenario is very similar to staff's estimation. However, staff would be able to perform a more complete assessment of the various scenarios once the preliminary analysis on the 60% scenario becomes available.

## **Planning Staff Supports Focusing Growth Through Intensification and Reducing the Need for Whitebelt Expansion**

When planning for growth for a diverse municipality such as York Region, it is important to strike the right mix of growth derived through intensification and urban expansion from a regional perspective. In general, more emphasis should be put on intensification within

the existing built up areas. Intensification allows for the efficient use of land, infrastructure and social/community services. It plays an important role in planning for complete, walkable, and transit-oriented communities, which are associated with many economic, health, social and environmental benefits.

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS) contains policies on managing and directing land use to achieve efficient and resilient development and use patterns. Specifically, policy 1.1.1 e) of the PPS states:

“Promoting the integration of land use planning, growth management, transit-supportive development, intensification and infrastructure planning to achieve cost-effective development patterns, optimization of transit investments, and standards to minimize land consumption and servicing costs.”

As directed by the Province through the PPS, aligning growth with intensification and infrastructure planning is important. Urban expansion requires significant infrastructure investments whereas intensification maximizes the use of existing infrastructure. It is acknowledged that expansion into the whitebelt lands will be needed to accommodate growth in the Region to 2051, however the Alternate 2051 Forecast report indicates that additional whitebelt expansion in the Town of East Gwillimbury would require second of the two expansions beyond the initial construction of the Upper York Water Reclamation Centre plant facility. Regional staff do not anticipate the second expansion to occur prior to 2051. As such, bringing all of the whitebelt lands in the Town of East Gwillimbury into the urban area through this municipal comprehensive review appears to be premature from an infrastructure planning perspective. Available resources and planned infrastructure should be prioritized for lands within the existing urban areas according to the Regional structure.

### **Slower, Measured Urban Expansions Are Preferred**

Similarly, the identification of the balance of the Town of East Gwillimbury's whitebelt lands as “future urban areas” would appear to be premature at this time. Between 2021 and 2051, it is anticipated that the Region will undertake at least two municipal comprehensive reviews where market trends and demands could change before 2051. As such, for the purposes of this municipal comprehensive review, intensification in existing urban areas should be prioritized before identifying additional “future urban area”. Identifying “future urban areas” now is premature and may affect/limit the Region's ability to direct any future financial or infrastructure resources to other local municipalities. Future urban expansion needs are best determined through future municipal comprehensive reviews when updated population growth and intensification results become available as York Region develops. In the meantime, it is recognized that incremental urban expansion is necessary and can help ensure hard and soft infrastructure are available to support growth.

## **Newmarket is Well Positioned for More Intensification**

Newmarket's planning context is distinct in the northern half of York Region in that it contains the only Provincial Urban Growth Centre. Further, Newmarket has the most MTSAs compared to the other five northern municipalities within York Region (East Gwillimbury and Whitchurch-Stouffville each has two MTSAs, Aurora and King each has one MTSA). This planning context places Newmarket in an ideal position to accommodate increased levels of growth through intensification.

In preparing for future growth in the centres/corridors and 11 MTSAs (excluding Mulock GO MTSA), Newmarket has undertaken the following planning initiatives and transportation investments with Regional partners:

- Approved an Urban Centres Secondary Plan and implementing Zoning By-law that designates and zones lands along the Yonge Street and Davis Drive corridors for intensification
- Updated the Servicing Allocation Policy to prioritize developments in the Urban Centres
- Approved a Parkland Dedication By-law that accepts more urban forms of parkland and land/cash-in-lieu combinations
- Approved a Development Charges Deferral Policy for the Urban Centres
- Constructed VivaNext Bus Rapidways to support intensification within the Urban Centres
- Reduced parking requirements in the Urban Centres

With the above noted plans and projects in place, the number of medium/high density built forms are increasing in the Urban Centres and MTSAs and this trend will continue within the 2051 planning horizon. Growth obtained through intensification, as can be provided by Newmarket's Urban Centres and MTSAs, should be prioritized.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the data available, the Region's recommended Phased 55% intensification scenario is acceptable for Newmarket. The environmental, societal and financial benefits of greater levels of intensification are well documented. Growth obtained through intensification should be prioritized over urban expansion in order to achieve these benefits.

## **Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages**

None

## **Consultation**

None

York Region 2051 Alternate Forecast and Land Needs Assessment Scenarios

## **Human Resource Considerations**

None

## **Budget Impact**

None

## **Attachments**

Attachment 1 – Local Municipal Impacts of Modified 50% and Recommended Phased  
55% Intensification Scenarios

## **Submitted by**

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## **Approved for Submission**

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